

AWARENESS OF KEY CONCEPTS OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF VARANASI CITY

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Abstract

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a centrally sponsored integrated flagship scheme launched by the Central government for the universalization of elementary education (UEE) with a specific time frame. The main thrust of SSA is on community participation, decentralized planning and better quality of education. It covers the entire country in a mission mode and was launched in India in the year 2001-2002 in collaboration with the state governments and local self governments. The programme aims to provide useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group. The present research paper focuses on the status of awareness among primary school teachers (PST) of Varanasi city towards key concepts of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and its initiatives in providing quality education.

Key words: - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Elementary Education, Quality Education, Primary School Teachers.

Education is the mirror of the society and is the seed as well as flower of the socio-economic development. It transcends human being from ignorance to enlightenment from the shade of social backwardness to the light of social amelioration and the nation from underdevelopment towards faster social and economic development. India has the obvious distinction of having one of the largest elementary education systems in the world. With more than 15 crore children enrolled and having more than 3 lakh teachers, the elementary education is expanding in the country on a significant scale. The literacy rate in the country has been increased from a meagre 18.33% in 1951 to 74.5% in 2011. (Annual Report 2011-2012 Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi). In reiterating its stand for universalization of primary education in the country, the 86th amendment to the constitution of India has made free and compulsory education to the children of 6 - 14 age groups a fundamental right.

Elementary Education sector is the most important sub-sector of the education system, laying the foundations of the education edifice. The goal of universal elementary education, encompassing universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps, and improvement in the quality of education, was sought to be achieved through the country's flagship programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in 2001-02. Over the years, SSA has contributed significantly to universalization of access and bridging of gender and social category gaps in elementary education.

Despite decades of educational reform through various schemes such as Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), it was realized that a vast majority of children were still out of the educational stream and efforts made by the states were insufficient to achieve universal elementary education. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) was conceived as a centrally sponsored scheme at the end of the Ninth Five Year Plan to improve the educational status in the country through interventions designed to improve accessibility by laying down a framework for achieving the goals of universal enrolment through time bound targets and was conceived in a mission mode.

Over the past two decades, India has made significant advances in school education in respect to overall literacy, access and enrolment in schools, and infrastructure. (Pushkar, 2003). The two major accomplishments in the recent years is the political recognition of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) as a legitimate demand and the state commitment towards UEE in the form of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education. This has led to a higher demand of qualified elementary school teachers. Over the past decade, access to education was one of the only topics that were being addressed by the Government of India. However, increasingly the shortcomings of what actually takes place inside a classroom has come to the forefront of the national debate on education.

With the expansion of the government schooling system in India, teachers have been recruited massively over the past two decades. As a result, the average profile of teachers in the country has changed in many ways. (Tiwari, 2012). Teachers are undoubtedly the most crucial component of schooling system. Hence no education reform effort is effective unless the competency of the teachers is ensured. Teacher professional development should hence be considered a national priority from various social and economic perspectives.

Need of the Study

Teachers are the pillars of education system. Qualitative training input leading to value addition amongst teachers is a way to enhance quality teaching learning process. Teacher training is a continuous process under SSA. Teachers have a broader role and crucial responsibility in achieving UEE. It is quite important to target the teachers. Unless the teachers prepare themselves to adopt the new teaching pedagogies, no improvement in the existing standard of education being imparted in our schools can be achieved. It is necessary that all the teachers teaching elementary classes be fully oriented under SSA. Teacher training programmes for in service / freshly recruited / un-trained teachers should be regularly organized at district level. The main objective of the teacher training should be to improve the knowledge of teachers regarding curricular and co-curricular activities and to make teaching learning process more effective, joyful and interesting.

The basic rationale of the study comes from the importance of teachers in education system as they are one of the most important components of our society who help in overall development of their students. For this it is necessary that the teacher themselves should be aware about various government plans and schemes related to education especially elementary education.

Though the plethora of studies were conducted on SSA and PST viz., Desai (1961), Dandekar (1965); Saini (1980); Mittal and Nand (1992); Pushkar (2003); Sahay (2006); Singh (2008); Shukla (2011); Tiwari (2012) and Kumar (2013). Imperatively, it was found that none of these was directly dealing with the awareness of the key concepts of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan among PST of Varanasi city. Hence there is identified gap and lack of knowledge related to present problem. Therefore this study may be considered as very contextual and timely to fulfill the said gap of knowledge.

Keeping in view the importance and role of Primary School Teachers (PST) to society, there are some questions that need to be answered -

- ❖ Whether primary school teachers of Varanasi city who are one of the most important components of SSA are themselves aware towards its key concepts?
- ❖ Is there any difference in awareness among primary school teachers of Varanasi city coming from different background?

The present study will be an attempt to answer the above questions.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the awareness of key concepts of SSA among primary school teachers of Varanasi city.
2. To study the variation, if any, in awareness of key concepts of SSA among primary school teachers of Varanasi city with respect to their following personal variables:-
 - 2.1. Gender - Male / Female
 - 2.2. Level of education - Undergraduate / Postgraduate
 - 2.3. Inhabitation - Rural / Urban
 - 2.4. Streams - Language / Science / Humanities.
 - 2.5. Category - Reserved / General

Research Hypothesis

Following research hypothesis was formulated to achieve the second objective of the study-

H₁. Awareness of key concepts of SSA among Primary School Teachers (PST) of Varanasi city varies with their personal variables such as level of education, streams of education, gender inhabitation and category.

Null Hypothesis

On the basis of above research hypothesis, following null hypothesis was formulated -

H₀₁. There is no significant difference among PST regarding the awareness of key concepts SSA with reference to the following personal variables-

H_{01.1}. Gender - Male / Female

H_{01.2}. Level of Education - Undergraduate / Postgraduate

H_{01.3}. Inhabitation - Rural / Urban

H_{01.4}. Streams of education - Language / Science / Humanities

H_{01.5}. Category - Reserved / General

Method of the Study

In the present study descriptive survey method of educational research has been used to study the awareness of PST towards SSA.

Population and Sample for the Study

The population selected for the purpose of this study was of the primary school teachers who were teaching in the classes I - V in schools of Varanasi city during the session 2013-2014.

Purposive cum incidental sampling method was used to select the sample. The sample of the present study consists of 72 primary school teachers teaching in Nagar Nigam schools of Varanasi city.

Tool used for the Study

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan Appraisal Inventory (SSAAI) was developed by the investigator to study the awareness of the primary school teachers towards key concepts of SSA. The inventory

consists of six areas, viz. Concept/Rational (CR), Alternatives (A), Objectives (O), Coverage (C), Components (CO) & Prospects (P). On the basis of the opinion of the experts, it was concluded that these selected six areas were fairly revealing, representative and would cover the requisite dimension of the awareness towards SSA. The final draft of the inventory included 30 items which were arranged randomly.

Scoring

This inventory had maximum 30 marks. One mark for each right answer was given and zero mark for wrong answer was allotted. No negative marking was there.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

Table-1 : Awareness of PST towards SSA

N	Mean	S.D.
72	14.95	4.37

The overall awareness of PST towards key concepts of SSA has been found to be of average level. As it is clear from the above table that the mean is 14.95 and the SD is 4.37. While the maximum marks in the inventory would be 30. So data in the table-1 is showing average awareness towards SSA among PST of Varanasi city.

In order to examine whether the awareness of PST of Varanasi city towards the key concepts of SSA differ on the variations of socio-educational variables i.e. gender, level of education, inhabitation, category and academic discipline/ streams, various categories concerning aforesaid groups were prepared and pertaining data were placed accordingly. After the suitable statistical treatment the following results have been drawn and are being reported below group wise in the following table-

Table 2 - Statistical Treatment of Collected Data

S.No	Variable	Category	PST	Total	Mean	S.D.	t-value/f-value	LOS(0.05)
1.	Gender	Male	32	72	16.87	4.4	7.063	Significant
		Female	40		13.55	3.45		
2.	Level of Education	Undergraduate	42	72	14.12	4.36	3.128	Significant
		Postgraduate	30		15.70	4.56		
3	Inhabitation	Rural	44	72	13.60	5.50	4.09	Significant
		Urban	28		15.79	4.52		
4	Category	Reserved	41	72	14.74	4.36	0.414	Not Significant
		General	31		14.95	4.48		
5	Streams	Language	24	72	-	-	1.08	Not Significant
		Science	20		-	-		
		Humanities	28		-	-		

Findings and Conclusions

On the basis of the findings from Table-2, the following conclusions can be drawn from the present study-

1. The overall awareness of key concepts of SSA among PST of Varanasi city has been found average.
2. There is significant difference between the mean scores of male and female PST. Hence, it may be concluded that gender has proved to be the significant determinant concerning the awareness of PST of Varanasi city towards the key concepts of SSA under present study.
3. Course of study (UG/PG) also has been found significant determinant of awareness of PST of Varanasi city towards the key concepts of SSA.
4. Inhabitation (Rural/Urban) is also reporting significant variation among the awareness of the respondents.
5. Category (reserved/general) of PST has appeared to be a not significant determinant of awareness towards the key concepts of SSA under this study.
6. Mean differences regarding streams of study was examined on the basis of the analysis of variance. The application of the analysis revealed that stream wise difference was not significant at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, it can be concluded that streams of PST are not a significant determinant concerning the awareness of PST of Varanasi city towards the key concepts of SSA.
7. There was significant difference among PST regarding the awareness of SSA with reference to variables viz. gender, level of education and inhabitation. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. While there was no significant difference among PST regarding the awareness of SSA with reference to variables viz. category and streams. Therefore, the null hypothesis may be accepted partially.

Implications

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the awareness of the primary school teachers of Varanasi city towards the key concepts of SSA. This study also attempted to compare the awareness of PST with reference to different variables like gender, level of education, inhabitation, academic discipline and category. The study has a wide range of implications-

1. This study is useful in knowing the existing level of awareness of key concepts of SSA among PST of Varanasi city.
2. Special activities like debates, discussions, seminars, field survey etc. should be organized to develop awareness among PST.
3. This study is fruitful for the policy makers and planners for creating more awareness among PST.

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