

Evaluation on Critical Indicators of Primary Education in Andhra Pradesh: A Decentralized Approach for Universal Education

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Abstract

Primary education is a key for any government to bring social change particularly in the tribes and interior rural communities. Andhra Pradesh has demonstrated considerable progress in the past decade on primary schools access. The performance of school education has also seen number of achievements but with the compromised nature at key indicators in primary education. An attempt has made for reviewing the critical indicators of primary education in the newly formed state aiming at enrollment, dropout ratio, habitations without schools, toilets and drinking water facilities in rural and tribal areas of AP. The findings from this research are however, not being reflected in the current policy priorities of the state. This paper seeks to bridge the gap by summarizing the two reports namely AP Book let, by the Planning Department, Government of AP and Annual Status of Education Report, India, making policy recommendations, and suggesting an implementation roadmap as to focus on the key indicators, decentralized models and community social responsibility for achieving the universal education. On the other hand, innovations and best practices are also highlighted with possible policy implications.

Keywords: Andhra pradesh, primary education, educational indicators, community social responsibility, community participation, policy intervention.

The right to live with dignity and self-respect as a human being leads to a continuous analysis of policies and programs aiming at marginalized sections. Despite many programmes, Education is the one, which ensures the basic fundamental rights of all children. Andhra Pradesh (AP) is the state within the central federal structure focusing more on educational issues for achieving the universal education but the state remains at the bottom third among the major 15 states in the country in the literacy rate index (Raghuram Rajan Committee, 2013). According to the Backward Index developed

by this Committee, the state remains '*less developed*' with a score of 0.521. The previous studies show that a large number of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe children in AP have been brought into school system by the series of efforts, motivational camps, bridge schools targeting at the rural and tribal children. But these efforts have not given an expected outcome due to non targeting indicators in the school education. Thus, the challenge in educational programs is to how to achieve the universal education while prioritizing the critical indicators in the school programs.

Rationale

According to the Planning Department, Government of A.P (2014), It has been recorded that 29.9 % of the total enrolled children were dropouts and this percentage among girls is even more (33.44 percent). In addition to this, 32.8 percent of total children were enrolled in the private schools which will cause again in pushing households back into the economic deprivation. By measuring, there are 61,421 children in primary schools were out of schools followed by another 54,688 children in upper primary schools, were deprived of education at their first stage of education (DoES, Hyderabad, 2014). Around 4,602 habitations (9.3 %) in the state have no connectivity to primary and secondary schools. Apart from this, 3394 schools (6.87 %) in primary and upper primary schools have no water facility (DoES, Hyderabad, 2014).

By saying, Andhra Pradesh is the best performed state came in at greater than the 90 percent efficiency level (ASER, 2010) in the education sector but not in all the indicators. Achieving education goals, perhaps easy in AP if state focus goes on critical indicators in the implementation. Yet, it is indeed to introduce the best and innovative practices in the school programs to bring public cooperation in achieving the universal education. While many

innovative steps such as the Mid Day Meal, increase in residential facilities, and creation of models of excellence and English Medium schools are at an experimental stage, the state has a long way to go in institutionalization of these modes to see a more sustainable direction to achieving goals in primary education.

Approach of the Study

In this study, the secondary data has been collected from two sources namely Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh and Annual Status of Education Report (ASER,) India for the year of 2013-14. The data has used in tabulation and comparisons on different indicators and prioritized key indicators that need to be targeted by the concern departments in AP.

Further, the data used in comparison between state and srikakulam district and analyzed on Enrolments, Dropout rate, Teachers and Students Ratio, Habitations without Schools, Schools without Drinking Water facility and Out of School Children. The study also collected some of the best practices and innovations in primary education and drowns the decentralized models and policy recommendations.

Study Outcome

Table 1: Status of Education in Andhra Pradesh

Indicators	Primary Schools	Upper Primary	%
Total Enrolments	37,45,340	21,01,928	97.9
Dropout rate (from enrolment)	61421	54,688	29.9
Dropout rate in Girls (from enrolment)	–	–	33.4
Teachers and Students Ratio	29.3	24.6	26.9
Habitations without Schools	2117	2485	9.3
Schools without Drinking Water facility	2819	575	6.8
Out of School Children	61,421	54,688	5.3

Source: AP Book let, Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2014

In applying metric, the dropout rate in Andhra Pradesh was recorded at 29.9 percent, which is lower than the national dropout rate (40%) but in case of the girl, the dropout rate was higher (33.4%)

than the dropout rate among boys. Critically saying that there were 3,394 schools have no drinking water facilities out of which, 575 schools are upper primary schools. This scenario may lead children

for not attending the school regularly. Therefore, the emphasis should be given for providing the drinking water facilities to all the running schools. Another serious concern is that connecting the habitations with schools by road connection. There were 4,602 habitations have no connection with primary and upper primary schools. It is quite difficult to achieve the 100 percent literacy without connectivity of schools in the state. On other side, it is also quite difficult to define of dropout and out of school children. As per statistics shown, there were 1, 16,109 children (5.3%) were out of the schools in primary and upper primary schools. In addition to this, the dropout rate was recorded as 29.9 percent, followed by 33.44 percent for girl children. The previous studies stated that unless state prevent dropout and out of school children at primary and upper primary level, the state face difficult in achieving the universal education in coming years. In addition, 35 percent of the children were enrolled into the private schools. Consequently, the spending of poor households on private schools will surely impact on their income condition.

Table 2: Indicators Comparison between Srikakulam District and State

Indicators	District (%)	State (%)
Literacy Rate	61.7	67
Literacy in Male	71.6	75.5
Literacy in Female	52	59.7
Grass Enrolment Ratio	97.7	97.9
Dropout	26.1	29.9
Teacher-student ratio in SSA	32	40
Out of Schools	7278 (6.2%)	116109
Habitation without schools	988 (21.4)	4605

Source: AP Book let, Planning Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh

The District literacy rate (61.7 %) was lower than the state (67%) and the female and male literacy rate in the districts were 52 % and 71.6 % respectively which were much lower than the state gender wise literacy. Further, the District Grass Enrollment Ratio was recorded as 97.7 per cent, whereas the state Grass Enrollment Ratio recorded as 97.9 per cent.

But this statistic may not be relevant as there is no proper record on number of children are born and number of children are enrolled in a particular years in the state.

As per the statistics, there were 988 habitations out of 8064 habitations in srikakulam district have not connected to schools, which mean 12.5 percentages of habitations in srikakulam district were there without schools. This District alone has 21.4 percentages of total habitations in the state without connection to the primary schools which must be given a serious concern to reduce this gap. Further, the district's dropout rate (26.1%) was lesser than the state dropout rate (29.9%), and out of schools children in the district were 7278 which recorded as 6.2 % in the share of the state. From this, it is understood that one of the important indicators that is lacking completely is connecting habitations with local schools.

Table 3: Status of Learning, Recognize Numbers and Subtraction

	Read Letters & Words	Recognise Numbers	Read 1 st text	Subtraction
State	76.1	82.3	69.1	60.4
Srikakulam District	77.1	77.1	79.4	70

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), India, 2013

Compiling the data from ASER, children who recognize numbers among the primary and upper primary schools children was very low (77.1%) when it compared with the state percentage (82.3 %) and it shows that reading letter and words was almost equal to the state figure (district: 77.1 and state: 76.1). Adding to this, the status of reading 1st level textbook in the district was 79.4 percent, whereas in the state shown as 69.1 percent. This indicates that the district was performed much better than the state. The same way, the status of learning activity like subtraction among children in the district was more (70) than the state (60.4). Therefore, there is a mixed performance between the state and the backward district like srikakulam. However, with regards to recognizing numbers, srikakulam district needs to take reinforcement steps for bettering the performance.

Table 4: District wise outcome of School Education Programs in AP, 2013

	Pvt School	Out of School	Std I-II learning levels		Std III-V learning levels	
District Name	% children (6-14)	% children (6-14)	% children who can READ	% children who can recognize numbers	% children who can READ	% children in Maths
Srikakulam	25.7	1.1	77.1	77.1	79.4	70.0
Vizianagaram	16.0	1.1	79.7	83.1	70.4	72.2
Visakhapatnam	21.5	1.6	78.8	86.3	66.1	55.9
East Godavari	30.3	1.2	75.9	82.8	77.1	68.2
West Godavari	34.0	3.2	72.7	86.4	67.8	56.2
Krishna	37.8	3.2	84.4	88.3	73.3	56.0
Guntur	43.2	2.3	79.2	83.0	76.6	60.0
Prakasam	40.1	4.9	76.2	77.8	76.1	61.9
Nellore	30.9	1.9	76.6	81.3	81.5	71.1
Cuddapah	48.5	1.9	84.5	91.8	72.3	77.5
Kurnool	33.0	10.7	65.4	72.3	45.9	48.4
Anantapur	27.4	2.2	75.0	81.5	59.1	55.1
Chittoor	30.7	0.4	75.3	86.0	73.3	55.0
AP STATE	32.2	2.7	71.0	82.9	70.6	62.1

Source: Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), India, 2013

Factors Contributing for Poor Outcomes

In order to skilled existing teachers, the state is still lacking in terms of providing professional teacher training. As a result, teachers have lack of motivation while tackling the issues in teaching as well as school administration (CGG, 2007). Adding to this, lack of capacity building for school leadership and management are always causing for low level of accountability of teachers and remained as low aspirants in the teaching profession.

Tribal locations and interior rural schools are challengeable place where sometime teachers face difficult to reach the locations; this problem can be doubled particularly in rainy season. In this case, the Ajim Premeji School model suggests states to identify teachers from local community can be a solution to such problem. Otherwise, distance of teachers and children to schools may affect the enrollment and quality of primary education.

The basic standardized assessment procedure is completely missing at the elementary school level.

Apart from this, there is no single window monitor system exclusively for primary schools. Therefore, the state should provide better motivational tools and review system (ex: PMENDOLab method) for adequate assessment and monitoring process.

Improve Quality in Primary Education

The districts level data management system may be established on enrollments, dropouts and out of school children in the district for better review and monitor the programs at Gram Panchayat and Mandal level. It can also help for proper quantitative review on monthly basis. Quoting successful cluster model, the state can set up of a Teacher's Mentoring Program at district level to enhance the required skills through an integrated approach.

There is a need to promote the community participation in school programs for which, the state shall design School Development Program (SDP) with community participation that lies within an integrated approach (Azim Premji Foundation, 2004). This may help the state to recruit teachers

from local community particularly in tribal and remote rural areas on a contractual basis to restore the closed schools. As a result, schools can function as summer schools as well. The state may also develop strategy for Community Social Audit for supervising and monitoring by the local community through which, annual education meeting may also be conducted and presented the best awards for teachers and students (Rahul Mukhopadhyay, Ramkumar.N, Vasavi. A.R, 2009). The state may set up a Mandal Quality Improvement Committee for High Schools to review the existing strengths and weakness of high school education and give proper recommendations to the District Education Board.

Community Role in Schools Activities

The district may seek and facilitate meaningful participation from the Civil Society Organizations, Non- Government Organisations and Corporate Social Responsibility Companies and local community, particularly parents towards improving quality in school education. Therefore, this can increase access of community members to schools during and after the school hours. Promote volunteers from the local community to own up of nearby schools and encourage them to serve as guest speakers, mentors in the schools can help interior schools to achieve the universal education.

Community Social Responsibility

Promotion of Community Social Responsibility at district level can boost up the basic amenities to the schools including children uniform, drinking water, toilets and construction of the walls etc. There should be a Public Private Partnership (PPP) between schools and communities for achieving the targeted literacy rate (Sampath kumar, 2012).

Through the Community Social Responsibility, the state or district administration can involve the VOs/SHGs/MMS/Youth Groups in the promotional activities of primary schools can certainly bring solid understanding among local partners at grass root level. Adding to this, promoting the Community Social Participation will enable for local village guardian or community volunteers to take part in decision making process in school activities.

Further, active women members also be involved in identifying the children, dropouts, out of school children and then to be enrolled in the schools.

Policy Recommendations

The researcher is also collected and examined the best practices in education across the world and recommended them as following.

The use of vouchers (currently being piloted by the Centre for Civil Society in Delhi, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and UP) introduces competitive pressure on participating schools to improve performance in order to gain enrollment share (Nancy B, Rath. L & Amina.I. (2005).

Hiring teachers from the local community enables them to better connect with the schools and puts reputational pressure on the teachers to deliver. Rural and tribal habitations may not be having the potential teachers, but this can be fulfilled through intensive training and ongoing support (Elizabeth A. Giordano, 2008). Further, creating incentives that reward schools and teacher for good outcomes is a method that is increasingly being adopted around the world to boost learning outcomes is a performance pay for teachers (UNESCO, 1995).

Introducing the bio-metric in all the schools to mitigate the teacher's *absenteeism*. *This approach is highly regarded* in the ITDA areas as the majority of teachers will not attend to their schools. For this problem, bio-metric system is one good tool to overcome the problem of absenteeism. Adding to this, introducing the *Geographic Information System* (GIS) for standardizing assessment of schools at various levels can give better results in the school programmes. Data management and up grading the outcome of each school, at phased manner, will help state to improve the quality of education. If we do so, it helps state to grade the schools based on the enrollment, learning outcome, dropout children, out of the school children, drinking water facilities and toilets can certainly help state government to monitor through a single window system.

Giving a small grant to schools at Mandal level which function especially under PPP mode to provide quality education at minimal cost and further, the local community can also own up of

schools under PPP mode, based on the principle of Community Social Responsibility can certainly help the state to achieve universal education.

Balabadi is one of the effective pre-school programs being implanted by the SERP of Andhra Pradesh, which focus on play way method of teaching before children's schooling. This program has given positive outcome in terms of pushing children for enrolling in the primary schools especially in the ITDA areas in Andhra Pradesh. The Balabadi shall be used as effective tool to increase enrollment in tribal area.

Promoting the '*e-learning and e-lab*' method in selected model schools will help children to adopt the 'global village learning' and this will possible with sophisticated infrastructure in these schools. The outcome of this concept would be familiarizing children with computers skills for which these schools shall be provided a special status in terms of quality and subject competences.

Conclusion

The newly formed state like Andhra Pradesh shall not simple continue its education programs as it is but zones and geographical area wise mapping should be done for critical assessment of certain indicators such as children enrollment, functions of school administration, drop out and basic amenities in schools in the rural and tribal regions of Andhra Pradesh. However, execution of the newly designed initiatives can be a key to success otherwise. But above the key issues that the state will have to be considered upon and it may not be that easy unless the key focus should be given for prioritized indicators in AP.

Policy level change will have to bring for hiring teachers from the local tribal community so that the absenteeism of teachers and children can be reduced as a immediate effect and further connectivity has become another critical issue in the newly formed state. As a result, Srikakulam district alone has 988 habitations which is very critical to achieve the universal education. The study also highlighted about lack of toilet facilities for both boys and girls which is the most sensitive issue forcing parents to rethink of sending their girl children to the government schools.

Reform in education is a cultural, political, financial and administrative challenge. The vision and mission of education programs of the state is to provide quality education through the teacher training and leadership environment. The state is not yet adopted fully the best practices such as '*cluster modes*', school '*vouchers system*' and community participant model of Azim Premji Foundation. Thus, this article is strongly recommending for adopting above the models which can certainly help the state for timely monitoring to overcome existing bottlenecks and also improve the quality of primary education as well. The children of today are to be the citizens of tomorrow. We as a citizen of today will able to provide a slate to every child and a pen to write his/her own future.

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