



A Report on the Implementation and Impact of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan on a School in Kolkata

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ABSTRACT:

Primary education, often known as elementary education or primary school, is the first level of compulsory education that occurs between early childhood education and secondary education. India's main task is to quickly give chances for its whole people to become literate and acquire fundamental leadership and problem-solving abilities to increase production, entrepreneurship, and living standards. As a result, we may conclude that education is the method by which one can address any difficulty in one's life. The author has taken the initiative to conduct a survey on the implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan plan based on a school in Kolkata. The author has attempted to provide a clear picture of the current state of primary education, as well as some suggestions for change. The major focus is on basic education since, in an overpopulated nation like India, education is a must to alleviate all of life's challenges, and elementary education is the foundation for subsequent advancement.

Keywords- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, impact, implementation

Introduction:

Universal primary education is a precondition for a country's cultural and economic development. Elementary education, which is the cornerstone of education, is not only important for improving quality of life, but it is also required by democracy and necessary for economic success. It is required as a foundation for national integration. As a result, universal education and its attainment by all countries have become a worldwide priority. The survival, development, and protection of children is no longer a philanthropic concern; it is now a legal need. In April 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, endorsed certain attainable goals for developing more equal nations by delivering high-quality 'Education for All.' The forum made six goals, one of which was to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly females, children from low-income families, and children from ethnic minorities, have access to a comprehensive free and obligatory primary education of high quality.

In India, however, the concept of universal education is not new. Our constitution, as well as the government's subsequent actions, consistently emphasized the need for mass education and equalizing educational possibilities. In line with international commitments to provide "Education for All," India's government launched the "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" project with the goal of universalizing Elementary Education through community ownership of school systems. The government gave its approval to the project at a meeting in 2000, and it was eventually launched in 2001.

The government imposes a 2% education cess to close the gap between available plan resources and the needs to fund the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the midday meal scheme, which are the two key programmes for universalizing elementary education.

The Government of India's flagship programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, aims to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time-bound manner, as mandated by the 86th Amendment to the Indian Constitution, which makes free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years a Fundamental Right. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a community-owned school system that aims to universalize primary education. It is a reaction to the nationwide need for high-quality basic education. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan initiative also aims to give a chance for all children to improve their human potential by providing community-owned quality education in a mission style.

In India, the midday meal plan was started in 2004 for all students in classes I through IV at government and government-aided schools, alternative and innovative education centers, and the education guarantee scheme. "The whole sum collected as cess would be dedicated for education, which will inevitably entail delivering a nutritious prepared noon meal," finance minister Chidambaram declared while imposing the 2% education cess in 2004.

Education is the bedrock of one's life, and no superstructure can ever be built on top of a shaky foundation. As a result, basic education is critical. Education is the most important tool for social change. Education is the only genuine key to a nation's progress since it can meet the requirements of a changing society. Education is the only way to ensure that all members of society have equal opportunity and that the entire society has a bright future.

Why elementary education?

Social justice and equality are powerful arguments in and of themselves for universal basic education. It is a well-known fact that basic education promotes human well-being, particularly in terms of life expectancy, infant mortality, and children's nutritional health. According to studies, universal basic education has a major impact on economic growth. "It will be assured that free and compulsory education of adequate quality is offered to all children up to the age of 14 before we reach the twenty-first century," according to the National Policy of Education of 1986.

Aims of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

- (1) By 2010, give a valuable and primary education to all children aged 6 to 14.
- (2) By involving the community in the management of schools, bridge socioeconomic, regional, and gender barriers.
- (3) To provide opportunities for children to learn about and dominate their natural surroundings in order to maximize their spiritual and material potential.
- (4) To instill value-based learning, which encourages students to work together for the good of others rather than allowing them to pursue their own interests.
- (5) Recognize the importance of early childhood care and education and consider the ages of 0 to 14 as a continuum.

Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:

- (1) By 2003, all students in school, an Education Guarantee Center, an Alternative School, and a 'Back to School' camp would have been established.
- (2) By 2007, all students will have completed five years of primary school.
- (3) By 2010, all students will have completed primary school.
- (4) Emphasis on high-quality elementary education with a focus on lifelong learning.
- (5) By 2007, all gender and social category inequalities in primary education will be closed, and by 2010, all gender and social category gaps in basic education will be closed.
- (6) By 2010, universal retention will be achieved.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has two aspects:

1. It offers a comprehensive, convergent framework for implementing Elementary Education Schemes.
2. It is also a budgeted programme aimed at improving critical regions in order to attain universalization of primary education.

Objectives of the project:

This project has been undertaken with the objectives:

- (1) To study the implementation of the scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan based on a survey of a school under SSA.
- (2) To study whether SSA has been able to meet its target to provide elementary education of satisfactory quality to all children.
- (3) To study the implementation of the Mid-day meal that has been integrated into the scheme of SSA.

Methodology:

The methodology used for conducting the project included survey of a school in Kolkata under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and gathering information from print and electronic media about the development, progress, and prospect of the scheme of SSA and Mid-day meal.

The survey comprised the following:

- (1) Survey of the school premises to study the infrastructure, co-curricular activities and teaching staff and other educational facilities provided by the school.
- (2) Interview with the Headmaster of the school selected for the survey.
- (3) Application of Achievement Tests on students of classes I-IV to assess their educational progress.
- (4) Feedback from students regarding the Mid-day meal.

About the School:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has been implemented in the country with a target of providing eight years of quality education to all children in the age group 6-14 by the year 2010. SSA has been operational since 2000-2001 to provide for a variety of interventions for universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in elementary education and improving the quality of learning. SSA interventions include inter alia, opening of new schools and alternative schooling facilities, constructing of schools and additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water, provisioning for teachers, regular teacher in service and academic resource support, free textbooks and uniforms and support for improving learning achievement levels or outcome.

In the current project a survey was conducted on a school named Adarsh Hindi Primary School recognized by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education, located at 10/7D Deshpran Sashmal Road, near the Rabindra Sarobar Metro station in Kolkata. Observations were made regarding its educational facilities, infrastructure, teaching faculty,

Mid-day meal and educational progress of the students and a detailed report was made.

The school starts from 11am and runs till 3:30pm. Student strength of the school is 65 with around 10-12 absentees every day on an average. The headmaster of the school is Sri Vijay Pratap Tiwari.

The following observations were made:

Educational Facilities: The subjects which are taught in the school are English, Hindi, Social Studies, General Sciences and Mathematics. Unfortunately, there is only one teacher for teaching all the above subjects for all the standards. Educational qualification of the teacher is Higher Secondary Pass. According to the Headmaster, they are not provided with enough funds by the state government to recruit more teachers. With only one teacher it is not possible to look after each and every student in the class and attend to their personal needs and problems.

Building Structure:

The school is a small, two storied building. Each floor comprises two classrooms, each classroom around 90 square feet. The benches are broken and dirty and there is no sitting arrangement for the teacher in any of the classrooms. There is only one fan in every classroom, most of which do not function properly. Due to the absence of even windowpanes and curtains, the students have to bear the brunt of scorching heat, lashing rains and cold winds during winter.

Toilet Facilities:

No importance has been given to sanitation. There is only one toilet in the entire school. It is very dirty and unhygienic. There is only one cleaning staff. No phenyl or anti-germ liquids are used for cleaning the floors and toilet. A broom and plain water are all that they have. All these are greatly detrimental to students' health.

Drinking Water Facility:

There is no drinking water facility. There is only the school tap to quench thirst.

Co-curricular activities:

Indoor activities like singing and drawing are done in the classroom itself. For outdoor games like running, skipping, football, students walk towards a nearby field as there is no provision for a field within the school compound.

Educational progress:

A few learning achievement tests were conducted in the Adarsh Hindi Primary School to assess the educational progress among the students (N=60). The result can be seen as follows:

LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS**A) ABILITY TO NARRATE ALPHABETS FROM A TO Z**

CLASS	NO OF STUDENTS	NOT AT ALL	POORLY	PARTIALLY	COMPLETELY
1	35	-	-	-	35
2	25	-	-	6	19

B) ABILITY TO NARRATE NUMBERS FROM 1 TO 20

CLASS	NO. OF STUDENTS	NOT AT ALL	POORLY	PARTIALLY	COMPLETELY
1	35	-	-	17	18
2	25	-	-	-	25

C) READING TEST OF LOCAL LANGUAGE (HINDI)

CLASS	NO. OF STUDENTS	NOT AT ALL	POORLY	PARTIALLY	COMPLETELY
3	20	-	2	15	3
4	17	-	3	11	3

D) READING TEST OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

CLASS	NO. OF STUDENTS	NOT AT ALL	POORLY	PARTIALLY	COMPLETELY
3	20	-	5	8	7
4	17	-	4	6	7

We can also observe from the above that the higher the classes, the lesser the number of students.

Mid-day Meal:

The Mid-day meal scheme is a school meal programme of the Government of India, launched in 2004, designed to improve the nutritional status of school age children nationwide. This programme comes under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Programme since the formulation of the NPE (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992). Several new schemes for qualitative as well as quantitative improvement to primary education and reaching the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) have been initiated by the Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Department of Education.

A nationwide programme of NP-NSPE was launched on 15th August 1995. This is called the NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT TO PRIMARY EDUCATION. This programme intended to give a boost to UEE by increasing enrolment, retention, and attendance and simultaneously to make an impact on nutrition levels of students in primary classes. The ultimate aim under the programme is the provision of wholesome cooked or processed food having a calorie value equivalent to 100 grams of wheat or rice per student per school day.

The Supreme Court occasionally issue interim order regarding mid-day meals, some of which are:

a) The order regarding BASIC ENTITLEMENTS dated 28th November 2001 stated-

“Every child in every government and government-assisted primary school needs to have a prepared mid-day meal with a minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein each day of school for a minimum of 200 days”.

b) The order regarding KITCHEN SHEDS dated 20th April 2004 stated-

“The Central Government shall make provisions for construction of kitchen sheds”

c) In the order regarding PRIORITY TO DALIT COOKS dated 20th April 2004 stated-

“In appointment of cooks and helpers, preference shall be given to Dalits, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes”.

d) In the order regarding QUALITY SAFEGUARDS dated 20th April 2004 stated-

“Attempts shall be made for better infrastructure, improved facilities (safe drinking etc.), closer monitoring (regular inspection etc.) and other quality safeguards as also the improvement of the contents of the meal so as to provide nutritious meals to the primary schools”.

The nutritional guidelines for the minimum amount of food and calorie per child per day are:

ITEM	PRIMARY(I-V)	UPPER PRIMARY(VI-VII)
CALORIES	450	700
PROTEIN	12gm	20gm
RICE/WHEAT	100gm	150gm
DAAL	20gm	30gm
VEGETABLES	50gm	75gm
OIL AND FAT	5gm	7.5gm

Mid-day meal served in the Adarsh Hindi Primary School: A weekly chart of foods served under midday meal has been given by the school:

DAYS	FOOD ITEMS SERVED
Monday	Rice, mixed vegetables
Tuesday	Rice, Arhar daal, fried potatoes
Wednesday	Rice, soyabean
Thursday	Rice, matar aloo
Friday	Rice, daal, vegetables
Saturday	Rice, egg curry

Feedback from students about Mid-day meal:

The students complained that the quality of rice is very poor with occasional pebbles found in it. They do not find the mid-day meal tasty or nutritious. Moreover, no eagerness or delight has been observed among the students when the mid-day meals were served to them. The food-carrying vessels are not found to be properly washed; hence they prove to be unhygienic. The amount of food given to the students is not sufficient. Even when the students ask for more, they are not served properly. Overall, it is unsatisfactory.

There have been several articles in the print media related to midday meals which need to be focused on.

In December 2005, Delhi police seized 8 trucks laden with 2,760 sacks of rice meant for primary school children. The rice was being transported from Food Corporation of India go downs to the Bulandshahr district of New Delhi. The trucks were stopped by the police, and it was later found out that the rice was being stolen by an NGO.

In November 2006, the residents of Pembong village, 30km from Darjeeling accused a group of teachers of embezzling midday meals. In a written complaint the residents claimed that the students at the primary school had not received mid-day meals for the past year and a half.

Twenty-three children of the Dharma Sati village in Saran district on 16th July 2013 died after eating pesticide-contaminated midday meals.

A recent report has been shocking to many. There was news from Anandabazar Patrika dated 25th December 2015. At an anganwadi school named Chardhara Primary School, 60km away from nearest Godda town, the students were served midday meals of poor quality consisting of rice with radish leaves, while the radishes were taken away by the teachers to their homes. In a week the students are supposed to get egg curry for 3 days and soyabean for the remaining days. But they are served with only rice and boiled radish leaves as alleged by the guardians of the students. Radish contains a lot of protein; vitamins and it is beneficial to the students' health. The principal of the school when contacted about the incident made no comment and stated to the concerned higher authority.

There has been a few positive news as well.

Oranges, bananas were reported to be a part of the midday meal at Nagpur. However, the midday meal project falls under the jurisdiction of the central government. Hence the proposal of including oranges and bananas in the midday meal was sent on December 12, 2015, to the central government.

Mothers of government school students in Haryana would be involved in conducting quality checks of the midday meals served to children (January 8, 2016). A spokesperson of the Haryana elementary education department said that the quality and weight of food grains used for preparing midday meals should be thoroughly checked before the same are lifted from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) depots. He added that a district elementary education officer (DEEO) or a block education officer would be present at the time food grains are lifted.

AKSHAYA PATRA:

The picture is not always so grim. A glimmer of hope appears in the efforts of some organizations which have been doing valuable work promoting health and education of our future generation. One such organization is the Akshaya Patra.

The Akshaya Foundation commonly known as *Akshaya Patra* has been doing a noble job in the field of serving mid-day meals to the school students. It is a non-profit organization in India that runs a school lunch programme across the country. Their slogan is "Unlimited Food for Education". The programme embraced the vision that "No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger". Their mission is to reach out to 5 million children by 2020.

A total of around 11 Crore children across 12 Lakh schools are benefitting from this programme. As an extension of its vegetarian philosophy, Akshaya Patra does not provide eggs but by incorporating alternatives such as milk and bananas it provides meals that are prepared scientifically and with required nutritional value. The food distributed by the Akshaya Patra is perceived to be 'hygienic, nutritious, and delicious.

Following is the summary of findings of impact on students of a nutritious mid-day meal by Akshaya Patra-

1. **Increased enrollment:** The midday meal acts as a great incentive for children to come to school. As often, this meal becomes the child's only meal for the day, it also motivates parents to send their children to school.
2. **Increased attendance:** Children look forward to coming to school every day because of the mid-day meal. As the Akshaya Patra meal caters to the regional palate it further suits the taste buds of the children and draws them to attend to school.
3. **Increased concentration:** A stomach full of freshly cooked nutritious and healthy mid-day meals keeps classroom hunger at bay and increases the child's concentration in class.
4. **Improved socialization:** As the meal served by the Akshaya Patra can be consumed universally by children of all castes and communities it has fostered the habit of eating together. The intermingling has increased the unity among children of various religious and castes. It has also helped in removing divisional hierarchy in terms of social standing thereby enhancing a sense of equality among all children.
5. **Addressed malnutrition:** Through the mid-day meal Akshaya Patra is striving to meet the nutritional requirements of children such as energy, carbohydrates, proteins, and fat for school children.
6. **Empowered women:** Women have been employed by the nice of Foundation in different capacities in operations and other functional areas. Women Self-Help groups (SHG's) have also been appointed in decentralized kitchen set-up for cooking and managing the processes involved in mid-day meal preparation under the guidance of Akshaya Patra's standardized operating process. This opportunity has doubly benefitted women by boosting their self-esteem and improving their social standing.

Conclusions:

The survey has thrown up a few conclusions about the implementation and impact of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan on the school selected for the study. The impact of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and midday meal has not yielded much positive outcome in this school due to several factors.

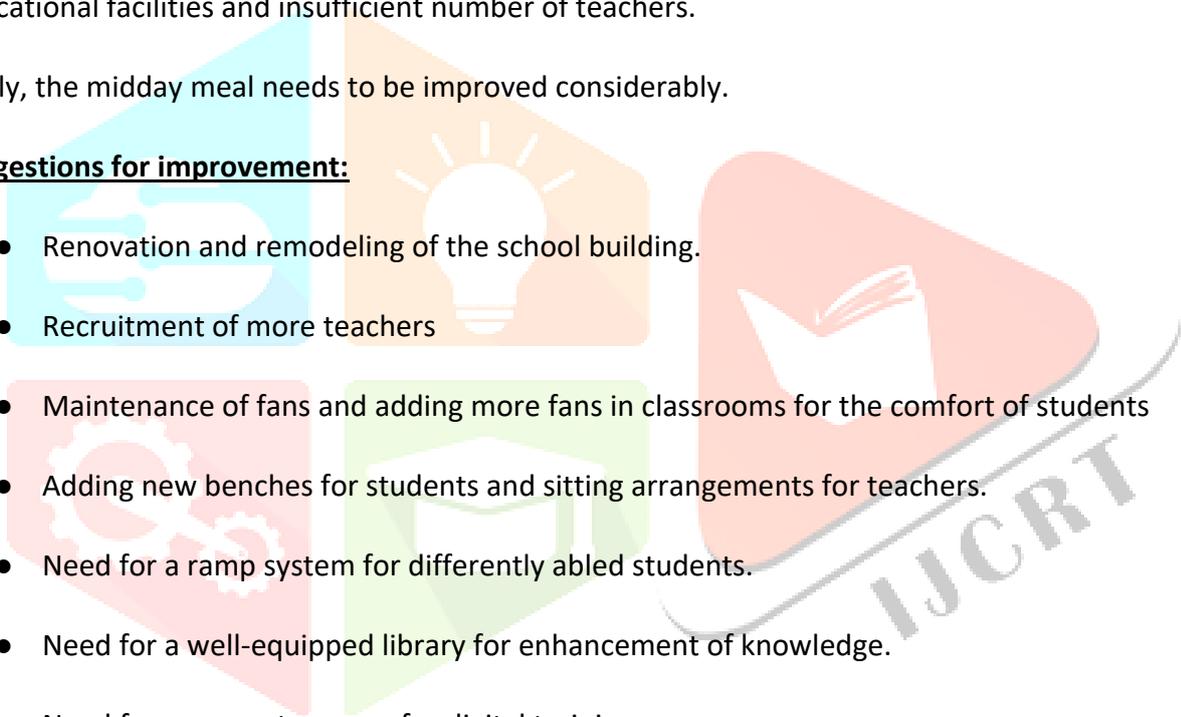
Firstly, the funding is insufficient as could be seen from the condition of the classrooms and other infrastructure.

Secondly, more teachers need to be appointed in the school. This is also linked to insufficient funding as claimed by the headmaster.

Thirdly, the educational progress of the students is not at the desired level as could be gauged from their performance and the achievement tests conducted on them. This also can be traced to the lack of educational facilities and insufficient number of teachers.

Lastly, the midday meal needs to be improved considerably.

Suggestions for improvement:

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- Renovation and remodeling of the school building.
 - Recruitment of more teachers
 - Maintenance of fans and adding more fans in classrooms for the comfort of students
 - Adding new benches for students and sitting arrangements for teachers.
 - Need for a ramp system for differently abled students.
 - Need for a well-equipped library for enhancement of knowledge.
 - Need for a computer room for digital training.
 - Need a drinking water facility with a purifier.
 - Need for a playground for conducting games and other school activities.
 - A medical room with essential medicines, first aid items with the presence of a health instructor or a trained nurse.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and midday meal scheme has been adopted by the government as model schemes in the universalization of elementary education. It is evident from our survey and media reports that the goals of providing quality education for all have not been met by these schemes though the time has run out. But we cannot deny that some progress has been achieved in certain parts of the country where there is sustained effort, dedicated individuals, adequate finance, and less corruption. Hence with constructive policies, conscious effort, proper monitoring and dedicated participation of the stakeholders

and the community at large, schools can provide better facilities and the beneficiaries of the schemes can hope for a better future.

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