

# Increasing Student Participation Through the Success of School Management Committees (SMC) of Sindh Pakistan

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## **Abstract**

*The situation of primary education in Pakistan is poor. According to the ‘Out of school children’: South Asian regional study (UNICEF, 2014), in 2009, in Pakistan, there were 6.6 million school-age children<sup>1</sup> out-of school. The School Management Committees (SMCs) were created at the district level by the government’s initiatives of decentralization of education by introducing devolution plan in 2001 (The Sindh Local Government Ordinance, 2001). At the school level, the head teacher plays the role of general secretary of the SMC and facilitates the formation of the SMC by calling a general body meeting and arranging the election of the SMC. This research will address the ways and means through which the SMC policy implementations can be improved so that student enrolments are increased. The research question will explore the barriers that face the SMCs in increasing effectiveness of policy implementation, to enhance enrolments of students at the school level, and how this implementation can be improved in Sindh, Pakistan. The transformative worldview approach is selected. In the literature review, a significant search was carried out to explore hurdles with regards to the SMC implementation and effective strategies which worked successfully in developing countries. This paper outlines the findings regarding the SMCs’ experience in Pakistan and parts of developing countries where the SMCs model worked effectively.*

**Key Words:** School Management Committees, Education, Devolution, Community Empowerment, Public Private Partnership.

## **Introduction**

Pakistan is a country with a population of 18 million people (Population Census Organisation, 2013) and as per the United Nations Development Program [UNDP] (2013) World Development Report Education Index, Pakistan ranks 146th of 187 ranked countries. The situation of primary education in Pakistan is poor. According to the ‘Out of school children’: South Asian regional study (UNICEF, 2014), in 2009, in Pakistan, there were 6.6 million school-age children<sup>2</sup> out-of school and of these over three million are girls who are out of school. To address the issue of access to education, achieving quality education for children and protecting the Rights to Education for all, during the implementation of the devolution plan of the country the government of Pakistan introduced changes such as decentralization of education through introduction of devolving power from federal to provincial and district governments (Local Government ordinance, 2001). These changes includes changes in constitution such as, with the eighteenth constitutional amendment, inclusion of Article 25-A in the constitution of Pakistan and the development of Education policy in 2009 through the consultation of all stakeholders of civil society of Pakistan. Surprisingly, in spite of the presence of the mentioned policies and the government claims of

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1 Over three million girls are out of school. ([http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/EDUCATION\\_IN\\_PAKISTAN\\_\\_A\\_FACT\\_SHEET.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/EDUCATION_IN_PAKISTAN__A_FACT_SHEET.pdf))

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devolved mechanisms, scarcely any of these strategies brought significant changes. This shows that Pakistan is far behind in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) targets.

Strengthening of school management committees (SMCs) is one of the initiatives of the devolved system of governance. According to SMC structure, the head teacher will be general secretary of the SMC, at school level. He/she will formulate the SMC by calling a general body meeting, arrange the election of the SMC and run the day to day non-academic school improvement activities through participatory decision making. However, this principle of working is not in effectively implemented.

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate what the implementation gaps are in the SMC at the school level, which increase the barrier between the community and school management committees (SMCs), resulting in low enrolments of children in schools. This study will address the research question of this research paper according to which it will explore the barriers that face the SMCs in increasing its implementation at the school level, the increase of student enrolment, and how the implementation of the SMCs model can be improved in Sindh, Pakistan.

### **Use of Transformative Paradigm Theory**

The transformative world view is selected for this research paper because the research topic links with political social actions and contains an action agenda. This worldview provides a path for exploration of ways to make the SMCs an effective public institution that formulate reform agendas in order to change the lives of those communities whose children are out-of-school (Creswell, 2014). The underlying assumption regarding this research paper is that marginalized communities of Pakistan are supposed to be mainstreamed in the SMC decision-making process. According to Creswell (2014), this worldview also provides space for the marginalized, reduces inequalities in society and will help the society to accommodate to the thought of feminism (Creswell, 2014). Political interference created disempowerment of communities and failed in the use of the concept of the SMC. While conducting literature review, questions were kept in mind to determine specific issues regarding equity, equality social justice and political dominations and oppressions (Creswell, 2014).

### **Research Methodology**

With regards to the SMC research project, the transformative worldview approach is selected (Creswell, 2014). In this traditional literature review<sup>3</sup>, the synthesis technique is applied to conduct the analysis of the research. This research includes a total of six journal articles, which were retrieved by using Google scholar, Informit and Jestor, Proquest databases, One Search James Cook University (JCU) library catalogue. Additionally, 10 government and non-government humanitarian<sup>4</sup> organization' reports on websites, one media items, five national and international policy documents legislations, one evaluation report and one doctoral dissertation were included in the review. Eight out of fifteen journal articles were selected, two international reports were also included and three JCU library book on the subject of devolution and research methods were consulted for the review. The key words used to search articles for the purposes of the literature review and for finding best practices of school management policies were: legislation on education in Pakistan, situation of education in Pakistan, Millennium Development Goals, issues of gender in Pakistan, performance based system in education, community participation in education, literacy rates in Pakistan, National education policy of Pakistan, constitutional changes regarding

3 Traditional Review allows the researcher to be flexible to explore ideas. Jesson, J. K., Matheson, L., & Lacey, F. (2011)

4 UNICEF, UNDP, IFRC, ODI, IDRL, IASC and others.

education in Pakistan, public private partnership, donor funding in education, best practices of community participation, united nations facts, devolution of education. The database searches to retrieve the articles which related to legislation, best practices and policy of education.

*Inclusion Criteria:* Journal articles, books, policy papers from 1998 to 2014 were retrieved on evaluation/progress report on the education, school management committees and community participation models were also included in the review.

*Exclusion Criteria:* Studies focusing on secondary and higher education and other policy issues of education and the articles published before 1998 were excluded.

### **Basic Concepts Regarding this Research**

All the education plans, legislations, policies and their framework are devised for the increasing participation of students and increase awareness of education in communities and in the process of doing so, to ensure the adherence to Human Rights. Before going into any further discussion regarding School Management Committees, it is important to define some important terms:

#### **Education**

Education is fundamental because it is the source of knowledge to develop the skills which are necessary for enjoying a higher standard of living (UNESCO, 1956). It also provides the knowledge of how to use continually developing technical services in the areas of agriculture and health and in the use of machines for the production of crafts (UNESCO, 1956).

In itself education is fundamental human right, bedrock of development that contributes to all social, economic and environmental dimensions, leading to gains for generations to come. The dividends that result from investments in education are immeasurable. However, for these benefits to accrue, all girls and boys must have education opportunities both in and outside of school and should be acquiring meaningful learning that leads to mastery of skills (Saeed & Zia, 2014).

#### **United Nations Millennium Development Goals**

In the almost seventy years that the United Nations has been in place, there are still many problems in the world in regards to education, especially in much of the developing world. To combat this, UNESCO has set up goals which it hopes to achieve. These are the Millennium Development Goals. The first two priorities of the Millennium Development Goals are to 1) eradicate extreme hunger and poverty and 2) achieve universal primary education (United Nations, 2011). The current situation for primary school attendance globally is at ninety percent, the UN however, believes in achieving the ultimate goal of education for all (EFA).

#### **Devolution**

Devolution is a term used in political discourse. It is defined as a transfer of specific powers or functions from a central or federal government to a state or provincial government (Kincaid, 1998). Devolution surrenders power through its political, legislative, administrative and financial functions. Examples of its implementation are found in the British parliamentary systems as well as in the congress of the United States of America. This system occurs in vertical intergovernmental relations but it

cannot occur between the federal government and that of the states without amendments in the constitution (Kincaid, 1998).

### **Literacy Rate in Pakistan**

About 75 million Pakistanis of age ten and above years cannot read and write and 57 per cent children aged five to nine years are not attending schools (Government of Pakistan Statistics Division Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Islamabad. [PSLM], 2013). In rural areas, about 71% of girls have not completed primary schooling, and 53% of women are illiterate (PSLM, 2013). Aly (2007) noted that due to low education indicators, development processes such as economic development, social evolution, political stability are adversely affected. The status of the education sector of Pakistan is discouraging. Literacy rate of Pakistan has stagnated at 58 per cent (PSLM, 2013).

### **The Constitution of Pakistan 1973 and Associated Constitutional Amendments**

In the constitutional history of Pakistan, provision of the right of every person to education was acknowledged. According to the report of the Institute of Social and Policy Science [ISAPS] (2014), such provisions were present in the Constitutions of Pakistan i.e. in 1956, 1962, and 1973 but were never enforceable in letter or spirit.

According to ISAPS (2014) in the constitution of Pakistan 1973, the Federal government has to play a vital role in a central way in the affairs of education, such as educational policymaking, planning, curriculum development, syllabus setting, setting standards of education in general and Islamic education in particular.

In the year 2000, concerned citizens started demanding that education regarded as a fundamental right of every child be recognized in the Constitution. After incessant lobbying, the President of Pakistan signed the 18th Amendment to the Constitution on the 19th of April 2010. The 18th Constitutional Amendment acknowledges that the right to education is a fundamental human right.

### **National Education Policy 2009 of Pakistan**

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2009 is an outcome of a series of consultations (from 2006 to 2009), with civil society organisations, which were held in Pakistan. The outcome of such consultations became known as the White Paper (Aly & National Education Policy Review Team, 2007), prepared by Mr. Javed Hassan Ally and his National Education Policy Review Team. With regards to NEP 2009, it portrays an enlightening view of Pakistan which positions itself in a global perspective (Lingard & Ali, 2009). This effort of consultation and engaging communities creates ‘acceptance’ of education policy framework by the representatives and non- government actors of larger groups of society which supplies evidence of compatibility with the present research framework of innovation for change. However, ‘implementation’ of education policy needs further examination of evidence. This gap in implementation and commitment to change was also highlighted in the National Education policy of Pakistan (Ministry of Education Government of Pakistan [MoEGoP], 2009).

## **Literature Review**

### **Objective of Literature Review**

The objective of this literature review is to initiate insightful current debate regarding SMCs in Sindh, Pakistan and to critically analyse the available theories, research and donor evaluation reports as well as the National Education Policy (2009). This will

help to determine what barriers the SMCs need to overcome to increase their implementation at the school level, and what initiatives will be effective to improve the SMC's model. Such effective practices will help to increase school enrolments in Sindh, Pakistan. This serves the broad functions mentioned by Marshal and Rossman (2011), focusing on community participation and juxtaposing the findings of previous studies with the lessons learnt through experiences in further exploration of the requirements of a good education system.

This review will outline the research questions regarding an effective SMC model and workable strategies by adapting those characteristics which will help the revitalization of the SMCs, and their successful implementation.

### **Overview of Literature Review**

Five key findings are noteworthy: firstly, the education reforms were donor funded, with the funding channelled through low-priority areas of education. Secondly, SMCs were formed but because of lack of community participation, issues of accountability and transparency emerged. Thirdly, with regards to the SMC, the public-private-partnership (PPP) was not a successful model. In addition, political interference lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also formed a stumbling block. Finally, the performance based mechanism of SMCs in Ghana was identified as an innovative mechanism for community participation and increase in child enrolment.

### **Donor funding and Lack of Prioritization**

For the reasons above, striving for a hundred percent literacy rate, Universal Primary Education and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are problems of donor-funding dependency and lack of prioritization of education issues (Bossier, Baig, Modi & Zafar, 2007). This fact is indicated in the World Bank (WB) evaluation report by Bossier, Baig, Modian and Zafar (2007) that since 1970 the (WB) has funded USD 1,365 million, which was spent on educational projects in Pakistan. An article on the education advocacy network of Pakistan, Campaign for Quality Education [CQE] (2007), identified that in the education sector of Pakistan, investment of WB funding was focused on low priority areas with less than optimal results. It was also argued that the funding neglected the areas where improvement was needed. CQE (2007) further found that community participation at school level is non-existent or in some places found to be minimal. This shows that there is immense need for community mobilization, prioritizing their needs and for the fair use of donor funding. This emphasis will definitely help to increase enrolment of children and progress towards quality education.

### **Community Empowerment**

Community participation is the key to the theoretical and successful model for the effectiveness of the SMCs. According to Jaffery (2012), the NGO model of sustainable community participation is replicable in the public education system and will bring results. During the implementation of the WB-SMC project, evidence was found that the SMC election process was not transparent and created disengagement with the concept of the SMC (Indus Resource Centre ([IRC], 2011). According to the WB project-completion report by IRC (2011) teachers were not given clear guidelines for their roles and responsibilities nor were these guidelines disseminated in the community. The WB project report of the IRC (2011) and Khan (2003) identified the same problems of ineffectiveness of SMCs, such as delays in the transfer of SMC

funds, accountability and transparency issues. Furthermore, as there are increased numbers of out-of-school children in the country and the situation of the SMC has not been changed, questions are being raised.

### **Issues Regarding Community Participation and Gender**

The above mentioned issues indicate that there are problems of ownership of the SMC in its concept and by the communication gap among all SMC stakeholders. The research conducted by Khan and Zafar (1999) indicated that the mothers' participation in SMC matters was minimal. This supplies an opportunity to compare the SMC issues in the past with those of the present. The reports by (Khan & Zafar, 1999) and IRC (2011) found that after the passage of more than a decade, gender disparity had not been addressed by donors, the government or the NGOs. These insights regarding community participation and attitude to gender can be explored in further research. The final research design will be helpful in exploring workable solutions to mainstream the marginalized communities as well as developing vibrant schools.

Within education there is a large gender disparity between boys and girls in Pakistan. This is important because if boys have more educational opportunities than girls, then an educated man will have more opportunities in life than an uneducated woman. According to the Government of Pakistan's Social & Living Standards Measurement Survey, in 2011-2012 only 49 per cent of girls had ever attended school, as compared with 73 per cent of boys (2013, p. 22). The Commonwealth foundation found literacy rates to be similar. Sixty nine per cent of males were seen as being literate, whereas only 45 per cent of women were recorded as literate (2013, p. 8). The Gender Party index sits at 0.14 and 0.24 below the achievable aims for the primary and secondary schooling (Pakistan Coalition for education, 2013).

### **Public Private Partnership**

The community disengages from the SMCs if any mechanism is formulated which is against the people's perspective. One of the dominant models of the SMC is Public Private Partnership (PPP) in which the government in partnership with NGOs, spends donor money to run public schools (Farah & Rizvi, 2007). With such a model, there are fewer chances of community engagement in SMC decision making. Farah and Rizvi, (2007) exposed the empirical evidence regarding failure of implementation of the government's decentralization policy which disengaged the community and the marginalized groups of society. This shows there is a policy gap regarding power structure and loose or no links between government and community. In the long run this will not achieve desirable results at the school level.

## **Monitoring Mechanism in Context.**

### **Political Interference**

The education sector is immersed in political controversy. The Education Sector is subjected to the political opinions. Due to a large number of human resources and institutions involved with education system, politicians of different tiers get involved and exert their influence on the education system to gain power for the sake of vested interests.

From a primary school to the district education department, and from the district education department to federal ministry of education, reasons for new

appointments, transfer and postings of teaching and non-teaching staff are based on political motivated decisions. In the usual way politicians influence appointments, transfers and postings of district staff. This tool of power of influencing decisions affects primary schools negatively i.e. which are having no or having lack of teachers and in many cases there are one-teacher schools. Due to political influence on transfers, a number of primary schools are closed for long periods until the appointment of a new teacher. This interrupts the children's education and mistrust arises in the community. As mentioned in the previous chapter of analysis, central and provincial government resources are provided for specific purposes of the improvement in education sector. Unfortunately, at times these funds are not utilised at all, especially in those areas which are marginalized or rural, since local influential leaders are often not agreed to promote education in "their" communities.

In view of the above it is recommended that political interference must be prevented;

- a) Frequent transfers of teachers should not be allowed, or alternative arrangements made;
- b) Education decision makers should recruit teachers from the same communities, as the children they teach. Issues of mobility of teachers were identified in the qualitative analysis of this research study. This issue would be resolved if the teachers from the local vicinity are hired on merit. The solution of the transportation problem also solves that of teacher-parent relationships.

Greater autonomy to schools is essential. By comparison, empowered principals of schools are more effective than upper-level bureaucrats because principals are better acquainted with the daily realities of school life. In the case of schools, head masters have no or restricted decision making authority. By giving more autonomy at school level, head masters and community members would have more empowerment and power to appoint any staff member with common consensus and address priority issues that effect day to day affairs of school administration as well as maintain teaching standards. Instead, education officials at the district level decide all day-to-day decisions and this makes devolution ineffective.

Head masters have no or restricted decision making authority. By giving more autonomy at school level, head masters would have more empowerment and power to appoint any staff member and address priority issues that effect day to day affairs of school administration as well as maintain teaching standards.

Weak monitoring and political interference in education matters may also be a barrier to SMC implementation. In this regard, according to the research findings and argument of Komatsu<sup>5</sup> (2009), the decentralization policy of government burdened the local education department and created a range of problems including monitoring of SMCs and political interference in teacher- transfer. Komatsu (2009) and Shafa, Karim, and Alam, (2011) are in agreement that, if the local context and its culture are not taken into consideration, community participation cannot be attained and the SMC cannot be revitalized.

### **Continuous Improvement and Best Practices**

In Pakistan, during last twenty years, a range of education reform projects worth of millions of rupees, education policies and intervention were initiated with the goal to raise the overall literacy and achieve quality standards in education sector. However, despite of all efforts, there are millions of children are out of school in Pakistan.

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This research study emphasises the importance of promoting long-term policies and best practices of education reforms. It is very important that decisions regarding education must be based on neutrality, independent from politics and politicians interference. Additionally, all political representatives, irrespective of their political beliefs and positions must work together to device implementable education policies and enable the country to fulfil its international obligations as well as mainstream the marginalized communities.

Just as is the case in any profession, it is important to mention that professionally qualified and just trained teachers are needed to improve the overall situation of education. Both male and female teachers are needed in the government schools as this is one of the barriers to improving the education system under the devolution plan. Furthermore, the teaching profession was not considered to be a advantaged job, and a number of members of teaching community have become teachers by default and not by their own choice or inclination towards this profession. This can be one of the reasons for teacher absenteeism in government schools, as reflected in the analysis of this research study. The phenomenon of teachers absence from their schools was uniformly observed in both girls' and boys' government schools; however, it is more frequent in rural schools of Sindh.

### **SMC Implementation with Innovation**

Two predominant factors evolving from the literature review include: the issue of ownership of the concept of SMC, and the lack of accountability of all stakeholders towards each other. Firstly, according to Mfum-Mensah (2004), the community is engaged and is held accountable for its performance as the schools are steered to meet the expectation of the community, emphasized the necessity of a monitoring tool and a School Performance Review (SPR). According to Prew and Quaigrain (2010), the suggested model, the data of school needs are derived from the school performance record at the district level, and is linked with the School improvement plan (Prew & Quaigrain, 2010). Both studies have provided an opportunity to enhance and explore further the existing model of the SMC in Pakistan. The performance-based model has more effective mechanisms for accountability and transparency at all levels and will encourage all stakeholders to develop good schools. However, this model is at the pilot stage and is not yet implemented in all schools of Ghana. With regards to the replication of this model in Pakistan, a significant gap is found in the literature review. Ghana's model of the SMC is useful. However, it needs field compatibility and changes according to the country of context. Moreover, issues of decentralization, corruption and mainstreaming of the marginalized community need to be addressed according to the local context in the proposed project research methodology and design.

This review helped to identify ways and means of effective community participation through which SMC's can be steered effectively. In order to increase the population of children in school, the outcomes of the proposed project will definitely help donors and government to focus on community participation at ground zero level. Additionally, this review has expanded the area for further exploration of the research question as well as drawing attention to the importance of an effective model of SMCs, implemented in Ghana, that could be beneficial to Pakistan, through which the community is engaged in a participatory decision making process at school level and thus can be made accountable for its success/failure to all stakeholders. However, the social context needs to be understood before introducing this model to Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research paper includes literature review which has provided thoughtful discussions regarding successful SMCs in Pakistan. In order to increase the population of



children in school and make SMCs successful, the outcomes of the proposed research project will be helpful to donors and the government of Pakistan so that it can focus on community participation at ground level. The literature review identified gaps from previous research that demonstrate the need for further exploration. The findings of the mixed method approach will also help to demonstrate to what extent and how community participation is necessary, as well as the importance of gender role in decision making SMC affairs. Furthermore, the discussed performance- based SMC model of Ghana was analysed with more practical aspects taken into consideration as well few suggestions were also made. In this regard, the social context needs to be understood before suggesting the introduction of this model to Pakistan.

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**Legislations:** Migration Act 1958 (Cth)  
Migration Legislation Amendment Act 6 2001 (Cth)

