

Quality in Education Versus No Detention Policy

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Abstract: India's flagship programme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for Universalisation of Elementary Education has enhanced enrolment rate and retention of children in school. The country has now shifted its focus from retention to quality of education for improvement in children's learning achievements. Various strategies have been taken up by different states to enhance enrolment, improve access, retention, enhancing learning and developing employable skills in children through NVEQF.

UNESCO has also included these issues in its General Education Quality Analysis Framework (GEQAF) and has tested these 14 tools in India by undertaking pilot studies in Madhya Pradesh and Meghalaya. In view of gathering information regarding some of these issues, some important observations were made during the field work in a government school of Madhya Pradesh located in a village.

The Govt. of Madhya Pradesh has implemented various schemes to address issues of retention and enhancing enrolment under SSA and RTE (Right To Education). These include Mid-day-meals (MDM), bicycles, books, uniform, scholarship, etc. which cover all kinds of needs of school going children. These arrangements increased enrolment of children surprisingly. More girls are enrolled in this village located co-ed school. But when it comes to quality of education and learning achievement of children, it is a serious concern. When parents and teachers were interviewed, 100% parents said that "we are not afraid of attendance and their studies because our children will definitely be promoted to the next class". Teachers also told that "children are reluctant to study". This single thought has led to very poor performance. More than 95% children could not read 3 letter English words, were unable to write simple English alphabets and could not copy and write sentences from their books. The situation is similar in all the subjects. Besides, poor attendance of children in schools, reluctance of teachers is also there because of lots of other non-teaching work, etc.

The paper similar observations have also been presented besides showcasing status of 'No Detention Policy' on different states. This paper is aimed to bring this matter for discussion in the seminar and come up with certain suggestions/ remedial measures to overcome these problems faced due to 'No Detention Policy'.

Keywords: Quality in Education, No Detention Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

India's flagship program the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for universalisation of elementary education has undoubtedly enhanced enrollment and retention rate of children in schools. But changing scenario around the globe, calls for urgent attention towards ensuring quality of education to meet the human resource demand for market and for the upliftment of the society in general. The Government of India is also now shifting its focus to quality of education. Right to Education (RTE), 2009 is a step forward which focuses on the quality of teaching and learning. This has led to substantial reforms and making concerted efforts in educational planning and management. National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 has made recommendations for children centered pedagogy (constructivist approach), curricular and examination reforms. Also, the Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) is in place as per Government of India's Policy for over all development of students.

India's leadership by representing E-9 countries has forwarded quality issues through General Education Quality Analysis Framework (GEQAF) in these countries. The GEQAF has focused 15 tools which may also be considered as key indicators or issues responsible for quality education. This initiative has been taken to enforce quality in education by UNESCO in member states to achieve MDG's (Goal No. 8) by 2015. GEQAF tools have been piloted in India on request of UNESCO. The MHRD, Govt. of India entrusted this responsibility to NCERT as nodal agency for piloting GEQAF in India in two states viz., Madhya Pradesh and Meghalaya. The author is the member of one of the teams in Madhya Pradesh. The 15 tools of GEQAF administered under the pilot study include Relevance/ responsiveness, Equality and inclusion, Competencies, Lifelong learners, Learning, Teaching, Assessment, Curriculum, Learners, Teachers/ Educators, Learning Environment, Governance, Financing, System Efficiency and ICT in Education.

Besides above, under RTE, there is 'No Detention Policy' up to Class VIII to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) and to increase retention of children in schools by way of 'no pass – fail' system. According to this policy, no child will be detained from Classes I to VIII and promotion to next class will be given on the basis of their performance in various examinations and tests for formative and summative assessment provided, the child's attendance in the school is more than 75%. Also, appearing in unit tests and terminal examination is mandatory. In spite of all these efforts to ensure quality in education or taking care that learning should take place, in reality it is not happening.

Due to quality issues of education and implementation problems, people of India are not accepting the pass- fail system. According to "The Hindu" news daily (dated ;) reported an observation from Chennai; 'Teachers complain that student have developed a lackadaisical attitude – why study when there is no fear of failing. Also reported in "The Hindu" that All India Democratic Students Organization (AIDSO) protested in Bangalore is demanding re-introduction of the pass-fail system till Class VIII (dated).

In India it is very difficult to implement any program or scheme as a blanket because of diversity, pluralistic society, geographical set ups, the rural, urban divide, etc. So policies are made for the welfare of people but there are challenges in the implementation, same is true for the 'No Detention Policy'.

The 'No Detention Policy' has been adopted in almost all the states but with some variation. In general, half yearly and annual examinations are conducted in all the states and promotion is given on the basis of examination/ attendance (75% to 80%). In some states viz. Goa, Maharashtra, Chandigarh and M.P. the Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system is being used as assessment process.

In the present paper outcome of a small study on 'No Detention Policy' is presented. The aim of the paper is to place this issue for discussion and suggest strategies to ensure quality in education and a relook at 'No Detention Policy'.

II. THE STUDY

During the field work, teaching was undertaken in a rural government middle school of Madhya Pradesh. The environment in the school was very depressing students had no interest in studies in the school neither teacher's were enthusiastic to teach with devotion and energy. Hence, an attempt was made to understand problems coming across in creating interest and retaining children and teachers in the school.

For the purpose parents, teachers and students were administered questionnaire and interviewed at various occasions (approximately 100 respondents). 'No Detention Policy' was the main objectives of the study.

III. RATIONALE

The 'No Detention Policy' affects the quality of education.

IV. OBJECTIVES

The study was undertaken to:

- (1) Obtain views of teachers, parents and students with regard to No Detention Policy.
- (2) To know reasons for poor performance of students of Class VIII.

V. METHOD

Interviews and questionnaire was prepared and administered to teachers, parents and students of Classes VI to VIII. A total of about 100 respondents were included in the study.

VI. OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was intended to get views of teachers, parents and students on 'Pass-fail' system and the issue of quality education.

Ninety Nine percent teachers were of the view that there is clear negligence and reluctance of children to study. They are not bothered or have fear of examination and with regard to attendance most of the students attend the school for half day only. They leave for home after meals, on call of their parents to do work with them on fields or at home. This is happening because there is no boundary wall and children runaway easily.

Students of Classes VI to VIII were tested for Hindi, English, Science and Math's. More than 90% students of all the three classes were below average in performance in all the subjects. In Class VIII more than 75% students could not write 3 letter words and all 26 English alphabets, Hindi vernamala. To conclude it can be said that the students of Classes VI to VIII were tested for Math's, Science and English they did not show even the performance of level of Classes III or IV.

Parents were also interviewed regarding their view on 'No Detention Policy'. Ninety five percent parents answered that सरकार ने तो बहुत किया है बच्चों की शिक्षा के लिये, सब बच्चे आँटवीं कक्षा पास कहलायेंगे चाहे पढ़ सकें, स्कूल आ सकें या न आ सकें. A Government has done lots, for the education of children. This view of parents of children of the school under study was directing towards various central and state government schemes. These incentives for parents and students were given to increase enrolment in schools which attracted parents more because of financial assistance, bicycles, and attracted students to Mid-day Meals but to a limited extent due to poor quality of food. The present study indicated that covers though 100% students were from Below Poverty Line (BPL) category, but only 25% children were taking food in school provided in Mid-day Meal scheme.

All the students (through questionnaire filled by 90% students) mentioned that there is no attraction for them in studies they are uncomfortable in dingy class rooms. In rainy season school and class room is flooded with water. They have to sit on dirty floor in, filthy class room, no furniture, no fans, no lights, etc. So infrastructure facilities are worst, beyond imagination.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh has implemented various schemes to address the issue of retention and enhancing enrollment under SSA and RTE. These include MDM, bicycles, books, uniform, scholarship etc., which cover all kinds of needs of school going children. These arrangements increased enrollment of children, surprisingly, more girls are enrolled in this village located co-ed school. But when it comes to quality of education and learning achievements of children, it is a serious concern. When parents and teachers were interviewed, 100% parents said that "we are not afraid of attendance and their studies because our children will definitely be promoted to the next class". Teachers also told that children are reluctant to study. This single thought has led to very poor performance. More than 95% children could not read 3 letter words from their books. The situation is similar in all the subjects. Besides, poor attendance of children in school, reluctance of teachers is also there because of lots of other non-teaching work, etc.

NCERT's intervention through field attachment is a silver lining and ray of hope for these children of marginalized section in rural set-ups. They have aspirations to become a doctor, an engineer and want to speak English. Child centered approach also helped in creating interest and space for their engagement in school activities such as taking part in chart making plantation, plant raising in pots, spoken English, song and value inculcation sessions. All these activities were undertaken by the author as NCERT faculty during 3 months field work in schools.

This paper is aimed to bring this matter for discussion through some suitable platform to relook and makes suggestions for remedial measures to overcome these problems faced due to 'No Detention Policy'.

The 'No Detention Policy' was implemented with fair objective of reducing stress on children due to examination fear. But quality of education and aim of education has also to be achieved, there cannot be and should not be any compromises in this regard. Keeping this in view several strategies to impart quality education have been formulated and are being

practiced also. Still ensuring effective implementation for achieving aim of providing quality education in all schools specially, rural areas is far reaching and day dreaming. Effect of 'No Detention Policy' and weak implementation of strategies to achieve quality education is clearly evident in government schools in rural areas.

VII. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there is urgent need to re-think about continuing 'No Detention Policy' and its pros and cons to maintain focus on quality of education rather than only enrollment and retention. The fact is that these children with weak foundation reach in Class IX unable to continue in higher classes. It is a serious concern that all attempts of educating children.

(More specifically of rural areas and govt. schools) up to classes 8th under RTE is proving a waste in terms of time and money.

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