CHAPTER VII

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7.1 Introduction

Education is the most powerful instrument for social change and development. The social returns received from education is the highest among all kinds of investments. It is the only means to generate opportunities for optimum utilisation of human resources and for building up an individual's personality. Therefore, in India, the lower stages of education i.e. whole of elementary education is considered as welfare provision by Central and State governments. As such education at this level has been made free for its people with sufficient government subsidy basically to cover capital development such as improvement of school building and other physical assets, and also to provide teachers with professional competence. On the other hand the incidence of dropout and non-enrolment results in high cost to society generally in terms of unemployment, underemployment, lower wages to individual, crime, squalor, terrorism, delinquency etc. This altogether affects the developmental initiatives in the country. Hence, it is high time to take necessary steps to keep all children in school rather than to deal with the heavy social and economic consequences later on.

Tremendous emphasis has recently been laid by the international communities on levelling off the growth and development of all nations by creating opportunities for providing educational facilities at least upto
elementary stage. During post-independence period, arduous efforts have been made in our country also for achieving the goal of UEE in a time bound manner. A number of programmes and schemes such as Operation Blackboard, Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education Scheme, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Mahila Samakhya, Mid Day Meal, Non-Formal Education (NFE), Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Alternative Innovative Education (AIE) have been operationalised in India for achieving constitutional goal of UEE by providing suitable conditions for excellence in school education and for free and compulsory education of comparable quality to all children upto the age of 14 years. Of late, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), a holistic and convergent national programme targeting quality elementary education within a clear cut time frame was conceptualised by the Central government and this has been operationalised from 2000.

7.2 Needs and significance of the study

Since 1950, determined efforts have been made for achieving the goal of UEE in Assam. The substantial expansion has been made in respect of schooling facilities covering entire State. In order to facilitate the disadvantaged section of population, several schemes like supply of free textbooks, Mid Day Meal, attendance scholarship, TLM grant, establishment of EGS centre (Amar Parhasali), opening of Sanjogi Siksha Kendra as alternative innovative education, running of Residential Bridge Course centres as well as Hard to Reach Children Centres (Jyoti Kendra) and many other incentive schemes have been introduced during recent past in the State. For
enhancing quality of teaching learning process, emphasis has been given on improving professional competence of primary school teachers through short-term in-service training on different aspects of school education. In addition to this, infrastructural facilities including construction and repairing of school building, supply of teaching-learning materials, appointment of teacher etc. have been made especially under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes during post-independence era.

Despite all these praiseworthy efforts, the co-efficient of efficiency of primary school system of Assam during 2003-04 was recorded 80.7 which is far below than that of all State's average i.e. 87.8 and also below the corresponding figure for the year 2002-03 i.e. 82.9 (Mehta, A.C., 2006, p.142). It indicates that there is good scope for further improvement of internal efficiency of primary school system of Assam as 19.3 percent of the total resources have gone waste. This wastage indicates missed opportunities for individuals, communities and the entire State or nation. It deprives optimum use of scarce resources. Hence, finding ways to reduce school wastage must become an urgent priority for a State like Assam. On the other hand, during 2003-04, Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of Assam was 73.82 which is slightly lower than country's average (73.99) (Mehta, A.C., 2006, p.149). It reflects that 26.18 percent of primary school going age group children of the State still remain out of school. High dropout (7.22 percent) and repetition rate (3.81 percent) are also recorded in 2003-04. Dropout and repetition rates in Assam are still very high in Class I i.e. 13.37 and 4.88 percent respectively during 2003-04 (Mehta, A.C., 2006, p.134-138). Repeating grades and dropping out exert a terrible personal toll on the pupils involved and absorb a large share of
the limited resources available for education. Hence finding ways to minimise school wastage must play a central role in any serious effort to reach the goal of Education for All. It is also a fact that without Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE), Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) cannot be achieved. Moreover, primary stage is the most sensitive part of elementary education, because most of the students have to discontinue their study forever in this stage for several reasons. On the other hand, even after 55 years of the independence, primary education system of Assam is still characterized by insufficient qualified teachers as well as inadequate physical infrastructure, dilapidated condition of school building, low NER, poor academic achievement, etc. Now the question arises whether Assam would be able to meet the challenge of UEE by 2010 A.D. with the existing rate of enrolment, retention and dropout or not. Moreover, no significant attempt has yet been made to study internal efficiency and cost-effectiveness of primary school system of Assam, except a few with a very small sample size. Therefore, a thorough analysis of different indicators of quality education and identification of factors responsible for its ineffectiveness is urgently needed.

In view of the fact stated above, the researcher has proposed to take up the problem and it is expected that the findings of the proposed study will be helpful for the educational planners, teachers, educationists and administrators in implementing decentralized planning at grassroot level. It will help the planners to know the actual problems and prospects of primary education in different areas. The activities of Axom Sarva Siksha Abhijan Mission (ASSAM) will be benefited by the study especially in preparing Annual Work Plan and Budget with a new insight into the different problems like
infrastructural deficiency, inadequate qualified teachers, high incidence of drop-out and grade repetition, low learning achievement etc. at primary stage of education in Assam. The findings of the study will also provide a new perspective for reviewing curricula, textbook and teaching methodology in order to relate education with the need and aspiration of the people. Moreover, the findings of the study will reveal many other avenues for further study.

Considering the facts stated above, the investigator finds it significant and hence the present study is justified and taken up for the research work. It is a humble attempt to find out the pros and cons of the problem of inefficiency and ineffectiveness at primary school system and to suggest some measures for enhancing internal efficiency and cost-effectiveness thereof.

7.3 Statement of the problem

Internal Efficiency and Cost-effectiveness of primary schools – A Case Study of Kamrup and Marigaon Districts.

7.4 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present study are –

1) To know the existing enrolment trend in primary schools across urban and rural areas and gender disparity thereof.

2) To assess the internal efficiency of primary schools across urban and rural areas.
3) To identify the cost effectiveness of primary schools across urban and rural areas.

4) To study the factors responsible for the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of primary schools.

5) To know the Government interventions for increasing internal efficiency of primary schools.

6) To suggest strategies for making the primary school system internally efficient and cost effective.

7.5 Methodology

7.5.1 Method used in the study

To fulfil objectives of the study different indicators of quality education such as trend in enrolment as well as dropout, repetition and promotion rates were computed and compared across urban and rural areas. Hence the study was brought under the category of descriptive research. A number of case studies were done using survey method to fulfil the objectives laid out for the study. This method was considered appropriate for this research work, because no readymade data which are required for examining different objectives under study, such as school data on enrolment, dropout, promotion, retention, item-wise recurring expenditure, achievement scores, etc. were available. This resulted in no alternative for the investigator but to visit sampled schools for collection of data.
7.5.2 Sampling technique

Stratified random sampling technique has been adopted for the study. In this study stratification is done on the basis of location i.e. urban and rural areas. At first two blocks from Kamrup and Marigaon districts were selected randomly using simple random technique. Under Kamrup district, Hajo block for rural schools and Guwahati block for urban schools were selected. Similarly Mayong (rural) and Mayong (urban) blocks from Marigaon District were selected for the study. Then list of L.P. Schools under the each block were collected from DISE, SSA. Primary schools of selected blocks were stratified into two strata viz. rural and urban area based on their location. Thereafter from each stratum a representative sample of 5 percent of schools were selected with the help of simple random technique without replacement for detail investigation. On an average 3 teachers from each sampled schools were also included in the sample. In addition to this, 35 dropout children were also included purposively from the catchment area of sampled schools.

Thus the sample consists of 39 L.P. schools, 117 Assistant Teachers and 35 dropout children of sampled schools.

7.5.3 Tools used

a) School Information Schedule for the Headmaster.

b) Questionnaire for sampled Assistant Teachers.

c) Worksheet for Cohort analysis.

d) Interview schedule for dropout.
e) Observation schedule.

In addition to above tools, Focus Group Interview (FGI) with the Headmasters of sampled schools was also organised for discussion of various issues related to efficiency and effectiveness of primary school system.

7.5.4 Treatment of data

7.5.4.1 Computation of internal efficiency

In this study, the method of true Cohort was applied in strict sense without any deviation for computing different indicators of internal efficiency of primary school system and wastage thereof.

Co-efficient of Efficiency as well as Input-output ratio were taken as the measure of internal efficiency. Other indicators of internal efficiency such as average number of pupil years, survival rate to grade IV, percentage of pupils reaching Grade IV without repetition were also computed to have a clear picture of internal efficiency of primary school system. Certain process indicators such as promotion rate, repetition rate, dropout rate were computed to fulfil different objectives of the study. Gender disparity in enrolment also was examined in terms of Gender Parity Index.

7.5.4.2 Computation of cost effectiveness

To gain an idea about cost effectiveness of sampled primary schools, unit costs were computed and compared with the levels of
achievement of students of Grade IV in the school examination in terms of Achievement Index as well as with the Promotion Rate.

7.6 **Major findings of the study**

The major findings related to the different objectives of the study are given below.

1) Enrolment at grade I and II was declining since 2004-05.

2) Since 2001, gender disparity was declining in urban and rural areas till 2004. However, in 2005, Gender Parity Index (GPI) was found to be lower in urban and rural areas over the previous year.

3) Schools situated in the urban area were functioning more efficiently as compared to the schools of its rural counterpart.

4) Co-efficient of efficiency in both urban and rural areas was satisfactory.

5) Urban primary schools were operating at 89 percent efficiency level and wasting 11 percent of its resources on repeaters and dropouts.

6) Rural primary schools were working at 83 percent efficiency level, wasting 17 percent of its resources.

7) The survival rate to Grade IV was found to be 88.35 and 86.01 percent for urban and rural schools respectively.
8) Only 70.36 and 60.39 percent of students in urban and rural schools respectively were found to have reached Grade IV without repetition.

9) Rural schools consumed 4.83 pupils year against 4.51 in urban schools to produce a graduate on an average.

10) Unit cost and achievement index for urban schools were higher than that of rural schools.

11) In urban schools, the average number of teachers was 11.07 per school against 4.28 for its rural counterpart.

12) Due to high recurring cost on account of teacher's salary, the urban schools show a higher unit cost than that of rural schools although the average enrolment in urban schools was 1.55 times higher than that of rural schools.

13) It appears that rural schools were comparatively more cost-effective than its urban counterpart. The schools having higher number of teachers with low enrolment recorded higher unit cost and vice-versa.

14) No sampled school could record high achievement index with low cost. Whereas 7.69 percent schools spent the least i.e. below Rs.2,000/- and they have emerged with medium performance rate i.e. achievement index (60-79). Conversely 7.69 percent schools incurred high cost i.e. Rs.4,000/- and
above with low performance rates i.e. achievement index below 60.

15) Only 5.13 percent sampled schools were found to be most cost effective as they show high promotion rates (above 90 percent) and incur least unit cost below Rs.2,000/-. 

16) High dropout and repetition rates were found to be responsible for inefficiency of most of the sampled schools. 

17) Promotion rates were higher in urban areas than that of rural areas. However, cases of dropout and repetition were found to be higher in rural schools for which rural schools were found to be inefficient as compared to its urban counterpart. 

18) The major reason for dropout at primary stage in both urban and rural areas was poverty. In case of urban area 'need to earn' was recorded as second notable reason for leaving school without completing primary education cycle whereas in rural areas, need to do household work was the second major cause of dropout. The third major reason for dropout in both urban and rural areas was the lack of interest in education. 

19) The size of most of the schools in urban area was found to be higher than that of schools of rural areas. 4 percent schools in rural area could survive with less than or equal to 50 students. Size of 28.57 and 34.00 percent of urban and rural schools respectively was below 100 students only.
20) Urban schools had 4 to 17 teachers per school as compared to 2 to 7 per school in rural area. 64.30 percent of urban schools had ten or more teachers whereas 40.00 percent of rural schools had below four numbers of teachers depicting existence of a multigrade teaching situation in those schools.

21) PTR in rural schools was higher than its urban counterpart. Due to low PTR, teachers in urban schools could provide individual attention to pupils as compared to rural schools which influences the achievement level of the people.

22) Academic qualification of primary school teacher is very poor. Not a single teacher of urban and rural school had qualified any of public examination in their life securing first division or first class. Largest portion i.e. 47.62 and 54.67 percent of urban and rural teachers respectively were third divisioner in HSLC examination.

23) 16.67 and 5.33 percent of total teachers of urban and rural schools respectively were found to be untrained. Teachers were recruited without PSTE diploma.

24) Maximum numbers of short-term training programme attended by the teachers were of 2 or 3 days duration. Most of the teachers did not get opportunity to undergo 20-day training programme in a year.
25) 7.14 and 41.33 percent of urban and rural teachers respectively had to teach all school subjects. Only 14.28 percent of urban teachers dealt with one subject.

26) Teachers of rural schools had to perform multigrade teaching without any training on the techniques of such teaching.

27) The sampled schools were poorly equipped with basic facilities. 21.43 and 8.00 percent of schools of urban and rural areas respectively did not have separate blackboard for each class.

28) Average number of classroom in urban and rural schools was 4.62 and 2.56 respectively.

29) Only 53.60 and 55.56 percent of urban and rural students of Grade IV respectively secured above 60 percent of marks in last periodical evaluation.

30) 14.29 percent of urban schools reported that there was a problem of sound pollution due to adjacent busy road which hampered teaching-learning processes.

31) Not a single teacher was found to have used Audio Visual Aids during classroom transaction though all the sampled teachers had received Rs.500/- as TLM grant from SSA in the academic year.

32) No innovation and experimentation of any kind was recorded in any sampled school.
33) 97.62 and 84.00 percent of urban and rural sampled teachers respectively were not aware of utility of action research for educational practitioner.

34) 81.19 percent teachers stated that due to engagement of teachers in different activities related to Mid-day Meal programme, classroom transaction was hampered. It became a burning problem for the schools where number of teacher was very less.

35) Due to non-understanding of the new trend as well as affection towards traditionality, the transaction of new textbooks became a confusion among some teachers.

36) Community participation under SSA was not satisfactory. Involvement of community member in scholastic as well as co-scholastic activities was not recorded in any of the sampled schools.

37) Professional training is not a pre-requisite for entering the job of primary school teacher in Assam. As a result of which persons without having any pre-service training directly deal with small children who need some special care at school.

38) No Pre Service Teacher Education (PSTE) course has been conducted by Teacher Training Institutes of Assam since 2002.
39) 24.00 and 14.29 percent of rural and urban headmasters respectively criticized the present non-detention policy. According to them due to lack of pass fail system, student’s interest in teaching-learning process had been decreasing and were promoted automatically to the next higher classes without attaining desired level of learning achievement which deteriorated the total quality of school system.

40) It was observed that headmaster and teachers were not conceptually clear about Continuous and Comprehensive Education (CCE) and very purpose of introducing periodical evaluation as well as remedial teaching.

41) No school was found to have provided remedial teaching regularly immediately after evaluation of answer scripts of periodical evaluation.

42) Working days were gradually increasing during 2001 to 2005.

43) School support mechanism developed under SSA by constituting academic core groups was functioning poorly.

44) Involvement of Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator (CRCC) and Additional Block Resource Centre Coordinator (ABRCC) in teaching-learning process was not significant.

45) Number and intensity of school visit by government officials was found to be insignificant.
46) In rural area, all the headmasters had to take regular classes on account of insufficient teaching staff.

47) Target under civil work could not be achieved in time by the State Mission Office, SSA, Assam.

7.7 Conclusion and policy implication

Most of the government primary schools were characterised by low and declining trend in enrolment, high dropout, high repetition rate, under qualified teacher, uneven distribution of teachers, existence of multigrade teaching situation particularly in rural schools, poor infrastructural facility and poor academic performance of pupils. As such, a significant portion of total resources invested in the primary education had gone waste which was higher in rural schools as compared to its urban counterpart. On the other hand, rural schools were found to be more cost-effective than the urban schools. Size of many schools was not economically viable. Moreover, due to poor academic qualification together with lack of sufficient professional competence, most of the teachers could not perform well in the teaching-learning process. Though a good number of schemes and projects have been operationalised in the State during post-independence period, interventions given under such schemes or projects were not so effective to make the system 100 percent efficient till today and not to speak of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE), even Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE) still remains as a distant goal for the State of Assam.
Despite almost six decades of planning, constitutional commitment, legislations, programmes, schemes etc. introduced to ameliorate such conditions of inefficiency and ineffectiveness at primary stage during post independence period, traditionality of such circumstances still prevails in our society. Hence, it is urgently necessary to adopt a concerted effort, albeit with programmes of other departments of government and non-government organisations to associate necessary support services to the resource poor families in order to ensure universal enrolment as well as universal retention in primary schools. Dropout children ought to get back into the educational stream, otherwise the very concept of human resource development will be distorted. Equality in distribution of infrastructural facilities and teachers among all the schools and their optimal utilisation should be ensured through proper inspection and supervision. Mobilisation of demand for education especially in backward areas should also be ascertained. Child labour of school going age group should be provided productive and skill oriented education. Educational planning will have to be done at grassroot level and beneficiaries should be involved in the process of planning so as to make it local specific. Quality of teachers is an influencing factor for making school system effective and efficient. Hence strategy should be adopted to recruit talented and competent teachers with suitable professional qualification to the field of education particularly to primary schools. After all, the quality of primary education must be improved by reviewing curricula, textbooks, teaching methodology and testing procedure. The entire process of education should centre round the child. In no way the age, ability, interest, aptitude and the need of a child should be ignored.
Reference