The problems of the governance aspect of smcs education essay

Education

In the Indian Society, there are instances which confirm the statistic that education was a privilege of few which later led to mass illiteracy. This is evident from the low figures of the literacy rate at the time of independence and in the years that followed. Simultaneously, education was a neglected domain in terms of governance. The governance of educational institutions was highly centralised and bureaucratised. The monitoring measures were influenced by this system of bureaucracy and therefore, the real picture of education was not monitored and brought to the open and hence the quality of education suffered. As Dharampal suggests, in M. K. Gandhi's words that the British ruling in India has made Indians more illiterate than before, hinting that British did not really impact the growth of education (Dharmpal 1996). Apart from this, access to education for the masses has suffered from a range of caste and class based inequalities. Initially, education was mentioned in the Directive Principles of the State policy. It was made a directive principle and not a fundamental right. The reason behind this was the lack of funds to make education a right for all. Noting on the practicality of the scares resources and the need for a good educational system, Ambedkar termed DPSP as cornerstone for the policy formulation. Idea was that education and other social issues do not get neglected for the worse and the constitution can add them as fundamental rights in the forthcoming years. Over the years we have seen our constitution develop and create changes ensuring that education is given importance. However, it was only in the 1968, the first National Policy on Education made the unambiguous commitment for school education. The policy clearly stated that " Strenuous efforts for the provision of free and compulsory education at the elementary

stage, with emphasis on equalization of educational opportunities, correction of regional imbalances and provisions for access and improvement of educational facilities, especially in the rural and backward areas". It also highlighted the need to emphasize the education of girls and spread education among the backward classes. It stated that " Suitable program should be developed to reduce the prevailing ' wastage and stagnation' in schools and to ensure that every child who is enrolled in schools successfully completes the prescribed course." The 1968 policy was amended and the National Policy of 1986 included various goals for the betterment of management of education. Decentralized planning and management of elementary education was a new goal set by this policy. The policy also visualized direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for the management of elementary education. Most of the initiatives towards the formation of school committees were not a true aspiration for involvement of the local community by them or the state government. This is because most of these initiatives towards formation of school committees were designed and operationalized through international aid strategies and not the state government. Most villagers were uninformed about existence of VECs during the operationalization of the World Bank funded ' District Primary Education Programme' (DPEP). There were issues like the lack of awareness among VEC members about their roles and functions, time constraints, social structure, illiteracy, lack of communication, irregular capacity buildings and so on were causes of dysfunctional role of VECs during DPEP days (Bhattacharya, 2001). The new Scheme in 2001 was introduced under the banner of SSA that is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. It was

mandated in SSA framework about the responsibility of governments at local, state and national level was to work in decentralized governance framework to provide facilities on a priority basis for the poor and marginalized sections with more attention to Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Set of reforms as envisaged in SSA such as improvement in curriculum, teachers, management, school environment, supervision and learners' assessment etc., became key strategies for mainstreaming disadvantaged communities, but these reforms were not contextualized and redesigned to suit the local needs. Task force report by Raja Ramanna Committee (2000), constituted by Karnataka Government, and acted as precursor for conceptualization of the present day SDMCs (School Development and Monitoring Committees) in Karnataka. These replaced the VECs in Karnataka. The SDMCs formed were met with some grave issues. Powers were delegated to school head teacher who is also secretary of the SDMC; she/he acted as supreme authority taking decisions on behalf of SDMC members. No Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members were seen taking part at SDMC meetings and proceedings. This was very problematic as SDMCs were found not sharing their school development plans, which had adverse repercussions on the entire educational planning cycle (IRMA, 2009). Further absence of local participation in SDMCs has led to phenomenon of ' elite capture', unjust distributional outcomes and initiatives without long term plans, thus failing to achieve expected developmental goals in an efficient manner (Kumar V. A, 2006). Various studies have shown the reluctance among the community members to take active interest in educational needs of their children (Pradeep Ramavath,

2012). This demanded for a holistic and long term strategy planning. Therefore, the RTE act, 2009 included the provision of SMCs to meet this requirement. This policy and other such amendments by state governments were seen the basis for the ' Right to Education' Act, 2009. This right had various safeguards for the betterment of education including the levels of free and compulsory education, involving the local communities in the functioning of schools through SMCs and reservation in private schools and so on. The second section of the paper will deal with the RTE as legislation in context the SMC provisions in detail.

Aim of the Paper

This paper aims to study SMCs and their requirement through RTE and their existence prior to the formulation of the RTE. It aims to trace the historical background of SDMCs (School Development and Managing Communities) in Karnataka and VECs (Village Educational Committees) in Tamil Nadu and their impact on the educational institutions. It hopes to provide a basis for analysis of the shift in their nature of functioning before RTE and after RTE and whether there was a change for the better. Moreover, it will try to address the need for such independent governing bodies. The paper will also try to understand the law governing the SMCs formulation and functioning through RTE and will compare the law prevailing in the state of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Rationale behind the study is that the SMCs in both states should have come into existence after the RTE Act-2009. But previous to act, committees similar in the line of SMCs were functioning in both the states, for instance, VECs (Village Education Committees) in Tamil Nadu and SDMCs (School Development and Monitoring Committees) in Karnataka. Therefore,

the study will analyze this development i. e. the shift from the pre-RTE to Post-RTE in terms of these committees formation and examine whether the shift is underway or already happened. Objective of the paper is to do a systematic and comparative study that covers two government schools in two states i. e. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and analyze the difference in functioning of SMCs (School Management Committees). Moreover, the paper will compare rural schools' SMCs with the urban schools' SMCs and check if there are any differences in the governing structures among the two.

Structure of the paper

The paper is structured in a comprehensive manner that initially deals with the area chosen for as the field for research to understand the implementation of SMCs. It primarily locates the field and the issues one sees in the field, which will be the basis for understanding the wider implications of such problems through literature review on SMCs and their functioning. The theoretical basis of SMCs are mainly participatory forms of governance and need for decentralization of the functioning of such governing bodies. Following this the paper aims to link the theory and its framework to observations made on the field and locate the problems in the functioning of SMCs to the wider concerns with these theoretical schools of thought. Based on their issues and problems one perceives in the study, the paper will try to suggest some recommendations that can be undertaken to ensure that the functioning of SMCs is made better. It will take into account a case study of a school in which effective functioning of SMC has made significant impact on governance of school. This would be that of Namma Shale (our school), which is an initiative of APF (Azim Premji Foundation) in

which community participation in the school development is the prime focus started in 2007 in Mandya district but taken forward by Karnataka government in coming years.

Defining SMCs

As per the section 21 (1) and 21 (2) of Right of children to free and compulsory education Act, all government and government-aided schools shall constitute School Management Committee (SMC) of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents and guardians of children admitted in such schools and teachers. As per the act the SMCs should perform following functions: Monitor the working of the schoolPrepare and recommend school development planMonitor the utilization of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority or any other sourcePerform such functions as may be prescribed

Defining the ' Field'

Since, the paper aims to examine the SMCs' functioning and their role in ensuring education as a service is delivered to its consumers, the field is the school. The rationale behind choosing the school as the field is that one gets to observe the actual implementation of RTE in case of SMCs along with observing various other clauses that RTE aims to provide for better education of the children of age 6 to 14 years. Moreover it is here that discrepancies can be found in the actual implementation of this act. SMC is primarily a parent's body which is entrusted with the multiple responsibilities such as improving the quality of education, demanding accountability and promotes participation of stakeholders particularly parents and teachers in

schools. In order to understand its functioning we selected school as the unit of study. In addition, we have attended SMC meetings and interacted with SMC members of the schools, in both states.

The problems of the ' governance aspect' of SMCs

The Discussion on SMC functioning backed by the empirical findings on field will be based of 5 parameters. They are Formation, Awareness, Participation, Empowerment and Perception. Formation – The composition of SMC with respect to various reservations to various groups such as women and with respect to the rules outlined by state governments. In Karnataka Schools it was seen that the formation was with per with the SDMC rules of 2001, rather than the new RTE rules. In Tamil Nadu, it was found that one school had their formation according to RTE rules of 20 members; however the other school had only 5 members. Whether this lack of universalized formulation has an impact on the functioning SMCs will be one of the issues the second section of the paper will deal with. Awareness - This parameter accounts for knowledge related to the provision of RTE particularly SMCs their training, awareness among parents who are not the members of SDMC, PTA as an informal body for the dissemination of awareness and so on. This parameter was found to be the least developed in all the schools which were a part of the field. Although the training provision was seen to be operational for SMC members that included two or three days of training held once in a year and it has took place at least once in both states with around 70% attendance of the SMC members, this training was not really helpful when it came to its actual implementation in the monthly meetings of SMCs. Parents didn't have an idea about a structure of SMCs and moreover, proper

awareness is lacking among parents and surprisingly among teachers as well. Furthermore, the teachers felt that the parents who were on the SMC board did not really know or function as a part of it. They were on it for the names' sake. The main reasons for these include lack of people for taking the job responsibilities for SMCs work, migratory nature of parents as seen in Hebagodi Governemnt School and at times the chairman post is held by the person of relatively upper class as in the case of Hebagodi Governemnt School once again. Participation - The aim is to figure out the role of stakeholders particularly women, disadvantaged groups in planning, execution and monitoring. Along with the role of women, involvement of parents in the parent-teacher meetings, SMC meetings, and their elections. Again, in this aspect of participation, it is a mix bag. In Karnataka, there less participation as compared to Tamil Nadu. Karnataka`s Urban school HM was one man army, however in TN we find women especially from SCs as Chairman and VC. Though less educated those women had relatively more knowledge and interest in SMCs. Hence there is a wide difference the problems faced by SMCs. Empowerment - Empowerment through SMCs means empowerment of parents to make better decisions on their children future. In terms of power holder in SMCs, it is seen that the chairman has discretionary powers like sanctioning HM leave, her/his signatures is required in every transactions related to school account and give them more controlling power. It must also include the role of parents particularly women in influencing the decision making, devolution of power, finance. Perception - The change in the mindset of stakeholders particularly teachers and parents. For example, some of the teachers considered SMC to be a burden on them

in contrary to others who considers it to be move towards greater transparent education system. At the same time, some of the parents were indifferent towards SMC, whereas others felt a lack of empowerment.

Problem Formation

Considering all these parameters, the paper believes that the grey areas that exist in the governance structure are the main problem of SMCs. However we do not wish to dismiss the role of SMCs altogether, rather the paper would argue that SMCs must be continued. However, the grey areas need to be worked upon. Some grey areas include the questioning the functional aspects of members like for example, some members who have not attended meeting for more than a year, still continues to be the members. Also in the Karnataka Rural School (in outskirt of Bangalore) is facing different kind of problem compare to Karnataka Urban School (located in city). In the urban school most of the parents migrate for work. So, member's stability is much less. Such parents are considered among the last choice to be made members. They rarely participate because can`t miss their daily wage. Hence the paper aims to link the field data to the existing literature with the hope to provide certain answers to the prevailing issues of the functioning of SMCs and recommendations for the grey areas that exist between field realties and the theoretical basis of their functioning. These suggestions will perhaps help to bridge the gap between the law and the mandatory aspect of SMCs and the need for their proper governance and functioning as a part of the intermediary intervention that helps their service deliverance of education.

Stage 2

This section will deal the SMC part of the RTE act and the theories of governance linked with the problems on the field.

The Law: Right to Education (RTE) Act

As mentioned in the above section, ' The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years'. This is stated in Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy. The makers of the Constitution had envisioned that the Indian state would have the capacity to do so within ten years of the adoption of the Constitution. The wait was manifold though. It took over half a century for the Directive Principle to be realized and made into an Act by the 86th Amendment: The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (aka RTE Act), 2009. One might question the very need to make education a right. It is seen in the globalized world that the poor need to be empowered to voice their opinions. The arguments for participation and institutional accountability must become grounded in a conception of ' right-based approach' that fortifies the status of people from mere bearers of rights to its rightful and legitimate claimants of these rights. This is why there is a need for education to be made a right. The ability of individuals to participate in the decision making process and participate, helping them exercise their right makes them the rightful propagators of change. Hence, RTE is an important act and the clause of State Management Committees (SMCs) becomes more important among its various other clauses. It stands apart from many educational rights in other countries because the government

has a ' compulsion' to follow rather than the parents of the children and there is a stress on inclusion. To promote inclusiveness, the Act makes states that the government schools will be managed by school management committees (SMC). Parents/guardians should comprise of three-fourth of the committee and parents of economically disadvantaged children as well as those of the weaker sections must be included. The SMC will monitor the working of the school and utilization of grants and prepare a school development plan. This might have been included to provide transparency and accountability in the working of the school. Although there are a lot of criticisms to the act itself, the paper will focus on the need for the functioning of SMCs and the other characteristics of the act are not looked at. The central act mentions the need for SMCs in section IV (21 to 22), however largely leaves the state governments to define its rules. The next section will deal with the differences in the state rules of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the two states where the field of the paper is located or grounded.

Difference between Karnataka RTE rules and TN RTE Rules with respect to SMC

The Right to Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has come into effect from 1st April 2010. The Act outlined the various duties and responsibilities of the appropriate Government, local bodies, schools and parents. Section 38 of the said act provides that the appropriate government may by notification make rules for carrying out the provision of the said act. Accordingly, Karnataka Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules- 2012 (KRCFCER-2012) was published in April 2012 whereas the Tamil

Nadu Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2011 published earlier in November 2011. According to sec 1(4) of (KRCFCER-2012), the provisions have overriding effect over the provisions of rules mentioned under Karnataka Education Act, 1983.

Composition

Sec 13 of KRCFCE-2012 Rules deals with the composition and functions of SDMC. As per sec 13(1) there shall be SDMC for every school other than an unaided school. Such committee shall be reconstituted every three years. SDMCs shall have 16 elected members. Head teacher or senior most teachers can be the ex-officio member secretary. Health worker and anganwadi worker of the area will be the ex-officio member of SDMC. The number of members in SMC in TN, as per sec 9(1), is not less than 9 (This has been fixed to 20 members by the TN government order[1]). Further the same section fix the tenure for SDMC member except the ex-officio member to be of 2 years.

Parent's representation

Sec 13(2) of the KRCFCE Rules states that 13 members of SDMC shall be elected from among the parents/guardians. The remaining three members, according to sec 13(3) shall be nominated by the local authority, one member shall be selected among the teachers of the school, which will be decided by BEO and the remaining one member shall be an educationist, philanthropist from locality or children in the school to be nominated by BEO. On the other hand sec 14(2) of TNRCFCE states that 75% of the strength of SMC shall be parents or guardians of children. The remaining 25% strength,

according to sec 14(3) shall be occupied by one third of members from the local authority, to be decided by local authority another one third of the seats to be occupied by the teachers of the school, to be decided by the teachers and the remaining one third from among the educationist or children, to be decided by the parents in the SMC. So, in Karnataka the bureaucracy (BEO) has more control over the SDMC in terms of nomination of the members along with no power with parents to decide who else can be the member of the SDMC whereas in TN it is the parents who have the power to nominate the educationist or the children and the BEO has no role in any of the member of SMC.

Representation to women and the disadvantaged groups

Sec 14(4) of TNRCFCER-2011 states 50% reservation to women in SMCs. Similarly sec 13(3(b)) of KRCFCE rules also have similar provision. With respect to the representation of SC/ST the sec 14(2) of TNRCFCE rules states for the proportional representation of parents of children belonging to the disadvantaged groups but the KRCFCE rules nowhere mention the representation for the weaker section or the disadvantaged groups in SMC. As a result of this we find the adequate representation of parents from weaker section in TN SMC's whereas this is missing in the Karnataka SMC. As per TN government order[2]while electing the chairperson of the SMC the women member should be given preference. The result is that more women are in the position of chairperson of SMC in TN. Two schools we visited in TN had women as SMC chairperson in contrast to this two Karnataka schools had one male and female were appointed as chairperson. This reflects in the …How it led to any change in TN or Karnataka??----formulation parameter i.

e. the data from ground----and how the composition affects the decision making.

Functions

Though the functions of SDMCs of Karnataka and SMCs of Tamil Nadu are more or less similar on the lines of sec 21(2) of the RTE Act, 2009, however the Karnataka rules mention some functions more clearly. For instance in sec 13(5(l)) of KRCFCE rule mentions the duty of SMC to conduct parents council meeting held every 3 month. Further SDMCs is required to conduct parent day celebrations to involve all parents in the activities of the school. Further sec 13(5(m)) states that SDMC can involve all parents in school activities and encourage them to give suggestions to SDMC. The Karnataka rules aims for the participation of all parents in the school activities rather than just the participation of 13 parents, who are SMC member as such a provision is absent in TN Rules. Though at first sight the rules seem to be well thought out at least on the paper, it doesn't seems to be the case on ground. The reflection on this we saw on field is that – Not much difference were found--- The SDMC in Karnataka, according to sec 13(5(m)) and sec 13(5(n)) can address grievances of parents, students, teachers and non-teaching staff. It can act as first level grievance redressal authority. It can also take appropriate action according to rules mentioned in the rule book. Though, compared to SMCs in TN the SDMCs in Karnataka can take actions in the event of harassment but such powers are not clearly mentioned. Nevertheless the SDMC in Karnataka has been provided with more power. For instance according to 13(5(o)) maintains working days and decides public holidays, as per 13(5(p)) it can hire a teacher on a temporary basis.

Further as per 13(5(q)) it can periodically review the performance of the teachers and facilitate compliance with minimum quality standard as prescribed by the government. Some of these are the technical matters and require proper training to the SDMC members. But the absence of parents from training, inadequacy in training programme (2- 3 days of training once in a year) are some of the challenges for the parents to assimilate the complex/technical matters often resulting in the hijacking of SMC by HM or/and other influential people. Hence, we see how post RTE changes whereby the school becomes the basic unit of planning for school development instead of village for most schools.

Stage 2: Part two - Governance

The second section of the paper deals with why SMCs are needed. The specific concern of this section is concerned with research or theoretical framework on the relations within and between schools, communities and local governance institutions and their combined influence on access of ' good education'. The main reason for SMCs is because of its decentralization aspect and because it links ' policy framework' and the ' implementation' together. The other reason why SMCs were added into the governance structure of RTE was due to the role of ' community participation', which has proven to be successful in various situations as it gives the individuals the capacity to question. Further, the section will map the governance at the ground level with the five parameter mentioned above in the introduction and based on that it will analyze the extent to which the SMC' s in both states functions. The reason for why right to education (RTE) act decided to uproot existing SDMCs and plant SMCs is best explained by Munn. The

uprooting of old 'partnership' understandings in favor of newer ones operating at several levels - national, local, and school-level can be seen as government's attempt to restructure networks within the education system that will be more reliable instruments of policy implementation, or at least less resistant to central initiatives (Munn, 1991). The need for the creation of SMC comes from the intended causality between the stakeholder participation and the improved education quality and better accountability. SMC provide stakeholders particularly parent with the decision making power to bring about changes from short term to long term issues pertaining to the management and operationalization of schools. Parent's role in SMC is demarcated at the 3 levels: Parents as educators, parents as partners and parents as decision-makers. The parent's involvement as stakeholders in the functioning of school along with teachers creates a symbiotic ambience where everyone can share their experience and could contribute in their own way in the development of school. It will create a sense of ownership among the stakeholders which would propel them to continue participating in the school processes and build sustainable and productive school system. The RTE Act envisions parents to get involved as decision-makers with an objective to make teachers and principal more accountable for education delivery which in-turn would lead towards the better learning outcomes of students. If parents become actively involved as decision-makers in school, then they would also be encouraged to get involved as educator----1. Local stakeholder perspectives although rarely considered in any depth in policy formulation, have an important but under played bearing on the realization of policy intentions. Hence SMCs serve to make the local authorities an

important stakeholders to ensure education is inclusive and for its betterment.

Decentralization in Education

Decentralisation as a process is used to definition from the dictionary. With the similar ideology SMCs were to be formed in schools to ensure the governance and the ownership in the hands of the locals. This would guarantee a proper and inclusive schooling for all. Not only is it seen as a pathway for improved delivery of social services, but it has also come to stand for a mechanism to improve the democratization of decision-making for increased system efficiency (Jutting et al., 2004). Thus, decentralization can be useful in providing the desired access and improvement in the education. However, it is important to understand that decentralization does not mean a total detachment from the control of the central or state government. Rather it means formation of a new relationship between decentralized governance between the central and local governments. In the field of education, this decentralized government would increase equitable access. If the problem of access to basic education is construed as a political and economic one, then decentralization may be seen as the response in offering citizens increased opportunities to contribute in local-decision making to improve access to education and make it a worthwhile investment especially for the poor. What is clear from the literature is that imbalances and disparities in human and resource capacity in poor countries can actually make decentralization exacerbate inequities in society (Davies et al., 2003). Education decentralization is seen as a vehicle for reinforcement of management efficiency and accountability by relocating critical decision-

making of education matters in the SMCs itself. Once various SMCs have similar issues, it can be brought to the notice of BEO and later at the district level as well. Decentralization in education is done in RTE through the delegation of power from the local level that is village or local bodies to schools. Thus, RTE is responsible for the structural tweaks in the hierarchy which flows from top to bottom from centre to local bodies. Another layer of control unit in education that has emerged through the provision of the act is the school. The school and stakeholders in the schools are the new locus of authority in the whole education system. Hence, we see how post RTE the school become the basic unit of planning for school development instead of local bodies. But, entrusting the decision making power in the purview of newly formed unit is not an assurance that the power will be exercised by the same unit which is the school. However in the field of the study, it was observed that several complex power relations existed in the schools of both the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. This was due to the overlapping power domains of the old management committees and the newly formed SMCs. SBCs (School Betterment Committees) in Karnataka and VECs (Village Educational Committees) in Tamil Nadu are not only existential but exercised substantial power in comparison to SMCs. In other words, despite the legal delegation of power to SMC's, the old structure continues to be the real power house in education system. This move from existing committees to the formation of new ones can be linked to the path dependency theory. The path dependency theory mentions that any new institution cannot work autonomously without the getting affected by the institution existed prior to it. Thus, it can be said that newer institutions emerge from the pre-existing

ones with the aim to make the earlier one better or more efficiently. This is similar to the emergence of SMCs. This is the theoretical understanding of how decentrailisation must work. However, the field data shows.. In the main, developing country education systems that have pressed forward with decentralization have not readily devolved power and control over education management, financial administration and teacher management to the local level. (CREATE). Hence the process is bottle necked due to this lack of devolution of power and the crucial decision making procees which is still in the hand s of the higher-ups. Yet, decentralization has led to a raised awareness and commitment among local players to take more active role in addressing problems of education. The next shall look at this awareness aspect in detail.

Understanding the ' community'

In order to understand what community participation means, it is important to understand what community means. Linking community to school is an important aspect of participation. Sam Redding has analysed the relation between school and community that can be understood at different levels. The first being the school as a community and second one is the school in the community. As school consists of linguistically and ethnically diverse families, the school acts as a community. The school in itself is a community of its members such as teachers, administrators, staff, students, and their families. SMCs can take lead in building community of the school. Thus the paper sees the school as community unto themselves. It is seen that before the formation of SMCs, both the school and public were two separate entities. It is considered important that the teachers must initiate contact

and come out from their ivory tower schools. They must interact with the students' families outside the ' school' intended level in order to convince them to send their children to schools. On failing to persuade, they were obliged to rescue children from the stifling attitudes of their milieu and ensure that education is provided to them. Hence, there was a need for participation from the teachers' side to encourage the ' community' for their cooperation in ensuring that the children get education. The school is often discussed in terms of its relationship to the community, suggesting that the school is something apart from community. In fact, the school exists within a mosaic of overlapping communities and is in itself, capable of functioning as a community. A community is a group of people associated with one another who share common values. Geography does not make community, nor does membership, nor casual affiliation. When the school functions as a community rather than in a community, its constituents (students, parents, teachers, staff) associate with one another and share common values about the education of children. At the root, members of the school community assume responsibility for one another. The children become their children, and parents are not external agents but full partners in the education of their children and of each other's children. Teachers are not isolated practitioners of pedagogy, but professionals integrated into the web of community and buoyed by common purpose. However, we can't assume that community is always benign and supportive. Just like many families, it can be oppressive too. A community may hold on to value system that is patriarchal, repressive, exclusive and undemocratic. So, it is important that community should be linked to an ideology (ideology based on principles of democracy,

equality, inclusiveness). So here, community is not fully autonomous. The powers have been devolved to it. The powers can be devolved to it through constitution, laws etc. SMCs have got it powers through RTE Act and State RTE rules. Therefore, it has to work under the democratic framework setup by the state. It has to structurally and functionally mold as per state directives.

Community participation

Community participation involves democratic decentralization of power. In participating communities the responsibilities are divided. When responsibilities are clearly defined the work can be done more openly by the participants. It encourages citizens to cumulatively work for the welfare of the community. Furthermore, in community participation there is no discrimination based on color, race, sex, age, prior community involvement, level of education, occupation, handicap, religion etc.

Community Participation In pre RTE era

Decentralized planning and management of elementary education was a goal set by National Policy on Education of 1986. Policy visualized direct community involvement in the form of Village Education Committees (VECs) for management of elementary education. Most of the initiatives towards formation of school committees were not a true aspiration of local community as most of the initiatives towards formation of school committees were designed and operationalised through international aid strategies. Most villagers were not aware about existence of VECs during operationalisation of World Bank funded District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). Lack of

awareness among VEC members about their roles and functions, time constraint, social structure, illiteracy, lack of communication, irregular capacity building etc., were causes of disfunctioning of VECs during DPEP days (Bhattacharya, 2001). The new Scheme in 2001 was introduced under the banner of SSA. It was mandated in SSA framework about the responsibility of governments at local, state and national level to work in decentralized governance framework to provide facilities on a priority basis for poor and marginalized sections with more attention to Scheduled Caste(SC) and Scheduled Tribes(ST). Set of reforms as envisaged in SSA such as improvement in curriculum, teachers, management, school environment, supervision and learners' assessment etc., became key strategies for mainstreaming disadvantaged communities, but these reforms were not contextualized and redesigned to suit the local needs. Task force report by Raja Ramanna Committee (2000), constituted by Karnataka Government, acted as precursor for conceptualization of present day SDMCs in Karnataka. It replaced the VECs in Karnataka. The SDMCs formed met with some issues. Powers were delegated to school head teacher who is also secretary of the SDMC; s/he acted as supreme authority taking decisions on behalf of SDMC members. No PRI members were seen taking part at SDMC meetings and proceedings. This was very problematic as SDMCs found not sharing their school development plans, which had adverse repercussions on the entire educational planning cycle (p18. IRMA 2009). Further absence of local participation in SDMCs has lead to phenomenon of ' elite capture', unjust distributional outcomes and initiatives without long term plans, thus failing

to achieve expected developmental goals in an efficient manner (Kumar V. A, 2006).

Community Participation In post RTE era

This policy was the basis for the ' Right to Education' Act, 2009. This right had various safeguards for the betterment of education including the levels of free and compulsory education, involving the local communities in the functioning of schools through SMCs and reservation in private schools and so on. Current Participation in SMC is hindered by various factors. Various studies have shown the reluctance among the community members to take active interest in educational needs of their children (Pradeep ramavath, 2012). This demand for a holistic and long term strategy. In TN the RTE rules established SMCs but did not replace VECs. This causes confusion among the members about the function of the SMCs. Further it leads to duplication of work and inefficiency. The power structure in the society where by the people has internalized to get dominated by few sections is reflected in some places in SMCs also. For instance, in Karnataka rural School the chairman of SMC is relatively well off compare to other members. TN Rules have tried to make the structure more inclusive. According to TN rules for the post of chairman preference has to be given to the female. This is reflected in the TN rural schools with female SC as the chairman. The power relation is also reflected through the non-implementation of the democratic voting process. Either the HM handpicks some parents on the basis of their place of living or based on showing of hands. Lack of Knowledge about the technical aspects of the school management issues make the parents to not to take interest in the matters and left those stuffs at the disposal of HM. Further, other reasons

of lack of interest among parents include illiteracy, lack of enthusiasm for change and to participate, belief that the HM can and shall handle all the needed decisions, because of lack of attendance at times meetings of SMCs do not even happen. Occupations include Labourers at Brick factory, Work in Municipality, Cook, Housewife, wage labour etc. Migration is another important issue that affects this participation. Training given by govt for SMC members are also not attended by them because they are not interested. HM remain extra burdened due to the SDMCs functions it has to monitor and supervise because of the lack of participation from the parents' endCommunity EmpowermentEmpowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for practise in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. (Journal of Extension, October 1999)Community Empowerment is a holistic concept which is the sum total of many other processes like community participation, awareness generation, and education and so on. Hence, empowering the stakeholders involved in the functioning of the school functioning is one of the main objective of the creation of SMC. SMCs are the avenues where stakeholders can engage themselves in managing and regulating the critical processes of school governance. Though it is a long drawn process once achieved it forms a loop which strengthens all the units connected in the educational hierarchy. The positive aspect of such empowerment is that it is initiated from the bottom of the educational hierarchy by the ' agency' (actors) directly involved in the decision making process which feedbacks into the

education structure resulting in the positive systemic changes. The resultant of a fully empowered community is a matured society. –NAMASHALE reading. Education community participation awarenessStakeholder's empowermentDecision making by the stakeholdersDevelopment of schoolStrengthening of educational systemMatured communityThe objective of empowerment envisioned of stakeholder by RTE through SMC seems to be a distant goal. Rationale behind this state of which were inferred by our team are two pronged: first are the fragile processes that leads to empowerment and second is the second is the debile process of accountability. Case study of ramamani: Ramamani is a chairperson of Kothakondapalli upper primary school. She is a 35 years who is fluent in kannada and tamil languages with the educational qualification till 10th. Before the introduction of RTE, she was a housewife but post RTE because of her interest in school activities; she was handpicked by HM as chairperson. She is regularly attendant of SMC meetings and participates in the proposing and settling of the issues rose during meetings. Though Ramamani lacks factual awareness regarding SMC composition, fixing of SMC meeting and other important details, she has fair knowledge of what is expected out of SMCs. Though, she has felt the sense of participation but the sense of empowerment is missing. Case study of headmaster (murugeshpalaya school): NAME: She is pivotal to all the decision taken in the school. Since, she joined the school, the picture of the school in terms of infrastructure and quality of education imparted in the school has improved manifolds. After detailed interaction with her, she kept on reiterating the following statement, ".... we are here (I am here to do all the things, no need of parents to do anything), parents don't trouble me

(they don't interfere in my work)". This was in response to the inquisitiveness of the role played by parents SDMC members in the decision making process of school., of headmaster…(only indi empowered not the community)….

Accountability

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we as responsible civil society members need to make the government acco untable through social audits, filing right to information applications and dem anding our children's right to quality elementary education." -Parth ShahOne of the major influences of decentralisation in school management through SMCs as a service delivery mechanism is that it produces accountability. Participation in education is seen as another means to ensure accountability of decentralised institutions. The need for accountability is felt more in make of communities interacting with the management rather the state intervening because it leads to a short route of accountability which is more desirable than the longer route and SMCs ensure this shorter route is played out for the betterment of schools. Like Yamini Aiyar questions in her… whether the current system for financing elementary education in India deliver on the RTE promise. She believes that SMCs were mandated in the RTE to ensure that the decentralised decision-making facilitates the accountability in the financial trait. However, she goes on to show SMCs have failed to ensure this accountability and gives recommendations about the same. However, this paper argues that parent ownership and participation can ensure that accountability is maintained through the parents' involvement with the schools. This accountability can be understood from two separate angles. One is through, how community impacts the

accountability of SMCs and the school and the other one is how SMCs ensure that accountability is maintained. In the former case, accountability is enhanced only through community empowerment and through participation. The increased availability and transparency of information among the community and the SMC members ensures that there is citizen involvement because they can now demand for change in the functioning of schools where they find issues. Moreover, the information/awareness of the SMC and its functioning gives them a power or a voice to expose the inequalities and challenges they feel exist or learn to exercise their choice for better SMC functioning. This is one aspect of accountability. The latter one ensures that the teachers are accountable to the SMC members and SMC members can raise their concerns about the infrastructure decisions and the head masters and others need to be accountable to the members. The theoretical underpinning is that accountability is part of a wider philosophy of decentralisation of decision making and responsibility, including ' information for accountability' policies which argue that local access to information about school quality as a lever for change (Bruns et al., 2011). Thus as the power of the clients in this case the community, the SMCsIn understanding the fiscal accountability in the funds received by SMCs, it is understood there is both vertical accountability and horizontal accountability. The funds are handed over from the BEO or SSA to the chairman or Head master who is responsible for all the allocation of money and they are accountable to the SSA and BEO. This is vertical accountability. However, the SMC members also are at power to question the use of funds. Hence, there is an inter-play of accountability that exists.

Stage 3: Recommendations and Suggestions for Change

The paper does not argue that RTE as legislation needs a change, though there are grey areas when it tries to link pre-existing management bodies to the working of SMCs. This section will use the case study of ' Namma Shale' to show how SMCs can be useful if they are implemented in the right way on the field. Considering this as the ' Ideal Type' the paper gives recommendations for change in the current functioning of SMCs. However, since a convenient sampling of very few schools, it can be argued that too early to comment on the functioning of SMCs. This is one of the limitations of the study. Moreover, SMCs is rather new concept under most state rules. Hence for a shift from pre-existing management bodies to SMCs could perhaps take time. Though these are limitations of the study, the paper will try to locate certain recommendations for SMCs that are similar to the ones that were existed as a part of the field research.

Namma Shale

Right to Education Act-2009 provides a detailed provision on the responsibility of local authority and School Management Committees (SMCs) regarding roles & functions to be played in matters of elementary education. But there is a gap between the role perceived & role performed by the SMCs. A view is that there is a gestation period of few years in such initiatives, a phase of trial and error, experimentation process for the SMCs to expand its roots. But there is a strong need to involve and engage with local communities and influential stakeholders in the educational governance, innovative programme designs are the need of the hour. Namma Shale is a step in this direction. Namma Shale is a commendable initiative by Ajim

Premji foundation (APF) in collaboration with Government of Karnataka. This programme has made efforts to involve the stakeholders from communities and schools as well as ensure the participation of secondary and tertiary stakeholders such as the local media, Taluk Panchayat, Block Resource Centres (BRCs), Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) and district administration. These were undertaken to ensure help was provided to the primary stakeholders at the village level. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2005 revealed that Karnataka was way behind in term of the quality of education it provided. Hence, Karnataka State Quality Assessment Organization (KSQAO) assessed the quality of education in Karnataka. The results showed disparities between the performances of different schools. Another similar kind of result is shown in the Learning Guarantee Programme (LGP) of Azim Premji Foundation that only 5. 7% of the children from the 2000 schools assessed would achieve 80% of the Minimum Learning Levels (MLLs) set by the state. These reports led Government of Karnataka to find out the causes of poor performance and make plans for action to deal with this problem. It was recognised that out of the various aspects needed to bring about Quality Education, Community Mobilization was the most neglected. The government felt the need for professionals experienced in community mobilisation to help develop this aspect of quality education. This is an example of shift from the government to governance, working of non-government players with government. Karnataka State Trainers Collective (KSTC) was hired to guide the work as KSTC has its hand on experience in similar interventions in Karnataka. The managerial strengths of Azim Premji Foundation and grass root intervention strategies of KSTC along with

identified local NGO partners at the selected four districts started the program in 2007. A study was done to understand parents' perception of the quality of education their children received, their understanding of the issues in providing good quality education in the school, their knowledge of their children's level of learning achievements, the relationship between the schools and the community and the needed intervention to improve quality. The study has shown that there is critical difference between the perception of the community and the school staff towards what quality education was & how it could be brought about. This is what needs to be studied first instead of assuming the synchronizing between the perceptions, and just imposing the plans on them. There was also a significant absence of communication between various stakeholders in the village, namely parents, teachers & members of the SDMC & Gram Panchayat. The philosophy of ' Namma Shale' was premised on the bringing about an improvement in the quality of education by enabling a common understanding of what ' quality education' meant among different stake holders. Then creating a communication process web for them to achieve that common version of quality education using tools, increase awareness about institutions' roles & responsibilities & thus build the capacity of stakeholders. Enabling the community to demand quality education for their children & held the responsible persons accountable for their works by active participation of the stakeholders. The programme was implemented in three phases: 1. Planning/Community Initiation Phase (2007-2008); 2. Implementation/Community Empowerment Phase (2008-2009); 3. Sustainability/Consolidation phase (2009-2010). (Reference of ramavath). In planning phase common version of quality

education is formed & the tools to achieve it were decided, when & how to use them. In implementation phase work is done on strengthening the institution (stakeholder organization) making them accountable to each other. Communication networks (horizontal) are also built in this phase. In the last phase efforts are made to make these changes (community's capacity building, empowerment etc.) sustainable & improved over time. In ' Namma Shale' project many tools & processes were designed & used for the communication process, to bring community more closer & participate in school development process. These tools have led to community empowerment. One tool Intimate Interactive Theatre (IIT), this is a theme (socio-political & cultural) based street theatre of short durations (2-3 minutes) enacted by the group of activists. This is used to sensitise the community about their role in problems related to education. Participation Planning & Action (PPA) is improvisation on existing Participatory Rural Appraisal Technique, in PPA people can think & act cohesively to overcome their existing situation & can design solutions based on their needs & resources. This process is used by the people to understand a particular problem related to education & arrive at solutions from different dimensions. School Immersion Program is a tool which brings the community close to the school. This is based on the interactive capacity of the participants & designed to make them feel part of the decisions made. In this the stakeholders can go to schools & observe things, they can study the school accounts, observe the class etc. This technique involves the community in understanding school related larger issues better. The very people that were treating teachers with contempt and mistrust are found to develop great

respect for the teachers after school immersion. Exposure Visits are also used in the process of community awareness. In these visits the people who are opinion makers are taken from their habitations to model schools for exposure. This process helps people to know the best things done by others & try to implement the same in their own areas. Formation of Old Student Associations is also a part of bringing community close to the schools. Schools are democratic institution it gives space to all who are connected with it to act freely & to support the school. This gives alumni's of the school to contribute for the school improvements. All these tools & processes mentioned above resulted in many positive changes like teachers have become regular, students absenteeism is on decrease, there is continuous monitoring of attendance by the government, community. There is considerable improvement in co-curricular activities. Old students are responding to the changing scene. Drop out children are coming to school regularly. The local youth are volunteering to Namma Shale programme. In one village, Hampanna was found organizing people, registering them and other support work. In school immersion program people noticed that a teacher was teaching English in English only, they asked him to teach/make students understand in Kannada also. Drastic change in the attitude of the people at some places, where earlier they used to rejected outright the idea of sending their kids to schools, now not only sending their kids to schools but are also spending on their education a considerable amount of money. As a result of formation of students club children are able to overcome their fears to ask the questions to teachers and others on the subject. They can learn even difficult subjects in simple ways. It provides a space for their

creativity and self-expression. This will lead to quality learning. A pool of SDMCs has come together & has organized on their own & started SDMC network at the cluster level. They have formed their own laws & rules regarded the functioning & networking. This shift from mere forced participation to taking initiatives by themselves is a great & unique thing. They can now demand more schemes which are needed for the development of schools & can negotiate with educational functionaries at different platforms.

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

Different schools/communities have different levels of understanding. In some places people are aware about the need & importance of education. There the need is to just provide them opportunity to legitimate their demand & right to ask people for the same. But there are places where people are against the very idea of education. Giving then rights to claim quality education, holding people responsible etc. is of no use. There the need is to first make people understand the value of education & bring them in synchronisation with the teachers' idea of quality education. Then only they will use their rights. This a very common excuse we heard that parents don't come to attend the SDMC meeting as they are workers & they don't want to attend the meetings on the cost of their wages. This problem can be solved by keeping the meeting at a time which suits the parents. For example in Namma Shale programme all the trainings were held in the evening as that was the time suitable for the stakeholders for whom the training was imparted. One of the problems faced by the teachers is that a lot of documentation work is required to be done in order to fulfil the criteria

of SMCs to be accountable. Teachers complain that they don't get enough time to work on their teaching because of this documentation work. So a person can be appointed to do the documentation work specifically. In rural areas the synchronization of school calendar (all the exams & assignments etc.) & village seasonal/agricultural map (when there is more work in the fields like sowing harvesting) can be used to reduce the problem of absenteeism of the students because of the work in their houses. Some holidays can be given in the months of heavy works in the agriculture. There is a need to integrate the two calendars so that they are complementary and not clashing. One of the very common reasons we came across for parents not participating is that they are illiterate. But if proper awareness is to be done then even being illiterate they can hold teachers accountable if they just know that it's their right. They can even ask through their students & know that is their teacher comes regularly, teaches lessons properly etc.