

# Pragna Approach: A Critical Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Activity Base Learning (ABL) method is one of the most effective methods in education sector. It is useful in primary education. Pragna approach is one of the methods in classroom teaching Gujarat government has adopted ABL approach for all round outcomes from the students. This article aims to analyze Pragna approach implemented by Government of Gujarat. The secondary source of data are used for analysis. The study focuses on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Pragna approach implemented by Government of Gujarat. To conclude, Pragna approach of learning in primary classroom is better than traditional teaching methods and has probably better outcomes on rethinking its applicability time to time in the state.

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## 1. Introduction

PRAGNA means *Pravruti Dwara Gyan* Based on the understanding developed through various exposure visits and meetings, the state found the activity based approach meaningful for the children. Activity-Based Learning (ABL) is now a very familiar term amongst the people concerned about educational reform in India. Introducing activity based learning in Gujarat was a means of complying with the National Curriculum framework, 2005, which called for child-friendly classrooms and a shift from textbooks and tests that promoted rote learning to activities and continuous comprehensive evaluation. Initially introduced in just over 250 government-run primary schools, Pragna was extended to 20,000 schools within five years. Officials in state capital Gandhinagar said that the push to scale up came from the Union Human Resource Development Ministry, which was keen to disburse Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan funds to promote what looked like a good idea. The rapid expansion meant that there was no time to grow support systems necessary for the successful transition to the new methodology.

## 2. Meaning of ABL

Activity is a very broad term. In a classroom, if a child is to be considered doing activity, if is found doing something with an external instrument, playing with some educational toys, and engaging with some making something. However, the questions that are needed to be asked what are the characters of the activity in education. Are they to be conceptualized purely in terms of bodily act which include physical movements of the children in educational space or their engagement with external objects? Do activities involve only those acts of children which are observable, and to be performed in accordance with preplanned design? British philosopher, R. F. Deardern (1970) says that 'an activity is not just a bodily act it necessarily involves mental act'.<sup>1</sup> Even the most obvious physical activities are mental in their essence. What is important to note is that an activity necessarily involves consciousness of what one is doing, further it also involves consciousness of one's situations. An activity can't be conceived in the absence of some abstract meaning making.

Hein. G.E (1991) explains that Activity-based learning (ABL) theory is a cognitive-learning theory which is considered a "constructivist" learning theory. Essentially, a learner "constructs" his own microcosms of knowledge from past knowledge and/or current experiences and interacting with data. He or she actively seeks new information, and is actively engaged in the process in the way s(he) gains, assimilates, and utilizes knowledge,

As explained in wikipedia, Activity-based learning or ABL describes a range of pedagogical approaches to teaching. Its core premises include the requirement that learning should be based on doing some hands-on experiments and activities. The idea of activity-based learning is rooted in the common notion that children are active learners rather than passive recipients of information. If child is provided the opportunity to explore by their own and provided an optimum learning environment then the learning becomes joyful and long-lasting"

According to Pica (2008) "Activity based learning is the process of exploration and discovery of acquiring knowledge; of knowing how to acquire it."

## 3. Need of Pragna Approach

In spite of dedicated efforts to improve the quality of primary education which is delivered, the primary classrooms of the state generally found teacher centric where,

1. The level of teacher domination found higher in classroom at all the time and as a result, the children freedom on learning or development was negligible during the traditional teaching methodology.
2. It is presumed that the children will learn the same at the same time in the same manner.
3. The level of encouraging self learning seems very low in traditional teaching methodology.
4. No opportunities exist for students to catch up with his or her lessons of them have been absent from the class.
5. Evaluation of teaching and learning efficiency found as summative in most of the schools.

6. PRAGNA, an activity base learning approach was initiated in 2010 by Government of Gujarat to cope the above issues.

#### 4. Objectives of the study

1. To analyze strengths of Pragna approach implemented by Government of Gujarat in primary education
2. To discuss weaknesses of Pragna approach implemented by Government of Gujarat in primary education
3. To discuss opportunities of Pragna approach implemented by Government of Gujarat in primary education
4. To analyze threats of Pragna approach implemented by Government of Gujarat in primary education

#### 5. PRAGNA : Strengths

Pragna is an alternative method of teaching and learning which focuses on practical aspects of curriculum. The following strengths are enlisted after careful study of related previous literature gathered by the researcher.

1. Each student can learn at his /her pace in the classroom. So that student's ability can come out and he /she can perform the level best during the classroom activities.
2. Each student has a chance to learn with own experience without learn to mouth .So that caliber base learning can be seen by the teacher and outcomes can be measured.
3. It is stress free and learns with fun .So that student can achieve fun-filled education in the classroom.
4. It is a chance for student to learn from teacher as well as peers.
5. The student can get exposure through different projects and field work.
6. The level of core competency of student can be traced out.
7. It helps to develop teachers' competencies by self evaluation of one's work., Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) and teaching strategies.
8. It also helps to initiate capacity building of teachers.
9. It also helps to cater the learning requirements of children with special needs.
10. It also provides equal opportunities for learning.
11. It also creates the sense of teamwork amongst the students.
12. It helps to create the sense of compaction amongst the students.
13. It also gives answer of what to learn, how to learn and why to learn to the students.
14. It is burden less to the students
15. Thus, strengths of Pragna approach of learning can be fruitful to the students as well as associated the people with primary education.

#### 6. PRAGNA : Weaknesses

The following weaknesses are enlisted after careful study of related previous literature gathered by the researcher.

1. Physical atmosphere of classroom are necessarily to be maintained in such a manner that allows the students to make them comfort with the facilities. The normal norms of physical environment designed in Pragna approach should be adopted by the concern authority.
2. Pragna model of primary education provides various opportunities to the students to develop their skills but it has some limitations on matching with human power hired by the government for teaching purpose. The traditional teacher with formal education in the school cannot match with the performance require for implementing Pragna in government primary schools in Gujarat.
3. Teacher Training modules and e-content in Gujarat for primary education purpose are not on the same excel which can create imbalance between teacher performance and student acceptations on learning.
4. Monitoring machinery of implementation PRAGNA in Gujarat and its performance must be technologically enhanced.
5. School dropout ratio and Pragna performance are to be frequently tested with each other in terms of their significant association.
6. Learning outcomes of children in Gujarat after implementation of Pragna in selected schools are not evaluated by scientific way..
7. The opinions of Pragna teachers and initiatives towards their opinions are necessary to evaluate in regular periodicity.
8. Self motivation is the most important key on running successfully the PRAGNA Abhiyaan in the state.
9. Gap on "Quality inequity" between children in well-resourced schools and under resourced government primary schools of Gujarat is one of the barriers in the state. The main objective of introducing Pragna program to reduce such a gap.
10. Awareness of Pragna program amongst parents, students and educationalists palys key role on its success.

#### 7. PRAGNA : Opportunities

Pragna approach of teaching and learning in primary government schools of Gujarat state can be proved as driving force of qualitative primary education of Gujarat. Some of the opportunities are enlisted in the following manner after careful study of related literature by the author.

1. Holistic development of students can be achieved through PRAGNA approach of teaching.
2. The student can be strong confident and strong civic sense through PRAGNA approach of teaching.
3. The student can be aware on life beyond his/her immediate surroundings.
4. Pragna can reduce school dropout ratio of children.
5. Pragna makes learning joyful and child centric by considering teacher as a guide.
6. Pragna also provides tools and techniques to upgrade teachers to become a part of 21st century teacher.

7. Level of academic achievement can be increased by Pragna program in government primary schools of Gujarat.
8. Pragna program can also be implemented in private primary schools of Gujarat to create competitive environment between private primary education industry and government school education.
9. Say good bye to traditional methodology of teaching in primary education in Gujarat state can be possible, if vision and mission statements of primary school education change by the government.
10. Pragna can be made more accessible through training ,workshops and seminars in the state of Gujarat by collaborating with other advance states of India and abroad.

### 8. PRAGNA : Threats

Pragna approach of teaching and learning in primary government schools of Gujarat state can be proved as driving force of qualitative primary education of Gujarat. Some of the threats are enlisted in the following manner after careful study of related literature by the author.

1. Pragna program has a great challenge on its implementation with sufficient funding, resources and knowledge capitalists in the state of Gujarat.
2. The primary education sector of Gujarat is passing through its restructuring period in this globalized environment. It is known fact that long periodicity of restructuring of any sector creates more complications to the beneficiaries. Primary education sector of Gujarat state has a challenge of such long periodicity of restructuring. It can be minimized.
3. One of the most challenges before the state government on Pragna program implementation and its better outcomes is innovation. The teachers are divided in two groups on this issue. One group favors Pragna and another group rejects Pragna. It is also a

challenge before government to put entire teacher community on one excel.

4. Changes in ABL design and quality of implementation is also a great challenge before government of Gujarat. The frequent changes result in confusion amongst teachers and students, also.
5. Adequate training and support to the teachers, material supply timelines are big challenges before the government.
6. Teacher efforts and Buy-in are also challenges before the government because efforts are associated with principles of model and Buy-in is associated with state ABL model.
7. Another threat before the government related to research base systematic approach.

Thus, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are wheels of Pragna project of Gujarat state. The following conclusions and recommendations are made on the basis of the above discussion.

1. ABL model can be made more sustainable in primary education sector in the state of Gujarat by conducting more research and development activities.
2. Confidence level of leadership of ABL should be enhanced through making the model more effective by collective efforts.
3. The level of teacher involvement in ABL should be increased by evaluating student teacher performance in the classroom.
4. The decision making body on running ABL model should be more proactive. It is necessary to create a culture on evidence base decision- making rather than government order base culture.
5. Structural and cultural elements like; rigidity on principles, flexibility on procedure, autonomy and involvement, evidence based decision making, basic factors (i.e. infrastructure and material) and capacity building are helpful to create successful system to increase the level of primary education in Gujarat.

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