

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

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Abstract :

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalise elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education. The SSA programme is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode.

Key terms - Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Introduction :

SSA has been operational since 2000-2001 to provide for a variety of interventions for universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in elementary education and improving the quality of learning. SSA interventions include inter alia, opening of new schools and alternate schooling facilities, construction of schools and additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water, provisioning for teachers, periodic teacher training and academic resource support, textbooks and support for learning achievement. With the passage of the RTE Act, changes have been incorporated into the SSA approach, strategies and norms. The changes encompass the vision and approach to elementary education, guided by the following principles :

- (i) Holistic view of education, as interpreted in the National Curriculum Framework 2005, with implications for a systemic revamp of the entire content and process of education with significant implications for curriculum, teacher education, educational planning and management.

- (ii) Equity, to mean not only equal opportunity, but also creation of conditions in which the disadvantaged sections of the society – children of SC, ST, Muslim minority, landless agricultural workers and children with special needs, etc. – can avail of the opportunity.
- (iii) Access, not to be confined to ensuring that a school becomes accessible to all children within specified distance but implies an understanding of the educational needs and predicament of the traditionally excluded categories – the SC, ST and others sections of the most disadvantaged groups, the Muslim minority, girls in general, and children with special needs.
- (iv) Gender concern, implying not only an effort to enable girls to keep pace with boys but to view education in the perspective spelt out in the National Policy on Education 1986 /92; i.e. a decisive intervention to bring about a basic change in the status of women.
- (v) Centrality of teacher, to motivate them to innovate and create a culture in the classroom, and beyond the classroom, that might produce an inclusive environment for children, especially for girls from oppressed and marginalised backgrounds.
- (vi) Moral compulsion is imposed through the RTE Act on parents, teachers, educational administrators and other stakeholders, rather than shifting emphasis on punitive processes.
- (vii) Convergent and integrated system of educational management is pre-requisite for implementation of the RTE law. All states must move in that direction as speedily as feasible.

What is SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN :

- 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 root 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 the local government.
- An opportunity for States to develop their own vision of elementary education.

Aims of SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN :

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6 to 14 age group by 2010. There is also another goal to bridge social, regional and gender gaps, with the active participation of the community in the management of schools.

Useful and relevant education signifies a quest for an education system that is not alienating and that draws on community solidarity. Its aim is to allow children to learn about and master their natural environment in a manner that allows the fullest harnessing of their human potential both spiritually and materially. This quest must also be a process of value based learning that allows children an opportunity to work for each other's well being rather than to permit mere selfish pursuits.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan realizes the importance of Early Childhood Care and Education and looks at the 0-14 age as a continuum. All efforts to support pre-school learning in ICDS centres or special pre-school centres in non ICDS areas will be made to supplement the efforts being made by the Department of Women and Child Development.

Objectives of SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN :

- 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 eight years 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
- Universal retention by 2010

WHY A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION (AND NOT A GUIDELINE)

- To allow states to formulate context specific guidelines within the overall framework
- To encourage districts in States and UTs to reflect local specificity
- To promote local need based planning based on broad National Policy norms
- To make planning a realistic exercise by adopting broad national norms.

The objectives are expressed nationally though it is expected that various districts and States are likely to achieve universalisation in their own respective contexts and in their own

time frame. 2010 is the outer limit for such achievements. The emphasis is on mainstreaming out-of-school children through diverse strategies, as far as possible, and on providing eight years of schooling for all children in 6-14 age group. The thrust is on bridging of gender and social gaps and a total retention of all children in schools. Within this framework it is expected that the education system will be made relevant so that children and parents find the schooling system useful and absorbing, according to their natural and social environment.

SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN AS A FRAMEWORK AND AS A PROGRAMME :

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has two aspects - I) It provides a wide convergent framework for implementation of Elementary Education schemes; II) It is also a programme with budget provision for strengthening vital areas to achieve universalisation of elementary education. While all investments in the elementary education sector from the State and the Central Plans will reflect as part of the SSA framework, they will all merge into the SSA programme within the next few years. As a programme, it reflects the additional resource provision for UEE.

BROAD STRATEGIES CENTRAL TO SSA PROGRAMME :

- Institutional Reforms - As part of the SSA, the central and the State governments will undertake reforms in order to improve efficiency of the delivery system. The states will have to make an objective assessment of their prevalent education system including educational administration, achievement levels in schools, financial issues, decentralisation and community ownership, review of State Education Act, rationalization of teacher deployment and recruitment of teachers, monitoring and evaluation, status of education of girls, SC/ST and disadvantaged groups, policy regarding private schools and ECCE. Many States have already carried out several changes to improve the delivery system for elementary education.
- Sustainable Financing - The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is based on the premise that financing of elementary education interventions has to be sustainable. This calls for a long -term perspective on financial partnership between the Central and the State governments.
- Community Ownership - The programme calls for community ownership of school-based interventions through effective decentralisation. This will be augmented by involvement of women's groups, VEC members and members of Panchayati Raj institutions.

- Institutional Capacity Building -The SSA conceives a major capacity building role for national, state and district level institutions like NIEPA / NCERT / NCTE / SCERT / SIEMAT / DIET.
- Improvement in quality requires a sustainable support system of resource persons and institutions.
- Improving Mainstream Educational Administration - It calls for improvement of mainstream educational administration by institutional development, infusion of new approaches and by adoption of cost effective and efficient methods.
- Community Based Monitoring with Full Transparency - The Programme will have a community based monitoring system. 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 be encouraged to share all information with the community, including grants received. A notice board would be put up in every school for this purpose.
- Habitation as a Unit of Planning - The SSA works on a community based approach to planning with habitation as a unit of planning. Habitation plans will be the basis for formulating district plans.
- Accountability to Community - SSA envisages cooperation between teachers, parents and PRIs, as well as accountability and transparency to the community.
- Priority to Education of Girls - Education of girls, especially those belonging to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and minorities, will be one of the principal concerns in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
- Focus on Special Groups - There will be a focus on the inclusion and participation of children from SC/ST, minority groups, urban deprived children disadvantaged groups and the children with special needs, in the educational process.
- Pre-Project Phase - SSA will commence throughout the country with a well-planned pre-project phase that provides for a large number of interventions for capacity development to improve the delivery and monitoring system. These include provision for household surveys, community-based microplanning and school mapping, training of community leaders, school level activities, support for setting up information system, office equipment, diagnostic studies, etc.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP IN SSA :

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan takes note of the fact that provision of elementary education is largely made by the government and government aided schools. There are also private unaided schools in many parts of the country that provide elementary education. Poorer households are not able to afford the fees charged in private schools in many parts of the country. There are also private schools that charge relatively modest fees and where poorer children are also attending. Some of these schools are marked by poor infrastructure and low paid teachers. While encouraging all efforts at equity and 'access to all' in well-endowed private unaided schools, efforts to explore areas of public-private partnership will also be made. Government, Local Body, and government aided schools would be covered under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, as is the practice under the Mid Day Meal scheme and DPEP. In case private sector wishes to improve the functioning of a government, local body or a private aided school, efforts to develop a partnership would be made within the broad parameters of State policy in this regard. Depending on the State policies, DIETs and other Government teacher-training institutes could be used to provide resource support to private unaided institutions, if the additional costs are to be met by these private bodies.

FINANCIAL NORMS UNDER SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN :

- The assistance under the programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan will be on a 85:15 sharing arrangement during the IX Plan, 75:25 sharing arrangement during the X Plan, and 50:50 sharing thereafter between the Central government and State governments. Commitments regarding sharing of costs would be taken from State governments in writing.
- The State governments will have to maintain their level of investment in elementary education as in 1999-2000. The contribution as State share for SSA will be over and above this investment.
- The Government of India would release funds to the State Governments/Union Territories only and instalments (except first) would only be released after the previous instalments of Central government and State share has been transferred to the State Implementation Society.
- The support for teacher salary appointed under the SSA programme could be shared between the Central Government and the State government in a ratio of 85:15 during the IX Plan, 75:25 during the X Plan and 50:50 thereafter.

- All legal agreements regarding externally assisted projects will continue to apply unless specific modifications have been agreed to, in consultation with foreign funding agencies.
- Existing schemes of elementary education of the Department (except National Bal Bhawan and NCTE) will converge after the IX Plan. The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day-Meal) would remain a distinct intervention with foodgrains and specified transportation costs being met by the Centre and the cost of cooked meals being met by the State government.

Overview :

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is implemented as India's main programme for universalising elementary education. Its overall goals include universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in education and enhancement of learning levels of children. SSA provides for a variety of interventions, including inter alia, opening of new schools and alternate schooling facilities, construction of schools and additional provisioning for teachers, periodic teacher training and academic resource support, textbooks and support for learning achievement. These provisions need to be aligned with the legally mandated norms and standards and free entitlements mandated by the RTE Act.

The new law provides a justiciable legal framework that entitles all children between the ages 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.

Refrance :

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