Impact of SSA on Quality Education at Primary Stage

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Abstract
For a society, “excellence” and “value” are most appropriate indicators for quality education. A generally accepted definition of quality education does not exist and different end users adopt different criteria for determining the quality of education. As such the present study is on the impact of SSA on quality education at primary stage. The study was conducted with the objectives like to study the reading capacity of primary school students on Odia language, to study the reading capacity of primary school students on English language, to study the mathematics knowledge of primary school students. It was conducted on a sample of 100 students (5th class) of primary school. The findings of the study are students are not in a position to read, write and do a simple arithmetic problem even after completion of 4th class, the condition of students learning achievement (quality) is extremely poor in mathematics compare to language and the condition of students learning achievement (quality) is poor in English compare to Odia language.

1. Introduction
The universal declaration of human rights (1948) considered primary education as the basic human right of all people. Accordingly, all nations prioritized universal access to education. The developed and developing countries have attained universal or near universal access to primary education. Now the focus is on the quality of student learning. The quality concern is not uniform across the nations. The developing and poor nations are still striving for expansion of educational access. It has been
established that access to education and its quality are not sequential elements. At the sub-regional meeting of South Asian Ministers in Katmandu in April 2001, quality education was unanimously identified as a priority area. All participants were in agreement that there was an urgency to develop the quality of education to meet the intermediate target and education for all by 2015. Because how well pupil are taught and how much they learn can have a crucial impact on how long they stay in school and how regularly they attend. Further whether parents send their children to school at all is likely to depend on the judgment they make about the quality of teaching and learning. Based on this perception parents decide whether attending school is worth the time and cost for their children and for themselves. The World Bank (1997) suggested that ‘the best way to improve access is to improve quality which would make coming to school or staying in school a more attractive option from the perspective of parents as well as children. Moreover, efforts to improve quality will tend to increase the efficiency of the public expenditure and will encourage parents to contribute children education’.

In the year 1950, when the Constitution of India was adopted, education was recognized as a basic individual right. Directive Principles of State Policy, Article 45, states that “the state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years” (The Constitution of India). In line with the commitment of the country to provide elementary education to all children, educational facilities have got tremendously expanded during the post-independence period, especially in primary stage. The number of primary school in India has increased from 2.2 lakhs in 1950-51 to nearly 7 lakhs in 2004-05. In addition, there are at present nearly 3 lakhs non-formal education centres providing primary level education to out-of-school children in the age group 9 to 14. This expansion has definitely helped in making primary level education more easily accessible to a large section of children. As a result, the illiteracy rate and drop-out rate at school stage have come down. The national literacy rate has increased from 52.21 per cent in 1991 to 64.84 per cent in 2001. The drop-out rate has also declined from 64.9 per cent in 1960-61 to 29 per cent in 2004-2005. Although the literacy rates for both males and females have increased, the latter still continues to lag behind the former. However, there has been a narrowing of the male-female gap in literacy from 24.8 percentage point in 1991 to 21.7 percentage point in 2001 (Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05).

Primary education is the first stage of formal education. The main objective of quality primary education is to inculcate basic knowledge about reading, writing and arithmetic among the children. It is expected that after the successful completion of the primary level of education, a pupil should be able to read, write, and solve simple arithmetic problem.

2 Objectives of the Study

The study undertaken by the investigator has the following objectives;
1- To study the reading capacity of primary school students on Odia language.
2- To study the reading capacity of primary school students on English language.
3- To study the mathematics knowledge of primary school students.

3 Research Questions
The present research focused on some pertinent questions in the context of quality education at primary stage.
1- Whether the primary students are able to read clearly on Odia language?
2- Whether the primary students are able to write clearly on Odia language?
3- Whether the primary students are able to solve written numerical sums?

4 Delimitations of the Study

The present study has been delimited as follows:
1- The study has been conducted on 100 students only.
2- The study is confined to only 5th class students of Primary Schools under SSA.
3- The study is confined to only one blocks i.e. Balisankara Block of Sundargarh District, Odisha.

5 Method of the Study

The research method of the study was descriptive survey in nature. As descriptive survey focuses on studying the existing conditions as it prevails and makes comprehensive descriptions of the same, the present study also focuses on studying the quality education at primary stage.

6 Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised all the students of primary schools of the Sundargarh District and the sample of the study comprised 100 students of primary schools of Balisankara block, Sundargarh district of Odisha. All the samples were selected on random basis. Out of the 100 students, 60 students are boys and 40 students are girls.

7 Tools Used & Techniques of Analysis

For collecting data, the investigator of the study used self-developed questionnaire for students of class five and the questionnaire was prepared by considering the factors like reading, writing, substraction and division. The collected data were tabulated and analysed by applying percentage statistical technique with respect to the research questions mentioned in the study.

8 The Results and Discussion

The major purpose of the study was to assess the quality of primary education on the basis of student learning achievement i.e., ability to read, write and do mathematics. Data with regard to the mentioned purpose were collected from 100 students of primary school under SSA. Such data were tabulated and analysed by percentage wise and the obtained result have been discussed in the following;

A. Reading capacity of primary school students on Odia language.
The data pertaining to the reading capacity of primary school students on Odia language have been presented in table-1.
Table-1 School Children who can read Odia Language (in per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>One-Para of the story</th>
<th>Complete story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balisankara</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-1 reveals a very poor scenario of primary education in Balisankara block. This study found that 3.5 per cent student were not able to recognize anything, 14.9 per cent can recognize only letters, 11.8 per cent can read a word, 14.5 per cent can read a paragraph of a story and only 55.3 per cent can read the complete story.

B. Reading capacity of primary school students on English language.

The data pertaining to the reading capacity of primary school students on English language have been presented in table-2.

Table-2 School Children who can read English Language (in per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>One-Para of the story</th>
<th>Complete story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balisankara</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>47.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-2 reveals a very disappointing scenario of primary education in Balisankara block. This study found that 8.8 per cent student were not able to recognize anything, 10.5 per cent can recognize only letters, 15.6 per cent can read a word, 17.7 per cent can read a paragraph of a story and only 47.35 per cent can read the complete story.

C. Mathematics knowledge of primary school students.

The data pertaining to the Mathematical learning achievement (quality) of primary school students have been presented in table-3.

Table-3 School children who can solve written numerical sums (in per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Number recognition</th>
<th>Subtraction</th>
<th>Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balisankara</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table-3 reveals the fact that 11.9 per cent children could not recognize the numbers, 25.7 per cent children can recognize the numbers but not able to do addition or subtraction, 26.5 per cent children only can do subtraction, and only 35.9 per cent children can do addition, subtraction as well as division.

9 Major Findings

The findings of the study are as follows;

1- Students are not in a position to read, write and do a simple arithmetic problem even after completion of 4th class.
2- The condition of students learning achievement (quality) is extremely poor in mathematics compare to language.
3- The condition of students learning achievement (quality) is poor in English compare to Odia language.

10 Educational Implications
The following implications may be derived on the basis of the findings of the study;

1- The teachers should be internally motivated to teach the students.
2- Pronunciation drill and reading practice should be done in class rooms regularly.
3- Teacher should develop strategies for correct reading ability.
4- The students required guidance and counselling with regard to study habits.
5- Parents should help their children to develop the habit of regular study in home.

11 Suggestions
The following suggestions may be derived on the basis of the findings of the study;

• Early childhood education is extremely important and must be universalized.
• A relevant curriculum should be developed.
• Accurate assessment of learning outcomes.
• Engaging local communities.
• Using ICT in teaching learning process
• Training of teachers and administrators of ICT.
• District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs) and State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) need to be more strengthened and undergo structural changes.
• Strengthening the teacher training institution.
• Reform in examination system.
• Special strategies needs to be devised to ensure greater access to schools for children in backward regions, remote locations, children belonging to SC/ST and Muslim communities and other backward caste (OBC).
• Community participating in monitoring the primary education.
• Parent-teacher association should be formed.
• Rigorous implementation of the inspection system.
• Optimizing the pupil teacher ratio.
• Developing new teaching learning strategies.
• Developing the infrastructure of primary education.
• Appointment of duly qualified teachers in primary level.
• Appointment of female teachers and teachers in disadvantaged and rural areas. Local qualified applicants need to be preferred.
• District based educational planning and implementation body needs to be formed.

12 Conclusion
It appears from the empirical study that quality of primary education has been compromised for its universality in India. Operation Black Board, District Primary Education Project, National Literacy Programme, Sarvha Shiksha Abhiyan—all aim at universalizing. It is time that the nation pays heed to the quality dimension. As it has already been pointed out, quality indirectly helps in
making the quantity. As a result, quality improvement programmes need to be devised for all levels—national, state, district and block.

References