

A Study on the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Its Consequences

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Abstract – Education is the most important lever for social, economic and political transformation. A well educated population, equipped with the relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills is essential for economic and social development in the twenty first century. Education is the most potent tool for socio economic mobility and a key instrument for building an equitable and just society. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is one of India's major flagship programs for universalisation of elementary education launched in 2000-2001. Universalisation of elementary education in India implies Universal access and enrolment, universal retention, bridging gender and social category gap in primary and upper primary education and elementary education of satisfactory quality.

Keywords: Education, Sarv Shiksha, Program

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INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic input for investment in human capital. Education is directly linked with economic development and it is also one of the essential social indicators. It is the key to social mobility. Well-educated population is essential for India's economic and social development. India has not yet achieved cent per cent literacy level. There also exists gender disparity in literacy level. Children from oppressed and poor sections of the society especially girls lack access to school education which is a serious problem to be encountered. Government of India had implemented several schemes to promote school education.

The principal programme for Universalization of primary education is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) a centrally – sponsored scheme being implemented in partnership with State/Union Territory Government. The programme has been in operation since 2000-2001. Bridging gender gap in access to and participation in elementary education is one of the major goals of SSA. In this context an attempt has been made in this study to analyze the changes brought in gender disparity in enrolment of student in elementary education in India.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme that aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010 and bridge social, regional and gender gaps. It assigns the greatest importance to systematic mobilization of the community and creation of an effective system of decentralized decision-making.

Almost all states and union territories have constituted school education management committees (SEMCs)

under the SSA. These committees are to ensure community participation. The nomenclature of the community level structure varies from state to state.¹

These community level structures play a key role in micro-planning, especially in the development of a village education plan and school improvement plans. Under SSA the annual work plan and budget is prepared in a participatory planning process by these communities and they take into account local needs and specificity. The SEMC is the mechanism through which public funds for education services flows to the village, through which planning, implementation and monitoring are coordinated.

As per the provisions in the SSA, every school has grants for their school development. These grants are spent for the preparation of TLM, for school development and for school innovation. The TLM grant is spent by the concerned teacher for preparation, whereas the school development and school innovation grants are spent by the headmaster. The school headmaster, as a convener, can spend these grants only with the prior consent of the SEMC members taken at the monthly meetings. If the SEMC agree to such expenditure of the grant for school development, the school headmaster passes a resolution, where the members give their consent for expenditure.

In the course of the fieldwork and in discussion with the respondents, the community members revealed that they were not aware of the financial resources that the school receives. They also pointed out that "the teachers do not disclose the financial resources and its expenditure". As a result, they believe that the school teachers have a greater say in decision-

making over the financial resources. It is felt by the respondents that teachers spent the grants on their own without discussing these issues with them. The respondents also indicated that even they were not aware that these issues were to be discussed in the meetings. All this reveals that the government initiative to create awareness among these tribal groups for their greater participation in school-related activities through various education programmes such as the SSA are being poorly implemented.

The other suggestions were to introduce mid-day meal programme on a daily basis in the schools, making drinking water available in the premises, use of TLM materials by teachers, provision of better infrastructure schools and so on. All these suggestions reveal that the tribal community members are participating in some way or the other in school-related activities. However, to organise them in a common platform, the ITDA needs to focus on creating more awareness among tribes for better results from their participation.

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Today the world is passing through rapid changes. The world is on the threshold of exciting and revolutionary period in which the scientific study of man is harnessed in man's least interest. Education must play its part. It must accept the fact that a sweeping revision of education practices is possible and inevitable.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time-bound manner as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years' age group a fundamental right. The SSA is being implemented in partnership with the state governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations.

The programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water facility, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. Existing schools with inadequate teacher strength are provided with additional teachers, while the capacity of existing teachers is being strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching – learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at a cluster, block and district levels. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girls' education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide.

The SSA is an effort to recognize the need for improving the performance of the school system and

to provide community-owned quality elementary education in mission mode. It also envisages bridging of gender and social gaps. It is also an opportunity for states to develop their own vision of elementary education. The Government of India vide its notification dated 2nd January 2001 had set up the National Mission for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

SSA has set up national mission and state missions for demand-based capacity development. It is an effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj institutions, the school management committees, the village education committees, the parents' teachers associations, the mothers' teacher associations, the tribal autonomous councils in the management of elementary schools. It has also other levels of mission like district level Gram Panchayat education committee and municipal ward education committee. In first review joint meeting, it has found that the following states viz., Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Tamilnadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal represent a wide variety.

One reason is that some states had an experience of organizing their activities in a mission mode, thanks to the earlier District Primary Education Programme. Punjab and Tripura came into the SSA without experience of DPEP. States like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tripura have decentralized governance which is the hallmark of SSA. But states do not like Punjab, which has a history of strong local government institutions nor is some experience with working in a mission mode obviously in a different stage of evolution.

The SSA is to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children. There is also another goal to bridge social and gender gaps, with the active participation of the community in the management of schools. As it does not alienate any section, it develops the community solidarity. It develops the human potential both spiritually and materially. It is a process of value-based learning that allows children an opportunity to work for each other's well-being rather than mere selfish pursuits.

The Central and State Governments together implemented the SSA in partnership with the local governments and the community. To signify the national priority for elementary education, a National Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Mission has been established with the prime minister as the Chairperson and the Union Minister of Human Resource Development as the Vice Chairperson. States have been requested to establish State Level Implementation Society for DEE under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister/ Education Minister. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is not disturbing the existing structures in states and districts but it only tries to bring convergence in all these efforts. Efforts are to be made to ensure that there is functional

decentralization down to the school level in order to improve community participation.

DISCUSSION

"Banerjee (2012) explored a factor which needs to be heeled if Universalisation of primary education is to become a reality. He concluded that the focus must be on local condition affecting such as allocation and use of resources and teaching learning process in the classrooms". There will be a focus on the inclusion and participation of children from SC/ST, minorities groups and the children with special needs, in the educational process. It lays a special thrust on making education at the elementary level useful and relevant for children by improving the curriculum, child-centered activities and effective teaching learning strategies and it recognizes the critical and central role of the teachers and advocates a focus on their development needs.

Mehta (2010) in his report said that the successful implementation of any educational programme, effective monitoring coupled with efficient information system is essential". As per the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan framework, each district will prepare a District Elementary Education Plan reflecting all the investments being made and required in the elementary education sector, with a holistic and convergent approach.

"Chauhan (2012) in a study on primary level of education (2000-2001 to 2007- 2008) to assess educational development in all primary schools in the journey of primary schooling from has been average performance". Government, local Body, and government aided schools would be covered under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, as is the practice under the Mid Day Meal scheme and DPEP.

The educational development index has been computing in which a set of 23 indicators have been used in computing the EDI. These are further divided into 4 subgroups namely access, infrastructure, teachers and outcome indicators". In case private sector wishes to improve the functioning of a government, local body or a private aided school, efforts to develop a partnership would be made within the broad parameters of State policy in this regard.

Mishra (2014) has reported that despite being projected as a large success, the flagship programme of government for the universalization of primary education, that is SSA, leaves much to be desired". The Commitments regarding sharing of costs would be taken from State governments in writing. The support for teacher salary appointed under the SSA program could be shared between the Central government and the State government in a ratio of 85:15 during the IX plan, 75:25 during the X plan and 50:50 thereafter.

Ramchadran (2013) in a study concluded the lack of access to upper primary schools within village which

caused most girls to drop out after the primary level as many families do not allow their daughters to travel outside the village to study". Incentive schemes like distribution of scholarships and uniforms will continue to be under the State Plan. They will not be funded under the SSA program.

CONCLUSION

SSA has made significant progress in moving towards universal enrolment particularly by reducing gender gap. The increase in enrolment at elementary level has been higher for girls than that of boys. Still there are challenges in moving towards universal enrolment. Higher community involvement would help in effective implementation of SSA and thereby to achieve universal enrolment in elementary education in India.

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