Sarat Kumar Rout[1*], Sumitra Mishra[2]

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGH SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE IN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TRIBAL AREAS OF ODISHA, INDIA

Sarat Kumar Rout[1*], Sumitra Mishra[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, School of Education, Ravenshaw University, Odisha, India
[2]Research Scholar, School of Education, Ravenshaw University, Odisha, India
*saratrout2007@rediffmail.com, mishra.sumitra10@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This piece of research seeks to study the community participation in planning, management and supervision of civil works as well as academic activities of government school at secondary stage through School Management and Development Committee (SMDC). The study was set in three constitutionally scheduled tribal districts namely Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Nabarangpur of Odisha. The data were collected by using a semi-structured interview schedule from SMDC members of 30 government secondary schools. The close-ended responses were analyzed by using percentage analysis and open-ended responses were embedded through thick description. The major findings of the study revealed that the Heads of the school concerned as the chairman of the SMDC has been initiating the formation process of the SMDC. The composition of SMDC was uniform and complied with the state government guidelines. Grossly, the Head and teacher members of the school had been monitoring and supervising civil works as well as academic activities of the school. It was observed that engagement in domestic works, lack of information in advance about the meeting, lack of awareness of role and responsibilities, weak articulation power of woman members from Schedule Caste (SC)/ Scheduled Tribe (ST) community and low educational level of the members were the prominent causes of low attendance rate in SMDC meetings particularly among the parents, Panchayat Raj Institution nominees (PRIs), Village Education Committee (VEC) and Self-Help Group (SHG) members. The study concludes that along with structural reform, some long-term context specific local strategies are required for the capacity building of community members for proactive participation in the SMDC.
Keywords: Community Participation; School Management and Development Committee; Panchayat Raj Institution; Village Education Committee; Self -Help Group; Rashtriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan

INTRODUCTION
The policy makers, associated with planning and management personnel involved in the process across the globe unanimously acknowledge the need of community involvement to ensure the access, enrolment, retention and quality of education at school level. The constitution of India in 1950 directed all states to elect local self- government bodies under the framework of the PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions) and endowed them with such powers and authority to function as units of self-government. Subsequently, the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) appointed by the Government of India recommended for establishment of three tier PRI(s) in India: Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad and envisaged that that primary education must come under the Department of Panchayati Raj. Ashok Mehta Committee (1977) was appointed to inquire into the causes of the poor functioning of PRI(s) and suggested measures for the same. The committee re-emphasized the need for involving Panchayats in local development and planning and viewed their role in terms of strengthening the planning process at the micro level (Chaturvedi, 2003). In the next phase, NPE-1986 (National Policy on Education) stressed on community involvement in educational management and the policy visualized direct community participation in the form of VEC(s) (Village Education Committees) to be responsible for administration of the delegated programmes in the field of education at the village level (Government of India, 1992). Then, SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), as an intervention programme, started in 2001-2002 to provide community owned quality education to all children at elementary school stage. It envisioned a larger community ownership of the school and emphasized on the formation and proper involvement of VEC(s), School Management Committee (SMC) comprising of teachers, parents, women members and members from disadvantaged sections. In tune with the earlier efforts, National Curriculum Framework-National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCF-NCERT-2005) as a precursor to the Right to Education Act, 2009 also reemphasized on community participation as a means of ensuring both quality and accountability in education. The Right to Education Act (2009) was enacted in the state from 1st April, 2010 to keep up with this pledge of decentralization of educational management. It was envisaged that SMC would be constituted for every government school at elementary stage with adequate representation of parents and a proportional representation from reserved categories and weaker sections including

women members. Meanwhile, Rashtriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) as a flagship scheme was launched in 2009 with the objectives to enhance access to secondary education and improve its quality. The document assigned special importance to decentralized planning and implementation with active involvement of community members, teachers, parents, local bodies including PRIs, Municipal Bodies and other stakeholders in the management of secondary education through establishment of multi-member SMDC.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Almost 40 years have already been passed since the introduction of community participation in form of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) / Mother Teacher Association (MTA) /VEC/ SMC at elementary stage. Majority of research studies in early 21st century confirmed about the violation of mandated norms in formation and composition of these organizations (Lal, 1997; Tyagi, 1999; Narayana & Chandrakant, 2000; Ramachandran, 2004; Sinha, 2008; Jalan & Panda, 2010; Tripathi & Bajpai, 2012). There was lack of unanimity in the formation of SMCs, the norms were not followed by the SMCs as formulated for their better structural development. The SMCs were formed for the name sake but the members were not aware about its formation, reformation and some members were also there who did not know whether still they are the members of SMCs (Kumar, 2016; Laldintluangi, 2017). Further, Singh & Sood (2016) stated that teachers as the SMCs members are moderate effective or less effective in backward districts and the main concern in this regard is the lack of awareness of the SMC members regarding their roles and responsibilities. Not a single school is aware about School Development Plan which is an important aspect of SMCs, contrary to the scene not a single school has formed SDP and the members are not aware about it (Sethi & Muddgal, 2017).

RMSA was implemented in 2009-10 and suggested community ownership through formation of the SMDC in line with SMC at elementary stage with minor modification in composition and accountability. Hence, studies are worthwhile to reflect upon the implementation status of suggested norms for formation and composition of the SMDC at secondary school stage. The SMDC(s) are supposed to undertake different micro and macro level initiatives in their annual plan for expansion of infrastructure as well as improvement of academic environment of secondary schools. The proactive involvement of community in planning, monitoring and supervision is essential for effective implementation of any plan. The close observations of the previous research studies conducted by (Padmashree, 2004; Pailwar and Mahajan, 2005; Yadav, 2006; Mor, 2008; Kalhotra, 2013) informed that community was more active in development of infrastructural facilities than academic activities of the school at elementary stage due to financial benefits. The president of VEC/SMC was one of elected community members rather than the Head of the school. H/she along with other members used to withdraw the annual school grants and also submit the utilization certificate to the office of the Block Education Officer (BEO) through the Head of the school. But SMDC structure gives financial power only to the Head and senior most teacher of the school as Chairman and Secretary of the SMDC rather than any outside elected community members. Further, earlier research studies conducted by (Kumar, 2005; Banerjee. et al, 2007; Mishra & Gartia, 2013) reported that SMC(s)/VEC(s) have not the ability to monitor academic activities or provide any type of academic support because of lower level of education and low socio-economic status among parent members and their weak articulation power. As the academic activity at secondary stage is tougher than the elementary stage, the supervision and monitoring of such activities are little difficult for illiterate/low qualified members. Therefore, research studies are required to shed light on nature and types **of** involvement of elected community members in planning, monitoring and supervision of civil works as well as academic activities of the school.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Under RMSA integrated flagship scheme, the Government of Odisha has taken a pioneering step in establishing SMDC(s) across the state since 22nd of January, 2011 as participatory democratic institution to ensure community participation in the process of schooling. This unique initiative has already completed 10 years since its implementation in the state. There is a need to understand the mechanism of community participation in secondary school activities particularly in tribal areas to explore how it has been functioning, the techniques used for community mobilization and the benefits accrued. Out of 30 revenue districts of Odisha, 6 districts like Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh are predominantly inhabited by scheduled tribes. The literacy rate in the state shows an upward trend recorded during 2001 and is about 73% (Census 2011), talking specifically about ST (Schedule Tribe) community as they form a majority of the population in the state of Odisha, the literacy rate is 52.24% for the ST. The figures prove that the ST communities fall behind the average literacy rate for the state. This difference may be due to the social inequalities still prevailing in the social fabric of the state. Therefore, there is a felt need to evaluate the formation, composition and functioning of the SMDC(s) in tribal areas in order to identify their strength and loopholes. Accordingly, the findings of the study would help the policy makers and other stakeholders to modify the existing guidelines of the SMDC at the state and national level. Keeping in view the requirements, the present study has focused to answer the following queries:

1. What were the procedures adopted for formation and composition of the SMDCs?
2. **How** did the members of the SMDC participate in planning, monitoring and supervision of civil works and academic activities of the school?

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Sarat Kumar Rout[1*], Sumitra Mishra[2]

Design: To answer the research questions asked above, the investigator used the *convergent parallel design*, a mixed-methods design. The research process can be symbolized as quantitative and qualitative (QUAN + QUAL; Morse, 1991). A convergent parallel design entails that the researcher concurrently conducts the quantitative and qualitative elements in the same phase of the research process, weighs the methods equally, analyzes the two components independently, and interprets the results together (Creswell & Pablo-Clark, 2011). With the purpose of corroboration and validation, the researcher aims to triangulate the methods by directly comparing the quantitative statistical results and qualitative findings. Quantitative approach used to study the existing status of phenomena under interest numerically. Qualitative research approach was also used to support quantitative findings. The approach gives room to the investigator to enter to the respondent's personal world in order to gain deeper and clear understanding of their knowledge, experiences and feelings (Creswell, 2003). Thus, this approach was earmarked for the investigation on the involvement of SMDC members in the management and supervision of secondary school academic and infrastructural developmental activities. Furthermore, the approach was used because sampling was predominantly be purposeful and this enabled the investigator to obtain rich sample in providing information related to the study. Therefore, qualitative research approach enabled the SMDC members to describe and narrate their experiences in their own words. Therefore, the investigator in this study used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches within this research design.

Participants: Out of 30 districts in the state, six tribal dominated districts namely Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh were considered for the study. These six districts coming under three administrative divisions i.e. Sundargarh district coming under North division, Mayurbhanj district coming under central division, Koraput, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri comeing under South division. By adopting multistage random sampling technique, the investigator selected one tribal revenue district from each division-North, South and Central of Odisha. Further, the investigator selected one most backward block and one most advanced block from each sampled district of all three divisions. After selection of one most backward and one most advance block from each district, the investigator used simple random sampling techniques to select five secondary schools from each block of three districts. In order to collect relevant data, the investigator collected data from 354 SMDC members (90 teacher representatives, 90 parent representatives, 30 PRI members, 30 Village Education Committee members, 30 Self Help Group members and 54 DPC/DEO nominees) from 30 secondary schools spreading over three tribal districts.

Instrumentation: A semi-structured interview schedule was developed by the investigator which consisted of 13 structured and 24 unstructured questions to obtain relevant information from the SMDC members about formation and composition of SMDC; its different functions and provisions; roles and responsibilities of the members and level of participation in the SMDC meetings.

Data Collection: After getting necessary permission from the S & ME (School and Mass Education) Department, Government of Odisha as well as from the office of the DEOs of concerned districts, the investigators personally visited all sampled schools of Mayurbahanj, Nabarangapur and Sundargarh district to collect data. The investigators had conducted one to one interview with different category of SMDC members (teacher representatives, parent representatives, PRI members, VEC members and SHG members and DPC/DEO nominees) of the sampled schools to collect required data for the study.

Techniques of Data Analysis: In the present study, the close-ended responses were analyzed by using percentage analysis and content analysis was done for open-ended responses by using thick description.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formation and Composition of the SMDC

It was found that all sample schools of the research areas had formed the SMDC within one year from the issuance of letter Vide No. 412/SME/VIII-A SME(SCH) 4/11 Dated 22/01/2011 by Department of S & ME, Government of Odisha. A majority of the Heads of school (60%) stated that they had not received any support materials for constitution of the SMDC. However, interaction with the Heads revealed that most of the then Heads of school who had received support material namely UTKRASH and formed the SMDC for the first time in their school were retired on superannuation. The existing regular Heads or Heads (I/C) in many schools were not aware of this document. Further, office of the DEO (District Education Officer) had not been organising regular capacity building programmes for members of the SMDC. The SMDC meeting register and its proceedings had been the only source for formation of SMDC as viewed by many Heads of the school.

The suggested composition of the SMDC consists of maximum of 17 members including the Chairman and Secretary. This includes nine elected members, out of which four representatives from the PTA (Parent Teacher Association), three representatives from teachers of the school concerned, one representative from VEC of the respective village to which the school concerned caters and one representative from woman groups i.e. SHG(s) (Self Help Groups). The Head and senior most assistant trained graduate teacher of the school concerned and two PRI members are the ex-officio of the SMDC. Additionally, four more representatives are nominated to the committee, out of which three experts each from Science, Humanities and Art/Craft/Culture background to be nominated by DPC (District Project Coordinator), one education officer to be nominated by concerned DEO. But the specific observations and comments of the Heads of the schools regarding composition of the SMDC reflected that some community elected leaders i.e. Sarpanch/Ward councillor/Ward member, VEC and SHG members were partially involved. However, there were ambiguities in selection of VEC members as noticed by majority of the Heads of the schools. To cite one Head of the school stated that:

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION THROUGH SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE IN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TRIBAL AREAS OF ODISHA, INDIA

It is not clarified in the letter about the selection process of members from VEC and SHG. As such there is non-existence of VEC at present. Further my school is catering to eight revenue villages. Every village has a lower primary or elementary school as well as SHG group. I am treating the president of the SMC of the school of the concerned village as VEC member. In the letter it is mentioned that 'One member from VEC of the village to which the school concerned caters' which clearly spell out that eight VEC members must be represented in the SMDC. But final ceiling specifies all total 17 members. This creates anomalies while selecting VEC members for SMDC.

The above excerpt shows that the Head of the school had been facing challenges in selection of VEC members because of absence of clear-cut guidelines as well as lack of involvement of office of the DEO. Similarly, some conflicting views were noticed about formation process of the SMDC as stated by some parent members during interaction. To quote one parent member:

The Headmaster is an influential person in this locality with political link. He never calls any PTA meeting for formation of SMDC in the school. He includes the name of parent members in the SMDC from whom he will get blind support for work of the school.

In spite of contradictory views expressed by negligible percentage of parent members about the formation process of the SMDC, it is concluded that the Heads of the school concerned as the chairman of the SMDC have been initiating the formation process of the SMDC. Field observation confirmed that the composition of SMDCs was uniform and in compliance with the Government rules. The finding, therefore, is an indication that Government have been able to strengthen democracy at grassroots or community level. The finding of the present study contradicts the findings of Ramchandran (2001) who reported that despite the mandated composition, majority of the members were from the dominant group in the village. There was power tussle for the membership because of the substantial amount of funds transferred to the committee for the construction of school building. Furthermore, Lal (1997) observed that there was no adequate representation of women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and minorities. The members were mostly people from upper caste who were agriculturists. This has been substantiated by studies of (Tyagi, 1999; Narayana and Chandrakant, 2000) who revealed that selection of right persons is a challenge because the influential and powerful people want to see themselves or their proxies as members and there were no proper representation of women and people from reserved categories in the SMDC.

Participation of SMDC members

SMDCs are expected to take necessary steps for overall growth and development of the school for academic excellence. For convenience, an attempt has been made to discuss in detail the participation of members in planning, monitoring and supervision of civil and academic activities of the school as envisaged for the SMDCs in the various Chapters of the RMSA Framework, School and Mass Literacy, MHRD, Govt. of India, 2014.

Frequency of the SMDC Meetings: Less than 12% of the schools had conducted monthly SMDC meeting as per the mandate of RMSA framework. Interaction in this regard with the Heads and other members of the SMDC revealed diverse snap which indicated that besides a negligible percentage of the Heads of the school (less than 14%), none of the SMDC members had idea about the number times the meeting to be conducted monthly/annually as suggested in RMSA framework. On further probing, the Heads of the schools reported that frequency of the SMDC meetings depends on the allocation of the budget under annual RMSA grant or any non-recurring budget for new construction etc. Some of the specific remarks of the Heads of the school for failing to conduct monthly SMDC meetings were given below. One Head of the school narrated that:

I am over burdened with other official works, therefore I usually call meeting after getting Rs. 50,000/- annual RMSA grant to discuss how to incur expenditure headwise and to select in-charge to procure the materials or goods from the market.

Another Head of the school observed that:

Though there is provision to meet the expenditure towards the minimum hospitality required for conducting meeting out of annual grant, we usually receive this budget in the last quarter of every year and supposed to submittee the utilisation certificate by first quarter next year. After submission of utilisation certificate, we do not have funds to meet the expenditure towards meeting. Therefore, I used to conduct limited meeting as and when required.

The above quotes acknowledge the limitations of the Heads of school about the rationale for holding monthly SMDC meeting which also indicates the flaws in the guideline of the government. The frequency of SMDC meeting should not depend on financial allocation of the government. Besides the civil works, SMDC is also equally responsible to work for academic improvement of the school. Further, provisions for hospitality of the members should not be an issue as community participation in education of their wards is a voluntary service. The finding clearly indicated that SMDC formation was a mere formality than a necessity. The Head of the school as Chairman of the SMDC was ignorant about the purpose of decentralization powers and functions. This finding corroborates to the findings of research studies undertaken by (Lal ,1997; Tyagi, 1999; Nayak, 2002; Leclerg, 2003; Thapa, 2012; Kumar, 2016). They found that although VECs and SMC were supposed to meet monthly to check education inputs, set rules and monitor the school; in practice they rarely met.

Attendance of Members in Meeting: It was found that cent per cent of the teacher representatives (100 %) and majority of the DPC/DEO nominee (61 %) were attending the SMDC meetings. But less than half of the members (20 to 49 %) from other categories were attending the meeting. Further, attendance percentages of the SHG members were

Sarat Kumar Rout[1*], Sumitra Mishra[2]

found to be the lowest (20 %) among all categories of members of the SMDC. Some of the specific responses regarding the reason for their non-attendance in the meeting were as follows:

One of the female parent members from ST community narrated that:

I have been avoiding the meetings intentionally because of my low self-esteem in the presence of teachers, resource persons and other dignified persons of my village. In fact I suggested Headmaster of the school to send the record to my home for signature if required.

One of the male parent members informed that:

Initially I have attended meeting 2/3 times. I found that teachers and other experts are competent enough to look after the affairs of the school. I do not know how to participate in the deliberations. Since then I skipped to attend the meeting.

One of the VEC members expressed that:

I have attended initial meetings two/three times. I found that teachers are mostly taking the responsibilities for procuring required materials for the school. In the meeting, usually approval is accorded to purchase the materials out of the annual grants received under RMSA head. My presence in the meeting hardly matters. I had given my consent that if there is a need for signature then I will come for signing.

Interaction with nominated member revealed that they have been delivering their service to school free of cost. In return, neither school nor the office of the DPC/DEO providing single rupees towards travelling cost. In this connection, one of the nominated members stated that:

I have been regularly attending monthly meeting for the last two years. Every time it is not possible to spend money from own pocket towards T.A to attend the meeting. Neither school nor DEO office gives any incentive or minimum honorarium towards this service.

It is clear from specific narratives of the members that attendance rate of the members in meeting is a challenge with multiple causes namely engagement in domestic work, absence of prior information about the schedule of meeting, lack of time because of working hours and lack of information about the roles and responsibilities and weak articulation power of woman particularly from SC/ST community for which large scale participation of parents, PRI, VEC and SHG members in meeting has not been possible. This finding is in tune with the earlier findings of Sahayi, Kerala, (1997) who claimed that apathy from the government functionaries, no efforts made for capacity building of the members. Further, Narayana and Chandrakant (2000) found that lack of proper coordination between its members and the administrative officials at the block and district levels was also a prominent cause for poor attendance in meeting. Mathew (2001) reported that the vicious circle of poverty prevented the poor parents from participating in the school activities in a regular way because of the opportunity cost. Bhattacharya & Mohalik (2015) observed that lack of interest and awareness among poor and illiterate parents were the main problems in participation in meetings.

Planning and Estimation of Works: As it was found that none of the schools had formed separate school building committee and academic committee within the SMDC as suggested in RMSA framework, it was asked to the Heads of schools to know how did they plan and estimate wide range of civil and academic works like protection of school premises, maintenance of playground, compound walls, classrooms toilets, furniture, provisions for drinking water or other basic infrastructural facilities needed by the school. The SMDC members other than teachers were completely ignorant of the school perspective plans and annual school development plan. On responding to the question about annual school improvement plan, the Heads and teachers expressed that they have been developing and approving the same in SMDC meeting at the beginning of the academic session. On further probing to the question whom they had been consulting for planning and estimation for civil works, the responses were mixed and inconclusive. One of the Head of the schools commented as follows:

As the annual RMSA grant is fixed i.e. Rs. 50,000/ to every school for meeting the recurring expenditure, we plan budget for this amount according to our priorities of the needs. Outside members are less familiar with our priorities of needs. In meeting, we inform them about immediate needs of the school as well as justify developed budget plan. After getting the amount, we call a meeting and discuss the approved expenditure headwise. For the last 7 years I have never received any complaint from any members of the SMDC about our plan or its expenditure.

Another Head of the school observed that:

The limited annual RMSA grant Rs. 50,000/- for specific purpose like electricity bills, repairing of bench and desk, some other regular contingencies do not give enough space for involvement of outside members in planning and estimation for civil works.

The above comments of the Heads of the school indicates that either they were not informing SMDC members other than teachers about the needs of the school or did not realize the importance of their involvement before any planning and estimation of works. In fact, they had been playing a dominant role in planning and estimation of different civil and academic activities of the schools. The SMDC constitutes members from diverse groups. The idea behind such diversities is to create awareness among them about the accountability and ownership. The PRI (s) represents their member in the SMDC with an intention that they would pursue/generate fund for the school from local Member of Legislative Assemble (MLA)/ Member of Parliament (M.P) grant. So that they can also raise the problems and needs of the school at the Panchayat level meeting. This can be possible only when they will be involved in planning and estimation of work plan. The fundamental question arises here that why they will be serious about its monitoring and supervision for which they have not been involved. The above narratives of the Heads confirmed their limited orientation about the purpose of formation of the SMDC at secondary school stage. When outside members were

probed whether or not they wish to be involved in determining and defining school developmental activities, one of the parent members showed interest for being involved as follows:

If we were involved, it would make us to know what is actually taking place in school and this would put us in a better position to motivate other parent members for their intervention.

The findings indicate that parent members would like to be involved in planning school activities. The need to involve different stakeholders in defining and determining school development activities was emphasized by Hersey et. al. (2006) who argued that this approach brings together resources-people, capital and equipment in the most effective way in order to accomplish the goals.

Monitoring and Supervision of Civil Works: The information pertaining to team effort of the members in monitoring and supervision revealed that majority of the teacher members (73%) and negligible percentages of members (upto 26%) from other categories were involved in monitoring and supervision of civil works. In order to pin down the causes of poor level of involvement of members, the investigator interrogated the Heads of the school. The specific valued observations of the Heads of the school were:

One of the Head of the schools stated that:

Mostly working parents and nominated members do not come to school for monitoring and supervision of the building work because of their own pre-engagements. If called purposively for this work, one or two active parent members and ward members would come to supervise the status work.

Another Head of the school reported that:

It is possible for some parent members as well as PRI members to help teachers in monitoring and supervising civil works. However, the problem is that parent members in this locality are not properly oriented how to participate and whom they are supposed to meet to complete the school work.

Another Head of the school observed that:

Even if they are called to participate in supervision exercise, do you think they will contribute? Once I informed to the engineer about the poor quality of materials used by the contractor for construction of the building. Next day local community leader gave me a telephonic call and said why are you interfering in that matter?

Responses from the Heads of the school and other members confirmed that apathetic attitude on the part of parent members leads for low level of participation in monitoring and supervising activities of the civil works. Grossly, the teacher members and the Heads of the school concerned have been monitoring and supervising civil works. This finding resonated to earlier findings of (Mishra & Gartia, 2013 and Reddy & Devi, 2015) who expressed that very few VECs/SMC members were actively engaged in monitoring and supervising civil works but mostly one or two members influential members alongside the Head teacher had been doing this work.

Monitoring and Supervision of Academic Activities: Besides the civil works, the SMDC is supposed to monitor academic activities like enrolment drives namely special campaigns for girl children, disabled children, working children and also create awareness among parents by door-to-door campaign and check dropout rates periodically so as to ensure attendance and retention of all children and teachers. The obtained information in these aspects has been given below:

Availability of required instructional facilities: On responding to the question how did you ensure that school has been equipped with required instructional facilities for smooth conduct of day-to-day teaching–learning process. The specific remarks of the members on this probing were:

One of the parent members stated that:

Headmasters and teachers know this better than us about the required instructional facilities. We assure them to assist in procurement of these facilities either from annual RMSA grant or by taking up the matter with higher authorities.

In this connection, one of the DPC nominees described that "We have informed to the headmaster that he should give priority to those items in the agenda which are required for healthy teaching-learning process on day to day basis". But contradictory views expressed by one of the Head of the schools that:

Outside members are least interested about the instructional facilities of the school. In consultation with teachers and students we used to prepare the expenditure head of the annual RMSA grant and send the same to the office of DEO with due approval from the SMDC.

The responses of the members other than teachers indicated that they were either having callous attitude towards it or squarely depending on teacher members because of their busy schedule. But some of the DPC nominees and parent members responded that the Heads and teachers members were empowered to come out with priority needs and put for the same in the SMDC meeting. It is concluded that outside SMDC members were not interacting with students about their needs and problems pertaining to instructional facilities and issues.

Enrolment and retention of students: The SMDC of the concerned school has the responsibility to ensure enrolment of all children in their locality irrespective of their religion, race, caste, sex, language, disability, place of birth etc. In order to achieve this, the SMDC may initiate enrolment drives namely special campaigns for girl children, children with special needs, working children and also created awareness among parents by door to door campaign. SMDC is also required to periodically verify dropout rates and ensure attendance and retention of all children. It was found from interaction with the Heads and other members of the SMDCs that dropout rate and absenteeism of students have been reduced since last 5/6 years in both developed and backward blocks. Unequivocally, all the Heads and teachers stated that parents were showing interest in continuing education of their wards because of government incentives like free uniform, books, stipend, midday meal but they were not being serious about their attendance. It was found that the

Sarat Kumar Rout[1*], Sumitra Mishra[2]

SMDCs have been organising different types of awareness programmes for parents i.e. "Prabash Utashav and Palli Sabha" and teachers were also visiting home of the absentee students particularly in rural areas. This may be considered as one of the significant achievements of community participation in education.

Enrolment and retention of girl students: Gender gap with respect to enrolment, retention and achievement was a perennial issue particularly in tribal areas for the last 70 years. In this connection, high majority of teachers (89 %) had stated that the retention rate of girl student has increased positively than past years and also acknowledged growing interest of parents towards the education of girl children. Further, the contribution of local community head i.e. '*Sarpanch*' and local health worker i.e**.** '*Asha Didi*' in bringing back the drop out girls to the school. One of the DPC nominated members described that:

Residential facilities for the girls at school, awareness campaign, eradication of corporal punishment as well as no-detention policy at elementary level and training of the teachers have increased the retention rate of girls in tribal areas. Parents are also becoming more aware of education of their girls than past and also are motivated to send the girls to attend the school regularly.

The above statement made it clear that enrolment as well as retention of girl students in urban areas was better than the rural tribal areas. It is concluded that affirmative action, policies and multiple micro and macro level area specific interventions of government have been very effective in reducing the dropout rate and absenteeism among girl students in tribal areas.

Focus on Education of Differently Abled Children and Children With Special Needs: One of the important tasks of the SMDC members is to look after the interest and needs of differently abled children and CWSN (Children With Special Needs) in their locality. Besides few teacher members, no other members were aware of the needs of differently abled children. The overall awareness of the SMDC members including some teacher members revealed that till now they have been upholding the age-old dispositions that these children are supposed to attend special schools. None of the schools had any specific infrastructural or instructional materials to support the education of differently abled children except ramps. These schools were only enrolling orthopedically handicapped children and partially visually impaired children. Further, none of the teachers were trained how to use these instructional materials to the benefit of differently abled children. The existing infrastructural and instructional facilities of the school did not permit the members to make provisions for the education of differently abled children.

The overall findings pertaining to involvement of SMDC members in academic activities of school show that though members were not fully aware of their responsibilities, they were active in limited academic activities namely enrolment, retention and occasional monitoring of the attendance of students. This is in line with the findings of earlier research studies of (Menon 1999; Padmashree, 2004; Wankhede and Sengupta, 2005; Duwarah, 2010) who found that even though VEC(s)/SMC (S) were not functioning as effective participatory organizations, they were considerably effective in increasing enrolment and attendance of girl children and children coming from other disadvantaged sections by organizing bridge courses in order to help children attain minimum competency before mainstreaming them to respective classes as per their ages. It had done nothing to improve the quality of education and had practically no say over matters pertaining to teachers. But findings of previous studies undertaken by (Sharma & Vinayak, 1996; Mishra & Gartia, 2013; Banerjee. et al, 2005; Kumar, 2005) presented a contrary perspective that community members have neither the ability nor the authority to monitor academic activities or extend any type of academic support to school.

A close analysis of findings of research studies reveals that numbers of problems have plagued the effective functioning of community-based channels like PTA, MTA, VEC/SMC/SMDC. The major constraints were lack of collective identity, planning and coordination and control over financial and administrative powers; absence of regular capacity building programmes for members; vicious circle of poverty of parents; caste, gender and political affiliation of members; lack of provision to pay some compensation to members; lack of interest and awareness among poor and illiterate parents which was reported by Sahayi, 1997; Tyagi, 1999; Vinayak, 2001; Mathew, 2001; Yadav, 2006; Nayak, 2009; Bhattacharya & Mohalik , 2015; Reddy & Devi, 2015; Kumar, 2016. Further, the findings of the research studies undertaken by Menon, 1999; Narayana and Chandrakant, 2000; Lal, 1997 concluded that there is no proper coordination between the community structures and government officials. The quality support from these structures is not visible. Equally these structures have not worked for the betterment of SMCs/ VECs and they perceive their role as mere 'supervisors' as reported by Shankar (2008).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the study clearly show that decentralisation policy has not essentially enhanced in empowerment of community at secondary school stage in tribal areas even though, decentralised policy provided opportunities to community and community based institutional channels for participation in educational planning, management and supervision through formation of SMDC. The capacity building of community members has not been possible so far. In fact, community participation of SMDC at secondary stage diminished the active involvement of local community in comparison to SMC at elementary school stage because of control of financial power by the Head and senior most teachers as the Chairman and Secretary of the SMDC respectively. Some outside members also stated that SMDC meetings were held merely to inform outside members about the use of annual school grant. They were marginally involved in the planning of allocations as well as providing input into planning for civil works and academic improvement of the school.

According to the results of the research and discussion, the suggestions given are: 1) Along with orientation programme and awareness programme, the Department of School and Mass Education, Govt. of Odisha should come out with a

plan to provide a minimum allowance to members from socio-economically weaker backgrounds to increase their motivation to attend the meeting and compensate their daily wages. 2) In order to encourage active participation of women members, the Department of School and Mass Education should develop short films which could be displayed to show participation of women members in the SMDC meeting particularly in preparation of agenda, actual deliberations, decision making and recording of meetings. 3) Exposure visits for the SMDC members to schools where SMDCs are functioning effectively may be organised with funds earmarked for the purpose. 4) The Heads and teachers should also be properly oriented how to involve the outside members in planning, estimation and monitoring for civil works of the schools. Further, they need to internalize that the functioning of the SMDC should not be confined to Chairman, secretary and one or two members but it should be a joint responsibility of the school and community. 5) The quality of learning which is one of the primary objectives of the SMDC needs to be monitored from time to time. Therefore, School and Mass Education Department, government of Odisha needs to issue instruction to schools to form academic sub-committee within the SMDC to focus on academic matters like curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices. 6) The DPCs and DEOs nominated may be oriented by state resource persons how to empower SMDC members to add academic inputs to institutional activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

REFERENCES

[1]   Banerjee, A; Banerjee, R; Duflo, E; Glennerster, R & Khemani, S. (2007). Can information campaigns raise awareness and local participation in primary education? *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 14 Issue, 65-72.

[2]   Bhattacharya, D. and Mohalik, R. (2015). Problem faced by the SMC members in implementing the RTE Act 2009: An analysis. *Edu quest an International Referred Journal in Education,* 4(2), 15-24.

[3]   Census, GoI (2011). *Census Digital Library*, http://censusindia.gov.in/DigitalLibrary/Archive_home.aspx.

[4]   Chaturvedi, A. (2003). Indian experiments with decentralized governance. *The Ritinjali Journal.* Retrieved from https://www.ritinjali.org/content/ritinjali-magazine.

[5]   Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[6]   Creswell, J.W, Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* 2. Los Angeles: SAGE.

[7]   District Census Hand Book – Odisha (2011). http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/OdishaA.html

[8]   Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development. (1966). *The Education Commission (1964-66.)* New Delhi, India: Government of India.

[9]   Duwarah, R.R. (2010). *Effect of community participation on elementary education in Assam.* Assam University, Silchar.

[10]   Government of Odisha (2010). *The Odisha Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules 2010*.

[11]   Hersey, P; Blanchard, K.H and Jonshon, D.E.F (2006). *Management of organizational behaviour: Leading human resources (8th edit.).* Landon: Prentice hall.

[12]   Johnson, R. B., & Christensen, L. B. (2004). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

[13]   Kumar, S. (2016). Roles and functions of school management committees (SMCs) of government middle schools in district Kullu of Himachal Pradesh: A case study. Retrieved from http://oaji.net/articles/2016/1201-1476446631.pdf

[14]   Lal, M. (1997). *Community participation through Village Education Committee (VEC) in primary education in selected blocks of Sitamarhi District in Bihar*. New Delhi: NUEPA.

[15]   Leclerq, F. (2003). *Education policy reforms and the quality of the school system: A field study of primary schools in Madhya Pradesh, India.*Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d4de/066d46deea62248c44bfad50ea4662719969.pdf.

[16]   Laldintluangi, T. (2017). Structure and functioning of school management committees in elementary schools of Lunglei district: A critical study *(Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation),* Mizoram University. Retrieved from http://mzuir.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/734/1/T.Laldintluangi,%20Edu.pdf.

[17]   Mathew, D. A. & Nambiar, M. (2002). Primary Education and Panchayati Raj Institutions: An overview. *Participation & Governance*, 8 (25), 3-6.

[18]   Menon, P. (1999). *Functioning of Village Education Committee: A study of Haryana*. New Delhi: NUEPA. Retrieved from https://www.educationforallinindia.com/page44.html.

[19]   Mishra, P. & Gartia, R. (2013). Administration of elementary education in Odisha: Role of village education committees. *Voice of Research*, 2 (3).

[20]   MHRD, GoI (1992). *Report of the CABE Committee on Policy*. New Delhi: (Author).

[21]   MHRD, GoI (1964). *National Education Commission (1964-1966*). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kothari_Commission.

[22]   MHRD, GoI (1986). *National Policy on Education-1986*. http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth_anoun/npe86.pdf

Sarat Kumar Rout[1*], Sumitra Mishra[2]

[23]   MHRD, GoI (1986). *Programme of Action: National Policy on Education 1986*. New Delhi: (Author).

[24]   MHRD, GoI (2010). *Right to Education Act, 2009*. Department of School Education and Literacy. New Delhi, India: (Author).

[25]   Morse, J. M. (1991). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing Research*, 40, 120–123.

[26]   Narayana, M. & Chandrakant, M. (2000). *Functioning of Vec in Satra district of Maharashtra: A study in reference to adult education*. (Unpublished Dissertation). NUEPA: New Delhi.

[27]   Nayak, P.M. (2009). Community participation in the universalisation of primary education. *Academic Excellence*. ISBN-13: 978-8189901738.

[28]   Padmashree, R. P. (2004). *Community participation in the process of universalization of elementary education*: *an evaluative study. (*Unpublished M.Ed. Dissertation), Bangalore University.

[29]   Pailwar, V.K. & Mahajan, V. (2005). Janshala in Jharkhand: An experiment with community involvement in education. *International Education Journal*, *6*. 373-385. Retrieved https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ854991.

[30]   Ramachandaran, V. (2001). Community Participation in Primary Education: Innovations in Rajasthan. *Economic Political Weekly*. June 23.

[31]   Reddy, A.P. & Devi, D. (2015). Community participation in improving enrolment, retention and quality of elementary education: A case study of Andhra Pradesh. *Bulgarian journal of Science and Education Policy, 9.*

[32]   Sahayi, (1997). National study on community mobilisation and participation in DPEP. Retrieved from https://www.pria.org/project-details-national-study-on-community-mobilisation-and-participation-in-dpep-30-99-7.

[33]   Shankar Girija, K. (2008). Community Involvement in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: An assessment of the Village Education Committees in India. *Madhya Pradesh Journal of Social sciences. Vol. 13(1): 75-88*

[34]   Sharma, T. N. (2008). Structure and mechanism of community participation in school management. *Journal of Education and Research*, 1,72- 85. Retrieved https://kusoed.edu.np/journal/index.php/je/article/view/78.

[35]   Sethi, C. & Muddgal, A. (2017). A study of role of SMC as mentioned in Right to Education Act, 2009 among municipal corporation primary schools of Delhi. Learning Community: 8 *(1)*: 39-47, April, 2017. DOI: 10.5958/2277-3371.2017.00007.9. Retrieved fromhttps://ndpublisher.in/admin/issues/LCV8N1g.pdf

[36]   Sinha, P.K. (2008). *Community involvement in elementary education in Jharkhand*. Paper presented at National Seminar, NUEPA, New Delhi.

[37]   Singh, A. & Sood, V. (2016).Functioning of School Management Committee in elementary school of tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh.*Scholarly Research journal for Humanities Science and English language,3(*18), 4079-4089.

[38]   Thapa, S. (2012). How functional are school management committees in the present context? Researching reality internship. C*entre for civil society, 271*. Retrieved from www.ccs.in/internship_papers/2013/271.

[39]   Tripathi, K., & Bajpai, A. (2012). Village education committees in Uttar Pradesh: Structure and member profile. *Journal   of   Indian   Education,   37*,   67-80.   Retrieved   from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303224582_Village_Education_Committees_in_Uttar_Pradesh_Structure_and_Member_Profile/citation/download.

[40]   Tyagi, R.S. (1999). Role of Village Education Committees in improvement of community participation in education. *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration, 13* (3).

[41]   Vinayak, V. (2001).*Evaluation of village education committee with reference to community participation and school management in DPEP III,* (Unpublished)SIEMAT, Allahabad.

[42]   Yadav, R. S. (2006). *Community Participation in Education: Role of VECs in Haryana*. Ambala Cantt: Associate Publishers.

[43]   Wankhede, G.G. & Sengupta, A.(2005). Village education committees in West Bengal, India: Planned vision and beyond. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *25* (5), 569–579.