

Assessment of 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' in Sarvodaya Schools of Delhi

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the effectiveness of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and focuses on assessing the awareness and satisfaction level of different stakeholders regarding selected programme components. The study revealed that despite some loopholes that were found in the programme, the programme had been very effective in mainstreaming out of school children and reducing dropouts. Some areas that need to be looked into to improve the efficacy of the programme were awareness level about the programme, allocation of funds for teaching-learning material (TLM) and providing NGO's who are partners in the programme with better funding and timely dispersal of the funds for their smooth functioning.

Introduction

Children are very important part of our society. Any lacunae in early education of a child can have long-term consequences. Not to be educated, not to acquire basic literacy and numeracy is a serious

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disability, both for the child and for coming generations. Every child in our country has a right to education. Commitment to provide basic education for all is a goal enshrined in the Indian constitution, which guarantees universal compulsory education as a fundamental right for every child in the age group 6–14 years. Successive development policies and plans have pursued this goal for the last six decades. With the population of more than one billion, which is still growing, it has been an uphill task to keep pace with the expanding demand for basic education. India is a vast country comprising 35 States and Union Territories with diverse socio-cultural histories, spread over widely varying geographical conditions. Correspondingly, progress in education has been uneven, though the overall progress made has been quite impressive. From a mere 18 per cent literacy rate in 1951, the country progressed to around 65 per cent literacy by 2001. While three out of four children in the age group 6-14 years were unenrolled 60 years ago, only 6–7 per cent of 210 million children remain unenrolled today. This progress is the result of the implementation of a wide array of programmes across the country for total literacy, universal and quality elementary education for all (National University of Educational Planning and Administration [NUEPA], 2008).

Universal Elementary Education or Education for All means providing universal enrollment, universal retention, equity and universal achievement of children (Zachariach, 2005). India's goal of universal elementary education of quality points to three main challenges: expanding access, raising learning achievement and reducing gaps in education outcomes.

In 2002, the Government of India legislated universal elementary education. As a result, every Indian child between the age group of 6–14 years has been given the fundamental right to receive a minimum of eight years of elementary education. A national programme known as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was started in the year 2002 which supports this legislation. The programme was launched with the aim of providing useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6–14 age group by 2010, and to bridge social, regional and gender gaps with the active participation of the community in the management of schools.

Table 1.1
Allocations to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in the Department of Education from
the year 1999-2010

Year	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
SSA (₹ Cr.)	300	500	1512	1951	3057	7156	10,041	10,671	13,100	13,100	15,000

The programme also seeks to open new schools in habitations, which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan covers the entire country, with a special focus on educational needs of the girls, Schedule caste and Schedule tribe and other children in difficult circumstances (Singh, 2005). Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has been built upon the experience of several primary education programmes that preceded it, including the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) and the Lok Jumbish Project (LJP). It is a partnership project between the Central and State Governments, which seek to improve the performance of the school through a community-owned approach, with specific focus on the provision of quality education.

In spite of this huge allocation, there is paucity of data about the performance of the programme. The present study therefore assumes importance as it has endeavoured to find out the perception and satisfaction level of stakeholders at large and students and parents in particular. Also, the government is pumping more and more money in the SSA in every five year plan in order to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education; hence it is imperative to assess its functioning from the point of view of different stakeholders.

II. Significance of the study

For better development and growth of child, quality education is most important aspect. Every child should have the opportunity to make a better life for himself. Unfortunately, too many children in the world today grow up without this chance, because they are deprived of their basic right to even attend primary schools. **Education is central to development.** It empowers people and strengthens nations. It is a powerful 'equaliser', opening the doors to all to lift themselves out of poverty. It is critical to the world's attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Government of India in its Five Year Plans has realised this and large amount of money have been allocated for education. During

the Tenth Plan, an allocation of ₹ 17,000 crore has been made for SSA. In the year 2010-2011, ₹ 15,000 crores has been allocated for SSA. Such huge allocation of money for education clearly reveals that education is an area that has been given a lot of importance. Review of literature revealed that though there has been research done in the area of education but it was mainly centred on the performance of various educational programmes launched by government at different points of time focusing on parameters like enrollment rate, student-teacher ratio, dropout rate, etc. However, it was seen that there were no researches to assess awareness and satisfaction level of different stakeholders regarding different programme components. The study was carried out to fill this lacuna.

In addition, it was seen that most of the previous researches done to assess programme performance had been undertaken by the government. It was therefore felt that an assessment from a source, which is not itself the implementing agency should be done for it to be free from any bias. Therefore, it became pertinent to take up this study and ascertain implementation of various programme components. Further, the study is significant as it makes an attempt to assess the programme from the user's perspective. The objectives of the study were:

- To ascertain the awareness and satisfaction level of the following stakeholders regarding selected programme components.
 - Students
 - Teachers
 - Principals.
- To ascertain participation of NGO's in the programme and perception of NGO functionaries towards provisions made for NGO's.

Selected Programme components included pupil to teacher ratio, boys Vs girls ratio, provision of money for teaching-learning material, refresher course for teachers.

III. Methodology

The study was conducted in Delhi, which is the largest metropolis in terms of area and the second largest metropolis next to Mumbai in terms of population in India. As per Census 2001, literacy rate of Delhi is 82 per cent (<http://des.delhigovt.nic.in/glance.htm>). The study was carried out in poor urban neighbourhoods as a large percentage of population here uses Government and Government-aided schools. The study was carried out in South West Zone of Delhi.

From this particular zone, five Government Sarvodaya co-education schools and slum clusters surrounding these schools were selected. Sarvodaya schools are schools under the aegis of the government of India meant specifically for students belonging to low income group families.

Five Sarvodaya co-education schools were randomly selected from southwest zone of Delhi. Only Sarvodaya schools were taken since they were co-educational schools and had children in the age range needed for the study. Since the researcher wanted to study the components such as boys Vs girls ratio therefore co-education schools were needed to be taken. From the selected schools, two schools were randomly selected for gathering detailed data from the principals, teachers and students. From the remaining three schools only the principals were interviewed.

The sample consisted of

- Forty-eight students, i.e. twenty-four from each of the two schools aged 12–14 years.
- Twelve teachers, six each from the two schools.
- Five principals, one each from five schools.
- Five NGO functionaries, one from each NGO.

Details of the selection of sample in each of above listed category

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is implemented for the students in the age group of 6–14 years but for this study students from Class VI to Class VIII were taken as children below that age would be too small to respond to the questions.

Forty-eight students, twenty-four each from the two schools were taken. Out of these students, eight students were taken from Class VI, VII and VIII, respectively. This was done so that the students of different ages get represented in the sample. From each class one section was randomly selected. From the selected section, attendance register was procured and separate list for boys and girls was prepared. From the prepared list, boys and girls were selected using systematic random sampling. From each class, four boys and four girls were taken, thereby making a sample of eight students per class. Equal number of boys and girls were taken in order to avoid gender bias. Only those students were taken who were between 12–14 years of age and had been studying in that school for at least two years so that they could answer the questions such as pupil to teacher ratio, boys Vs girls ratio, number of students who have dropped out in last two years and so on.

From each of the two schools, six teachers were interviewed thereby making a total of 12 teachers. The six teachers interviewed from each school included three class teachers, one each from Class VI to class VIII. This was done so that the teachers could answer questions such as pupil to teacher ratio, boys Vs girls ratio, number of students who have dropped out in last two years, timely provision of textbooks to students and so on. Out of the other three teachers, one was the teacher incharge looking after the programme funds and coordinating activities related to SSA and other two teachers were not necessarily class teachers but teachers who were teaching classes from VI to VIII. Only those teachers were taken for the sample that were teaching in that particular school for at least two years so that they could answer all aspects of the programme and its functioning over the years.

Five principals one from each of the five schools were interviewed to have a wider perspective about the performance of the programme. Five NGO functionaries, one from each NGO was interviewed to understand the kind of role they were playing in furthering the programme, in networking and in mainstreaming out of school children.

For the present study, interview schedule was used to ascertain the awareness and satisfaction level of different stakeholders regarding selected programme components and to elicit detailed and accurate information. Both open and close-ended questions were included. Group discussions and informal talks were also held in small groups so that the respondents felt comfortable.

For assessing the satisfaction level of different stakeholders regarding selected programme components, a five-point scale ranging from highly satisfied to highly dissatisfied was prepared. The inventory required the stakeholders to select the option that best described their level of satisfaction regarding different components of the programme. If the option selected was anywhere between 1-2, the reason for their dissatisfaction was subsequently asked in the next question. Similarly, if they choose the option 4-5, reasons for satisfaction were investigated.

IV. Results and Discussion

For assessing the awareness and satisfaction level of different stakeholders, the study covered several programme components. However, for this particular paper only some of the components have been included. This particular section deals with awareness and satisfaction level of the stakeholders namely the students, teachers and principals regarding awareness about the programme and

provisions made under it, pupil to teacher ratio, boys Vs girls ratio and provision and usefulness of teaching learning material.

Awareness about the programme and provisions under it

In spite of the fact that government has been allocating huge amount of money for the programme in every five year plan, still awareness about the programme was found to be very low. It was seen that none of the students were aware of the SSA. Thus showing lack of awareness among them regarding the programme. Table 4.1 below clearly reveals that as many as 83 per cent of the teachers were aware of the ongoing SSA but only 50 per cent of them had some idea about the objectives of the programme and could cite at least one objective which included providing free and compulsory education to all that is all children to complete 8 years of elementary education by 2010. The remaining had no idea about its objectives. All the teachers however were aware of the provisions that were being made for them. All of them quoted that they were being provided with refresher course, money for purchasing teaching learning material (TLM). Even though the teachers were aware of the provisions that were being made for them but as many as 75 per cent of them did not know that these provisions were being provided under the aegis of SSA. When teachers were asked about the provisions under SSA, only 25 per cent of them had complete knowledge about the same.

All the principals interviewed were aware of the ongoing programme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan but majority (60 per cent) of them had only some idea about the objectives of the programme. They could cite just 1-2 objectives of the programme such as providing free and compulsory education to all and mainstreaming out of school children. When asked about the provisions under SSA, it was found that only three of the principals had complete knowledge regarding the same. The remaining were aware of most of the provisions except for the provisions that were made for disabled children under SSA.

Table 4.1
Awareness level of teachers regarding SSA

Awareness about SSA	Total (N = 12)	
	n	%
Yes	10	83.3
No	2	16.7
Total	12	100

Awareness regarding the objectives of SSA

<i>Awareness regarding the objectives of SSA</i>	<i>Total (N = 10)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
All children complete 8 years of elementary education by 2010	1	10
Providing free and compulsory education to all	3	30
No one should be educated	1	10
Don't know	5	50
Total	10	100

Knowledge regarding provisions under SSA

<i>Knowledge regarding provisions under SSA</i>	<i>Total (N = 12)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Complete knowledge*	3	25
Average knowledge**	2	16.7
Poor knowledge***	5	41.6
Not applicable****	2	16.7
Total	12	100

*- Knew 5-6 provisions

*** - Knew 1-2 provisions

** - Knew 3-4 provisions

**** - Teachers who were not aware of SSA

Pupil to teacher ratio

- As per the norm under SSA, teacher to pupil ratio in a class should be 1:40 but, when asked about the class sizes, 66 per cent of the students reported class sizes of larger than 40. Students were dissatisfied with the same as they faced difficulty in understanding whatever was taught to them in the class and also reported that it was too difficult for the teachers to handle such large groups of students.
- When asked about the class strength, 50 per cent of the teachers were dissatisfied with the pupil to teacher ratio and reported that it was too difficult for them to handle such a large group of students and also checking their notebooks was tedious. Remaining half of the teachers were satisfied with the pupil to teacher ratio as they had maximum of 38-40 students in their class, which was quite manageable for them.
- Majority of the principals reported that the pupil to teacher ratio in their school was not complying with the provision in the SSA and stated that because of too many students taking admission

in their school, it was difficult to maintain that ratio. Further after Class V, students from feeder schools were also merged in these schools in addition to the existing ones and they could not deny admission to them. This distorted the student teacher ratio further in middle classes.

Boys Vs girls

There is no such norm for boys Vs girls under SSA. But since the programme gives priority to girls education and accords high priority to girls, therefore it became imperative to study boys Vs girls ratio in schools to see if any efforts were taken to improve the enrollment of girls in schools.

- When asked about boys Vs girls ratio, 62 per cent of the students stated that the number of boys were more in comparison to girls in their class. In majority of the classes the percentage of girls was less in comparison to boys. Of the students who reported more number of boys in their classes in comparison to girls, majority said that the ratio of girls was less because the parents did not want their girls to study in a co-educational school.
- When teachers were asked about the ratio of boys Vs girls in their class in the present year, as many as 42 per cent of them reported a ratio of 60:40 in their class. Thirty three per cent of the teachers said that the number of boys and girls in their class was equal. When asked to recall the ratio of boys to girls in their class last year, majority (67%) of the teachers reported a ratio of 60:40, whereas 58 per cent of them reported a ratio of 60:40 two years before that. Thus showing that the number of girls enrolling in schools had not changed much in comparison to boys over the years.
- When asked about the boys to girls ratio in their school, majority of the principals reported a ratio of 60:40 (60 boys and 40 girls) in their school. Two principals reported a ratio of 70:30 and 50:50 in their respective schools. Therefore it can be said that in majority of the schools the percentage of the girls was less in comparison to boys. It was seen that the norm under SSA, which says that girl education is given priority, was under question as no special efforts were being made to improve enrollment of girls in schools. All of them reported that the ratio had not changed after the implementation of the programme.

Provision for Teaching Learning Material (TLM)

- Under the programme, teachers are to be provided with money for the purchase of Teaching Learning Material (TLM), which helps them in classroom teaching. When asked about this provision, all the TGT's and assistant teachers reported that they were being provided with a sum of ₹ 500/year per teacher for the purchase of teaching learning material (TLM). Fifty per cent of them were dissatisfied with the amount of money that they were getting for TLM and felt that the money was too less to purchase. They added that rather than a meager amount being given every year, teachers should be provided with a lump sum amount of money at an interval of three years so that they could buy good quality material rather than buying cheap stuff. All the teachers reported that they had full freedom in purchase of teaching learning material (TLM) as per their need and requirement. Even though all of them were satisfied with the freedom that was being given to them, some of the teachers showed dissatisfaction with the additional burden for the purchase of TLM.
- Majority of the students interviewed reported that teachers were using teaching aids during their classes and further added that the aids helped them in better understanding of the subjects. As many as 88 per cent of the students said that they were able to understand whatever was taught to them in the class and were satisfied with the teaching methodology of the teachers.
- All the principals reported that the teachers were purchasing TLM on their own as per their need and requirement and said that the teachers knew the best as to what kind of aids they required that would help students understand and would make learning easy for them.

Usefulness of the refresher courses

- One of the provisions under SSA is refresher courses for teachers. All the teachers interviewed, had attended the refresher course at least once but as many as 75 per cent of them did not know that this training was being given to them under SSA. Sixty seven per cent of the teachers and principals said that the refresher courses that were conducted for the teachers were beneficial as they updated their knowledge, clarified some of their doubts, taught them better teaching methodology that helped make their

students grasp the subject matter easily and made subject matter interesting. Additionally, the principals also said that the teacher's interaction with outside faculty made them aware about different views and opinions which boosted their confidence.

- On the contrary, according to some of the principals (40%) and teachers (33%), refresher courses were a complete waste of time and resources and strongly felt that they were not of much use. This was so as the resource persons who came had poor knowledge of their subjects and the same resource persons were being sent every time which did not help in getting new view points. Some of the principals also stated that the subject seminars that were held were a complete waste of time as they were being held during the working days and teachers had to attend the seminar after the school timings, which was very tiring for them.

V. Participation of NGO's in the programme and perception of NGO functionaries towards provisions made for NGO's.

All the NGO functionaries were aware of the ongoing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Majority (80%) of them could just site two to three objectives of the programme such as providing free and compulsory education to all and mainstreaming out of school children. However, they were not aware of the other objectives which included focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life and completion of 8 years of elementary education by 2010 and so on. Only one of them could site as many as five objectives of the SSA thus depicting low awareness and knowledge about the programme among the functionaries.

As far as the provisions for students were concerned, all the NGO functionaries reported that they were getting ₹ 845/- per student per annum from which they were paying the salary to the teachers, giving rent for the learning centers, salary to the maids who were looking after the children and were also purchasing copies and other necessities for the students. All the NGO functionaries were highly dissatisfied with the amount of money that they were getting and stated that the money was too less.

When asked about the provisions for the teachers, all of them reported that the teachers of the learning center were provided with a 10-day workshop. According to the functionaries the workshop was very beneficial for the teachers and taught them many things like dealing with children of different age groups within the same class, using limited material for all students, using waste materials

effectively and also taught them some playful methods of teaching. Even though all of the functionaries were satisfied with the workshops that were organised for the teachers but at the same time they were highly dissatisfied with the salary of the teachers, which was just ₹ 1000/- per month. All the functionaries reported that the teacher to pupil ratio in their learning centers was 1:40, which was as per the norms under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

As far as the out of school children were concerned, which is a major concern for SSA, all the functionaries reported that some of the main reasons for children not attending school were sibling care, poverty, lack of value for education by parents and employment of children. All of them reported that they were conducting household surveys for locating out of school children as well as drop out children which was in line with SSA objectives. All the NGO functionaries reported drop out cases in their locality and stated lack of inclination towards studies and sibling care as reasons for the same. At the same time the NGO functionaries also reported that there had been a reduction in the number of drop out children with the implementation of the SSA. When the NGO functionaries were asked to rate their level of satisfaction regarding the effectiveness of the programme with respect to mainstreaming out of school children, all of them were highly satisfied with the same.

VI. Road Ahead

The study has comprehensively assessed the SSA and has shown that in some aspects the programme has done well in working towards its objectives. However, some loopholes have been identified, which are negatively affecting its efficacy. These are:

Low awareness level about the objectives and provisions under the programme

Since so much of money is being pumped into the programme it is suggested that awareness should be created among the people regarding the programme. At first, the principals of the schools should be made aware of all the objectives of the programme as well as the provisions that are made under it, so that the principals could disseminate the same information among the teacher and students. Also awareness campaigns need to be launched at the community level to make the people aware about SSA. Even though this being done through mass media, it needs to be reinforced through localised campaigns and door-to-door visits.

Pupil to teacher ratio

It was seen that the norm under SSA, which says teacher to pupil ratio should be 1:40, was not being followed in schools completely and measures should be taken to reduce the size of the classes. Pupil to teacher ratio was found to be more in most of the schools since after Class V students from feeder schools were also merged in these schools in addition to the existing ones and schools could not deny admission to them. This further distorted the student teacher ratio further in middle classes. Therefore, measures should be taken to reduce the number of students that are merged from the feeder schools in order to maintain the proper ratio.

Boys Vs Girls ratio

The norm under SSA, which says that girl education is given priority, was under question since most of the girls were still out of the school because of poverty, sibling care, early marriage, no inclination towards studies and so on. No special efforts were taken to improve the enrollment of the girls in schools; hence it is recommended that special schemes should be launched for enrolling the girl child.

Increasing allocation for Teaching Learning Material

Even though it was seen that TLM has by and large improved teaching in schools and has been quite helpful in making students understand the subject easily, quickly and with greater clarity, it is suggested that the amount of money given for the purchase of teaching learning material should be increased so that the teachers can purchase good quality material.

Appointing well qualified teachers for Refresher courses

It is important that the resource persons appointed for the refresher courses should be well qualified and trained and should have complete knowledge and information regarding the issues discussed. Moreover, the venue for refresher courses should be in vicinity of the school so that the teachers do not have to waste their time in travelling long distances.

Provisions for NGO's

As far as the NGO's were concerned, they need to be provided with better funding and dispersal of funds should be timely. The salary of the teachers should be increased, the NGO's should be provided with a place for running their learning centers and the method of reporting

should be simplified so that the NGO's can work effectively. NGO's were playing a major role in the programme in terms of community outreach and hence the learning centres run by NGO's should be allowed to function as before to attain programme objectives of mainstreaming out of school children.

Thus the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has touched upon various important aspects of elementary and middle school education with its broad based objectives and provisions. However, some loopholes as shown by the study need to be looked into, which are negatively affecting the efficacy of the programme. These are low awareness level about the objectives and provisions under the programme among the students, teachers, parents and principals; insufficient allocation for purchase of teaching-learning material and not appointing well qualified teachers for refresher courses. Special schemes need to be launched for enrolling the girl child who still remain out of school for social and familial reasons. As far as NGO's were concerned they need to be provided with better funding and timely dispersal of funds so that they can work effectively. Despite some loopholes, the programme has by and large been very effective in mainstreaming out of school children and dropouts, the teaching learning materials were found to be very effective and helped students in better understanding of the subjects, the refresher courses that were conducted were beneficial for the teachers and helped them update their knowledge and taught them better teaching methodology thus making the teaching learning experience for students more rewarding and interesting. However, with better planning, regular monitoring and frequent evaluation, the programme can be further improved.

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