

# Community participation in schools, functions and challenges

## An exploratory study



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as integrated project for ASER-TISS course 2019

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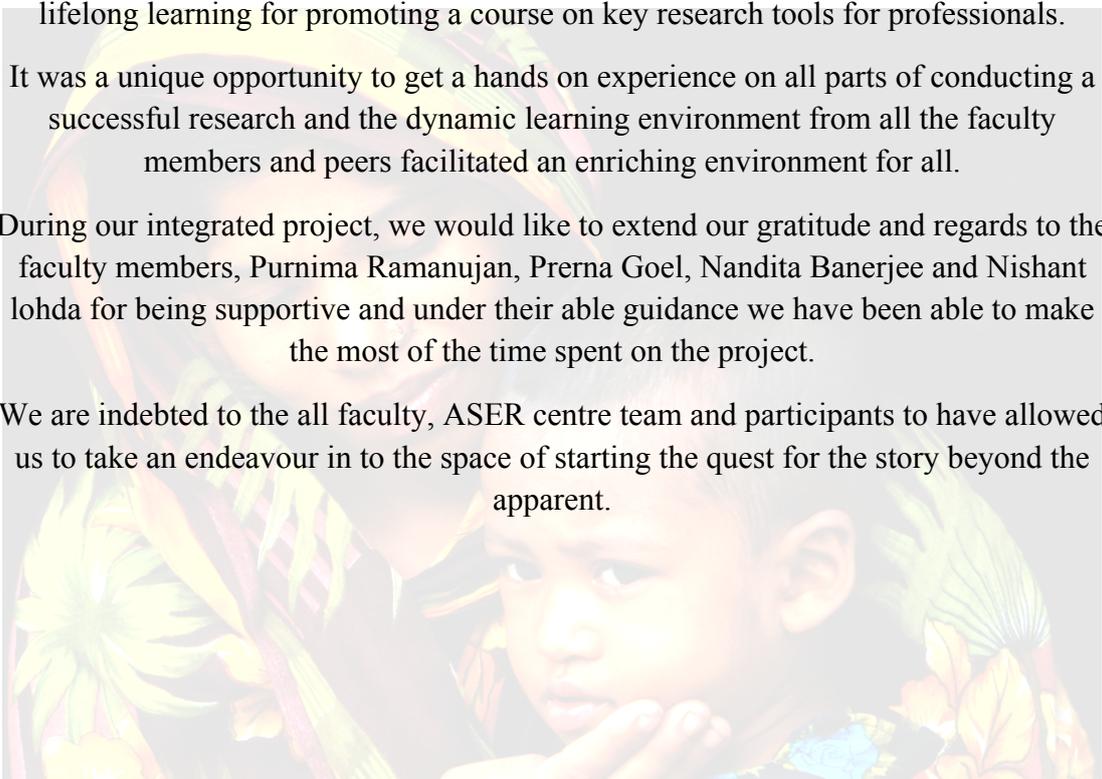
## Acknowledgement

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## Introduction

India is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest country in the world in terms of population and a very large segment of the same are youth(UN,2019). More than 40% of its population was in the school going age group of below 19 years in 2011, and the ratio is going to be around 35% in 2021 according to World Bank population projection.

29 Crore students are enrolled in schools across India, and substantial portion of these children are catered to, by the government school system (MHRD, GOI 2017). There are more than 11 Lakhs government and government aided schools in India, making the administration of these schools extremely crucial, since it is one of the main factors behind ensuring a proper environment and learning to the ultimate beneficiary-**student.**

Decentralising administration of institutions is an idea, which India as a country has grappled with since its independence, also included in the constitution of India. The idea behind this was to ensure representation of the impacted in administration of institutions.

Like other sectors and institutions within them, the education sector also has had this conversation since the 1960s. The 1<sup>st</sup> education commission, in its report, paved the way by reporting the need of decentralising administration of govt. schools and integrating the same with local governance institutions (Raut, Kumar, 2013). However, the roadmap still remained hazy.

Highlighted by National Education Policy (NEP) of 1986, which suggested the creation of the Village Education Committees (VECs), the next 2 decades saw policy initiatives from the central as well as various state governments to implement this model of decentralised administration.

The committee was replaced by School Management Committees (SMCs) in the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act) of 2009. For the last decade, much policy and implementation efforts have gone to the SMCs. These are bodies with 75% representation of parents of students studying in these schools, along with teachers and local representatives. RTE mandates these committees to look after the administration and overall development of the schools and ascribes to them powers.

### From Literature review-

Although much discussion has happened around the policy of decentralisation of school administration, a commensurate discussion has been missing around understanding the functioning of the committees on the ground.

Research in this field has been few, and the results thereof are sometimes contradictory. For example, while Tyagi (1999) was of the opinion that most VEC members did not attend the meetings, and Narayana and Chandrakant (2000) said that the notice of the meetings was not given by the VEC secretary to the other members,

Sujatha and Rao (2000) contended that VECs are involved closely in school planning. They further said that, in about 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the surveyed villages, new school building was revamped by VECs.

Regarding the SMCs, Teron (2012) was of the opinion that the committees were created as per guidelines, the meetings were happening regularly and trainings were being given to the members.

On the contrary, Nayak (2009) claimed that the performances of SMCs were not satisfactory at all. In support of this claim, Owusu and Sam (2012) opined that, SMCs are largely ineffective, especially when it came to supervisory roles of teachers.

Singh (2012) in his report, also supported this claim, stating that, the decision making was dominated by the 'influential' members like the president of the committee (the principal of the school) and others. The parent members' roles were restricted mostly to enrol children in schools and for resource mobilisation. Further stated that, the gender-ratio was skewed towards males, despite the RTE mandating 50% reservation of women in these committees, and that most of the members did not receive any training.

Contrarily, Verma and Singh (2014) held the view that VECs had played a positive role in terms of ensuring attendance of students as well as teachers.

It gets clear from the discussion above that, there is a need to understand the roles of parent members in SMCs in a much deeper manner. It is important to know exactly which functions they perform, which of the mandated functions they do not perform regularly, the challenges they face and the support received from the system.

Since the larger vision is to attain a school administration system sufficiently decentralised, it is also important to understand how the other parents in the community see the SMCs effectivity; and also to understand if/what role the local educated youth can play in this structure.

We look at our study as the first step towards understanding the same. We have surveyed a small number of SMC member parents, non SMC member parents and local educated youth, to understand the possibility to take this study forward.

## Methodology

### Research Questions

The main questions we seek to understand from the study are the following:

1. What is the level of awareness about the roles and responsibilities of SMCs among parents who are SMC members? Which of these functions they perform most regularly and which are the ones performed least regularly?
2. What are the main challenges faced by the SMC member parents in performing their functions? What are the supports they receive from the system and how important they think these supports are?
3. Knowledge of non SMC member parents regarding RTE and SMC? What is the knowledge of local educated youth in these matters and how connected they are in the local schools?
4. How successful are the SMC members in connecting the community with the schools?

### Sample selection

The target audience for the study were school management committees, other parent whose wards are in government schools and educated youth (15-29 years) of the community. The following respondents were chosen as the representation of the members of the community. The identification of the respondents happened in a school wise manner.

Geography- This study was conducted with 37 respondents in total from Delhi and UP. The survey was conducted in West Delhi district in New Delhi and in Chitrakoot district in Uttar Pradesh. The reason for selecting these two states was to draw learnings from the national capital and from one of the aspirational districts of India.

### Data collection method and tools

Comparing the census 2011 data, random sampling was done testing it for literacy rates, demographics etc, zeroed in blocks of West Delhi and Chitrakoot. Respondents in Delhi were from semi-urban while in UP were from rural background.

Questionnaire included closed ended and ranking based questions for the respondents for deriving concrete findings and Snowball method of collecting data was used in case of educated youth as a respondent group at some places.

### Experience from pilot

One pilot was conducted post which questions on awareness of RTE and SMC were included also for educated youth, ranking questions were administered carefully and clearly for easy response and all questions were kept neatly in information buckets.

### Limitations

1. Triangulation of the results will be better if the respondent groups involves teachers, SMC members and non-SMC parent members. As the schools remain closed during the months of May and June, one of respondent groups remains non-represented.
2. Students were not a part of this study for validating evidence provided by other respondent groups on academic and co-curricular events organised in school, on awareness activities carried out by the SMC, and on the interaction of SMC members with students
3. Inclusion of questions on RTE, SMC, Action areas and challenges should have been uniformly included for all three groups to check correlation under common categories
4. States like UP, have a 15 membered SMC with *lekhpal* and ANM as members of the committee, for understanding their effectivity as members, and whether they should continue being a part or not, including them in the respondent groups will help draw clear conclusions.

On Survey tool-

1. Common questions can be included for all respondent groups for more correlation, on RTE, SMC for correlation
2. Questions asking the respondent to rank the areas where community or SMC can be effective, should be administered differently for increasing ease and authenticity of answers

## Results

### 1. Basic demographic data:

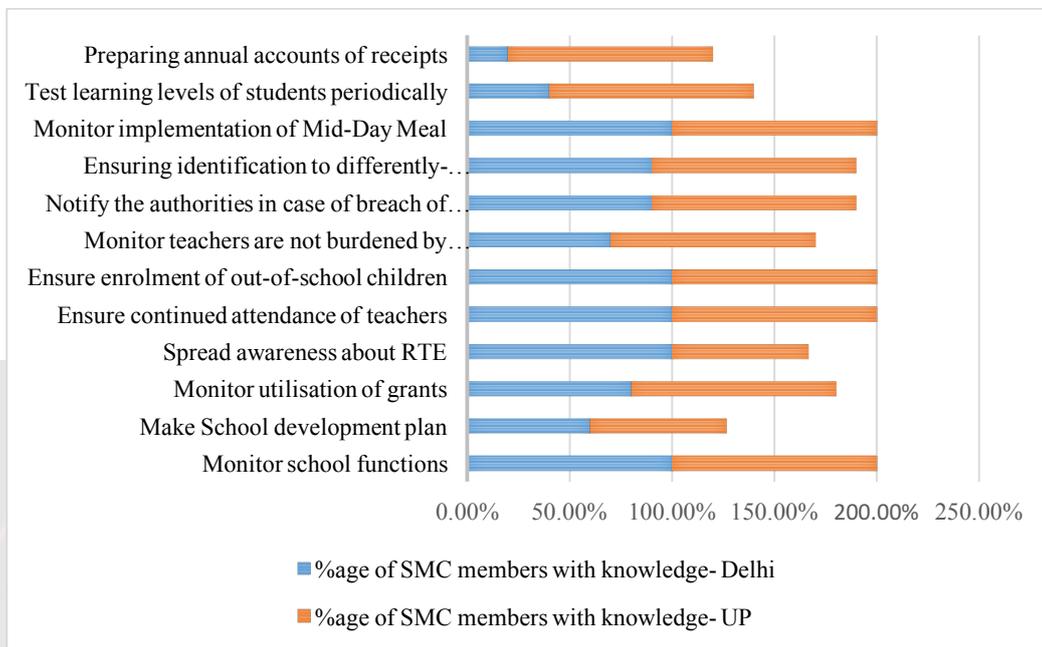
- i. Out of the 26 parents we surveyed, 9 were males and 17 were females.
- ii. Out of these parents, 16 were SMC members and 10 were non SMC members.
- iii. Out of the respondent parents, 15 were from Delhi and 11 were from UP.
- iv. Out of the respondent parents, 13 were from general caste, 7 were OBCs, 1 was SC and 1 was Muslim.
- v. Out of the parents surveyed, **18** were educated till **12<sup>th</sup> or below** and **4** were **graduates or above**.
- vi. **Out of the 8 educated youth surveyed, 6 were from general category and 1 was OBC. In Delhi, all of the educated youth respondents were from general category.**
- vii. The average age of the educated youth was 19.13. There were 5 female and 3 male respondents overall, out of whom 4 were from Delhi. In UP, there were 2 male and female respondents.

### 2. Knowledge on roles & responsibilities:

We listed out **12** roles and responsibilities (R&R) which apply to Delhi and UP according to the RTE rules of these states.

- i. Out of these, **4** were identified correctly by **all** the respondents.
- ii. In UP, there were **10** roles which were identified correctly by **all** the respondents.
- iii. In Delhi, 4 were identified correctly by all; **2** were correctly identified by **all but 1**, and there was **1** which was not identified correctly by **2** people.
- iv. On average, a little **more than 80%** of the roles were **correctly identified**. For **UP**, this number was **more than 86%** and for **Delhi**, it was **around 79%**.

**Graph 1: Percentage of respondents with correct identification of R&R**



### 3. Performance of functions:

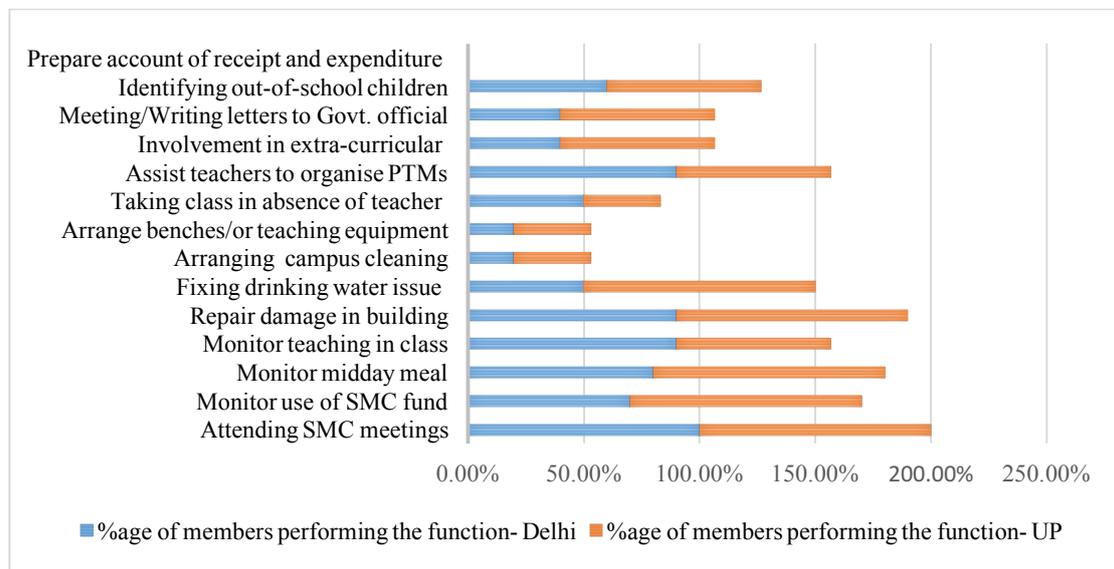
Here we listed out 14 different functions that the SMC member parents could possibly perform. These functions were taken from ground experiences of working with SMCs.<sup>1</sup> We asked the SMC member parents which among these they performed and how many times they performed the same in last 3 months. Given below are some of the results as from graph 2: -

- i. There were 5 functions for which all the respondents from UP said that they perform regularly, which are- **a)** attending SMC meetings, **b)** monitoring usage of SMC funds, **c)** monitoring quality of mid-day meals, **d)** repairing damage in the building through SMC and **e)** fixing problem of drinking water through SMC.
- ii. The least performed functions came out be the following- **a)** preparing accounts of receipt and expenditure of the school, **b)** arranging for benches and/or teaching equipment through SMC, **c)** arranging for cleaning of campus through SMC and **d)** taking classes in absence of the teachers. Although reasons for not performing these functions did not come up systematically as a part of the study, casual conversation with the respondents revealed that for the first 3 functions though, the general

<sup>1</sup> It may be the case that, we have missed a few of the functions. It needs to be kept in mind and checked and included (if need be), in case the study is taken forward.

opinion was that they were not done because they were not required to be done. These systems were already in place in the schools.

**Graph 2: Performance of functions by SMC members in Delhi and UP:**

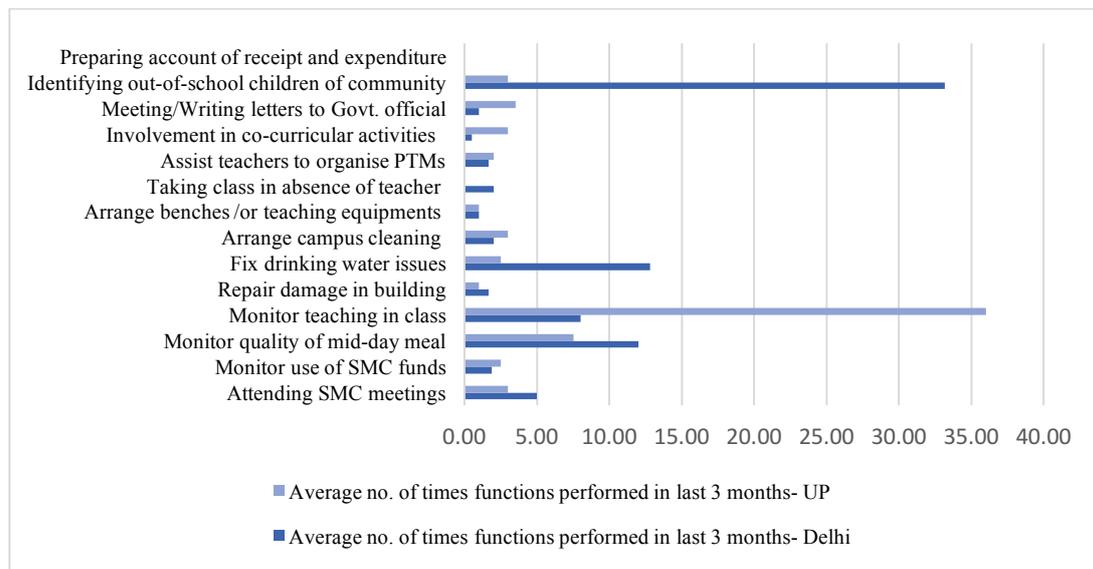


From the graph 3, it can be clearly seen that some functions are performed more than others. In some cases, this is misleading. For example, the bars for attending SMC meetings is really small and stands at around 5.

The numbers hide the fact that, as per RTE rules, there is supposed to be 6 such meetings in 3 months. So in comparison, attending 5 meetings does not look so small.

Similarly, the bars for Delhi in terms of monitoring teaching and identifying out-of-school children inflates the actual number because there were 1 outlier for each of them, responding an exaggeratedly high number for those functions.

**Graph 3: Average no. of times each function was performed in last 3 months in Delhi, UP and overall:**



#### 4. Some comparison between knowledge of R&R and performance of functions:

From the two lists, we found 8 functions appearing in both. Counting for each of them, the percentage of respondents performing the function among those having the knowledge, further calculated the average of these percentages.

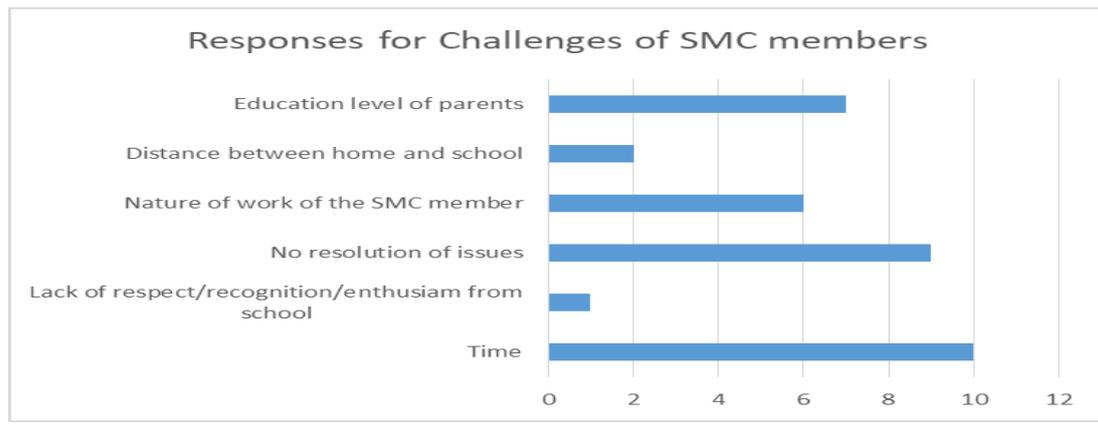
- i. On average, there is more than 72% match between the two.
- ii. For 1 function, the match is more than 90%. This function is- **ensuring continued attendance and punctuality of the teachers.**
- iii. For another 2 functions, the match is more than 80%. These are- **monitoring the overall functioning of the school and ensuring that teachers are not burdened too much with non-teaching functions.**

#### 5. Challenges to the SMC members:

6 different challenges which SMC members might face in performing their functions, this was a list taken from field experiences and is not exhaustive in nature. The graph 4 shows the no. of respondents facing each of the challenges, among 16 respondents.

As can be seen from the graph, the top challenges faced by the respondents were- **time (or lack of it), non-resolution of issues and education level of themselves. Nature of their work** also came out to be a challenge for members who have a job as well as those who are homemakers. **6 out of 10** respondents having time issues spent their time in housework.

**Graph 4: No. of respondents for each challenges:**



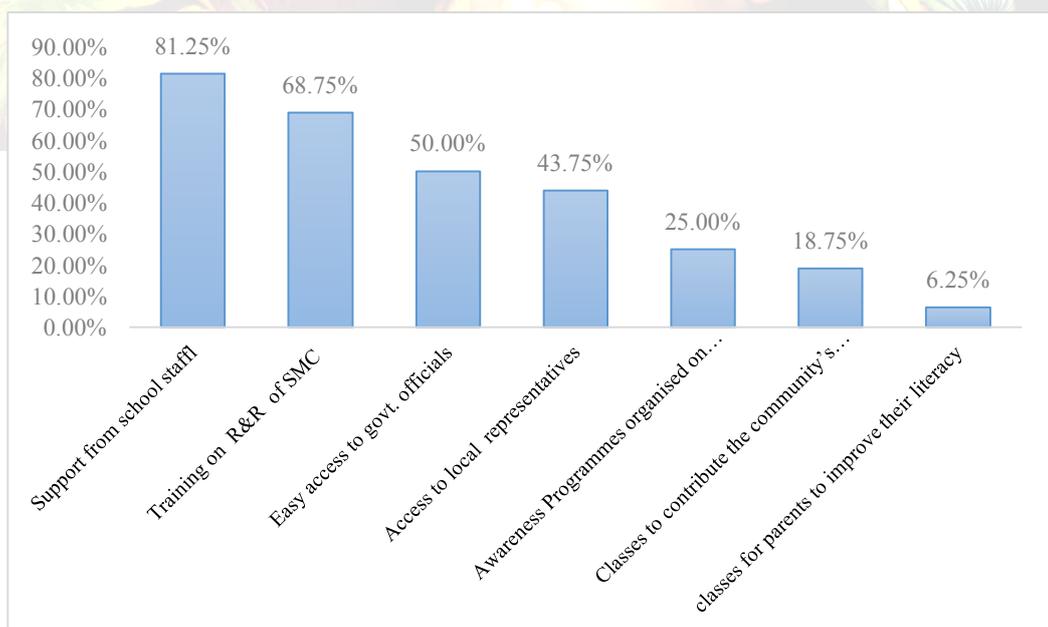
## 6. Support from school/system:

Post listing 7 support functions and asking respondents if they receive these supports and how important they think these supports are on a scale of 1-5 we have **Graph 5**, showing their responses regarding the availability of the supports.

As can be seen from the data, the most commonly available supports are- **support and information from school staff** and **trainings regarding roles and responsibilities**.

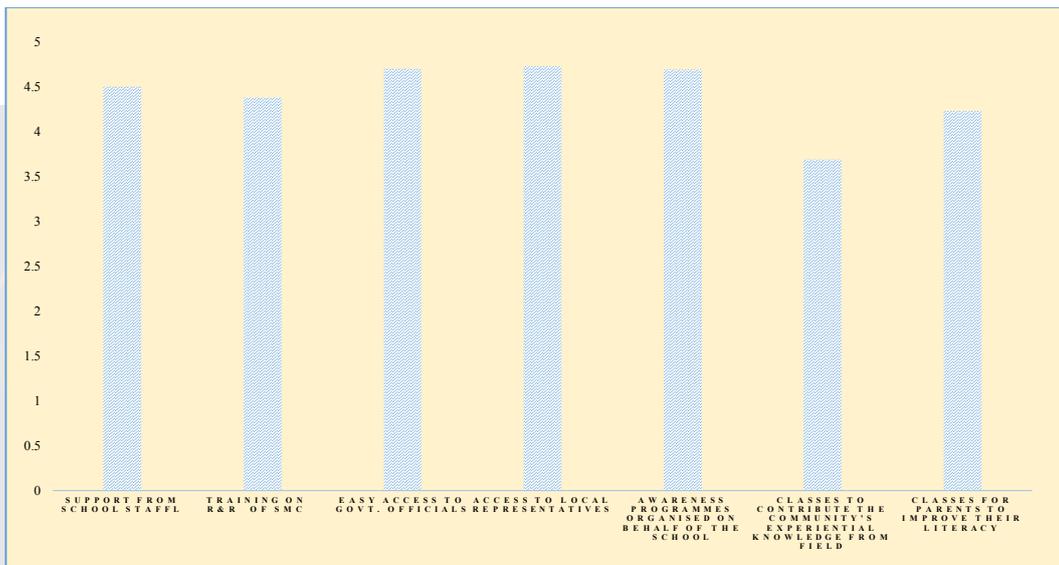
The lowest available support came out to be classes in community to increase education level of members.

**Graph 5: No. of respondents receiving different types of support**



In terms of importance of the supports, **access to local elected representatives, access to concerned Govt. officials, programmes in community to increase awareness and classes for SMC members to increase their literacy levels** came out to be the most important ones.

**Graph 6: Average rating for importance of each of the supports:**



We also calculated the correlation between the importance and availability of supports using Spearman's rank correlation, and the

**Spearman's rank correlation between availability and importance of the supports is 0.39**, showing slight degree of correlation.

## 7. Knowledge of non SMC member parents on RTE and SMC:

We took responses from 10 non SMC member parents on their knowledge on RTE and SMC. The results are shown in the table below.

**Table 1: No. of respondents in terms of knowledge on RTE and SMC:**

	Delhi	UP	Overall
Total no. of respondents	5	5	10
No. of respondents with knowledge on RTE	0	3	3
No. of respondents with knowledge on SMC	2	2	4
No. of respondents with knowledge on both	0	2	2

From the 4 respondents having knowledge on both RTE and SMC, information on the level of knowledge was taken which included basic information, results shown in table 2.

**Table 2: No. of respondents in terms of some basic knowledge on SMC:**

	Delhi	UP	Overall
Total no. of respondents	2	2	4
No. of respondents knowing correctly if SMC is part of RTE	0	1	1
No. of respondents knowing the no. of SMC members	0	0	0
No. of respondents knowing the no. of SMC parent members	0	0	0
No. of respondents identifying correctly the mode of choosing SMC members	1	0	1
No. of respondents who met any SMC member in last 3 months	1	0	1
No. of respondents feeling that SMCs have made a difference	0	0	0

## 8. Knowledge of local educated youth on RTE and SMC:

Some basic information on knowledge about RTE and SMC was also taken from local educated youth. The table below gives the results:

**Table 3: No. of respondents in terms of knowledge on RTE and SMC:**

	Delhi	UP	Overall
Total no. of respondents	5	3	8
No. of respondents knowing about RTE	4	2	6
No. of respondents knowing about SMC	2	1	3
No. of respondents knowing about both	2	1	3

Responses were also collected regarding the sources of their information on RTE. The table below gives the results.

**Table 4: No. of respondents in terms of their sources of information on RTE:**

	Delhi	UP	Overall
Internet	2	0	2
Teachers in PTMs	1	0	1
Newspapers	1	0	1
Bal Sansad	0	1	1
Govt. programmes	0	1	1

## 9. Involvement of local educated youth with local schools:

The respondents of this category were asked if they are involved in any school in their locality, in what capacity in case they do and their perception on being included as a SMC member. There were 5 respondents in Delhi and 3 in UP.

**Table 5: Details of involvement in schools for local educated youth:**

	Delhi	UP	Overall
No. of respondents involved with own old school	0	1	1
No. of respondents involved with some other school	3	0	3
No. of respondents not involved with any school	2	2	4
Average no. hours of involvement in an week (In case involved in a school)	19	NA	NA

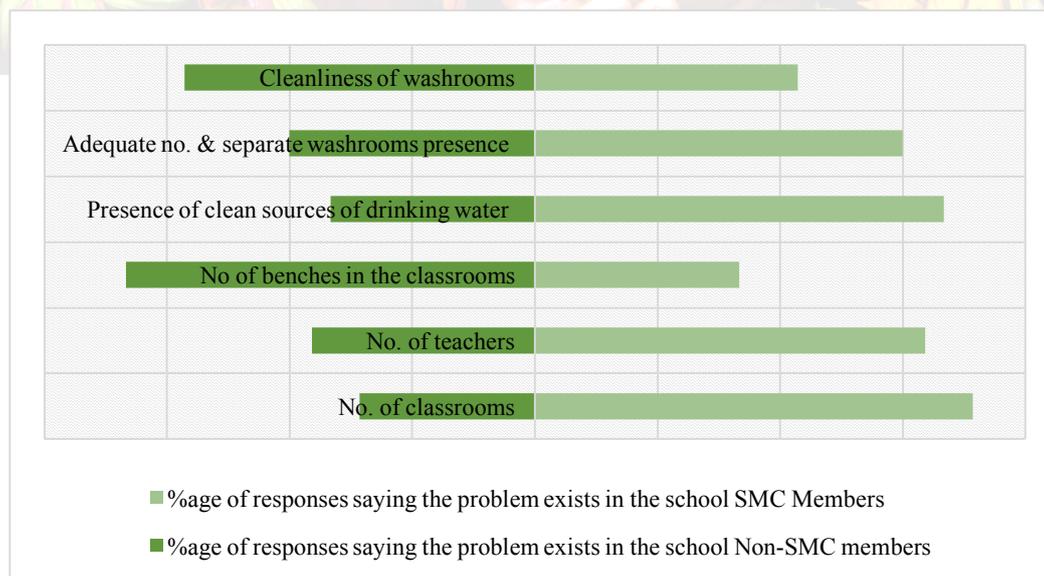
**Table 6: Areas of involvement in schools and perception about whether youth should be part of SMCs:**

	Delhi	UP	Overall
Total no. of respondents	5	3	8
No. of respondents involved in academics	3	1	4
No. of respondents involved in extra-curricular	2	1	3
No. of respondents involved in vocational training	0	1	1
No. of respondents who think educated youth should be a part of SMCs	3	3	6

**10. Connection of SMC member and non SMC member parents in terms of identification of problems of the schools:**

A list of possible problems of the schools was provided to the SMC member and non SMC member parents to understand how similar their views are regarding the identification of these problems. The respondents were asked to identify the problems they think were relevant for their schools (the schools where their children are enrolled currently).

Graph 7- Response of SMC and parents to school problems



It can be seen from the graph that the top 2 problems according to the SMC members, taking into account all the schools were- no. of classrooms and no. of teachers. According to the non-SMC members, the top 2 problems were- no. of benches in the classrooms and cleanliness of washrooms.

We ranked the problems according to the responses. There were 2 ranks each problem received, one according to the SMC members and the other according to the non SMC members. The correlation between the 2 ranks was calculated.

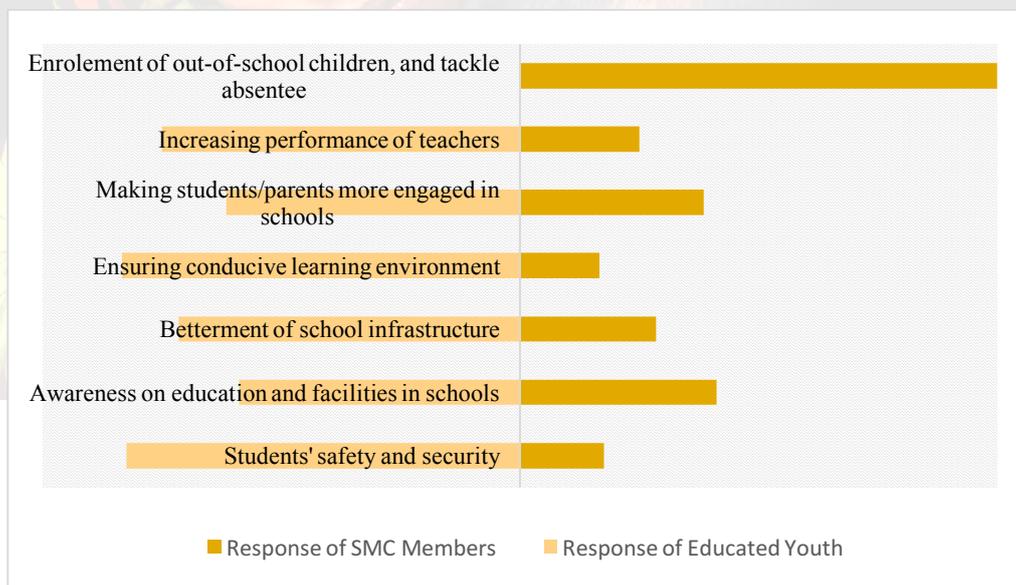
**Spearman’s Rank Correlation between the ranks received by the problems:**

**0.46**

**11.Connection between SMC members and local educated youth in terms of areas of action where communities can be effective:**

Connection between the SMC member parents and local educated youth was tested through questions on the aspects of schools they think communities can participate in, most effectively.

Graph 8- Response on parents and youth on effective areas of community



It can be seen from the graph that the top 2 aspects according to the SMC members, taking into account all the schools were- making the community more aware about the relevance of education, the facilities available for children in govt. schools and making students and parents more engaged in schools.

According to the local educated youth, the top 2 aspects were- students' safety and security and making the community more aware about the relevance of education and the facilities available for children in govt. schools.

We ranked the aspects according to the responses. There were 2 ranks each aspect received, one according to the SMC members and the other according to the local educated youth. The correlation between the 2 ranks was calculated.

**Spearman's Rank Correlation between the ranks received by the problems: 0.29.**

### Inferences

Some of the basic inferences drawn are-

#### **1. Knowledge and performance of roles and responsibilities:**

- i. We found that on average, most of the SMC member parents had knowledge about most of the functions.
- ii. For the functions, for which we could track both knowledge and performance, we found that most SMC member parents perform most of these tasks regularly.
- iii. **One question which emerges is that, do the respondents actually know their roles from the rules or do they know by performing them?**

#### **2. Challenges and support to the SMC members:**

- i. Time is one major challenge for the SMC member parents, this holds true especially for the homemakers.
- ii. SMC members get most of the support from the school staff and in terms of training.
- iii. In terms of importance of supports, access to govt. officials and local elected leaders are perceived as most important along with classes in communities to increase literacy levels of the SMC members.
- iv. **There seems to be a mismatch between the support the respondents thought as important and what they actually receive.**

#### **3. Knowledge of non SMC member parents on RTE and SMC:**

- i. On the basis of the sample, we concluded that, the knowledge of non SMC parents on RTE and SMC are satisfactory.  
**The lack of knowledge is especially visible in Delhi.** No respondent knew about RTE. Most of the respondents who knew about SMCs did not know about the specifics -no. of members or mode of choosing.

#### **4 Knowledge of local educated youth on RTE and SMC:**

Looking at the evidence from the data, it may be assumed that the knowledge of local educated youth on RTE and SMC is better than those of non SMC member parents. This is true for both Delhi and UP. Notably, respondents with knowledge

of both SMC and RTE are exactly half in number to those with knowledge of only RTE. Half of the respondents with knowledge about RTE had no knowledge on SMC. This result goes somewhat contrary to the responses of non SMC member parents, possibly because they have no direct connection with schools as the parents do.

## 5. Involvement of local educated youth with schools:

- i. Most of the respondents were involved in schools.
- ii. In case of Delhi, none of these involved respondents were involved in the school they passed out from, which is the local government school. All of them were involved in private schools.

On the contrary, the only respondent in UP, who was involved in a school, was involved in the government school he studied from.

- iii. All of the involved respondents are involved in academics with the students, some are involved in co-curricular activities as well.
- iv. On average, the involved respondents in Delhi spend around 19 hours in these schools per week.
- v. **All of the involved respondents and a few non-involved said that educated youth should be a part of SMCs.**

## 6. Connection between SMC members and community:

2 questions we had put in the questionnaires to test the similarity in opinions between SMC members and other community members (non SMC member parents and local educated youth), gives a good estimate of the connection between the 2 groups, then the results do not show a very good picture of the same.

From the results, it can be seen that the connection between SMC members and the local youth is weak. The connection between the SMC members and non SMC member parents are better but not encouraging. **These results hint towards a possible need of more communication between SMC members and the local communities.**

## Recommendations

The study should be explored further including teachers as a respondent group, Incentives could be explored further for the educated youth group, View of govt. representatives to this committee should be considered to conclude whether including them in achieving the desired purpose it aimed at initially, longer extensive study with the different respondents from the schools will help to draw stronger findings.

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