

Role Perception and Performance of SMC Members in Implementing the RTE Act 2009 in Bihar

^aJay Prakash, ^bRasmirekha Sethy

^aResearch Scholar, Utkal University

^bAssociate Professor, Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the perceptions and performance of School Management Committee (SMC) members in implementing the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 in Bihar. The study collected data from 60 SMC members of schools in three districts in Bihar using a survey approach and multistage sampling procedures. The data were analysed by quantitatively using percentages, and the findings suggested that SMC members understood their duties and obligations under the RTE Act, but they still needed further training to grasp the RTE Act. The survey also discovered that SMC members experienced a number of obstacles in implementing the RTE Act, such as a lack of awareness, insufficient training, and insufficient resources. The study has suggested for the orientation for SMC members to participate in the school management committee for effective implementation of the RTE Act 2009 in Bihar.

Keywords: Role Perception, Performance, SMC Members, RTE Act 2009

Introduction

Education is one of the most powerful tools to uplift a nation and equip children with essential skills. It provides opportunities for career development and stability in life. A college degree and knowledge of your subjects increase your chances of getting higher-paying jobs resulting in financial security. Access to quality education reduces the gaps between social classes and uplifts the marginalized sections of society. Education reduces crime and makes our society more peaceful as educated individuals are less likely to participate in criminal activities. Quality education is one of the most important tools for gaining confidence and expressing your thoughts, perspectives, feelings, or ideas.

The Parliament of India enacted the Right to Education Act 2009 to grapple with the downward spiral of the education system and poor learning outcomes. The act aims towards providing free and compulsory elementary education to kids between the age group of 6 years to 14 years. The Indian government wants every Indian child to get a quality education, irrespective of gender, caste, creed, and family income. The RTE Act was enacted on 4 August 2009, and since its inception, we have seen a lot of changes in the enrolment levels, equitable access, literacy rates of states and education standards. The enactment of the Right to Education Act under Article 21a of the Indian Constitution was a major move to change the failing landscape of education in India. According to a report by UNESCO, 159 countries around the world guarantee free education for 9 years or more and India is now a part of the list. The act came into effect on 1 April 2010 and it clearly states education is a fundamental right of every child. All private schools must keep 25% of seats reserved for children belonging to weaker sections of society. Unrecognized schools cannot interview a child or the parent for admission. No child

pursuing elementary education shall be held back, expelled, or asked to pass a board examination. The RTE act 2009 offers provisions for students who dropped out of school. Schools are not allowed to charge any capitation fee at any step while giving admission to a child. All government and aided schools should create a School Management Committee composed of 75 percent members as parents or guardians (CARE India, (n.d.)).

The RTE Act has successfully managed to increase enrolment in the upper primary level (Class 6-8). Stricter infrastructure norms resulted in improved school infrastructure, especially in rural areas. More than 3.3 million students secured admission under 25% quota norm under RTE. It made education inclusive and accessible nationwide (Drishti IAS, (n.d.)). The Right to Education Act 2009 is a significant step towards providing quality education to every child in India. It has helped to increase enrolment levels, equitable access, literacy rates of states, and education standards. The act has made education inclusive and accessible nationwide. Education is a fundamental right of every child, and the RTE Act has ensured that every child has access to quality education.

Elementary education is the foundation of a child's academic journey. It is the first step towards gaining knowledge and skills that will help them in their future endeavors. The status of elementary education in India has improved significantly over the years, but there is still a long way to go. According to a report by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for elementary education in India was 99.2% in 2019-20 (CARE India, (n.d.)). However, the quality of education and learning outcomes remain a concern.

Bihar, one of the largest states in India, has made significant progress in elementary education in recent years. According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018, Bihar has shown improvement in the enrollment of children in the age group of 6-14 years. However, the state still lags behind in terms of literacy rates and quality of education. According to the same report, only 63.8% of the population in Bihar is literate, and the literacy rate among women is even lower at 53.3% (Times of India, 2019). The Right to Education Act 2009 has played a significant role in improving the status of elementary education in India and Bihar. The act mandates free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. The act has provisions for students who dropped out of school and ensures that no child pursuing elementary education shall be held back, expelled, or asked to pass a board examination. The act also mandates that all private schools must keep 25% of seats reserved for children belonging to weaker sections of society (CARE India, (n.d.)).

According to a report by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, Bihar has achieved a GER of 99.6% in elementary education in 2016-17 (Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2018). However, the state still has a long way to go in terms of quality of education and learning outcomes. According to a study by Pratichi (India) Trust and the Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Patna, more than 50% of the population in Bihar is devoid of letters. The study also found that more than two-thirds of women in Bihar suffer from a basic infirmity - incapability of reading, writing, and arithmetic

calculations. The status of elementary education in India and Bihar has improved significantly over the years, but there is still a long way to go. The Right to Education Act 2009 has played a significant role in improving the status of elementary education in India and Bihar. Bihar has achieved a GER of 99.6% in elementary education, but the state still lags behind in terms of literacy rates and quality of education. The government needs to take more initiatives to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes in Bihar.

Rationale of the Study

The Right to Education Act 2009 has been a significant step towards providing quality education to every child in India. However, there are still several issues that need to be addressed. One of the major issues is the lack of adequate infrastructure and resources in schools. Many schools in rural areas lack basic facilities such as clean drinking water, toilets, and electricity (Chakraborty, 2019). The lack of infrastructure and resources affects the quality of education and learning outcomes. Another issue is the shortage of trained teachers. According to a report by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, there is a shortage of more than 1 million teachers in elementary schools across the country (Sethi, & Muddgal, 2017). The shortage of teachers affects the quality of education and learning outcomes. The School Management Committee (SMC) plays a crucial role in the implementation of the Right to Education Act 2009. However, there are several issues with the functioning of the SMCs. One of the major issues is the lack of awareness among SMC members about their roles and responsibilities. Many SMC members are not aware of the provisions of the RTE Act and their role in ensuring the effective implementation of the act. Another issue is the lack of training and capacity building of SMC members. Many SMC members lack the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively (Status of Education in India Report, 2018). Bihar, one of the largest states in India, has made significant progress in elementary education in recent years. However, the state still lags behind in terms of literacy rates and quality of education. According to a report by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018, only 63.8% of the population in Bihar is literate, and the literacy rate among women is even lower at 53.3%. The shortage of trained teachers and lack of infrastructure and resources are some of the major issues affecting the quality of education in Bihar. The Right to Education Act 2009 has been a significant step towards providing quality education to every child in India. However, there are still several issues that need to be addressed, such as the lack of infrastructure and resources in schools, shortage of trained teachers, and issues with the functioning of the SMCs. The government needs to take more initiatives to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes in Bihar and other parts of the country.

Statement of the Problem

The Right to Education Act 2009 mandates free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. The School Management Committee (SMC) plays a crucial role in the implementation of the act. The SMC is responsible for monitoring the functioning of the school, preparing and recommending the school plan,

and monitoring the utilization of the grants received from the government. However, there are several issues with the functioning of the SMCs. One of the major issues is the lack of awareness among SMC members about their roles and responsibilities. Many SMC members are not aware of the provisions of the RTE Act and their role in ensuring the effective implementation of the act. Another issue is the lack of training and capacity building of SMC members. Many SMC members lack the necessary skills and knowledge to perform their duties effectively. The present study aims to examine the “*Role Perception and Role Performance of SMC Members in the Implementation of the RTE Act 2009 in Bihar*”.

Research Questions

1. What is the role perception of SMC members in implementation of the RTE Act, 2009?
2. What is the role performance of SMC members in implementation of the RTE Act, 2009?
3. What are the Issues and problems faced in implementation of the RTE Act 2009?

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role perception of SMC members for the RTE Act, 2009 with regard to sex, level of education and training.
2. To examine the role performance of SMC members for the implementation of the RTE Act, 2009 with regard to sex, level of education and training.
3. To find out the issues and problems in implementing the RTE Act, 2009.

Methodology

The study used a survey method to collect data from School Management Committee (SMC) and Village School Society (VSS) members in elementary schools located in the districts of Saran, Siwan, and Gopalganj in Bihar. The researcher selected two mandals from each district and a total of six mandals from the three districts for this study. The final sample consisted of 60 SMC/VSS members from the six mandals, selected using a multistage sampling procedure. The self-developed questionnaire were used to collect data from the SMC/VSS members. Researcher personally visited the respected schools and villages for data collections. The data collected & analyzed systematically presented as per the study requirement.

The Results

The Results Relating to Role Perception of SMC Members

- Particularly 34% of SMC members perceived that they do not require to participate in SMC meetings and 66% have awareness about participation in SMC meetings. Comparatively more female (45%) SMC members have agreed that SMC members should participate in SMC meetings than male (26%) SMC members. Comparatively more trained (46%) SMC members have agreed that SMC members should participate in SMC meetings than untrained (19%) SMC members. Comparatively maximum above 10th passed (62%) SMC members have agreed that SMC members should participate in SMC meetings than up-to
- Generally 87% of SMC members are also believed that SMC members should involve in different school activities and 13% SMC members are totally unaware about the involvement of SMC members in different school activities.

Comparatively more female (59%) SMC members have agreed that SMC members should involve in school activities than male (27%) SMC members. Comparatively more trained (68%) SMC members have agreed that SMC members involve in school activities than untrained (21%) SMC members. Comparatively maximum above 10th passed (76%) SMC members have agreed that SMC members should involve in school activities than up-to 10th passed (15%) and illiterate (3%) SMC members.

- Overall 46% of SMC members are perceived that SMC members should monitor whether teacher's are engaging in private teaching activity besides teaching in the school or not and 48% of SMC members are totally unaware about this.
- On the whole 54% of SMC members are believed that SMC members should observe whether teachers are giving physical punishment/mental harassment to students in the school or not and 46% SMC members are totally unaware about this.
- Particularly 64% of SMC members are perceived that SMC members should monitor regular attendance, punctuality and teaching-learning process of teachers and 36% of SMC members are totally unaware about this.
- Generally 61% of SMC members are perceived that SMC members should participate in identifying out of school children and give them equal opportunities, protection, full participation and 39%. Overall 51% of SMC members are perceived that SMC members should monitor utilization of fund for the school development and 49% of SMC members are totally unaware about this.

Results Relating to Role Performance of SMC Members

- Commonly 54% of SMC members are performing their role in the RTE Act, 2009 implementation and 46% of SMC members are totally unaware about this.
- Overall 97% of SMC members are participating in SMC meetings and 3% of SMC members are totally unaware about this. Particularly 82% of SMC members are observing whether teachers are engaged in private teaching activity or not and 18% of SMC members are totally unaware about this.
- Overall 72% of SMC members are observing whether teachers are maintaining regularity and punctuality in school or not and 28% of SMC members are totally unaware about this.
- Overall 37% of SMC members are not overseeing the Mid-day meal program and 63% of SMC members are overseeing the Mid-day meal program.
- Overall 73% of SMC members are not engaging themselves in SDP preparation and 27% of SMC members are engaging themselves in SDP preparation.
- In general 68% of SMC members are not engaging themselves in textbook prescription and only 32% of SMC members are engaging themselves in textbook prescription that also sometimes.
- Overall 33% of SMC members are not participating themselves in enrolment drive and 67% of SMC members are participating themselves in enrolment drive.
- Overall 78% of SMC members are not participating themselves in monitoring availability of infrastructure in school & monitoring construction, repairing works of school building and 22% of SMC members are participating themselves in monitoring availability of infrastructure in school.

- On the whole 78% of SMC members are not participating themselves in preparation of annual accounts of income and expenditure and 22% of SMC members are participating themselves in preparation of annual accounts of income and expenditure.
- In general 93% of SMC members are participating in different school activities and 07% of SMC members are not participating in different school activities.

Results Relating to Issues and Problems of the RTE Act, 2009 Implementation

- 65% of SMC members believed that lack of interest among poor parents to send their children in school is the main problem in enhancement of enrolment in school.
- Particularly 59% of SMC members believed that lack of interest among out of school children to study in school is the main constraints in identifying out of school children.
- Overall 67% of SMC members are believed that poor quality of teaching-learning process is the barrier in offering quality elementary education.
- Particularly 73% of SMC members agreed that lack of skillful teachers is the main constraints in CCE implementation.

Implications of the Study

Strengthening the capacity of SMC members: The study found that many SMC members having awareness, training, and skills to perform their roles and functions effectively. However, still SMC members must have frequent training thorough capacity building programs that address a variety of subjects, including school growth plans, budgets, infrastructure, and quality.

Enhancing the participation of parents and community: The study found that, for a variety of reasons, including lack of interest, lack of knowledge, lack of time, etc., parents' and community members' involvement in SMC meetings and school events was not effectively & need full fledged participation. It's is also important to encourage parents and community members to get more involved in SMC and school-related issues by raising awareness, offering rewards, fostering communication, etc.

Improving the coordination and collaboration among stakeholders: The study revealed a gap between SMC members' performance and expectations and a need for more cooperation and coordination between SMC members, teachers, principals, education authorities, and other stakeholders. As a result, it's critical to strengthen stakeholder support, mutual trust, and respect and align and integrate SMC and school activities with district and state-level goals and policies.

Promoting the accountability and transparency of SMC and school: According to the assessment, there was a lack of appropriate reporting, documentation, and feedback systems, as well as a lack of accountability and transparency in the way that SMC and the school operated. As a result, it is imperative that SMC and the school follow the rules and regulations set out by the RTE Act and save and distribute records of their accomplishments, difficulties, and expenses to the relevant authorities and the general public.

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