



**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND
INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCES IN
SCHOOL EDUCATION:
SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING
COMMITTEES IN KARNATAKA**



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GLOSSARY	II
PREFACE	III
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	IV
CHAPTER-1: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION	
1.1 BACK TO BASICS: WHAT IS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION?	1
1.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION	2
1.3 EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT	3
1.4 THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT AND THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SMC)	4
CHAPTER-2: SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING COMMITTEES: EXPERIENCES FROM KARNATAKA	
2.1 METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY	5
2.2 EVOLUTION OF SDMC AND ROLE OF CCL-NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY IN THE PROCESS	5
2.3 CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING COMMITTEE (SDMC) POLICY BY THE STATE	5
2.4 COMPOSITION OF SDMCS	6
2.5 TRANSLATION OF SDMC CONCEPT INTO PRACTICE THROUGH AN EXECUTIVE ORDER	6
2.6 PROCEDURE FOLLOWED TO CONSTITUTE SDMC AT SCHOOL LEVEL	6
2.7 CHALLENGES FACED DURING THIS PROCESS	7
2.8 FORMATION OF STATE LEVEL SDMC COORDINATION FORUM	8
2.9 ROLE OF PEOPLE’S POLITICS TO COUNTER MAINSTREAM PARTY POLITICS	8
2.10 PROCESS OF CAPACITY BUILDING	8
2.11 LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FIRST STATE LEVEL ROUND TABLE OF SDMC COORDINATION FORUM	9
2.12 MODIFICATION OF POLICY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS RAISED IN THE FIRST STATE LEVEL ROUND TABLE	10
2.13 MODIFIED BYELAWS WERE CHALLENGED IN THE HIGH COURT	11
2.14 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDMC PROVISIONS	11
2.15 SDMC WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH KARNATAKA STATE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION	11
CHAPTER-3: IMPACT AND INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF SDMCS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION IN KARNATAKA STATE	
3.1 THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE SDMCS	12
3.2 THE ROLES PLAYED BY THE SDMCS	13
CHAPTER-4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	15
ANNEXURES	18
REFERENCES	21

GLOSSARY

APSA	Association for Promotion of Social Action
BRP	Block Resource Person
BRC	Block Resource Coordinator
BEO	Block Education Officer
CRC	Cluster Resource Person
CCL-NLSIU	Centre for Child and the Law –National Law School of India University
CAC-GP	Civic Amenities Committee
CACL-K	Campaign against Child Labour-Karnataka
CABE	Central Advisory Board of Education
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
EFA	Education for All
F&CE	Free and Compulsory Education
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
GP	Gram Panchayat
MLAs	Members of Legislative Assembly
NGOs	Non -Governmental Organizations
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RTE	Right to Education
SMC	School Management Committee
SDMC	School Development and Monitoring Committee
SDMCCF	School Development and Monitoring Committee Coordination Forum
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SBCs	School Betterment committee
TFE	Task Force on Education
TLE	Teaching Learning Equipment
UEE	Universal Elementary Education
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization
VEC	Village Education Committee
ZP	Zilla Panchayat

PREFACE

The demand for free and compulsory education was one of the early demands of the freedom struggle. In 1882, Jyothiba Phule from Bombay Presidency, in his evidence before the Indian Education Commission headed by Sir William Hunter, demanded the consideration of state sponsored free and compulsory education to all children until the age of 12. Later, in 1910, Gopala Krishna Gokhale moved a resolution to demand the same in the Imperial Legislative Assembly. A bill to that effect moved by Gokhale was discarded.

After nearly 100 years, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act) came into force in India. It provides for free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 years.

Despite serious flaws in the legislation in its current form, there is still a need to engage with it to continue our struggle to complete the unfinished task of ensuring equitable quality education to all children until the age of 18. This task cannot be completed by totally rejecting the Act. We must therefore engage with it, critically and constructively, and use it as a tool to achieve the larger goal of building a national system of education based on the principle of neighbourhood schools and create a common school system as envisaged in the earlier national policies in 1968, 1986 and 1992.

One of the important provisions in the RTE Act is to constitute school management committees (SMCs) in all state run and local schools. The inclusion of this provision is to ensure community participation and particularly, to encourage parents of school going children to cherish the goal of universalising elementary education. Sections 21 and 22 of the RTE Act made an important provision for empowering SMCs to ensure active participation of the community at the school level.

However, the process of making SMCs the genuine owners of school requires some amount of initiative and advocacy at the school, panchayat and department levels. It also depends on conceptual understanding and insights from other parts of the country.

Several states have made efforts to ensure community participation in universalizing

school education. Among these, the efforts made by Karnataka to involve the community in general, and parents of school going children in particular, in the process of universalising school education through school development and monitoring committees (SDMCs), is one of the most significant developments in the area of community participation, and a very positive step in the right direction. The Centre for Child and the Law at the National Law School of India University (CCL-NLSIU) in collaboration with the Department of Education, Government of Karnataka, played a significant role in the process of constituting and strengthening SDMCs. One of CCL-NLSIU's invaluable contributions to the process was the creation of the model bylaws which placed the SDMCs under the panchayats, to forge an organic link between SDMCs and gram panchayats. Since its inception, the CCL-NLSIU has been a part of every policy initiative and programme pertaining to SDMCs in the state. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Karnataka SDMC model is already partially inbuilt into the RTE Act in Sections 21 and 22.

We believe that these efforts and experiences from Karnataka provide a fair understanding about the constitution, composition, functioning of the SMC and its integral linkage with panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). This would benefit the activists and functionaries to a great extent in other states across the nation to operationalize the provisions pertaining to SMCs in the RTE Act.

It is with this objective an attempt has been made to bring out this monograph as a tool to assist the field level functionaries at the micro level and policymakers at the macro level to take concrete initiatives to mobilize community to give effect to the provisions of SMC under the RTE Act in letter and spirit. It requires initiative from both the grassroots as well as top bureaucrats.

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I am very much indebted to Karnataka State Primary School Teachers Association, Dharwad; the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Kodagu; SPANDANA, Belgaum; Society for Tribal and Rural Development, Chamaraj Nagar; ARALU, Bidar; GRAMA VIKASA, Kolar; Sarovodaya Integrated Rural Development Society, Koppal, for their valuable support to organize focused group discussions.

It would be unpardonable if I fail to record here, my gratitude and heartfelt thanks to all the participants of the focused group discussions—students, parents, elected members of the school development and monitoring committees, gram panchayat members, head teachers, teachers, anganawadi workers, health workers, self help group members and everyone else, for directly or indirectly, lending full co-operation in every process of data collection and investigation that went into the research study.

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Niranjanaradhya. V. P.

CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION

'It takes a whole village to raise a child.'

— Ashanti proverb

Most people would agree that involvement of the community is important to strengthen education. Governments, leftist leaning organizations, bilateral funding agencies and international organizations too feel it is a crucial component for strengthening the education system. Education policy gives pride of place to 'community participation' as a tool to improve the reach and functioning of school. Yet, no other phrase is more frequently abused and loosely used than 'community participation'. Delve deeper and it may mean anything from community paying for the school to participate in planning and auditing of the system to deciding the school curriculum, and everything else in between.

1.1 Back to Basics: What is Community Participation?

Community participation is most commonly used as a synonym for geographical or social 'neighbourhood' sharing common values and practices and a common sense of self. Communities can be defined by characteristics that the members share, such as culture, language, tradition, geography and class. Indian villages, however, are often fragmented across caste lines. Then there are other layers of diversity that splits the village into multiple, often conflicting categories. Indeed, doubts persist on whether a true sense of 'village community' exists naturally in most Indian contexts. Consequently, efforts directed towards community participation involve an element of inventing or creating the 'community' in a village by bringing together diverse interest groups together on a common issue. For instance, parents bring with them their caste and tribal affiliations, power relationships and loyalties. Caste and class identity of the elected representatives influences the nature of involvement as well as the nature of conflicts arising out of their involvement. These have to be overcome to ensure true participation. These subtle dynamics of interaction contribute an additional level of complexity to the processes of community participation in India.

At the same time, there are questions about the term 'participation'. The concept and practice of community participation took off during the mid-1980s creating an additional mechanism for views of ordinary people to inform locally relevant decision-making and development. The term, however, once again, is a catch-all phrase that has been abused. Two models of participation are the Arnstein ladder,¹ and that of Samuel Paul.² In both the models, at lower levels of participation, the decision is taken elsewhere and people are merely informed beforehand (or not at all) of what is intended for them. The true vision—of a community aware and involved in making decisions affecting their well being is rarely actualized. It is only when true citizen control is achieved that one can say that community participation is effective.

Community participation in education has taken a bewildering array of forms over the years. Below is a partial list of the potential ways communities support schools.

It has been pointed out that the very looseness of the concept of community participation may in fact explain its success. John Harriss (2001)³ made the same point for the notion of 'social capital': 'Ideas that can be interpreted in different ways (and may therefore become confused) are sometimes particularly powerful in "policymaking" because they provide a spacious kind of a hanger on which those of different persuasions are able to hang their coats' (Harriss 2001). Thus, while community participation in education may be considered good in terms of its potential scope to contribute to the cause of overhauling and strengthening the education system, however, the exact modalities through which this happens and what forms it takes is less clear.

¹ Arnstein, Sherry R. (1969). 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation,' JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 216-224, at: <http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html> (accessed February 2014)

² Paul, S (1987). 'Community Participation in Development Projects: The World Bank Experience', Washington DC: World Bank, at: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/servlet/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1999/09/21/000178830_98101903572729/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf (accessed February 2014).

³ Harriss, J (2001). Depoliticizing Development. The World Bank and Social Capital. New Delhi: Leftworld Books.

FORMS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION⁴

- Advocating enrollment and education benefits;
- Boosting morale of school staff;
- Raising money for schools;
- Ensuring students' regular attendance and completion;
- Constructing, repairing and improving school facilities;
- Contributing in labour, materials, land and funds;
- Recruiting and supporting teachers;
- Making decisions about school locations and schedules;
- Monitoring and following up on teacher attendance and performance;
- Actively attending school meetings to learn about children's learning progress and classroom behaviour;
- Forming village education committees to manage schools;
- Providing skill instruction and local culture information;
- Helping children with studying;
- Garnering more resources and solving problems through the education bureaucracy;
- Advocating and promoting girls' education;
- Providing security for teachers by preparing adequate housing for them;
- Scheduling school calendars;
- Handling the budget to operate schools;
- Identifying factors contributing to educational problems (low enrollment, high repetition and dropout); and
- Preparing children's readiness for schooling by providing them with adequate nutrition and stimuli for their cognitive development.

1.2 Community Participation in Education

Historically, community has operated the education system, not the State. The concept of large-scale State-run universal education systems is relatively new—by and large dating to the middle of the previous century. Its growth coincided with efforts towards universalization of education. In the early years after Independence, community participation in education was viewed and promoted as part of the liberation rhetoric. In Gandhi's scheme of education, a school or any kind of education setup was an integral part of the community. However, the development discourse did not follow the Gandhian model. In the post-Independence period the education system was progressively 'governmentalised' with the State taking on the onus of running schools without consulting the parents and local community or involving non government players in decisionmaking. While there are several reasons to explain the relative failure of the education system to achieve the objectives of ensuring universal education, surely one of the reasons is the State's failure to take people

along on this mission.

'Community participation' returned to the discussion during the 1980s amid talk about decentralization and strengthening governance. It received further support through the 73rd and 74th Amendments. Article 243 G (11th Schedule) of the Constitution provides powers and functions to Panchayati Raj Institutions to plan and implement schemes for socioeconomic development including primary and secondary school education.

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) committee had proposed a broad framework for managing education. A crucial feature of the framework is the provision for village education committees (VECs). The committee was expected to have the power to check attendance registers and report on, among other things, regularity of students, teachers' attendance and the overall functioning of the school.

A variety of projects have experimented with community participation in the education system, with mixed experience of success and failure). For example, DPEP (District Primary Education Programme), Bihar Education Project, Shiksha Karmi and Lok-Jumbish projects in Rajasthan, Mahila Samakhya Project and Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project included a strong component of community participation.

⁴ Uemura M. (1999), 'Community Participation in Education: What do we Know?', at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTISPMA/Resources/383704-1153333441931/14064_Community_Participation_in_Education.pdf (accessed February 2014)

The experiences of many of these have been extensively documented, hinting at the possibilities that are achievable if community mobilization happens in the true sense of the term. It has also come to light that whenever community participation has been mandated from the top, problems related to modalities of implementation have surfaced.

The mixed experiences as a result of the projects were drawn upon when formulating the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). It is the national flagship programme of Government of India, which aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the age group of six to 14. In its policy documents, it assigns the greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralised decision making. Partly since its roll out, almost all states/union territories constituted VECs, PTAs, SDMCs, MTAs (Mother Teacher Associations), SMCs, VEDCs etc. The nomenclature and degree of empowerment varied from state to state. It was during this time that Karnataka formed the exemplary SDMCs.

Most states provided for community based monitoring on specific issues such as enrolment, retention, education of girl child and other disadvantaged groups, utilization of various grants and construction. These community level structures were also, at least notionally, expected to play a key role in micro-planning, especially in the development of village/ward education plan and school improvement plans. Under SSA the annual work plan and budget is expected to be prepared through participatory planning process by communities where they take into account the local needs and context. On November 6, 2006, the Department of School Education and Literacy under Ministry of Human Resource Development had issued a memo for 'revision in the framework for implementation of SSA' to ensure centrality of panchayats in monitoring and supervision of SSA.

1.3 Evolution of Education as a Fundamental Right

When India's Constitution was drafted, it mandated providing free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14, within 10 years of its commencement as part of the Directive Principles of State Policy. This, however, was never actualized with

BOX-1: THE CONSTITUTION (EIGHTY-SIXTH AMENDMENT) ACT, 2002

1. Insertion of new Article 21-A: After article 21 of the Constitution, the following article shall be inserted, namely

"21-A. Right to education—The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine".

2. Substitution of new article for Article 45: namely,

"45. Provision for Early Childhood Care and Education to children below the age of six years—The State shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years".

3. Amendment of Article 51-A: after clause (j) the following clause shall be added, namely

"(k) Who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years".

the government constantly citing the lack of adequate resources. In reality, political will to initiate processes was absent. Eventually, Supreme Court intervened and interpreted the right to education as a fundamental right—as an extension of the right to life.

This historic verdict followed by a peoples' campaign compelled the Centre to amend India's Constitution to pave the way for the 'fundamental' status to the right to education. The Eighty Sixth Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 provided this states—right to education for all children in the age group of six-14 was made a fundamental right. A new Article 21A was added after Article 21 in the Constitution to this effect (see box-1). Nearly seven years and multiple drafts later, 'the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill' was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on December 15, 2008 and enacted into law after it was passed by both houses of

Parliament and signed by the country's president. This law came into force from April 1, 2010.

1.4 The Right to Education Act and the School Management Committee

One of the important provisions under the RTE Act is to constitute school management committees (SMCs comprising parents and local authority representatives (see box 2). At least 75 per cent of the SMCs are to comprise parents. Additionally, proportionate representation is to be given to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections of society and they are to have a minimum 50 per cent representation of women. The SMC in the school is assigned to monitor the working of school and grants received by the state and local governments. It is also tasked with preparing the school development plan. . The school development plan, as per subsection 22 (1), is the basis for the plans and grants to be made by the appropriate government or local authority as the case may be. What is critical is that this structure, unlike the majority of the pre-RTE Act structures, is a legal entity and it has a degree of uniformity across the nation.

However, lessons may be gleaned from the operationalization of the pre-RTE structures. One of such models has been the operationalization of School Development and Management Committees in Karnataka. The current report looks at the efforts made by the Karnataka government to look at the ongoing experiences of building a model of SDMCs as a possible example for forming and supporting similar structures under the RTE Act. The learning and insights drawn from this process may help grassroots functionaries and policymakers elsewhere to initiate similar processes to be able to evolve suitable democratic institutional mechanisms and ensure community participation in the process of universalizing quality education and ensuring the Right to Education becoming a fundamental right.

BOX-2: PROVISIONS FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE UNDER THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT

Section 21(1) A school other than school specified in sub-clause(iv) of clause (n) of section 2, shall constitute School Management Committee consisting of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians of children admitted in such school and teachers :

Provided that at least three-fourth of members of such committee shall be parents or guardians;

Provided further that proportionate representation shall be given to the parents or guardians of children belonging to disadvantaged group and weaker section:

1. Provided also that 50 per cent of members of such committee shall be women
2. The School Management Committee shall perform the following functions, namely:-
 - (a) Monitor the working of the school
 - (b) Prepare and recommend school development plan
 - (c) Monitor the utilization of the grants received from the appropriate Government or local authority or any other source; and
 - (d) Perform such other functions as may be prescribed

Section 22(1) Every School Management committee, constituted under sub section (1) of section 21, shall prepare a School Development plan, in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) The School Development Plan so prepared under subsection (1) shall be the basis for the plans and grants to be made by the appropriate government or local authority as the case may be

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING COMMITTEES: EXPERIENCES FROM KARNATAKA

Community ownership of the schools should be ensured through legislation providing for the establishment and empowerment of school development and monitoring committees ... and de-centralize functions from higher levels. Legislation should be brought to give teeth to these bodies.

Report of Task Force on Education, Government of Karnataka [Para 10(a)]

The school development and monitoring committee (SDMC) initiative in Karnataka is a significant policy step in the field of school education. It has created a highly democratic space and well-defined policy procedure for community participation in school education, besides a process to mobilize communities to improve governance, accountability and transparency in schooling. SDMC Karnataka's SDMC serve among the longest running experiences of community participation in education and it is hoped that these can be cashed in by other states embarking on the journey towards forming SMCs. More specifically, it is hoped that the experiences provide evidence of good practices pertaining to engagement with the local self governance structures and with teacher groups.

2.1. The Methodology for the Case Study

The focus of the Karnataka case study was on the state's experiences in the past decade in rural areas. The study followed the methodology listed below, besides tapping into the experience, knowledge and contacts of the Centre for Child and the Law (CCL).

- Focus group discussions at division level with SDMC forum members; The details of the FGDs are listed in Annexure-1.
- One-on-one discussions, interviews and meetings with primary stakeholders— education functionaries, community and PRIs
- Tapping into existing data from the Bannikuppe Gram Panchayat schools, where CCL has a research laboratory;
- Referring existing research and evaluations of the Karnataka SDMC experience

2.2. Evolution of School Development and Monitoring Committees and the Role of CCL-NLSIU in the Process

It is important to start by highlighting the significant role CCL played as an institution to realize quality education for all children. It has played a critical role in shaping the SDMC policy by working and collaborating with government, teachers' union, civil society institutions and other stakeholders, including bringing their own field experiences to the table. The availability of long-term, committed technical support has thus been a critical aspect of the success of the Karnataka experience.

2.3. Conceptualization of SDMC Policy by the State

The intervention can be dated to 1999 when a group of individuals headed by the then education minister started discussing the methods of ensuring community participation in school education to accelerate the process of universalization. As a result, a series of initiatives such as Sumudayadatha shala (school towards community), Shala Dattu Yojane (school adoption programme) and Shikshana Samvada (dialogue on education) were initiated in the state towards quality education for all children. A task force on education (TFE) was created. It submitted a report in 2000 recommending the constitution of school development and monitoring committees to replace the then existing village education committees and school betterment committees.

BOX-3: EXCERPT FROM THE REPORT OF EDUCATION TASK FORCE

"The school should be treated as a unit of planning and development. Every school should prepare vision document – a plan of development, village specific problems relating to access, enrolment, equity in enrolment, retention, attainment of children mobilization of resources for classroom teaching and organization of classroom activities can constitute the plan.

Therefore there is a need for a body called School Development and Monitoring Committee at the school level itself"

Interim Report of Task Force on Education (2000) p 22

In 2001, the government of Karnataka acted upon the recommendation of the TFE report by taking concrete steps to constitute SDMCs in all government primary, upper primary and high schools in the state. The then Commissioner of Public Instruction requested CCL to examine the draft note prepared by the Department of Education, and to facilitate consultations with different civil society groups and NGOs at the grassroots level to assist the department to conceptualize the formation of the SDMCs based on the recommendation of TFE report. The CCL-NLSIU in collaboration with the state government and in consultation with parents, children, teachers, NGOs and the elected representatives of the local self-government (in rural areas, panchayat representatives) evolved the structure and composition for the constitution of SDMCs. Extensive consultation prior to the evolution of the strategy and attention to the operational aspects of the policy have been critical to the long-term success.

2.4 Composition of SDMCs

The SDMC was conceptualized as a school-level committee built around nine elected representatives, comprising parents of school going children. In addition to the nine representatives, the committee would comprise head teacher, health worker, anganawadi worker, representatives from community based organizations, NGOs, elected representatives from gram panchayat, taluk panchayat, zilla panchayat and local donors who contributed in cash or kind for the development of school, as well as children representatives from class VII or X.

2.5 Translation of SDMC Concept into Practice Through an Executive Order

After several intensive consultation processes on the draft policy, the state government issued an Executive Order on April 28, 2001 to constitute SDMCs in all lower primary, higher primary and high schools across the state. The main goal of the SDMC was to involve the community in general and parents of school going children in particular in the process of schooling to ensure their active participation. The objectives of constituting SDMCs were stated to be as follows:

- a. To achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education.
- b. To replace the existing school betterment

committees (SBCs; which were mainly for the high school) and village education committees (VECs, which were introduced in 1994 under the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) for elementary Schools). Both the structures were dominated by officials, non-parents and members from elite groups.

- c. To ensure effective functioning of all government schools.
- d. To ensure effective participation of the community at all levels of schooling; access, enrolment, retention, quality and institutional reforms.
- e. To motivate teachers to deliver quality education.
- f. To decentralize the education system and improve school administration and monitoring to ensure accountability and transparency.
- g. To resolve issues related to enrolment, attendance and quality education.
- h. To mobilize local resources for the development of the school.

2.6 Procedures Followed to Constitute SDMC at School Level

As per Government Executive Order issued on March 28, 2001, the following procedures were followed while constituting the SDMC at the school level.

- The head teacher of each school should prepare a list of parents of all students studying in their school. This list has to be displayed on the school notice board and all other public places to get objections if any from the parents of school going children and community.
- After finalizing the list, a general council of parents must be convened to constitute the SDMC. To convene the meeting of the general council, bands (a drummer goes round the streets and calls for the meeting) and notice boards were used.
- SDMC be constituted in the general council and this should also be widely publicized before the meeting.
- The general council should elect nine parent representatives.
- The nine parent representatives to include

three women, a representative each from the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes and Minorities, and three from the general category.

- The representatives should elect their president.
- The nine members in consultation with the head teacher as member secretary co-opt ex-officio and nominated members to constitute SDMC.

Attention to operational details at the stage of notification itself has been a critical component. In so doing, a whole range of ambiguities have been avoided, minimizing the scope for misinterpretation and abuse. The response to the Government Executive Order at the grassroots level was tremendous and about 90 per cent of the schools established SDMCs within the stipulated period i.e. even before commencement of the new academic year in May–June 2001.

2.7 Challenges Faced During This Process

Though the policy decision to constitute school based development and monitoring committees was a turning point in the history of school education in Karnataka, the democratic process and political interference posed many challenges in the initial years.

As soon as the formation of SDMCs with adequate financial and monitoring powers became a reality, a few Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) exerted pressure on the government to modify the order to enable them to become chairpersons of the SDMCs. Succumbing to this pressure, the government issued two circulars in August 2001. The first of these circulars gave MLAs the power to nominate the president of SDMC among the nine elected representatives; and the second increased the scope of this power, enabling them to nominate the nine parent members as well. This circular further enabled MLAs themselves to be appointed as presidents of the SDMC of high schools.

The members of SDMC, civil society organizations and social movements vehemently opposed this move. Media was strategically used to combat the attempt to politicize the SDMCs. Media attention resulted in capturing the support provided for the work. For example, newspapers extensively wrote on the issue; CCL received

phone calls from different groups and individuals from across Karnataka offering their support. There was also spontaneous opposition from non-MLA SDMC members. It became clear that an effective media strategy has the potential to serve as a critical tool in the process of formation and empowerment of community structures.

In addition to using the media, CCL ensured that the state was part of the SDMC programmes to maximize legitimacy of the process. We found that a continued process of engagement with the state as a critical step towards ensuring legitimacy during the processes of formation and subsequently in countering MLA protests against actions taken by progressive SDMCs. State collaboration is also necessary to bring about long-term sustainability and in reducing the scope for the process being disowned or abandoned by the system.

BOX-4: PRINCIPLE OF CHILD PARTICIPATION INCORPORATED

In its deliberations during the conceptualization of the composition for SDMC, the Centre for Child and the Law, NLSIU strongly advocated for the children representation from class V in case of LPS, class VII in case of HPS and class X in case of High School. However, the government confined it to class VII and X

As a key strategy all studies and trainings reports were conducted or prepared with state support. For example, the 2004 evaluation of SDMCs was completed with state support and subsequently the 2005 bylaw to guarantee the formation of the SDMC gained state approval. After this, the training manual was developed by the state, in conjunction with CCL support. The in-depth evaluation reports helped CCL to counter misinformation that SDMCs were being run by illiterates and that they were not performing, etc. The study on the other hand showed the quantum of improvement at the school level after SDMCs took over the monitoring⁵.

⁵ Niranjana Radhaya, V., P. (2006). 'Making the Legislations Work in Schools: a Compilation of Four Case Studies', Centre for Child and the Law, NLSIU, Books for Change, Bangalore.

2.8 Formation of State Level SDMC Coordination Forum

In order to increase the mobilization and awareness around decentralization and democracy, and to further facilitate information exchange between different SDMCs, a School Development Monitoring Committee Coordination Forum (SDMCCF), from all the 50,000 schools in Karnataka, was formed. The SDMCCF at gram panchayat, taluk and district level comprised SDMC presidents and NGOs working with SDMCs from all the 14 districts in the state.

It was initially formed to petition against political interference. It met in December 2004 to discuss methods and strategies for lobbying. The forum not only took action but also ensured that the primary stakeholders (parents, teachers and

BOX-5: THE CHARTER PREPARED BY THE STATE LEVEL SDMC COORDINATION FORUM

The government should implement the first circular in totality, withdrawing all other circulars issued after the first executive order from circulation

1. The State Coordination Committee resolved to oppose any form of political interference in the functioning of the SDMC
2. Formation of the SDMC should be extended to all aided and unaided schools to empower all parents equally
3. A boy and a girl student of class 5, 7, (8 – in the case of a few higher primary schools) and 10 should be nominated to SDMC
4. The President / Secretary of Self Help Groups in the locality of the schools should be nominated to SDMC
5. Full-fledged training to all elected members of SDMC should be imparted by competent and resourceful people within two months of the date of constitution
6. Training and Communication to the members of SDMC should be given in the local language and medium of instruction followed in schools

Source: Minutes prepared by Centre for Child and the Law of One Day State Level Consultation Meeting of SDMC, Ashirvad, Bangalore, on 12th April 2004

SDMC members) subsequently remained at the centre of all the SDMC processes.

A critical feature of the forum was even though officials were invited to attend, it was made abundantly clear that the focus was not on their issues. In addition, it helps that the forum is not headed by any one particular body, but is a collectively owned group of interested stakeholders.⁶ Furthermore, this process established a clear mechanism of establishing local to state level linkage. The presence of this group provided a non-state structure to support and drive the processes. The need for such a supportive architecture has been a critical learning from the Karnataka experience.

2.9 Role of People's Politics to Counter Mainstream Party Politics

When the state threatened to allow MLAs to control the selection of the SDMCs, CCL along with other civil society representatives indirectly threatened that the constituents of SDMCs i.e. about 18 million parents would vote against the existing government in the forthcoming elections. The potential power of the SDMCs through their mass and collective nature is frequently ignored during the processes of community participation in education.

After sustained media pressure, face-to-face interactions and discussions with authorities and renegotiation of the policies, the government had to change its stand. This strategy also went a long way in trying to democratize the SDMCs. Thus, people's politics can be used to revert decisions taken under the influence of party politics.

2.10 Process of Capacity Building

Therefore, a decision was taken to focus energies on capacity building. This was necessary not only for the subsequent functioning of the SDMCs formed, but also for the processes of empowerment as part of the struggle to resist political interference. In so doing, a concerted effort was made to minimize the waste of resources. Engagement with the state ensured that resources were made available for the process from its own funding. This minimized duplication of efforts and ensured that the process of information dissemination was more decentralized.

⁶ Ibid.

As a result of continuous engagement with the government, a number of interventions were planned for their capacity building. These interventions used a multiplicity of media and brought together a range of stakeholders. Some of the specific steps taken included:

- Production of tele-film by Department of State Educational Research and Training in association with CCL-NLSIU.
- With financial assistance from Azim Premji Foundation, Radio jingles were written and tapes were produced to spread the message of SDMCs for broadcasting all over the state.
- In collaboration with District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) at Mysore, participatory and user friendly training manual—Sankalpa (Sankalpa in Kannada means 'pledge') and a resource book Spandana (Spandana means 'respond') was brought out to train SDMC chairpersons and members.
- In collaboration with the DIET and NGOs, several hundred trainings were conducted.
- There was continuous support/advocacy to solve problems faced by SDMCs. For example, translating the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan manual into local language (Kannada), petitioning for the removal of politically sensitive circulars and evolving rules for the effective functioning of the SDMCs.
- A coordination forum of SDMC was set up at the state level, comprising CCL and NGOs such as CACL-K, Vikasa, APSA, Cihiguru, Jeevika, MGRDSC, Valored, SDMC ChintanaVedike-Raichur, Abhivrudhi, SVYM as well as SDMC presidents and members as founder members of the forum across the state.

2.11 Lessons Learned from the First State Level Round Table of SDMC Coordination Forum

To understand the problems of SDMCs functioning in the first three years, a round table was organized in 2004 jointly by CCL and SDMC. It identified a number of challenges for the functioning of the SDMCs. Several of these challenges also arise for other processes of formation of SMCs and need to be addressed in a systematic process, it was realised.

- The executive order for the formation of the SDMCs lacked clarity in terms of procedures

related to meetings, linkage with the panchayats and disciplinary mechanism in case of irregularities or misuse of power. The funding rules needed to be clearer. The government orders needed to be more explicit to avoid confusion.

- Though children were part of SDMCs as part of an effort to ensure child participation, they were not given sufficient opportunities and space in SDMC meetings. Clear processes and procedures to address this were needed.
- There were no clear guidelines on how one could remove an ineffective president or SDMC member. Participants at the round table said that the head teacher had often selected the president before calling the parents' council and no viable mechanism for recall existed. A clear protocol for recall was necessary to deal with instances of improper formation or dealing with other exigencies when an elected leader or member was no longer able to fulfill the duties laid down.
- The training and information dissemination often went no further than the president. As a result, while the presidents were aware of all powers in the SDMC, other members were not as aware. Women members had hardly any information. The need for the whole community to be made aware of the benefits of SDMCs was seen as critical. A clear process of capacity building of the entire SMC was important.
- Training itself needed to be more effective. The training given by the state was not found very helpful and empowering, while the trainings given by CCL and other NGOs were considered useful. It was critical, therefore, to see how the government trainings could be improved.
- The monthly meetings of SDMCs did not necessarily take place regularly and with a sufficient number of participants. The reason was cited to be lack of time. However, deeper analysis suggested that the meeting times didn't fit with the daily routine, particularly among women members or because of very short notice. These considerations needed to be kept in mind while operationalizing SMCs.
- At the same time, community participation occasionally translated into requests for donations. It was noted that some parents were unwilling to enter the school in case

they would be asked to donate money. It emerged that there was a need for clear guidelines to ensure that the SDMC did not violate the right to free education.

2.12 Modification of Policy to Address the Problems Raised in the First State Level Round Table

As a result of the round table, the state Department of Education along with CCL initiated the next phase of participatory research to develop detailed bylaws/guidelines for the effective functioning of SDMCs and link them organically with panchayats. This move was important because:

- a. The Executive Circular issued on April 28, 2001 stipulates for the constitution of SDMCs but without any detailed administrative guidelines/procedures for their functioning.
- b. The state government decided to devolve more powers to panchayats including primary and secondary education.
- c. The panchayats were also under the impression that SDMCs were parallel structures, even though the SDMCs were supporting and supplementing the work of panchayats at school level as an extended decentralised unit.

After researching various available avenues for linking the SDMCs and panchayats, CCL found that there was ample scope to create delegated legislation (secondary legislation) through model by-laws under the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993. Further, CCL felt that creating such legislation would also help in reducing the scope of political interference and could create more democratic spaces and mechanisms for the autonomous functioning of SDMCs in the state. The solution was to introduce SDMCs as a unit of the PRI system, rather than having representation of selected PRI representatives in SDMCs.

The process of developing model by-laws involved repeated intensive consultations with civil society groups, the government and CCL's programme partners. It resulted in several revisions and drafts of the model by-laws. The revisions and modifications took into account suggestions of civil society groups as well as the government. At the end of this intense work, CCL submitted the final version of the model by-laws to the Karnataka government.

Thereafter, the model by-laws were notified by the government vide Notification NO. ED 122 PBS 2004, Bangalore, on March 17, 2006. This notification was put forth for public debate for a month for objections and suggestions at the end of which the by-laws were amended accordingly. The final model by-laws were notified in English and Kannada on June 14, 2006.

The creation of these model by-laws not only enabled the community to keep away political interference but has also helped in developing an organic linkage between existing decentralized units of administration (panchayats) and SDMCs. For highlights and detailed provisions, see separately attached modified SDMC by-law. Some of the provisions under the by-laws included:

- Civic Amenities Committee (a sub-committee of gram panchayat) of every gram panchayat to constitute SDMCs for each school within the gram panchayat.
- Head teacher of the school delegated the task of constituting this in all schools and reporting it to gram panchayat.
- The child participation element in school management was further ensured through legal provision.
- Functions of SDMC president, vice-president and member secretary were made explicit.
- Elected parents were given equal say in the affairs of the school through SDMCs.
- The functions of SDMCs were clearly outlined and SDMCs were given financial powers to operate the school fund.
- Separate provisions for disciplinary action against teaching/non-teaching staff/SDMC members; issues of sexual harassment and child sexual abuse dealt with under the by-laws.

It meant that power was decentralised to the Panchayati Raj as opposed to having separate systems. In addition, even if the original prime movers moved away from the process, SDMC would continue to function in a sustainable fashion since it was now entrenched in the law.

However, some MLA nominees were unhappy with this development since the new secondary legislation effectively translated to replacing the earlier executive order. The MLAs approached the court.

2.13 Modified Bye-laws Challenged in High Court

The MLA nominees challenged the validity of the model by-laws in the High Court of Karnataka and its procedure to elect the SDMC members and president through a democratic process (as opposed to nomination by MLAs). High Court upheld the validity of the model bylaws. Nevertheless, the court cautioned that the by-laws could not be given retrospective effect. It was big victory for civil society groups against the politicization of SDMCs.

BOX-6: EXCERPTS FROM THE HIGH COURT ORDER

The challenge to the notification dated 14.6.2006 bearing no. Ed 122 PBS.2004 issued by the state government framing the model –bye laws to constitute the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs) is dismissed. The said Notification is upheld.

Honourable High Court of Karnataka
W.P No.12467 of 2006(GM-RES)

2.14 Implementation of the SDMC Provisions

The model by-laws were implemented throughout the state and SDMCs constituted according to the procedure prescribed therein. The impact and experience of the implementation of SDMCs in the state have been looked in more detail in the subsequent chapter. Indeed, the notification of model byelaws drafted by CCL-NLSIU in close collaboration with the state and through the active participation of civil society organizations, academic institutions, subject and law experts and the NGOs working in the area of school education has served as a model set of guidelines for other states.

2.15 SDMC Working Relationship with the Karnataka State Primary School Teachers Association (KSPSTA)

The process of strengthening any educational system would be incomplete without engagement with teachers. Until 2006, teachers were hesitant to be part of SDMCs. The Karnataka legislators committee ordered a study of SDMC (again a very important milestone in the SDMC

saga and its successful implementation) to understand their functions and if it should continue to exist. Given the role of CCL in children's education, it was invited to be on the study team. As part of this study, meetings were facilitated by bringing all stakeholders face to face. This process of dialogue contributed to improving the understanding between teachers and parents and sensitized teachers to the rights of children and the role of parents in SDMC. In the end, the teachers' union accepted and recognized the need for SDMCs in schools and participation of parents as primary stakeholders in their children's education. Since 2007, they have been playing a very constructive role in the processes. The engagement of parents has taken the process to another level altogether.

Karnataka has approximately 1,86,000 teachers in the union from upper primary and higher primary schools. The union is an independent body, not affiliated to any political party and is the only recognized union in the state. The structure of the union is such that one teacher representative is elected for every 50 teachers at the cluster level. There are approximately 20-25 clusters in a taluk, and office bearers are elected from taluk level, which in turn elect the office bearers at district level and from the district level office bearers are elected for the state level. It holds an annual meeting, an executive meeting twice a year, and a special executive meeting that is need- or issue-based. Recently, recognizing the role of the SDMC in implementing the RTE, they have started inviting members from SDMC and the CCL representative to their core meetings.

The teachers union has held joint meetings with the SDMC forum annually since 2007. In 2008 a forum of SDMCs and teachers' union was created to address issues of mutual concern. In 2009, the joint meeting led to the development of a draft policy guideline that was shared with the teachers' union, which discussed the guideline and submitted the same to the government. This led to establishment of a state level joint forum of teachers' union and SDMCs in 2010.

Until 2012, four annual joint meetings have been held. In 2012, a joint citizen's charter evolved, which was agreed to, and published; See Annexure- 2 for this. The joint process is one of the contributing factors for the successful implementation of SDMCs and its impact on the functioning of schools.

CHAPTER 3

IMPACT AND INSTITUTIONAL EXPERIENCES OF SDMCS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION IN KARNATAKA

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him... Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj (freedom) for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melt away.

Mahatma Gandhi

This chapter looks at the impact that the formation of the SDMCs has had on education in the state and takes a closer look at the modalities of functioning of SDMCs. This analysis draws upon focused group discussions and secondary sources,⁷ especially the previous evaluations and documentation of the SDMCs.

3.1. The Structure and Functioning of SDMCs

The Civil Amenities Committee of the village constituted under the Section 61 of the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, comprise an SDMC for each school within every panchayat. Thus, a clear structural connection was created between the PRI system and the school level structures.

What is critical about the guidelines is the elaboration of the responsibilities of the specific roles to be played by each structure and position holder. The functions of the SDMC and that of the roles to be played by the president, vice president and member secretary have been spelled out. The guidelines look into the specific operational details, not leaving things to interpretation. Thus, even the term 'agenda of SDMC meeting' has been defined to include

⁷ Evaluation report on the impact of SDMCs by the Department of development studies, Kannada University, 2004 and valuation study on the functioning of SDMCs by BGVs and District Institute of Education Training, Mandya, 2008 and CCLs own work to date.

issues related to monthly accounts of the school and SDMC, school development, administration, enrolment, attendance, retention and academic achievement of the children. The guidelines also look into specific procedures to be followed for meetings of the SDMCs, including the modalities of convening the SDMC meetings, the quorum to be followed, what is to be done when the president or vice president is not present, the method of deciding questions and voting, as well as the record of decisions. The guidelines then devote almost two pages on the issues of grievance redress and action to be taken in instances of fraudulent operations of SDMCs. The guidelines detail issues of termination of membership and filling of vacancies and other operational issues. A copy of the guidelines has been appended as Appendix III. While several states have drafted fairly elaborate operational guidelines for SMCs in the post RTE Act era, these remain among the most comprehensive on the books.

There are obvious variations in the extent to which these provisions have been implemented. Several evaluations of the functioning of SDMCs have been undertaken and the subsequent section relies on secondary data to understand the nature and functioning of the SDMCs in practice.

Despite this fairly elaborate framework, there is of course, scope for strengthening the structures on the ground. While the extent of awareness and action on the part of SDMCs on generic issues like opening and closing of the school and attendance was fair, awareness on technical issues like finance requires to be further enhanced. The National University of Education Planning and Administration (NUEPA) study revealed that the SDMC members require greater support to understand the systems and functioning of the education system. Several SDMC members continued to work on the instruction of the head teacher since they were not aware of the procedures and functions of committees. The study also found that SDMC members were not aware of the records kept in the schools and that SDMC members had restricted access to the same. Linkage with the government officials concerned also needed to be facilitated. Similarly, school inspection visits and other spaces of interface between the school and the education department should

also provide for interface with the SDMC. With regard to transparency and accountability especially in use of funds, SDMC members were unaware of fund flow, its source, the purpose of utilization and how it was being used. There were no concrete measures taken to display the information related to use of funds and the record books were kept under the custody of the head teachers. A little over 60 per cent of SDMC members said they did not have any information on maintenance of accounts or any other financial matters regarding the school. However, 92 per cent of the members said they discussed financial matters in their monthly meetings.

Training for SDMCs was usually conducted at the panchayat level, but attendance in such trainings has been a persistent problem. Therefore, it was recommended that training programmes be conducted at the school level. All members of the SDMC needed training and support and it should not be restricted to a few members. SDMCs also needed gender sensitization to enhance women's participation. Similarly, there may be need for greater focus on the issues of social inclusion.

The study also revealed that the formation of the SDMC had an inherent risk of loss of attention on its functioning by the larger community. Periodic parents' meeting should be called to discuss issues relating to school expenditure report, children's learning levels, their attendance in school, and other issues pertaining to the school, the study recommended.

1.2 The Roles Played by the SDMCs

The SDMC guidelines laid down a range of roles that these structure was expected to undertake. This section looks at the extent to which these are actually being rolled out on the ground and the kind of changes being brought about in the lives of people through the formation of this structure.

i. Role in Ensuring Infrastructure

The community has played a significant role in ensuring minimum infrastructure. This has included donations and support for provision of land for the building and for the development of playgrounds, classrooms, toilets, drinking water and other facilities such as electrification, furniture, usable

blackboard and teaching and learning equipment. However, head teachers had control over the financial matter and SDMCs were involved only in the execution. Understanding of financial matters was limited. Furthermore, SDMC members were more proactive when it came to civil works in the school than the more intangible, advanced forms of quality improvement.

ii. Role in Universal Enrolment and Retention

SDMCs played a significant role in various campaigns like Ba-Maralishalege (back to school), Cooliyinda Shalege (work to school), Ba-bale-Shalege (campaign for girl child enrolment), Beediyinda Shalege (street to school). These campaigns have made outstanding impact in bringing back non-school going and dropout children to the mainstream. There was also a significant role played to ensure regularity of attendance of all children, especially girls, and the organization of Chinnara Angalas (bridge course).

Efforts have also been made to ensure retention in schools until children complete eight years of schooling. SDMC members have been closely involved in door-to-door campaigns and rallies. Their efforts have also been critical in ensuring quality of mid-day meals and in activation of incentive schemes like uniforms, textbooks, note books and other stationery. Community participation has helped school authorities to organize health camps and diagnose health problems affecting children's attendance in schools. Community participation has also helped them to deliver scholarships in time for eligible students, and to ensure delivery of incentives provided by the state government in time to all beneficiaries without affecting the day-to-day functioning of the school.

iv. Role of SDMCs in Accomplishing Quality Education

Community participation during the initial stages of implementation of SDMCs had been relatively more for enhancement of physical infrastructure. However, the FGD highlighted a gradual shift in the process, with the community progressively paying more attention to the qualitative improvement of

teaching learning process. The FGDs also suggest that community participation has improved the overall classroom transaction and contributed to improvements in academic performance. At the same time, SDMCs themselves have played a key role in the organization of cultural and sports activities.

v. Role of SDMCs in School Governance and Monitoring

Apart from conducting frequent and regular meetings of SDMC and general councils, the members of SDMC exercise their powers to monitor the activities of schooling. One of the important activities highlighted was monitoring of teachers' attendance. SDMCs have also, in places, used their discretion to decide the four local holidays for the school and sanction leave for head masters. They have taken measures to ensure 220 learning days and helped school authorities to identify and contact donors to mobilize additional resources for their schools. They have also used their powers to auction unused materials, verify accounts and to establish a school education fund.

¹ Observations and findings from the workshop of SDMC and Civic Amenities Committee members (CAC) jointly organized by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Prajayatna an NGO, in 2006.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding sections highlights the impact and various functions performed by School Development and Monitoring Committees in Karnataka, assigned to them under the delegated legislation that provides democratic institutional structure for the active participation of community. The School Development and Monitoring Committee appears to have played a significant role towards access, enrolment, retention and school monitoring. However, there is still a long way to go in relation to classroom processes and quality education.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the study have been categorized under the following themes:

- Policy changes
- Capacity building and training
- Improving quality of education
- Linkages and networking
- Accountability and transparency

Policy Changes

The pioneering experience from Karnataka demonstrates that the legal basis (here the model by-laws) for the formation of SDMCs at the school level has strengthened school-based monitoring in the state, and its impact on overall schooling. Further, the Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 provides a legal basis for constituting school-based management committees and requires the states to constitute 'School Management Committees' as per the provisions under Sections 21 and 22 of the Act, to ensure active participation of the community at school level. Keeping this in view:

1. It is recommended that the Centre should formulate general guidelines based on the best institutional practices of community participation such as SDMCs, to enable the state to constitute SMCs on the principles of democratic decentralization and to consider the SMCs as the last tier of decentralization at the village/habitation level.

2. State governments should look at the Model Karnataka By Rules to ensure operational aspects of the functioning of SMCs are addressed in the State guidelines.
3. States should enhance the current tenure of the SDMCs from three years to five years, to make it co-terminus with the panchayat's tenure so that the organic linkage between SDMCs and PRIs is reinforced
4. Any attempt to shift the state responsibility, especially monetary burden on the community, which is already taking up their work time to participate in the SDMCs process, would further discourage the communities to participate in the process of schooling. Consequently, efforts towards community participation should not violate the principles of free education.
5. There must be a clear plan of allocation and release of resources for SDMCs on time and without systemic obstacles.

Capacity Building and Trainings

The School Development and Monitoring Committees have contributed enormously to strengthening public education and demonstrated that they can make a positive difference in enrolment, retention and school governance, when provided with an enabling framework and support to enhance their leadership, management and monitoring. Keeping this in view:

1. It is recommended that the governments take concrete measures to build their capacities through need based training programmes, and harness potential strength, energy and time given by these committees for improving state run schools. These need to be of the entire body of the SDMC and not just a few individuals selected from the same.
2. Government academic and management personnel at levels immediately above the school such as staff at the Cluster and Block Resource Centres, Block Education Officers along with all head teachers should be trained in the procedure of constituting the SDMC at the school level as per the new provisions of the RTE Act and state rules.

3. Academic universities and specialized research centres including NGOs working with children on school education must be made part of SDMC trainings and the larger process of social auditing.
4. The training should be organized at school/ village level by involving both elected SDMC members and members of parents' council in campaign mode to empower all members. In so doing, the capacities of the entire SDMC has to be enhanced and not restrict inputs to a few individuals.
5. The BRC and DIET should be made accountable for training programmes since they are meant to provide it and the trainings should be designed to bring professionalism and managerial skills.
6. At the end of each training programme there should be a mechanism to take feedback from the participants, and training programme should also include a focus on the financial details to build accountability and transparency.

Improving Quality of Education

The biggest challenge for the state is to demystify the current notion that SDMCs are responsible only for physical development. Keeping this in view:

1. It is recommended that states should use the energy and potential of these committees/ members to create an effective institutional mechanism to also manage the quality of learning in schools.
2. To sensitize all SDMC and panchayat members on the issue of children with disability and work towards inclusive education. Disability shouldn't be perceived as just a physical problem but a social problem that needs addressing at all levels.

LINKAGES AND NETWORKING

Collaborating with Academic Institutions and NGOs:

The experiences from Karnataka have demonstrated that the role of academic institutions and NGOs working on the issue of education is crucial to ensure meaningful

participation of the community. The organic linkage between the communities and these organizations has helped the state to reach out to the communities and act as a bridge between them and the government. Keeping this in view, it is recommended that the role of institutions like CCL-NLSIU is critical and their ongoing engagement and collaboration with governments, civil society institutions, policymakers and other important stakeholders should be recognized and encouraged, to continue to sustain the achievements of SDMC.

Strengthening Linkages between SDMCs and Panchayats

Though the RTE Act 2009 prescribes specific functions for SMCs and local self governments, these roles and responsibilities are mutually complementary and supplementary to each other. The successful and meaningful implementation of the act depends on the organic linkage between these structures. Keeping this in view:

1. The state should perceive SDMCs as the last tier of the decentralization process and all mechanisms should be put in place to make them function meaningfully and effectively. It is also recommended to take concrete measures to further strengthen the linkage between SDMCs and panchayats.
2. The panchayat should perceive the SDMCs as the extended arms of its own body and should provide all support for them to ensure its democratic and transparent functioning.
3. The state should create a mechanism to review on a monthly basis measures taken by SDMCs to ensure quality education within a panchayat jurisdiction as per RTE mandate.

Transparency and Accountability

One of the key elements of good governance is ensuring transparency and accountability while discharging the roles and responsibilities assigned to institutions. Keeping this in view:

1. It is recommended that the state should establish a mechanism of acknowledging and publishing the quantum of contribution made by the community in general and SDMCs in particular at the village/school level.
2. The functioning of SDMCs should not be

confined to president, secretary or one or two members but it should be collective.

3. The state should create proper mechanisms to bring transparency in the overall governance of schools, including finances, and by sensitizing teachers, especially head teachers, to be more democratic in the administration of school.
4. SDMCs are encouraged to plan and undertake regular audit and review of their activities and resources.
5. The plans prepared by SDMCs should form the basis of allocations made to schools for ensuring school improvement. Plans prepared would need to be compiled and appropriate budget allocations made to enable the plans made to be implemented.

Conclusion

It is evident that the policy changes in relation to community participation in universalizing quality elementary education has brought a sea change in the state. The school development and monitoring committees have played a significant role towards access, enrolment, retention of children in schools and in the overall monitoring of schools. However, there is still a long way to go with respect to the committees' role and influence on classroom processes and quality education.

Community participation not only increases ownership but also empowers communities to take important decisions concerning the future of their children. It has been proven that when parents get involved in the education of their children, children are motivated and perform better. Moreover, it ensures sustainability of the processes adopted and innovations undertaken.

To conclude, the study demonstrates and reiterates the potential that can be played by school management committees (SMCs) as statutory bodies under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. The role of SMCs is strongly connected with the effective implementation of the Act. The state can do wonders in the area of elementary education, provided the mechanisms for the democratic constitution and functioning of this body are combined with adequate financial assistance and capacity building. Community participation

is a key element in the achievement of the goal of universalization of education, without which it would remain elusive. Given the important role communities play, it is imperative to continue to build their capacities so that they can take forward the agenda of education for all.

ANNEXURE-I

SAMPLING DETAILS OF THE FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS

To ensure adequate and equal representation of primary stakeholders, in a geographical sense, two educational districts from each revenue division were selected for the purpose of conducting the focused group discussions (FGD). While selecting districts in each division, classification made by the Department of Education in one of its annual reports published for the year 2010-11 was used. Districts are listed therein based on the Infrastructure Composite Index for primary and higher primary schools. For the purpose of the FGD, two districts in each division, having lowest and highest Composite

Infrastructure Index⁸ were chosen for FGD. As per the department report, in Bangalore division, Kolar has the highest (95.31) and Ramanagar the lowest (83.43) Infrastructure Composite Index. Therefore, Kolar was chosen for the district having the highest and Ramanagar as the district having the lowest Composite Index of Infrastructure facilities in the Bangalore division. Similarly, Kodagu (92.58) and Chamaraj Nagar (74.50) in Mysore division, Dharwad (89.12) and Belgaum (76.95) in Belgaum division, and Koppal (81.63) and Bidar (65.90) in Gulbarga division were selected for the FGD.

Further, it was decided to cover the following primary stakeholders in the FGD:

DETAILS OF FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSIONS HELD AS PART OF DEVELOPING THE CASE STUDY

Name of the Division	Date of FGD	District selected in the Division	Type of membership/Primary Stakeholders	Participants		
				Male	Female	Total
Bangalore	14-02-2012	Ramangar	Elected members of SDMC Coordination Forum	12	08	20
			Members of General Parents Council of SDMC	06	08	14
	18.02.2012	Kolar	Nominated members (Self Help Group) of SDMC	00	12	12
			Elected members of Gram Panchayat and CAC members	06	02	08
Belagum	22-02-2012	Belgaum	Nominated members (Anganawadi Workers) of SDMC	0	10	10
			Children Members of SDMC	08	13	21
	23-02-2012	Dharwad	Assistant Teachers	06	14	20
			Head Teachers cum member secretaries of SDMC	13	11	24
Gulbarga	28-02-2012	Bidar	Nominated members (Anganawadi Workers) of SDMC	0	14	14
			Nominated members (Self Help Group) of SDMC	0	10	10
	29-2-2012	Koppal	Elected members of SDMC	07	03	10
			Elected members of Gram Panchayat and CAC members	09	02	11
Mysore	02-03-2012	Chamarajanagar	Members of General Parents Council of SDMC	7	10	17
			Children Members of SDMC	10	10	20
	03-03-2012	Kodagu	Assistant Teachers	15	10	25
			Head Teachers cum member secretaries of SDMC	05	08	13
Total				104	145	249

⁸ The education department, while computing the Composite Infrastructure Index of each district, followed a systematic procedure. The department has identified eight core infrastructure facilities for each primary school in the district; these were: toilets, girls' toilet, electricity, playground, drinking water, compound wall, library and ramps. One mark was assigned for each facility; for instance, if a school has all eight facilities then such school will score eight marks. To arrive at the actual percentage of the district, the total score obtained by all schools in the district is divided by the expected score from the district multiplied by hundred.

- All primary stakeholders, directly or indirectly responsible for the effective functioning of the SDMC at the school level;
- Children representatives in SDMC in Belgaum and Chamraj Nagara;
- Parents from General Parents' Council of SDMC in Ramanagar and Chamaraj Nagar districts;
- Elected parent members of the SDMC in Koppal and Ramanagar districts;
- Head teachers of Lower Primary Schools and Higher Primary Schools in Dharwar and Kodagu districts;
- Assistant teachers of LPS and HPS in Dharwar and Kodagu districts;
- Primary Health Workers (ANMs) and Anganawadi workers in Belagaum and Bidar districts;
- Civic Amenities Committee (CAC) and Gram Panchayat (GP) members in Kolar and Koppal districts; and
- Self Help Group Members (SHG) members in Kolar and Bidar districts.

ANNEXURE-II

THE CITIZENS CHARTER EVOLVED BY THE KARNATAKA STATE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND THE SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT AND MONITORING COMMITTEE COORDINATION FORUM AT THE STATE LEVEL ROUND TABLE ON MARCH 26, 2011

Citizens Charter

- The state government should immediately constitute an expert committee consisting of Primary Stakeholders to formulate a comprehensive policy on education
- The state should take measures to implement the Common School System in order to ensure equitable quality education to all children at the national and state level. The policy formulated by the above mentioned expert committee should facilitate and complement this process
- The state should take measures to provide education in the mother tongue from class I to class X and measures should be taken to teach English as a language at the mastery level
- The state should provide for necessary infrastructure and learning aids to provide meaningful learning experiences to recognize and honour the fundamental right of the physically challenged and special children in the mainstream school education
- The state should uphold the fundamental right of children in the Juvenile Justice System by providing similar quality education and facilities as compared to children in the mainstream education
- The state should take measures to provide orientations to School Development and Monitoring Committees immediately after the formation of SDMC at the school
- The quality of the mid-day meal needs to be improved further and measures for successful implementation of the programme
- The policy of sanctioning permission to private un-aided schools should be thoroughly reviewed and stringent measures should be adopted to handle maladministration and mismanagement in unaided schools
- The knowledge and experience of primary stakeholders at the grassroots should be the basis for policy, programme and law reforms and formulations
- The elected representatives, bureaucrats and all other government employees should send their children to state funded public schools
- A detailed discussion about implementation, follow up and evaluation should be made while planning an education project
- A specific time should be allocated for project implementation and completion. It should be such that the results of the project should be discussed extensively. The learning from this should be considered while planning the next project
- The pros-cons should be analysed while experimenting on various teaching methods
- Regional specialty should be understood while writing text books such that there is representation of all communities/regions
- A prompt survey of admission-attendance should be made and the current status should be reported
- The procedure of giving permission for setting up of private schools should be looked into again; procedures should be made strict
- Efficient policies should be made to address issues related to promotion, salary hike and transfer of teachers; one teacher per class system should come into practice
- Evaluation to assess if trainings to teachers are enhancing their skills should be carried out; number of trainings should reduce
- Primary school teachers should get paid leave to pursue higher studies
- An effective communication system should be established between school-community-other partners
- Selection of CRP-BRP should be reconsidered and made better
- Library should be compulsory in high schools; to give authority to schools for purchase of books
- School administration at district levels should be reformed
- Proper regulations to be set for temporary teachers selected through Zilla Panchayats

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