



QUALITY IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: IDEAS AND INITIATIVES

Vidhu Shekhar Pandey

Junior Research Fellow, Department of Education, University of Allahabad, Allahabad

Email: vvv.net007@gmail.com

Abstract

Primary education is the first stage of formal education. The main aim of quality education in primary school is to inculcate basic knowledge about reading, writing and arithmetic of the children. It is expected that after the successful completion of the primary school education, a pupil should be able to read, write and solve simple arithmetic problems. For quality improvement, we have to re-think about the ideas and initiatives of primary education which have very crucial motivating effects on the students. Teaching-learning environment and quality of education are so unsatisfactory particularly in government controlled primary schools that teachers of those schools themselves prefer to arrange education for their children in a better run school in private sector. Due to the economic factor they have to enroll their children in government run primary schools where quality is very poor. The elite and rich groups of the society or village enroll their children in private schools where quality is presumed to be far better than the government schools. So, the clients of these public schools are the poorest of the poor, economically and socially down people. So the children belonging the marginal group are deprived from good quality education and as a result they can hardly climb ladder of development.

Keywords: Quality Education, Primary School, Children Development



[Scholarly Research Journal's](http://www.srjis.com) is licensed Based on a work at www.srjis.com

Introduction:

In recent decades India has made significant progress on access to schooling and enrollment rates in primary education but dropout rates and low levels of learning remain challenges for the state and central government. As the U.S. has a longer history of public education than India there are opportunities for India to learn from the successes and failures in the American education system and to collaborate in tackling shared challenges such as the best use of technology in primary education. Primary school enrollment in India has been a success story, largely due to various programmes and drives to increase enrollment even in remote areas. With enrollment reaching at least 96 percent since 2009, and girls making up 56 percent of new students between 2007 and 2013, it is clear that many problem of access to schooling have been addressed. Improvements to infrastructure have been a priority to achieve this and India now has 1.4 million schools and 7.7 million teachers, so that 98 percent of habitations have a primary school (class 1st to 5th) within one km. and 92 percent

have and upper primary school (class 4th to 5th) within a three Kilometer walking distance. A generally accepted definition of quality education does not exist and different end users adopt different criteria for determining the quality of primary education. In this context we discuss the quality of primary education on the basis of student learning achievement i.e. ability of read, write and do mathematics. Majority of India still lives in villages and so the topic of rural education in India is of utmost importance. Even though the number of rural students attending schools is rising, but more than half of the students in fifth grade are unable to read a second grade text book and are not able to solve simple mathematical problems.

These are a few reasons why schools have failed to educate rural India. Quality and access to education is the major concern in rural schools as there are fewer committed teachers, lack of proper text books and learning material in the schools. Though Government Schools exist, but when compared to private schools their quality is a major issue. Every village is not provided with school which means that students have to go to another village to get education. Owing to this parents usually do not send their daughters to school, leading to a failure in achieving rural education in India. Government schools are not as good and private schools are expensive. This results in a very low number of students actually clearing their secondary education taking admission in a college for further studies. In some of the government schools there is only one teacher for the entire school and if they do not show up at work, then it is a holiday. If the quality along with number of teachers and that too committed teacher can be improved in these schools, then aspiring rural children and Indian can fulfill their dreams of doing something great.

Factors Influencing Quality Education:

The ultimate objective of school improvement planning is to enhance the level of student achievement; the person who has the greatest impact on students during the school day – the teacher – plays many critical roles in the school improvement planning process. Assess students in a variety of ways and develop strategies for improving the level of student achievement.

- The selection of teacher.
- Focused professional development (empowering teachers)
- Cultural competence and culturally responsive.
- More work load on teacher.
- Improves the attendance of teaching staff.

How can we Improve Primary Education?

Government schools serve the majority of children in our country. These schools have witnessed a decline in their services, and increasingly they are accessed by the poor and the marginalized. Across India, a handful of committed individuals have led efforts to improve government schools, in the belief that they could demonstrate an enduring change in the system. The overall objective of schools improvement planning is an enhanced level of student achievement. To effect real change, however, the process needs to focus on specific priorities. Student performance improves when teachers use curriculum – delivery strategies that specifically address the needs of their students, when the school environment is positive and when parents are involved in their children’s education.

Therefore, schools should concentrate on these three areas – school environment, curriculum delivery and parental involvement. Curricular expectations are not to be measured class wise but need to be achieved by the end of a particular stage as these are long term targets of the curriculum i.e. abilities, attitudes, values etc. Learning indicators along with the pedagogical processes will help achieve these curricular expectations.

Ideas about Quality Education in Primary Schools:

Primary school improvement has been an important concept in terms of increasing competition in parallel with globalization, the need for enhancing quality education in primary level. Schools improvements aims to empower the capacity of a school for managing the change, provides a better quality education in it and raise student achievement levels (Barth, 1190; Clarke, Harris & Reynolds, 2004; Fullan, 1992; Hale, 2000). Although there are many schools improvement models applied in different countries and their unique aspects, the studies showed that most of these models share the same points (Goldenberg, 2003). Some of these ideas present the basic principles for school improvement while other’s elaborate on what should be done at which step. These ideas emphasize that without considering internal and external conditions of the school the strategies to be developed and implemented for the sake of school improvement cannot be effective (Hopkins & Harris, 1997). The ideas elaborating on quality improvement in primary school and it is assumed that organizations are monotype. The projects of this type mostly focus on the benefits of more classrooms and various instructional strategies and emphasize the dependence on the program in practice (Harris, 2000). In a study, the finding of research for 20 years, it was concluded

that for school improvement, there is a need for connecting schools with each other's and with larger societies (Ainscow, Dyson, Goldrick & West, 2012).

In the review of literature, there are various school improvement models and ideas and the researchers studying school improvement have theoretical point of views. With the assumption that they facilitate understanding the nature of school improvement practices at school level, researchers have referred to effective schools (Purkey & Smith, 1983), and the knowledge based on effective teaching and learning (Creemers & Kyria-Kides, 2008). On the other hand, some researchers describe school improvement in terms of the processes related to change with the assumption that improving the school is a way of organizational change. Finally, school improvement studies have improved in it by focusing on a narrower literature. So, the attempts for synthesizing there various theories related to school improvement to date have not reached a single inclusive theoretical prospective.

Initiatives for Enhancing Quality Education:

Primary education has been grossly neglected in our country. The UNESCO report suggests several factors for poor learning outcomes – heavy curriculum, high teacher absenteeism, and shortage of teachers leading to big classes, particularly in government schools. The report said that insufficient financing is one of the main obstacles to achieving education for all. The HRD Ministry has taken a number of initiatives including different Centrally Sponsored Schemes to enhance quality of education. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) conducts detailed periodic national surveys on learning achievement levels of children in classes III, V and VIII. Three rounds of their National Learners Achievement Survey have been completed by the NCERT over the period from 2002-03 to 2012-2013, which have revealed improvements in the overall learning levels of students. Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the State Government and UT Administration are supported on interventions to improve the quality of primary education. School improvement and teachers development is a multifaceted approach. Therefore, school reform and initiative need to be carefully planned and executed by involving all stakeholders. In the process of implementing school improvement programme, teachers play critical role in institutionalizing change initiatives. Although concerned about the quality of education, our key stakeholder has not yet realized the need to transform the day today practices at school. A number of activities have been taken into account bring about change and enhance quality education in schools.

Indian Government has pursued a fivefold strategy in 1990 to improve the quality of education in generally and of basic education in particular these includes:

- Improvement in the provision of infrastructure and human resources for primary education.
- Provisions of improved curriculum and teaching learning material.
- Improvement in the quality of teaching learning process through the introduction of child centered pedagogy.
- Attention to teacher capacity building.
- Increased focus on specification and measurement, and measurement of learners' achievement levels.

So teachers and the quality of their teaching have been given high priority and importance in this context.

Challenges in Primary Education:

In primary education several challenges faced by the learners and teachers such as:

- Most of the primary schools are shelter less.
- The schools with buildings have insufficient accommodation.
- Students mostly sit on mats.
- High pupil – teachers' ratio.
- Teaching aids are very old. ICT is still not used for teaching in primary school education, which is recognized as very effective for learning.
- The teachers of public schools often participate in political activity or other profitable activity rather than concentrating in teaching the learners.
- Resource materials are never provided in adequate quality.
- Community support is at the very low.
- A high absentee rate of the students in primary school particularly in rural areas.
- Inspection system for primary education has become only a ritual.
- Co-curricular activities have not been given due importance as the teachers of the primary school, particularly of public school and rural areas consider them as wastage of valuable time. As a result, making learning a fun for the learners is not done.

Conclusion:

The quality of education is determined by a variety of factors within the outside of education system, but teacher and teaching – learning process in class-room plays a crucial

role. The present scenario of primary school education in India where students are not in a position to read, write and do a simple arithmetic problem even after completing the primary level education. In their context learning of the student is very poor in all Indian states, whether it is educationally backward or forward and it is due to the combination of such factors like high pupil-teacher ratio, teaching aid are very old, lack of community support, high absentee rate of the students etc. To overcome this problem, government should implement the voucher system, especially in case of primary education system.

References:

- Ainscow, M., Dyson, A., Gldrick, S. & West, M. (2012). *Making schools effective for all: Rethinking the task. School Leadership & Management*, 32 (3), 197-213
- Barth, R. (1990). *Improving schools from within San Francisco*; Jossey Bass.
- Clarke, P., Harris, A. & Reynolds, D. (2004). *Challenging the challenged: Developing an improvement programme for schools facing extremely challenging circumstances. Paper presented at AERA, San Diego.*
- Creemers, B.P.M. & Kyria Kides, L. (2008). *The dynamics of educational effectiveness: A contribution to policy, practice and theory in Contemporary Schools. London: Routledge.*
- Fullan, M. (1992). *Successful school improvement the implementation perspective and beyond. Buckingham: Open University Press.*
- Goldenberg, C. (2003). *Setting for school improvement. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 50, 7-16.
- Hale, S.H. (2000). *Comprehensive school reform research-based strategies to achieve high standards. West Ed.*
- Hopkins, D., & Harris, A. (1997). *Improving the quality of education for all. Support for Learning*, 12 (4), 147-151.
- Harris, A. (2000). *What works in school improvement? Lessons from the field and future directions. Educational Research*, 42 (1), 1-11
- Purkey, S.C. & Smith, M.S. (1983). *Effective Schools: A review. The Elementary School Journal*, 83, 426-452.