

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Introduction

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme of Government of India to attain Universal Elementary Education (UEE), covering the entire country in a mission mode. SSA has been launched in 2001-2002 in partnership 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 by 2010. 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. The programme lays emphasis on bridging all gender and social category gaps at elementary education level with time bound objectives.

A number of programmes were launched during the last four decades for universalisation of elementary education. Some of these efforts have been in the field of primary education and a few also covering upper primary sector. Due to these interventions, initiated by G.O.I and the respective state governments, there has been considerable progress in providing access, improving retention and the quality of improvement in primary education sector. Quality improvement still remains a major concern, especially for upper primary sector.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is an attempt to fill this vacuum and cover all the districts in the country unlike the earlier programmes on elementary education.

Policies before SSA

■ Policies on Education after Independence ⇒ After independence, several committees and commissions were required to review the educational problems and make recommendations in order to adjust it to the changing needs, aspirations of people, structure and strategy of education. With a view to fulfill all these objectives, the Central and State Governments have been attempting to give a concrete shape to various programmes under the Five-year Plans.

● University Education Commission (1948-49) ⇒ The setting up of the University Education Commission popularly known as the Radhakrishnan Commission in 1948 was a major landmark for enunciating the goals and objectives of Higher education in Independent India.

● Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) ⇒ On September 23, 1952, the Government of India appointed the Secondary Education Commission/Mudaliar Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. A.L. Swami Mudaliar. The report, submitted by the commission, gave a broader view about the educational problems of Indians and proposed to increase efficiency of production.

● Indian Education Commission/Kothari Commission (1964-66) ⇒ The commission was followed by the appointment of the Mudaliar Commission under the chairmanship of D. S. Kothari. It was entrusted with the task of dealing with all aspects and sectors of education.

● National Policies on Education ⇒ **1968** ⇒ In 1968 the Government of India has formulated the National Policy on Education, in response to the recommendations of Kothari Commission.

1986 ⇒ On April 20, 1986, a new educational policy was placed before the Indian Parliament for consideration and approval.

1992 ⇒ The NPE and its Programme of Action (POA), which was the result of deliberations, consultations and consensus was reviewed and updated in 1992.

■ The recommendations of those commissions could not be implemented in the education system entirely. After that, as an intervention programme, SSA started in 2002 and SSA has been operational since 2000-2001. However, its roots go back to 1993-94, when the District Primary Education Programme was launched, with an aim of achieving the objective of universal primary education.

Aims and Objectives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:-

- Aims →
- To provide useful and elementary education for all children in the 6-14 age group.
 - To bridge social, regional and gender gaps with the active participation of community in the management of schools.
 - To allow children to learn about and master their natural environment in order to develop their potential both spiritually and materially.
 - To inculcate value-based learning which allows children an opportunity to work for each other's well being rather than to permit more selfish pursuits.
 - To realize the importance of Early Childhood Care and education and to look at the 0-14 age as a continuum.

Objectives →

- All children in School / Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, 'Back-to-School' camp by 2003.

- All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007.
- All children complete of elementary schooling by 2010.
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
- Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.

Policy Formulation of SSA: A Community based planning process.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a comprehensive and integrated flagship programme of the Government of India led by then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was launched in 2001-2002 in partnership with the State and Local Self Governments. It envisages the bottom-up approach of planning as it reflects the reality at the grassroots level. Hence, the planning process is curated to be participatory in nature not only to create a sense of ownership and awareness among the stakeholders but also to help in the capacity building of personnel at various levels. The plan, therefore, reflects local specificity as a result of the consultative meetings and interaction with the community and target groups.

The selection of suitable persons for inclusions in the planning teams is perhaps the most crucial element in plan formulation.

The starting point includes the creation of a core-group of governmental and non-governmental persons, entrusted with the formulation and implementation of SSA. Besides Educational Department functionaries, these teams could comprise of faculty members of DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, NGO representatives, etc.

The Habitation level planning team should give wider representation to grassroots level structure including PRIs and VEC, community leaders, teachers and parents. This is done to strengthen or build community-school linkages.

There would be core planning teams at block and district level. At the district level, there could be a larger advisory body. This body usually comprise of representatives of various departments like Education, Health, Public Works, Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, Tribal Welfare, PHED, NGOs etc.

The core planning teams receive training that are of paramount importance. Other than these bodies, the SIS or the State Implementation Societies also undertake intensive monitoring. The Community based policy formulation of SSA is known to have enhanced the transparency of the entire process.

Features of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) -

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has two aspects -

- ① It provides a wide convergent framework for implementation of elementary education schemes.
- ② It is also a programme with budget provision for strengthening vital areas to achieve universalisation of elementary education.

Some of the basic features of SSA are as follows -

- 1) Institutional Reforms - As part of the SSA, institutional reforms will be carried out in order to improve the delivery system for elementary education.
- 2) Sustainable financing -> Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan calls for a long term sustainable financing in partnership with states.
- 3) Community ownership -> SSA involves community ownership of school based interventions through effective decentralization.
- 4) Institutional Capacity building -> It conceives a major capacity building role for national and state level institutions like NIEPA / NCERT / NCTE / SCERT / SIEMAT for improvement in quality.
- 5) Community based monitoring with full transparency -> It involves for a monitoring system with full transparency in all aspects of implementation. The Educational Management Information System (EMIS) will correlate school level data with community based information from micro planning and surveys. Besides this, every school will have a notice showing all the grants received by the school.

Success Of SSA

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Both Central Government and State Governments have held the responsibilities to implement the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan properly. As a result, India has improved in many ways. Those are -

- 1) Students attendance rates ~~in~~ have improved in educational institutes. 62% of the rural ~~in~~ schools reported average attendance of more than 75% as against 68% of urban schools.
- 2) 70% of the out of school children in the villages and 84% in the urban slums were willing to attend schools.
- 3) The expectations of free uniforms, free textbooks and scholarships were fulfilled.
- 4) The enrolment ratio of girls in education improved significantly resulting in gender parity ratio of 0.89 in rural and 0.82 in urban areas.
- 5) The infrastructural facilities improved impressively. 90% of the schools are now able to provide drinking water and all schools have blackboards except a few schools in Himachal Pradesh.
- 6) Many schools got grants to buy computers for computer education for students.
- 7) The mid-day meal initiative and scholarships under SSA, have decreased the percentage of drop-out students.

Problems while implementing SSA

Increase of dropout :- 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%.

Shortage of Teachers :- The primary schools need additional 68000 teachers to fulfill the RTE norms for pupil teacher ratio.

Poor quality of learning :- As per Pratham's ASER reports, close to 78% students in class III and 50% students of class V can't read a class II text. Alarmingly, about 20% of class II students can't recognize numbers upto 9.

Lack of accountability :- It means the manifestation in poor learning outcomes and poor attendance rates of teachers.

Poor construction of primary school :- Schools without proper infrastructure and facilities, termed as ill-equipped schools, may not be in a position to impart education properly and the quality of education in such schools will be poor.

Contemporary Condition of Education

- According to the Ministry of HRD, over 1.4 million schools and 50,000 higher educational institutions are operating in India. Out of 907 universities, there are 399 state universities, 126 deemed-to-be universities, 48 central and 334 private universities. As per Census 2011, over 26% of India's population is still illiterate, compared to 4% in China. According to Educational Statistics at a Glance (ESAG) 2018, girl's Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) is lower than that of boys at the higher educational level. NSSO 71st round (2014) states that drop-out rates are very high for boys at the secondary school level.
- 2015 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reflects the poor quality of education.
- Education policies in India are focused on inputs rather than on learning outcomes.
- Issues with teachers - teacher shortages, local politics, corruption in teacher appointment, defects in teacher training, socio-cultural factors like caste division, cynical attitude towards the teaching profession.
- Inadequate public spending. It has still not reached 6% of GDP, as was recommended by the Kothari Commission way back in 1964.
- Inadequate employable skill of youth in India as they lack relevant industry-level skills.
- Sports education is grossly neglected area in Indian education scenario.
- Sprawling of an unregulated private channel, both organized and unorganized, which is also spreading in the rural areas, has led to inequitable access, uneven quality and commercialization of Early Childhood Education (ECE).
- India's higher education system is of a linear model with very little focus on specialization. Poor governance, mindless over-regulation is widespread in this sector.
- An increasing trend of bright students choosing foreign institutes over Indian institutes for higher studies, has resulted in 'brain drain'.

Conclusion:-

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 students. In this contemporary world, the value should also be based on the functional ~~and~~ 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 decision and improving democracy.

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