

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN UTTAR PRADESH: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF LUCKNOW AND UNNAO DISTRICTS

**ABSTRACT OF
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ABSTRACT

Education in today's world is undoubtedly the most powerful tool to ignite the young minds and guide the young generation. At a time when our society is fast evolving, it is education that builds the young generation with knowledge and values and empowers them to dream big. In this context elementary education plays a vital role as it is important in formative years of the childhood. In most countries, it is compulsory for children to receive primary education, though in many jurisdictions it is permissible for parents to prove it. The major goals of elementary education are achieving basic literacy and numeracy, as well as establishing foundations in science, geography, history and other social sciences (Tomar and Srivastava: 2007).

In India, contemporary education draws from western origins. According to Yogendra Singh, the traditional content of education in India was esoteric and metaphysical, its reach was limited to upper castes and its organization was ascriptive. Modern education, on the other hand, is rational and scientific and open to all groups on the basis of merit. Education is seen as the most influential agent of modernization-apart from industrialization and urbanization in India (Singh: 1986)

The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress or development is implicit and recognized. Education helps to improve functional and analytical abilities and opens up opportunities for individuals and groups, and enables access to the labour market, providing livelihood to people. Education is not a mere tool to enhance efficiency, but an effective mechanism to augur democratic participation in social life. Hence, education is a dynamic and powerful force to usher in social and economic empowerment; but its effectiveness depends on its spread, utilization, and social circumstances. In this direction, one exemplary effort is the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 (RTE: 2009), which came into effect after many drafts. The Act seems to have an inclusive character, which seeks to raise the educational standards of marginalized communities and to be a tool for any child to demand basic opportunity. In this regards a close look at provisions and their implementation reveals disconcerting features. The RTE Act is being implemented from 1 April 2010 in Uttar Pradesh. In this backdrop and in order to understand issues concerning the Elementary Education in Uttar Pradesh this study has been undertaken

in two districts of Uttar Pradesh i.e. Lucknow and Unnao. The study reveals that the students of government primary schools who belongs to lower caste and class. They do not have enough resources to get better education. They have only hope from government schools but the condition of these schools is good. The infrastructure and other things are not sufficient. Teacher and student both are unsatisfied with these conditions. But government is not bother because caste and class group study in these group are from lower strata of the society who did not have education, awareness, economy etc. and do not know about their rights.

Our Constitution provides equal opportunity for all, and all citizens have a fundamental right to education up to 14 years. But the question is- Do the students are getting proper and quality education? To know this there is a need to study the functioning and operational status of Schools at different levels. To know this, there is need to study what is the status of implementation and functioning of schools as a government institution for equality of opportunity available to the disadvantaged sections in terms of actual access to elementary education. In fact promoting equitable access to the disadvantaged social groups (in terms of caste, class, and gender) to educational opportunities in elementary education has a major challenge before the policy makers and with public education providers, the situation looks more vulnerable.

In this backdrop, this study unearthed the existing community perception regarding elementary education vis-à-vis schools environment and situations. Further, issue of assesses to school and education is described in the pretext of RTE, SMCs and other provisions enshrined in the Act. Further, it intends to highlight the present condition of elementary education in both the districts like physical and operational condition of Schools and MDM condition and educational condition of marginalized communities in pretext of right to education act vis-à-vis educational status, opportunity and access to education. Further, a modest attempt is being made to encapsulate gap in implementing the right to education act and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan. This study draws reference from international scenario from where 'education as a right' has emerged and implemented in India with the certain constitutional provision.

The sociological context of education refers to various facets of overall socio-economic and educational environment in which an individual or a family lives. It

includes the family and the extended kin group, the caste hierarchy, the economic conditions and class relations, the religious beliefs and practices and the social demography of the region.

This sociological concern is extremely relevant to the subject of elementary education in Uttar Pradesh mainly because the educational decisions of children are family/household decisions, and are also governed by them. As Jean Dreze puts it appropriately, “Literacy achievements in India depend crucially on the social context: The gender division of labour, the kinship system, caste-related norms, economic entitlements and so on. The statement is perhaps trivial, but it is worth noting that the overwhelming context of literacy achievements conflicts with the notion of elementary education as a basic right of all citizens” (Dreze: 2003). It is obvious that the socio-cultural, economic, occupation, caste and demographic factors play a vital role in enhancing or diminishing educational chances of the children. In fact, many of the reasons for the failure in achieving good quality elementary education till date may be rooted in this social context. Although RTE act 2009 ensures free and compulsory education for 6-14 year children but still in reality children are getting poor quality of education since they belong to the poor socio-economic background and hence it deserves a detailed enquiry.

This research study has been undertaken in two districts of Uttar Pradesh to know the status and implementation of elementary education. This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is ‘Introduction’ in which a brief introduction of the study had been given. In this chapter, the methodology is discussed in which objectives, study area, sample design, sample size had been described. The reviewed literature is discussed in International and National context following with time series for a better understanding of the subject. A brief overview of the entire chapters is given for better understanding of the study. The methodology is such Descriptive research design is used in this study. A well-knitted interview schedule was prepared and finalized through pilot survey and then it is used for collection of data. Apart from this a quasi-participatory observation method and focused group discussions with development authorities and government officials was also used for data collection. Secondary sources were used to substantiate the findings.

This study is undertaken in two district of U.P. especially in one fourth selected blocks from each of the districts. The selected two different districts have various different specialties, one is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh and other is backward and having a larger rural area which is also neighbor district of the capital city. There are eight blocks in Lucknow district and sixteen blocks in Unnao district out of which one-one block is purposively selected on the basis of Low literacy rate and a high percentage of marginalizing communities viz. Mohanlalganj block from Lucknow and Hillauli block from Unnao district.

The selection of the blocks has been done on the basis of its backwardness, low literacy rate, more marginalized population and the occupational dependency on the land of the population. In the selected blocks there are 244 and 207 Primary and Upper Primary schools in Lucknow and Unnao districts respectively, out of which 50 schools are randomly selected from each district for the study.

Mainly this study had three types of respondents, aiming to make study realistic, impartial, inclusive and specific. The respondents to the study are students of government primary and upper primary schools and SMCs members. Secondly, the teacher of that very school in which the student is enrolled is interviewed to ascertain the sociological nuances of education. Randomly 50 schools were selected from each block and from these selected schools three students, one teacher and one SMC member (parent) were interviewed. In total 150 students, 50 teachers, and 50 SMC members interviewed from one block.

In this manner total 250 respondents from each block were interviewed. The total number of respondents interviewed for this study is 500. The selection of respondent is given below in the table.

Interview Scheduled is one of the most popular and opt use technique of data collection because it gives the opportunities to have the personal rapport with the respondents, where response rate is fairly high and data obtain is most authentic. Therefore, an Interview Scheduled is developed to obtain data from the respondents. This interview scheduled is prepared and given a final shape after a pilot testing. Besides this in some cases in-depth personal interview were conducted to supplement

the information. Further, observational and secondary data were collected for better understanding of the problem. Data analysis is done by using SPSS.

Chapter two is about social perspective on Education. This chapter turns to provide an idea to understand the different sociological perspective on education by eminent sociologists and their perception of education as a whole. In order to understand the broad fundamental nature of education and the government's commitment to people, the background of the social perspective, community leaders, and the society take part in it. A sociological perspective on education is an attempt to trace the development of sociological theory from the classical to Indian thinkers. In the developing world today, there is a great concern for universal elementary education and that everywhere some progress has indeed been made, although there is still a large gap between the developed and the developing countries. Great Scholar Ambedkar argues that some measures should be taken otherwise the education of the depressed classes would achieve a great set back. He viewed that the entry in the public service should be secured to the depressed classes otherwise there would be no inducement for them to take to education. But he was aware of the fact that it was useless to make provision for the higher education of the Depressed Classes unless steps were taken to ensure the growth of primary education.

A country like India, are groping in the dark in very many areas of elementary education and most importantly in enrolment, provision of teachers in appropriate numbers, infrastructures, and others. It appears there is not only a gender gap; there is, in addition, a rural-urban (spatial) gap that has to be bridged. Elementary Education can be improved only by the effort of all likewise government, institution, community, students, teachers and parents. So it can be said that there is a great concern of education in social perspective.

Chapter three described the socio-economic background of teachers, parents, and students of the school going children who are interviewed for the study. The most of the students and parents are belong to so-called lower caste and class of the population is studying in the government schools. Therefore, the social and educational mapping and the socio-economic background of the parents and the Students show that the setting for the study is mainly stratified within the lower end of

the socio-economic structure. However, the caste differences have come to the fore very clearly.

The educational level of the parent respondents is mostly illiterate i.e. 46 percent and 36 percents are under Matriculate whereas only 15 percent are Matriculate and only 3 percent parents have qualification above Matriculate. This fact underscores the weakness of the Primary quality education. As parents are educated then they have a better understanding of the utility of education and can motivate their children about the importance of education and that leads to a better participation in education in the future.

Mostly the parents are engaged in unskilled and traditional work like labour, agriculture etc., about 67 percent of parents are doing labourer work and 12 percent are work as agricultural labour which shows their poor economic condition. They don't have their own agriculture land. Some of them are doing traditional work like pot maker, cobbler, etc. Parents belong to scheduled caste and backward class is doing these work but the general caste people are slightly better as they work private jobs, animal husbandry etc.

Most students of government primary school belong scheduled caste which is nearly half (48 Percent) and 34 percent of the student are of backward caste, 8 percent belongs to Muslim and only 6 percent of the student are General in caste. The teacher respondents are the majority in General caste which is above 52 percent and 23 percent belongs to a backward caste and 13 and 11 percent are Muslim and scheduled caste respectively. The Parents have also scheduled caste and backward caste in the majority and which is 42 percent and 43 percent respectively and 11 percent of the parent are Muslim whereas only 3 percent are General in caste. Thus, it can be concluded that most of the Students and Parent are from Scheduled caste and backward caste whereas Teacher is General caste in the majority.

In chapter four, is an attempt to figure out the physical and internal condition of government schools. What is the status of Enrolment, PTR, basic infrastructure and other facilities provided to the student of government schools? What is happening – in the teaching-learning process, in the school environment or at home? It is concluded in that the clients of government primary schools were the children who belonged to

the poor families. The main objective of the RTE act is to provide free and compulsory education for 6 to 14 years children and various other duties. It is a very big challenge for the government to improve primary education because it was felt that very few responsible persons are careful about the improvement of primary education in Uttar Pradesh. Mostly responsible persons think that everything is going on very smoothly and normally but it is not the reality.

In this regards the lacunas and problems are found in government schools are as discusses. Infrastructure is the basic problem which is not adequate in schools. Further, it discusses categorically School Building. It is heartening to see that around 98-99% government schools have built at all levels. But if go into detail the building condition is not good. Primary schools did not have separate classrooms for a separate class. Students are used to sitting on the mats because they did not have seats for proper sitting. The condition is worse in most of the schools. It is also noticeable that higher proportion of government schools require major repair than minor repair. Proper and pure Water Facility is not available in all the schools. The hand pump is the only source of water in all the schools but there is no proper drainage of impure water in schools. There is slight variation if we compare the government schools of both the districts. All primary government schools have 96 percent of available water facility whereas in Unnao district it is worse i.e. only 94 percent schools have drinking water facilities in school as it is 98 percent in primary government schools of Lucknow. Similar variation can be found in case of the upper primary level though, the gap has declined at the secondary and higher secondary level.

It has been found that only 39 percent of government Primary schools have separate and functional girls' toilet. However, the situation is slightly better in Lucknow district in comparison to Unnao district i.e. 44 percent in Lucknow and only 34 percent in Unnao district.

It is heartening to see that Uttar Pradesh have more than 98% government schools with toilet facility as ASER 2016. However, further attention needs to be given to the government schools where a large number of schools at each level are yet to be provided with girls' toilet. It is also noticeable that in some of the schools are functioning without girls' toilet in it. Besides this functioning of the toilets are more important because it is seen in most of the school that toilets are there but no toilet is

functional. Students use to go outside to toilet. It is also seen that if one of the toilets is semi-functional or functional; it is acquired by the teachers and no student is allowed to use it.

The classrooms availability in the schools, on an average only 3 classrooms is available whereas there are 5 classes running parallel daily. It means more than one class is running in a classroom. Teachers are also complaining about these things. They told it is not possible to teach different syllabus in a class at a time as two different class students are sitting together.

MDM supply is regular in primary and upper primary schools of both the districts. The students, teachers, and parents were asked about the regularity of supply of hot cooked meal in primary and upper primary schools of Lucknow and Unnao districts. In which it is shown that most of the MDM is cooked in open place i.e. 70 percentage and only 6 percentage kitchen is used to cook MDM in Unnao district because the kitchen is not in the working condition and mostly the wood is used to cook MDM. Akshaya Patra serves MDM in Lucknow district. In absence of these things, it is very difficult/ impossible to talk about the improvement of primary education. So it is necessary that government think seriously about these things.

Most of the schools are located within the range of 1 to 2 km. Only 4 percent of the schools are at a distance of more than 2 km. The regularity of student is one of the basic problems of the government primary and upper primary schools. A student whose attendance is more than 60 percent in last three months is treated as regular. Only 56 percent of the students of primary and upper primary schools are regular whereas 44 percent are not regular because of several social and personal reasons. Absenteeism is more in PS (48 percent) whereas less in UPS (34 percent). Reasons for not regular in schools are found as 15 percent of the students are engaged in work of grazing animals, 8.10 percent are helping their parents in traditional occupation like making mud pots, selling vegetable etc., 9.47 percent are helping their parents in domestic work like cooking food, cleaning utensils etc. mostly the girl students are engaged in this type of work. About 8 percent of the students are irregular because they have to look after their younger ones because parents have to work outside the house and some are helping their parents in farming mostly in seasons and when more labor work is required in agriculture i.e. 4 percent.

The regularity of teachers teaching in classrooms in primary and upper primary schools is not satisfactory. Only 60 percent students reported that teacher came in the classroom. Reasons for not teaching regularly in classrooms by the teachers are as mostly engaged in many other departmental duties instead of teaching like MDM, household survey, NPR, election duties, building construction, dress distribution, and other daily paperwork.

The teaching method of teachers is also an important part when the quality of education is a concern in primary schools because small children need to teach differently and politely so they have little interest while learning. Only 5 percent teachers used different – different methods to teach and about 35 percent of them teach only by asking to repeat means copy from one book to another and about 10 % are such teachers they never teach. About 3/4th of the teachers are not satisfied with their teaching job due to various reasons. Although salary in government primary schools is good but many other factors like schools situated in interior areas, lack of electricity connection, no arrangement for cleanliness of school, no post of sweeper and peon, non functional toilets, bad condition of hand pumps for drinking water, less support from officers, extra works like census, election, MDM, maintenance of schools, meetings, construction of SMC and interference of Gram Pradhan & villagers etc. are reasons for low job satisfaction among teachers of government primary schools. Job Satisfaction is very necessary for best output from any person. Therefore, the government should think seriously about these things mentioned above for low job satisfaction otherwise improvement of primary education is impossible.

The average enrollment is very low in the government schools. No doubt the enrollment is increased in government schools after the implementation of SarvaShikshaAbhiyan and RTE but it is not enough because the average enrolment is very low in these schools i.e. 84 in Unnao and 63 in Lucknow district. Average of students per class is lowest in class V is about 13.31 students and highest in class IV is about 15.31 students. It shows a slight downfall in average enrollment from class I to V. The difference is about 1.88 which means about two students are a drop out within in five years course from government schools whereas it is 96.69 in Unnao and 88.63 in Lucknow in Upper Primary Schools (ASER, 2016).

Pupil-teacher-ratio at Primary and Upper Primary in both the blocks of both the district is about 30 at primary and 28 at the upper primary in Unnao which is upto the

mark as RTE norm and in Lucknow is even less. It is seen as it is good but the reason behind it is the average enrollment rate is falling down year by year. In this way, the PTR is maintaining automatically.

It can be concluded that the students of government primary schools belong to lower caste and class. They do not have enough resources to get a better education. They have only hope from government schools but the condition of these schools is good. The teacher and student both are unsatisfied with these conditions. But the government is not bothered because caste and class group study in these groups are from lower strata of the society who did not have education, awareness, economy etc.

Chapter five focused on the processes and practices of School Management Committee and its functioning. The chapter also goes through the relevance of the school management committee. The level of awareness about the way in which SMC members are elected is found to be not clear among the committee members. Election as a means of electing this democratic body is not exercised at all. Rather, different other means are employed for the election of the SMC members and the chairperson. One way is by nomination, by the parents/guardians of the school going children, and the other way is by selection by few like Gram Pradhan and other dominant persons from the community.

The condition is much worse than about 2/3rd majority of the SMC members does not know about SMC how anyone can expect them that they know their role and functioning of the committee. As discussed above that even parents are not aware to educate their children and engage them in many household works because of several reasons; how they participate in this type of committee as they are engaged in agriculture and laborer work for their livelihood. This type of committee is helpful in facilitating quality education in government primary schools as they are aware and functional. The community members are of such a background where they did not have any proper occupation for their livelihood; how can they give any time to school activities when they even did not give any time for their child's education at home.

Only 16 percent of the SMC members attended monthly meeting whereas teacher responded 34 percent and when we verify it from SMC register, 82 percent of the members attending a meeting every month. Thus, more than 80% of the SMC members are not active and not attended any School Managing Committee meetings.

The Problem is also faced by teachers in conducting a SMC meeting, 63 percent teachers said no proper means of communication to call them for the meeting, the measure issue raised by the teacher that no member come at an allotted time for the meeting or even allotted day of the meeting, about 98 percent have such problem. But if we see on another hand, mostly who are SMC members are farmers, laborers, peasants, daily workers etc, so they did not have proper time to be attained the meeting at the allotted time, they are also not aware the concept of SMC. Most of them feel it is surely related to the benefit of teachers. They also argue that they did not get any monetary help which is very necessary for them to arrange food for their family because they are daily wages laborer.

There are many kinds of limitations many among the community members as well as teachers stated that experience of working with SMCs was not good. However, in order to strengthen the SMCs, it is critical to think on the future course of action.

As a matter of concern, the main component of good school needs to be understood, particularly by the parents. Thus, it is important to understand teacher-child relationships, child learning processes, issues that school faces and role of SMCs etc. are some crucial issues in taking schools out of this present mess.

At last, it can be said on the basis of this research that when it is seen the sociological perspective of elementary education the two main aspects emerged. Through these governments primary and upper primary schools with the effect of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Right to Education, a large number of students are getting free education and other facilities. It also gives some education and a concept of learning to the students. Most of the students are studying in government school are belongs to lower caste and class, so the lower caste and class children are getting some education. In this way, this system is beneficiary to them so it helps in maintain social arrangement in the society. Thus this arrangement is functional to the society. Besides it, the second aspect of the elementary education and its status and functioning is the quality of this arrangement is very low, so it helps in maintaining the hierarchy and discrimination in the society and help bourgeoisie to maintain their dominance. In this regards the elementary education system can be also seen in Marxist perspective.