

How functional are School Management Committees in the present context?



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‘Ram is a grade V student who goes to a local, government-funded school in his village. When it comes to reading Hindi, he cannot go beyond the letters to read words. He is one of the 15.72% students in the country who can only read letters. His classmate Shyam represents another group, 9.38% of the enrolled students, who cannot even read any letters.’

The case given above is one of the most prevalent ones in the government schools of India. The learning outcomes of students are very poor. And, the ASER¹ report 2011 clearly illustrates this point.

ASER report 2011²

	Nothing	Letter	Word	Para	Story	Total
All India	9.38%	15.72%	14.23%	15.03%	45.64%	100%

	Nothing	Number 1 to 9	Number 11 to 99	Subtraction	Division	Total
All India	8.69%	17.74%	21.17%	22.21%	30.19%	100%

Numerous studies conducted show that the parental involvement is directly linked to the learning outcomes of students and as a whole, to the betterment of the school. (Aronson, 1996; Ballantine, 1999; Brown, 1999; Chen & Chandler, 2001; Columbo, 1995; Gonzalez, 2002; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Norton & Nufeld, 2002; Vincent, 1996; Zellman & Waterman, 1998)

When the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) mandated the formation of School Management Committees (SMC) in every government-funded schools, it was to encourage community and more particularly, parental involvement.

School Management Committee (SMC) comprises mainly of parents. In fact, 75% of the SMC members should be parents. In the other 25%, 1/3 should be from the elected members of the local authority, 1/3 from amongst the teachers and 1/3 from amongst the local educationists. In case, there is no educationist in the area, 1 student should take the place. The total number of the SMC members depends on the strength of students in the school.

RTE³ rules of Haryana says:

Strength of students	Number of SMC members
1-300	12 + 1 head-teacher
300-501	16 + 1 head -teacher

501+	20 + 1 head-teacher
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1 ASER is a tool developed to measure learning outcomes of students.

2 <http://www.asercentre.org/ngo-education-india.php?p=Query+ASER+data>

3 <http://harprathmik.gov.in/pdf/rte.pdf>

For example:

If a school has 250 students, the total number of members in the School Management Committee should be 12. The composition would be:

Parents	9
Teacher	1
Local authority	1
Local educationist	1

+ 1 Head teacher who would be the convener or ex-officio member.

On broader terms, as per the RTE act⁴, School Management Committee (SMC) should perform the following functions:

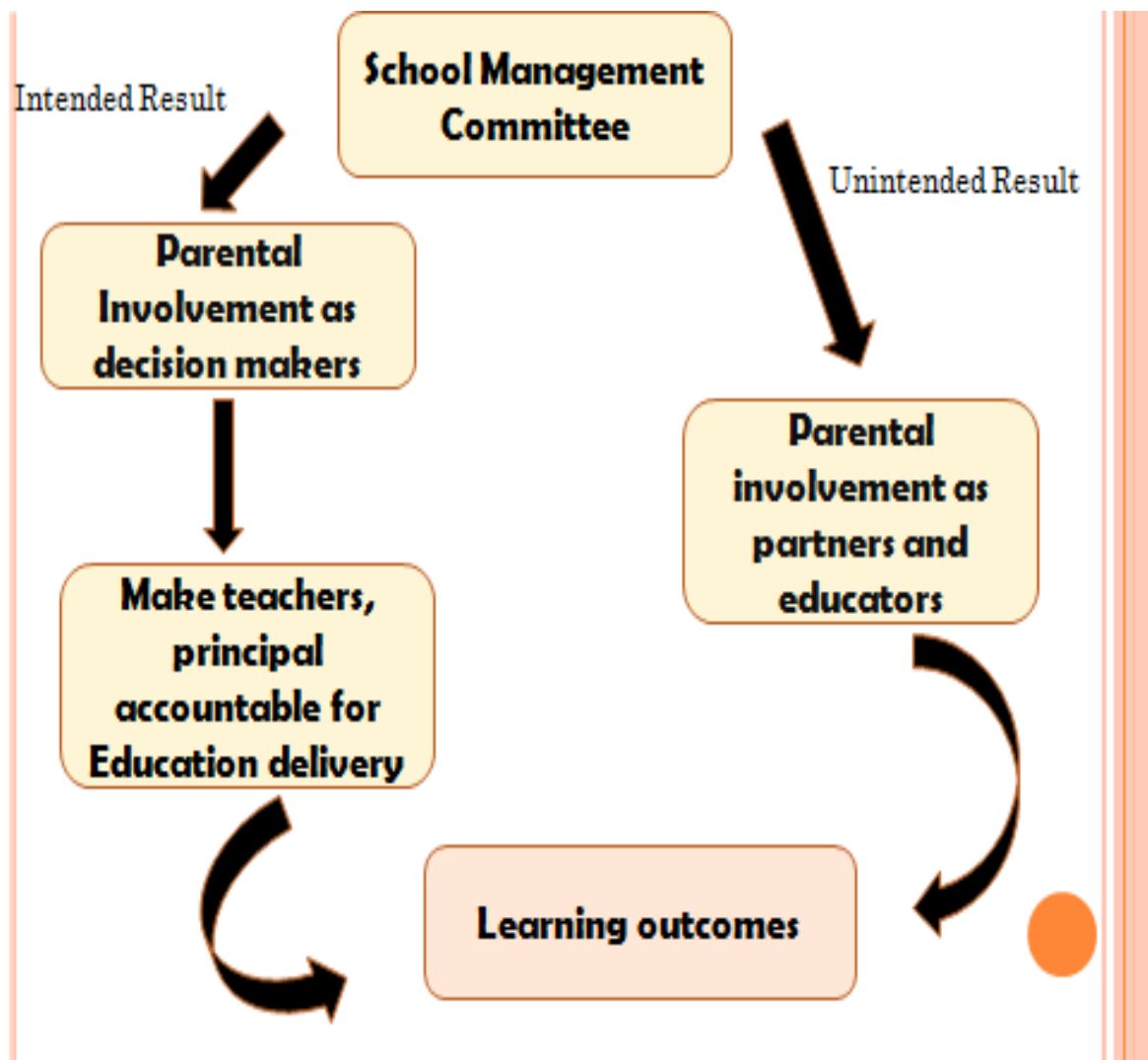
1. Monitor the working of the school.
2. Prepare and recommend school development plan.
3. Monitor the utilization of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority or any other source.
4. Perform such functions as may be prescribed.

The School Development Plan shall be a three year plan comprising three annual sub plans. The School Development Plan, shall contain the following details –

- a. Estimates of class-wise enrolment for each year;
- b. Requirement, over the three year period, of the number of additional teachers, including Head Teachers, subject teachers and part time teachers
- c. Physical requirement of additional infrastructure and equipments over the three year period,
- d. Additional financial requirement over the three year period, year-wise, in respect of b.
- e. Additional requirement for providing special training facility specified in section 4, entitlements of children such as free text books and uniforms, and any other additional financial requirement for fulfilling the responsibilities of the school under the Act.

Parental involvement can be of three types: Parents as educators, parents as partners and parents as decision-makers. The RTE Act envisions parents to get involved as decision-makers with an objective to make teachers and principal more accountable for education delivery which in-turn would lead towards the better learning outcomes of students. If parents become actively involved as decision-makers in school, then they would also be encouraged to get involved as educators. This would further enhance the learning outcomes of students. The following figure simplifies this point.

4 http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/free_and_compulsory09.pdf



To put it even more simply, since SMC is indirectly related to the better learning outcomes of students, I wanted to research on whether School Management Committees (SMC) are working properly or not.

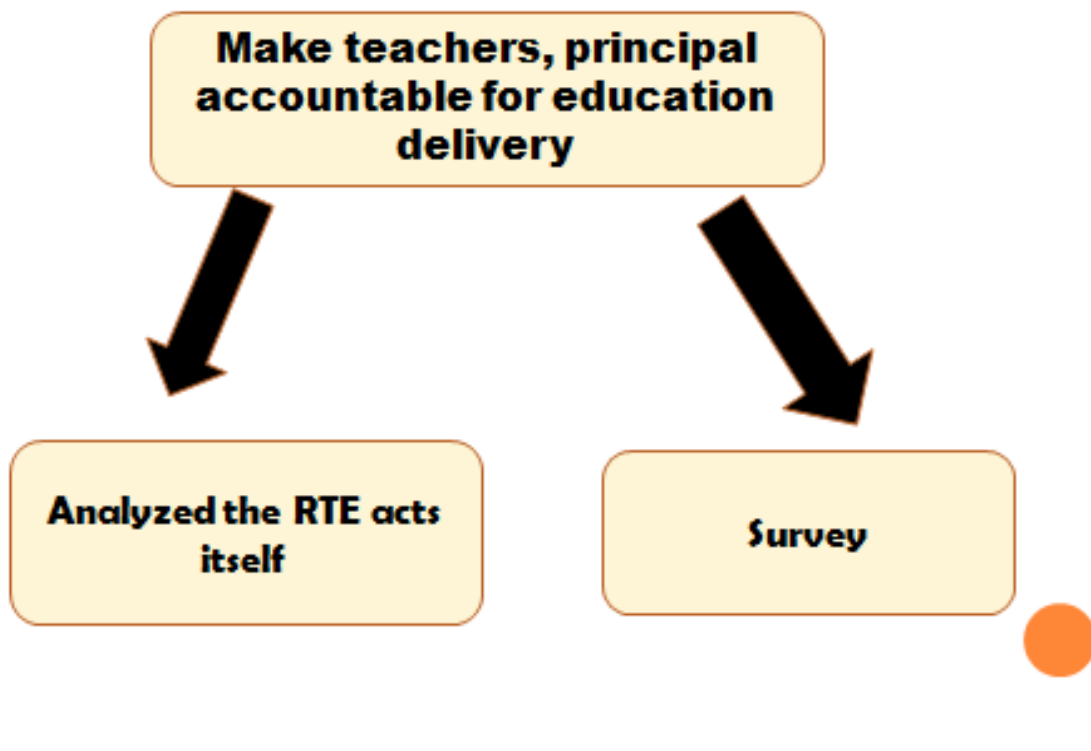
My research question is ‘How functional are School Management Committees (SMCs) in the present context?’

B. Methodology

The methodology of my research was divided into two parts:

1. Analyzing the RTE Act
2. Carrying out the survey

Methodology:



1. Analyzing the RTE (Right to Compulsory and Free Education) Act
 - i. The Act itself is really vague. It lists down what School Management Committees (SMC) should do but it doesn't clarify the point.
For instance: a. Monitor the working of the school.
 - What does monitor mean? What kind of working should be monitored?
How to monitor the working of the school?
 - ii. The defined rules are somewhat clear but it consist words like 'monitor', 'ensure' and 'bring to notice' which are rather weak and vague works.
For instance:
 - a. **Monitor** that teachers are not burdened with non academic duties other than those specified in section 27;

- b. **Ensure** the enrolment and continued attendance of all the children from the neighbourhood in the school;
- c. **Bring to the notice** of the local authority any deviation from the rights of the child, in particular mental and physical harassment of children, denial of admission, and timely provision of free entitlements as per section 3(2).
- iii. The rules don't point out anything about attendance of teachers in school. Because, it is a well-known fact that absenteeism of teachers is one of the most prominent problems in government schools.
- iv. The act doesn't give punitive power to the committee itself.

2. Carrying out the survey

I carried out the survey in Gurgaon district of the state Haryana. For the survey, I followed the following methods:

- a. I randomly selected seven primary schools also known as GPS (Government Primary School).
- b. From within the schools, I randomly selected School Management committee (SMC) members and other parents.
- c. I prepared questionnaires.
- d. I spoke to SMC members, other non-SMC parents and the head-teacher.
- e. I collected the required data.
- f. Finally, I recorded the data electronically and analyzed it.

(NOTE: For randomization, I used District Information for System Education's (DISE) randomization method.)

Questionnaires:

Initially, I had prepared 40 questions to be asked to each individual. However, since not everybody could answer all the questions, I put emphasis on 4 most simple and basic questions from which I could draw my conclusions.

1. Have you ever heard about SMC before? Do you know what an SMC is?
2. What is the frequency of the meeting of School Management Committee (SMC)?
3. Do you think there are some kinds of problems or other in the school? Can you point out few of them?
4. Are you aware of your child's academic progresses?

Results:

1. None of the 20 parents I interviewed knew about the term 'School Management Committee' or 'Vidhyalaya Prabandhan Samiti' and weren't aware that such a committee even exists. Even the SMC members didn't know the fact.
 - I had a new and different experience in a school in Ghanghola village. An SMC member was called to be interviewed. I asked her if she knew what an SMC is; she replied no. I asked her if she is a part of some kind of committee in the school; again, she replied no. I inquired again "But there is your signature in that register where the details of SMC meetings are recorded?" She told me " No, I have never signed in any register. I didn't even know I was a member of something called SMC." I figured out that the signatures put there were fake ones.

2. The responses given by head-teachers differed from the responses of parents. Actually, 0 out of 20 parents could specify when the last meeting was held. Even the SMC members couldn't tell how often the meetings happen.
 - I went to another school to interview an SMC member. I asked her if she could tell me about the meetings – how often meeting takes place and whether she attends the meetings or not. She replied that meetings happen very rarely. And, she is called to school, if she has to put her signatures in some kind of papers. She also added that when she asks for the purpose, she doesn't get any details.
3. Only 2 out of 20 parents could tell the most basic and conspicuous problems the school was facing- lack of manpower i.e. teachers or lack of infrastructures like desks and benches. Others couldn't even specify any.
(Note: To all the schools I went to, the number of teacher to students' ratio wasn't 1:30. And, except for two schools, students were sitting on the floor in all other schools.)
4. Only 6 out of 20 parents could clearly tell how their child was doing in the studies.

Observations:

1. The SMC members weren't finalized by calling up a general meeting.
2. The local people aren't informed about what an SMC is.
3. The SMC members aren't aware about what their roles and responsibilities are.
4. No training has been provided to SMC members in any of the schools.
5. The School Development Plan hasn't been prepared in any of the schools. Even the head-teachers aren't aware about what the School Development Plan should contain.
6. Out of the 7 schools, I could see the students studying in 2 schools only.
7. Teachers weren't teaching the students. The students were roaming everywhere.

Conclusions:

SMCs aren't functional at all. SMC has become more of a formality than practicality. Yes, it does exist on paper but in reality, it is nearly non-existent.

What can be done then?

- If SMC is to work according to what government has envisioned it to, then definitely the most crucial thing that is missing is awareness. If people aren't even aware about what their responsibilities are, then how can they be expected to work the way they are supposed to? School Management Committee should be so talked about that it becomes as well known a fact as India has 28 states.
- Also, the committee should be given more authority. It shouldn't only be expected to highlight problems but rather, it should be given more power to solve it. For instance, if a school is lacking enough teachers then it should be given power to hire teachers according to the need. If somebody is not sending his/her child to school then it shouldn't only be expected to report to higher offices, but rather it should be allowed to do something against it. If a teacher is being absent for long exceeding his allowed period of leave, School Management Committee should have the power to do something against it. Then, I believe members will be more serious and more responsible for the running of the schools.

Limitations and Challenges

1. Time Constraints: This study was targeted to be finished within a short period of time. So, I wasn't able to give reasonable period of time to one particular school.
2. Small Sample: Because of the time constraints, I had to limit the number of schools to carry out the survey.

3. Timing: The survey was conducted when new session was just being started in the schools. So, may be the observations were affected.
4. Unavailability of interviewees at the required time

Annexure- Complete Questionnaire

S.N	Questions	Answers
1.	In which class does your child/ward study?	
2.	What is the name of your child's class-teacher?	
3.	Have you ever met the class teacher before?	a. YES b. NO
4.	Have you ever talked to the class-teacher about your child?	a. YES - b. NO
5.	Are you aware of your child's academic progresses?	a. YES (Good at- (Weak at- b. NO
6.	Why did you choose this school for your child's education?(Tick all that apply)	a. School nearest to home b. It is a good school compared to others in the locality c. Others please specify -----
7.	Do you like the way the school is being run?	a. YES b. NO
8.	What is the best thing about the school?	
10.	What is the thing that you don't like about the school?	
	All parents	
11.	Do both parents work?	a. YES b. NO
12.	Can you please tell me about your work schedule? / From what time in the morning to what time in the evening do you work? In a week, how many days do you work?	-- --
13.	Do you monitor if your child has completed	a. YES – b. NO (Why not?) --

	his homework or not in the evening?	
	All parents	
14.	Have you ever heard about SMC? Do you know what an SMC is?	a. YES – b. NO --
15.	How did you come to know about SMC?	
16.	Can you please tell me some of the works that it is doing now?	a. b. c. d.
17.	Do you know what exactly it is supposed to do?	a. b. c. d.
18.	Do you think parents can do something in improving the functioning of the school?	a. b. c. d.
	NON-SMC	
19.	If given a chance, would you become a member of SMC? Why?	a. YES – b. NO—
	SMC	
20.	How did you become a member?	a. Elected by the head teacher b. Elected by parents through meeting c. Others please specify- -----

S.N	Questions	Answers
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21.	When was SMC constituted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 2 years ago b. 1 year ago c. 6 months ago d. Others Please specify: ----- -----
b.	Has it been re-constituted yet?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. YES b. NO
c.	Who provides the structure for SMC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. State Government b. Local Government c. Headmaster d. Others Please specify: ----- -----
d.	When was the last meeting held?(Specify date)	
e.	What is the frequency of the meeting?	
f.	Who calls up for the meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chairperson b. Vice-Chairperson c. Headmaster d. Others Please specify: ----- -----
g.	How many members were present in the last meeting?	
h.	What do you think are the major issues in your school?(Enlist any three.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. b. c.
i.	Did you raise the issues in the meeting?(if no, proceed to k)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. YES b. NO

j.	Did you come up with any solutions?	a. YES— b. NO--
k.	Who provides the details of the meetings?	
l.	Who writes the proceedings of the meetings?	
m.	What agendas did you discuss?	Academics: Non-academics:
n.	Who decides the agenda of the meeting?	
o.	What roles do you have as a member of the SMC?	
p.	Do you know what a School Development plan is?	
q.	Has it been formulated?	a. Yes b. No --- Why hasn't it yet?

r.	Do you know what is it supposed to contain?(Enlist any five of them)	a. b. c. d. e.
s.	When did you last receive your funds?	
t.	Has all the funds been spent yet?	
u.	Where are the funds been spent?	
v.	In your opinion, what can be done for the proper functioning of the school?	
w.	In your opinion what should be done to strengthen SMC?	