

STRUCTURAL STATUS OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Education has always been accorded a privileged place in Indian society. The 86th amendment to the Indian Constitution made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. This Study highlights the performance of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, discusses the weakness and gives the suggestions and policy implication for improvement of the education quality in schools. The study observed that quality of education under SSA has been improved in the previous year due to the appointment of new teachers, introduction of training and development programs such as Teacher Training Programme (TTP), opening new schools, construction of school buildings, providing water facilities and other key facilities in the school.

Key Words- Education, Right to Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, India,

INTRODUCTION

The poor delivery of basic service (education, health, water etc.) is a main problem in India, indeed, in most of the developing world. This creates a huge gap between word and action. The poor delivery mechanism is also related to the principal agent problem, exemplified by the gap between government and citizen, school and parents/children, policymakers, and implementers (Iyengar and Surianarain, 2008). Education has always been got a privileged place in Indian society. The great leaders of the Indian Freedom Movement realized the fundamental role of education and throughout the nation's struggle for independence, stressed its unique significance for national development. The Indian education landscape saw important development during the 11th plan of the planning commission of India, there was a rush in school enrollments, and gender and social category gaps in enrollments. The East Asian phenomenon and the popularity that endogenous growth theory has attained, thereafter emphasis the role that education plays in economic growth and conceptualize the process as "human capital" accumulation (Das, 2007). Indian education system is divided into different levels, such as pre-primary level, primary level, elementary education, secondary education, undergraduate level and postgraduate level. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the apex body for curriculum related matters for school education in India. The NCERT provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India and oversees many aspects of enforcement of education policies. A number of programmes / schemes were launched during the last four decades for Universalisation of elementary education. Some of these efforts have been in the field of primary education and a few also covering upper primary sector. Due to these interventions, initiated by Government of India and the respective state Governments, there has been substantial progress in providing access, improving maintenance and the quality improvement in primary education sector (MHRD, GoI ,2004).

The 86th amendment of the Indian Constitution enacted in December 2002, made free and compulsory education, a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6-14 years. The bill specifies that every parent or guardian of a child has to enroll his child in a recognized school.

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According to SSA, child has to attend such school with at least such minimum regularity and provide the child full opportunity to complete elementary education. The Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2004 was organized and had since then studied by the Central Advisory Board of Education (Chandrasekhar and Mukhopadhyay, 2006).

The main concern of the Five Year Plans is the development of primary education. Further several primary education programmes such as Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), National Programme of Nutritional support to primary education commonly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Kasturiba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGVBS), National Literacy Mission Programme (NLMP), Mehla Samikshya (MS), and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), etc.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. There have been various studies undertaken on the aspects of SSA initiatives. The aspects used for assessment in most of these studies are more like access to availability of classrooms, toilets, behaviors of teachers, number of SC/ST students and sex ratio etc. But on the other hand, aspects which are more subjective in nature like number of teacher, drinking water facilities, library and playground, and teacher training programme etc are not adequately addressed. The main objective of this study are to access the schools in terms of adequate and quality of infrastructure in India and Punjab; second, to compare all categories at India and Punjab level; and third, to suggest the improvement measures in ongoing initiatives in the direction of equity and quality of SSA.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary data available from the various publication of the government of India as well as Punjab; DISE, annual reports, and Planning Commission Reports and moreover websites of different institution are also access.

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)

The SSA is a flagship programme that aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all the children of 6 to 14 age group by 2010 and bridge social, regional and gender gaps and to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE) was launched in January 2001 in the country in a mission made. It assigns the greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision making. Launched in partnership with the state government, SSA aims to provide useful, free and relevant education to all children. SSA has funding pattern of 75:25 between the centre and state. The programme covers the entire country except the state of Goa with a special focus on education needs of girls, SC and ST and other children in the country. The National Advisory Council (NAC) in its draft recommendation on the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) states that, "The government of India must make a beginning by making a firm financial commitment, which has been lacking so far". First, there is a need to step up expenditure on school infrastructure; the second broad head relates to wages and salaries of teachers, the third area is the recurring expenses on per child for providing free education, mid-day meals (Chandrasekhar and Mukhopadhyay, 2006). Since education is an important 'freedom', as theorized by Amartya Sen, the current efforts to formulate a bill for free and compulsory education in India, 68 years after attaining political freedom, can be regarded as the second freedom struggle. But this freedom struggle seems to be getting bitter. The four SSA goals are as follows;

- 1) Enrollment of all children in school, education guarantee centre, alternate school, back to school camp by 2005.
- 2) Retention of all children till the upper primary stage by 2010.
- 3) Bridging of gender and social category gaps in enrolment, retention and learning.
- 4) Ensuring significant enhancement in the learning achievement levels of children at the primary and upper primary stages

The mission has noted the progress made towards all the four goals with huge satisfaction. That SSA will soon be expected to respond to the situation arising out of the approval of children's Right to free and compulsory Education. Almost all the states and union territories (UT) have constituted school education management committees (SEMCS) under the SSA. These committees are to ensure community participation. These community level structures play a key role in micro planning especially in the development of village education plan and school improvement plans (Rao, 2009). The implementation of SSA since its inception has complete significant achievements in the field of education. Special emphasis was laid to ensure inclusion of all out-of-school children in the field of education. The focus has been on improving the present infrastructure of regular schools as well as on alternate strategies for mainstreaming children who have been left out of the schooling process due to various reasons. As a result, the number of out-of-school children declined from 320 lakh in 2001 to 95 lakh as on October 2005. To improve the quality of results on the part of students, grants are given to all teachers for developing teaching-learning materials, 20 days training is expected to be given to all teachers and free text books distributed to all girls and children of SC/ST origin (Kainth, 2006).

Progress Under SSA

There has been substantial spatial and numerical expansion of primary and upper primary schools; access and enrollment at the primary stage of education have reached near universal levels; the gender gap in enrollment has narrowed, and the percentage of children belonging to scheduled castes and tribes is proportionate to Indian population. Nonetheless, there remains an incomplete agenda of universalizing education at the upper primary stage. The number of children, particularly children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, who drop out of school before completing upper primary education, remains high, and the quality of learning achievement is not always entirely satisfactory even in the case of children who complete elementary education (MHRD, GoI, 2011). Efforts to universalise elementary education gained energy during the 11th and 12th Plan.

Financial Progress Under SSA

SSA was launched towards the end of the Ninth Five Year Plan (2001-2002), the outlay and the expenditure on the scheme was nominal with the total allocation for the programme at Rs. 500 crore only. The total expenditure in 2001-2002 incurred by all the states was Rs. 499.9 crores. During the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) the initial total outlay was Rs. 17,000 crores. In Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), the outlay is Rs. 71,000 crores. In the first three years of the 11th plan Rs. 39,371 crore was provided, representing 55% of the overall outlay. With the RTE enactment in 2010-11, Government approved an outlay of Rs. 2.31 lakh crore for implementation of the SSA programme over a period of five years from 2010-11 to 2014-15 as per the following break up:

Table 1: Costs Toward Implementation of SSA from 2010-11 to 2014-15

S. No	Item	Last two years of 11 th Plan Rs.In Crore	First three years of 12 th Plan Rs.In Crore	Total Rs.In Crore
1	Child Entitlement	28852	21535	37626
2	Teacher Related Costs	38307	82584	120889
3	Infrastructure	17544	23417	40959
4	School Related Costs	5351	5566	12918
5	Research Evaluation and Management	5540	9533	14973
6	Total	84408	146825	231233

Source: Working group report on EE&L, 12th Five Year Plan, MHRD

Funding Sharing Pattern of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Government of India also revised the fund Sharing Pattern between the Central and State Government for implication of the modified SSA programme. A New Fund Sharing Pattern adopted in the 12th Plan as follow:

Table 2: Funding Sharing Pattern Under SSA

States	Fund Sharing Pattern	Rationale
NER States: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura	90:10 ratio to continue	No change
Special Category States: Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand	90:10	Change proposed in view of the special category status assigned to them, given their difficult geographical terrain.
Low Literacy States: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal	75:25	The absence of adequate school infrastructure and facilities as also teaching staff is one of the main factors affecting literacy in India. Apart from low literacy these states are also low in HDI rankings, and other social and health indicators. The additional financial burden on the states in meeting the RTE mandate is high. A more favourable fund sharing pattern in the 75:25 ratio for these states, and lead to improved outcomes in respect of the activities proposed in the 12 th Plan
All Other States	65:35	No change

Source: Working group report on EE&L, 12th Five Year Plan, MHRD

There has been substantial spatial and numerical expansion of primary and upper primary schools, access and enrollment at the primary stage of education have reached near universal levels. The country has witnessed substantial increase in the number of primary and upper primary schools in the recent years. Table 3 shows that numbers of primary schools increased from 827244 in 2010-11 to 847118 numbers in 2014-15 in India but numbers of primary schools decreased from 15977 in 2010-11 to 14641 numbers in 2014-15 in Punjab. The status of schools sanctioned in upper primary category in India has been increased from 136423 in 2010-11 to 147388 in 2014-15 in all India but the numbers of upper primary schools are decreased from 3050 in 2010-11 to 2890 in 2014-15 in Punjab. Table shows the overall status of all schools in India that's is also increased from 1362324 in 2010-11 to 1445807 in 2014-15 in all states of the country but the overall numbers of schools decreased in Punjab.

Table 3 Distribution of Schools by Category under SSA in 2010-11 to 2014-15

Years	Primary		Upper Primary		All School	
	India	Punjab	India	Punjab	India	Punjab
2010-11	827244	15977	136423	3050	1362324	30858
2011-12	841644	15702	146129	3001	1412178	30181
2012-13	853870	15335	147339	2934	1431702	29833
2013-14	855916	14751	147163	2885	1448712	29198
2014-15	847116	14641	147388	2890	1445807	29023

Source: District Information System for Education (DISE)

Ratio of Primary to Upper Primary School In this direction a number of activities have already been initiated under the SSA and it is hoped that more Upper Primary schooling facilities would be available in the years to come. The improved ratio of Primary to Upper Primary schools/ sections clearly shows availability of more Upper Primary schooling facilities across the country which is an encouraging signal. Table 4 shows the ratio of different category in schools from 2010 to 2015.

Table 4 Ratio of Primary to Upper Primary Schools Under SSA in 2010-11 to 2014-15

Years	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15	
Items	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Department of Education	2.38	1.24	2.23	1.23	2.24	1.23	2.25	1.22	2.30	2.06
Tribal/Social welfare Department	2.88	1.00	2.42	1.00	2.43	1.00	2.74	1.00	2.72	1.00
Local Body	3.28	0.00	3.29	-	3.40	0.00	3.47	-	3.23	38.33
All Govt. Schools	2.59	2.14	2.48	2.04	2.69	2.83	2.50	2.10	2.49	2.09
Private aided	0.72	0.84	0.73	0.83	0.76	0.83	0.78	0.81	0.78	0.81
Private Unaided	1.39	1.17	1.39	1.12	1.38	1.13	1.35	1.17	1.34	1.15
All Private Schools	1.20	1.12	1.22	1.08	1.38	1.17	1.22	1.14	1.21	1.13
All Schools	2.12	1.64	2.06	1.63	2.06	1.61	2.04	1.57	2.02	1.57

Source: District Information System for Education (DISE) (i) I-India (ii) P- Punjab

The data in table 4 shows the ratio of different category under SSA programme in all the states of country and Punjab from 2010-11 to 2014-15. The table indicates that the ratio of primary to upper primary schools is still high at 2.12 at the national level in 2010-11. Now this ratio of all schools is declined in 2014-15 at 2.02 in the India and Punjab. Further a significant difference in ratio of primary to upper primary schools is noticed in school run by the government of India and Punjab. The ratio of private schools is increased from 2010-11 to 2014-15 at the national level, but this ratio is decreased in Punjab in these years.

School Infrastructure of SSA

For improving the education quality, all state governments has provided new syllabus, the textbooks, blackboards, the use of multi-language, new classrooms, sports activities and provided the library to improve the reading habits in children. All these significant material for SSA programme improve the education quality in schools. Table 5 shows that under SSA programme following infrastructure is improved in 2010-11 to 2014-15.

Table 5 School Infrastructure Under SSA in All Schools in 2010-11 to 2014-15

Years	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15	
Items	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P	I	P
Numbers of Teachers	6403234	204967	6687883	207718	7354151	226570	7721903	236205	7963181	242375
Drinking Water Facilities (%)	82.18	99.78	84.13	99.98	94.55	99.00	94.93	99.76	86.70	99.86
Library (%)	67.26	72.85	53.86	73.14	68.95	86.13	76.13	94.84	82.08	95.62
Playground (%)	66.03	73.12	68.10	76.88	56.58	81.47	58.05	95.64	68.79	95.30
Teaching Training	-	-	-	-	-	-	44.1	36.38	37.78	47.51
Free Text Books	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Electricity (%)	42.76	99.37	47.11	98.03	49.92	99.76	51.74	99.86	58.93	99.88
Computers(%)	18.70	47.12	18.86	57.57	70.78	90.90	62.71	86.00	68.40	83.96
Kitchen (%)	38.11	13.39	40.86	17.43	94.83	96.37	72.64	68.59	84.94	94.30
Furniture (%)	81.83	84.03	83.81	86.81	61.10	86.78	61.05	86.58	89.06	99.06
Boundary Wall (%)	66.41	95.08	68.18	96.99	59.48	95.00	61.87	96.81	64.60	96.62

Source: District Information System for Education (DISE) (i) I-India (ii) P- Punjab

under SSA, the country has seen massive infrastructure development at the school level. This includes numbers of teachers, drinking water facilities, library and playground, teaching training, electricity and computers, kitchen furniture and boundary wall. Table 5 shows that, the availability of drinking water in the schools are the most essential facility that every school should have. There has been substantial increase in the availability of basic facilities of water

(all category) from 82.18 per cent in 2010-11 to 86.70 per cent in 2014-15 in all states, and this percentage is also increased from 99.78 per cent in 2010-11 to 99.86 per cent in Punjab. In this table study shows that overall infrastructure is increased from 2010-11 to 2014-15 at national and Punjab level. Quality of education and infrastructure under SSA has been improved in the previous years.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT 2009

The Directive Principles of Indian Constitution obligates the government of India to ensure universal school education state policy. Article 45 deals with the promise to ensure free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years within 10 years (1960) of independence (Dholakia and Jain, 2009). Mission mode implementation under SSA has, undoubtedly, contributed to substantial achievements in universalizing access and enrolments, especially among hitherto unreached children. However, mission mode implementation was also expected to influence and reform the mainstream education department to take up the challenge of universal elementary education. This has met only limited success, and over the last ten years the education departments and SSA mission agency have tended to function as dual and parallel structures.

The implementation of RTE began while the SSA was operational. It was considered sensible, as a temporary measure, to use a modified SSA as the vehicle of implementation of RTE. The understanding was that by the middle of the 12th Plan a new modality of implementation of RTE would be ready to replace SSA. The RTE Act confers a permanent right to free and compulsory education of equitable quality for the children of India - for all times to come. It requires the whole education department to work together in a unified manner, and necessitates a fundamental change in the governance structure. It is, therefore, necessary to put in place systems and mechanisms for a shift from the SSA project-based approach to RTE (MHRD, GoI, 2011).

Challenges of SSA

Quality of Education, in the initial years of SSA, can lead to improvement in quality of education imparted by government schools. Many problems occur at the operational level in implementing the SSA scheme. It is a major ongoing social security provided programme in the field of education in the whole country. While the efficiency is no doubt remarkable but some major challenges under SSA system which tend to dilute the strengths.

- High dropout rate and quality education are the two major areas of apprehension of SSA that should be addressed through detailed measures.
- Teachers correlated issues like vacancies, non-attendance, unqualified teachers; ineffective training should be addressed immediately.
- Local community should be involved in monitoring school performance.
- Lack of learning infrastructure, pupil evaluation, and classroom discussions etc.
- Inadequate school supervisions, maintenance of records, effective liaison with the parents and community etc. could not be ensured.
- Lack of proper utilization of SSA funds in schools. District level authority gets funds in district heads, non flexibility in progress of funds in the programme.

CONCLUSION

There are only three ways in which the government can pay to all teachers a salary recommended by the sixth pay commission. First, the education budget can be raised much beyond 6 per cent of GDP to above 15 per cent of GDP on a sustained basis. Second, the government can keep the budget allocation at 6 per cent of GDP, but then cover much less than the universal coverage of children under primary and secondary schools. The provisions of RTE will rule out this option. The political leadership in the country will rule out the possibility of reducing the government school teachers' salary significantly below the levels recommended by the Sixth Pay Commission, either through hiring them on ad-hoc basis or denying them the benefits available to permanent regular teachers for a longer time. The only remaining alternative, therefore, is to pursue the goal of universal school coverage through public-private partnership (PPP) in which low cost private providers of school education, who pay much lower teacher salary, cover a significant part of school education. As it happens, many studies have brought out that private/ non-government schools can supply a reasonable quality of school education at almost 25% to 35% of the cost of government education. This happens because the salary of a school-teacher in the private sector is almost 25% to 35% of the government salary as found by several studies (Dholakia and Jain, 2009).

There is a need to open more upper primary schools and develop stronger linkages of pre-primary schools with primary schools in villages. Transport facilities to be provided to all children from remote habitations or unsaved habitations in rural areas. Free uniforms and financial help have to be provided all the poor children who live below poverty line in India. Midday meals has to be provided in all the schools to improve student attendance, punishment to be avoided, sports activities should also be provided to all children and educational tour is organized for the development of children's skills. The RTE Act mandates that a library should be provided for each school. School libraries should to be set up in all the primary schools under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. In order to improve the school environment, other suggestions such as, facilities like blackboards, drinking water, separate toilets for girls, shortage of classrooms, boundary walls, repair grant to provided for better infrastructure, electricity and appropriate funds should be provided in order to maintain proper infrastructure.

Issues relating to free and compulsory education have been actively debated worldwide. The primary objective of this paper is to highlight the performance of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, introduced the weakness and gives the suggestions for improvement of the education quality in schools. The study observed that quality of education under SSA has improved in the previous year due to the appointment of new teachers, facilities of Teacher Training Programme (TTP), opening up of new schools, construction of school buildings, providing water facilities in the school, and other facilities. All these significant material for SSA programme improve the education quality in schools. But there are some challenges in the programme, like weak performance of monitoring and supervision system, lack of funds, lack of knowledge in vulnerable groups, lack of facilities etc. The study suggested that there is also a need for community members to participate in the school related activities under SSA. The time has come to act actively with the participation of implementing agencies, lest the flagship programme of SSA should remain on paper only.

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