

Involvement Of Teachers (Panchayat Shikshak, Prakhand Shikshak And Nagar Shikshak) Under Sarve Shiksha Abhiyan(Ssa) Of Bihar Education

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ABSTRACT

Bihar is the twelfth largest state in India with an area of 98,163 square kilometres (Census of India, 2011). The river Ganga divides the state into two natural regions: North Ganga plain and South Ganga plain. Administratively, the state has been divided into 9 divisions, 38 districts, 101 sub-division, 534 blocks, 8,471 Panchayats and 45,103 revenue villages (Govt. of Bihar). Demographically, it is the third most populous state in the country with a population of 103,404,637 with 54,185,347 male and 49,619,290 female populations. Bihar has a population density of 1,102 persons per square kilometre (Census of India, 2011). Schedule Castes (SCs) constitute 15.9% of the total population whereas Schedule Tribes (STs) constitute only 1.28% of the total population. The percentage of Muslims in the state is 16.53% (Census of India, 2001). The population in the age group of 0-14 years in Bihar amounts to 37.3%: respectively 37.4% and 37.1% male and female. Bihar is a predominantly rural society with 88.7% of the population living in the villages (Census of India, 2011). According to the Census of India (2011), literacy rate of Bihar is 63.8% (73.4% male and 53.3 % female). Literacy rate in urban areas is 78.75% (84.42% male and 72.36% female); in rural areas it accounts for 61.83% (male 71.90% and female 50.82%). The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Bihar Education Project (BEP) have provided new impetus to the school education system. The pace of growth of education system of the country and that of Bihar was renewed owing to new ideas, issues and challenges with the notification of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, which makes elementary education a fundamental right of every child in the country.

KEYWORDS: Bihar, Shiksha Mitras, Prarambhik Shikshaks, Mahila Samakhya

INTRODUCTION

The National Policy in Education 1968 pointed out the importance of the teacher in quality education and their contribution to national development. The 1968 policy emphasised in-service teacher education for the skill development of teachers. The National Education Policy (NPE), 1986 has equally emphasised the fact that teachers are the backbone of the Indian education system of the country and that their recruitment should be based on “merit, objectivity and conformity with spatial and functional requirements” (NPE, 1986). The policy underlined the complementary nature of both pre-service and in-service teacher training and education. District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) were constituted for pre-service and in-service education for elementary school teachers and for personnel working in non-formal and adult education. The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) was to be provided with the necessary resources and capabilities to accredit teacher education institutions and provide guidance regarding curricula and methods. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Framework: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is India’s flagship programme for achieving Universal Elementary Education. Its goals mainly include universal access and retention, prevention of gender and social discrimination in education and the improvement of children’s learning level. SSA provides for a variety of interventions that include: (1) the introduction of new schools and alternate schooling facilities, (2) the construction of additional classrooms, (3) toilets and drinking water facilities, (4) provisioning for teachers, (5) periodic and continuous training and academic resource support, and (6) the ready availability of textbooks. Over the decades, there has been a significant spatial and numerical advancement of elementary schools in the country. Despite this remarkable progress, the cherished goal of universal elementary education continues to evade. The number of dropout children, especially from socially excluded and vulnerable sections, has remained depressingly high. Even for those who have escaped the dropout phenomena and completed the elementary education cycle, the quality of learning achievement is not up to the mark. With the implementation of Right to Education Act, the SSA framework has also been revised to meet the needs of free and compulsory elementary education in the country. The

revised framework also takes into account the centrality of teachers as facilitators in creating an inclusive culture in schools and beyond. The aim is to make teachers aware of the pedagogical processes informed by diverse social backgrounds of the children who participate and strive to complete elementary education cycle. Apart from systemic and structural reasons, the classroom behaviour of the teacher as well as peer groups is a very important factor in determining whether or not children from socially excluded/disadvantaged groups are welcomed and feel socially included. Sensitisation of teachers on the modus operandi of exclusion and inclusion of socially vulnerable groups should be a part of pre-service and in-service training. Recruitment of teachers from socially disadvantaged groups is also an important component of this strategy. The revised SSA framework emphasises norms established by National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) for teachers' qualification. The teacher training must uphold the objectives of the National Policy on Education and Right to Education Act, and should enhance the knowledge of teacher to understand the world of the child. The training programmes should be continuously research informed and so designed that they addresses the need for continuous development of teachers' repertoire of knowledge and training, the annual review of training modules, and the development of master trainers. The SSA framework also details the roles and responsibilities of teacher training institutions that provide both pre-service and in-service training. In addition, the SSA also reiterates the importance of community as a support system for schools. School Management Committees are envisioned as a support mechanism, providing a link between schools and communities. In this regard, teachers have been given a key role in planning and implementing community participation strategies in schools.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF TEACHERS' WORK

For understanding the political context of elementary school teachers' work, their employment policies and training programs operational in Bihar since the year 2002 were analyzed. For achieving this objective, data was obtained from several important documents related to the elementary school teachers' employment policies and their training programs operational in the state. The documents included several gazette notifications, office orders and circulars, government reports and curricular documents, etc. An in-depth analysis of these documents was made to elicit factual information

about the elementary school teachers' employment policies and their training programs operational in the state. The analyses were done keeping in view the techniques of policy-analysis. The understanding developed about the intricacies of the teacher employment policies and teacher training programs operational in the state since last thirteen years is presented in the following sections.

THE 'SHIKSHA-MITRA YOJANA'

The origin of para-teachers in Bihar can be traced back to the State government's initiation of employing *Shiksha Mitras* from the year 2002. In a clear departure from the past practices of recruiting teachers on a regular pay-scale through competitive examinations, the elementary teachers' employment policy of 2002, popularly known as the *ShikshaMitra Yojana*, initiated the appointment of primary and middle schoolteachers by the *panchayats* or municipalities on a *anubandh* (contract) of 11 months. These teachers, called *Panchayat Shiksha Mitras* (when the placement was done by the *panchayat*) and *Nagar Shiksha Mitras* (when employed by the municipalities) were to be given a fixed honorarium of 1500/- per month.

The eligibility for recruitment included being a resident of the *panchayat* or municipal area, and the minimum possession of Matriculation or equivalent with at least 45% marks. Possession of a degree or diploma in teacher training was not essential. The newly recruited '*Shiksha Mitras*' were given an induction-level training of 30 days (called '*Prerna*') and they went through the in-service training of 20 (10+10) days (called '*Ujala-1*' and '*Ujala -2*'). The job of these *Shiksha Mitras* was non-transferable(Hussain, 2009). Around 35,000 *Shiksha Mitras* were employed during 2002-2005. However, with the exercise of malpractices by the representatives of the local bodies who were entrusted with the task of employing the *Shiksha Mitras*, and a lack of effective monitoring from the State, scores of unsuitable and incompetent candidates were employed as teachers. Interestingly, the persons eligible to be appointed as teachers under the old criteria challenged this policy too in the Patna High Court. In 2005, the Court reprimanded the Government of Bihar and asked it to formulate a plan for teacher recruitment, wherein trained teachers were to be employed as a matter of priority (Priyam, 2011). "Strategic retreats were made by the Government of Bihar in 2006-07,

abandoning its earlier policy of confrontation with the courts and with unemployed but potential teachers. In a Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court of India, the state government withdrew from the case, and assured the court that it would provide employment to trained candidates on priority"

GENERAL FEATURES OF TEACHER EMPLOYMENT ON NIYOJAN

The *Niyojan Niyamawali-2006* abolished the contractual nature of the job of *Shiksha Mitra* (2002-03) and changed the nomenclature of elementary school level para- teachers. The generic name for them was now *Prarambhik Shikshak*, who were kept under two major categories:

- i) '*Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshak*': This category included the '*Prakhand Shikshaks*' (recruited at Block level, including the physical education teachers) and '*Panchayat Shikshaks*' (recruited at Gram Panchayat level); and
- ii) '*Nagar Prarambhik Shikshak*': This category consisted of two sub-categories – '*Nagar Shikshak*' (trained) and '*Nagar Shikshak*' (untrained).

According to the *Niyojan Niyamawali-2006*, the scheme of recruiting *Prarambhik Shikshaks* has been initiated to: mainstream out of school children, achieve UEE, make PTR 40:1, and transfer the responsibilities of primary education to the Panchayati Raj Institutions keeping in view their importance in primary education. Under this revised scheme, preference in recruitment was to be given to the trained candidates possessing an Intermediate or Higher Secondary Certificate. The trained teachers were to be recruited first. Thereafter, on the availability of vacant posts, untrained teachers could also be recruited and the arrangements would be made for their training. There was a provision for reservation of 50% of the seats for the women candidates and 3% of seats for the physically handicapped candidates. The honorarium of the *Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshaks* was raised under this scheme and they were to be given a fixed salary of Rs. 5000/- per month (for trained PSs) and Rs. 4000/- per month (for untrained PSs). An increment of Rs.500/- in case of trained teachers and Rs. 300/- in case of untrained teachers after three years (of their recruitment) on evaluation of their work was also proposed. The minimum age for recruitment was 18 years and the maximum age limit was 37 years. This scheme abolished the contractual nature of the job and the

Panchayat Prarambhik Shikshaks recruited under this scheme could remain in their positions until they attain the age of 60 years—the age of retirement.

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' TRAINING PROGRAMS

The second part of the first objective of this study sought to analyze the various types of training programs available for the capacity building of the *Prarambhik Shikshaks* of the State. Data was obtained from several important documents related to the elementary school teachers' training programs operational in the state of Bihar. The information obtained about the training programmes through document-analysis was substantiated by the information elicited from the PSs, RTs and BRPs. The understanding developed about the intricacies of the teacher training programs operational in the state since last thirteen years is presented in the following sections.

TEACHER EDUCATION IN BIHAR: AN OVERVIEW

This section presents a brief overview of the status of teacher education and teacher education institutions in contemporary Bihar. The information presented here is based on the analysis of three important reports: *Report of the Common School System Commission, Bihar (2007)*, *Report of the Joint Review Mission on Teacher Education: Bihar (2013)*, and *the Report of the Committee on Evaluation of the Diploma in Primary Education (2009)*. Teacher education has historically remained a largely neglected area in Bihar. There was only one degree level teacher training college in the state till 1950—the Patna (Government) Training College which was established in 1908. The number of such colleges in Bihar remained only five till 1965 and rose to 10 by the year 1989. Compared to the number of degree level teacher training colleges, the number of elementary level training schools has been large in the State. The Elementary Training Schools opened during the pre-independence period rose to 55 in 1941-42. In 1938, Basic Training Schools were also initiated for preparing elementary level teachers of *Buniyadi Vidyalayas* (Basic Schools that followed the curriculum of Gandhi's *Nai Taleem*) in the State.

THE ‘INDUCTION-LEVEL TRAINING’ PROGRAM OF PRARAMBHIKSHIKSHAKS

The State government had made a provision for imparting an induction-level training of 30 days (called ‘*Prerna*’) and an in-service training of 20 (10+10) days (called ‘*Ujala-1*’ and ‘*Ujala-2*’) for all *Shiksha Mitras* in 2003. The *Prarambhik Shikshaks* employed during 2006-2015 were also required to undergo this short-duration training program imparted at the Block level. This 51-days training schedule has been referred as the ‘Induction-Level Training’ Program of *Prarambhik Shikshaks* in this study. The information regarding the ‘induction level training’ program was collected through interactions with the PSs, RTs and BRPs. The Supplementary Material for the *Panchayat/ Prakhanda/ Nagar Shikshaks ‘Prerna-Meri Kitab’* Third (revised) edition, BPEP, 2006] was also analyzed for collecting information about the ‘induction level training’ program of PSs.

The ‘induction level training’ program called ‘*Prerna*’ (meaning inspiration), has been designed with an aim of empowering the newly recruited (*Panchayat/ Prakhanda / Nagar Shikshaks*) teachers. The induction level training program for the PSs is organized at the Block Resource Centres (BRCs). The program is fully residential and all participant teachers are supposed to stay at the BRC for the full duration of training. The arrangements for the accommodation and fooding of the trainees are to be made at the BRCs.

The present form of the program was deliberated about in a workshop (dated 10th to 12th August, 2006) organized at the State Level Office. The State Resource Person, a Professor of SIEMAT (State Institute of Educational Management and Training) and five selected teachers were among the participants of this workshop. The cooperation of ‘*Pratham*’, NGO was also sought. Initially, this training module was of 30 days’ duration, but after this workshop a practical teaching component of 21 days has been added in the ‘induction-level training’ program. The structure and duration of the induction level training program, at present, is as follows:

The first phase: The first phase of the ‘induction level training’ program is of 25 days’ duration. During this phase, the participant teachers come to the BRCs and stay there for a period of 25 days. From the First Day to the Fourteenth Day theoretical classes are held at the BRCs, at the end of which the trainees are sent for a ‘demonstration lesson’ to be given at the nearby school.

The second phase: The second phase of the 'induction level training 'program is of 21 days' duration during which the participant teachers are sent for practical teaching work to the nearby schools.

The third phase: The third phase of the program is of 5 days' duration. This phase starts when the trainees come back to the BRCs after the completion of 21 days teaching practice in schools.

CONCLUSION

Poor retention of girls is attributed to two main factors. The first is the tendency of parents to withdraw them from school on attainment of adolescent age (say 9+) as they become capable of fulfilling certain domestic needs (sustenance activities & sibling care) while the second is the school environment itself which neither encourages girls nor is able to bring out the best in them. During the seasons of harvest, marriages, festivals, etc. girls' attendance at school suffer a setback as they are kept back at home. In the absence of any mechanism to address their need as a result of these periods of absenteeism, their achievement suffers. Thus begins the cycle of teachers' neglect in the classroom leading to disinterest and de-motivation eventually resulting in their leaving school. Added to these are natural barriers, distance to school. Ensuring equal opportunity for boys and girls is not adequate enough. The question of 'Gender equity' often demands additional support and facility for ensuring girls' education equivalent to others. A girl doing poorly, probably needs special attention in class, and perhaps even in family and community, while an intelligent girl may demand for attention that teacher should show towards every student in class. The teacher may also have to look into facilities, she is allowed in her family to increase the rate of improvement. The Girls' Education component has now been supported through two prestigious programmes under SSA namely National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) and also through Mahila Samakhya.

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number of speakers of Bihari languages are difficult to indicate because of unreliable sources. In the urban region most educated speakers of the language name Hindi as their language because this is what they use in formal contexts and believe it to be the appropriate response because of lack of awareness. The uneducated and the urban population of the region return Hindi as the generic name for their language.

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