

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN: MAJOR CHALLENGES

Dr. Afifa Aisha Rahmat*

(Abstract)

The core of Human Resource Development is education, which plays a remarkable role in the socio-economic development of the Country. Development of the citizens is depend on the quality basic education leads to a better quality life. Good quality education is the foundation of new discoveries, knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship that trigger growth and prosperity of the individual as well as that of a nation. Government has started SSA in a mission mode program to provide elementary education to all children between the age of 6-14. Program succeeded to a large extent but could not achieve its objectives. Implementation has certain flaws which have to be identified and corrective measures should be taken. This paper highlights the challenges have been faced by sarva shiksha abhiyan.

Key words: development, quality education, people participation, inclusive approach, challenges.

*** Guest Faculty, Public Administration Program, Department of Political Science, BBAU, LUCKNOW**

Full Paper

A strong education system is the cornerstone of any country's growth and development. Education, has a great social importance specially in the modern and complex societies. The primary aim of education is to maintain individual and societal improvement. . Education plays a crucial role in the social and individual progress. Social progress clearly indicates a general development in the community in terms of economic, social, cultural aspects. education is among the basic foundations of socio-economic development. Development is the central purpose of any government specially for the third world and underdeveloped countries. Education encourages democracy. democracy in any large and complex society depends on literacy. Literacy allows full participation of the people in democratic processes. Literacy is a product of education. Educational system has this economic as well as political significance. Development is not possible without citizen 's participation. Despite the second largest population in the world India could not be able to convert its population liability into human capital in the absence of strong formal education system. India has so many problem with its elementary education system that can be classified as structural and behavioural.

India's commitment to free and compulsory elementary education and literacy for all dates back to the drafting of the nation's constitution. Article 45 of the constitution stipulates that the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years, and these goals were re-examined and reframed in 1986 when the National Policy on Education was instigated. The National Policy on Education 1986 and Programme Of Action 1992 also accorded top priority for achieving the goals of Universal Elementary Education with the world Declaration on education for all (EPA) adopted in Jometin in 1990. This new policy led to the adoption of several new programmes, including "Operation Blackboard" (which sought to improve access to schools and infrastructure in schools) and the setting of minimum levels of learning for each grade in primary school. Due to these interventions, initiated by Government of India and the respective state Governments, there has been considerable progress in providing access, improving retention and the quality improvement in primary education sector. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a flagship programme of Government of India to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE), covering the whole country in a mission mode. SSA has

been launched in 2001-2002 in partnership with the State Governments and Local Self Governments. SSA aims to provide elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an attempt to fill this vacuum and covers all the districts in the country unlike the earlier programmes on elementary education. The programme covers the whole gamut of elementary education sector and is flexible enough to incorporate new interventions like specific interventions for girls, e.g., NPEGEL, Kasturba Gandhi Programme. The programme focuses on bridging gender and social category gaps at elementary education level with time bound objectives. SSA is an umbrella programme covering other programmes like District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish, Operational Blackboard, etc. The SSA became the most comprehensive among all efforts initiated by the Government of India before 2010 and was approved by the union cabinet in November 2000 as a centrally-sponsored scheme.

It is an initiative to universalize and improve quality of education through decentralized and context specific planning and a process based, time bound implementation strategy. Foreign assistance was accepted for several projects which aimed at extending the coverage of primary education in India and improving its quality in innovative ways. SSA adopts, “the bottom-up” process of planning, wherein the felt needs of the served communities and educational needs of learners are well taken care of and the plan fits into the broad framework of SSA. In view of the fact that the desired improvement and sustenance of the improved efficiency level cannot be achieved without the active involvement of the community in the schooling system, SSA has emphasized the involvement of local people & stakeholders in planning. This also ensures reflection of local specificity, which is essential for achieving the goals of the programme.

The need to address inadequacies in retention, residual access, particularly of unreached children, and the questions of quality are the most compelling reasons for the insertion of Article 21A in the Constitution of India..The 86th Constitutional Amendment of 2002 led to inclusion of a new Article 21-A in part III of the Constitution that made free and compulsory education to all children of 6 to 14 years of age. It is imperative to give good quality elementary education to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. With the launch of RTE, SSA became the main vehicle for the implementation of RTE Act. This is a fundamental shift, as the RTE Act is a

legal framework, and its provisions for free and compulsory elementary education are legally enforceable matters of law. This is a crucial and fundamental distinction between SSA as it was and SSA post- RTE, heralding important changes in the ways that education must be conceptualized and delivered. With the passing of the Act, the MHRD issued a new SSA framework, stating: “The changes are not merely confined to norms for providing teachers or classrooms, but encompass the vision and approach to elementary education as evidenced in the shift to child entitlements and quality elementary education.” The Implementation Framework of the SSA has in fact been revised to coordinate with the provisions of the RTE Act. A comprehensive monitoring mechanism has also been put in place to ensure smooth implementation of the SSA.

Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

- All children to be in schools, Education Guarantee Scheme centres, alternate schools, back-to-school camps by 2003;
- all children to complete five years of primary schooling by 2007;
- all children to complete eight years of schooling by 2010;
- focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life;
- bridge all gender and social disparities at the primary stage by 2007 and at the upper primary level by 2010;
- and universal retention by 2010..(planning commission)document for reference

The major characteristics of SSA are:

- A programme with a clear time frame for universal elementary education.
- A response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country.
- An opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education.
- An effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum Level Education Committees, Parents' Teachers' Associations, Mother Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grass roots level structures in the management of elementary schools.
- An expression of political will for universal elementary education across the country.
- A partnership between the Central, State and local government
- An opportunity for States to develop their own vision of elementary education.

Basic Features of SSA

- Institutional reforms in states.
- Sustainable financing in partnership with states (IX Plan 85:15, X Plan 75:25, After X plan 50:50).
- Community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization.
- Institutional capacity building for improvement in quality.
- Community based monitoring with full transparency in all aspects of implementation.
- Community based approach to planning with a habitation as a unit of planning.
- A mainstreaming gender approach.
- Focus on the educational participation of children from the SC/ST, religious and linguistic minorities, etc.
- Thrust on quality and making education relevant.
- Recognition of critical role of teacher and focus on the human resource development needs of teachers
- Preparation of District Elementary Education Plans reflecting all governmental and non-governmental investments.

The right to free and compulsory education Act 2009 provides a justice able legal framework that entitles all children between the age of 6-14 years free and compulsory admission attendance and completion of elementary education. It provides for children's right to an education of equitable quality, based on principles of equity and non discrimination. Most importantly, it provides for children's right to an education that is free from fear, stress and anxiety.

Education has an inherent value for the development of the society and helps in the realization of a better social order. Education and development are the two sides of same coin. Greater literacy and basic education help individuals to make better use of available economic opportunities. The Government has taken a major initiative by launching the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, which aims at universalisation of elementary education within a given time frame, in partnership with states. These initiatives led to significant spatial and numerical expansion of elementary schools in the country. Today, access and enrolment at the primary stage of education have reached very close to universal levels. The number of out-of-school children at the

elementary level has reduced significantly. The gender gap in elementary education has narrowed and the percentage of enrolled children belonging to scheduled castes and tribes has increased successively. Quality is the prime concern of education. Data and figures shows that enrolment and retention rate in schools increases day by day but the quality remains a primary concern. Quality is the biggest challenge for the SSA despite the appointment of appropriate number of teachers the quality of their training is an important issue. Himachal Pradesh's initiative for "learning standards" is worth notice which should inspire other states. The implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan will result in a significant increase in the number of children completing elementary education. It is important that the Centre make adequate provision of funds for the fulfillment of the objectives of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and this has to be backed by a complementary on the part of the states. Resource budgeted for education is not an expenditure but a crucial and profitable investment. The programme cannot succeed without proper utilisation of the available funds. SSA envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and PRIs, as well as accountability and transparency to the community. Community ownership of schools which was envisaged as the backbone for the successful implementation of the program at the grassroot level has met with partial success. The funds that are allocated for SSA are misutilized.

There is also a need for capacity building at all levels to make the programme self-sustainable. Improvement in quality requires a sustainable support system of resource persons and institutions. Infrastructural facilities are still far behind the expectations and need. Adequate structural arrangement is the Basic requirement for any policy /program to be successful .after 70 years of independence we are not able to provide the basic facilities to the government school to draw the attention of local people. School must serve the purpose of education whether in public domain or private domain. Government schools should shift their focus from literacy to skill development which in a broader context is helpful in economic development as well. Education is a tool that helps in developing a perspective to understand and analyse any phenomenon. Government should focus on education in a wider perspective and the real goals of education. Effective mechanisms have to be evolved to transfer responsibility for funds and personnel to PRIs so as to assign greater role to them as envisaged in the Constitution. . Government has started so many schemes to attract the people towards the school but could not achieve the

desired results. Objectives of the education can not be achieved without the participation of all stake holder— the central government, the states, local government bodies, teachers, parents, NGOs, academic institutions and the children themselves. . The parents individually and community collectively has to play a positive role in elementary education. Parents should send their ward daily to school while the teacher should be made accountable for learning outcome of the student . Administration must also be responsive to the needs of the elementary education system. Upliftment of primary education system is not a one dimension activity, without active citizen participation it is not possible for the government to achieve the goals of education. The implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with the involvement of all the stakeholders must ultimately result in a transparent and broad-based system of education.

The need to impart value-based education to the children at the elementary stage can hardly be overemphasised. The essential elements of such education should be based on the development of concern towards the needs of society and the nation among the children. In this contemporary world, the value should also be based on the functional utility of education and should highlight the dignity of labour. The idea of creation of wealth should be incorporated into the education system. The most important contribution of education is not only to upgrade the living standards of citizens but also to enable them to become better citizens. In addition to being a human right, education today is a prerequisite for development and also an effective means for both taking knowledge-based decisions and improving democracy. Education improves and strengthens developmental capacities of individuals, communities, groups, institutions, and countries.

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