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Barriers In Improving Education Quality: A Case Study Of Rural India

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Abstract: The study was done in order to find out what are the barriers to education from the perspective of various actors involved therein, as per the census report of 2011. The report is based on a case study conducted in the school situated in village Sanathpur, District – Bhadohi, State- Uttar Pradesh. The main aim of our study was to find out what are the various factors that lead to poor quality of education. The village has much worse literacy rate than its state Uttar Pradesh. This means that somewhere quality of education hampering due to certain reasons which are still unknown. So in order to know and understand those reasons, a study has been conducted in which perspective of various actors upon the poor quality of education in the village was taken. Every actor stated the set of problems from their own perspective, and we framed certain solutions that will cater to the need of every party involved therein. In this report, we have focused on methods to improve children's participation as well as establishing a digital classroom in the village.

INTRODUCTION TO THE VILLAGE

Education is the most powerful tool in today's world. It is like a passport to the future. It benefits those who invest their time in it. It can beautifully create young minds and can guide them towards the goal of their life. Education paves the way for a student's success in life by imparting them with the necessary skills and knowledge and allows them to dream big in life.

India was termed as one of the best countries in terms of education, but with times and increasing population, the quality of education in India is getting deteriorated. The Right to Education act is provided in our country as per the articles of the Indian Constitution, but there has been a problem of proper implementation of this right. Children get enrolled in the schools, but in reality, they are not benefitted by the facilities provided to them by the government. Uttar Pradesh (UP) is the most populated state of India. It has a share of 16.50% in India's population (Census, 2011). UP is one of the most backward states in terms of education. The literacy rate of Uttar Pradesh is far behind other states of India. Particularly in the district of Bhadohi, where literacy rate is much worse than the state (see Figure 1), village Sanathpur has been facing many problems in imparting quality education to its students. Sanathpur is a small village with a large population. 80% of the families in the village have a very low income. Most of the households in the village are dependent on agriculture and own a small patch of land. The

produce that they get from land is enough to feed the bellies of their family members. The amount of produce that remains is sold by the farmers to the whole sellers in the market of Block Suriyawan. Muslim community of the village is engaged in the preparation of earthen pots, Keunth Community of the village do fishery for a living, and other households are dependent on small businesses or do manual labour. As the people of the village, Sanathpur does not have enough income, they try to minimize their expenses and spend their income to meet necessities of life. All the children who are six to fourteen years of age are enrolled in classes 1 to 8, respectively, in the government school of the village, and the education is provided free of cost to the students under article 21A of the constitution. But the quality of education suffers a lot due to various problems faced by the students, their parents, and teachers of the school.

In this report, the problems that are stated by each of the concerned actors are mentioned and what can be an appropriate solution to the stated problem. This report is prepared by Students of Xavier University, Bhubaneswar, on the topic 'How can we improve the quality of education in village Sanathpur.' In this report, we have also mentioned the things which we have noticed so far to increase the children's participation in schools.

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Particulars	Total	Male	Female
Total No. of Houses	265	-	-
Population	1,723	878	845
Child (0-6)	304	164	140
Schedule Caste	491	265	226
Schedule Tribe	0	0	0
Literacy	65.47 %	80.25 %	50.50 %
Total Workers	502	363	139
Main Worker	78	-	-

'The above picture displays the literacy rate of Puresanath is worse than its state.'

Objectives of the study

- To identify various hindrances in the deliverance of quality education to students.
- To study the behaviour and attitude of the actors involved there
- To study the effect of digitalization on the quality of education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

(Pandey, 2006) **1.** The quality of education suffers when there are two types of teachers, that is contract teachers and permanent teachers. Contract teachers are often termed as Para- Teachers. These teachers are performing the same duties in the same schools but are treated with different government service conditions. On the one hand, permanent teachers are paid more on the other hand para teachers are paid less while performing the same duties. (Harma, 2009) **2.** This research says that people prefer well-functioning government schools as compared to low fee private (LFP) schools. As per the survey of 250 households and visits to 26 government and private schools in Uttar Pradesh, whether the low fee private schools are affordable to some parents but still they are unaffordable for low caste and Muslim families. So they still prefer better functioning government schools. (Singh, 2018) **3.** Infrastructure such as availability of electricity, digital learning facilities, sports equipment, sanitation facilities, classrooms, availability of chair and desks and other important elements like availability of school staff, access to learning material and books directly affect the quality of education. If a single factor is absent, then the quality of education will suffer. (Kaur, Rural education in India, 2019) **4.** As per the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), most of the population of our country still live in villages and the topic of education is of major importance. As per the reports, more than half of the students in class fifth are unable to read a second-grade

textbook and are unable to solve a simple mathematical problem. And the reason determined was a single classroom to educate children from first to fifth grade at the same time. (Jitendra, 2018) **5.** As per the reports of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) says that the gap between the learning ability of the student studying in government schools and private schools is widening. Students prefer to study in private schools as compared to government schools and choose to pay around Rs. 100 to study there. Even if they are not studying in private schools, they are taking tuitions to clear their basic concepts.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

Problem from the students' perspective:

- The government school providing education to the students in the village is having classes from 1st to 8th. As the students belong to those families, which have a weak financial background. These families can just fulfil the basic needs of the members of their families. So how will they be able to pursue their education after class 8th? So as they see no future for them in studies, they deny coming to school.
- The students are made to sit together in combined classes (see Figure 2). The students from class 1 to 5 are made to sit in a group, and another similar group is formed for students from class 6 to 8. These groups of students are made to sit in the playground and are usually guided by one or two faculties. This limits the scope of learning as all the students in the group are taught the same concepts or lessons irrespective of their educational standard. This, in turn, leads to a decreased interest among the students as the students from higher educational standards don't seem to see their time being utilized and, in turn, bunk classes. Another major shortcoming of this practice is the lack of discipline among the students. This action can be attributed to the lack of proper monitoring by the concerned faculties. The student to teacher ratio in the school is not appreciable, and when something like a combined class is being held, this number drops even further. This results in even poor attention to student needs from the faculty side and, in turn, leads to increased indiscipline among students.

Problem from parents' perspective:

- A large section of people from village Sanathpur practice agriculture and allied activities to earn a livelihood. People in the village have a small portion of land, which restricts them to grow crops and vegetables for

their own sustenance. The amount of produce they get from land is only enough to feed the bellies of their family members. So, what parents do is they engage their children with themselves in agricultural activities so that they can get an extra hand in the field. As the parents cannot afford to employ labour in their fields, they engage their children with them to save money. So here, poverty acts as a barrier between the education of students and their family's livelihood. Sometimes families do not have adult male members and have children and ladies to complete their household activities. This leads to a barrier in front of that child, as he has to work to bread to his family and ultimately leads to loss of education. Here present conditions of the family do not allow the child to develop, and the status of the family does not improve over time.

Problems from the teachers' perspective:

Teachers of government schools say that; the attendance of the students is very low. This leads to no understanding of the topics that were held at the times they were absent. Reason for the absence of the students as stated by teachers of the school was:

- They miss classes as they are engaged in agriculture activities along with their parents.
- Some children are engaged in the preparation of food items at various shops in the village.
- Parents support their children to do these types of activities, as these activities are helping them to increase the income of the family.
- The study material provided to the students of the village is sold by them for earning a small amount of money.
- Teachers also complain about the various other activities they are engaged in, apart from teaching,

Teachers also say that the quality of education suffers due to security reasons as well. The computer or other devices installed in the school are stolen by the villagers. The villagers also use the premises of the school for open defecation, which leads to loss of education.



'The picture above was captured in a village near Sanathpur, shows active participation of students in the curriculum. Rewards and appreciations play

an important role in encouraging students to participate further in the curriculum.'

OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS:

Hygiene and sanitation:

There seems to be no staff appointed to monitor the sanitation and hygiene of the school campus. In recent times there has been an incident where an outsider has breached the classroom of primary students and excreted; this is the reason (as stated by the teachers) for holding combined classes. There were any steps taken by the teachers to prevent such mishaps in the future. There have been instances where the school playground has been used for organizing marriage functions and classes as the restroom for Baratis. The litter that is spread during the function is not taken care of by anyone. Separate toilets have been constructed for both boys and girls, but they were not in use. When asked around, the teachers stated that the keys to the toilets were with the Gram Pradhan, and he hasn't handed them over to the staff yet. This problem forced the students to urinate along the edges of the very same playground where their classes are being held simultaneously. Sometimes they also visit back home for freshening up and do not come back to school for further classes.

Infrastructure:

The lack of a compound wall poses a serious problem. The sole absence of a compound wall results in villagers failing to distinguish the school area from the nearby vicinity, which in turn results in an improper use of the school playground as well as other buildings. Moreover, the villagers sometimes use the school infrastructure to accommodate guests during marriage functions and other similar social gatherings. This also compromises the security of the school equipment. The school has been provided with a computer, but the teachers are afraid to install that in the classrooms. When asked, they said that the villagers sometimes break in through the doors of the classrooms and hamper the equipment. This is a major hindrance to achieving digitalization in the classrooms. The teachers are also hesitant about the installation of other equipment like projectors keeping in view the lack of security measures at school. The issue of toilets not being made available for the use of students is another major problem.



'The above image represents that the school has no boundary walls which compromise the safety of the school and further leads to an increase in waste disposal in school premises.'

Lack of proper administration and supervision:

Lack of strict supervision is a major problem faced by government educational institutions. The hierarchy of commands is very thinly distributed, and there is an evident lack of responsibility at each and every level. The government schools lack supervision in comparison to their private counterparts. Moreover, this system promotes dishonesty and a lack of effort from the teachers' side. Regular and unscheduled inspections are the only way to determine the problems faced by these institutions on a daily basis.

METHODS OF INTERVENTION

Change in attitude towards education:

Parents fail to recognize a future in education. They are more concerned about putting the food on the table, no matter what the consequences, and for the same ask their children to lend a hand in managing the earnings of the house. Children will leave their homes and village once educated; this is another misunderstanding prevailing among parents. They think that education brings barriers in the family by separating them from their children. These attitudes should be changed. There has been quite an effort made by the government, and honestly, the scenario has changed significantly over the years, but we still have a long way to go. Not only parents, but the teachers should also be reminded that their paygrade includes responsibilities handed over to them not only by the school administration but also by the state and central government (like helping out during election, census, etc.). They should also be reminded that their main job is to help the children in whatever way possible, nevertheless keeping in mind that the funds and commodities distributed by the government are for the development of the children, thereby securing their future.



'The above image represents the children of a single household are studying together and helping each other.'

Making classroom hours more interesting:

Class hours can be made more interesting by the introduction of certain elements that will benefit the students in the long run. These are,

- **Bench Rotation:**

The attention of a human being is very fragile. It is not uncommon for the students sitting in the front rows to gather more attention from the instructor as compared to those on the backbenches. This practice is not uncommon, but, in the long run, can attract grave consequences. The students sitting in the backbenches initially show a lack of enthusiasm towards studies. Maybe the students sitting in the backbenches are relatively weaker in the concepts discussed in the classroom from another student. This leads to the repulsion of the student from the academics. Generally, these back benches serve as the breeding ground for mischiefs and indiscipline. The students in the whole classroom are a victim of these disturbances. A method as simple as 'bench rotation' has been proven very effective in these cases. The students are asked to perform a rotation of their seats, i.e., the students in the backbenches are asked to switch places with a frontbencher on a regular basis, this leads to the undivided attention of the instructor towards every student of the class whilst maintaining the flow of academics to each and every budding mind in a uniform manner. This action will also promote equal class participation as well as a decrease in mischiefs and indiscipline in the classroom.

Addition of co-curricular activities

Co-curricular activities are a major part of the whole education system. Higher emphasis is being paid to encourage co-curricular activities from the grassroots levels of education. Students with similar groups should be asked to form groups among themselves. Each group should be encouraged to organize mini activities of their interest in which all other students have to participate. Group activities such as quizzes (on current affairs, academic curriculum, etc.), art and craft, public speaking, etc. can be formed. These

will not only make the classroom hours more interesting but also increase the exposure of the students exceptionally. The school board can also organize sports competitions, exhibitions, etc. Some of these competitions should be organized at the interschool level to increase enthusiasm among students as well as compare the level of education and curriculum among themselves. Priority, however, should be given in the identification of talents of the students and working in a way to promote these in however way possible. Co-curricular activities bring a sense of responsibility and leadership in students, as well.



'The above image represents dance competition and handwriting competition in school as a part of extracurricular activities.'

More emphasis on practical education

*"I hear, and I forget, I see, and I remember, I do, and I understand"*¹ (Chinese proverb)

The need for practical education is uncanny in today's world. Students should be provided with practical education along with their theoretical counterparts. They must be given examples of the topic they are being explained. Classroom knowledge is partial and unfulfilled without field exposure. Practical education involves working on a particular activity by ourselves self which leads to proper knowledge and understanding of the topic. Topics related to agriculture and basic science can be easily found in the village periphery. For example: If a teacher is explaining about irrigation, farming, or allied activities, he/she can take them to a nearby field. Similarly, concepts related to basic physics (for example, optics, magnetism, etc.) can be displayed in the class itself.

Encouraging student participation

It has also been explored that most of the students show very little or no interest in education. As they always sit on backbenches and talk within themselves. The teacher must involve the students sitting on backbenches as well and should regularly ask questions to them. He or she should welcome answers from everyone in the class and must listen to the perspective of all the students and should make his final statement at last. Teachers must encourage students to participate in class as much as possible.



'The above image was clicked during an interactive session with the students of class 8th from the government school in village Sanathpur. They were asked to participate in a social-science exhibition held in their school. Their enthusiasm was appreciable, and the attendance in that particular day was almost 5 times the regular attendance during any other working day.'

Proper utilization of afterschool hours

Parents are the main actors when it comes to educating a child. The children spend a major part of their day at school, but what they do after school hours is equally important as well. Parents involve their children in household chores instead of asking them about their studies, academics, or discussing with them the problems they face in the school. They should be asked to act responsibly towards the education of the children. The pattern of homework provided by schools should also be changed. The homework provided by the school is repetitive in nature, the students are asked to memorize tables, perform basic mathematical operations, etc. whereas they should be asked to perform activities which involve their parents as well (for example, preparing a report on crop rotation, recycling of organic and inorganic substances at the household level, etc.). This will lead to the holistic development of the child, making him aware of multiple socio-economic scenarios as well as bring the parent's interest in the education of their children.

Setting up a digital classroom

- Immediate focus should be provided towards increasing the attendance of children in the schools.

- This will lead to a regular and uniform flow of academics, thereby saving everyone's time and energy. One of the best ways to act upon is setting up a digital classroom in the village.
- A room (in close proximity to the school premises) can be converted into a digital classroom.
- The setup requires a computer, a projector, and some digital education material. The use of the internet is optional and is sparsely required.
- There is also a requirement of an operator to operate the equipment as well as an instructor to explain the concepts discussed in the digital classroom.
- As discussed with the school faculties, there is a computer system available that would be ready to work with some minor repairs. There is also the availability of digital study materials provided by the government. Additional materials can be downloaded as per need be.
- To make the whole curriculum more interesting, students who have a minimum of 75% attendance in the whole week should be allowed into the classroom.
- The digital classroom will attract students, and a basic of 75% attendance will be maintained by the students as well.

Note: The use of digital classes will prove to be very beneficial in aiding the curriculum. Apart from them, the teachers are also equipped with course materials provided to them by the government.

The IPO Model

It is known as the Input-Process-Output Model. This method is used to evaluate the results obtained and also focuses on the ways to intervene in the output and results. The basic way to evaluate a result is to check on the 'output.' If the 'output', which in this case is quality of education, is comprehensible or cannot be measured quantitatively, then we move forward to the second step, which is 'process.' In this step, we evaluate the 'process' followed to come to the output. This is useful if there are defined steps or stages that need to be followed to achieve the 'output.' In this case of improving the education, we do not have a 'pre-defined' 'process' list that we need to follow to achieve the 'output.' In other words, this process fails as there are numerous ways to intervene the education system and yet we do not have a pre-defined way or foolproof way to do so, the reason being there are multiple factors that interfere with the system and these vary greatly according to the social-economic as well as demographic factors of

the area. And hence we come down to the first stage that is determining that enough or appropriate 'input' is provided. The government does everything in its power to make sure that proper 'inputs' are provided for the system and, in turn, except for the desired 'output.'

CONCLUSION

As per the present scenario, it is tough, or we can say challenging to bring digitalization to the school. Efforts were made before with the introduction of computers in schools, which were stolen by the village people. And school premises are also used for marriage functions which compromise the security of these equipment installed by the government. So, the education of the student suffers due to security reasons and the mind-set of people. As the people should think about the issue and should know the practices done by them is hampering the education of their own children. So it is recommended that there should be a provision of a security guard by the government for the school premises which will lead to no further loss and it will also provide employment to one or two people as well. Awareness must also be created in the village about theft and excretion incident. So that in future people may think twice before doing such things. And secondly, digitization has no doubt changed our education system, but we cannot say that it has diminished the value of our old-time classroom learning.

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