

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - Critical Analysis

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Social Issues Education 13

Launched in 2000-2001, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is **Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE)** in a time

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bound manner, as mandated by 86th amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory Education to the Children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right.

SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations.

The programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants.

Existing schools with inadequate teacher strength are provided with additional teachers, while the capacity of existing teachers is being strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching-learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at a cluster, block and district level.

SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide (Quoted from MHRD website).

The SSA is being implemented through several sub-missions like 'sub-mission on teacher training', 'sub-mission on social mobilisation', sub-mission on capacity building', the 'Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat' programme to improve learning outcomes etc.

With the passage of the RTE Act, changes have been introduced in the SSA to keep it in line with the objectives of RTE. SSA is the main implementation instrument for RTE Act, 2009.

Achievements of SSA

- As per Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) data for 2014-15, Gross enrolment ratio (GER) stands at 98.85% for boys and 101.43% for girls which indicates universal enrolment at primary level. At upper primary level the GER is 87.71% for boys and 95.29% for girls.
- Total enrolment in elementary schools has risen from 18.7 crore in 2009 to 19.76 crore in 2014-15.
- The pupil teacher ratio (PTR) has risen from 32 in 2009-10 to 25 in 2014-15. Also, nearly 63% of government schools have PTR as per RTE norms i.e. 30:1 for primary level and 35:1 for upper primary.
- Number of out of school children has come down from 134 lakhs in 2005 to 61 lakhs in 2013.
- As per UDISE 2014-15, the average annual dropout rate has come down from 6.76% in 2009 to 4.34% in 2014 at primary level.
- As per UDISE 2014-15, the transition rate from primary to upper primary has gone up from 85 % in 2009 to 90% in 2014.
- The gender parity index has reached at 1.02 at primary level and 1.06 at upper primary level.
- At elementary level the enrolment of SC children stands at 19.80% which is more than their share in population (16.6% as per census, 2011).
- Similarly, at 10.47% the enrolment level for ST children is higher than their share in population.
- As per UDISE 2014-15 around 23.18 lakh children with special needs have been brought into the fold of education (in formal schools, or through home based tutoring, or by school readiness programmes). The SSA focuses on teacher training, aids and appliances for children with special needs.
- Under the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) component of SSA, 3600 schools have been opened specifically targeting drop out girls from regions with low literacy levels and regions with high share of minority and SC/ST population. These schools today enroll close to 3.5 lakh girls.

Compliance on Infrastructure standards is as follows-

- 98% of habitations have a primary school within one kilometer and 92% have an upper primary school within three kilometers of walking distance.
- 96% of schools have drinking water facility.
- Now every government school have separate toilet for girls and boys.
- 72.24% of schools have ramp facility for differently-abled.

- 54% of schools have a playground.
- 58.44% schools have a boundary wall.
- 86% schools have a kitchen shed for cooking mid-day meals.

Recent initiatives under SSA to improve quality of education

- Almost all the states have adopted curriculum reforms under the National Curriculum Framework proposed by the NCERT. This includes changes in pedagogy, assessment and teacher training so as to make the learning process more rewarding.
- Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat initiative has been launched to improve comprehension and arithmetic skills of students so as to improve the learning outcomes. Under this sub-mission, special material has been prepared for the Tribal children to bridge language and learning gaps.
- Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan has been launched to encourage and motivate children in science, mathematics and technology.
- National Programme on School Standards and Evaluation (NPSSE) has been launched to evaluate the performance of schools in terms of quality of education, teachers' performance and learning outcomes. Such an evaluation is to be followed by remedial measures.

Shortcomings of SSA

Despite these achievements of the SSA, keeping students in school throughout their schooling career is a challenge as dictated by high dropout rates. Nationally 29% of students dropout before completing five years of primary schooling and 43% dropout before finishing upper primary school. The high school completion rate is only 42%. These figures sum up to reveal that India has 1.4 million out of school children in the age group of 6-11.

There is vast shortage of teachers across all the levels. The primary schools need additional 689000 teachers to fulfill the RTE norms for Pupil teacher ratio.

Even though under the Swacch Vidyalaya Mission (Sub mission under Swacch Bharat Mission) all schools now have a designated girls' and boys' toilet, a closer scrutiny reveals that only 53% of such girls' toilets are functional.

The provisions of SSA and the RTE have some under most severe criticism for poor quality of learning across all levels of schooling. As per Pratham's ASER reports, close to 78% students in Class III and 50% students of class V cannot read a class II text. Only 25% of class III students are able to solve a two digit subtraction problem. Alarming, about 20% of class II students cannot recognize numbers up to 9.

There is lack of accountability under SSA which manifests itself in poor learning outcomes and poor attendance rates of teachers.

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