THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SMC) IN SUPPORT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of School Management Committee (SMC) is an important issue for Government primary schools' in Bangladesh. The expanding demand of education has pushed the schools in a challenge delivering their services with the existing management system. The overarching aim of the study was to explore the role of SMC in support of primary school improvement in Bangladesh. The study sought to examine the practices of the SMCs and how they helped the schools to be successful. The data were gathered through qualitative method using a semi - structure interview from a range of educators within one Upazila (sub district) in Bangladesh. The researcher aims to gather the experience, ideas and perception of the participants of what and how the SMCs deliver their services to schools. The findings of the study indicate that the participants responded in both similar and different ways. Most of the participants agreed on the significant contribution of the SMCs on matters such as: teaching-learning delivery, school leadership and increasing attendance in schools. On the other hand, a few participants disclaimed such co-operation of the SMCs in the school system. However, there was a consensus amongst the participants of having an effective SMC to run a school successfully. The findings suggest that there is agreement on the importance of further research would be useful to focus SMC for delivering quality education to the primary schools in Bangladesh.

Keyword: *Education, Scope, Development, Primary level, Centralization, School Management Committee.*

INTRODUCTION

Universal primary education has been prioritized in the constitution of Bangladesh. Compulsory primary education has been endorsed as one of the fundamental principles of state policy that stated in article 17(a),

> ' *'The state shall adopt effective measures for the purpose of – establishing a uniform, mass oriented and universal system of education and extending free and compulsory education to all children to such stage as may be determined by law''.* (Free and Compulsory Education Act 1972, P.22).

In accordance with the constitutional mandate and commitment made in different international forums to attain the Education for All (EFA), 2015 and Millennium Development Goals by 2015, a number of plans, policies and efforts have been adopted in Bangladesh. The following initiatives have paved the way of advancement of the primary education in Bangladesh:

''1. Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990
2. EFA National Plan of Action I and II (1992-2000, 2003-15)
3. National Non-Formal Education Policy 2006 and Non-Formal Education Act 2014
4. National Education Policy 2010
5. National Skill Development Policy 2011
6. The Sixth Five Year Plan 2011-15 7. Vision 2021/Perspective Plan 2011-21''(Education for All,2015, p.3).

Primary education of Bangladesh has achieved significant success in the last couple of years and subsequently has become one of the largest and complicated primary education systems in the world (Ahmed, 2011). It deals with around twenty million students, around 65 000 primary schools and 322,638 teachers (DPE, 2016). Such a large and rapidly expanded system faces challenges in delivering the services (Education for All, 2015). Furthermore, the primary education system is highly centralized in Bangladesh (Rabbi, 2007). It is a dilemma for centralized management like Bangladesh to manage the tension between the increasing demand for schooling and delivering services for quality improvement in an equitable manner (Education for All, 2015).

The existing condition calls for stronger school-based management and close co-operation with communities for effective delivery and governance in schools.In line with this reality, the Government of Bangladesh has revised the responsibilities of SMC to make it more effective and accountable for delivering services and management to the people (Cambridge Education,2016). In response to these initiatives, this study explores the characteristics of an effective school management committee in support of primary education improvement in Bangladesh.

The SMCs play an important role by involving the communities in management and development of the primary schools in Bangladesh. Every primary school in Bangladesh is managed by an SMC that consists of 11 members from different background of the locality.

Structure of SMC of Government primary school in Bangladesh:

SL No	Category	Position
1	Head Teacher	Member Secretary (Ex-officio)
2	Benevolent female within the catchment area	Member
3	Benevolent male within the catchment area	Member
4	Land Donor of the school	Member
5	A teacher of adjacent high school (Female teacher should be given priority)	Member
6	A teacher of concern primary school (Female teacher should be given priority)	Member
7 – 8	Two female representatives selected from the guardians	Member
9 – 10	Two male representatives selected from the guardians	Member
11	Concern member of local Union Council / Municipality	Member (Ex-officio)

Chairman is selected from among the members except for head teacher and teacher representative of the concerned school. (MOPME, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The primary education system in Bangladesh is a massive sector which is regulated by central public administration. Lately, it has achieved significant success in enrolment. Almost all children go to school. For government, this is a big challenge to accommodate the expanding demand for education, as it is a less develop country and lacks a lot of

resource constraints. So, a massive awareness in communities centering the schools is needed to continue this progress. SMC can be the proper institution to create such awareness within communities for making a public-private partnership to deliver effective learning in school. Considering this matter, the researchers were encouraged to conduct this research.

Purpose of the Study

This study set out to explore the experience and expertise of the participants who worked closely in the area. The purpose of the study was to understand the professionals' insights into the characteristics of effective SMC of primary school in Bangladesh. It aimed to establish of how the SMCs helped to deliver the services of the schools. Another purpose of the study was to examine the views and opinions of participants that may have valuable insights. Their views formed the substance of this study.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to examining the question of the reform of the existing framework of SMC. It expands the field of literature especially on benefits of SMC in the context of Bangladesh, as there is lack of study in Bangladesh perspective and the current literature is dominated by other countries. This study offers a clear picture of the significance of the SMC's intentions to improve the learning in schools substantially, as the government of Bangladesh looks for ways to strengthen SMCs to ensure a quality education through community participation. Schools, communities and educators can be inspired to make a positive school ethos considering the findings of the study. It can also be useful to the academic, research and policy makers' community for future study.

Research Question

The research sought to answer the following question:

What are the characteristics of an effective School Management Committee in support of primary school improvement in Bangladesh?

LITERATURE REVIEW

SMC in Europe and western nations

Community involvement in education is not a new phenomenon. Until 20th century education been provided mainly by churches and voluntary organisations (Archer 1984; Cummings & Riddell 1994, cited in Brey,2003). However, in the 20th century, the concept gained wider recognition as the financial and other logistics limitations of the governments, and different international organisations advocated the community participation in their resolutions (Brey,2003). The Declaration of the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 (WCEFA) stated that:

> 'Partnerships at the community level should be encouraged; they can help harmonize activities, utilize resources more effectively, and mobilize additional financial and human resources where necessary' (WCEFA Secretariat, 1990, p. 58 cited in Brey 2003, p. 32).

The Department for International Development of UK (2001), reinforces the need for this in claiming that effective participation of community and parents in school's activities can play a pivotal role in improving education at the local level and can emphasis on quality education and accountability (Brey,2003).

The concept of decentralization and community participation in the governance of the education system has been introduced firstly in the United States (Gamage, 2010). Subsequently, the concept of decentralization of governance in education was developed in England and Wales (ibid). Since 1980 a major change has been taken in the management of education in the UK. Devolution of power and authority from the Local Education Authority (LEA) to individual school governing body was one of the most significant reforms undertaken in the United Kingdom. The aspiration of this provision was that governing bodies would be better and more accountable to the public than LEAs (Kiprono, Nganga and Kanyiri,2015). Similar to the UK policy, in the mid-1980, considering decentralizationas a new culture, Australia transferred the power and authority of education from central to community level (Gamage, 2010).

SMC in developing nations

Since the last few decades, SMC has become the most important tool to enhance the education system in developing countries. In Kenya, the SMCs are the main institutions in the governance of the primary schools as the Education act cap. 211 justified the establishment of SMC at school level (World Bank,2005 cited in Kiprono, Nganga and Kanyiri,2015). On the other hand, Yamada (2014) in his study in Ethiopia found SMC has been introduced as an administrative tool aims to decentralise power and authority at school level so that local people can participate actively in the decision-making process. Likewise, stressing the need for SMC in school management in India Rani (2016) stated that achieving the target of qualitative goal the SMCs have to work intensively not merely to obtain the qualitative education i.e. enrolment, attendance etc. but to fulfil the qualitative targets of education i.e. effective teaching and learning practice, turning school into community hub, individual development of students.

Development of SMC in Bangladesh

Since independence in 1973 primary schools have been nationalized in Bangladesh. Consequently, the management and responsibility of 19 million primary school-aged children and 80,000 primary level institutions went to central government (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005). Recently, the government has recognized the reality to devolve the authority to the school level in order to improve the quality and develop the accountability at the local level (ibid). However, the primary education system in Bangladesh is highly centralized. Rabbi (2007) stated that, decentralization of SMC might have a positive impact on quality primary education in Bangladesh. Some provisions already have been introduced to make it effective. For example, ensuring countersignature of the SMC chair on the monthly payroll of the teachers, bills and vouchers of the scheduled development activities of schools, leads to promoting and supporting the School Level Improvement Plan (SLIP) and activities (ODCB,2017).

The National Education Policy-2010 of Bangladesh (Ministry of Education, p.9) considering the improvement of quality primary education and community participation in schools notes that:

> ''to ensure community participation in the development activities of school, the management committees will be further empowered, where necessary, to become more active. The management committees will be constituted of some ex-officio members and others elected through thoughtful consideration. Simultaneously, the accountability of the committee must be ensured''.

Similarly, the Directorate of Primary Education (the implementing authority of primary education in Bangladesh) has taken the initiative to empower the SMCs under the Third Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-3) as:

> 'in efforts to decentralize many school management functions of the SMC which the Government is currently reviewing to make it a more effective body with responsiveness and accountability to the school community. SMCs will take a lead role in the preparation and implementation of school level improvement plans' (DPE, 2016, p.58).

SMC in community leadership

Yamada (2014) stated that SMC has been introduced as a means of administrative behavior in many developing countries as an aim to decentralize power and authority at school level so that local people can contribute in decision making. School Management committee became mandatory as a flat form of managerial and financial transfer of power and community participation. Furthermore, they are empowered as a means to promote the access and the quality of education (ibid). It is expected SMC will contribute to improving not only the administration and management but also quality education by creating a sense of ownership towards school within the community. In addition, the SMC is an important body in the process of development and operation of the primary school within the community. It is entitled to make collective responsibilities of the community for the well-being of the children in a school and a community (ODCB Guidebook, 2017).

SMC in management and governance

The Government of Bangladesh has recently revised functions and responsibilities of SMC to equip it more functional and effective, transparent and accountable to the community for overall management (Cambridge Education,2016). For example, the SLIP initiative that has played a significant role in raising involvement of the SMC members in school activities. Community participation and ownership have been increased as a result of implementing school level programed like SLIP. Efforts and awareness increased within the community, they felt honored being involved in school development process. They also contributed their resources (cash and kind) along with government allocation to implement their own plan (ibid). The ministry of primary and mass education notes some key roles of SMC; these roles are underpinned in the characteristics of an effective SMC. The major activities of an effective SMC includes; forwarding report to the UEO about school management, teachers performance and pupils attendance, ensuring to stop corporeal punishment, approval of expenditure, mobilising local resources by community participation, making school level improvement plan, taking steps to inclusive education within a catchment area, monitoring the quality of development work and taking measures to cope with during disaster (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2012).

SMC in support of teaching learning activities

Over last few decades, community participation in school management has been focused significantly to improve the placement and retention of children in school (Dunne, Akyeampong, and Humphreys 2007, cited in Essuman & Akyeampon, 2011). In the decentralized form of education system, it is expected the community will be able to account for the resources and the results they provide as well as to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of education (World Bank 2003, cited in Essuman & Akyeampong 2011)). However, it involves many factors and is complex, e.g. local culture, dynamics of power and perception of education along with the contribution of the SMCs (Chikoko 2007, 22; Cohen and Peterson 1999, x; Geo-Jaja 2004, 314 cited in Yamada,2014).Rani (2016) noticed that SMC was effective to attain enrolment and retention of the students. However, its involvement of resources mobilization and teaching learning activities was found negligible. In a recent case study of PEDP-3 in Bangladesh shows that effective SMCs were important factors in the better performance of a number of schools in Bangladesh (DPE, 2016). Alam (2015) conducted a recent study which reported that the community and the guardians play a significant role to ensure quality education in schools and such participation makes a difference. The author added that the SMCs show great concern for ensuring quality education in schools. They contribute a lot to the overall development of schools whereas the SMCs in the community of poor performing schools are less concerned regarding the same issues and have no contribution to improve the quality of education.

Concept and theories

According to Bush (2016) decentralization in the educational system is a process of decreasing the power and authority of central government to school and community level. It can be in different forms. In the United Kingdom it is apparent mainly in three forms:

- Devolution; involves transferring power from central government to subordinate level.
- Participative democracy; Meaning direct involvement of actors in school governance.
- Market mechanism; means parents can exercise their choice.

Yamada (2014) notes that reforms of decentralization can be organized by a range of transferring power: managerial, financial, political and market decentralization (World Bank 2000, 107-110), and degree of transformation of power are configured that is decentralization, delegation and devolution (McGinn and Welch 1999, 18).

In terms of educational management Hannaway and Carnoy (1993, 11-12) define three levels: system level decentralization that is from central to local jurisdiction; organization level decentralization: from the central level to school stake holders; and market decentralization: involving the community in decision making (cited in Yamada, 2014).

Moreover, decentralization aims to encourage the community to participate in school management, as community participation plays a significant role in primary education system. According to Gamage (2010), community participation in school governance can be defined in different ways. Conceptually, it can be termed as a formal altercation and reshuffle of governance structure as a form of decentralization. It focuses on the individual school as a prime unit of development; decision-making process is delegated to the local level for the sustainable

development of school. For this reason, authority to make a decision on the vision and values, goals and policies including finance, budget and human resources are being transferred to school level. The formal body represents the community and enjoys the power and authority is known as council or board which consists of the principal, representatives of the teachers, parents and community.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The aim of this study was to gather knowledge about the characteristics of an effective SMC in support of the improvement of primary schools in Bangladesh. The design and methodology of this research had been determined by the purpose of this study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The researcher has chosen qualitative approach as this approach is such a strategy of enquiry that gives importance in conversation rather than quantification of data collection (Bryman,2016). The aim of qualitative research is to conduct a systematic survey of a particular case or cases and to foster in-depth description of the subject matter of research (Boudah,2011). The purpose of this study was to explore the perception and experience of the participants. Therefore, a qualitative approach was suitable.

Data Collection Tool

The review of the literature and the experience of the researcher suggested that this study is relevant to the professionals who work in management of the department of primary education. In order to gather in depth perception and experience about the topic, it was assumed an interview method would be more suitable to address the participants' profound experience and perception about SMC. Therefore, the data collection tool was a semi-structured interview. The aim of a semi-structured interview is to analyses and develops in detail the interviewee understands of the topic, and thus accumulates qualitative information (Menter et al. 2011).

Research Participants

For sampling, the researcher identified a group of primary education officials in different categories, i.e. Upazila Education Officer, Assistant Upazila Education Officer and Head teacher at Phulpur Upazila of Mymensingh district in Bangladesh. They are directly involved in primary education management and have practical experiences and knowledge about the characteristics, the role of SMC in primary education and management in schools. The sample consists of six in which four is head teacher two female of them, one AUEO and one UEO who is the chief executive of the primary education management within the Upazila. The participants are presented in the following table:

Participant	Role	Experience
P, 1	AUEO	8 years
P, 2	Head Teacher	12 years
P, 3	Head Teacher	22 years
P, 4	Head Teacher	11 years
P, 5	Head Teacher	17 years
P, 6	UEO	8 years

Data Analysis

The thematic analysis was conducted in this study as it is one of the most popular approach to qualitative data analysis (Bryman,2016). The interviews were conducted over a mobile phone. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. Each interview was recorded and transcribed immediately after the interview. The recordings were transcribed entirely, and these records were carefully scrutinized for mistakes as recommended by Menter et al. (2011). Transcripts have been read time and again to better understanding of the data as guided by Menter et al. (2011). Manual qualitative analysis was used in making transcripts. Each line of each transcript was numbered, different coloured highlighter pens were used to identify the thematic area (Menter et al. 2011). The data were categorized and analyzed thematically.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

As earlier discussed, the purpose of this study was to understand the characteristics of an effective SMC of the primary schools in Bangladesh. The semi-structured interview method was used to understand insights and experiences of the participants about the SMCs. The primary analysis of the answers to the open questions turned into ten codes After detail analysis, these codes have resulted in three themes. The themes are:

- Attendance
- Support for Teaching Learning Delivery
- Support for School Leadership

These themes are examined and discussed below with quotations from the participants' answer in line with the review of the literature.

Attendance

Four of the six participants recognised the contribution of SMCs to increase enrolment in schools. A common theme was to encourage and motivate the guardians about the benefit of education so that they could send their children to the school, as shown in the following quotes:

> *''Sometimes the SMCs take some programmes in association with the head teachers like mothers' gathering, PTA meeting. In these meeting, the SMCs motivate parents to enrol their children in schools''*(P,1).

> *''In my school, the SMC conduct campaign for enrolment from the mosque at the beginning of the year. They offer stipend as an incentive to the poor guardians to enrol their children''* (P, 2).

> *''The SMCs contribute to enrol significantly in many schools in this Upazila. They often arrange yard meeting, mothers gathering to aware guardian about value of education'.* Generally, the educated SMCs take such initiatives''* (P,6).

When asked about how the SMCs contribute to promote attendance in schools, most of the participants responded positively.

> *''Yes, within our catchment area the chairman and some members of the SMC visit the houses whose children keep absent, they ask them to send their children to school regularly''*(P, 2).
> *''I know, some SMCs motivate the parents getting their children regular in school. Sometimes they visit their homes to keep the children regular in school''* (P,6).

These findings are consistent with the evidence of literature review (Rani, 2016; Uemura, 1999; Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2012; Dunne, Akyeampong, and Humphreys 2007). For example, community participation in school base management focused significantly to improve enrolment and retention of children in school (Dunne, Akyeampong, and Humphreys 2007cited in Essuman & Akyeampong 2011). Rani (2016) stressed the need for SMC increasing enrolment and attendance.

Two participants responded that the SMCs did not contribute in enrolment and increasing attendance in schools.

> *''I did not get such help; they do not visit the houses of irregular students. They keep busy with them''* (P, 3).

> *''I arrange programmes occasionally with parents. Only the chairperson often attends. Other keep absents''* (P, 5).

One participant responded almost neutrally.

> *''We always try to keep up attendance in the school. I and my staff communicate with the parent. We find a little co-operation from the SMC''* (P, 4).

These results correspond with the studies of Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009; Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004; Gropello 2006 cited in Yamada,2014. They indicated many more SMCs are inactive and they do not make a significant difference among schools.

Four participants confirmed that the SMCs contributed to reducing drop out. The common theme was to motivate and convince the poor people to send back their children in schools.

> *''We all are working to minimise drop out. The SMCs help us in that case. They motivate and envision the parents what they can get if their children once are educated''*(P, 1).

> *''The poor parents migrate to urban areas for work leaving their children. These children tend to drop out. My SMC take initiatives and negotiate with their relatives about how to continue their studies''* (P, 2).

> *''In my area, the SMC take initiatives for a few children to be continued in school whose parents go away for work''* (P, 4).

These findings are in line with the SMCs entitled to raise the collective responsibilities of the community for the well-being of the children (ODCB Guidebook, 2017). Furthermore, they will create a conducive environment for quality education through creating awareness within a community (Yamada,2014).

However, two participants responded that the SMCs did not contribute to reducing drop out in their catchment areas.

> *''The SMC does not help that deserve mention curbing drop out''*(P, 3).

> *''My SMC does not take such initiatives''*(P, 5).

Support for Teaching-Learning Delivery

Most of the participants answered that the SMCs had a role in improving teaching learning activities in schools, as indicated in the following responses:

> *''Educated members of the SMCs often conduct classes when a school experiences crisis of teacher. Somewhere they provide para-teachers temporarily to meet the crisis of teacher''*(P, 1).

> *''Chairperson and few members of the SMC often observe classroom practice. They helped me recruiting a para-teacher in my school. SMC also helped me in gardening''*(P, 2).

> *''The SMC often discusses how we can teach in a more attractive way. They also conduct classes''*(P, 4).

These results are consistent with the findings of the reviewed literature of Rani (2016); Taniguchi & Hirakawa (2016); DPE (201); Alam (2015). School-based activities e.g. volunteer teaching, conducting classes and holding mock tests were considered important factors that contributed students' performance (Taniguchi & Hirakawa,2016). A recent study of PEDP-3 showed effective SMC were important factors behind the outstanding performance of some schools in Bangladesh (DPE 2016).

However, a few participants disagreed in this aspect which corresponds with the study of Barnett (2013) and Chimombo and Kadzamira(2002 cited in Taniguchi & Hirakawa,2016).

> *''The SMC members' do not have the idea of teaching-learning activities. They have no scope to help''* (P, 3).

> *''The SMC does not help in teaching learning activities''* (P, 5).

There was a consensus amongst all the participants but one about intervention of the SMCs in the crisis of the schools. The theme was to run the teaching and learning activities smoothly in these schools.

''Some of the schools in my cluster often face these problems. In that cases, the SMCs come forward to meet up these problems temporarily. They set up toilets or devices of safe drinking water. They also negotiate with local Union Council seeking its cooperation to meet the problems. When the schools suffer from classroom crises, sometimes, the SMCs build makeshift rooms to continue learning environment'' (P, 1).

''The SMC helps us to address these crises. Some of the members invest their labour if needed. They repair toilets and help to ensure safe drinking water'' (P, 2).

''Yes, my SMC is very helpful in these matters. They repair toilets, tube well'' (P,4).

''The SMC helped me to build a pre-primary classroom'' (P, 5).

''Generally, the SMCs help when a school faces such problems. They recently have set up some makeshift classrooms in this Upazila. They also make support in the crisis of toilet or drinking water. Either they meet these issues for the time being or seek co-operation from the local Union Council'' (P, 6).

One participant replied slightly positively.

''The SMC helps a little in these crises. Sometimes they collect fund through influencing the guardians'' (P,3).

These results are supported by the literature of Baku and Agyeman (1997 cited in Essuman & Akyeampon 2011). The authors focused on community participation as machinery for improving the overall environment of primary education e.g. increasing enrolment and persistence in school, maintenance of infrastructure facilities, teaching and learning activities and creating awareness among the community.

When asked about how the SMCs helped in a shortage of teachers in the schools, almost all participants made references the contribution of the SMCs. They reported the SMCs address the crisis in two ways. One was to recruit para-teachers (a para teacher is recruited locally by SMC for the time being when a school faces shortage of teacher) and another way was to conduct classes by the educated members of the SMCs.

''Yes, the SMCs co-operate in these situations. Sometimes, they provide para teacher to cover the shortage, sometimes they conduct classes. They also ask us for posting teacher'' (P, 1).

''The SMC helps when we fall in a crisis of teacher. It contributes recruiting para-teacher'' (P, 2).

''Our SMC significantly helps in the crisis period. They recruited three para-teachers when we were in a shortage of teacher. They also conduct class'' (P, 4).

''Normally we get co-operation in this matter. We got financial support recruiting a para-teacher'' (P, 5).

''The schools located in the remote areas often suffer from shortage of teachers. The SMCs sometimes provide para-teachers in these schools. They raise fund by motivating the parents. Thus, the para teachers are paid by this fund'' (P, 6).

One participant answered neutrally as the following:

''The SMC does not oppose to recruit a para-teacher, but, not ever contribute to paying''(P, 3).

These findings correspond to the literature of Taniguchi & Hirakawa (2016) that found school-based management considered these community-level activities to improve the quality of teaching -learning delivery in schools.

Support of School Leadership

Half of the participants agreed about the significant involvement of the SMCs in implementing SLIP. They claimed the SMCs take part making the improvement plans of the schools. In some cases, they helped financially when a

school experiences insufficient budget. Some of the SMCs tried to create ownership among the community towards schools. They fundraised through motivation, especially from the well off, ex-students and the guardians.

> *''The SMCs know their duties. They are trained. They motivate the community to participate in the school's activities. Some of the SMCs donate finance to the schools''*(P, 1).

> *''Our SMC significantly contribute in implementing SLIP. We fix up the priority of the activities of school for the next year with their co-operation. The SMC collected fund from the community for gardening in the school. They recently have provided some electric fans in the classrooms''*(P, 2).

> *''The SMC participates in making the improvement plan of our school. We get some financial donation from them when the budget lacks to make up the estimate. I do not find the initiatives of the SMC that develop the community participation in the school. It is hard to see''* (P, 5).

These findings are supported by the study of Cambridge Education (2016), it explains SLIP initiative has made a significant impact on increasing involvement of SMC members in school activities.

Two participants partially agreed on the involvement of the SMCs in SLIP program.

> *''The SMC participate in the preparatory meetings of making a plan and setting a list of priority. But, they do not take the initiatives that can promote the participation of the community in the school''*(P, 4).

> *''We do not find enough co-operation from the SMCs to implement SLIP program in our schools. They often think it is a Government responsibility to implement SLIP. We are organizing some training to bring a change in their minds. But, there are some SMCs who co-operate to run the programs smoothly. Ex-students and the well-offs of the community along with the SMCs occasionally extend their support to the schools''* (P, 6).

One participant made a reference of non-cooperation of the SMC in running the SLIP program.

> *''The SMC does not always help me. Sometimes, they claim undue benefit from the SLIP fund. They are locally influential people. So, I could nothing to do''* (P, 3).

These results are consistent with the study of Cambridge Education,2016 and Rabbi, 2007. Cambridge Education (2016) found that the SMC members have no clear perception about SLIP, only 11.8% schools got support from the SMCs.

All participant confirmed that the SMCs monitor the management and administration of the schools. They asserted the SMCs performed their managerial roles that include the attendance of the teachers, observing classroom practice, starting and closing time of the schools. The SMCs also looked after the movable and immovable assets of the schools.

> *''The SMCs oversee the schools discipline. They monitor attendance of the teachers and the students. They observe when a school starts and ends, often monitor class room practice, if they find anything irregularities, they inform us''* (P, 1).

> *''The SMC observes school management. They monitor the daily attendance of the teachers and encourage the students to be attended timely. Whether the classes to be held as per schedule are also supervised by the SMC. The chairperson and some members take care the land and other assets of the school''* (P,2).

> *''The SMC is much interested in monitoring attendance of the teachers than other things. They also observe the opening and closing time of school on regular basis. But, they have no much interest in classroom practice. We do not get enough assistance from the SMC improving the quality of teaching-learning activities''* (P, 3).

> *''The SMC monitors the school activities. Attendance of the teachers and classroom practices are overseen by the SMC''*(P, 4).

''The daily activities of the school are observed by the SMC. They monitor attendance of the teachers and students on regular basis. Whether the classes are held on time are also monitored''(P, 5).

''Most of the SMCs in this Upazila monitor the activities of the schools. They observe teaching-learning activities, attendance of the teachers and the opening and closing time of the schools'' (P, 6).

When asked about the monitoring of development activities of the schools, most of the participants stated that the SMCs monitor the quality of works. When any malpractice occurs, they protest and complain to the authority.

''The SMCs are very much concern about of ensuring the quality of development works in the schools. They always complain to us when irregularities or low quality of works appear to them''(P, 1).

''When a development work is implemented in our school, the SMC always keeps alert about its quality. They divide responsibilities among the members through a meeting'' (P, 2).

''The development works are strongly monitored by the SMC. Most of the members along with the chairperson observe the development activities to ensure the quality of work. They also ask me to keep contact with the authority avoiding any irregularities'' (P, 4).

''The development works are often monitored by the SMC. The most SMCs in this Upazila give their efforts to ensure the quality work of the schools. There are also a few SMCs who are indifferent ensuring the quality of development works in their schools'' (P, 6).

Two participants were partly agreed about efforts of the SMCs to ensure the quality of the development works in their schools

''Only the chairperson of the SMC monitors the development works. The other keep busy with themselves'' (P,3).

''A few members who live close to the school only monitor the development activities. Rest of them does not come forward'' (P, 5).

These results indicate the findings of Cambridge Education (2016) that found functions and responsibilities of SMC have been revised to equip it more functional and effective for overall management. SMC is mainly responsible for managing local disputes, funds, and crosschecking development activities of schools (Kiprono, Nganga and Kanyiri, 2015). The results are also in line with the findings of Behlol, Akber and Shahid ,2017.

Most of the participants responded partly about participation of the SMCs in the monthly meeting. They commented the meetings often were held in quorum crisis.

''All member does not participate in the meeting. Few of them keep absent from the meeting. Generally, the members remain inactive except chairperson in making decision'' (P, 1).

''Women representatives keep absent in the meeting in general. Rest of the members attend and participate actively''(P, 2).

''The Monthly meetings could not be held in plenary. Because, most of the members keep absent and remain silent'' (P, 3).

''The SMC members do not attend actively in the meeting. They keep them away from the meeting. It is a big problem'' (P, 6).

The result indicates the literature of Rabbi (2007) that found in most cases members of the SMCs remain inactive.

Less than half of the participants made the reference of participation of the SMCs in the monthly meeting.

''SMC members attend in the monthly meeting on regular basis. They participate in discussion and decision making''(P, 4).

Three participants made the references of some initiatives that encourage the community participation in the schools. They reported the SMCs often take some measures that motivate the community to be involved in the school activities.

> *''Some of the SMCs in this Upazila take initiatives to involve the community in the school activities. They organise few programmes and invite the community to have participated. The aim of these programmes is to make proximity between the schools and the community''*(P, 6).

> *''A few SMCs in my cluster wish to involve the community in schools' activities. Different co-curricular activities, annual sports and national days are celebrated participating in the community. The SMCs try to make proximity and create ownership towards the schools through these programmes''*(P, 1).

> *''The SMC tries to involve the community in the school. They encourage the community through offering some programmes to be involved more''* (P, 2).

These findings are supported by the study of (Dalin et al., 1994; Carron & Chau, 1996 and Heneveld & Craig, 1996, cited in Grauwe et al.,2005). They found School-based management, the relationship among the SMC and stakeholders within a community, and the opportunity to define its improvement plans have a great impact on the performance of a school. Rani (2016) argued the SMCs should take initiatives to turn the school into a community hub. The results also indicate the findings of Yamada (2014).

The rest of the participants disclaimed about of taking initiatives of the SMCs increasing the community participation in school's activities.

> *''The SMC does not take initiative to involve the community in our school''*(P, 3).

> *''Initiatives are not taken generally by the SMC to involve the community''*(P, 4).

The participants made some recommendations from their empirical experiences of how an SMC can be more effective to support the primary schools in Bangladesh:

> *''The SMCs should be free of political influence. Measures should be taken to select a chairperson not more than once. In the existing provision, a member can be selected as a chairperson more than once. This step may encourage other people turn to schools''*(P, 1).

> *''Monthly meeting should be held on regular basis. Duties and responsibilities should be divided among the members to develop accountability. There should be a provision to reward the members who contribute better. Displaying an honour board in the school recognising the contribution of the SMC can be inspiring to the community''*(P, 2).

> *''The SMC members should have a certain educational qualification. The benevolent member must be compassionate to education''* (P, 3).

> *''The members should be educated and honest''*(P, 4).

> *'' Their service is voluntary. They wish for allowance as like us. It should be considered''*(P, 5).

> *''The SMCs need intensive training to better understand their roles and responsibilities as they have no clear idea about it. If possible, chairperson of the SMCs should be included in the monthly co-ordination meeting of the head teachers and they are to be paid some allowances as incentive''* (P, 6).

DISCUSSION

As noted before in the previous chapter the research question was: What are the characteristics of an effective School Management Committee in support of primary school improvement in Bangladesh? The purpose of the study was to gather experiences and insights of the participants in the characteristics of an effective SMC of primary education in Bangladesh.

The findings of the participants indicate the SMCs contribution for significant increasing enrolment and attendance in their schools. They encouraged and inspired the guardians as well as the community about the benefit of education through organizing different programs like parents gathering and PTA meetings. Members of the SMCs visited the homes occasionally to keep the students regular in school, as some guardians preferred children to help them in domestic works rather schooling. However, a few participants disclaimed the co-operation of the SMCs in this regard. Most participants agreed on the contribution of SMC in reducing drop out whereas a few disagreed on that issue.

Most of the participants agreed on the contribution of SMC in improving teaching- learning activities in the schools. Some examples of the contribution of SMCs to teaching-learning activities are as follows:

- Conducting classes and recruiting Para-teachers in crisis of teacher.
- Observing class room practices.
- Providing teaching learning materials e.g. supplementary book, pen, pencil, exercise book etc.
- Persuading the teachers to teach in an attractive way.

All participants made the reference of taking the intervention of SMC when the schools faced abrupt situations. The SMCs addressed these crises to continue teaching and learning delivery. They built makeshift classrooms, sources of drinking water, toilets etc. for the time being. Either they raised fund through motivating the community or sought help from local Union Council.

The SMCs took some initiatives to influence the community to be involved in the schools' activities. They tried to make proximity between the school and the community while some participants disagreed on it. The SMCs involved in SLIP activities and financed occasionally. They contributed to creating community ownership towards schools. However, two participants were partially agreed, and one made the reference of non-cooperation of the SMC in running SLIP. The SMCs monitored the daily activities. For example, attendance of the teachers, time schedule of schools, class room activities etc were observed by the members. Members of the SMCs had a tendency not to take part in the monthly meetings. So, the meetings often were held in quorum crisis, as reported most of the participants.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The overarching aim of this study was to understand the significance of the characteristics of effective SMC in support of primary schools in the context of Bangladesh. This research examined and discussed how SMC contribute to the management of the primary school to deliver its services in Bangladesh. The findings of this research show the significant impact of SMC on running the schools effectively. The findings were justified in the reviewed literature as different authors emphasized on school-based management for effective teaching learning delivery in schools.

This research has reviewed a body of literature in school-based governance and management of primary education in the context of different countries. As Bangladesh is an emerging country and the progress of primary education is heading through the initial stage, a very few academic efforts are there that can examine reform of primary education system in Bangladesh. To my belief, the findings of this research and the reflection of the literature can be useful for future reference to build the primary education system more effective to deliver services at school level in Bangladesh

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As can be found from the findings, the significance and benefit of SMC are recognised for delivering quality education. SMC has been introduced as a decentralised form of mechanism in many countries including Bangladesh and the UK. They are entitled and empowered to deliver quality education through the participation of the community (Gamage,2010; Essuman & Akyeampon, 2011; DPE,2016; World Bank,2005 cited in; Kiprono, Nganga and Kanyiri,2015; Rani,2016; Taniguchi & Hirakawa ,2016; Cambridge Education,2016). However, the benefits of SMCs are still contested. Findings suggest a lot of SMCs are inactive, and they do not make a significant difference among schools (Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009; Gamage and Sooksomchitra 2004; Gropello 2006 cited in

Yamada,2014). Therefore, it is recommended that SMCs should be strong and equipped. A policy should be taken for the capacity building of these bodies and should have the accountability for their performance.

Given evidence from the reviewed literature and as seen from the participants in research findings, the aim of the SMCs was to improve the quality of teaching and learning environment in schools and they had a great impact on quality education. However, some results of the literature review and findings of a few participants demonstrated the SMCs could not make a difference in performance of the schools. They did not give much attention in classroom practice, to some extent they are incapable to lead teaching-learning activities (Chimombo and Kadzamira,2002; Barneet,2013 cited in Taniguchi & Hirawaka,2016). So, the SMCs should be trained well to make them capable. It is important for being a member of SMC, one should have a minimum academic qualification to understand and monitor the teaching-learning practice of a school.

As the reviewed literature and discussed findings showed that the SMCs acted as a bridge between the schools and the communities. The SMCs tried to ensure community participation in schools for the attainment of sustainable learning. However, the findings of some participants showed their efforts were negligible to involve the communities in schools for different reasons. For example, services of the SMCs were voluntary. It sounds rational why they will serve being unpaid for an indefinite period. A provision should be introduced that the SMCs will be paid for their services. Political influence that hinders the effectiveness of SMC should be avoided. At the same time, those who are truly dedicated to education should be included in the SMCs.

As the reviewed literature and findings of the participants showed there was an ambiguity between policy and practice regarding SMC. The SMCs are apparently empowered and equipped in many countries including Bangladesh. But the reality is different as per the results of this study. Therefore, the government should literally recognise and empower the SMCs so that they can contribute potentially. An SMC should to be equipped to ensure community participation and create community ownership to school for making a positive school ethos.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

When considering how to better understand the characteristics of an effective SMC in support of primary schools' improvement in Bangladesh, there is a relative lack of study on this topic in the context of Bangladesh. A lot of studies were found in the perspective of Europe including the UK, Africa and many Asian countries including India, but no study could be found on SMC of primary school in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, another recommendation might be that further research can be undertaken in this context. The field of research will be enriched in Bangladesh perspective.

As the study was small and data were collected from a limited number of participants within an Upazila, therefore, the results of the findings could not be generalized. Further study can undertake in different context using a different design that may bring invaluable insights into findings to better understand the delivery of services of SMCs in primary schools. Despite limitations, the findings of this study can offer some valuable insights that may inspire the concern authorities to think again about SMC for the effective delivery of education in schools. This study also may be useful to the academic, research community and to the policy makers for future study.

This study contributes a limited amount of knowledge relating to school-based primary education system in the context of Bangladesh. To my understanding, there is an inconsistency between the provision and practice regarding the school-based system of governance in Bangladesh. It is time to revise school-based management with some legal authoritative powers of SMCs to make the schools effective. Thus, the continued progression that Bangladesh already has achieved in primary education may have a chance of being accelerated.

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