

Effectiveness of community based innovative Primary Education Projects/Schemes implemented in India: An analysis

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Abstract

Policy makers and planners viewed that community participation has been considered as an important strategy for universalisation of primary education in India. The importance of decentralization of school planning especially primary education and empowering local community to take management decisions has been highly stressed in National Policy on Education, 1986 (as revised 1992). 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment gave further fillip to this move towards decentralization and community empowerment in the management of education. Following the recommendations of national policies and constitutional provisions, several innovative primary education projects were started for universalisation of primary education in India. In fact, this paper will categorically discuss the state specific innovative primary education projects, its inception, aims and objectives, coverage and findings. It will also share the particular interventions adopted and applied for systemic change of educational situation of particular state.

KEYWORDS: community participation, decentralization, quality education

1. Introduction

Community participation has been acknowledged as one of the effective means of achieving the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education which has been reflected in the recommendation of various commissions /committees on education. The need for decentralized planning of school education especially of primary education has been strongly stressed in NPE 1986 (as revised in 1992) which recommended not only promoting participation of the community in elementary education but also a involvement towards empowering the local community to take major management decisions in this regard. It proposed adopting the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution which provides among other things for entrusting with Panchayati Raj Bodies, education including primary education, secondary education, teacher training, vocational education, adult and non-formal education, literacy and cultural activities. The subsequent 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment gave further fillip to this move towards decentralisation and community empowerment in the management of education.

Following the policy level developments and constitutional provisions, several community based primary education programmes like Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Bihar Education Project (BEP), Lok Jumbish (LJ), U.P. Basic Education projects (UPBEP), District Primary Education Project (DPEP), and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)etc. were initiated in different states to achieve the goals of universalisation of primary education. The above said national programmes had implemented the policy of decentralization of education planning intensively with active involvement of community. Community based mechanisms like social mobilization approach with participatory planning including intensive micro-planning, school

mapping, voluntary work and constitutions of different structural bodies like VEC, PTA, & MTA are really programme innovations which have explored the ways for bringing systemic change in the school education in India. As an impact issues like dysfunctional or nonexistent schools, teacher shortage, school drop outs, out of school children, enrolment, attendance and retention and quality education etc were resolved in a greater extent. The kind of progress made in different programmes have categorically discussed elaborately in the following ways.

Table 1 - Primary Education Programmes

Sl.No	Community based Primary Education Programmes	Year of Implementation
1	Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP)	1987
2	Total Literacy Campaign (TLC)	1988
3	Bihar Education Project (BEP)	1991-1992
4	Lok Jumbish (LJ)	1992
5	District Primary Education Project (DPEP)	1993-94
6	Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Programme (UPBEP)	1993
7	Janashala Programme (JP)	1998
8	State Programme for Elementary Education Development (SPEED)	1998
9	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)	2001

1.1. Shiksha Karmi Project (1987)

- **Inception:** Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) was introduced in the year 1987 as a collaborative venture between Government of Rajasthan, Government of India and SIDA.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** a) To reach out to the children living in remote, inaccessible and rural areas where the formal primary schools were either non-existent or dysfunctional, b) To sort out the difficulties like teacher absenteeism, drop outs, out of school children and community despair and cynicism existed in nonfunctioning schools
- **Coverage:** Shiksha Karmi activities have spread to 2697 villages in 146 blocks covering all the 32 districts in the state.
- **Key Findings:** Under the Project local youth with some basic education were identified, trained and provided continuous educational support to teach children in Shiksha Karmi Day schools, Prehar Pathshalas (schools of convenient timings) and Angan Pathshalas (courtyard schools). (Ramachandran and Sethi: 2002). The concept of Shiksha Karmi was based on the assumption that a change agent, especially in the field of education, can work better if he/she belongs to the same locality. The involvement of the community in the identification of potential candidates and their recruitment as Shiksha Karmi was an important feature of the Shiksha Karmi Project. A key element of the SKP was its emphasis on consensual functioning, with all decisions related to schools, selection of Shiksha Karmis, location of Pathshalas was to be taken in the Village Education Committee

meetings (Ramachandran and Sethi: 2002). There was a great reliance on community support and each VEC consisted of members representing all castes, minority groups and women.

- In Shiksha Karmi Project, 9 resource units had operated, 13 Mahila Prashikshan Kendras established which had trained 349 Mahila Shiksha Karmies, 2137 Village Education Committees were activated with active involvement of 188 Shiksha Karmi Shayogis and 331 Mahila Sahayogis, says Ramchandran Vimala and Sethi Harsha (2000).

1.2.Total Literacy Campaign (1988)

- **Inception:** Total Literacy campaign concept came when the NLM (National Literacy Mission) was established on 5th May, 1988 by Government of India. There are three phases like Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Post Literacy Campaign (PLP) and Continuing Education (CE).
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** To eradicate illiteracy in the country by imparting functional literacy to non-literates.
- **Coverage:** Till November 2002, 596 districts out of the total 600 districts of the country had been covered up by the National Literacy Mission (NLM) under the total literacy campaign programme, out of which 191 was in the post literacy phase and 238 in the continuing education phase.
- **Key Findings:** Total Literacy Campaign has evolved along three basic principles. First, was to create a positive climate through mass mobilization and motivation, generating demand among non-literates for literacy and willingness among the educated to contribute and participate in the literacy campaign on voluntary basis. Second, was to design a cross representative organizational structure and participatory management system which assured support of government and enable involvement of NGOs, voluntary agencies and all sections of civil society. Thirdly, the campaign gave stress on highly professional project implementation and management structure with inbuilt monitoring. Total Literacy Campaign was marked by massive environment building for mass mobilization, motivation and participation, a door to door survey to identify non-literates and other resources such as volunteer teachers and learners. Total Literacy Campaigns were based on a unique social mobilization approach that involved all sections of the society from grass roots level to the highest level

1.3.Bihar Education Project (1991-1992)

- **Inception:** Bihar Education Project was as the first Education For All (EFA) project in India towards achieving the goal of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) which was started in 1991-92.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** Universal Access, Universal Participation and Universal Achievement of MLL are the three main constituents of the Universalisation of elementary education.
- **Coverage:** The project was launched initially in three districts – Ranchi, Rohtas and West Champaran in 1991-92 and subsequently expanded to four other districts.
- **Key Findings** The Project was conceived as a micro approach (village level) as well as a macro approach (state level) for universalisation of primary education.

In the effective implementation of BEP, Village Education Committees played an important role. VECs constituted women and members of disadvantaged groups, were instrumental in carrying out detailed micro planning exercise for building a proper environment for children's education. VECs played a positive role in raising people's contribution in construction and school improvement activities. The VECs not only helped in micro planning but in many cases also acted watchdogs against the vested interests at the village level working against the BEP. Among major components of the BEP, one was to restructure the VECs to make them more effective and inclusive. The VECs formed before the implementation of BEP suffered from the basic problem that the members were being nominated by the Block Education Officer and the 'mukhiya' used to be made the president (Kantha and Narain: 2002).

1.4. Rajasthan Lok Jumbish (1992)

- **Inception:** Lok Jumbish (meaning Peoples' Movement) project is considered as a people's movement at the grassroots level to mobilize support and participation of the rural community in primary education. Rajasthan Lok Jumbish was launched in 1992 by the government of India and government of Rajasthan with the support of SIDA.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** The main objective of Lok Jumbish is to develop, demonstrate, catalyze and transform the mainstream education system with the objective of ensuring that every child has access to the basic education.
- **Coverage:** Blocks covered: 58, Revenue villages: 9,755: Environment building done: 5,683: Core teams formed: 4,420: Mahila Samooh formed: 2,816: School mapping completed: 4,006 (percentage 70.49): New primary schools opened: 383 : New Shiksha Karmi schools opened: 454: Upgrading to upper primary schools: 227.
- **Key Findings:** Community mobilization is at the heart of Lok Jumbish followed by acknowledging the importance of sensitive management and improving the quality of education. The core component of Lok Jumbish was the participatory process of school mapping and micro planning. Under this, it was the villagers themselves who carried out the field surveys and prepared the education map of the village indicating the status of participation of every child. The Lok Jumbish project empowered local people by involving them in school matters through carefully formed Village Education Committees making the participation more representative. Formation of a core groups and a women's group under Lok Jumbish met the need for the coming together of people voluntarily for a common cause. It was the voluntary organization of the people that gave them a feeling of empowerment. The Lok Jumbish project was able to transform, to a great extent, the centralized and hierarchical management systems of school education into people-friendly decentralized system in the state of Rajasthan. Finally Lok Jumbish developed village education registers, retention registers for each class, and also the concept of forum for building maintenance and school environment called the bhavan nirman samiti" says Ramachandran Vimala (2000).

1.5. District Primary Education Project (1993-94)

- **Inception:** District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched in the year 1993-1994 with financial assistance between central government (85%) and state government (15%). The Government of India share is resourced by external funding from IDA, European Community, Government of Netherlands, DFID (UK) and UNICEF
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** i) to provide access to all children to primary education through formal primary schools or its equivalent through alternatives; ii) to reduce overall dropouts at the primary level less than 10 percent; iii) to increase achievement levels by 25 percentage points over and above the measured baseline levels; iv) to reduce disparities of all types to less than 5 percent.
- **Coverage:** DPEP, over several phases, covered 272 districts in 18 states of the country. District Primary Education Project has been one of the largest education projects of its kind in the whole world.
- **Key Findings:** The Programme aimed at achieving universalisation of elementary education in the country through district-specific planning with emphasis on decentralized management, participatory processes, empowerment and capacity building at all levels. DPEP stressed on the active role of the local community in promoting enrolment, retention, achievement and school effectiveness. The process was institutionalized through Village Education Committees and bodies like the Mother-Teacher Associations (MTAs). The VECs were entrusted with the responsibility of improving school facilities according to locally felt needs and priorities. The DPEP emphasized on local-specific planning in a participatory manner involving teachers, parents and Village Education Committees (GoI: 1997).

1.6. Uttarpradesh Basic Education Programme (1993)

- **Inception:** Uttarpradesh was the most populous state of India and also the home of large number of Out of School Children. A Project 'Education for all' prepared by the government of UP was approved for funding by the World Bank in June 1993.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** The Prime need of UPBEP was to locate schools in unsaved areas of the project as soon as possible.
- **Coverage:** UP-Basic Education Project started in 1993 covered 17 districts
- **Key Findings:** Under UPBEP, VEC was also assigned task of distribution of scholarship, school construction and rehabilitation, creation of school facilities, ensuring maintenance of school assets and some degree of control over teachers. VEC maintained its own account and disbursed funds for school construction and purchase of education material. The VEC members met monthly to discuss school performance which was also to be attended by District/Block Education officials on rotation basis. Under this project annual cash grant of Rs. 25000/- was provided to such VEC which showed significant achievement in completing village surveys, increasing enrolment in schools, and implementation of non-formal education classes. The amount of said award to be used for school improvement, purchase of educational material or facilities improvement. There

was provision for annual training of VEC members which were regularly conducted says Vinayak.V and Shrivastava Sandhya (2014).

1.7. Janshala Programme (1998)

- **Inception:** The Janashala Programme is a collaborative effort of the Government of India and five United Nations agencies, i.e., UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA - to provide programme support to the government's ongoing efforts towards achieving universalisation of elementary education.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** The aims were to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children in deprived communities, marginalized groups, working children and children with specific needs. Children, who do not go to schools, live in appalling conditions and are found on the streets, railway platforms, markets, slums, squatter's colonies etc. had been identified & admitted them alternative school centers.
- **Coverage:** Janshala is a block-based programme, in which the block is the unit of planning and implementation. The programme at present covers 120 blocks and 10 cities in nine States of the country. Originally, it covered eight states, viz., Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh says (Janshala report 2003).
- **Key Findings:** The term Janshala consists of two components i.e., 'Jan' (refers to the word 'community') and 'Shala' (refers to the word 'school'). The unique feature of the Janshala was that it was a cluster-based programme with emphasis on community participation and decentralization. The areas had been selected on the basis of different indicators such as low female literacy, incidence of child labour, and concentration of ST and SC population. The organisation carried out community mobilization activities and intensive micro planning exercise with community participation. VECs, PTAs and other grass root level structures had been set up in Janshala and they were actively working on school improvement, enrolment and retention of children in schools.

1.8. State Programme for Elementary Education Development (SPEED)

- **Inception:** SPEED was launched in January 1998 which because of its late start had the advantage of launching from earlier experiences.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** Empowering the community to take up the case of strengthening primary education was the key objective of SPEED.
- **Coverage:** The programme has spread to eight blocks in five districts- three in Nalanda, two in Deoghar, two in Giridih, one in Sahebganj and to some panchyats in Garhwa.
- **Major intervention:** School-based village education committees were formed and as of now there are 800 VECs. While BEP has a four day daily programme of organising and training, SPEED has extended the period of 20 days in a given panchyats. Microplanning and VEC formation go hand in hand. The village education planning are also drawn up. Financial mobilization is another remarkable example of community involvement. In Noorsarai block in Nalanada district where there are 88 VECs, the public contribution was over one lakh rupees. VECs have succeeded in mobilizing the teachers. In the course of teachers strike in Noorsarai people volunteered to carry on teaching in the schools. In

Sarwan block Deoghar, VECs staged Dharanas for the improvement of water supply and solving of the problems related to land.

1.9. Sarava Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)

- **Inception:** SSA as an intervention programme which has been operational since 2000-2001. However, its roots go back to 1993-1994, when the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched, with an aim of achieving the objective of universal primary Education.
- **Aims & objectives of the programme:** SSA's core objective is to attain UEE in the Country. Its overall goals include universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in education and enhancement of learning levels of Children.
- **Coverage:** SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations.
- **Key Findings:** The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (meaning People's Movement for Education to All) aims at universalizing elementary education by community - ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. The target beneficiaries in the community and other stakeholders are involved in all stages of implementation to achieve the education outcomes (GoI: 2000). The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode. SSA calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effecting decentralization. It advocates for community based monitoring system with full transparency. Every school is expected to share all information with the community, including grants received. On the whole, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community-ownership of the school system through active involvement of Women's Groups, Village Education Committee (VEC) members, and members of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the above discussion, it has been found that community participation is major panacea towards problems erupted on the way of universalisations of elementary education in India. Mechanisms like social mobilization approach with participatory planning including intensive micro-planning, school mapping, voluntary work and constitutions of different structural bodies like VEC, PTA, & MTA are really programme innovations which have explored the ways for bringing systemic change in the school education in India. Because of its impact, now elementary education system is being more closed with community as a result community owned school system, community based quality education and community based monitoring with transparency have been become ensured in RTE-SSA Programme, a flagship programme of Government of India. But in some of the areas like closeness of panchyat raj system with school level structure, capacity building of School level committees and their involvement etc. strategic works

needs to be done for taking forward the community participation for universalisation of primary education in India.

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