

Teachers' Perceptions about Community Participation on School-Based Management in Meghalaya State

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Abstract

The study presents teachers' perceptions about community participation in school-based management practices in elementary schools as envisaged under RTE Act 2009. The research was conducted in a tribal concentrated rural area of Meghalaya State. The study took an evaluative approach, so data were gathered through a schedule for teachers covering Act provisions, as well as focus group discussions with stakeholders. The sample of data sources for gathering information were teacher's consisting of head-teachers, primary teachers, and upper primary teachers. The quantitative information was analysed and expressed in percentages and statistical figures. The qualitative information was collected through semi-structured data items from teachers, and an open coding method was applied to analyse the same. The results of a study on teachers' perceptions of community participation concluded with a positive and motivating picture. However, to attain the goals of the Act, more stringent measures should be taken by the State, especially in empowering the community through SMC members to implement various academic and non-academic programmes in the elementary schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Community participation was essential in promoting school education at the grassroots level in implementing public policies and programs. It aided in identifying local educational issues and developing strategies for resolving barriers that impede access, retention, and quality of school education. In the Dakar Framework for Action, a document that reaffirmed the goal of “Education for All”, the participating governments, including India, pledged to develop responsive, participatory, and accountable systems of educational governance and management. In this regard, the RTE Act 2009, as enacted by the Government of India (GOI) had stipulated that School Management Committees (SMCs) should:

- prepare and recommend the annual and three-year School Development Plans (SDPs), which addresses infrastructure; academic achievement, etc. These plans should collectively feed into creating an Annual Work Plan for every district;
- monitor the working of the school (mid-day meal, toilet facilities, teacher attendance, etc.); and
- monitor the utilisation of grants received from the appropriate government, local authority, or any other source.

In addition, GoI had recently released the National Education Policy-2020, and this policy had documented the increasing role of

SMCs on various issues, including:

- ensuring participation and learning through monitoring students’ attendance in school, tracking out-of-school children;
- involvement in setting up a school culture, which encourages excellence, curiosity, empathy and equity;
- sensitisation of SMCs to a caring and inclusive school culture on a continuing basis;
- endorsement by SMCs on periodic performance appraisal of teachers;
- efficient resourcing and effective governance through The School Complexes Management Committee (SCMC); and
- involvement in nurturing the culture of planning, both short and long-term ones, for the school includes human resources, learning resources, physical resources and infrastructure, improvement initiatives, financial resources and educational outcomes.

Therefore, an evaluative research approach was undertaken to determine the teachers’ perceptions about community participation in school-based management practises in implementing school programmes and challenges that confront the community. The study was also intended to find out whether there were differences between teachers’

perceptions according to the chosen data items, keeping in view the policies and programmes of the government.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional survey was conducted to explore the teachers' perception of community participation in Meghalaya State. The mixed analysis method, consisting of qualitative and quantitative data items having an evaluative approach and exploratory in nature, was used for this study, and the same has been illustrated in the succeeding section on data presentation and analysis (Kiral and Kiral, 2011).

Participants

The study sample comprised 75 teachers, comprising head teachers, primary teachers and upper primary teachers, were selected from 11 clusters in Bhoirymbong block of Ribhoi District. In addition, several focus group discussions were held with the stakeholders of the schools.

Data Collection, Tools and Statistical Methods

Data collection was initiated by approaching the Directorate of School Education, Meghalaya Government, and the data collection task was assigned to the Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCCs). Data items were developed for teachers' schedules based on the various provisions of the RTE Act 2009, and related literature review, which were

subjected to the experts' validation before they were exposed to the pilot testing for field trial, including checkpoints for group discussions. Subsequently, data was collected to assess teachers' perceptions about community participation. The same was subjected to the mixed method of data analysis for drawing inferences using the simple descriptive statistics method as suggested by Czaja and Blair (2005), Jick (1979), and others.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The teachers' schedule had data items pertaining to general information about the school and specific information about the contribution of the community, covering provisions of the RTE Act 2009. The schedule was further administered by the CRCCs from January 2020. The item-wise data presentation and analysis of the teachers' perception are presented in the succeeding sub-sections:

Orientation of Teachers About the Role and Functions of SMCs

Teachers are essential members of SMCs, and they should be extensively oriented about the role and functions of SMCs. Teachers reported that orientation programmes mainly focused on free and compulsory education for children, teachers' qualifications, school records' maintenance, and no-detention policy for children, the constitution of SMC, and roles and functions of SMC.

Getting Help from Community on CCE in schools

As per the head teachers, the poor contribution of the community was due to a lack of awareness about Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). The responding teachers informed us that if awareness was created among the community, then certainly the community should be helping the school in the implementation of CCE.

provided inputs about the support received from the community to achieve PTR as envisaged under RTE Act 2009. Based on the perception of teachers, it was inferred that PTR, as prescribed under statutory provisions, was followed in more than 60 per cent of the schools. The teachers reported that the main reason for non-compliance with PTR norms in the schools was due to rise in enrolment in recent years.

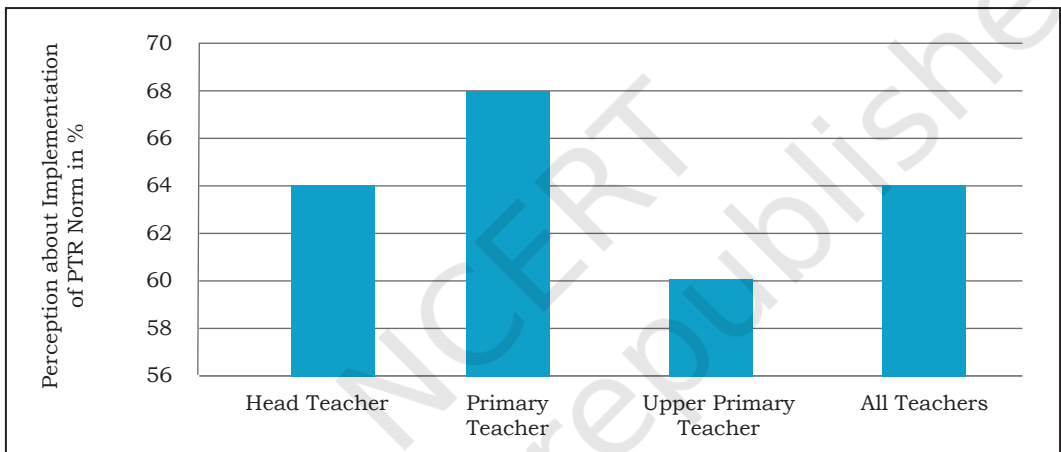


Figure 1: Teachers' perception about implementation of PTR norm in the schools

Implementation of PTR Norm and Community Support

Fig. 1 exhibits teachers' perceptions about the implementation of the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR). Nearly 64 per cent of the teachers perceived the implementation of PTR. Teacher-wise, perception of the implementation of PTR was reported as a maximum of 68 per cent by primary teachers, and a minimum of 60 per cent upper primary teachers followed by 64 per cent head teachers. Teachers also

Imposing Local Socio-cultural Specific Norms by Community

The impositions from the community on the children were reflected in the community's demands to teach the religious practices, cultural dance, traditional dresses, making historical instruments and use thereof, etc.

Nature of Contribution Received from Local Communities

The village council contributed to water facilities, dustbins, desks,

benches, furniture, and the facilitation of plantation drives. Youth Clubs, including NGOs, helped the schools provide cleanliness training, organised sports activities, participated in health and hygiene programmes and distributed medicines.

Teachers' Perception on SMC Meeting Details

The proceedings of the meeting were well recorded and maintained. Most of the decisions taken during meetings were implemented after being approved by the Chairperson of the SMC. The main discussion points as listed in the proceedings of 67 SMC meetings held in the schools for consideration of SMC were obtained and summarised hereunder:

- (a) Education: Promotional development of quality of education, consideration of dropouts, increase in school enrolment, attendance of children/teachers, discipline, academic curriculum/calendar, book bank, fixing examination and result dates, assessment of children and parents-teachers meeting.
- (b) School Staff and Accounts: Honorarium for teachers, funds for the school, the appointment of teachers and cook for the mid-day meals and other financial matters.
- (c) Infrastructure: Repairing of building/furniture, water facilities, toilets, electricity connection, boundary wall and development plans.

- (d) Co-curricular Activities: Sports activities, excursions, cultural programmes, fest and plantation drive.
- (e) Mid-Day Meal: Cooking and other related aspects.
- (f) Cleanliness and Hygiene: Cleanliness drives including toilets and hand washing station.
- (g) Health: Health check-up, distribution of medicines and vaccination.
- (h) Others: Formation of standing committees for addressing specific issues.

It was sought from the teachers to provide follow-up action from the last SMC meeting held, and a listing of at least two points from the proceeding of the meeting. Accordingly, the follow-up action points were reported about mid-day meals, cultural programmes, repairing of buildings, furniture, tree plantation, cleaning drive, attendance of teachers and children, and issues related to enrolment.

Constraints and Challenges in Constituting and Holding Regular Meetings of the SMC

The attendance of members during meetings of SMC was a challenge. One of the contributing factors to the low participation of parents in these meetings was time constraints due to their involvement in labour-intensive occupations like farming and a lack of awareness regarding

the role and function of SMC. The teachers acknowledged that the SMC was central to improving children's education.

revolves around the attendance of children (>84%) and teachers (>88%). At the same time, SMCs had the least attention towards enrolment of

Table 1: SMC contribution on key parameters of responsibilities as responded by the teachers (in %)

Key Parameters of Responsibilities	SMC Contribution on Responsibilities as Responded by the Teachers (in %)		
	Head Teacher	Primary Teacher	Upper Primary Teacher
Building	56	64	52
Accounts	44	40	68
School Development Plan	76	72	76
Enrolment of OoSC	44	56	36
Student Attendance	92	84	84
Teacher Attendance	92	88	88
Curriculum Completion	48	48	60

SMC Contribution on Responsibilities

The RTE Act 2009 has mandated several responsibilities to be undertaken by SMCs in the functioning of schools, such as school building, accounts, school development plans, enrolment of Out-of-School children, children and teachers' attendance, curriculum completion issues, etc.

Table 1 provides SMC's contribution to the functioning of schools, and it is that SMC's contribution to responsibilities

Out of School Children (OoSC), as responded by 45 per cent of the teachers; next in line was curriculum completion, as responded by 52 per cent of teachers, respectively. The contribution of SMCs to prepare school development plans was reported by more than 72 per cent of the teachers. Further, on accounts-related matters, the contribution of SMCs was reported on the lower side (nearly 44%, 40% and 68% by head teachers, primary and upper primary teachers, respectively).

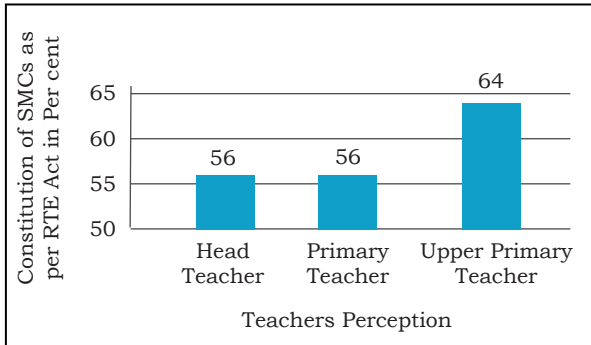


Figure 2: Teachers' perception on the constitution & gender-wise composition of SMCs as per RTE Act 2009

Gender-wise Composition of SMCs

Fig. 2 represents teachers' perception of the constitution; gender-wise composition of 64 SMCs, and it is evident that the constitution of SMCs as per statutory norms was perceived by 56 per cent head teachers, 56 per cent primary teachers and 64 per cent upper primary teachers, respectively, thereby indicating that constitution of existing SMCs was not as per norms in nearly 40 per cent of schools because of the responding teachers, although more than 10 years had already passed on the enactment of RTE Act 2009. In addition, information on the gender-wise composition of SMCs for 31 primary and 33 upper primary schools as provided by the teachers revealed that:

- the existing SMC was formed as per the specified number of 9 members. Nearly 52 per cent of

primary schools constituted the SMCs with 9 members. Similarly, 73 per cent of the upper primary schools had formed SMCs with 11 members, as specified in the case of upper primary schools under relevant norms.

- female participation as SMC members was reported at more than 50 per cent in nearly 32 per cent of the existing SMCs in the primary schools. In contrast, the upper primary schools' female participation as SMC members was around 9 per cent.
- out of 31 primary schools, only two had established existing SMCs with 50 per cent or more parents as members. However, the Meghalaya RTE Model Rule 13(2) states explicitly that 75 per cent of the strength of the SMC should be from amongst parents or guardians of the children. In the case of upper primary schools, none of the 33 upper primary schools had achieved this target. In this way, the existing SMC in all primary and upper primary schools was not meeting the requirements of the RTE Act 2009 and rules thereon as mandated by the Meghalaya government.

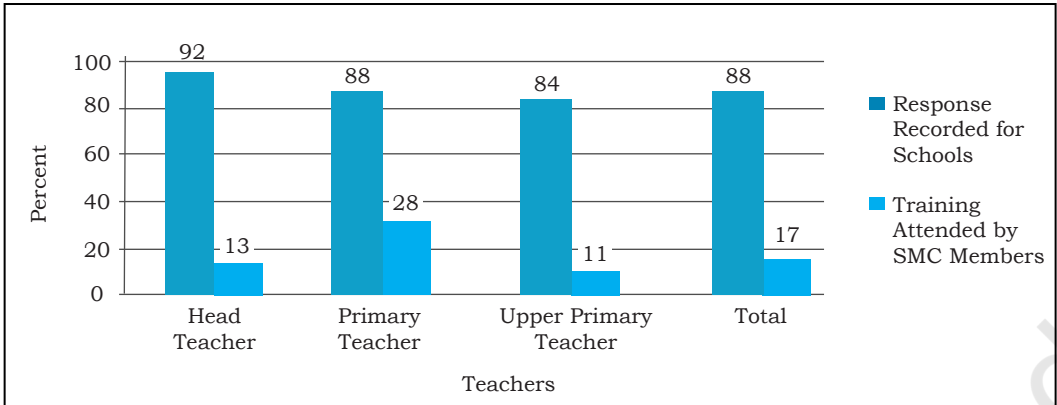


Figure 3: Response recorded for schools by teachers, and training attended by SMC members

Training Attended by the Existing SMC Members

Section 21(2) of the RTE Act 2009, directed SMC to perform several functions: monitor the school's work, prepare and recommend School Development Plan (SDP), monitor utilisation of grants received from appropriate government or local authority or other sources; and perform such functions as may be prescribed. Given these responsibilities, SMC members felt it necessary to acquaint with these functions that are available under the act in detail and initiate necessary steps with appropriate measures. However, it has been reported by several workers about the absence of competence and training to prepare SDPs among SMC members.

Fig. 3 provides the response recorded by teachers for the number of schools and training attended by SMC members, and it is evident that members of SMCs had a very poor

rate of access to attending the training programme concerning the role and functions of SMC, that was reported 13 per cent by head teachers, 28 per cent by primary teachers, 11 per cent by upper primary teachers, and in totality by 17 per cent teachers.

Community-based Grievance Redressal Mechanism and Issue of Corporal Punishment

Information about the existence of a community-based grievances redressed mechanism for students was sought from the teachers. The majority of teachers indicated that such mechanisms did not exist in schools, or that if they did exist, they were on the low side (12%). On the other hand, teachers reported that SMC forms a standing committee for redressing grievances, and meetings were held among SMC members to review and resolve such issues if any.

The issue of corporal punishment and mental harassment brought for consideration to the SMC was reported on the lower side. Based on data processing on this item, nearly 17 per cent of the responding teachers (N=75) had brought the issue of corporal punishment for consideration to the SMCs.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the teachers obtained information from the teachers' schedule, group discussions with stakeholders, field notes and findings-based conclusions on community

participation. It reflected a positive and motivating picture of the status of implementation of the RTE Act 2009, regarding community participation. However, for attaining universalisation of elementary education, goals of children's right to education for elementary education and national education policy and programs, more stringent measures should be taken uniformly and timely by the States in India, especially in empowering the community through SMC members in letter and spirit as enacted by the people through the Indian Parliament.

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