

Primary Education in India:

A Case Study of Government- Run Primary Schools in Rudraram

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Abstract

In India, we have three different types of schools, namely schools that follow state syllabus, schools that follow central syllabus and schools that follow International curriculum. Hence, at any class level, we end up with students who have different levels of academic knowledge. Coming to the rural villages, students who come from economically backward classes are obliged to opt for Government run schools due to their financial constraints. The Government run schools teach in vernacular medium. The present paper deals with the limitations of Government run schools in terms of performance when compared to Central Board schools and International curriculum schools. For the purpose of present case study, the Mandal Parishad Primary school and Zilla Parishad Primary school in Rudraram, Patancheru Mandal in Andhra Pradesh State are considered. The students in Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary schools are basically from a weak economic background. Students of these schools are beleaguered with linguistic, social, and financial problems. Teachers who teach in these Parishad Primary schools should keep these facts in mind while teaching the students. These Parishad Primary schools need teachers who not only can teach the subject to the students but also who are aware of the problems that students face in their daily lives so that the teachers can motivate them to excel and exceed in academics. The present study deals with various factors that influence the performance of students in Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary schools. The study is carried out with the aim to call attention to the issues that hinder the progress of students. These concerns can be identified and addressed by proper channels so that the Parishad Primary School students can emerge as competent individuals on par with students from schools run by Central Government and private sector. The paper expounds that the society also has a major role to play in the improvement of Zilla Parishad Primary schools. Instead of depending upon the Government alone for financial aid, society should come forward to improve rural education as these students are a part of future India.

Keywords: Zilla Parishad Primary school, Mandal Parishad Primary school, rural education and Primary school education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rudraram is a small village Panchayat in Patancheru mandal in Hyderabad. The many industries situated in and around Patancheru and the industry effluents they emanate are the reason for critical pollution levels in Patancheru area. In Rudraram village, most of the villagers are illiterate and they work in the surrounding industries as unskilled labour for their living. The children of these villagers generally enroll in Mandal Parishad Primary school as the parents are unable to pay the fees of private schools. Also, in Vaddera colony, Rudraram village, the economic background of the students is below poverty line as most of them belong to the Vaddera¹ caste. These students enroll in Zilla Parishad Primary School in Vaddera colony, Rudraram. The students of these two primary schools are unaware of the importance of education and do not get encouragement from their parents as the parents are mostly illiterate.

Some of the students are orphans and children brought up by single parents. The parents of these students are beleaguered by problems like alcoholism, unemployment and/or separation from their marital partners. The surrounding community ignores this state of affairs and shakes off its responsibility to build a better society. Hence, the students end up as victims of their parents' ignorance, apathy of the Government and inconsiderate attitude of the society around them.

Incidentally, there are a few engineering colleges in and around Patancheru, which have a positive impact on the villagers. The villagers understand the fact that education can lead their children to a better life similar to the

¹ Vaddera Caste people in Andhra Pradesh are stone cutters and well diggers who are well below poverty line and most of them work as daily labourers.

students of engineering colleges who are pursuing higher education. The aim of the paper is to bring awareness regarding the deplorable conditions of government-run schools. It is high time that society and Government take note of the issues and provide solutions. These are the reasons that led to the present study.

As it is evident from the table, the government schools do not satisfy the basic needs of the students. According to the Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution all children are entitled to receive at least primary education. Indian government provides “free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.” The Indian Loksabha on 28th Nov., 2001 passed the 93rd Constitutional Amendment Bill, making education a fundamental right. The responsibility of creating awareness and promoting the growth of education was given to the individual states with specific guidelines from the State Government. The intention was to provide education to every child irrespective of their financial background through formal schooling system [1].

The State Government is responsible to impart education to the masses and hence the primary schools are controlled by the Government. In order to encourage the masses, the State provides free education to all the children. The educational status of Indian masses according to the latest census has gone from 16% in 1941 to 75% in 2010 due to the concerted efforts of Indian Government [1].

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Among the sustaining problems that are prevalent in Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary schools in Rudram village, teachers without specialized training to deal with students having specific problems is of great concern. Majority of the teachers who teach in the Mandal Parishad Primary schools lack suitable training to meet the challenges of educating students who come from rural and low economic backgrounds. This problem needs to be addressed at the earliest to promote the right for quality education for every child.

It is pathetic to find that the infrastructure of these schools is in deplorable condition even in the present day. School buildings and surroundings are yet to be developed. Apart from these two problems, another major problem is the treatment meted to school children who come from economically backward classes. It is observed that in many cases the students are not treated in an appropriate manner as there is a need to address the infrastructural problems at the earliest.

1.1.1 OBJECTIVE:

The study could also help the students of State government run schools in Rudram to be on par with students of schools following Central Government syllabus or International syllabus. As many academicians agree that a uniform syllabus across India is difficult to achieve, we can at least insist that the teachers follow approaches that are similar across India yet modified to suit the native conditions to achieve this target.

The performance of students from Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary schools is noticed to be well below the average performance of students from schools run by Central Government and private sector [1]. The challenges faced by the Vernacular medium Primary schools which are in close proximity to the University in Rudram where the authors are teaching is a strong reason to take up this research project.

1.1.2 METHODOLOGY:

It has also been observed that all the students who enroll in these Primary schools do not complete high school. In an article published in the Hindu, New Delhi edition, 22 February, 2005, Sri Man Mohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, lamented that only 47 students out of 100 who join in class I reach class VIII in rural primary schools [2].

Teaching techniques and approaches used by the Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary school teachers were examined. Creative teaching aids are extensively prepared by the teachers of the concerned classes but ready-made teaching aids by authentic publishers and material suppliers would generate remarkable interest in the students.

Feedback from the students, teachers and the parents were taken into account for analyzing and reporting the government provided education scenario with suitable recommendations and conclusions.

1.1.3 FINDINGS

There is no clear mention of the powers of the Gram Panchayat with regard to primary education in the State Act. The GO issued in 1999 mentioned that powers related to non-formal education and libraries would be transferred to the Panchayats but there was no mention of primary education. The G. O. issued in the year 2000, transferred the powers of the Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Parishad to the District Education Officer with regard to functionaries and teaching staff. However, these powers were taken back by the State Government giving the Panchayat a nominal role. This results in no clear-cut demarcation of roles on the part of Gram Panchayat and District Education Officer.

Moreover, the school buildings and the surrounding infrastructure² appall any right-minded citizen of India. The Rudraram Mandal Parishad Primary school is functioning without a facility for toilets for the past several months as the washrooms are not functioning. The Rudraram vaddera colony Zilla Parishad Primary school lacks a compound wall and the toilets do not have doors. The students in these two schools squat on the floors of their classrooms. Protected drinking water is not provided for the students or the faculty. In short, the schools and the students who study in these schools are treated like second-class citizens in independent India.

The students do have a sports period but no equipment. They do not have note books as their parents are not in a position to purchase them or simply neglect to buy as they have their own problems to sort out.

Other reasons that were identified for the no. of dropouts in/after high school are financial problems, lack of motivation, inadequate basic facilities in the schools, and distance from their homes to the schools. Unfortunately, the measures taken by the government are not sufficient to provide proper education in appropriate surroundings.

Here, it is also important to note the fact that the Government is providing for these schools. Midday meals are supplied to the schools through a programme called “Akshaya Patra.” The meals generally consist of rice and dal/pickle/banana. This scheme popularly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme was first launched in 1995 with the intention to support Universalization of Primary Education. In September, 2004, NDNS was universalized to all primary school children and it is observed that attendance, retention and nutritional status of the primary school children enhanced after the Universalization of this scheme [5].

The government also provides a budget of Rs. 15,000/- per annum for these schools. Text books are provided by the government. It is mandatory for the teachers to check personally on the absentees. The teachers see that the students complete their primary education and hand them over to the Zilla Parishad High school in Rudraram.

In spite of the above measures by the government, there are several issues that deter the students from completing their primary education. Out of these, the main reason is discouragement by the parents due to poverty and lack of awareness regarding government measures which provide scholarship for higher education³. There are very few genuine cases of economically weak students who avail of this facility whereas the educated people who are aware of this scheme are misusing it.

Some of the issues identified are:

- Infrastructure and ambience of ZPP schools are not on par with private and central schools.
- Lack of support from teachers.
- Lack of motivation or support from parents. Due to parents’ educational levels and jobs which the parents hold (mostly IV class employees), they generally do not have the desire nor the time to invest in their wards’ education.
- Parents are generally troubled due to various reasons and it affects the students in a negative way.
- No clearcut government G.O.s regarding the responsibilities of the village panchayat and District Education Office.

The scenario is not so hopeless throughout India. Providentially, there are some instances where the Panchayat took initiative in developing the existing conditions [1]:

The Gram Pradhan of Sonali village of Purola block (Uttarkashi), played an important role in providing the basic infrastructure for the school. Along with VEC, he sent a proposal for additional teacher as there was only one teacher for 127 students. When there was no response from the authorities, they appointed a teacher paying 700 per month from the contribution of the villagers.

Another measure worth appreciating in this regard is that of the Kayyur Cheemeni Panchayat, in Kasargod district, Kerala, which not only gave money to improve the quality of education but also designed a revised curriculum. They presented it to the State Council for Educational Research and Training. The Panchayat also conducted Teachers’ training and student’s camp for environmental study. They set up a library and lab.

² The photographs are provided in the annexure.

³ Here, citing a glaring oversight by the government is appropriate; the fee reimbursement scheme provided by the government for professional higher education to the economically backward classes is blatantly misused by the educated middle and upper middle class people.

Tondannur block Panchayat in Kozhikode district has made significant contributions to school education by designing training modules, conducting special training for teachers of English, tele conferencing etc. [3]

1.1.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

The practical implications of the education system on the students who study in Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary schools are unproductive. When these students go for higher education, lack of self confidence and interpersonal skills will affect their performance due to their inadequacy in English language skills. This could also be the main cause for them to drop out of college.

White collar job opportunities are negligible for these students. This in turn has a negative influence on their lifestyle. They are embroiled in a vicious circle where they will not be able to provide promising educational opportunities for their children.

Further, the education that the Government is providing at Zilla and Mandal Parishad schools in the present has a direct impact on the country's economy as the percentage of below poverty line has not minimized due to lack of job opportunities.

1.1.5 CONCLUSIONS:

Low economic background and illiteracy of the parents are the reason for the students to opt for Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary Schools as the fee structure in English medium schools is beyond their means. In some villages there is no access to schools, and teacher – student ratio is alarmingly disproportionate although many schools have been constructed by the government. Even if the students have access to school, the quality of education is such that some children remain almost illiterate in spite of completion of primary level education, [4].

Consecutively, this hampers the growth and progress of the rate of national literacy as these schools cannot compete with Central or International schools in terms of syllabus and infrastructure.

The government should take up necessary measures to ensure that government-run primary schools should be given a fair chance to compete with the private schools before classifying them as outmoded [3].

Coming to the present case study, both the primary schools lack proper infrastructure and it is difficult to procure funds from the Government or private organizations for providing basic amenities. Apathy on the part of Government to immediately deal with the problems impedes the resolution of the issues.

For example, in the Mandala Parishad Primary School, the students are unable to utilize the washrooms. Many applications were submitted to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for sanctioning of Rs. 11,000 towards repairs to no avail. The students are forced to go outdoors to attend nature calls⁴.

Keeping in view the negative implications of the existing primary education system provided by the Government, it can be concluded that extensive modifications should be brought in the Government Orders regarding primary level education in rural areas. Taking an example from the neighbouring states, progressive decisions can be reached and implemented by the school authorities and Village heads. Resourceful individuals and affluent organizations in the immediate society should take an active role to promote a healthy educational environment for the future generation.

1.1.6 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Faculty Development programmes, faculty training workshops, guidance to parents should be conducted to promote quality education.

The Andhra Pradesh State Government should give clear-cut responsibilities to the Gram Panchayats with regard to planning and implementing primary education programmes.

Teachers who work in rural and tribal areas should be given special allowances and promotions to encourage teachers take up rural posts.

Regular inspections should be conducted to check maintenance of infrastructure and progress of the students.

Conducting awareness campaigns and development programmes for the benefit of the teachers and parents may result in the required change.

The responsibilities are not clearly mentioned in the GO. Hence, adequate staff should be provided to the Panchayats and their roles clearly defined so that they are accountable to the Panchayat.

⁴ GITAM University, Hyderabad Campus, came forward to bear the expenditure through their NSS Programme.

Measures should be taken to transfer funds immediately for the village level plans implemented by the Panchayat.

Indian Government needs a systematic and organized system of building capacities at both Panchayat and Gram Sabha so that the members can carry out their new responsibilities effectively.

Society should come forward to play an important role to improve Zilla and Mandal Parishad Primary education. Industries, organizations and individuals should take moral and social responsibility to improve the education of our future citizens.

To sum up, in the modern world, where rapid changes are taking place in technology and economy, it is essential for the Government and the society to take necessary steps to reinforce the government-run schools to be on par with private schools. To envisage a future India of global standards in education, employment and lifestyle, it is imperative to include the vernacular student community in the mainstream education.

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Table 1. Profile of schools visited:

	Mandala Parishad Primary School, Rudraram	Zilla Parishad Primary School, Vaddera Colony, Rudraram
No. of students	143	140
No. of teachers	05	05
No. of classrooms	06	05
Pucca building	Yes	Yes
School surroundings	Next to a graveyard, on National highway	In the midst of residential homes
Traffic controller	No	Not applicable
With compound wall	Yes	No
Proper toilets	No	No
Benches in the classroom	No	No
Staff room	No	No
Lunch room for the staff	No	No
Chairs and tables for the teachers	No	No
First aid box	Basic	Basic
Medical doctors	Once in 30 days	Once in 30 days
Teaching aids	Prepared by the teachers	Prepared by the teachers
Playground	Yes	No
Sports equipment	No	No
Protected drinking water	No	No
Substaff/Attenders	1	1

The no. of students who enrolled in these primary schools in the last 5 years:

Academic year	Zilla Parishad Primary School, Rudraram Village	Mandala Parishad Primary School, Rudraram
2011 – 2012	22	33
2010 – 2011	27	29
2009 – 2010	18	23
2008 – 2009	25	23
2007 – 2008	25	49
2006 – 2007	29	43



The authors with Smt. P. Rama Devi, School Assistant, at Mandal Parishad Primary School.



The playground of Mandal Parishad Primary School which is situated on a National Highway next to a graveyard.



The Zilla Parishad Primary School building without a compound wall and unusable toilets.



The authors with Class III students of Zilla Parishad Primary School.