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QUALITY OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN NAYAGARH DISTRICT OF ODISHA: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to know the quality of elementary education in Nayagarh district of Odisha. The sample of the study consisted of 24 teachers and 60 students of 12 elementary schools of Nayagarh district of Odisha. Data were collected through questionnaires. Information were also collected from reports and records published by Government of Odisha. The result indicated that incentives such as Mid-Day Meals and School uniforms were available in all schools. ICT facility was not available in any school. Supervision of the schools was done by B.E.O.s. Play ground, and provision of electricity was available in very less number of schools. Ten different co-curricular activities were organized in schools.

Key Words: *Quality, Elementary Education, Evaluative Study*

Almost all policies and programmes on education in India have consistently recommended elementary education as the foundation stone on which the whole edifice of education stands. It is the main gateway to higher education. Universalisation of Elementary Education has been explicitly reflected in the Article 45 of the Indian Constitution as: "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 14 years." The National Policy on Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992) aimed at improving access, reducing dropouts and improving learning achievements for all children between 6-14 years of age. The Government's two policies NPE-1986 and POA-1992 prominently stand out as a Landmark in history of Indian movement for Universalisation of Elementary Education. The National Policy on Education (1986) states: MAY-JUNE, 2015, VOL-I, ISSUE-I

"It shall be ensured that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all children up to 14 years ago before the new generation enters 21st century." The National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1992) recommended a number of measures for qualitative improvement of standardizing levels of learning at elementary stage and so on. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan launched in 2001 throughout the country is an effort to universalize access to and retention in school emphasizing the quality of elementary education. The 93rd Amendment of the Constitution (2001) declared primary education as a 'Fundamental Right'. Article 21 A of Indian Constitution is placed along with redefining the Article 45 and introduction of Article 51 K as a fundamental duty. Article 21A states: "The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of six to fourteen years in such manner as state may, by law determine." The historic moment has happened on 1st April, 2010 when The Right' of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act - 2009 came into force that guarantees free and compulsory elementary education to all children in India. There have been efforts at the international level to universalize elementary education, such as the World Conference on Education for all held in Jometien, Thailand (1990) which Dakar Framework for Education for All (2000), the Millenium Development Goals (2000), Third High Level Group Meeting (2003) and Global Monitoring Report (2005). Quality in and of education has always been a priority area and a prominent agenda of various committees and commissions on education. Consistent efforts have been made in the post-independence period to improve the quality of elementary education. The dimensions of quality elementary education are basic infrastructure and other facilities, suitable learning environment, teaching and teacher preparation, curriculum and teaching learning material, teaching learning process, instructional time, evaluation, monitoring and supervision and community participation and support. The major efforts in the direction of Usiniversalisation of Elementary Education at the national level by the Central Government are Operation Blackboard (OB) Scheme, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Mid-Day Meals (MDM) Programme, Janasala and Serve Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) etc.

Elementary Education in Odessa: Primary and Upper Primary education has been expanding in Odessa, especially in rural and backward areas. The state aims at providing primary schools within 1 km and Upper Primary schools within 3 kms of habitations having population of more than 300 and 500 respectively. During 2012-13, there were 55,329 functional primary schools/sections (Government and Local Bodies 51,655, Government Aided 468 and un-aided private/other schools 3206) in the state with 1.35 lakh teachers and

43.41 lakh students. The average teacher pupil ratio is 1:28 (2012-13). The state government has engaged 46,327 Sikhya Sahayaka and 22,717 Gana Sikh yaks. With a view to building and improving their teaching capabilities and assuring responsible career growth, the government has introduced a career advancement policy. The dropout rate has been declined to 0.37 percent in 2012-13 (Economic Survey, 2013-14). There are 24,234 Upper Primary schools /sections with 53.8 thousand teachers and 20.81 lakh enrolment (2012-13). During 2012-13, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and NET Enrolment Ration (NER) at Upper Primary levels stood at 101.83 and 91.57 per cent respectively. The dropout rate has declined to 2.36 per cent in 2012-13. The state of Odisha has promulgated the Odisha Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010, on 1st April, 2010 on the basis of the model rules made by the Government of India. There are 1125 primary schools with 87,342 enrolment and 3140 teachers in Primary schools and 510 Upper Primary Schools with 50,150 enrolment and 1416 teachers in Nayagarh District (2011-12).

Major Initiatives Taken up by Government of Odisha for Promotion of Elementary Education (2012-13):

The major initiatives taken up by Government of Odisha for promotion of elementary education are: In order to improve access to elementary education and to achieve 100 per cent enrolment, Government has relaxed the norm for opening new Primary schools. Government provided Block Grant to the 916 eligible Upper Primary Schools. Block grant of the teaching staff of 74 Madras's at the Primary level has been provided. 65.20 lakh children of 6 to 14 years age group are in schools, out of which 12.43 lakhs are SC and 18.38 lakh are ST. In 6 to 14 age group, 6.31 lakh children are out of schools and from these 0.05 lakh are from SC and 0.20 lakh are from ST communities. Grant in aid related to 1866 teaching and non-teaching staff of 692 privately managed, aided Upper Primary schools. Free text books have been supplied to all students in the elementary level in the year 2012-13. Recruitment of 14,768 Sikhya Sahayaks have been made. Two steps of uniforms have been provided to 49.60 lakh students. Computer aided education programme is implemented in 1603 UP schools. 101 ECEE centres under SSA and 322 under NPEGEL are functioning in the state. 1-20 lakh children with Special Needs (CWSN) were enrolled out of student's field 1.23 lakh children. 1.14 lakh aids and appliances have been distributed to CWSN and 51,266 numbers of ramps constructed in CWSN schools 15,610 primaries and Upper Primary School buildings and 56,824 additional classrooms have been completed under SSA and 1080 school building and 16,478 ACRS are process. 51.95 lakh students of 69,019 Primary and Upper Primary schools are covered under MDM programmers.

Review Of Related Studies: There are some research studies conducted on elementary education. Let us have bird's eye view over studies and their findings. The study by Acharya and Behera (2004) on functioning of Sarba Siksha Abhiyan in Odisha revealed that the progress on civil works had been very slow due to release of funds, inadequate monitoring and lack of district level conveyance of SSA with other allied development schemes. The study by Debraj et al (2005) in Karnataka on improvement of quality of elementary education revealed that Head Masters engaged parents and the community in discussions about school development and children's learning levels. The investigations by Maikhuri (2005) in Uttaranchal revealed that all the elementary schools had no electricity and only 40 per cent schools had toilet facility whereas in rest of the studies this facility was launching. The study by Acharay and Sankar (2006) in Odisha revealed that provision of clean drinking water at school and health check-up of students was an important aspect of school management. The findings of the study by Bhattacharya (2006) on the problem of primary school women teachers of Odisha revealed that the works performed by women teachers besides teaching include Census work, pulse polio, literacy, voter list verification and plantation. The study by Mishra (2007) in Angul district of Odisha revealed that sufficient number of furniture was not available in 92 per cent of primary schools Panda (2007) found that most of the BRCs were unable to perform their role satisfactorily due to lack of infrastructure and required facilities. Pattnaik and Mohanty (2007) found that 22 per cent teachers were interested in co-curricular activities by providing training in organising drama, 38 per cent for dance, more than 65 per cent in song and less than 20 per cent in debate. Zaidi (2008) examined the basic facilities in primary and Upper Primary schools in various states of India. The study revealed that 17.5 per cent primary schools and 7.7 per cent upper primary schools had only one teacher. In primary schools of Odisha prominent areas of deficiencies observed by Jena (2009) were: inadequate space for learning, non-availability of play ground and play materials, poor or non-availability of sanitary conditions, dearth of minimum number of teachers and irregular and inadequate supply of free text books. The study by Das (2010) revealed that the heads of the institutions and teachers stated that there was provision of continuous evaluation in schoolstic areas in their institutions. Ram (2011) found that in India although enrolment in the schools had increased, yet the learning levels had declined over the years. Swain (2012) in his study found that 89 per cent of Sikshya Sahayaks expressed their dissatisfaction with regard to their salary. Nanda (2013) found that 92.8 per cent primary schools in Odisha had drinking water facility, 74.87 per cent schools had boy's toilet where

as only 6.16 per cent schools had functional girl's toilet. Nayak (2015) on the status of primary education in Odisha found that drinking water facility was available in 99 per cent of institutions. However, electricity was available in 19 per cent of institutions.

Objectives of the Study: The following are the objectives of the study. To study the quality of elementary education in Nayagarh district of Odisha with regard to: Availability of Physical facilities, Availability of Teaching-Learning Materials, Enrolment of students, Dropout rate of students, Position of teaching staff, Availability of ICT facilities, Provision of incentives for students, Organization of co curricular activities, Achievement of students. To study the steps taken up by Government of Odisha for improving the quality of elementary education in Nayagarh district. To suggest measures for improving the quality of elementary education in Nayagarh district.

Method: Descriptive Survey Method was used in the present study.

Sample: The sample of the study consisted of 24 teachers and 60 students of 12 primary schools of Nayagarh district of Odisha. The schools were selected randomly. Teachers and students were selected through the method of purposive sampling.

Tools Used: The following tools were developed and used by the investigator for collecting data. Questionnaire for Teachers. Questionnaire for Students. Information were also collected from reports and records published by Govt. of Odisha.

Main Findings: The main findings of the study as follows: Different physical facilities such as adequate classrooms; furniture, drinking water, toilet, storage facility, and boundary wall were available in more than 66 per cent of schools. However, play ground and electricity were available in very few schools. Teaching Learning Materials such as blackboards, charts, maps, globes and models were available in almost all (100 per cent) the schools. Almost all the teachers (100 per cent) stated that they used teaching Learning Materials to provide instruction to students. In 50 per cent schools, the enrolment of students was below 100. However in 17 per cent schools, the enrolment of students was between 101-200. No student dropped out of the schools during the session 2011-12. Incentives such as Mid-Day meals and school uniform for students were available in all schools. The position of teaching staff varied from institution to institution. In majority of the schools (37 per cent) the number of teachers was 3. About 71 per cent of teachers reported that their syllabus was updated. Three different methods were followed by teachers to provide instruction to students such as storytelling, play way and project. Story telling was the popular method used by teachers.

Almost all the teachers (100 per cent) reported that ICT facilities were not available in any of the elementary schools. 88 per cent of teachers attended in-service training within three years such as Samartha, Unmesh, RTE, NCF, Unmesh II, English, Mathematics, Girls education, Uday I and II etc.

Different techniques were used by teachers to motivate the students such as praise, feedback, smile, thank you, giving gift and knowledge of result. Oriya was the medium of instruction in all schools. Annual examination, half-yearly examination and monthly test were being conducted to evaluate the performance of students. Supervision of the schools was done by B.E.O. The non-teaching assignments performed by the teachers include election duty, census duty and health camp. The steps taken up by Government of Odisha for qualitative improvement of elementary education include: infrastructural facilities, Mid-day Meals for students, dress for students, dress code for teachers, improvement of physical facilities, training of teachers, drinking water facility, separate toilets for boys and girls and finance for TLM. Ten different co-curricular activities were organized in elementary schools such as morning assembly, gardening, quiz, debate, excursion, plantation, and drill, celebration of national days, drawing and yoga. The academic performance of students indicated that 60 per cent students secured between 30 to 59 per cent of marks, 25 per cent more than 60 per cent of marks and 15 per cent secured less than 30 per cent of marks in Class V Annual Examination (2011-12). The problems in elementary schools as mentioned by teachers include: unhygienic toilets, less space for playground, less number of teachers, problem of electricity, less number of classrooms and lack of involvement of parents in school activities. The suggestions given by the teachers for improving the quality of elementary education include: separate toilet facilities for boys and girls, provision of electricity in schools, play ground, supply of newspapers, journals and magazines, provision of boundary wall, store room, appointment of more teaching staff and availability of staff quarters.

Educational Implications: On the basis of main findings of the study, it is clear that there is a need to take some effective measures to intensify proper implementation of elementary education in Odisha. The following suggestions may be given for improving the quality of elementary education in Nayagarh district of Odisha. Necessary infrastructural facilities like adequate classrooms, drinking water facility and books in the library may be available in the elementary schools for smooth functioning. All the schools need to be electrified for proper transaction of teaching learning process. Separate toilet facilities for girls and lady teachers need to be available in all elementary schools. Adequate mats for

students may be available in all the institutions. The state government may allocate adequate funds for all the above facilities. A teacher is the most influential element for improving the quality of education. The teacher is no longer a person who gives lessons, but as someone who has the ability and capacity to organize, observes, stimulate, assess and foster learning in children and to take remedial measures whenever necessary. Selection of right type of personnel on regular basis for the teaching post is very important. Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) are an important input for effective teaching learning. Adequate Teaching Learning Materials may be available in schools as per the requirement of the teachers. Each teacher may be given Rs. 2000 per year for the preparation of TLMs. All teachers are required to use TLMs for effective classroom transaction. Textbooks for the students may be available before beginning of the session. Teachers need to adopt innovative methods to motivate the students towards studies. Incentives may be provided to all the students to increase the enrolment and reduce the dropout rate. In-service education programme need to be regularly organised by the state government for the professional development of teachers. Continuous and comprehensive evaluation system may be introduced in all schools in systematic manner for the benefit of students. Co-curricular activities need to be an important part of school activities. Students may be encouraged by the teachers to participate in co-curricular activities at the block, district state and national levels.

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