“EDUCATION FOR ALL” IN JALPAIGURI WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INFRASTRUCTURE & RTE ACT, 2009: CURRENT STATUS & RECENT INITIATIVES

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ABSTRACT

Several programmes were designed to achieve the goal of universalization of elementary education (UEE) which is based on multiple factors. Infrastructure or civil works is one of the major parameters to influence the Sarva Shiksha Mission (SSM) in achieving UEE. It is admitted that, effectiveness of the existing infrastructure for elementary education is the debatable & challenging issue. The present paper is an attempt to evaluate the role of civil works in SSM and also to emphasize the need for better infrastructure that would provide quality education in school centric environment. The entire analysis is based on the District Information system for Education (DISE) and school report card which are published by National University of Educational planning & Administration (NUEPA).

Besides, another legislation effort of Govt. of India is the introduction of “Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education, Act 2009” (RTE Act) to secure the access to elementary education. The present paper also investigates, the comparative differences between west Bengal & Jalpaiguri in order to realize the implementation of the act in terms of difference performance indicators which are the most crucial of elementary education.

Keywords: elementary education, infrastructure/civil works, RTE Act

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination in social and economic progress in any civilized society could be cracked by education. Education helps to develop functional & analytical ability for individuals’. Involvement in education do not only increase the efficient, it also helps to lead a quality and societal individual life. Elementary education is the base of our education system. During this period, students are encouraged to think independently and to develop basic values of social life. To achieve this, Government of India made constitutional right to provide free and compulsory education to all children until age of 14 in the year 1950. This policy was strengthen by the direct involvement of the Central Govt. through Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the year 2001. But, of course State Government also played a very significant role in respect of sharing financial expenditure and implementing education goals under SSA. The amount of money spent on infrastructure, stipulated in SSA budget to 30% share in infrastructure and West Bengal allotted 18% of the SSA budget to the infrastructure and spent 90% of its allocation in the year 2013-14. Infrastructure resources are pre requisite to provide quality learning. According to National policy of Education 1986, Operational Blackboard was introduced to provide minimum basic facilities in the schools. Success of the schools were evaluated on the basis of some quantitative measures or
basic facilities in the schools. The minimum basic facilities like school building, drinking water facilities, girls' toilet, electricity etc are required for enhancing the learning environment of the school.

As infrastructure plays a very significant role to universalisation of elementary education. In this context, need for evaluation of civil works is much more important undoubtly school environment has a great impact on quality teaching and learning procedure and school environment depend on some basic facilities and it includes school building, drinking water facility, girl’s toilet, electricity, boundary wall, play ground, sports facilities, classrooms etc. On the basis of this, it also analyses the existence of infrastructure facilitates and other performance indicators as per RTE Act, 2009. Article 21 A states that "the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6 to 14 years as the state may, by law determine”. To compliance with Right To Free Education Act (RTE) came to effect from 1.04.2010.The Act provides some qualitative norms for all the schools like one room for every teacher, separate & functional toilets, clean and adequate drinking water, provision for playground, boundary wall, library, kitchen. But, present infrastructure facilities in the Jalpaiguri shows a variation which act as a limit to successful implementation of RTE Act, 2009. The concluding part of the paper proposes prospective suggestions and actions that may help to achieve the objective of UEE.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

With the above background realizing the significance of primary education in Jalpaiguri in achieving the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), the paper was designed with the following objectives

1. To study the infrastructure facilities in Jalpaiguri district. It includes class rooms, toilet, drinking water, computer, electricity and sports facilities.
2. The paper investigates the variations in educational facilities in between state & district relating to infrastructure facilities.
3. To analyses the existence of infrastructure facilitates and other performance indicators as per RTE Act, 2009 in achieving elementary education.

The paper was prepared collecting information from field survey and secondary data. Various books, journals, research papers and Government reports have been used. The paper has tried to investigate the probable causes of obstacles for effective universalization of elementary education and followed by recommendations and suggestions

Sample Area

The district Jalpaiguri in the state of West Bengal, India is considered for the present study and it is largest district of North Bengal. The district has two subdivisions; Jalpaiguri Sadar, and Malbazar. The district is surrounded by international borders with Bhutan and Bangladesh in the north and south respectively and district borders with Darjeeling hills in the west and northwest and Alipurduar district Coochbehar district on the east. The total area of Jalpaiguri district is 3044 sq km. According to 2011 census, this district has population of 3,869,675 and population density of 622/km. According to most recent data available in 2012-13, 72% of the populations in the district are in village; so it is evidenced that large number of primary schools were situated in rural area.

The Jalpaiguri district has a sex ratio 954 females for every 1000 males which is marginally higher than the state average sex ratio (950) and literacy rate 73.25% (male 79.95, female 66.23) which is lower than state average (76.3) and thereby making rank 12th district in the state among 14 districts.

Educational Facilities in Jalpaiguri District Vis West Bengal

School with Single Class Rooms

According to survey, the Jalpaiguri as a whole 15.9% of the schools had single classroom in 2013-14 while the ratio 23.5% in 2004-05. So, it was observed that from 2004-05 improvement of classroom
infrastructure have been made by only 8%. It was observed that, 90% of the school building is wholly pucca and roof covered with tin shed. The single class rooms ratio in the district for the year 2004-06 were near about 22-14%. But an impressive decadal percentage was observed in 2006-07 and 2007-08 due to higher rate of establishment of primary schools in the district. The percentage of schools that are single class rooms is also higher in Jalpaiguri district in comparison to west Bengal. In Jalpaiguri 15.9% of total schools were single class room, while in west Bengal, it was estimated at 9% in 2013-14.

To get rid of the concept of single class room in some schools, single classrooms have been converted to double class room by making fence partition in middle of the room. As a result, size of the class rooms has reduced. It was also found that, one classroom was shared by the two different grade students. It was managed by the class I and class II student’s are used to share same class due to lack of availability of the sufficient class rooms. There is no provision of separation in between this class. As a consequence, learning and teaching procedure was not effective due to overcrowded students. Free space is the big limitation and poor condition of the class rooms affect adversely on the overall academic environment. In Jalpaiguri district, although, 90% of the school buildings are owned by the Government, maintenance is the big concern for these school building. In most of the schools in urban areas, it was found that schools suffer from adequate benches and desks so that; student are required to sit in the floor or mat which was provided by the schools or sometimes student are required to bring mat from the home. If situation is such in the urban area, we could imagine the interior picture of infrastructure in the rural schools. The condition is unbearable in the winter season where the average temperature is around 8 to 14 degree Celsius during November to February. Sitting on the cold floor of the classroom really dysfunction the objective of SSA.

School with Toilet & Drinking Water Facilities

Availability of basic amenities in the schools is the basic right of each child in the schools along with other facilities because these were integral to hygienic environment of schools. According to MHRD, about 20% of total schools in India are still lack of toilet facilities for girls, where as availability of boy’s toilet 62.4%.

But, in the West Bengal, positive changes are visible in recent years. For instances availability of girl’s toilet is about 90.6% in primary level, where as availability of boy’s toilet 62.4%. In terms of girls toilet facility in schools, Jalpaiguri seems have been maintaining increasing trend in comparison to West Bengal. As per DISE data, remarkable improvement was noticed in 2010-11. About 90% of girls toilet facilities were available in 2010-11, compared to 34% girls toilet in schools in 2009-10 in the district. And the district is still maintain is an impressive picture in terms of girls toilet facility. More schools now have girls toilet facility, about 90% of schools had girls toilet facility in schools in 2013-14, compare to 38% in 2008-09; and 25% in 2004-05.

Figure-I

![Toilet facility in Jalpaiguri & West Bengal](chart.png)
The ratio of girls enrolment to total enrolment from 2004 to 2014 at the primary level had been remined uniformly near about 49%, despite of providing several facilities to the girls. Proportion of girls enrolment had not shown any significant improvement in West Bengal and as well as in Jalpaiguri, also. Participation in universalisation of elementary education of girls still not attained at a desired level. Gender disparities is one of the major issues in elementary education in Jalpaiguri district due to geographic & cultural factors. From the above table it was reflected that, girls enrolment has come down to 49.2% in 2012-13, as compared to 2011-12, 49.4%. The enrolment of girls has increased by only 0.7%; for last year 49.2% to 49.9%. Though the sanitation facilities were provide in most of the schools, but due to non maintenance & non cleaning, toilet facility became non functional. As per norms, toilet facility were available, but a question remains always about the functionality.

Provision of drinking water is one of the majority necessities in any school. Although 90% to 95% of the schools are covered with drinking water facility. In 2004-05, 70% of the primary schools in Jalpaiguri district had drinking water facility. But in reality, some schools provide drinking water from well, which is really unhygienic and condition is getting worse in rainy season due to high level bacteria prevails in the well and it was observed that some of the schools near to Jalpaiguri sadar, does not have the facility of drinking water. As a result, student often go to home or near tube well for drinking water and come back to school at the time of mid day meal or sometimes they did not come back.

“Wash in School in India: Commitments and Action” is an implementation of UNICEF global programme which was introduced in 2012. In meeting with global programme, every child has a right to get water and sanitation. Wash in school in India: Commitments and Action is an adoption of the UNICEF global document “Raising Even more clean hands: Advancing Health, learning and equity through Wash in school” launched in 2012-Sue Coates, UNICEF. Since 2008-09, of the 80% of the schools reported to have drinking water facilities in both West Bengal and Jalpaiguri district. In the district area, 98% of total number of schools provided drinking water facility in the schools. The figures are almost equal corresponding by state average figure during 2010 to 2014.

Schools with Other Facilities

Electricity & Computer

According to survey 2013-14, only 20% of the primary schools had the facility of electricity whereas in 2010-11, it was 13.9%. In Jalpaiguri an around 20% of the total primary schools are provided with the facility of electricity in comparison to state wide figure around 29% in 2013-14. In comparison with state wide figure, Jalpaiguri district is still deprived to provide electricity in most of the schools. In this regard, as there is no provision of fund for paying electric bill, most of the schools suffer unbearable situation in the months of April to June. Some schools had the facility of electricity connection by managing funds from teachers and managing committee, VEC (Village Education Committee) and NGO. Electrification to the schools is necessary to energize the student and as well as teacher to run an enthusiastic learning programme.
Strengthening the school education in the modern era of globalisation cannot be completed without digital education. Introduction of computer and computer aided learning helps to develop their logic faster as they easily picks up digitally moving character compare to blackboard fixed character and it will increase school performance in all respect significantly. In modern schools, ICT (information, communication and technology) plays a significant role in effective teaching and learning procedure. From 2010 to 2014, electricity & computer facility in district has always ranked lower than State average. During the period of 2010-11, a small percentage of schools in West Bengal (3.6%) were computers.

Sports Facilities
This part shows that 53.7% schools in the Jalpaiguri district had only the playground and very few schools had the facilities of sports material. But, most of the private schools have the facility of playground along with the sports material and they had been maintaining the other facilities. Most of the private schools had the manpower of maintain the playground and sports material. Universalisation of elementary education is worthy objective. A credible result only visible when teaching and sports are emerges and it would reduce the social barrier among the children by mixing with each other at the time of playing. During the visit of some schools, it was found that first aid medical kids are also not available in most of the schools. As per DISE data (2013-14), there were sixteen (16) performance indicators to evaluate the civil works under SSA, but some performance indicators like first aid kid, sports material, water purifier, benches & desks should be included to evaluate the success of SSA in a better way. In the elementary education context, sixteen (16) indicators have been identified as performance indicators. The performance indicators are single class room schools, single teacher school, school schools with girls & boys toilet, schools with boundary wall, schools with drinking water, schools with playground, schools with ramp, schools with electricity, schools with computer etc. It would also be suggested that, at least a medical centre should be situated within 5km distance from the school.

Right to Education Act, 2009: Issues & Challenges
Right of children to free & compulsory education act, 2009 (RTE) was passed in the Parliament on August 27, 2009 and came into effect from April, 2010. The RTE Act is mainly influenced by several factors. As per section 8(f) of RTE Act, 2009 the appropriate authority shall ensure and monitor admission, attendance and completion of elementary education of each child all the schools and in respect of infrastructure, schools should have playground, drinking water facility, boundary wall, library, kitchen and in respect of quality norms, each school should have the provision of PTR (pupil teacher ratio 30). This section critically reviews the RTE Act 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicators</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% single class Room</td>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BENGAL</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% girls Toilet</td>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BENGAL</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% drinking water</td>
<td>WEST</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BENGAL</td>
<td>93.9</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significance: ***1%

The main focus of RTE Act, 2009 is to gear up universalization of elementary education. The above analysis revealed that, district needs more expenditure in terms of infrastructure, as it has got single class room ratio 20.5 % (against the West Bengal state average 14.4%). More than 90% of schools in Jalpaiguri & the state had the facility of drinking water, availability of girls toilet facility in district and the state are 71.7% & 85.7% in 2014-15 respectively compare to 88.6% and 89.4% respectively in 2010-11. During 2014-14, percentage of computer facility available in Jalpaiguri (4.8%) was higher than state average(4.2%). The percentage of female teacher increased significantly from 19% in 2010-11 to 52.7% in 2014-15. More recruitment of female in schools is the positive attitude towards girls enrolment. Figure-II reveals that girls enrolment decreased to 48.9% in 2014-15 from 49.4% in 2010-11, along with state diminishing rate 0.2% from 2010-11 to 2014-15. Girls child in this district still experiences a different treatment like ‘nakusa’ (unwanted in Marathi in rural Maharashtra) due to social-psychological factors. Availability of electricity in the schools in the district 24.16%, which is significantly higher than 2010-11 (13.9%). During 2014-15, almost all the schools in the state and as well as district implemented the MDM programme and revealed that 85.4% of total schools in district had the facility of kitchen shed which is significantly higher than state average (54.2%).

Apart from adequate infrastructure, another key issue is the quality of learning which is based on teachers of requisite quality. There is no provision of office staff in the primary schools to monitor admission, and attendance of each child in the school and as a result, teachers usually do all the school related work like teaching and other administrative responsibilities. So, effective teaching – learning may be hindered due to over engagement of non teaching duties. As per section, 8(g), RTE Act, 2009 demands good quality education. After the five years of implementation of RTE Act, 35.9% children of Std-I, could not identify a letter and 51% student of std-V, could not read the std-II text, as per
ASER report 2013, in West Bengal. In Jalpaiguri district, near about 40% of student of std I-III could not read letters, words. In mathematical aptitude, the picture was very worsen, only 28.6% of the total children could do subtraction or more. The quality of education is really at stake due to existence of section 16 of RTE Act, 2009. As per this section, no student shall be held back or expelled from the school till the completion of elementary education. So, universalisation of elementary education is universalized at the cost of quality, as there is no retention policy. From the above table, still some of the schools in Jalpaiguri district do not have the facility of drinking water (3.2%), boundary wall (78%), girls toilet (9.4%). The monitoring method has not developed to evaluate the implementation of RTE Act, 2009. Due to absence of have such basic facilities RTE Act, 2009 is really challenged.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

All children are different in nature to their mental & physical attributes. Various education policy, after independence were implemented to equalize their mental abilities by providing proper education and this has resulted the implementation of SSA along with the provision of some basic facilities. There is need for certain urgent steps to increase the enrolment in the elementary education. Like, at first, there is exist a gap between demand and supply of infrastructure facilities in the schools. More supply of infrastructure facilities in schools will create a suitable academic environment. Secondly, expenditure on primary education needs very careful planning and monitoring to develop a better academic environment. Expenditure on primary education should be increased, at least 6% of GDP as per Kothari commission. Thirdly, future manpower of the country will depend on quality education. And; the quality education is primarily depending on both teaching and infrastructure facilities. Proving same basic facilities & quality teaching in all schools will reduce regional & social disparities among children. If expenditure on civil works remain fall short of the requirement, private institutional could be invited to fill the gaps with some regulatory framework. Fourthly, largest launch programme in the school MDM (Mid day meal) is now facing challenges in respect of nutrition and hygiene. Government & other administrated agencies should adopt a proper method to implement the truly nutritional support by inclusion of NGOs and other agencies. Expenditure on education should be termed as investment not as expenditure as it has significant return in future for overall development and quality of human life.

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