

A Study of Parental Involvement in the School Management of Elementary Schools of Bihar

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Abstract

The formation of the School Management Committee was mandated by the RTE Act, 2009 for effective school management. The Act acknowledging the importance of parents in school governance stated that “if the parents are recognized as primary stakeholders in the education of their children, they must be involved in a meaningful manner in the monitoring and management of schools”. This decision brought a revolutionary change in education as it enabled the community to participate in school functioning and take ownership of the schools. In Bihar, the Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti (VSS) has been constituted in each elementary/primary school for better management of schools by the community. This seventeen-member committee comprises of minimum 50% of mothers of the children enrolled in the school. This paper is an attempt to find out the level of awareness among parents regarding their roles and functions in managing elementary schools of Bihar. Seventy-two parents from twelve schools of four districts of Bihar (Purnia, Patna, Gopalganj, and Munger) were selected for the study. The findings revealed that there was very limited parental involvement in the functioning of all the twelve schools of Bihar.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, School Management Committee & Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti

Introduction

Right to Education Act, 2009 envisages the importance of community in the improvement of the schooling process. Therefore, the Act has highlighted community involvement in the school organization for the overall development process and in solving locally arisen problems through local methodologies. Section 21 of the Act recommends for constitution of a School Management Committee, comprising of the community members, giving significant importance to the parents with the view that they being the main stakeholders would be directly affected by the whole schooling process. Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, (2010) argue that combating educational exclusion is closely associated with an increase in awareness among local governing agencies about local educational problems and their effective participation in the day-to-day functioning of schools as well as in decision-making processes. Anderson and Minke (2007) point out that parental involvement in children's learning and development leads to better outcomes. The parents being the most important stakeholders of the schools have been included in the school management committee in the majority number. According to Common School System Report (2007) “An overwhelming majority of the members of the school management committees should be of the parents of the children studying in these schools; for, they have the highest stake in the effective functioning of these schools.”

Participation of the parents in the school management includes their involvement in the planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding, and controlling the school activities. The parents can be actively involved in the spread of awareness regarding enrolment of children in school; contribution or collection of money, materials, and labours from the community; monitoring school functioning; providing suggestions in the school development plan; participation in the preparation of mid-day meal in the school; participation in the decision-making process at every stage of school functioning and identification of school problems.

The adoption of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Act, 2009 (RTE Act) was a big step towards decentralized school governance, which specifically outlined the duties of the state governments and local authorities. With the implementation of the RTE Act 2009, efforts were made to ensure wider participation of parents of the children studying in schools by making a new VSS Act. Thereafter, Bihar Prarambhik Shiksha Samiti (Bihar Elementary School Education Committee) Act 2011 was brought to decentralize school management and community participation giving significant responsibilities and power to the parents.

In Bihar, a seventeen-member Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti comprising a minimum of 50% of mothers was formed as per the VSS Act, 2013. The 17- member committee comprises of nine mothers of students (Two from backward class, two from extremely backward class, two from scheduled castes/ scheduled tribes, two from general category, one mother of the disabled child). Thus, it is evident from the VSS composition that the policymakers are aware of the power and potential of the parents in the improvement of school functioning. Effective school management is only possible if these members are aware of the provisions of the RTE Act, their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the effective implementation of the same. In light of the above discussion, the investigator tried to find out the awareness of parents about their roles in effective school management and supervision of the elementary schools with the following objective:

Objective of the Study

To find out the level of awareness among parents regarding their roles and functions in managing elementary schools.

Method of the Study

This is a survey study of qualitative nature. A descriptive and analytical survey method was adopted by the investigator to conduct the study.

Sample

All the parents of all the primary and middle schools of Bihar constitute the population of the study. Since there is variation in the population on the demographic variables, the investigator first adopted a non-probability sampling technique (purposive sampling) to select four districts of Bihar (Purnia, Patna, Gopalganj, and Munger) with maximum variations. After that, through the multistage sampling technique, 3 blocks were selected from each selected district, and thereafter from each block, one village was selected, and finally, from each village one elementary school was selected for the study. Six parents from each of these twelve schools of Bihar were interviewed through a structured interview schedule.

Tool for Data Collection

A structured interview schedule was prepared and used for obtaining data from the primary source regarding the awareness level of parents about their roles and functions in managing elementary schools.

Delimitation of the Study

Due to paucity of money and time and some other technical reasons beyond the control of the researcher, the present study was delimited to only twelve primary/elementary schools of Bihar.

Results and Discussion

Role of Parents in the School Management of the Elementary Schools of Bihar

Data of the responses of the 72 parents whose children study in the primary/ elementary schools reveal the extent to which they are involved in managing the school functioning.

Frequency of Visiting School by the Parent

The parents were inquired regarding their frequency of visiting schools for any purpose. The responses received are as follows:

Table 1a: Role of Parents in the School Management of the Elementary Schools of Bihar

Districts →	Patna			Munger			Gopalganj			Purnia		
Village →	Naubatpur	Barni	Ghoswari	Bariarpur	Jamalpur	Tarapur	Bhore	Gamariya	Manjha	Barhari	Sonma	Gurahi
Frequency of Visiting School by the Parent												
Everyday	3 (4)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	2 (2.8)	4 (5.5)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)
2-3 times in a week	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)
Once or twice in fifteen days	1 (1.4)	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	-	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	-
Visit school only for PTM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Once in 1-2 months	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	-

Note: Total no. of sample parents is 72. Figures in parentheses indicate percentage and outside parentheses represent the frequency of sample.

The table shows that 48% of the respondents visit the schools daily, 38% said that they visit the school twice or thrice a week, 11% respondents said that they visit the school once or twice in every fifteen days and 3% respondents said that they visit the schools in one to months. It was found that none of the respondents contacted said that they visit the school for Parent Teachers Meet.

The parents of rural areas are mostly engaged in small economic activities for their livelihood. Maximum parents visit the schools regularly just to pick and drop their children. Some parents sampled do not get time to visit the school daily due to their engagement. Due to the busy routine and non-serious approach towards education, the parents do not show interest in the parent-teachers meet.

Involvement of Parents in the School Functioning

The policymakers have asserted that parents and especially mothers should be involved in school administration and management to improve the school's output. This would inculcate a sense of accountability, belongingness,

connectivity, and collective responsibility among parents. Involving mothers in school management would lead to actual devolution of power by empowering the local mothers belonging to different communities. The responses regarding their involvement were as follows:

Table 1b: Role of Parents in the School Management of the Elementary Schools of Bihar

Districts →	Patna			Munger			Gopalganj			Purnia		
Village →	Naubatpu	Barni	Ghoswari	Bariarpur	Jamalpur	Tarapur	Bhore	Gamariya	Manjha	Barhari	Sonma	Gurahi
Involvement of Parents in the School Functioning												
In the preparation of mid-day meal	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)
In monitoring the attendance of teachers and students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
In providing suggestion for school improvement	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	-	1 (1.4)	-	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	-	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	-
Monitoring the teaching-learning process	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
supervision of building projects in the school	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	-
organizing the school programmes	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Increasing enrolment and retaining all the children enrolled	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not involved	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	4 (5.5)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	4 (5.5)

Note: Total no. of sample parents is 72. Figures in parentheses indicate percentage and outside parentheses represent the frequency of sample.

Regarding the involvement of the parents in the school functioning 33% of respondents said that they supervise and help in the preparation of the Mid-day meal, 13% said that they provide suggestions to the school for improvement, 1% said that they help in the supervision of school building, 1% said that they help the school in organizing the school programmes and 53% said that they are not involved in the school functioning. None of the respondents said that they monitor the attendance of teachers and students, monitor the teaching-learning process, and help in increasing enrolment and retaining the enrolled children.

The present study reveals that the parents are not adequately involved in the administration of primary/elementary schools in Bihar. Moreover, parents' involvement in school functioning in Bihar is very less although they are the most important stakeholders of the school. Their involvement was limited to the supervision of MDMS. The parents are unaware of their duty as they do not monitor the attendance of teachers and students neither they monitor the teaching-learning process. The sampled parents do not assist the school in increasing enrolment and retaining the enrolled children.

Supervision and Monitoring Mid-Day Meal in the Elementary Schools

The Mid-day meal Scheme is a significant step taken to strengthen educational development and to improve the nutritional status of the children. The parent's involvement would make the teachers free and they would get more time for teaching-learning. The responses on this aspect were as follows:

Table 1c: Role of Parents in the School Management of the Elementary Schools of Bihar

Districts →	Patna	Munger	Gopalganj	Purnia
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Village →	Patna			Munger			Gopalganj			Purnia		
	Naubatpur	Barni	Ghoswari	Bariarpur	Jamalpur	Tarapur	Bhore	Gamariya	Manjha	Barhari	Sonma	Gurahi
Supervision and Monitoring Mid-Day Meal in the Elementary Schools												
In the preparation and distribution of mid-day meal	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)
Monitoring the hygiene of the meal	1 (1.4)	-	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	-	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)
In the storage and cleaning of the grains	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-
None of these	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	3 (4)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)

Note: Total no. of sample parent is 72. Figures in parentheses indicate percentage and outside parentheses represent the frequency of sample.

Regarding the involvement of the parents in the Mid-day meal, 32% of respondents said that they help in the preparation and distribution of Mid-day meal, 23% monitor the hygiene of the meal, 3% in the storage and cleaning of the grains and 48% said that they do not participate in any way in the mid-day meal scheme of the school.

The community participation in Mid-day Meal and especially the parents' contribution was found to be very less. The parents who were members of VSS mostly contribute to the supervision and monitoring of the Mid-day Meal.

Awareness of Parents regarding the VSS in the Elementary Schools of Bihar

The parents of children enrolled in the sample school were inquired regarding their awareness regarding the VSS in their schools and the following responses were obtained:

Table 2: Awareness of Parents regarding the VSS in the Elementary Schools of Bihar

Districts →	Patna			Munger			Gopalganj			Purnia		
	Naubatpur	Barni	Ghoswari	Bariarpur	Jamalpur	Tarapur	Bhore	Gamariya	Manjha	Barhari	Sonma	Gurahi
Awareness of Parents regarding the VSS in the Elementary Schools												
Aware about VSS in the School	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)
Not Aware about VSS in the School	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)

Note: Total no. of sample parents is 72. Figures in parentheses indicate percentage and outside parentheses represent the frequency of sample.

The study brought to light that 48% of the respondents were aware of the presence of Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti in the elementary schools, whereas 52% said that they were unaware of it. The inclusion of the local community in the management of the school affairs facilitates effective school functioning as they are the most concerned and connected community members. The parents are also a part of the SMCs in maximum numbers. The lack of awareness of the parents regarding the presence of a school management committee reflects a lack of public awareness in this regard.

Awareness of Parents Regarding the People Involved in the School Functioning

The awareness of the parents regarding the people involved in the school functioning was found out with the help of an interview schedule and the responses obtained as follows:

Table 3: Awareness of Parents Regarding the People Involved in the School Functioning

Districts →	Patna			Munger			Gopalganj			Purnia		
Village →	Naubatpu	Barni	Ghoswari	Bariarpur	Jamalpur	Tarapur	Bhore	Gamariya	Manjha	Barhari	Sonma	Gurahi
Awareness of Parents Regarding the People Involved in the School Functioning												
Headmaster/principal and teachers	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)
Principal/headmaster only	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	1 (1.4)	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)	-	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)
Educational officers, Headmaster/principal, and teachers	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1 (1.4)	-
Parents, Educational officers, Headmaster and teachers	-	-	3 (4)	-	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)	-	1 (1.4)	-	-	-	-

Note: Total no. of sample parents is 72. Figures in parentheses indicate percentage and outside parentheses represent the frequency of sample.

The present study revealed that regarding the people involved in the school functioning, that 67% of the respondents opined that the headmaster and the teachers are mainly responsible, 32% were of the view that mainly the headmaster is responsible, 3% said education officers, Headmaster/principal, and teachers are responsible and 10% were of the view that the parents, education officers, headmaster, and teachers were responsible. It can be interpreted that parents were not aware that VSS comprises ward member, headmaster/head teacher, mothers of students, heads of village organization (V.O) of Jeevika and Mahila samakhya, students' representative, senior-most teacher, and a donor. Effective school management is only possible if all the members of the SMCs together perform their roles and responsibilities.

Attending the Parent Teacher Meet of the School by the Parents

In a move to improve the quality of education and to solve students' issues, the department of education promoted the practice of holding parent-teacher meetings (PTM) in all the government primary and upper primary schools in the state. The parents whose children were enrolled in the schools were interviewed to find out whether they attend the parent-teachers meet organized by the schools and the responses are as follows:

Table 4: Attending the Parent Teacher Meet of the School by the Parents

Districts →	Patna			Munger			Gopalganj			Purnia		
Village →	Naubatpur	Barni	Ghoswari	Bariarpur	Jamalpur	Tarapur	Bhore	Gamariya	Manjha	Barhari	Sonma	Gurahi
Attending the Parent-Teacher Meet of the School by the Parents												
Always attend the Parent-Teacher Meet	1 (1.4)			2 (2.8)				1 (1.4)		1 (1.4)		
Sometimes attend the Parent-Teacher Meet	3 (4)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)		2 (2.8)	4 (5.5)	3 (4)	3 (4)	4 (5.5)	2 (2.8)	1 (1.4)	2 (2.8)

Never attend the Parent-Teacher Meet	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	4 (5.5)	4 (5.5)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	2 (2.8)	2 (2.8)	3 (4)	5 (7)	2 (2.8)
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Note: Total no. of sample parents is 72. Figures in brackets indicate percentage and the outside bracket represents the frequency of the sample.

On the issue of attending the Parent -Teacher Meet of the School by the parents, some shocking results came out. Only 7% of the respondents said that they attend the Parent-Teachers Meet always, 44% respondents said they sometimes attend the Parent-Teacher Meet and 49% said that they never attend the Parent-Teacher Meet in the school.

The introduction of the no-detention policy was to achieve a hundred percent literacy in the country. The children are promoted to higher grades every year and as such the parents do not feel the need of visiting the school and discussing the progress of their ward with the teachers. The annual performance of a student in academics as well as other areas is assessed and discussed in the meetings on pre-announced dates.

Provision of Government Incentives to the Children Enrolled in the Elementary Schools

Elementary education has experienced a major expansion in the recent past. One of the reasons was the government initiatives for quantitative and qualitative improvement of the education system. But the real success will only take place when we find that the children get attracted to school, not because of these incentives rather the teaching-learning process.

On the issue of provision of government incentives to the children enrolled in the elementary schools, all the parents declared that their wards get Mid-day Meal in the school. All the respondents of all the schools stated that their children get free textbooks from the school. 82% of respondents said that their wards got free uniforms whereas 11% of parents mentioned that their children got a scholarship from the school.

The government has tried its level best to maximize the enrolment and to retain students inside the boundary wall of the school. It provides incentives like Mid-day meals, free text book, free uniforms, and scholarships to attract the children to the school. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) and Free Textbooks are for all children in the school, whereas Free Uniform is given to all students in Standard III-V and for girl students in Standards VI-VIII. The Scholarships are provided only to students belonging to scheduled caste/tribes or student's achievements.

Suggestions of the Parents Smooth Functioning of Elementary Schools of Bihar

The role of parental involvement as a key factor in children's education is well evidenced. Participation of parents in their children's educational development is considerably less in rural areas due to unawareness of the importance of formal education for the children among parents, lack of time, household and field related work, lack of conscience, little kids, and social barriers. In the interview, the parents provided some suggestions for the smooth functioning of the school. 74% of respondents said that infrastructural improvement is required, whereas 34% said that improvement in the teaching and learning process is needed. Some other suggestions from them were more recruitment of teachers in the school, frequent inspection of the schools, involving literate parents in the monitoring of teaching-learning, and proper use of school development fund by the school authority.

The students and the parents are the key stakeholders of the school education system. They are the most affected group and thus they are given the opportunity to bring about change in the education process by involving them in the school governance. The suggestions given by them are the actual problems being faced by their ward. These suggestions would help in improving the access and quality of the education system.

Conclusion

Inclusion of parents in the school management was done with the view of effective monitoring of the school functioning by the most concerned and connected people of the school goes. The impact of a good or a faulty education system is faced directly by the parents and the students. Their participation in school governance will have a positive impact on the education system by their constructive and collective engagements with the school and other stakeholders.

In the present study, it was found that maximum parents do not visit the school regularly due to their engagements. Among the ones who visit the schools regularly, it was seen that the parents were not adequately involved in the governance of primary/elementary schools in Bihar. Moreover, it was also found that the parent's involvement in school functioning in Bihar is very less although they are the primary stakeholders of the school system. It was seen that only the parents who were members of VSS mostly contribute to the supervision and monitoring of the Mid-day Meal. The mothers are the least informed personnel regarding the presence of a school management committee in the school.

The mothers can play a significant role in actualizing the goal of universalization of education in the nation. The parents or rather the mothers of the children enrolled in the school have been involved in the school governance by the government as they are active at the local level, can influence the other community members, are concerned for their children's welfare, and have large potential to bring about change. The need of the hour is to give them more opportunities and involve them more and more in the school governance to bring about qualitative improvement in the school education system.

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