

Role of School Management Committees in the Implementation of the Right to Education Act

Richa Dixit¹, Dr. Bhupendra Singh Chauhan²

¹Research Scholar, ²Professor

Department of Education

Vikrant University, Gwalior (M.P.)

Abstract: *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, is one of India's most significant educational reforms aimed at ensuring universal elementary education for children aged 6–14 years. The Act emphasizes community participation through School Management Committees, which serve as decentralized governance bodies responsible for monitoring school functioning, preparing School Development Plans, ensuring enrollment and retention, supervising infrastructure development, and promoting transparency and accountability.*

This paper examines the role of School Management Committees in implementing the RTE Act, highlighting their responsibilities, achievements, challenges, and policy implications. The study is based on secondary data collected from government reports, academic journals, UNESCO publications, and educational policy documents. The findings reveal that active SMCs contribute significantly to improved school governance, increased community participation, enhanced student enrollment, better utilization of school grants, and stronger accountability mechanisms. However, inadequate training, limited awareness of legal provisions, socio-economic barriers, and insufficient financial autonomy continue to constrain their effectiveness.

Keywords: Right to Education Act, School Management Committee, Community Participation, Educational Governance.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, operationalized Article 21A of the Constitution of India, guaranteeing free and compulsory education to every child between six and fourteen years of age. The Act represents a paradigm shift from education as a welfare measure to education as a fundamental right. One of the unique features of the Act is the institutionalization of School Management Committees (SMCs), which are intended to strengthen participatory governance by involving parents, teachers, local authorities, and community members in school administration.

School Management Committees were established to decentralize decision-making and empower local communities to monitor school performance, ensure transparency in fund utilization, improve infrastructure, promote student enrollment, reduce dropout rates, and prepare School Development Plans. Under Section 21 of the RTE Act, every government and government-aided school must constitute an SMC comprising at least 75% parents or guardians, with due representation of women and disadvantaged groups. This participatory approach seeks to bridge the gap between educational policy and grassroots implementation by making communities active stakeholders in school governance.

II. SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES UNDER THE RTE ACT

Section 21 of the RTE Act mandates the establishment of School Management Committees in all government and aided schools. Their major responsibilities include:

1. Monitoring school functioning
2. Ensuring regular attendance
3. Preparing School Development Plans



4. Monitoring teacher attendance
5. Supervising school grants
6. Improving infrastructure
7. Encouraging community participation
8. Addressing grievances
9. Promoting inclusive education

Table 1: Composition of School Management Committees

Component	Provision under RTE Act
Parents/Guardians	Minimum 75%
Women Representation	At least 50% of parent members
Teachers	School Head and Teachers
Local Authority Representative	Included
Socially Disadvantaged Groups	Mandatory Representation
Chairperson	Parent Member
Tenure	Generally Two Years

III. MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

SMCs function as democratic institutions that promote accountability and transparency in school governance. Their key functions include monitoring student attendance, supervising teacher performance, maintaining school records, preparing annual development plans, managing grants, organizing parent meetings, and ensuring that RTE norms are followed.

SMCs also act as a communication bridge between schools and communities. Through regular meetings, parents become informed about school activities, student learning outcomes, infrastructure needs, and government schemes.

Table 2: Functions of School Management Committees

Function	Expected Outcome
School Development Planning	Infrastructure improvement
Monitoring Teacher Attendance	Better teaching quality
Monitoring Student Attendance	Reduced dropout
Financial Monitoring	Transparency
Community Participation	Increased accountability
Monitoring Mid-Day Meal	Improved nutrition
Infrastructure Inspection	Better learning environment
Social Inclusion	Equal educational opportunities

IV. ROLE OF SMCS IN IMPLEMENTING THE RTE ACT

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, represents a landmark legislative initiative in India that recognizes education as a fundamental right for every child between the ages of 6 and 14 years. The Act not only guarantees free and compulsory elementary education but also emphasizes the importance of community participation in school governance through the establishment of School Management Committees (SMCs).

These committees are a cornerstone of the decentralized governance model envisioned under the RTE Act, ensuring that parents, teachers, local authorities, and community members actively participate in the planning, monitoring, and development of schools. Section 21 of the RTE Act mandates the constitution of SMCs in all government and government-aided schools, with at least 75 percent of the members being parents or guardians of enrolled children.



Furthermore, adequate representation of women and disadvantaged groups is required to promote inclusive and participatory decision-making. The primary objective of SMCs is to bridge the gap between schools and communities while ensuring transparency, accountability, and quality in elementary education (Government of India, 2009).

One of the most significant roles of School Management Committees is promoting universal enrollment and ensuring that every eligible child has access to elementary education. Members of the SMC identify out-of-school children within the community and encourage parents to enroll them in nearby schools.

Through awareness campaigns, home visits, community meetings, and interactions with local leaders, SMCs help reduce educational exclusion among children belonging to economically weaker sections, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minority communities, migrant families, and children with disabilities. These efforts contribute significantly to achieving the universalization goals of the RTE Act by ensuring that no child is deprived of education due to social, economic, or cultural barriers (UNESCO, 2022). Community involvement also increases public awareness regarding the legal provisions of the RTE Act and strengthens confidence in the public education system.

School Management Committees also play a vital role in improving student attendance and reducing dropout rates. Regular attendance is essential for meaningful learning, and SMC members continuously monitor absenteeism by interacting with teachers, students, and parents. Whenever children remain absent for extended periods, committee members visit their homes to understand the reasons behind their absence and encourage families to send their children back to school. Financial difficulties, child labor, seasonal migration, household responsibilities, and lack of parental awareness are among the common causes of school dropout.

By addressing these issues through counseling, community support, and coordination with local authorities, SMCs contribute to retaining children in schools and ensuring continuity in education. Their active involvement has been particularly beneficial in rural and disadvantaged areas where dropout rates tend to be higher (UNICEF India, 2021).

Another crucial responsibility of School Management Committees is monitoring the functioning of schools and ensuring accountability among teachers and administrative staff. SMCs regularly observe teacher attendance, punctuality, classroom teaching, student participation, and the overall learning environment. Although they do not directly control teachers' appointments or disciplinary actions, their observations and feedback are communicated to school authorities and education departments, thereby promoting greater accountability. The presence of active community monitoring encourages teachers to maintain regular attendance, complete the prescribed curriculum, and adopt child-centered teaching practices. Studies have indicated that schools with functional SMCs often demonstrate improved teacher attendance and stronger community trust in the education system (Govinda, 2011). Such accountability mechanisms contribute to enhancing the quality of education envisioned under the RTE Act.

School infrastructure development is another major area where School Management Committees make substantial contributions. The RTE Act prescribes minimum infrastructural standards for elementary schools, including adequate classrooms, drinking water facilities, separate toilets for boys and girls, electricity, boundary walls, playgrounds, libraries, and teaching-learning materials.

SMCs periodically inspect school infrastructure, identify deficiencies, and prepare School Development Plans (SDPs) outlining the physical, academic, and financial requirements of the school. These plans are submitted to local authorities and education departments for approval and allocation of resources. Continuous monitoring by SMCs ensures that government grants are utilized appropriately for improving school facilities and creating a safe, child-friendly learning environment. Better infrastructure not only enhances educational quality but also increases student attendance and parental confidence in government schools (Ministry of Education, 2021).

Financial transparency and accountability constitute another important function of School Management Committees. Government schools receive financial assistance under various schemes, including Samagra Shiksha, maintenance grants, library grants, and school development funds. SMCs supervise the utilization of these funds by reviewing expenditure records, monitoring procurement processes, and ensuring that financial resources are used exclusively for educational purposes.



Community participation in financial decision-making reduces the possibility of fund mismanagement and promotes transparency in school administration. Public disclosure of expenditures during SMC meetings further strengthens accountability and encourages greater trust among parents and community members. Financial monitoring by SMCs has become an effective mechanism for ensuring responsible governance and improving resource utilization in schools (Ministry of Education, 2022).

Inclusive education is another key objective of the Right to Education Act, and School Management Committees play an essential role in achieving this goal. The committees work to ensure that schools remain free from discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, disability, or socio-economic background.

They encourage equal participation of girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized communities by promoting awareness regarding educational rights and ensuring that schools provide supportive learning environments. Female members of SMCs often advocate for better sanitation facilities, girls' safety, menstrual hygiene management, and gender-sensitive infrastructure, thereby improving girls' educational participation. Representation of disadvantaged groups within the committee itself strengthens social inclusion and enables diverse community perspectives to influence school governance (National Education Policy, 2020).

School Management Committees also facilitate stronger collaboration between parents and teachers, thereby improving communication and mutual understanding. Regular SMC meetings provide opportunities for parents to discuss children's academic progress, attendance, behavioral issues, and learning difficulties with teachers. Such interactions encourage parents to become active partners in their children's education rather than passive beneficiaries. Increased parental involvement has been associated with better student motivation, improved academic performance, higher attendance rates, and stronger emotional support for learners. Community ownership of schools also encourages collective responsibility for maintaining school infrastructure, organizing educational activities, and supporting initiatives such as cleanliness drives, plantation campaigns, health awareness programmes, and cultural events.

The preparation and implementation of the School Development Plan (SDP) represent one of the most strategic responsibilities assigned to School Management Committees under the RTE Act. The SDP serves as a comprehensive planning document that identifies the school's infrastructure requirements, teacher needs, student enrollment targets, academic improvement strategies, financial estimates, and future developmental priorities. The plan is prepared through participatory discussions involving teachers, parents, and local stakeholders, ensuring that school development reflects actual community needs rather than top-down administrative decisions. Well-prepared School Development Plans help education authorities allocate resources more effectively and support evidence-based planning for improving educational outcomes. The participatory planning process also enhances transparency, accountability, and community ownership of educational development initiatives.

Despite these significant contributions, several challenges limit the effectiveness of School Management Committees in implementing the RTE Act. Many committee members have limited awareness of their legal powers and responsibilities, particularly in rural and socio-economically disadvantaged regions. Low literacy levels among parent representatives often reduce their confidence in participating in school governance and financial decision-making. Inadequate orientation programmes, irregular training, lack of administrative support, and insufficient monitoring mechanisms further weaken SMC functioning. Political interference, infrequent meetings, limited participation of women despite formal representation, and delays in the release of school grants also hinder effective implementation of committee decisions. Additionally, many SMCs possess advisory rather than executive powers, limiting their ability to enforce corrective measures when schools fail to comply with RTE norms (NCERT, 2021). Addressing these institutional challenges requires sustained capacity-building programmes, regular monitoring, digital reporting systems, and stronger collaboration between education departments, local governments, and community organizations.

School Management Committees constitute one of the most innovative and participatory features of the Right to Education Act, 2009. By empowering parents and communities to participate directly in school governance, SMCs strengthen democratic accountability, transparency, and local ownership of elementary education. Their contributions extend beyond monitoring school functioning to promoting universal enrollment, reducing dropout rates, improving



infrastructure, supervising financial management, supporting inclusive education, preparing School Development Plans, and fostering meaningful collaboration between schools and communities.

Although several operational challenges continue to affect their performance, evidence indicates that active and well-trained School Management Committees significantly improve educational governance and contribute to better learning environments. Strengthening SMC capacity through continuous training, adequate financial support, institutional recognition, and regular evaluation will further enhance their effectiveness and help realize the constitutional vision of equitable, inclusive, and quality education for every child in India as envisaged under the Right to Education Act.

1. Increasing Student Enrollment

SMCs play an important role in identifying out-of-school children and encouraging parents to enroll their children. Door-to-door campaigns and community awareness programs have significantly improved enrollment rates in many rural areas.

2. Reducing Dropout Rates

Regular interaction with parents helps identify reasons behind absenteeism and dropout. SMC members often counsel families and coordinate with local authorities to ensure continued education.

3. Monitoring Teacher Accountability

One of the important responsibilities of SMCs is monitoring teacher attendance and punctuality. Community oversight has contributed to reducing teacher absenteeism in several states.

4. School Infrastructure Development

SMCs identify infrastructural deficiencies such as classrooms, toilets, drinking water facilities, playgrounds, electricity, and boundary walls. These needs are incorporated into School Development Plans submitted to education authorities.

Table 3: Infrastructure Areas Monitored by SMCs

Infrastructure Component	SMC Responsibility
Classrooms	Monitor availability
Drinking Water	Ensure functionality
Toilets	Regular maintenance
Electricity	Monitor availability
Library	Promote utilization
Playground	Ensure safety
Boundary Wall	Improve security
Digital Facilities	Encourage ICT integration

5. Financial Transparency

SMCs monitor utilization of government grants received under Samagra Shiksha and other educational schemes. Financial transparency helps reduce misuse of funds.

6. Inclusive Education

SMCs promote enrollment of girls, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minority children, and children with disabilities. They work toward eliminating discrimination within schools.

V. BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Research indicates that active School Management Committees improve educational governance through:

1. Better school monitoring
2. Improved learning environment
3. Greater parental involvement
4. Reduced dropout rates
5. Enhanced financial transparency



6. Improved infrastructure
7. Increased student attendance
8. Better teacher accountability

Table 4: Impact of Effective SMCs

Indicator	Before Active SMC	After Active SMC
Student Enrollment	Moderate	High
Parent Participation	Low	High
Teacher Accountability	Moderate	Improved
Infrastructure	Poor	Better
School Transparency	Limited	High
Student Attendance	Moderate	Improved
Community Ownership	Low	High

VI. CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Despite their importance, several challenges limit the effectiveness of SMCs.

Major Challenges

1. Lack of awareness regarding RTE provisions
2. Limited training of members
3. Low literacy among parent representatives
4. Political interference
5. Poor participation in meetings
6. Financial constraints
7. Inadequate monitoring mechanisms
8. Weak coordination with education departments
9. Limited decision-making authority

Table 5: Challenges and Suggested Solutions

Challenge	Suggested Solution
Poor Awareness	Regular orientation programmes
Lack of Training	Capacity-building workshops
Low Participation	Community mobilization
Financial Constraints	Increased funding support
Weak Monitoring	Digital monitoring systems
Gender Inequality	Encourage women leadership
Political Influence	Independent oversight
Poor Coordination	Strengthen district-level support

VII. DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Right to Education Act depends not only on government initiatives but also on active community participation. School Management Committees represent a decentralized governance mechanism that enables local stakeholders to participate in educational planning and monitoring.

Evidence from various studies suggests that schools with active and well-trained SMCs demonstrate higher enrollment rates, improved infrastructure, increased transparency, and stronger accountability. However, many SMCs remain ineffective due to inadequate awareness, limited institutional support, and irregular capacity-building initiatives.



Strengthening these committees through continuous training, financial autonomy, digital monitoring systems, and stronger collaboration with local authorities can significantly improve the implementation of the RTE Act.

VIII. CONCLUSION

School Management Committees are central to the successful implementation of the Right to Education Act in India. They strengthen democratic governance in schools by involving parents and communities in educational decision-making, promoting transparency, monitoring school performance, and supporting inclusive education. While SMCs have contributed to improvements in enrollment, infrastructure, and accountability, their full potential remains unrealized due to capacity and resource constraints. Sustained training, stronger institutional support, financial empowerment, and effective monitoring are essential to enable SMCs to function as robust instruments of community-led educational governance and to achieve the goals of equitable and quality elementary education envisioned under the RTE Act.

REFERENCES

1. Aabha, & Pandey, C. P. (2026). School Management Committees as catalysts for curriculum reform and interdisciplinary learning. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 52(3), 421–431.
2. Bhattacharya, D., & Mohalik, R. (2015). Problems faced by the SMC members in implementing the RTE Act, 2009: An analysis. *Journal of Educational Studies* (Research Paper), 3(2), 45–56.
3. Bhue, P., & Singh, T. P. (2020). Decentralised school system through community participation: From expectation to implementation. *Journal of Indian Education*, 45(4), 150–164.
4. Govinda, R. (2011). Community participation and educational governance in India. *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, 25(2), 145–160.
5. Govinda, R., & Diwan, R. (2003). Community participation and empowerment in primary education: Indian experience. *Educational Planning*, 15(3), 23–38.
6. Kumar, V. (2018). Delineating the challenges and remedies of the School Management Committees as constituted under RTE Act 2009. *Journal of Indian Education*, 44(3), 78–86.
7. Rani, B. (2016). Parents' perceptions about School Management Committees in the implementation of RTE Act 2009 in government schools of Kurukshetra District (Haryana). *International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanities*, 7(5), 82–88.
8. Shrivastava, A. P. (2018). A study on the awareness of School Management Committee on RTE rules and their role. *International Journal of Current Research and Modern Education*, 3(1), 141–150.
9. Singh, N. (2017). Effectiveness of School Management Committees in Haryana. *Innovative Research Thoughts*, 3(5), 21–25.
10. Singh, P. (2012). Understanding the role of School Management Committees (SMCs) in the context of effective implementation of the Right to Education Act-2009. *The Primary Teacher*, 37(1–2), 107–112.

