Hindi Language Competency of KGBV Students in Bihar

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ABSTRACT

The study identified some reasons of poor performance (about 40 per cent) in Hindi language of Class VI students in KGBV of Bihar and also noticed loss in transition (about 6 to 24 per cent) at the upper primary level despite residential facilities being provided to them. There existed acute shortage of teachers (46 per cent) as well as wardens (46 per cent) in KGBV, resulting in poor management of residential facilities. Additionally, non-availability of language teacher for teaching Hindi and their limited understanding of pedagogical processes left the teaching-learning transaction unattended. Their insufficient training to language at the time of induction showed a gap in inputs what they desired and what they had. In some KGBVs (e.g., Kishanganj) there existed minimal activities to overcome learning deficiencies in Hindi. They had virtually no idea about how to evaluate students and formulate plan for improving Hindi language. Illiterate mothers had a strong desire to educate their daughters (40 per cent achievement in Hindi language). Attitudinal problem of the school teachers and headmasters were the prominently observed. They attributed to the KGBV stakeholders for the managerial activities. The study suggested deployment of teachers and their intensive training for improving Hindi language.

Keywords: *Hindi language, Knowledge, Skill, Application, Learning, Teachers*

Introduction

The study was designed to assess Hindi language competency level of KGBV students in Bihar. The basic objective of Kasturba

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Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV) is to ensure access and quality education to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools at upper primary level. In Bihar 304 wardens (56 per cent) and 891 part time teachers (56 per cent) under module 1 are committed to educating the drop out students (DOS) and out of school children (OOSC).The learning needs of such children demand greater understanding including sensitivity to their background. Hence, it is essential to work out what methods and study materials to be used for accelerating learning, how to enable children to reach grade level knowledge and skills. How to teach Hindi language to girls, who either break their study at the primary school level or join the school for first time, is a challenge.

The teaching-learning needs of girls in the KGBV are a challenge as well as an opportunity. All KGBV students have had a break in their schooling due to family or other circumstances. Such girls are likely to be lagging behind academically. The entire process of enabling girls to reach Class VI needs to be ascertained. "How to enable girls to learn at their own pace?" National Evaluation Report of KGBV (NER, 2007) titled captured some teaching practices in various states. In Karnataka for instance, a zero class was provided to students till they reached Class VI level. In Gujarat, Model 1 was used to complete the primary cycle of the enrolled girls. In Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand the primers developed for bridge courses were used but the rush to prepare them for early school leaving class (ESLC) was also evident (NCERT, 2008). Andhra Pradesh enabled students from bridge courses to enrol in KGBV, thereby, doing some amount of preparatory work before they were formally enrolled in Class VI. In KGBV, some states used supplementary materials. At the initial stage Bihar followed a bridge course for the new-entrants in KGBV. The most worrying outcome was that there was little understanding of the programme in several states (Gogoi and Goswami, 2015; NER, 2013; PEO, 2015).Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO, 2015), a wing of NITI AAYOG, observed that, "the initial momentum that the programme gained could not be sustained after 2009". In many cases, where Model 3 was being followed, the learning related issues were similar to that of the formal school system (NER, 2007). The entry level of learning was not taken as a point of departure or as the baseline for planning their academic growth. There was lack of clarity about "who was eligible for admission in KGBVs" and "how to identify the eligible girls".

It was also observed that no standardised and uniform method was followed for the identification of girls for the admission in KGBVs. There was no curriculum, no separate classes (except in Gujarat) and no teachers' training for this purpose (PEO, 2015). Many states followed their own methods for bridging the academic gap of the out of school children (OOSC) and the drop out students (DOS) in KGBV. In Gujarat, for instance, the number of never enrolled girls was quite high in the Model 3 KGBVs. It was not clear how they were tackling the bridging process for various levels. It was worth noting that the teaching and learning processes visible in KGBVs was textbook-oriented and in most states it was not very different from the formal schools (NER, 2013). Teachers had little inputs in participatory and activity-based teaching practices. In some areas where model 3 was being implemented (with the exception of Karnataka) the children went to the formal school during the day and the part-time teachers of KGBV provided remedial teaching and support before and after school. This practice still continues in Bihar.

The study on KGBV was undertaken because of twin reasons: first, girls in Bihar showed low achievement in Hindi language of Class V (NAS cycle3, 2012) and second, Bihar did not have benchmark data of Hindi language of Class VI for KGBV. Usually, girls outstrip boys in language acquisition because of early cognitive development. In Bihar the scenario is quite different. Girls scored less than their counterpart in Hindi language (NAS cycle3, 2012). National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) conducted a national achievement survey (NAS) for Class V of the government schools excluding KGBVs in 2012. Language is a serious issue in Odisha and Jharkhand where the tribal girls continue to face learning difficulties as the textbooks are in the state language. Even the teachers are young urban women who have limited understanding of pedagogical processes (NER, 2013). In border districts of Bihar where minority or a few tribal communities concentrate, language poses a serious problem in learning for the students (BEPC, 2015).

The 2001 Census identifies 27 mother tongues listed under Hindi. More than 20 per cent districts at the national level are linguistically heterogeneous. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) supports the idea of mother tongue at the primary level and recommends gradual addition to other languages in elementary classes. The language problem poses moderate to severe learning

disadvantage for children who shift to Hindi from the regional dialect. *Maithili*, *Angika*, *Bajika* and *Maghi* are widely spoken in Bihar whereas Hindi as the medium of instruction is used in the government schools. The National Achievement Survey (NAS) highlights the position of Bihar in the context of language learning in Classes III, V and VIII. Bihar scored less than 45 per cent as compared to national average (55 per cent) in reading comprehension in Class V (NAS cycle 3, 2012). Both Boys and girls scored lower than the overall average score on all the mental processes. Boys performed better than girls in reading comprehension. Similar cases were recorded in Class III (Bihar socred 53 per cent as compared to national average 64 per cent). Where the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue at the primary school level, it becomes difficult for the girl child to cope with the school instruction. A major challenge being faced by the children of KGBVs in Bihar is that they do not compete with the required level of Class VI. The study primarily focusses on the assessment of achievement in Hindi language and finds out gaps in language competencies.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study were to find out:

i. Learning achievement level in Hindi language of Class VI students,
ii. Gaps in Hindi language competencies,
iii. Academic support system of KGBVs,
iv. KGBV management system and
v. Competency level of Hindi teachers.

Methodology

The Setting and Coverage— Altogether 535 KGBV in 530 blocks of 38 districts (altogether 534 blocks) were operational under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) since 2011–12. In five districts more than one KGBV was functioning because of minority concentration. Altogether 48719 students (45% SC, 36% OBC, 8% minority, 7% ST and 4% BPL) were admitted in KGBVs (BEPC, 2015).The study was conducted on 20 KGBVs spread over 20 blocks in 10 districts of nine divisions. It was a multistage sampling covering district at the 1st level, KGBV at the 2nd level and girl students of class VI, part-time teachers and warden at the 3rd level. At the 2nd level two

KGBVs from each district were selected with the help of standard operating procedure (SOP). At the 3rd level 398 girl students (20 from each KGBV were sampled through systemic random sampling with replacement technique. Additionally, 20 wardens, 20 Hindi teachers and 20 HMs/teachers of the feeder schools participated in the study.

Tools Used

1. *Hindi Language Test for Class VI Students*— To measure the learning level of penultimate class, a Hindi language test for Class VI (28 objectives items and two descriptive items) based on IRT model, was developed. The test consisted of two set of items viz., language-specific elements, such as contents of textbooks, grammar and contents of writing skills. These two categories of items represented four competencies — knowledge, understanding, skill and application (KUSA).

Table 1

Area Wise and Class Wise Distribution of Hindi Language Test Items

Area	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V	Total
Knowledge	3	6	0	0	9
Understanding	0	0	4	2	6
Skill	0	0	0	9	9
Application	0	0	5	1	6
Total	**3**	**6**	**9**	**12**	**30**

2. *KGBV Teacher Schedule*— It covered some dimensions, such as group formation for remedial teaching, time spent on teaching, feedback and monitoring, competency wise planning for improving language, etc.
3. *Warden Schedule*— Items included were: ensuring textbooks for students, health care, promoting life skills activities, making child profile, etc.
4. *KGBV Management Schedule*— It was developed for measuring process of enrolment, convergence with the feeder school, teacher and staff deployment, continuous assessment of students, etc.
5. *School HM Schedule*— It enfolded some questions of convergence with the school and interaction with the KGBV teachers.

Results

Table 2 presents mean per cent of learning outcomes in Hindi language. The state mean per cent is 40 with SD 20.57.Nalanda and Jamui secured 54 and 55 per cent, respectively, while Kishanganj and West Champaran underscored by obtaining only 25 and 29 per cent. Bhagalpur had 36 per cent, showing 4 per cent below the state mean percentage. Madhepura and Madhubani secured 37 and 38 per cent which was about 2–3 per cent less than the state mean per cent. The results further, revealed substantial differences in learning outcomes between the highest performing districts (Nalanda followed by Jamui) and the lowest performing districts (Kishanganj followed by West Champaran).

Table 2

Mean percentage of Class VI students

District	Mean %	SD
Bhagalpur	35.63	20.468
Kishanganj	25.36	14.372
Madhepura	36.88	22.665
Madhubani	37.86	18.026
Siwan	42.95	24.986
West Champaran	28.93	12.859
Gaya	42.77	11.817
Jamui	53.57	15.514
Nalanda	54.98	24.343
Rohtas	40.36	17.518
Bihar	**39.85**	**20.571**

Table 3

Percentile Score in Hindi Language for Districts

District	Percentile					Range	
	10th	25th	50th	75th	90th	75–25	90–10
Bhagalpur	3	6	9	13	20	7	17
Kishanganj	2	4	7	9	12	5	10
Madhepura	2	5	10	18	20	13	18
Madhubani	4	6	11	15	17	9	13
Siwan	3	5	12	19	20	14	17

West Champaran	3	6	8	10	14	4	11
Gaya	8	9	12	15	17	6	9
Jamui	8	12	16	17	21	5	13
Nalanda	8	10	15	21	25	11	17
Rohtas	4	7	12	15	18	8	14
Bihar	**4**	**7**	**11**	**15**	**20**	**8**	**16**

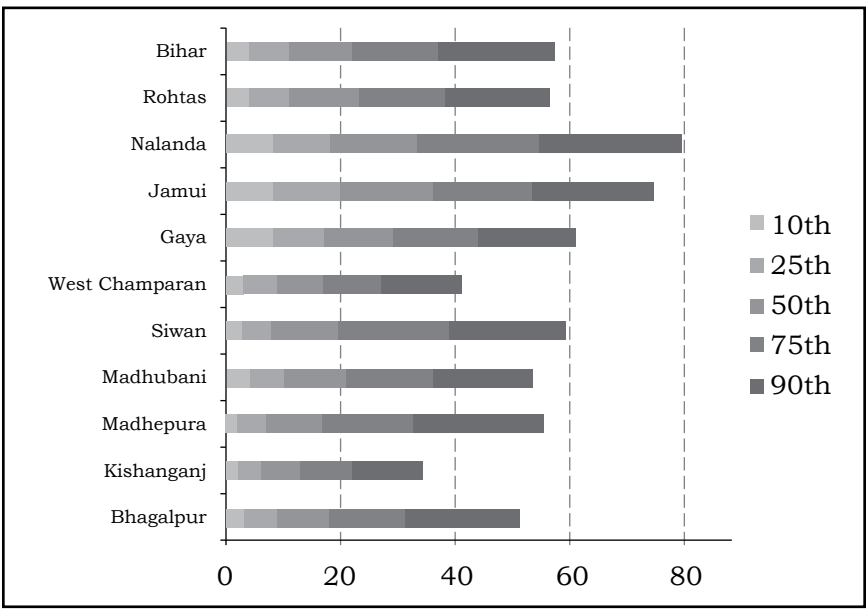

Figure 1

Table 3 illustrates percentile score in Hindi language for districts. West Champaran had an inter-quartile range of just four while Siwan had a corresponding value of 14. These values suggested that the Class VI KGBV students in West Champaran were far more homogeneous than that of Siwan. For other districts, such as Kishanganj, Gaya and Jamui, the inter-quartile range varied between 4–9, 9–15 and 12–17. The range of performance for the same districts was between 4–6 scale-score points. It was to note that Jamui was the highest performer while Kishanganj was the lowest. But variation was noted in both districts. The percentiles provided additional information while comparing achievement scores among districts.

For example, when the districts were arranged in order of average score, the differences between adjacent districts tended to be small. However, the ranges of score were not similar. For example, there was no significant difference between the average score of Madhepura, Madhubani and Rohtas. However, the range of scores between the 25th and 75th percentiles was very different: Madhepura (13), Madhubani (9) and Rohtas (8)). Further, the 50th percentile scores of the students of Madhbani (11) and Siwan (12) were far better than 75th percentile scores of Kishanganj (9) and West Champaran (10).

The study compared category-wise average achievement scores of students (Table 4). Students of minority group showed lower performance (about 32 per cent) than the state average (39.85). Performance of ST students was better than SC and OBC. Though only four students in general category were available, their performance was better than the remaining groups. Altogether 160 OBC students followed by 134 SC appeared in the evaluation session.

Table 4

Achievement of Class VI Students by Category

Category	N	Mean %	SD
SC	134	41.74	20.767
ST	47	43.77	19.596
OBC	160	39.60	20.045
General	4	49.11	11.056
Minority	53	31.67	21.314
Bihar	**398**	**39.85**	**20.571**

Table 5 throws light on the overall achievement on each competency (KUSA). The results show a descending trend from knowledge to application (mean per cent varied from 35 to 44). An apparent reason of poor performance in Hindi language was that they did not have sufficient skills to apply their knowledge to different situations. In each competency there existed a variation in responses making a few items either easy or difficult. A large number of students either skipped questions or answered incorrectly. A few students (<5 per cent) guessed to answer the questions. In case of passage writing and letter writing the results were less encouraging. About 69 per cent respondents fairly copied the text with sufficient space while 49 per cent maintained shape and size of the letters. However, about 41 per cent copied the text with a number of errors

ranging from 1–7 (fig. 2). It was expected that students should have letter writing skills. The entire format of the letter writing was divided into five sub-headings — heading of the letter, date, content, spelling error and end of the letter. About 17 per cent students did not attempt this question. There existed a wide variation in response distribution at each sub-heading. Only 19 per cent followed the heading style of the letter at the left end. Hardly 3 per cent of them mentioned date on the letter. About 66 per cent committed spelling errors while elaborating contents of the letter. About 24 per cent used KGBV experiences in the content. And finally, 9 per cent concluded the letter at the right end. This showed a significant gap in letter writing skill (Figure 3).

Table 5

Overall Achievement of KUSA

Achievement	Mean %	SD
Knowledge	43.66	22.91
Understanding	43.47	28.10
Skill	34.60	26.08
Application	36.64	27.17
Total	**39.85**	**20.57**

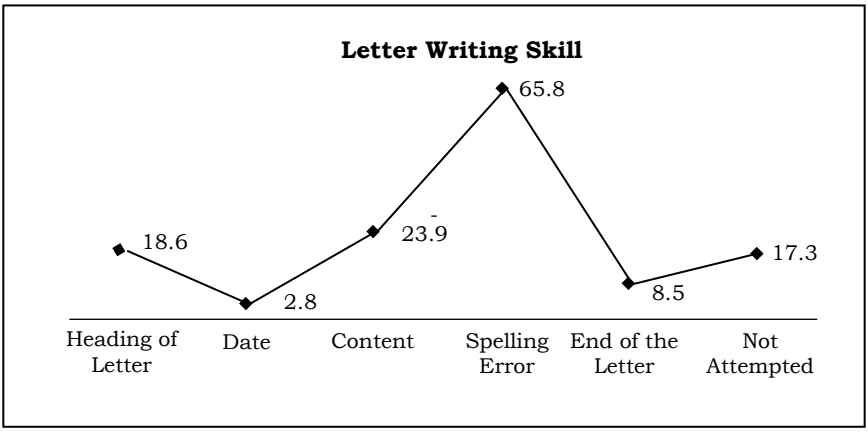

Figure 2

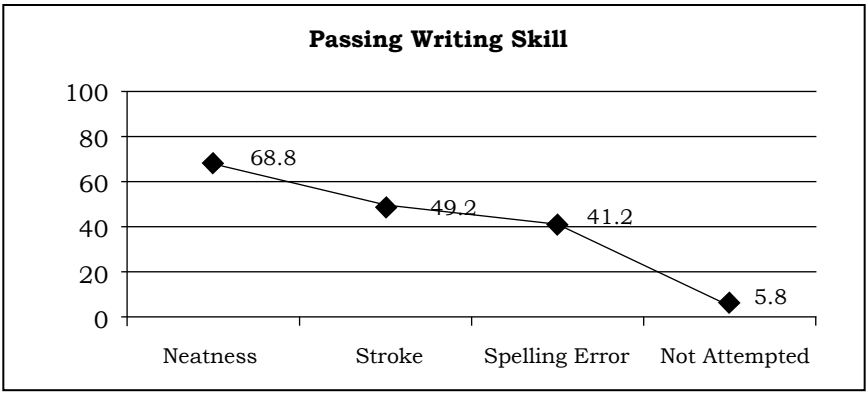

Figure 3

The study followed Item Response Theory (IRT) model for analysis and decided to determine item difficulty level of each item. The study categorised learning outcomes competency wise and item wise for viewing response distribution pattern. About 44 per cent students worked out questions of knowledge competency meaning that 56 per cent failed to locate the information. Understanding competency had six items. Of them five items were moderate while the remaining one easy. About 44 per cent respondents could solve the questions of understanding. A large segment of them (56 per cent) missed to hit the correct answer. A descending trend of learning outcomes was noted in case of skill and application competencies (about 35–36 per cent). In case of skill competency the results were not encouraging. By the same token, four items were reported difficult while the remaining two easy. Only 36 per cent respondents could apply basic skills to answer the questions correctly. On average respondents had fewer tendencies to guess the correct answer (about 4 per cent). A sizeable number of students (about 33 per cent) could not answer the questions correctly. About 23 per cent students did not attempt the questions. Altogether, about 60 per cent students missed to answer the questions correctly at the state level.

Family Background

The study attempted to categorise achievement scores in terms of parents' occupation and education. Of 398 students 236 had a family background where father was labourer, 78 had a family background where father small farmer and 25 where father was

skilled worker. Their learning outcome varied from 36 to 43 per cent. Father's educational level was also categorised. Around 133 of them were illiterate, 98 had education up to primary level and 88 up to middle level. Remarkably, students having illiterate father secured about 43 per cent marks in Hindi language as compared to others who had school education (about 39 per cent) showing more interest in rejoining of schools for education. More or less similar trend was found in case of mother. About 51 per cent students' mother were illiterate, 28 per cent had primary school background and only 9 per cent had completed elementary education. Illiterate mothers had strong desire to educate their daughters (40 per cent achievement in Hindi language). A similar desire for educating the daughters was noted in the literate mothers. Probably, growing realisation of girls' education in the society motivated illiterate mothers to send their girls for schooling. Another attempt was made to ascertain where any educational background of family members supported the appetite for educating the girl child. The data revealed the fact that about 50 per cent family members had secondary/higher secondary education. It supported the education of the girl child (about 40 per cent achievement in Hindi language). Even the family members who had education up to primary level motivated the girl child for rejoining the school (about 59 per cent achievement in Hindi language).

Teachers

The study noted acute shortage (46 per cent) of part time teachers in KGBV. There existed no language-specific teachers. Instead they were inducted on the post of language teachers irrespective of professional qualification. Previous studies (NER, 2013; PEO, 2015) on KGBV witnessed multiple activities of KGBV teachers. They were engaged in hostel management in addition to teaching. They had inadequate training to teach (PEO, 2015) depriving them of getting learning activities based on group formation. About half of them had time-table of classes for KGBV students. Group formation was an important exercise in all KGBVs. Many of them formed group either on the basis of grade as recorded at the time of admission (48 per cent) or level of knowledge after evaluation (33 per cent). Hence, they promoted their students accordingly from one group to another after continuous evaluation (45 per cent) but, could not place substantive evidences of promotion. They assessed their students after admission

(65 per cent). There was no standard format of evaluation for group formation. Even there existed inconsistency in displaying and updating child profile. The study disclosed some unusual facts. Only 50 per cent teachers used to study Hindi textbook of Class VI before engaging classes. About 50 per cent did not know the number of units in Hindi textbook. About 60 per cent teachers spent about one hour in teaching Hindi. When asked about last unit of Hindi textbook taught in the school by the teachers, 55 per cent had no idea about it. Lack of interaction with the school teachers was evident in the sense that a few (40 per cent) had information about the units taught by school teachers. Only 40 per cent teachers kept monthly progress. About 45 per cent teachers got feedback from students about school activities.

Though they had identified problems in Hindi language (about 70 per cent), less activities to improve it were noted (about 50 per cent). In some KGBVs (e.g., Kishanganj) there existed minimal activities to overcome learning deficiencies in Hindi. No proper training to Hindi teachers in KGBVs were provided. They had virtually no idea about how to evaluate students and formulate plan for improving Hindi language. KGBV teachers could not properly track month-wise distribution of units to be taught by school teachers, subject wise monthly progress report of the student and progress in Hindi language. Instead of getting feedback on the units taught by the school teachers they relied on students' saying.

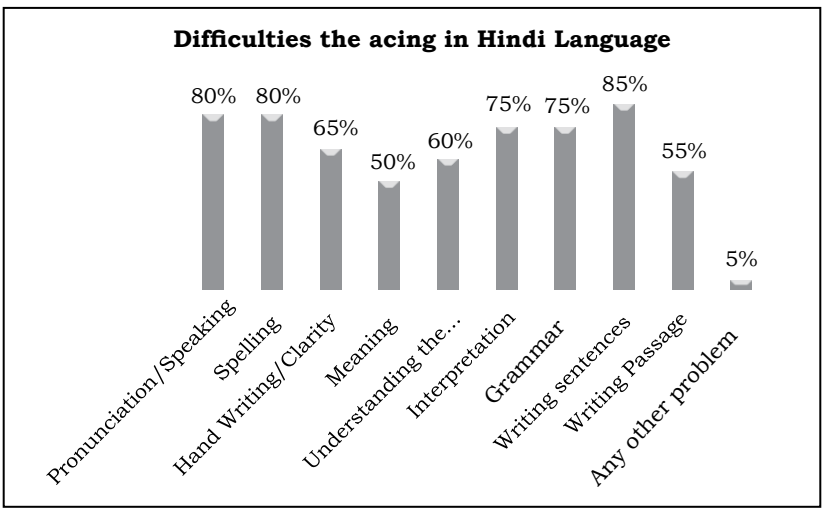

Figure 4

KGBV Management, Warden and Headmaster

The KGBV management used multiple sources, such as block and panchayat for fresh admission. The management was expected to be aware of the concept — the drop out under the state rules RTE notification, 2011. There existed–ambiguity on the concept—drop out among stakeholders. Around 55 per cent wardens had an idea of the drop out students who were absent from the class for more than six months. Around 45 per cent respondents had an impression of absence from the class for either one or three months. Previous studies confirmed this pattern (PEO, 2015). Confusion also prevailed in their mind, when asked about direct admission in class VI. They frankly admitted that 55 per cent students were directly admitted in Class VI. Around 35 per cent studentls were admitted after evaluation. Panchayat played a vital role in the fresh admission as they (50 per cent) recommended the application for KGBV. A similar pattern was evident in the previous evaluation studies (NER, 2007, 2013). Altogether 748 students were enrolled in Class VI. Of them, 49 per cent shared Class V, 11 per cent Class IV, 7 per cent shared Class III and 3 per cent shared Class II. The warden assumed a managerial role in KGBV. Almost 55 per cent OBC category wardens were working whereas, one ST category warden made her presence felt in the centre. Of them 70 per cent were graduate. About 40 per cent of them used to teach Hindi language. In some cases they spared some time for other subjects. Performance appraisal of the students was an important activity in KGBV. About 65 per cent wardens kept subject-wise monthly progress report of students.

School headmasters extended their support as *Sanchalak* and facilitated functioning of the warden. A few relevant information were extracted from them to assess activities of KGBV students in the school. The study witnessed loss in transition from Class VI to Class VIII (about 6.60 to 24 per cent) in KGBV. The girl students left out KGBV because of many reasons. Of them KGBV poor management was more prominent. Because of the restricted hostile environment and its poor delivery mechanisms a large number of girl students left their study from KGBV at various time intervals. It was surprising to note that KGBV students could not cope with the changing situation where they were expected to adjust. The study also observed that students were allowed to go home during holiday. Many of them overstayed at their home and did not return to KGBV. Attitudinal problem of the school teachers and

headmasters were the prominent issue. They attributed to the KGBV stakeholders for the managerial activities. Where the coordination between the school and KGBV was observed, the latter performed well. Whatever resources they had, were properly utilised by the stakeholders. Despite a circular of engaging at least one class in the school by KGBV teacher the school did not take it seriously and kept them away from the school. A few KGBVs run under NGO. Their management was questionable in the sense that they maneuvered the situation to grab resources. An intense interaction with the school teachers may reduce attitudinal problems as was noticed in the study. KGBVs had acute shortage of teachers and auxiliary staff. Another constraint was temporary stay of teachers in the KGBV. As soon as they get another assignment they quit, resulting in sudden vacuum in KGBV. Many of them joined the formal school as they were professionally qualified.

Summing up

The study attempted to find out reasons of low performance in Hindi language. It had two facets. First, the nature of test and its administration and second, mismatch between the teaching process and the learning ability. In case students were alien to the test, there could be a possibility of lowering down the performance. A few negative questions posed problems to elicit correct answer. Even guessing tendency was high in case of negative questions. They were not aware of grammar while speaking or writing. Hindi language was compatible with the mother tongue. It often restricted to learn Hindi language. It was more visible in case of border districts like Kishanganj and West Champaran where either minority or ST/SC was dominant. In Kishanganj 26 (65%) out of 40 students were Muslim.

Bridge course materials need to be developed to reduce learning deficiencies resulting from gap in schooling. At the same time teachers as well as wardens require to be trained. There should be recurrent training programme to KGBV teachers. Assessment of learning deficiencies is an important exercise at the KGBV level. There needs to be some standard procedures for assessing learning difficulties of students and grouping them accordingly. This requires thorough training of teachers as well as wardens. In addition to organising any training programme to KGBV teachers, there should be a substantive arrangement of engaging classes in the school. Previous studies also suggested the same inputs

(NER, 2013, PEO, 2015).Another related problem was to get insufficient inputs of teaching during the job. Teachers and auxiliary staff need to be appointed at the block level. The child protection demands a security management. Since they are the deprived girls coming from a poor family background, they can be readily exploited at any level.

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