



Level of Academic Achievement in Hindi among Class IV Students in Four Districts of Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract

Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) has been accepted as a national goal in India since Independence. The founding fathers of Indian Constitution recognized UEE as a crucial input for nation building. In this context, about 60 years ago, Article 45 of the Indian Constitution (1950) stated 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. When the target could not be achieved till 2001, Indian Government started its flagship programme named as 'The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' in 2001. It was, therefore, thought worthwhile to undertake the present piece of research with an objective to evaluate the 'National Program of Universal Elementary Education' known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001 in Himachal Pradesh with respect to quality improvement at elementary Stage.

Keywords: *Evaluation, Academic Achievement, Hindi, National Policy, Education for All*

Introduction

Administration of School education in the recent years has witnessed a major transformation in its approaches, structures and functions. The main emphasis has been on structural changes so as to make administration more responsive to the educational needs of the people at the grassroots. New dimensions are continuously being added to the learning Strategies and the educational management practices. Efforts have been made to decentralize planning and management of education to the local level so as to make the delivery of educational programmes more effective. It is in this context that initiatives like flagship programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Right to Education Act and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan are being implemented to make the administration of education more

responsive to the needs of the people. Globalization has a direct bearing on the present initiatives for reforms in the education administration

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When the target could not be achieved till 2001, Indian Government started its flagship programme named as 'The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' in 2001 with the following objectives: 1) *All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007* 2) *All children complete eight years of elementary schooling by 2010* 3) *Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life* 4) *Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010 Universal retention by 2010*

Recently, the document 'Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth: An Approach to the 11th Five Year Plan' (2006) envisaged the following plan for Elementary Education for 11th Five year Plan 2007-2012:

Education, in its broadest sense of development of youth, including sports, is the most critical input for empowering people with skills and knowledge and for giving them access to productive employment in the future. The 11th Plan should ensure that we move towards rising public spending in education to 6% of GDP, which is an NCMP commitment. It must fulfill the Constitutional obligation of providing free and compulsory elementary education of good quality to all children up to the age of 14. This means we must ensure both access and good quality and standards in respect of curriculum, pedagogy, and infrastructure irrespective of the parents' ability to pay.

The analysis of the review of literature reveals that academic performance of students enrolled at elementary stage is not up to the mark and there has not been a marked shift in quality of education measured in terms of academic achievement of students even after eight years of implementation of SSA (NCERT, 2006; ASER 2005; ASER 2006; ASER 2007, ASER 2008, ASER 2009, ASER 2010, Walker, 2011).

The State of Himachal Pradesh is not an exception. The rapid expansion of the school network and an exceptionally high teacher-pupil ratio notwithstanding, the quality of education, particularly at the primary level, continues to be a matter of concern in the hill state of Himachal Pradesh.

With about 11000 primary and 4000 upper primary institutions, elementary education is accessible to all, and children do not have to walk more than 1.5 km to attend school. As per the recent data, the teacher-pupil ratio has improved to 1:17 from 1:22 in 2004-05 as against the norm of 1:40. The average of slightly more than three classrooms per primary school is also quite reasonable. In fact, infrastructure-wise the state is ranked seventh in the country. However, the upgrading of physical infrastructure and deployment of more than adequate teachers has not brought about the expected improvement in the standard of education.

When the present study was envisaged, no worthwhile survey had been carried out by any independent agency in Himachal Pradesh in order to evaluate the SSA in terms of

achievement of its objective of 'providing elementary education of satisfactory quality'. Whatsoever information was available with respect to the improvement in quality as a result of SSA was based on Government sponsored surveys. It was, therefore, thought worthwhile to undertake the present piece of research with an objective to evaluate the 'National Program of Universal Elementary Education' known as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) launched in 2001 in Himachal Pradesh with respect to quality improvement at elementary Stage. The index of quality was limited to 'academic achievement' only. The study was focused on Class IV.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were laid down for the present study:

1. To evaluate the level of academic achievement in Hindi of Class IV students of following four Districts of Himachal Pradesh vis-à-vis the expected one:
 - a. Una
 - b. Hamirpur
 - c. Kangra
 - d. Bilaspur
 - e. Total sample from four Districts
2. To construct an achievement test in Hindi for class IV students.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated which were tested in the present study:

1. The level of academic achievement in Hindi of Class IV students of following four Districts of Himachal Pradesh is far below the expected one:
 - a. Una
 - b. Hamirpur
 - c. Kangra
 - d. Bilaspur
 - e. Total sample from four Districts

The Sample

Survey method of research was used in the present study. The sample for the present study was drawn from 81 Government Primary Schools and 76 Government Middle/High/Senior Secondary Schools situated in four districts of Himachal Pradesh viz., Hamirpur, Una, Kangra and Bilaspur. The four districts and the schools in each district were selected on the basis of convenience, though it was observed that the schools were spread over a wider area in each district. It is worth mentioning that all these schools followed the curriculum prescribed by the Himachal Pradesh Board of School Education.

In each Government Primary/ Middle/High/Senior Secondary Schools, data were collected from students studying in class IV. Finally the total sample comprised of 1258 students.

Tools Used

Since the objective of the present study was to evaluate *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) launched in 2001 in Himachal Pradesh with respect to quality improvement at elementary Stage, achievement test was constructed by the investigator for class IV (Hindi). It is worth mentioning that the purpose of the test was not to differentiate the students as high or low achievers or bring them to a specified level of performance. Hence, the usual procedure of constructing norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests was not followed in the present case. On the other hand, the aim of the present study was to observe whether the students of selected class have been able to achieve **minimum levels of learning** in the subject of Hindi.

The Procedure

The achievement test prepared by the investigator was administered to the class under standard conditions after establishing proper rapport with the respondents. Keeping in view the purpose of the study, the tests were administered to the students either immediately before

their final examination or immediately after they took admission in the next class. The tests were scored and scores thus obtained were tabulated item-wise and class-wise for further analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data for the study were available in the form of responses of students for different items grouped into four categories, namely, 'Correct', 'Partially Correct', 'Incorrect' and 'Un answered'. The techniques of frequency distribution and percentages were used to analyze the data.

Conclusions

On the basis of analysis and interpretation of data, the following conclusions were drawn for the present study:

The item-wise responses of Class IV students to 19 items of the Achievement Test in Hindi are presented for each of the selected four Districts separately as well as for the total sample. The responses for each item were grouped into four categories, viz., 'Correct', 'Partially Correct', 'Incorrect' and 'Un answered'.

Una: Only two items were answered correctly by more than 75 per cent of the students.

Hamirpur: None of the items was answered correctly by more than 75 per cent of the students.

Kangra: None of the items was answered correctly by more than 75 per cent of the students.

Bilaspur: Only three items were answered correctly by more than 75 per cent of the students.

It is quite clearly revealed from the above observations that the level of performance in Hindi of 1258 Class IV students comprising the total sample from four Districts is far below the expected one. Hence, the hypothesis that "*The level of academic achievement in Hindi of total Class IV students sampled from four Districts of Himachal Pradesh is far below the expected one*" is accepted.

Educational Implications

The present study reveals that academic achievement of students class IV selected from four Districts of Himachal Pradesh, viz., Una, Hamirpur, Kangra and Bilaspur came out to be far below the expected one in all the schools under study. This indicates that the State of Himachal Pradesh has not been able to achieve the objective of SSA of providing elementary education of satisfactory quality even after about ten years of its launch.

The State of Himachal Pradesh has been successful to a great extent in making elementary education accessible to nearly all through rapid expansion of the school network, achieving an exceptionally high teacher-pupil ratio, increasing enrolment at elementary stage and decreasing dropout rate considerably. However, the quality of education, particularly at the elementary stage, continues to be a matter of concern as is evident from the results of present study. It seems that the upgrading of physical infrastructure and deployment of more than adequate number of teachers has not brought about the expected improvement in the standards of education.

The results of the study may prove to be beneficial to policy planners in reviewing their policies in the context of improving quality of education at elementary stage. The results of the study may also generate awareness that it is not sufficient to provide infrastructure alone but is also equally necessary to identify factors that are essential in order to achieve the aforesaid goal of SSA.

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