

Effect of government educational policies in enhancing educational quality of government primary school in Nalbari district of Assam with special reference to Barajol area: A Study

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ABSTRACT

Education is recognized as a human right since the adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 besides health and shelter. World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) Policy was adopted by more than 150 governments to support universal right for education. The growing concern for quality education, particularly in primary level has a focus on the learning level of school children. There is need of multifaceted standpoint and reasoning framework to realize educational policy evaluations that can truly contribute to the improvement of educational situation in developing countries. The present paper deals with the influence of different government educational policies regarding primary education in defining the ideal education indicators. It deals with various factors that influence the performances of students in Government primary schools with special reference to Barajol Area of Nalbari District, Assam. This paper also examines the factors that lead to gradually higher rate of drop out in the above mentioned area. The study is carried out with the aim to call attention to the issues that hinder the progress of students and the role of New Education Policy (NEP) in enhancing the quality education in the studied area.

1. Introduction

Education is considered as a fundamental right for all members of the society. It is rightly recognized that education is the most important input for the development of an individual, society and nation. Researches all over the world suggest that education happens to be the cheapest and the easiest support that the government can provide to its citizens. Education is the single most important factor for an individual after health. The community gains more from the educated than the ignorant. But if a change must be brought about, where does one begin? The answer would be from the beginning i.e. from the primary education.

The primary education is the foundation stone of any educational system. It highlights the real development of a nation not only in the field of education but also in the social and economic terms. Primary education equips the individual with basic skills for survival both as an individual and as a member of the society. The word primary is derived from the Latin word "Primaries" or "primus" and English word "Prime", which means first in order or sequence. Primary education is thus the most important element in the educational system. UNESCO recommended it a new name as the first stage of education. It has been stated in Article 45 of the Indian constitution that the state shall endeavor to provide for free and compulsory education for all children until they attain the age of 14 years.

2. Objectives

1. To explore the impact of government educational policies on the quality education of primary school.
2. To explore the problems of primary education system in rural areas with respect to teachers and educational infrastructural facilities.

3. To explore the activities of government schemes and its result.

3. Methodology

This research is based on secondary sources of data and personal observation. Data are collected from government reports, books, journals, official websites and publication of other prestigious institutions. Moreover, although this research is also based on personal observation, hence it is also exploratory in nature.

4. Analysis and interpretation

1. Progress Of Primary Education In Assam

Assam naturally welcomed the all governmental helping hand in the direction of educational expansion. In this context, the resolution of 1882 made first attempt which laid emphasis on the importance of local bodies in the matter of expansion of primary education. It also authorized the Boards to exercise general supervision and give grant-in-aid to the lower middle schools also (Govt. Resolution, 17th November 1882). Educational policy under resolution of 1913 provided greater emphasis on the primary education. The Assam local self government Act of 1915 gives wider power to local bodies to manage all affairs of primary and middle education. In Assam the relevant Act was passed in 1926, but it failed to achieve its primary objectives. Afterwards, this policy was changed and by 1930, compulsory primary education Acts were passed in all the provinces. By this time, government released imperial grants to Assam for the promotion of elementary education. As a result, by 1937 around 6795 primary schools were functioning along with 313,347 pupils. The Assam primary education Act was passed in 1947, which removed most of the defects of the 1926 Act. Compulsory education was not just to be implemented but enforced through various measures.

Further repeals of this Act came through the Assam Basic Education Act of 1953 and the Assam Elementary Education Act of 1962 and 1968 (Barpujari, 1980: 308-314).

From 1950, there began planned development of primary education with the five-year plans. The government undertook development schemes in primary schools to provide basic facilities for children and salaries of teachers. The growth rate of primary schools during the period 1975-76 to 1993-94 was 1.75' (Lais, 2005: 173). The National Policy on Education (1986) recommended several schemes for improving the reach and quality of primary education all over India. One of these schemes was called "Operation Blackboard" which was initiated in Assam in 1987 and provided greater number of teachers to the teacher needy schools. The scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched by the Govt. of India in 2001 with the objective of Education for All (EFA) and it gives special focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life. The World declaration on EFA paved the way for the basic education getting the international attention (Ojha, 2009: 312).

2. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)

The constitutional provision in "Article 45" and the subsequent legislative provisions made way for expansion and improvement of elementary education in Assam. Accordingly, the Government of India formulated the "District Primary Education Programme" (DPEP) scheme in 1993. DPEP is an effort to decentralize educational planning at the district level. The teacher training programme of DPEP aimed at increasing the awareness and motivation of teachers leading to activity-based and learner-centric teaching for achieving MLL and carried out at the following level:

1. State Level (SCERT and DPEP)
2. District level (DIETS)
3. Block level (BRC)
4. Cluster level (CRC)

3. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Efforts have been made to extend the opportunity of Elementary Education to a large number of children through Operation Black Board, Non-Formal Education, Mahila Samakhya, Nutrition programme, Total Literacy Campaign, DPEP, etc. But, in spite of implementation of all these programmes a large section of children of the country continue to be deprived of the opportunity of Elementary education. On the other hand, the Supreme Court in 1993 has proclaimed the right of education of children up to the age of 14 years as a fundamental right. Now that the 93rd amendment bill of the Constitution has sought to give Constitutional status to the right of education as a fundamental right, it has become imperative for all of us to work unitedly in achieving the goal of education for all. To ensure this fundamental right of children, new efforts have been made through decentralized planning process. All the ongoing programmes for development of Elementary education in the district level have been sought to be taken up under one organization/programme, named as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Now through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan the aims of UEE is sought to be attained by need based and decentralized planning, enhanced community participation, and by involving the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI) in matters of school management and supervision.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a people's movement for education for all, attempts to provide useful and relevant

Elementary education of satisfactory quality for all, bridging all social and gender gaps with the active participation of the community in the affairs of the school.

The SSA is an integrated effort to enhance the efficiency of the schooling system, and to ensure building of community ownership for quality Elementary education. The challenge now is to convert this Abhiyan into a mass movement.

5. Findings

1. SSA IN NALBARI DISTRICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BARAJOL AREA

1.1 ACTIVITIES OF SSA IN NALBARI

SSA, Nalbari has been putting its best effort to achieve quality education through various activities in elementary schools since its inception. There are four Education Blocks in Nalbari- Barkhetri, Pub Nalbari, Borigog Banbhag and Paschim Nalbari. Teachers Training component is one of the core components of SSA which is dealt with quality learning, such as- teachers training, development of learning materials, evaluation etc. In the urban areas of Nalbari and Tihu town 27 centres (jyoti Kendra) are established where children are being educated with free of cost and reading materials. In those educational centres, maximum stress is given to mainstream the dropout children so that they can carry on their education with their work. It is found that among those children and their parents' awareness is growing regarding the value and benefits of education.

SSA, Nalbari conducted the following activities in district, block and cluster level. Most of the activities mentioned below:

1. Siksha Jagaran Sabha
2. Mobilization of Masses through Mobile Theatre Groups
3. RTE awareness and publicity campaign through flex
4. RTE awareness and publicity campaign through Public/Private Buses
5. Loka Bhashya
6. Operationalization of Toll Free Number and ensuring right of children
7. Training of school managing committee on school development plan
8. Reconstitution of Mothers Group and cluster level training of Mothers Group members on RTE
9. Orientation for members of PRI/Urban Bodies/VCDC/VEC President on RTE
10. Summer Camp during summer vacation
11. Saturday Club in Elementary schools
12. Rangmela
13. Social Audit in Elementary Schools
14. People's Committees
15. Strengthening SMCs & capacity build up to SMC members
 - i. Community Training (Sankalpa Jatra)
 - ii. Social mapping with the help of NGO
16. Dropout prevention & Retention drive (Summer Camp etc)
17. Intervention in Scheduled Tribe (ST), Scheduled Caste (SC), Minority and Tea garden areas
 - i. Meena Campaign and back to School Drive
 - ii. Mass Mobilization campaign in special areas
 - iii. Vidyarambha Utsav
 - iv. Learning Visit of Children from Disadvantaged of category

v. School Health Camp in collaboration with NHRM.

Table 1: SSA in Nalbari District

No. of Centres	No. of Teachers	No. of Students
27	54	684

Source: SSA, Nalbari (2006)

Table 2: Profile of school visited in BARAJOL area, Nalbari, 2020

	Nonapar Banti L.P.School	Kayapar L.P.School	No.1 Barajol L.P School
No. of Student	94	30	25
No. of Teacher	03	02	02
No. of classroom	03	02	05
Building	yes(1 kutcha,2pukka)	yes	yes
Proper Toilet	yes	yes	yes
Benches in the classroom	17 pairs	15pairs	12 pairs
Staff Room	no	yes	no
Lunch Room for Staff	no	no	no
Chairs and tables for the teachers	3 pairs	3pairs	2 pairs
First Aid Box	Basic	Basic	Basic
Medical Check Up	Once in 30 days	Once in 30 days	Once in 30 days
Teaching Aids	yes	yes	yes
Playground	yes	yes	yes
Sports Equipment	yes	yes	yes
Protected Drinking water	yes	yes	yes
Sub-staff/attenders	1	1	1

Table.3. No. of students enrolled in these primary schools, 2014-2019

Academic Year	Nonapar Banti L.P School	Kayapar L.P.School	No.1 Barajol L.P School
2014-2015	130	69	41
2015-2016	125	64	40
2016-2017	115	54	35
2017-2018	110	43	28
2018-2019	95	36	23

6. Drawbacks

1. To make class interesting sufficient teaching aids and modern technological equipment is needed. Moreover, sufficient teacher is needed for the well functioning of the school. But, if we are going to see this scenario of Assam, we would be obviously unhappy with this. In Assam, total 40444 schools with 113575 teachers only, that is, average 2.80 teachers per school according to data 2014-15(Kro, 2017).
2. Despite of various Government schemes, disaggregated enrolment figures have been found in the studied area due to high rate of dropout. The children of dropout belong to either poor economic background or illiterate parents. One of the obvious factors contributing to school dropout rate is poverty. In Assam, in every stage of formal education, children are obliged to face by the lack of teacher, lack of appropriate classroom and other educational infrastructural facilities. Data tabled in the Rajya Sabha by Human Resource Development minister Ramesh Pokhriyal revealed that Assam has

registered the highest school dropout rate in primary and secondary classes in the country. In 2017-2018, Assam registered 10.1 percent dropout rate in primary classes and 33.7 per cent in secondary classes.

3. Computer education in Assam is still neglecting even in the higher education level in Assam. In the studied area, the condition is very woeful. These primary schools are not equipped with sufficient computer facility and computer education. Students of poor economic background cannot afford the cost for private institutions; they are obliged to deprive of those facilities.
4. Co-curricular activities are very important for physical, academic, aesthetic and socio-cultural development of the students, especially in the primary level. But these activities are neglected in the primary schools of the studied area. It is only limited to celebrating once a year, like a school week which is not sufficient for the students.

From the above mentioned points it is evident that there are various problems hidden in the education system of rural areas of Assam. The major problem is the underrepresentation

of the inadequacy of resources and competent teacher (Rahman, 2012) Because of such drawbacks, despite of implementation of government educational policies or schemes; we have not seen any major positive change in the quality of primary education in the studied area.

7. Conclusion:

The state with heterogeneous population and immense geo-cultural diversities faces numerous challenges in the implementation of elementary education for all children. As an added constraint the state is also faced with some difficult economic and political challenges. Nevertheless, the main challenge of universalizing elementary education is related more with rationalization of resource allocation and

maximization of utilization of that resource. Educational interventions in the state seemingly require both policy and implementation level modifications in order to rationalize the resource allocation on one hand and meaningful utilization of the resources on the other. Exclusion of certain sections of children from the schooling system and learning achievement remains a big question that needs to be addressed (Report,Pratichi Institution, 2013). While analysis of secondary level data of the studied area throws some light on the issues of elementary education in rural Assam, there remain some gaps in developing a fuller understanding of the various deeper connections that influence the policy and practices of the delivery of elementary education.

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