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Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Program in India: An Assessment

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Abstract

SSA is a flagship programme of the government of India, It was started in 2001, the sole purpose of which to attain the Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). The legal support to SSA was provided when free and compulsory education for the children in the age group of 6-14 was made a fundamental right in the Indian Constitution under Article 21 A. SSA focuses to meet the hope of this fundamental right in a time-bound manner. The present paper tried to make a critical analysis of history, targets, achievements and failures of SSA in India.

Key words: Sarva Siksha Abhijan, purpose, compulsory education, achievements, failures

Introduction

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“In our national perception, education is essentially for all.” (National Policy on Education,1986)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme of Government of India with a view of achieving of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) within a time This was mandated by 86th amendment to the Indian Constitution ensuring free and compulsory education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right. 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. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a unique focus on girl's education and children with special needs. The SSA was a collaborative effort of the central, state and local governments. The planning, implementation and monitoring of this multifaceted programme was a mammoth task. Civil society organizations (CSOs), including those with their origins in the voluntary sector; non-profit groups set up as foundations, as well as those that are part of profit-making companies.

Objectives

1. To enumerate the historical evaluation of SSA programme;
2. To find out the key target of SSA programme in India;
3. To analyse the achievements made by SSA in India;
4. To elucidate the failures of SSA

Data source and Methodology

This study is primarily qualitative in nature. Different websites and related books have been followed to frame out the study. Secondary information have been collected to substantiate the study.

Analysis and Discussion

The whole analysis is carried out under the following heads:

- 1 History of SSA in India: A conceptual framework
2. Targets of SSA in India: An overview
3. General achievements of SSA in India
4. Failures of SSA

Let us now analyse each head one by one.

History of SSA in India: A conceptual framework

The origin and evolution of SSA has been backed up in the Constitution of India through the following:

SL No	Act/Policy	Mandate
1	Constitutional Mandate of 1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State should provide free and compulsory education to all children until they attain 14 years of age. • State should endeavor to do this within ten years of the commencement of the Indian Constitution
2	National Education Policy, 1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal retention of the children in schools until they attain 14 years of age. • Children up to the age of 14 should be given free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality before India reaches the 21st Century.
3	Constitutional Amendments (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local governments were given statutory recognition, and school education was included in the list of its responsibilities. • Influenced the structure of education management.

Moreover, the history of SSA can be divided into two major phases:

SSA Phase I: At the outset this programme was focused on decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring on schools and communities. Thereafter, District Annual Plans (DAPs) were prepared through a “bottom-up” approach beginning from the school level. The annual financing requirements were mitigated through the process of decentralized planning. Funds were channelized from the centre directly to the SIS and then to district offices. School-community linkages were organised through village-level education committees. An easily-accessible decentralized education Management Information System (MIS) was prepared to smooth the progress of decentralized planning and monitoring

SSA Phase II: The mid-term assessment of SSA in 2005–06 revealed that progress towards access and equity targets of this programme at the primary level was praiseworthy, but at the same time additional effort was needed to achieve the SSA goals. Although schooling of children had increased but retention was still a bigger problem in reality. Thereafter, the SSA programme was extended until 2011–12 with a slightly changed focus to meet the challenges of equitable access, retention and quality. After passing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act

(the “Right to Education Act” RTE, August, 2009) the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) established a committee to suggest necessary follow-up action in SSA in light of the new Act.

Few important facts about SSA are mentioned in the list below:

1. SSA is associated as an ‘Education for All’ movement
2. The pioneer of the SSA programme was Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Indian Former Prime Minister.
3. The Central Government in partnership with State Governments is implementing this initiative.
4. The initial aim of SSA was to meet its objectives by 2010, however, the timeline has been extended.
5. SSA aims to provide educational infrastructure to around 193 million children in 1.1 million habitations.
6. 86th Amendment Act to the Indian Constitution provided legal backing to SSA when it made education free and compulsory for children in the age group of 6-14.
7. In the National Education Policy of 2019, it was mentioned that an estimated 6.2 crore children of school age (between 6 and 18 years) were out of school in 2015.
8. Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat is a sub-programme of SSA.
9. There is a government portal under the name ‘Shagun’ that has been launched to monitor the SSA programme. The World Bank in association with the Ministry of HRD developed it.

Targets of SSA in India: An overview

After the passage of the Right To Education Act, 2010, SSA takes a holistic approach in meeting its objectives to bring a positive change on curriculum, teacher education, educational planning, and management. The broad objectives of SSA are mentioned below:

1. To open new schools in those areas where there are no schooling facilities.
2. To make stronger the existing school infrastructure
3. To grant alternate schooling facilities
4. To build new schools
5. To ensure additional classrooms, toilets, drinking water facilities in the schools
6. To maintain school improvement grants
7. To provide free textbooks, uniforms to the children
8. To increase the strength of teachers in the schools where there is a shortage of teachers. Additional teachers are provided to such schools.
9. To enhance and strengthen the skills and capacity of the existing teachers in the schools through:
 - a. Extensive Training
 - b. Materials of teachers-learning are developed by maintaining the grants

- c. Academic support structure at a cluster, block, and district level are being strengthened.
10. To provide life skills to the students along with quality education
11. To promote girls' education (to bring a change in the status of women, being the wider aim) and also the education of the differently-abled or children with special needs. Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) expressed that SSA seeks to bring equal opportunity in education to children of people belonging to SC, ST, Muslim Minority, Landless Agricultural Labourers etc.
12. To understand the educational needs of traditionally excluded categories
13. SSA also seeks to bridge the digital divide by offering computer education to the children.

Before 2010, the time-bound aims of SSA were:

1. All children to complete five years of elementary schooling by 2007
2. All children complete eight years of schooling by 2010
3. Bridge the gender and social category gaps at primary schooling stage by 2007 and elementary education level by 2010

General Achievements of SSA in India

According to Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) data for 2014-15, it was revealed that Gross enrolment ratio (GER) stands at 98.85% for boys and 101.43% for girls which indicates universal enrolment at primary level. At upper primary level the GER is 87.71% for boys and 95.29% for girls.

The SSA programme achieved a great deal of success in India. This can be summarized in terms of access, equity and quality as follows:

Access: The number of schools and enrolment increased harshly over the implementation period of Sarba Siksha Abhijan Programme. This growth was higher for primary classes in the first phase of SSA while it was higher for upper-primary classes in the second phase of SSA. There was a sharp decline in the number of non enrolment of school children, and this was reported as 3 million in 2010–11.

Equity: Gradually, the SSA programme shifted from being input-based to being process-and outcome based in system. The stress on eliminating discrimination in the classroom and segregation from school brought benefits. The percentage of enrolled children from disadvantaged communities in the society greater than before, although vulnerable groups still required ongoing support and encouragement.

Quality: SSA showed relatively insignificant progress in terms of quality improvement. Several changes were introduced in the second phase of SSA for achieving quality of education.

National Curriculum Framework (2005) emphasized the need to provide constructive and pertinent education through revising text books in school education. Apart from this, several state-specific initiatives were taken which stressed on improvement of teacher training and student learning achievements. Again systematic changes were occurred more slowly in some states than in others in terms of finance, administration and management in schooling.

Failures of SSA

Although Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is associated as the government's flagship programme of Govt of India to enroll all children in the age group of 6-14 in schools. In spite of this SSA programme suffers from several leakages. These are the followings:

1. Misuse of funds to ineffective monitoring both at the national and state levels;
2. Interventions by the project implementing agencies were deficient to a large extent
3. substantial gaps between planned and actual achievements
4. Inadequacies in key areas such as classrooms, textbook distribution, provision of teachers, their training and other infrastructure.
5. The programme, planned to be taken up earnestly by the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry for achieving its rather ambitious targets;
6. Inadequacies of funding and
7. Lack of serious commitment on the part of implementing agencies including state governments.
8. Utilisation of almost 86 per cent of the funds available with implementing agencies
9. Substantial under-funding, the CAG said it ranged between 43 and 57 per cent during 2001-02 to 2004-05.
10. Misuse of funds and lack of monitoring have resulted in one of the UPA's most ambitious scheme of universal education remaining a colossal failure
11. Wastage and stagnation and non-strengthening of the District Institute of Educational Training (DIET) (CAG, Govt of India, 2006).

Concluding Remarks

Last but not the least it can be said that the achievement of SSA in India can be judged in quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. Because, although percentage of schooling increases

sharply of SSA but quality is far from the expectation. Various types of service provision within the programme, innovations in teaching training modules to build capacity of teachers, involvement in community mobilization and building capacity of members of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Education Committees have been improved. Since August 2009, SSA played an important consultative role in the process of implementing the Right to Education Act.

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