

Village Education Committees in Uttar Pradesh: Structure and Member Profile

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Abstract

Decentralised management of education through community participation and community mobilisation is conceived to be essential for successful and effective management of elementary education. Policy of decentralisation in India at the grass-root level has institutionally metamorphosed in the formation of Village Education Committees (VEC). Structure of VEC and profile of its members give a glimpse of the nature and level of community participation. Therefore, every state government including UP (Uttar Pradesh) has prescribed the structure of VEC through GO/ordinance/statutes. This study presents the structure of VEC and the profile of its members in UP. In UP, at some places VECs are formed against the norms. Low education of the members of VEC, no timely reorganisation of VEC and absence of VEC members' wards from VEC managed school denotes passive or no participation of community in educational management.

Management is an important component of all effectively running systems and this is true for education system also. The components of education system i.e., teachers, curriculum, methods, physical resources etc. become ineffective, if not managed properly. Increased demand of quality education from all walks of society, increasing size of school education and focus on

demand of democratic participation in public delivery system have enforced the policy makers of the country to decentralize the management of education. Although decentralisation has been an inherent part of the culture of our nation, the genesis of the system of decentralised management of present time can be traced from the 73rd and 74th Constitutional

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Amendment 1992, National Policy on Education 1986 (as modified in 1992) and the recommendations of CABE Committee on Decentralised Management of Education (1993). Owing to the aforesaid modifications mentioned in the different national policies, a three tier system of decentralised management of education, parallel to the system of Panchayati Raj Institutions has been evolved throughout the country and responsibilities of *Education for All* have been devolved to the bodies formed at district, block (intermediate) and village levels. Different states of India have legislated different structures for Village Education Committees (VECs) and assigned different roles. This paper delineates the structure of VECs under the light of rules and regulations formed by the Government of Uttar Pradesh (2000, 2006).

Government of Uttar Pradesh, under Basic Education Ordinance 1972 (as amended in 2000), has prescribed the structure of the Village Education Committees in each Gram Panchayat of the State as follows:-

Chairperson	- Gram Pradhan (village head)
Secretary	- School Principal (service senior)
Members	- Three parents nominated by Asst. BSA. (Participation of one woman and one SC candidate is mandatory among guardian members) (Gov. of U.P. 2006). [Active Women Self Help Groups should be invited to

participate in the VEC activities. (Banerjee, A., Duflo, Glennerster and Khemani, 2006)]

This paper is based on a study conducted to see the observance of stated regulations as well as to know the innovations, if any, in the formation and organisation of the village education committees in Uttar Pradesh. The questions which the study aimed to answer were:

- Are there only five members in the VECs or some volunteers, self-help groups, women groups are also included?
- What is the demographic structure of the VEC? (Here demographic structure refers to caste, sex, tenure, age, profession, and educational qualification of the members.)
- How many children are there in the families of the VEC members?
- Do all children/wards of the members of VECs study in the schools managed by VECs?

Objectives of the Study

1. To know the structure of the VECs, formed under the Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Ordinance 1972 (as amended in 2000) with reference to the following demographic variables:
 - Caste and religion based participation of members.
 - Gender based participation.
 - Tenure of the members.
 - Educational levels of the members.
 - Professions of the members.
 - Age groups of the members.

- School types in which the children/wards of the families of the members of VEC study.

Justification of the above mentioned variables included in the study:

- **Caste:** Government of U.P. had regulated the membership of one person from SC/ST caste among three guardian members of the VEC.
- **Gender:** Government of U.P. had mandated the participation of one woman among three guardian members of the VEC.
- **Tenure** of the members of VEC was included to know the experiences of the members and reorganisation of VECs.
- **Educational level** of the members became important because they were the members of such a committee which was assigned administrative, academic and financial management of school in their respective villages.
- **Profession** of the members was studied to know the participation of the people of different professions.
- **Age** became a variable of the study to know the participation of the person of different age groups.
- **School type,** in which the children/wards of the family of the members were studying, was very important as it reflects the interest of the people towards school and quality of education in the schools of a Gram Panchayat (one village or cluster of two to five villages).

Method

In accordance with the objectives of the study, *Survey* method was used to collect the relevant data.

Tool

Interview schedules (one for Chairpersons and Secretaries of VECs and one for Members of VECs) were used to get the information about the VECs.

Structure of the Block

In this study 20 VECs of one Block of District Ramabai Nagar (earlier Kanpur Dehat) in Uttar Pradesh was studied. Structure of the block was as following:

- Block – 01 (Sandalpur)
- Clusters – 10
- Gram Panchayats (G P) – 53
- VECs – 53 (*According to rule*) (*In study of 20 GP 28 VEC were found*)
- Primary schools – 109 (in 2009)
- Upper Primary schools – 61 (in 2009)
- Population – 3.5 lakh (approx., Census 2001)

Sampling

One block of district Ramabai Nagar of Uttar Pradesh was selected to know the structures of the VECs, hence purposive sampling technique was used. There were ten clusters in this block where Cluster Resource Centres (*Nyay Panchayat Sansadhan Kendra*) were established and permanent officers known as NPRC Coordinators (*Nyay Panchayat Resource Centre Coordinators/NPRCC*) were appointed. The structure of a VEC could be affected by Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) and Block Resource Centre (BRC), therefore beginning with the selection

of one block as the case, all 10 CRCs/ NPRCs had been included and two Gram Panchayats from each CRC were selected to study the structure of VECs therein. Thus, this study presents the structure of the VECs in 20 Gram Panchayats of Block Sandalpur, Ramabai Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

Sample size

Twenty Gram Panchayats were selected from all ten clusters of the block, i.e., two from each CRC. Within those 20 Gram Panchayats there were 28 VECs. As there should be one VEC in a Gram Panchayat, 20 VECs were selected in which service wise senior school principals were secretaries, which were considered as main VECs of Gram Panchayat by principals, school teachers, Pradhans (village heads) and Block Resource Centre (BRC) coordinator. In those 20 VECs there were 20 presidents, 20 secretaries and 60 guardian members. Data were collected from 20 presidents and 20 secretaries. Only two members from each VEC were selected for interviews. Thus sample size contained 80 respondents.

Results

Structure

As per the government order there should be one VEC in each Gram

Panchayat, members of which should be selected through an open forum or meeting of the Gram Panchayat. But such type of member selection process was reported nowhere by the members of VECs. During this survey, variations were found against the recommendation of 'One VEC one Gram Panchayat'. Table No.1 shows that there are variations from one VEC in one Gram Panchayat to four VECs in one Gram Panchayat. At some places it was only one VEC in a Gram Panchayat of three to five villages and at some other places there were as many VECs as the number of schools in one Gram Panchayat. Two VECs were also found in one single village, one for each school in the village. Thus there was no uniformity in the organisation of the VECs in the Block. Block Resource Centre (BRC) coordinators and a few principals of the schools told that when it came to official representation of the VEC, they consider the VEC of that village or school (if formed per school) in which service-wise senior principal of school would be the secretary. Therefore in this research, VECs which were recognised by the BRC as *main* were taken into account, thus only 20 VECs, one from each Gram Panchayats were selected.

Table 1
Numbers of VECs in a Gram Panchayat

No. of Gram Panchayats	No. of Consisting Villages	No. of VECs	No. of Villages representing in VEC
1	4	1	Members from two villages.
2	3	1	One member from each village.
3	1	1	_____

4	1	1	_____
5	1	1	_____
6	3	2	Main VEC representing two villages. One village has separate VEC.
7	2	2	_____
8	4	1	Members from two villages only.
9	2	1	All Members from one village only.
10	2	1	All members from one village only.
11	3	2	One village has no separate VEC and does not have a representative member in VECs of other village.
12	2	2	_____
13	3	1	One member from each village.
14	3	4	Each school has separate VEC.
15	1	2	Members are same. Secretary different. No representation of SC member.
16	3	1	All Members from one village only.
17	3	1	All Members from one village only.
18	1	1	One member was Aganwadi worker.
19	4	1	All members from one village.
20	5	1	Members from two villages.

In 6 out of 20 Gram Panchayats rule of 'one VEC One Gram Panchayat' was not followed. In one gram panchayat neither the name of the VEC members were written on the wall of the schools (as required) nor the register was maintained by the Secretary of the VEC. This Gram Panchayat consisted of three villages, two large villages and one small village, which had common VEC before two years. After that, no VEC was formulated by the new secretary who joined the upper primary school. Researcher contacted the Secretary of VEC of that time (secretary before two

years and now principal of primary school) and got the name of members during the tenure. Researcher found only one member of VEC living in that village and got the information about the VEC's activities during tenure. In the small village, principal of primary school had formed a separate VEC. In the case of non availability of the VEC members in the schools (villages) where senior principals were posted, researcher had to contact one member of VEC in that small village and obtain the data of VEC in that Gram Panchayat.

Chairpersons of VECs

Chairperson or president of Village Education Committee is involuntarily selected because of the government regulation. Gram Pradhan (Village Head) is presiding over the VEC in each village. In this study, information about 20 Village Heads were collected through the direct interview schedule. But it is astonishing to find that where there are female village-heads, they do not perform the tasks of the village head due to the local culture and male dominance. Some facts about presidents of the VECs are as follows:

Out of 20 village heads nine were male (all farmers/related to agricultural works) and eleven were females (all housewives), in which one male and one female village heads were not living in their respective villages (both were living in cities, about 100 km away) all their duties were performed by their representatives in the villages.

Caste and Religion

Study of castes of the members of the VECs was important because of two reasons:

- (i) Policy mandates the membership of one person from SC/ST community among three guardian members.
- (ii) To know the participation of different communities in the

village education, as in that particular area, village streets were divided on the basis of different sub-communities, i.e., caste and religion.

Caste-based report of chairman and secretary is not of much importance because they are selected involuntarily, so we come directly to the caste of guardian members. Besides caste, religion of the members was also recorded as there was a minority group in the area. Thus four types of categories were made deliberately to represent all types of sub-communities in the area, i.e., General, OBC, SC and Muslim (minority). Scheduled Tribes and other religious communities were not living in the block of the study.

- 19 out of 20 selected Gram Panchayat people from SC communities had representatives in the VECs. In one Gram Panchayat all the three members of VEC were from general caste.
- At one place, the sweeper of the school (one of the school staff) was the member representative of SC community in the VEC.
- In two Gram Panchayats two SC members were nominated.
- In one Gram Panchayat two women, both from SC community were members of VEC.
- In two Gram Panchayats one member was representing both SC community as well as females.

Table 2

Caste and Religion based numbers of members interviewed

<i>General</i>	<i>OBC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>Minority (Muslims)</i>	<i>Total</i>
11	11	14	4	40

Gender: The regulation under which VECs were formed had mandated the participation of one female guardian member among the three guardian members. It was found during the survey that at least one woman was nominated in each VEC of the block. It was also observed that in one Gram Panchayat two female members were nominated. Most of the female members were unaware or less aware about the school activities in comparison to their male counterparts. Some variations in the type of the nomination/representation here which are as follows:

- In one VEC, *Aganwadi* (ECCE) worker (who was one among the school staff, as *Aganwadi* centre was established in Primary school)

was the representative of female guardian member in the VEC.

- In two Gram Panchayats female members of VECs were residing out of their villages.
- In another case VEC was not formulated for last two years, so no female member of VEC resided in those three villages (constituting one Gram Panchayat).
- A female member of VEC said that she had never visited school, so did not know whether she was member of VEC at present or not.
- One female member of VEC explicitly said that she did not know about the members who attended the meetings of VEC held in the school premises, as her husband used to represent her in meetings.

Table 3
Gender of the VEC members

<i>President of VEC</i>		<i>Secretary</i>		<i>Members Interviewed</i>	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
09	11	17	3	26	14
20		20		40	

Tenure of VEC members

When the data was collected for this study, the Gram Panchayats were finishing their five-year tenure. In this area, VECs were formed with the formation of the Gram Panchayats. Most of the chairpersons and members of the VEC were experienced, as they were members for the last five years. Tenure of the secretaries depended on their seniority among the school principals of the Gram Panchayats.

- One Village Head was the chairperson of the VEC for the last 10 years and remaining 19 village heads were working as chairpersons of VECs for the last five years.
- Amongst 40 guardian members of the VEC, one member was holding the post for the last 15 years, six members were holding the post in VECs for the last 10 years, two were members for the last eight years and two were holding the

post for the last seven years. These facts show that at many places VECs were not reconstituted from time to time.

- 23 guardian members were holding the post of VECs for the last five years. Remaining six were members of VEC from one to four years.

Educational levels of VEC Personnel

It was essential to know the educational level of the persons who were planning and managing

the education for the whole Gram Panchayat (1-5 villages). In this study, education level was categorised into four main categories i.e., Illiterate, educated upto elementary, secondary and graduation and above. Here, educational qualification of president of VEC and other two members needs to be mentioned. Secretaries of VECs and Principals of schools are qualified, therefore their educational qualification need not be discussed.

Table 4
Educational levels of Chairpersons and Guardian members of VECs

<i>Educational Levels of VEC personnel↓</i>	<i>Illiterate</i>	<i>Upto Elementary level</i>	<i>Upto Secondary level</i>	<i>Upto Graduation and Above</i>	<i>Total</i>
Chairpersons	3	5	6	6	20
Guardian Members	7	9	21	3	40
Total	10	14	27	9	60

Table 4 indicates that :

- Three out of 20 (15 per cent) chairpersons and 7 out of 40 (17.5 per cent) guardian members were illiterate.
- Five (25 per cent) chairpersons and nine (22.5 per cent) guardian members were having education up to elementary level. In a similar study conducted in 1998-99 in Haryana, all VEC members were reported to be formally educated up to secondary level and above (Menon, 1998). It is also true that members of low educational level in such type of institutions do not have their say in the meetings and

are not able to raise their issues, unless they are properly oriented and trained for their duties (Varghese and Zaidi, 1999).

- Only six (30 per cent) chairpersons and three (7.5 per cent) members were having educational qualification up to graduation and above level.

Under U.P. government rules, Panchayat Head must be the chairman of VEC thus they were selected involuntarily. But in case of educational level of guardian members, it is the Assistant Basic Shiksha Adhikari (ABSA) who nominates and the secretary of VEC suggests the names

of the members. They have the right to select highly educated guardian members but they do not do it in most of the cases. It cannot be said that the area concerned does not have higher education facilities. It has graduates in villages because this district has about 20 Degree colleges including one which has completed four decades. Many in these villages have attended and are attending degree colleges in the nearby districts i.e., Aurraiya (16 K.M. from the block centre) and Kanpur Nagar (at a distance about 80 K.M.).

Profession of the members

Professions of members of VEC were divided into following categories:

1. Agricultural works

20 members (50 per cent) out of 40 were engaged in agriculture.

2. Laborer

Seven members (17.5 per cent) were labourers by professions

3. Teacher

Two members (5 per cent) were teachers, (one was in private school and one has retired as principal from a government primary school).

4. Self-employed

Six out of 40 members (15 per cent) were self employed (i.e. shopkeeper, taxi driver etc).

5. Housewife

Five guardian members (12.5%) were housewives. Nine *chairpersons* (all males) were involved in agricultural works and 11 *chairpersons* (all females) were housewives.

Age of the Members of VECs

In the block of the study a variation had been found regarding the age of the members of VEC which ranges from 25 years to 75 years. Overall view of the block (Table 5) shows that most of the members of the VECs were middle aged.

Table 5
Age of the members of the VECs

<i>Age group in years</i>	25-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75
No. of members	14 (35%)	15(37.5%)	8(20%)	2(5%)	1(2.5%)

Children/wards in the families of the members of VEC and details of their education:

In this study, members of VECs were asked to report the details of children in their families between six and fourteen years of age and the children studying in Class I to Class VIII. As joint families existed in the area of study the term 'children in the family'

was used. The term connotes members' sons, daughters and children of their relatives (brother, sister etc.), whose education is guarded by them (members of VECs).

Schooling of chairperson's children/wards

Out of 20 village heads (VHs) 19 have children belonging to six to

fourteen (6-14) age group. Out of 19 VHs who have school-going children only four were sending their wards to Government school, one VH has sent his children in both type of schools and fourteen VHs were sending their wards to private schools. Among the school going children from the families of village heads, some are commuting a long distance for education, while the government is providing school within the range of one kilometre. Only the wards of six VHs were studying in their own villages, three VHs' wards were commuting 2-4 km daily and four VHs' wards were commuting 10-16 km daily. While six VH's wards were studying 40-100 km away from their homes. Most of these children commuted in the buses sent by private English medium schools situated in the nearby towns.

Schooling of children of VEC Secretaries and their school types:

In this study, data related to the schooling of children of secretaries of VECs were collected from twenty Gram Panchayats.

- Eight VEC secretaries belonged to general caste. Three had no school going child in their families. Remaining five send their wards to private schools. Most of those children were commuting 10 to 20 km daily.
- Three VEC Secretaries belonged to OBC caste group. Among them one had no school going child in her family. One had his wards studying in private school. Another member reported sending his/her ward to government school was of 59 years old.
- Six VEC secretaries belonged to the SC caste. One had no ward in the family, four reported that their wards were in government schools and one had wards in both type of schools. (Ages of the secretaries who had children in their families ranged between 42 and 61. Age distribution shows that it is possible that secretaries might have informed about the children of their relatives not about their own sons and daughters.)
- Three VEC secretaries were from minority group (Muslim). Two had no wards in their families and one had nine wards of school going age in his family. All his wards were attending private schools.

Guardian-members' children

Among 40 guardian members, two had no children. Remaining 38 members had children of 6-14 years age group in their families:

1. Six members had one child of 6-14 years age group in their families.
 - Five were sending their wards to Government school and
 - One was sending his ward to private school.
2. Thirteen members were having two children in their family.
 - Nine members' wards were in government schools.
 - One member got his ward enrolled in private school at the distance of 3 km.
 - Three members of VECs were sending their wards to both type of schools (government and private). Out of these three members, two had one girl

and one boy in their families. Boys were going to private schools and girls were going to government schools.

3. Ten members of VECs had three children in their families:

- Four members had their wards in government schools.
- Three had their wards in private school.
- Three members' wards were going to both types of schools. Among these three members, two were having one boy and two girls. Boys of both members were attending private school. One was sending girls to government schools and other was sending them to both types of schools. One ward of these members was commuting 15 km daily.

Four members had four children of school-going age in their families. One was sending all his wards to government run school and three were sending their wards to both types of schools. Among the members who were using both types of schools for educating their children, two were having one girl child. One of the member's girl child was attending private school and other was attending government school. School distance of these four members wards were 0, 20, 50 and 2 km respectively.

Three members were having five school-going children in their families. Two were sending all of them to government schools and one was sending children to both types of schools.

One member, having six children, was sending them to both types of schools. All three boys were in private schools and girls were in both types of schools.

One VEC member had nine children in his family, all three girls were attending government school and boys were attending both types of schools.

Tenure of the members and school type of children

- One person was a member of VEC since last 15 years but all his wards were attending private school.
- One person was guardian member of VEC since last ten years but his wards were not attending VEC-managed government schools.
- Three members were members of VEC since last five years but all their wards were attending private schools.

Remaining 35 members were sending their wards to government schools or to both types of schools. Five members who were not sending their wards to government schools (VEC managed schools) were members of VECs against the government directions.

Caste and religion of the members and school types of their children

- There were 11 general caste members, 6 out of these 11 got their wards enrolled in government schools, one in private school and four in both types of schools. Among four members who sent their wards to both types of schools, first had one boy in private school and one

girl in government school, second member had one boy in private school and two girls in government school, third member of VEC had three boys in both types of schools and fourth member had four girls in both types of schools.

- There were 11 VEC members belonging to OBC group. Seven members had their wards in government schools, one member had her wards in private schools and three members had their wards in both types of schools. Among three members who had their wards in both type of schools, first member had one boy in private school and two girls in both types of schools; second member had one boy in private school and one girl in government school and third member had three boys in both types of schools and one girl in private school.
- Fourteen members belonged to SC community. One member had no children. Seven members had their children in government schools. Two members had their wards in private schools and four members had their wards in both types of schools. The members who had their children in both types of schools, first had three boys in both types of schools and one girl in government school; second had four boys in both types of schools

and one girl in private school; third member's three boys were attending private schools and three girls were attending government schools and fourth member had six boys in both types of schools and three girls in government schools.

- Four members belonged to Muslim community. Out of four only three had school going children, first member's ward was in government school, second member's ward was in private school and third member's wards (two boys) were in both types of schools.

Thus the caste of the members does not seem to affect the members of VECs for their children. But the gender of the wards seems to be an affecting factor in the choice of the schools of guardians, as many of the guardian members had chosen government schools for their girls and private schools for their boys.

Overall five VEC guardian members out of forty interviewed in the block had no child attending the government school managed by Village Education Committees. While under the government rules and regulations three guardian members of VEC must be the guardians of children studying in the school. (U.P. 2000 as cited in U.P.2006)

To conclude, it can be said that rules and regulations, under which VECs were formed in Uttar Pradesh, were not observed strictly. There was

Table 7

School type of children of Guardian Members of VECs

<i>Government School</i>	<i>Private School</i>	<i>Both types of schools</i>	<i>No child in Family</i>	<i>Total</i>
21	5	12	2	40

no unanimity in the structures of VECs. Ordinance says one VEC in one Gram Panchayat, but the VECs were formed in different ways, i.e., Gram Panchayat wise, village wise and school-wise. Local needs were not taken into account during the formation of VECs. Also, general meetings of Gram Panchayat or meetings of all guardians of school children were not conducted for the formation of VECs. Some members did not know that they were still members of VEC (as also found by Banerjee, Banerji, Duflo, Glennerster and Khemani, 2006 in a study conducted in Jaunpur district, U.P.). Consequently local educational needs were not fulfilled in the case of building construction, maintenance, and enrolment. VECs were not revived annually or time to time. A few persons were members of VECs whose children were not attending the school managed by VECs. No volunteer or member of women self-help groups were included beyond mandated five member structure. There was also variation in the caste-based participation of the members. In one VEC no candidate of SC community was included which was against the norms. Most of the children

from the families of president and secretaries and members of VECs were not attending the schools managed by VECs which shows that the members of VECs were not interested in the good management of schools or believe that these government schools are not providing proper educational facilities. In four or five cases members of VECs were sending their boys to private schools and girls to government schools. Only in one case a girl was studying in private school and boys were going to both types of schools. Children studying in lower classes were attending schools in their own villages and children of upper classes were going to schools (private or government) in other villages which are thought to be better by their guardians. Affluent people of the block were sending all their wards (of all classes) to private schools which were providing school buses. Therefore, we cannot hope to seek the favour of whole village community for better management of the government schools. The concept of decentralisation through community participation still needs more efforts and voluntary involvement of the people.

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