

MONITORING FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT UNDER SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

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Background

Monitoring is the systematic process of collecting, analyzing and using information to track a programme's progress towards reaching its objectives and to guide management decisions. Monitoring usually focuses on processes, such as when and where activities occur, who delivers them and how many people or entities they reach. Monitoring is conducted after a programme has begun and continues throughout the programme implementation period. The purpose of monitoring is to assess the status of a programme progressively with reference to the objects and targets. Monitoring is effective if it is built into the total life cycle of a programme or project, starting with pre-planning and going on to planning, implementation and assimilation. The significance of monitoring is brought out in the National Policy of Education (1986) as follows:

The Central Advisory Board of Education will play a pivotal role in reviewing educational development, determining the changes required to improve the system and monitoring implementation.

Within a multilevel framework of educational development, Central, State, District and Local level agencies will participate in planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

(Part X, The Management of Education, National Policy on Education, 1986)

Elementary education has been recognized an important tool for empowering children so as to enable them to grow as responsible citizens. It is in this context that education of children of the age group 6-14 years has been made the Fundamental Rights of all children in the country through 86th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 2002. It implies providing education of satisfactory quality to all children in this age group. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the initiative of the Government of India to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education. SSA is an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities of the poorest children, through community owned quality education in a mission mode. It is in response to the demand for 'quality basic education' in the country.

Quality of Elementary Education

Education and quality are interwoven. Ideally education and quality are synonymous. Quality

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education is referred as making a subject conscious and productive citizen capable of facing future challenges in life. In this sense quality is referred as high degree of goodness, worth, excellence in an object or a system.

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The International Commission on Education (Delor's Commission) emphasized that quality education should equip the learners in looking for and using learning opportunities throughout life, broaden his/ her knowledge, skills, attitudes and to adapt to the changing complex and interdependent world. The commission, therefore, referred to four pillars of learning which could lead to quality education. These are: Learning to Know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be. As such the quality of education should represent a sum total of experiences gained throughout life for the benefit of both individuals and the society.

The goals of SSA include not only attainment of universal enrolment and universal retention but also 'education of quality'. SSA suggests various parameters to be addressed in district and State plans to achieve the desired goal of quality education. Realization of these goals is possible only when various dimensions/ parameters of elementary education having potential to affect on both quality and quantity are identified and their nature and scope determined. The quality dimensions for elementary education have broadly been identified as:

- Infrastructural Facilities in the School
- School Management and Community Support
- School and Classroom Environment
- Curriculum and Teaching Learning Materials
- Teacher and Teacher Preparation
- Classroom Practices and Processes
- Opportunity Time (Teaching-learning Time)
- Learners' Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision

In order to be continually informed about the parameters and issues related to quality of elementary education both at the classroom level as well as at the systemic level, some monitoring system has been thought to be put in place for better management of quality. A strengthened need was felt for periodic monitoring and regular feedback at elementary level within and outside the classrooms. The NCERT was entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the quality of education in SSA.

Nature of Monitoring in SSA

Monitoring under SSA is envisaged as a three-tiered one: monitoring at the local community level, at the State level and the National level. Community based monitoring is one of the strengths of the programme. The community, through its representative institutions like Village Education Committees, has been entrusted with the primary level of ensuring that the schools are functioning effectively. For monitoring the qualitative aspect from the national level, reliance

may have to be placed more on assessing the effectiveness of community-based monitoring at the local level and ensuring that this system is functioning properly. In addition at the State and National level, monitoring would focus more on the quantitative aspect of both the status of the implementation of the project and the progress made towards the achievement of the SSA goals.

Dimensions of Monitoring System under SSA

Various provisions for monitoring of programme implementation under SSA are as follows:

Joint Review Mission:

An independent Joint Review Mission (JRM) reviews the progress of SSA alongwith members from State government and external funding agencies on half-yearly basis.

National and Regional Review Meetings with States:

Half yearly National level Review Meetings and quarterly Regional Review Meetings are held with State Education Secretaries and State Project Director of SSA, Quarterly Review Meetings of the State Pedagogy Coordinators and SCERT representatives are also held to review progress in quality interventions and exchange of good practices.

Monitoring Institutes:

41 National Social Science Institutions have been associated with different States and Union Territories for monitoring of implementation of SSA. These Monitoring Institutes (MIs) make field visits and report on progress of SSA at the ground level on half yearly basis.

Educational Management Information System (EMIS):

The EMIS incorporates provisions for correlation of school level data with community based information from micro planning and surveys. Besides this, every school has to display data regarding grants, enrolment, attendance, incentives etc. for public knowledge. Panchayat Raj Institutions through its bodies at village, block and cluster; supervise and monitor the elementary education programmes periodically.

Project Management Information System (PMIS):

The second information system is the Project Management Information System in which the emphasis would be on to record the progress made, both in physical as well as financial terms, towards the implementation of the perspective plans and annual plans as sanctioned by the Project Approval Board.

Monitoring by District Based Body:

Provision has been made for the constitution of a District Level Committee comprising local public representatives (Members of Parliament Members of the State Legislature and Members of the Zilla Parishad, elected from that district / and / or urban bodies as applicable) to monitor the implementation of the SSA programme in the districts.

The Challenge

State Implementation Societies (SIS):

Representatives of the National Mission for Universalisation of Elementary Education and National Level Institutions like NCERT, NUEPA, NCTE are involved in periodic monitoring and provide resource support to SIS for strengthening monitoring and appraisal.

Educational Development Index (EDI):

An EDI has been developed to take progress of the States towards Universalisation of Elementary Education.

National Achievement Surveys:

Pupil Achievement Level Sample Surveys are conducted every three year by the National Council of Educational Research and Training for classes III, V, VII / VIII. States are also encouraged to undertake independent learning achievement surveys to assess performance of their students.

Research and Evaluation:

Research studies are conducted at National and State levels to provide feedback on effectiveness of different inputs, to identify problem areas in implementation and to provide suggestions for making effective changes in implementation. Research groups of the State and District levels are also constituted to facilitate quality improvement in teaching learning.

Programme / Impact Evaluation:

Programme / Impact Evaluation studies are conducted by the NCERT to evaluate the quality initiatives by the States.

Web Portal – A web portal on implementation of the SSA programme has been developed and launched on 31st July, 2008. This is an online district based, MIS system to track progress of the various aspects of implementation across districts and states.

Financial Monitoring – Important dimensions of financial monitoring include:

- Independent concurrent financial reviews of States and Union Territories commissioned by the ministry
- Quarterly review meetings of Finance Controllers of States/ UTs regularly covering reports on release and utilization of funds, capacity building of accounts staff, status of external audit, good financial management practices etc.
- Audit of annual accounts by chartered accountant firms and State Accountant General (audit)
- Setting up internal audit mechanism

National Resource Group (NRG) of SSA

The Challenge

The NRG of SSA advise Central and State governments on different aspects of quality improvement in elementary education like curriculum, quality and content of textbooks, inservice training of teachers, and appropriate pedagogic and evaluation practices.

Quality Monitoring Formats

With a view to introducing a system of continuous monitoring of quality aspects of elementary education, NCERT developed a set of 14 monitoring formats and 3 analytical sheets, popularly known as Quality Monitoring Formats (QMFs), through a nationwide rigorous process of consultations. These formats were rolled out by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in all the thirty five States and Union Territories in the country. It was visualized that these monitoring formats will empower the functionaries at different levels, particularly at the grass-root level. Information collected through these formats at different levels viz. school, cluster, block, district and State is analysed and used to provide feedback and corrective measures for quality improvement. The major quality dimensions for improving quality of elementary education covered under these formats are:

- Children's attendance
- Community support and participation
- Teacher and Teacher Preparation
- Curriculum and Teaching Learning Materials
- Classroom process
- Learners' Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision

The existing quality monitoring formats, envisage a close partnership of DPOs and SPOs with DIETs and SCERTs respectively. The formats ultimately seek to rejuvenate the academic resource support structures at the block and district levels, for improvement in classroom processes and pupil achievement levels. The formats also seek to monitor the provisions of quality-related inputs under SSA, like training of teachers, availability and usage of TLMs, availability of textbooks, functioning of academic support groups viz. District Resource Groups (DRGs), Block Resource Groups (BRGs), Cluster Resource Groups (CRGs) etc.

It is hoped that once the system of monitoring gets established and the objectives of monitoring are meaningfully realized/utilized, the quality of elementary education will continue progressing and the goal of achieving quality for all will be achieved. Through strong monitoring mechanism at all levels, we will not only be able to sustain the interest of children in schools, but we will also be able to improve their achievement levels. The improved quality of teaching learning processes will facilitate to achieve the objectives of SSA.

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