



DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in India has a long history: a socio-political movement to educate people for their upward mobility in the development ladder. Hence, efforts and initiatives were directed towards simplistic linear expansion: more schools and more teachers and more children in the primary school system. The National Policy on Education (1986/1992) and the World Declaration on Education for all (1990) put the concept of UEE (basic education) in an inclusive conceptual framework, which provided a direction and intensity to the efforts mounted to achieve UEE, which continues even today as a 'teasing reality'. The concepts of UEE which acquired clarity and comprehensiveness. To put it simply, UEE components were delineated more correctly: (i) universal provision and access; (ii) universal participation and completion; and (iii) a substantial improvement in the quality education, mostly defined as 'breadth and depth' of learning acquisition.

Quality education, particularly of the basic education, coupled with equity concerns, has emerged an over arching concern. For ostensible reasons, quality of primary education has largely been defined in terms of quantum and quality of what children learn i.e., the level of learners achievement.

School quality is increasingly being viewed in a larger context of 'school effectiveness'. School effectiveness is reflected in the presage, process and product variables. Various input, interventions and strategies, identified to contribute to school effectiveness, have differential effects depending on the context in which schooling takes place and the relative 'advantage' of the learners. In other words, generic on the across-the-board interventions do not work in all contexts. It would, therefore, be useful to examine the variables or determinants that impact school quality, represented by learner achievement.

OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the present study were:

1. To examine the relationship between the physical and academic infrastructure of the school and the competency attainment.
2. To probe into the link between the home and the competency attainment.
3. To examine the relationship between the perception of learning environment and competency attainment.
4. To ascertain the influence of learners' characteristics on the competency attainment.
5. To ascertain the effect of mental ability of the students on learners achievement.
6. To examine the instructional process in schooling adopting activity based approach in terms of quality learner attainment

METHOD ADOPTED:

The Survey and analytical method.

SAMPLE :

The study covers 640 students as sample of eight primary schools selected randomly from Jajpur and Keonjhar district . Out of these schools four form rural area , those are Swrnaprva primary school and Dhabalagiri primary school of Jajpur district and Muchinda primary school and Salabani primary school of Keonjhar district and four schools from urban area are Chorda primary school and Chromme nagar primary school of Jajpur district and Badabil primary school and Fakirpur primary school of Keonjhar district were selected for this study.

The sample has been selected on random basis.

Sl.No.	Name of the District	Total No. of Schools		Total No. of Students			
		Urban	Rural	Grade II		Grade V	
				Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1	Jajpur	2	2	80	80	80	80
2	Keonjhar	2	2	80	80	80	80
3	Total	4	4	160	160	160	160

INSTRUMENTS:

- Scales for studying individual abilities and performance.
- RCPM (Ravens coloured progressive Matrices)for ascertaining the mental abilities of the subjects.
- Language Achievement Test (LAT)
- Mathematics Achievement Test (MAT)

These are standardized tests developed by NCERT used from grade V and grade II is the Baseline Assessment study (1996)

- Schedule for collecting information on home and school environment.
- Learning Environment Scale (LES)
- Home Environment Schedule (HES)
- Class room observation Schedule (COS)
- School record Schedule (SRS)

MAJOR FINDINGS:**Learning Environment:**

- While the rural and schools had near similar physical conditions, the prominent areas of deficiencies observed were:
(i)Inadequate space for learning, (ii) Non availability of play ground ,(iii)Poor and non- availability of sanitary conditions, (iv) Dearth of minimum number of teachers and (v) Irregular and inadequate supply of free Text Books.
- Classroom activities were invariably teacher dominated in the schools irrespective of their location.

PERCEPTION OF LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

- In Class II, the rural–urban differences were significant in the dimension of Interpersonal Relationship and in Self –Concept.
- Students of class II in rural schools, irrespective of their gender, outperformed their urban counterparts in both subjects when they perceived their learning environment at a higher level.
- Gender difference in Language achievement in favour of boys in rural areas and in favour of girls in urban areas was observed at class V level.
- Urban students demonstrated invariably better performances in both the subjects over their rural counterparts at class-V level.

- Students with high perception of their learning environment demonstrated higher Mathematics achievement at class II level.
- Students in class II of rural schools irrespective of their gender outperformed their urban counterparts in both subject areas when placed in better learning environment. On the other hand children in urban schools even when they are placed in poor learning environment demonstrated better performance over their rural counterparts.

HOME ENVIRONMENT AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

- Gender differences in their performances on Language and Mathematics were observed in favour of boys belonging to high and low socio-economic status.
- Both in urban and rural areas Language Achievement at class V level demonstrated increasing trend as a function of the socioeconomic status of the learners.
- In the class II Mathematics Test, the boys both from the rural and urban schools demonstrated increased performance with the increase in SES, but the girls did not. But at class V stage, children both boys and girls, from higher socio-economic status in urban schools performed significantly better on the Language and Mathematics tests than those in lower socio-economic group in rural schools.

MENTAL ABILITY AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

- While the performance in language increased with the level of mental ability the same for Mathematics demonstrated a decreasing trend from medium to high mental ability level at Class II level.
- On the Class II Mathematics test, among the average and high mental ability groups (both in rural and urban schools) seemed to have higher gain than the boys' groups at the same level.
- Although mental ability was the major influencing factor of achievement in Language and Mathematics, girls at a particular level of mental ability at early years of schooling were better in performance than boys. But at the terminal year of primary schooling, the location of the school along with the mental ability level seemed to be the determining factors of achievement.
- Main effect of social category had significant effect on Language achievement at class II level. General and scheduled Tribe students sharing better performance over their scheduled caste counterparts.
- The differences in the performances in Language and Mathematics at class V level among the students belonging to different social categories were found to be significant.
- In Mathematics the general category students maintained their overall superiority in performance over the other two categories both in urban and rural schools

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

This study brings into focus several pointers for improving quality of primary education. Some of the major implications of the study are as follows.

- Quality learning in schools cannot be possible without adequate and congenial physical atmosphere in the school. A well thought out plan for providing a congenial healthy and pleasurable atmosphere blending with its elements from its immediate environment is required particularly in rural schools.
- Efforts are needed to make the collaboration of the community members with the teachers for enhancing contextuality of learning environment thus contributing the quality of education at the early stage.
- It appalling to note that classroom transactions have continued to be teacher dominated and registrant to the interventions encouraging students' participation in learning activities. This calls for the immediate attention of all concerns to bring the child to the center of activities. Otherwise quality learning shall continue to be a distance dream.
- Significance differences in learning achievement both in Language and Mathematics due to the concomitant variables like gender, socioeconomic status, learning perception, social category etc. were

observed at class V level. These were not significant at the early stage of schooling. Indicating the systematic interventions that are invoke responsible for accentualizing such differences. The school and class room practice and any other interventions within and out side the school need to be closely examined for exploring the elements which accounts for such differences. Otherwise Universalization quality education could not be possible in rural sense.

CONCLUSION:

- The material conditions of the schools are almost identical in both rural and urban locations, ostensibly due to DPEP/SSA initiatives. Despite DPEP/SSA inputs, there found to exist enough space for improving sanitation situation and drinking water facilities, particularly in rural schools. Inadequate learning space was found to be a critical concern that hindered child-friendly and creative learning activities.
- Targeting better facilities was found to be an overall planning –deficit. Prioritization in creation of facilities through SSA and several other programmes is required to receive pre-eminent attention in planning .These would, in turn, lead to creation of better physical facilities and academic climate for functioning of schools with higher internal efficiency and effectiveness.
- Despite DPEP/ SSA largesse for improving quality of classroom processes with unprecedented emphasis on interactive pedagogy , persistence of teacher dominated practices was found to be pervasive. The situation calls for restructuring and in-depth analysis of underlying non-enabling conditions and road-blocks.
- The superiority of learner performance in Language over that of Mathematics is a widely established truth. This is due primary to the fact that primary schooling, as pedagogues hold, is essentially language education. Children come to school with a rich language advantage acquired through a variety of sources. Contrary to this, mathematics is invariably formally taught, and children are made to view it as a dreaded subject.
- SC and ST students' performance, compared to that of the unreserved category, continues to be a challenge. Fairness of provision and fairness of treatment demands that the children from the scheduled category are to be treated differently with better schooling in order to compensate for their multiple historical and social disadvantages.

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