

Chapter 5: Results and Discussions

“Our Constitution fathers did not intend that we just set up hovels, put students there, give untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds and say, we have complied with Article 45 and primary education is expanding...They meant that real education should be given to our children between the ages of 6 and 14”⁶⁹.

Enactment of the RTE act in 2010 guarantees the right to compulsory and free elementary education for all children. Special training (ST) is to be mandated to be provided to all OOSC to enable them to bridge the gap between the academic age and the biological age once they enrol in to some school. The OOSC have the right to be enrolled into an age-appropriate (AA) class as discussed in previous chapter. All the processes and systems that are aimed at mainstreaming the child into the AA class form the set of activities under ST. Besides numerous scholastic aspects of the child, the school, the teachers and the TLM, several other socio-economic and cultural aspects impact the ST.

Discussion on each attendant aspect of ST is warranted to get the overall picture. These are - the quantum of OOSC children, the complexity in assessment of age-appropriate class and finally the model of delivery of the ST itself.

Numbers of the Out-of-School Children (OOSC) in India are Persistent

The world came together by way of the second Millennium Development Goal in asserting the need of education of out of school children by 2015. World civic organisations such as UNESCO, World Bank and IMF have all been supporting this unequivocally. Despite the ambiguity of the definition of the OOSC which stems from whether to include the children who dropped out after enrolment to schools as OOSC, several bodies continue to estimate and monitor these numbers closely. Concerted efforts the world over resulted in the numbers dropping from 100 million in 1990 to 67 million in

⁶⁹ Shri MC Chagla, Education Minister, 1964

2009. This trend is comforting but the persistency of the residual numbers causes great concern.

India is not faring well in Asia, trailing only behind Pakistan. Here too, the definition of OOSC though standardised in the guidelines by the MHRD in 2013, the state governments differ in including the dropouts in the enumeration of OOSC. OOSC have a high presence of SC, ST, street children, orphans/homeless children, migrant children, denotified/ primitive tribal groups etc. Gender party cuts across all categories. Initially social and economic reasons preclude enrolment and later on abets drop out and absenteeism.

Administrative agencies, NGOs, researchers and house hold surveys all estimate the quantum of OOSC differently. Even here, the definition of out of children leads to large variations. When we include the dropouts as an OOSC, reports of Population Projections from Registrar General of India (RGI), 2009 and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2009 (2012 revision) estimated that we had a mammoth figure of 11.7 million which is 6.15% of population. Rural areas reported greater numbers which is aggravated by households below poverty line. In all cases gender gap is small.

In 2013, in absolute numbers, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Bihar have each over 2 lakh OOSC and Andhra Pradesh (then including Telengana), West Bengal, Haryana, Assam, Maharashtra have over 1 lakh. In all states, the figures of 2013-14 are lesser than that of 2012-13. However, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, MP and Gujarat have shown an increasing trend in this period presumably due to better enumeration consequent to the spreading of the awareness of the mandate of RTE act.

The study has assimilated the differentials in estimations of the OOSC stemming from the definition of school, definition of OOSC and data collection methods. At the national level the overall figures have shown a downward trend over the years of reckoning

i.e. from 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 as 3.2, 2.9 and 2.2 million respectively. It would be fair to estimate that approximately that 1.8 million OOSC would be the beneficiaries of the special training. As discussed earlier the geographic, demographic, social-economic and cultural factors are likely to affect ST.

Complexity and Estimation of Age-Appropriate Grade

The problem of large numbers of OOSC is aggravated further by the dynamics of geography, demography, socio-economic factors and literacy. This is further compounded by the mandate of admission of the OOSC to age-appropriate (AA) grade. The age appropriate grade has two aspects - the *biological age* and the competency based *academic age*. The differential between the same is enormous and makes ST that much more complex.

Lack of accuracy of record keeping agencies in registration of births and deaths makes the assessment of the biological age of OOSC complicated. In 2014, UNESCO estimated that 4-5 % of all OOSC are 6 years old which dips to 2% for the 9 year olds and rises alarmingly to 6.5 percent for 13 years old. It is remarkable that the gap in school participation rates between male and female children is quite small till the age of 11, and increases after that in favour of males. Hence the age differential that needs to be bridged by the ST is wide, thereby demanding a focussed and responsive approach.

The study found that in 2011, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had at least 1 lakh children who are more than two years overage for class 5 and class 7. This makes it even more difficult for the special training agency/school. Madhya Pradesh had over 1.2 lakh students who are 2 years overage for class 7 i.e. they are at least 13 years old. In case they undergo a yearlong special training, they would have to achieve the competence for the age appropriate class i.e. 10th, all within just two years by when he/she will be 15 years

old. Madhya Pradesh also had another 42000 students who are 3 years overage for class 7th. West Bengal surprisingly has over 25000 students in class 7 who are 4 years overage. Mainstreaming them would be an insurmountable challenge. The rural and urban divide exists here too. The percentage of overage children is higher in rural areas. Private school too face the same severity of challenges of the age differential. The percentages of the enrolled children, who are 2 years overage for their classes, is high but those who are 3 years overage is lesser and is small for 4 years overage.

Age differential between the biological age and the academic age of OOSC, when they get enrolled, increases the difficulty in administering ST further. The differential would worsen when age differential of the OOSC children who are yet to enrol is factored in. The complexity is further compounded when the drop-out percentages are included in the estimates. Drop out not only makes the enrolled children OOSC again, it further widens the gap that needs to be bridged. The more the delay in enrolling the OOSC, firstly, the wider is age differential and secondly, the closer is the OOSC to the upper limit of 14 years for ST. This demands a longer ST duration but the time available to administer the same shrinks -a case of double jeopardy for such children.

Designing, Conduct and Effectiveness of Special Training to Out of School Children

Disparities in equity to education access, attainment between different social and economic groups based on class, caste, gender, and religion all tend to deeply influence children's participation in the learning process. In the past too, mainstreaming of OOSC through some form of remedial education has been existing in some form or the other well before the special training initiatives of RTE Act. Ever since the launch of SSA in 2001, Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) centres dotted the educational map of India. These were called by several names such as the bridge courses and camps, remedial

education/learning centres etc. One can view the ST as a school for the school or a school within the school. ST serves to be a feeder process for mainstreaming of OOSC.

ST encompasses a wide range of processes and activities. Retention and completion of the elementary school cycle are also critical areas of concern. The fears that these mainstreamed children face due to curricular aspects, discrimination, impede learning (Anil Bordia, 2012). Anil Bordia Committee report (Anil Bordia, 2012) and the National Level Workshops (National Level Workshops on Special Training held on 20-21st Sep 2010, 2010), have both recommended numerous measure to achieve efficacy in designing and delivery of ST.

Designing special training requires understanding the context and needs, strategies for age-appropriate enrolment, duration of special training and bridging programmes and teachers training. Each of these aspects has been analysed. Besides these, school empowerment plan for special training, strengthening of SMC, preparation and keeping of record of children, school readiness packages, developing special training materials, life skill education and finally the management of special training have also been studied.

The study finds that the capacity building for ST in the nation has been notable. Quantum of schools that conduct ST increased commensurately with new schools opening in pursuit of the RTE. In 2010-11 only 35100 schools reported conduct of ST in any form of the total 11.5 Lakh schools in India. The number of school had increased to 14.4 Lakhs in 2014-15 and an impressive number of approximately 69500 reported that they conducted ST in that year. At the state level, most states have shown an increasing trend except Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and to some extent Bihar, which have shown a declining trend in the number of school that conducted ST. Rural areas and urban areas alike have continued their impetus towards the delivery of ST. Both government and private schools have

contributed to the capacity to deliver ST. The government's impetus is really noteworthy; in 2011 approximately 18200 education department schools were involved in ST which has remarkably increased to 42900 schools in 2014-15. Private parties account for over 7800 schools.

Schools which are not approachable by all weather roads face numerous hardships as it is, and hence may be unenthusiastic to burden itself further with ST. However, it is comforting that over the years, more and more school in unreachable areas have delivered ST. The major contributors ST has been the non-residential mode and that too with in school premises. The number of residential school imparting ST has however grown over the year since 2010. One reason that can be attributed to this increase is that the effectiveness of the focussed training in residential school presumably results in better mainstreaming and reduced drop-outs.

Educational volunteers (EV) (including serving school teacher) play a key role in any education system and so is it in ST too. The RTE act provides the flexibility to the local authorities and school management committees (SMC) to decide who conducts the ST, the school teacher, specially engaged teachers or a mix and match option. Teachers of the schools concerned contributed the most in ST in both government schools and private school. Teachers specially engaged for ST has been on the rise both in government and private schools.

Even though the number of schools employing various types of EVs has been increasing over the years, the overall number of actual teachers/EVs employed has a different trend. Initially the number of EVs increased both in government and private bodies till 2012-13; however, thereafter a notable decrease, dipping to levels lower than 2010-11, is evident in 2014-15. This could be the causal effect of the reducing numbers of

OOSC with each passing year possibly due to efficient enrolment. Analysis of this dip deserves a more rigorous treatment.

All EVs that are employed in the task of administering ST have to deal with a heterogeneous group of OOSC with substantial age-differential and disparate socio-economic background. Each OOSC has a different competence and resultant learning aptitude. All EVs thus need substantial and focussed training themselves to handle such a heterogeneous group. Each year the number of trained EVs that were specially engaged for ST by the government and private schools has increased. It can be safely inferred that cumulatively, sufficient number of EVs have been trained. The quality of their training and its impact on delivery of the ST is yet another matter.

The readiness of a school for ST depends on the trained staff and the availability of specially designed accelerated teaching-learning material (TLM) for ST and not merely the curricular learning material. In this context, first and foremost is availability of special TLM to enable accelerated learning by the OOSC based on his/her abilities. Ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the TLM, specific to each child's competence, is a complex matter and a continuous process. Maharashtra and Rajasthan have fared well whereas Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and UP have reported only a small number of school having TLM. The efficacy of ST in the absence of adequate TLM is a real suspect. One can take solace in the fact that the inadequacy may have been overcome by qualified teachers who are competent to deliver competence based accelerated learning. However, a lot more needs to be done to make TLM available in adequate quantities. The local bodies and the education department both in rural and urban areas could provide further impetus to liquidate the shortage of TLM. Private schools too lag behind in this aspect.

Thus far the preceding metrics indicated the capacity of schools to deliver ST. We notice that the number of children who completed ST dipped in the years 2011-13 and then picked up in 2013-14 and continued thus. Notably, far greater number of enrolled OOSC seems to have completed their ST in 2014-15, two years later. This could be because better enrolment or more schools or both. This is a positive trend. It implies that schools have the capacity to meet varying demands of ST.

Finally, the rate of providing ST may be a good measure of the success of ST. How effective the complete process of ST has been in the States over the years can be assessed in some ways by the average number of OOSC mainstreamed per school of that State, which can be reckoned as throughput, loosely. Bihar and West Bengal both have increased their throughput from 50 per school in 2010 to 400 in 2012 and then to about 350 in 2015. In contrast Rajasthan has a lower throughput. Rural schools have greater throughput as expected and so do the government schools. Throughput has been highest in 2015 which is encouraging. Whether, higher throughput degrades quality or is indicative of improved ST machinery, remain a matter of speculation at present. Urban areas were able to leverage the private bodies more than rural areas for ST delivery. This is understandable.

Pupil teacher ratio (PTR) of ST has a lot of bearing in its success. We notice that in larger and medium sized states, one teacher has been responsible up to 20-25 students. Much lower ratios are noted in most cases, which seem to be a good trend sparing Chandigarh, which has reported a high ST PTR of 50 in 2014-15. However, there is remarkable increase in PTR where teachers were specially engaged for ST in the past years. The trend has since been corrected in 2014-15 less Chandigarh which again reports a high PTR of 60 students to one ST teacher/EV. In the earlier years, considerable numbers of students had to do without suitable TLM developed by the SCERT. The good part is that

the trend has been decreasing over the years. More TLM leads to better ST but to be really effective TLM effectiveness needs to be reviewed.

More OOSC were trained in non-residential mode in almost all states. However, Assam, Gujarat and Maharashtra continue to consider the residential ST mode a preferred option. Government has stipulated a norm of Rs 3000/- per annum for a non residential student and Rs 15000/- for residential. This large fund requirement for residential ST could be a limiting factor. Correlation of the learning outcome of the residential/non residential students (once they are mainstreamed) would indicate which mode is better.

Proposals are made by the all the States in the SSA's annual Planning and Budgeting Meetings (PAB). Larger states have not expended more than 60% of the allocations. In contrast, the smaller states have a better spending rate. Interestingly, larger states have either tried to improve their expenditure percentages or at least maintained it. Some large states such as Assam, Gujarat and TN have shown improved expenditure consistently to levels of 80%. The smaller states and UTs have similarly increased their expenditure percentages and are well above 80% in 2014-15.

Quantitatively, in larger states, despite low spending of as 60%, more than 75% student of the target fixed by each state were imparted ST. The smaller states and UTs have achieved closer to 100% of the target. Hence, it can be inferred that adequate funds are at the disposal of respective governments to maximise ST. It is not clear whether the target fixed by the states were closer to the estimated numbers of OOSC, between 6-14 years, in their states or it is fixed based on the assessed maximum capacity to deliver ST. Hence the mere fact that higher percentages of the targets were trained may not necessarily correlate to efficient ST mechanism or process.

The shortfall between the numbers that were imparted ST and those actually got mainstreamed is a more direct measure of the efficacy of the ST provided the numbers does not include the drop-outs. It is seen that the shortfall is considerable and is worthy of further rigorous analysis. In case of larger and medium states, the percentage of the ST students that were mainstreamed is not so encouraging. Smaller states and UT have been faring better.

Special Training Centre where the actual ST is conducted may be within the school premises or may be in separate premises. It may be residential or non-residential. Analysis of data of about 22 STCs in Delhi revealed that most children were able to get mainstreamed into an age-appropriate class with in the same academic year. However some underwent the ST for up to two years also. It was learnt that competence for admission to an age-appropriate class was assessed through an instrument developed by the SCERT of the respective states. Whereas for lower classes up to class 4th, accelerated learning may be feasible in one year, same is fraught with scepticism for classes 5 to 8. The finding that most students were also able to achieve the competence to mainstream into classes as high as 6, 7 and 8 merely with 12 months of ST seems unbelievable. Further research is needed to validate the findings. No linkages of the duration of ST with the gender or socio-economic aspects were noticed. The STC also did not maintain child level learning outcomes of the mainstreamed OOSC to assess the follow up. Measuring the effectiveness of ST would continue to remain a challenge in future too, unless policy corrections are made.

It was also seen that there were indeed some really fast learners who were mainstreamed into senior classes like 7 and 8 with less than eight months of ST. On interaction with the DURC revealed that this really was the case. Notwithstanding the

scepticism, these OOSC need to be reckoned as genius in their own accord and hence this national resource should be nurtured as such.

Mainstreaming of OOSC involves - estimation of numbers, identification of OOSC, enrolment, and target for ST, deliver ST and finally mainstreaming. Slippages at each level are to be expected. The rate at which, we as a nation, are mainstreaming OOSC has been improving. However, when extrapolated to 2016-17 using the growth rate formulation, it is seen that there will still be 15.8 lakhs OOSC despite all out efforts to enumerate, enrol, impart ST and then mainstream the OOSC. About 10 lakhs would be from Bihar with 2.00 lakhs and Jharkhand and Maharashtra 4.00 lakhs each followed by Assam and Maharashtra each with 1.00 lakh OOSC.

Correlation test was run on several of parameters to assess the correlation coefficients and the significance levels. The aggregated yearly data of 14.4 lakh schools, for the period 2011-15 was used. Pearson correlation coefficients were then calculated for each of the said aggregated values using 2-tailed test of significance using SPSS grouped under two aggregated heads as under:-

- a. Figure : Aggregated Number of Schools and other Variables.
- b. Figure : Aggregated Number of Education Volunteers and other Variables.

Considerable correlation was noticed with certain factors - NGOs, specially engaged teachers and availability of TLM. The same was low for rural schools when employing school teachers. However, the associated statistical significance was negligible.

Linkages of Special Training to Learning Outcomes after Mainstreaming

Anxieties arising from the socio-cultural and economic trepidation, the lack of academic competence of the mainstreamed child may further distress the child and result in eventual drop-out. On the contrary, good competence will reassure the OOSC and inspire

him to complete the education. Special training can thus be a very important link in the right to of elementary education the OOSC. Hence, quality of ST becomes paramount.

Somehow, ensuring the quality of ST by measuring and monitoring the learning outcomes of the OOSC is limited to school level only, once in awhile assessed by some surveys, NGOs or researchers. The child level data of the STC is not in public domain as is in the case of ASER and School Achievement Surveys, NCERT. This notwithstanding, bridging courses which are meant for accelerated learning, has been in vogue since long the world over. Linkages of the learning outcomes of the mainstreamed child need to be monitored and evaluated by all stake holders. This assessment needs to be available in the public domain too akin to the School Report Cards on DISE Website. After all public money is spent on the STC. Moreover, an ineffective ST will render the mainstreamed child unable to cope with the ensuing academic rigour in the main school and may result in a dropout thus, in some ways, inadvertently violating his/her right to elementary education, albeit, in some ways abetted by the state.

Literature and research on this area has been scanty. Activists, researchers and scholars acknowledged this frankly. Data, on its part, is aggregated at school level and treats OOSC as another normal student precluding any child level analysis.