



SDMCs in Karnataka

Analysing the quality of SDMC meetings in Hoskote, Kushtagi and Mundargi

**Research and Evaluation
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Acknowledgement

This report emerged from the information collected from the meetings of SDMCs in selected government schools across Hoskote, Kustagi and Mundargi during the year 2014-15. We thank the field staff of Akshara Foundation for collecting relevant information; Mr Girish B. of Prajayatna for compiling the information, Dr. Sowresh Kudkuli for translating the report and Lakshmi Mohan for editing the document.



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One The Context

Education, A Fundamental Right

Education is the fundamental right of every child. Providing quality education is the responsibility not only of the government but also a responsibility of India's citizens. Government plays the far-reaching part, but community involvement in education can propel it to another level. Growth and development cannot be equated only with the narrow goal of physical infrastructure. Development is meaningless without education. It yields a future for children everywhere in India, particularly in village schools in remote rural habitations. Education provides opportunities. It guarantees access to knowledge, an enlargement of the exploratory horizon of the mind, and the confidence to lead a better life. Unless these aspects are included one cannot achieve bigger and broader goals (*Human Development Report 2005, United Nations Development Programme*). There has been tremendous progress across the world since 2000 – but we are not there yet. Despite all efforts by governments, civil society and the international community, the world has not achieved Education for All....15 years of monitoring shows sobering results (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, UNESCO).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations on the 10th of December, 1948, declared **education as a fundamental right**, a basic need on par with food, shelter and water. The Declaration recognizes the vital role it plays in bestowing upon people a multi-dimensional, multi-spectrum advantage, besides contributing to the overall development of a nation. That education improves people's wisdom to make the right choices, enhances their skills, increases productivity and family income, and helps in the growth of a nation is a well established fact. It is a lifeline for children, especially in villages in India where there is an opportunity void.

The Concept of SDMCs

That education can be a life-changer has not percolated deep into rural communities where it is not a prioritized need for people. Sustained efforts by pressure groups and civil society organisations resulted in the formulation of the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, or RTE as it is widely known. For the first time in India, the Act enforced parameters for school infrastructure, the basic facilities an educational institution must have, learning outcomes, teacher capabilities, school quality, and equally importantly, community participation through the already mandated School Development Monitoring Committees (SDMCs).

SDMCs, the idea first promulgated in 2001, are forums to enable communities to partner in school management and school improvement. Most government schools have an SDMC, though in many cases they are non-functioning entities. The RTE Act has a framework for the involvement of SDMCs and a direction that it has charted. The aim is to position or locate the local school in the local social psyche. When accomplished, this would bring a sense of collaboration and accountability in the functioning of schools and ensure the active contribution of resources - not just financial - from the local community. Section 21 of the RTE emphasizes the need for SDMC involvement in the functioning of a school. The Karnataka Gram Panchayats' School Development Monitoring Committees Model Sub-Ordinance 2006 extends legislative support to SDMCs in the state.

Roles and Responsibilities of SDMCs

The RTE Act identifies the roles and responsibilities of SDMCs.

SDMCs have been formed:

- To support head teachers in preparing the schools' Annual Plan (SAP).
- To ensure that all children enrolled in school are regular in attendance and that there is no discrimination.
- To follow and observe regularly the attendance of out-of-school children and ensure the distribution of incentives like uniforms, textbooks, midday meals, and scholarships.
- To conduct the Parents' Council meeting once in three months.
- To sustain the maintenance of schools and ensure complete cleanliness.
- To advocate for and seek facilities like a school playground, compound wall, drinking water, toilets for girls and boys, and furniture.
- To take responsibility for the construction, maintenance and improvement of the school premises.
- To ensure that the school works for 220 calendar days in a year.
- To regularly observe the performance of students and teachers and ensure that basic parameters are followed.
- To supervise all the assets, funds and finances of the school.
- To collect donations and contributions for school development and spend it on the school's improvement.
- To submit reports on SDMC activities to the Parents' Council and Amenities Committee of the *Gram Panchayat*.
- To hold a Parents' Day in school so that parents involve themselves effectively in the school's activities.
- To approve four local holidays every year.
- To ensure that the midday meal programme is implemented properly in school.
- To prevent and protect the school premises from encroachment and hindrances.
- To display details of the Child Helpline so that all children take note of it.
- To redress complaints made by students, parents, teachers and other staff in the school.

To ensure that activities are successfully implemented SDMCs must meet once a month and hold a Parents' Council meeting once in three months.

Two The Study

Akshara Foundation felt it necessary to observe how SDMCs are getting involved in schools. This study aims to look at the current scene more closely by analysing the minutes of SDMC meetings during the academic year 2014-2015 with the help of school data. The study pertains to the geographies where Akshara's in-school programmes are ongoing – Hoskote Block in Bengaluru Rural District; Kushtagi Block in Koppal District; and Mundargi Block in Gadag District.

Objectives of the survey

The purpose of the study was to observe the extent to which School Development Monitoring Committees have been able to do justice to their roles and responsibilities and how successful they have been in planning and implementing the plans they may have prepared.

Methodology

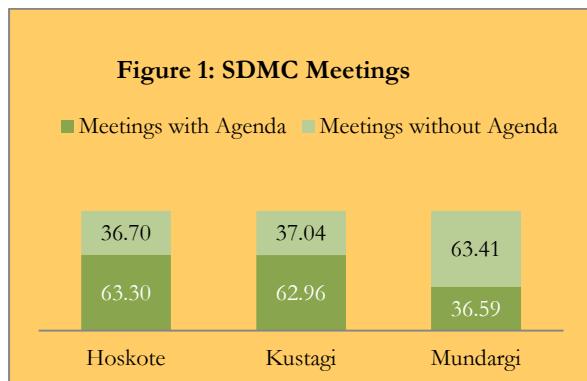
This study has been prepared from the notes on the minutes of SDMC meetings in schools in Hoskote, Kustagi and Mundargi Blocks. Volunteers visited the schools and requested the head teachers to share the notes on the minutes of these meetings. The teachers handed over to the volunteers photocopies of the minutes. The notes of the meetings were authorized and had the official seal of the head teachers. The number of schools that fall within the scope of the study and the number of meetings that took place in 2014-2015 are mentioned below.

Indicators	Hoskote Block	Kushtagi Block	Mundargi Block
Number of schools visited	64	34	21
Number of meetings held	188	162	82

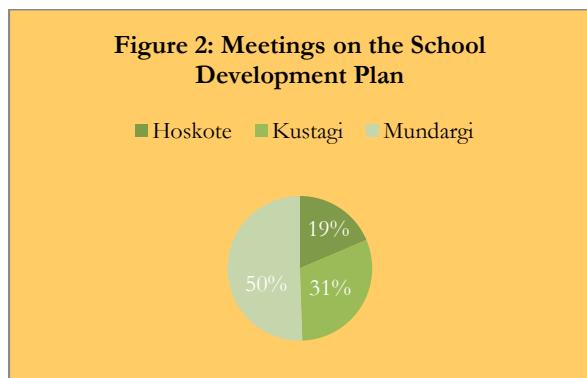
The Akshara team scrutinised the meeting minutes to glean the facts and analyse how the SDMC agenda was decided and what issues were discussed and implemented in the schools in the last one year.

Three The Findings

Key Observations

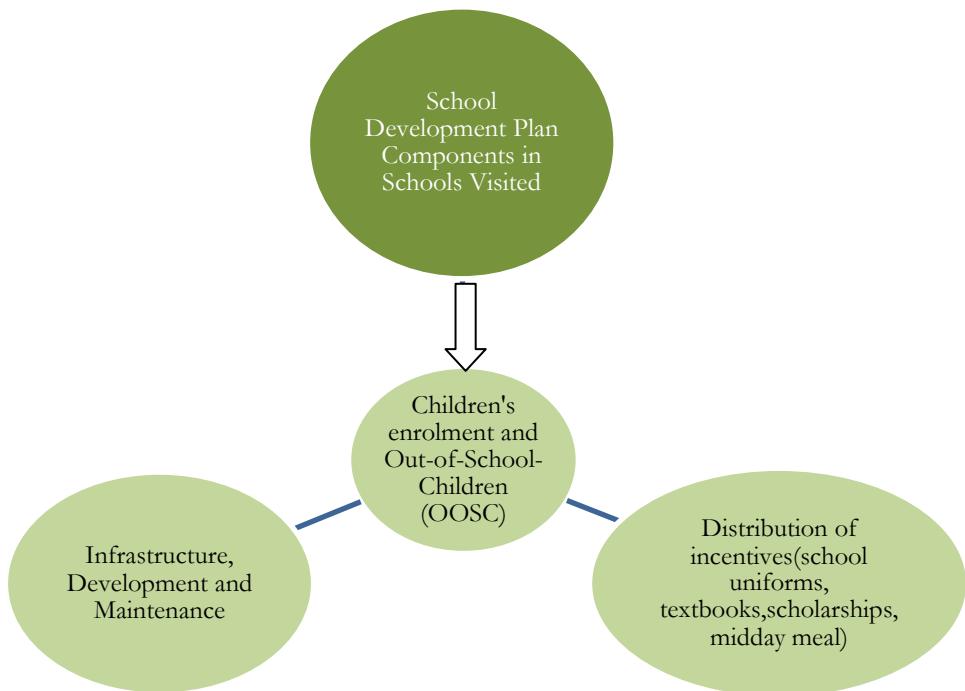


Nearly 60% of the schools in Hoskote and Kustagi Blocks, and only 36% of the schools in Mundargi Block had meetings with an agenda.

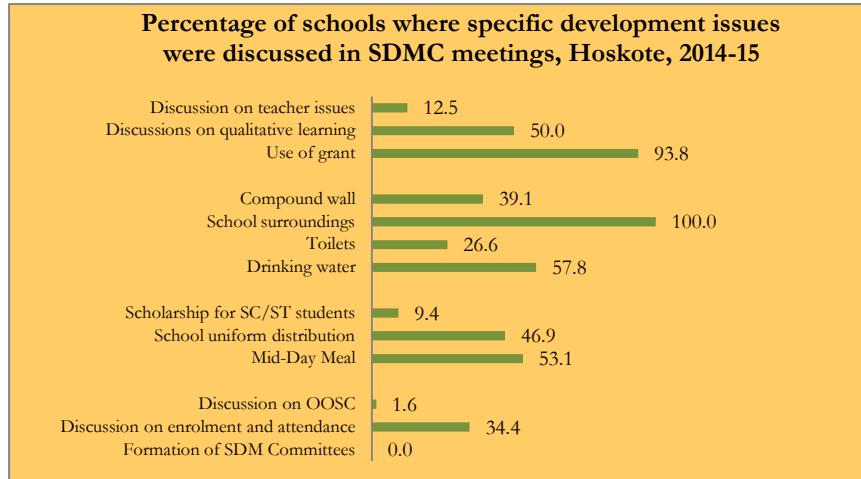


Of all the meetings with an agenda in Hoskote and Kustagi Blocks, very few were about the School Development Plan (SDP).

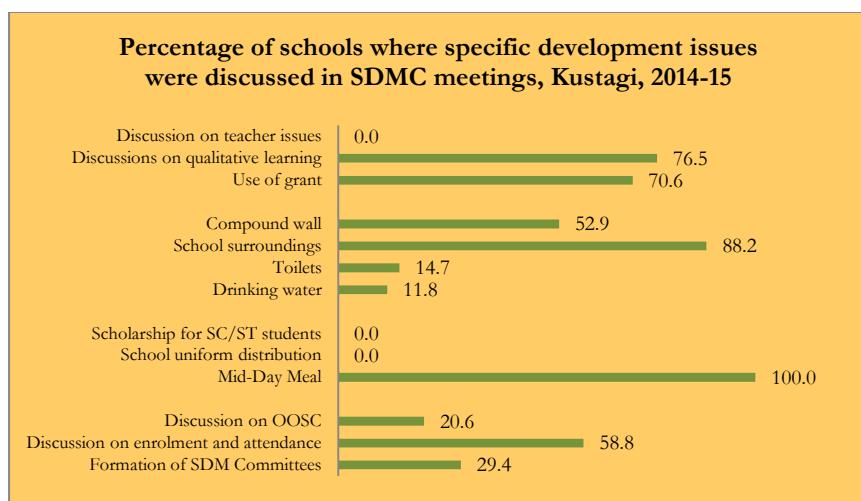
At least 50% of the meetings in Mundargi Block with an agenda were on the SDP.



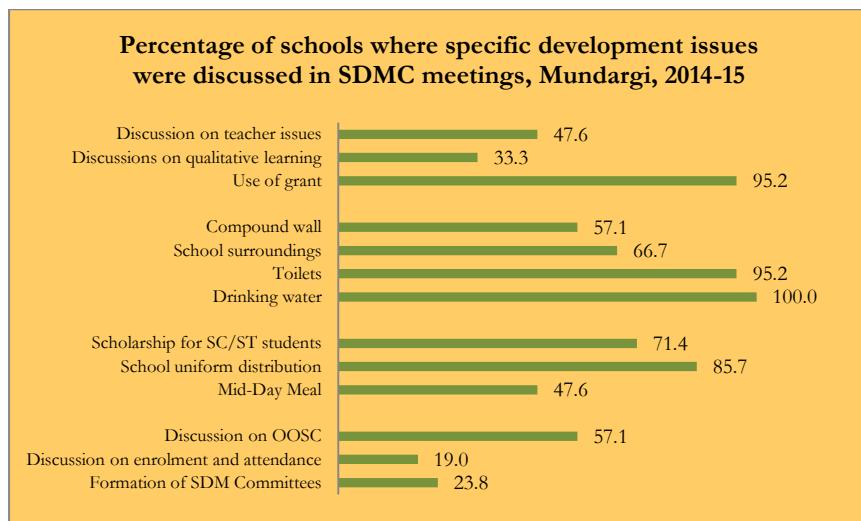
Specific Components of the Meetings



A majority (94-100%) of the schools in Hoskote Block discussed mainly on the usage of school grants and the development of the school premises.



In Kustagi Block, 88-100% of the schools discussed about the development of the school premises and the midday meal, particularly about staff and hygiene.



In Mundargi Block, a majority of the schools (95%) discussed about the use of school grants and the maintenance and provision of toilets and drinking water facilities.

Four

The Concluding Observations

Issues and Problem Areas

- ⇒ School Development Monitoring Committees are rarely formed or reorganized when school reopens. Instead it is done in the middle or the final stages of the academic year.
- ⇒ SDMCs were involved in the school system only when teachers request them to. This could be due to the fact that SDMCs largely comprise of parents and they defer to teachers as repositories of knowledge. Parents are very often semi-literate or illiterate and cannot speak authoritatively about the education of their children. Besides, it is a tradition in communities to respect the teacher and leave education in her hands.
- ⇒ It is noticed that SDMCs discussed enrolment and attendance issues, but there was no mention of how many children are enrolled and how many are out-of-school. There is more than a fleeting mention in some cases of house visits to check for out-of-school children (OOSC), but the minutes do not share any concrete plans as to how to get them back, and there is no number on record of the number of children SDMCs have successfully brought back. The non-availability of registers makes it difficult to testify.
- ⇒ One of the important responsibilities of SDMCs is to see that grants for incentives to children are obtained and their distribution supervised. The incentives include school uniforms, scholarships and midday meals, to name a few. In Hoskote Block 53.1% of the schools had SDMCs discussing the operations of the midday meal scheme. Like appointment of cook or hygiene issue, repairing the kitchen, buying of utensils etc. Proposals have been put forward or discussions taken place on the topic in 100% of the SDMC meetings in Kustagi Block.
- ⇒ The provision of basic infrastructure was given higher importance than its proper utilization.
- ⇒ Where and how school grants should be used was rarely discussed in the meetings on grants.
- ⇒ Quality of learning did not receive any significant push in the meetings. In Hoskote, Kustagi and Mundargi this issue seems to have been discussed in 50%, 77% and 33% of the meetings respectively. However, the quality of discussion seems to be poor. In the sense, in depth discussion on subject wise learning gaps seems to have not taken place and discussion on quality was reduced to a single sentence statement.

Enabling Factor

The study found that in every village there are various community groups like Stree Shakti women's self-help groups, Dalit or caste groups, youth groups, and Kannada organizations, and they are working to improve the conditions of their villages and their people.

Five Recommendations

SDMCs were formed to provide a space for community participation in education. To further strengthen it, SDMCs were made sub-committees of standing committees of *Gram Panchayats* and given additional roles and responsibilities. Though there is fertile ground now for increased involvement, with the RTE Act's directives, SDMCs are falling short of expectations. Schools are seen as belonging to the Department of Education, not the community.

If SDMCs are to align with the workings of schools, there is a host of things that could be done. Some of them are:

- Form or reconstitute SDMCs within a specified time frame
- Monthly meetings must be made mandatory and the minutes submitted to Education Department officials and the *Gram Panchayat*. The minutes should be published on the notice boards of schools.
- The submission of monthly reports to be systematized and better coordination ensured so that the sharing of responsibility becomes a joint commitment.
- Training, a vital need, must be instituted and designed to address the local context. It will help SDMCs work optimally. Training workshops should focus on SDMC members' roles and responsibilities.
- Training must have a long-term view, not be made a one-time event, and must be a platform for sharing experiences, challenges, and strategies to address those challenges.
- SDMC members need clear and specific training in how to conduct a meeting, develop an agenda, planning, and writing the minutes.
- The study reveals that in many instances teachers have not shared information or been supportive of SDMCs. Financial responsibility must be shared with the SDMCs in the interests of transparency and better school management.
- A school may have all the required facilities and its management may have improved. But if children are to come regularly it should provide effective teaching. Teachers must explain the teaching-learning process to SDMC members in the language they can understand and ensure that their capabilities are built in such a way that they can critically comment on it.
- SDMCs must begin to see schooling from the perspective of what the children are learning and how successfully they are performing.

Akshara's study reveals that 14 years after the enforcement of SDMCs, the foundation is still unstable. For members the purpose of such committees, or such collaboration, is still unclear, the goals therefore unrealized. Key responsibilities are often ignored and limited concerns are expressed during the course of specific actions like meetings and teacher interactions. The need



for training and awareness generation cannot be overemphasized. SDMC members have to be educated about their mission in school and inspired to take charge while being given the freedom to use their powers of decision-making, wisely and with understanding.