

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OF PURBA MEDINIPUR DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The elementary level of education shapes the basic foundation of children and it is the most important stage in our education system. All educationists and policy-makers emphasize more on elementary education since it is considered to be the foundation for the growth of not only the individuals but for the welfare of the entire nation of any country across the globe. To ensure the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), the Government of India has taken so many initiatives since independence; these are - Operation Black Board in 1987-1988, the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000-2001. In this study, an attempt has been made to know the Teaching-Learning environment at the elementary level of education in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, India. The data have been collected through a self-made interview schedule prepared for the head of the institution. The researcher also closely observed the teaching-learning process in the classroom, and interaction with the students. It has been found that about 24% of elementary institutes in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, where the scarcity of teachers sustained. It was also found that about 27% of schools where the numbers of classrooms are not sufficient. The scarcity of Teaching-Learning Materials has been found in 24% of institutes. It has been found that about 18% of schools in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, where Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation have been implemented moderately.

Keywords: Elementary Education, Teaching-Learning environment, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is not only considered essential for the pleasant development of one's personality but also for the growth and progression of the country as a whole.

The elementary level of education shapes the basic foundation of children and it is the most important stage among all levels of education. All educationists and policy-makers emphasize more on elementary education as it is regarded as the foundation for the growth of not only the individuals but for the welfare of the entire nation of any country across the globe. Elementary education in India is regarded as the foundation of compulsory schooling that is considered essential for individuals. Empirical studies also point out that investment in elementary education increases the output in all the sectors of the economy much more than other levels of education and that economic returns to investment in primary education are greater than those arising from other levels of education (Colclough, 1980). Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) is still a distant prospect in a substantial part of the world. In India, the central government, the state governments, and other organizations have been involved in the progression of elementary education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002 made education the fundamental right of children within the age group of six to fourteen years. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, commonly known as the Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 was recognized, it stated all children should be made provision free education up to the age of fourteen years and for children with special needs up to the age of eighteen years. To ensure the Universalization of Elementary Education, the Government of India has taken so many initiatives since its independence; those are Operation Black Board in 1987-1988, the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1994, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000-2001. After taking such so many initiatives from the government's end, it is essential from the common ground to review the policies and provisions from time to time and to make teaching-learning workable for the children. Classrooms are considered to be one of the important areas, where learning takes place. It is important to make the students feel comfortable within the classrooms so that their learning and understanding effectively take place. In this context, we may cite one of the unforgettable statements made by Daulat Singh Kothari in his Report i.e. in the Indian Education Commission (1964-1966): "The Destiny of India is now being shaped in Her Classroom." In this study, an attempt has been made to review the Teaching-Learning environment at the elementary level of education in the Purba Medinipur district of the Indian state of West Bengal.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study include:

- To know about the Teaching-Learning environment at the elementary level of education in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, India.
- To assess the practices and follow up actions of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation.

- To understand the problems and barriers prevailing in Teaching-Learning environment at the elementary level of education in the district.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- Elementary Education: In this present study, elementary level of education is the education level from the Class- I standard to Class-VIII standard.
- Primary School: In this present study, Primary Schools are those schools consisting of Class- I to Class- IV or V.
- Upper-Primary School: In this present study, Upper-Primary Schools are those schools consisting of Class- VI to Class- VIII in ambience of Secondary or Higher Secondary set-up.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The present study is basically a survey research taking a specific district as case study area. This study is designed to know the Teaching-Learning environment at the elementary level of education in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, India. The data have been collected through a self-made interview schedule prepared for the head of the institution along with close observation of classroom teaching-learning processes and interaction with the students. In this study, we have covered 49 schools including both Primary and Upper-Primary schools situated in different parts of Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, India. Among these 49 studied schools, 38 schools are Primary Schools and 11 schools are Upper-Primary Schools. The data have been collected from September to December 2023. Then, the collected data have been analyzed qualitatively.

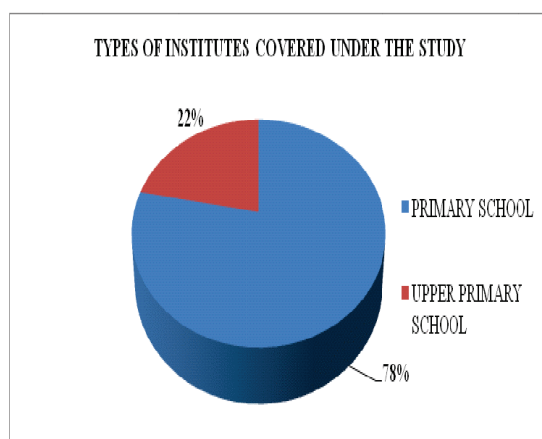


Figure 01: Types of Institutes Covered under the Study

Source: Field Data

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To know the present teaching-learning environment; practices and follow up actions of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation, along with the problems and barriers prevailing in Teaching-Learning environment at the elementary level of education of the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, we have collected data on the following research subjects that are depicted now along with discussion.

A) Pupil-Teacher Ratio: This study reveals that 76% of schools where the Pupil-Teacher ratio is within 30:1, and 24% of schools where the Pupil-Teacher ratio is above 30:1. According to the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 and very recent National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 which is under implantation process in India at present, the Pupil-Teacher ratio at the elementary level of education should be within or up to 30:1. Thus, from this finding it can be said that about 24% elementary institutes in Purba Medinipur district where the scarcities of teacher are found.

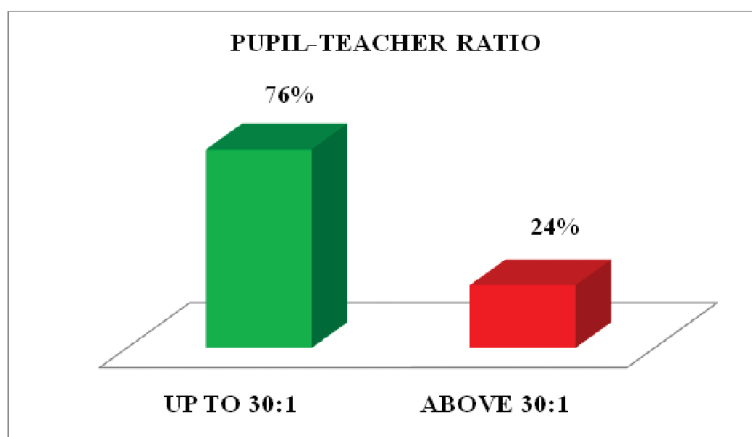


Figure 02: Pupil-Teacher Ratio

Source: Field Data

B) Teacher's Professional Qualification: The professional qualification of a Teacher is a very important parameter for providing quality education to the students. As per the norms and regulations made by India's top apex body in the field of Teacher Education, i.e. National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and subsequently according to the Right to Education Act, 2009 and the Country's latest National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, at all level of School education including elementary level of education, all teachers should have appropriate Teacher Education course. For the Elementary level of Education, teachers should have any of the Teacher Education Courses like a Diploma in Education (D.Ed.), Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.), or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) with six months Bridge course. Among the studied institutes in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, it has been found that 3% of teachers who are presently working as a teacher at the elementary level of students have no such Teacher Education Course, whereas

97% of teachers have that course.

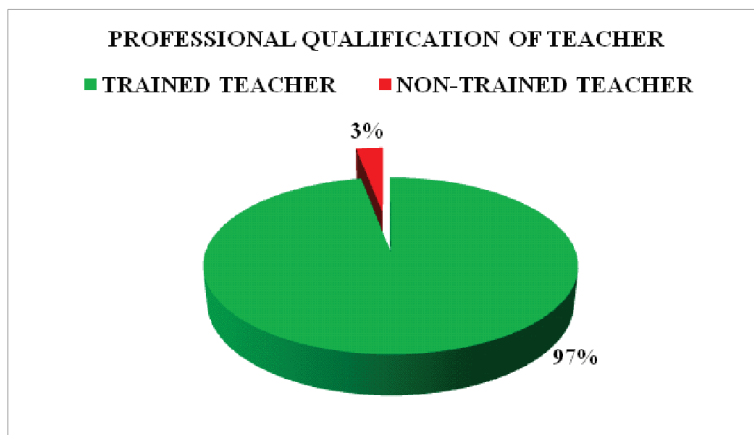


Figure 03: Profession Qualification of Teacher

Source: Field Data

C) Continuous Professional Development: We have collected data regarding the continuous professional development of teachers in the last three years. It has been found that only 49% of schools under study from where teachers have attended workshops, seminars, short-term training, orientations etc. for their professional development but 51% of schools where the teacher has attended not such type of any professional development programme or training courses in the last three years.

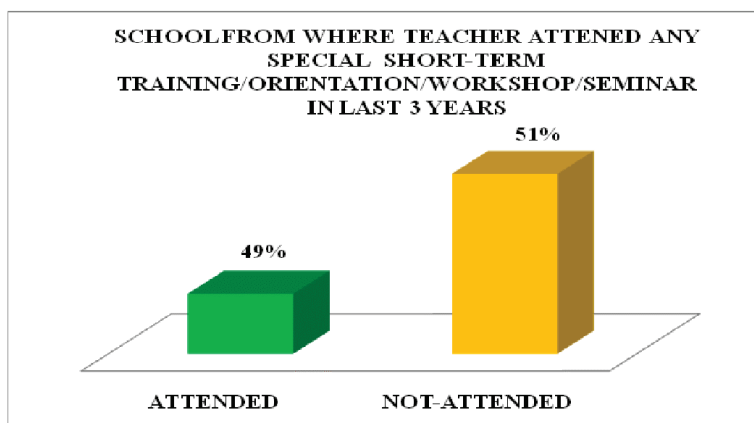


Figure 04: Continuous Professional Development

Source: Field Data

D) Status of Classroom: It has been found that about 27% of schools under study where the numbers of classrooms are not sufficient. During our data collection period, we saw students did not have enough places to sit down comfortably in their classes at those schools and in that situation, they are continuing their classes; whereas, about 73% of schools under study where the numbers of Classrooms are sufficient.

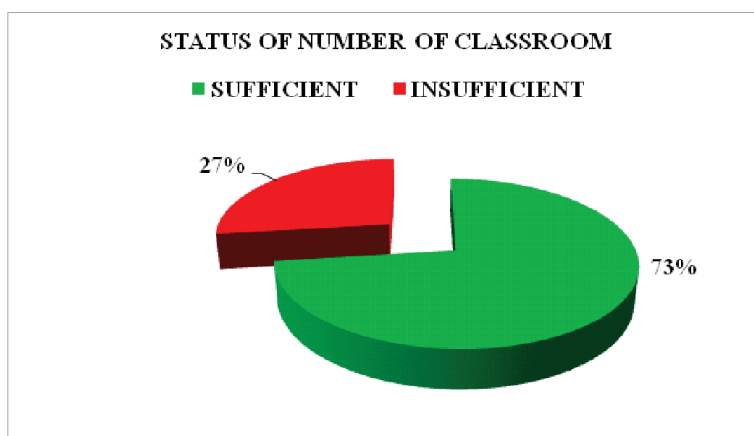


Figure 05: Status of Number of Classroom

Source: Field Data

E) Using of Teaching-Learning Material (TLM): When we asked the Head of the Institute regarding using of Teaching-Learning Material by the Teachers in their daily classes, about 98% of the schools where Heads of the Institute said that teachers used Teaching-Learning Materials in their classes. It is a very alarming situation that 2% of Head of the Schools said that teachers do not use Teaching-Learning Materials in their daily classes though there is no scarcity of Teaching-learning materials. These findings were also cross-checked when we interacted with students in the studied schools in Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal.

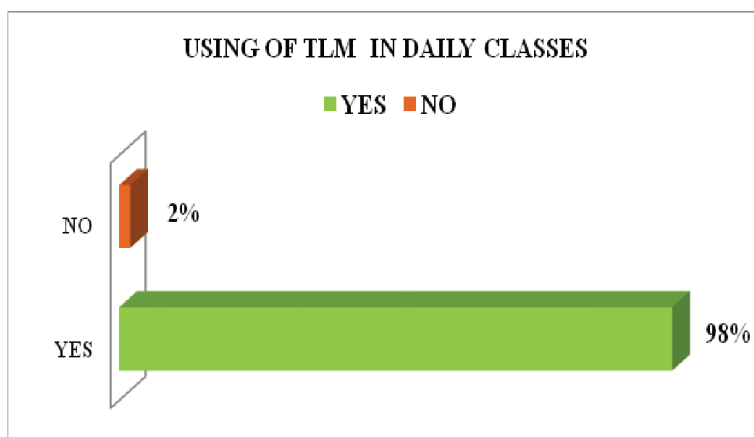


Figure 06: Using of TLM in Daily Classes

Source: Field Data

F) Availability of Teaching-Learning Material (TLM): Though 2% of school teachers do not use Teaching-Learning Materials in their daily classes in spite of sufficient Teaching-Learning materials available in their schools; but the scarcity of Teaching-Learning Materials is found in 24% of institutes under study. About 76% of schools have sufficient Teaching-Learning Materials.

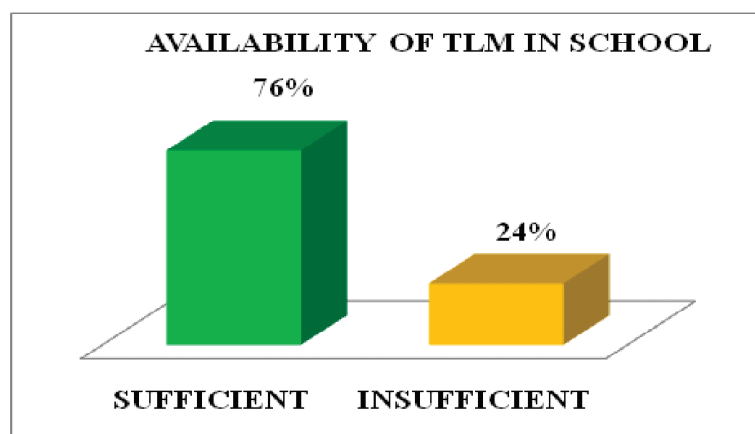
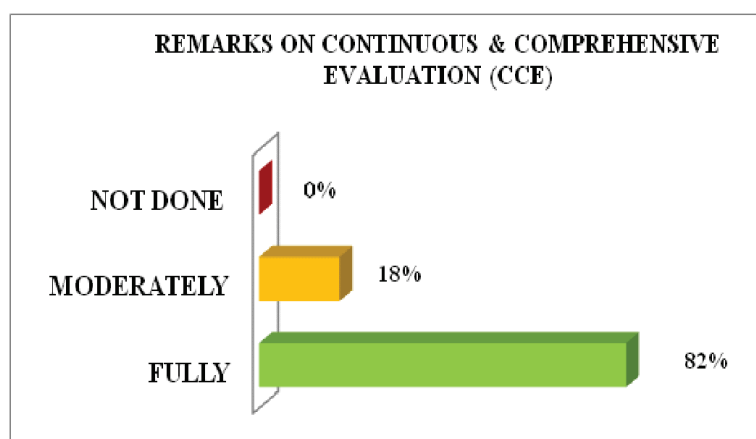


Figure 07: Availability of TLM in School

Source: Field Data

G) Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE): Evaluation is the utmost important area in education for ensuring the all-round development of children through education. The evaluation must be first continuous and subsequently the evaluation should be comprehensive in all aspects i.e. cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor developmental aspects of children for achieving all-round development of children through education. In India, after the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2000-2001, Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation should be ensured at the elementary level of education to ensure the all-round development of children through education.

**Figure 08:** Remarkson Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluatio **Source:** Field Data

After 23 years of implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, it has been found that 18% of schools in Purba Medinipur district in West Bengal are following 'moderately' the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation model whereas 82% of

schools' Head Teacher/ Head Master claimed that they are implementing Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation 'fully' in their schools.

H) Parent-Teacher Meeting: It is also one of the important aspects for ensuring the all-round development of children through education and this provision also has been laid down in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which was launched in 2000-2001 for aiming to provide elementary education to all children across India. In any education ecosystem, role of parents cannot be ignored. So, in every perspective, Parent-Teacher meetings should be held on a regular basis to ensure the all-round development of children through education, particularly because it is very effective for the elementary level of students. It has been found that Parent-Teacher meetings are held on a regular basis in 98% of schools, but there are still 2% of schools where Parent-Teacher meetings are not held on a regular basis.

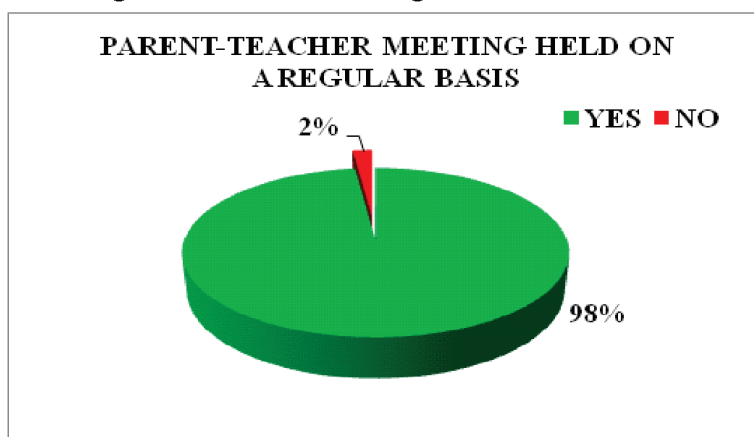


Figure 09: Status of Parent-Teacher Meeting **Source:** Field Data

FINDINGS

Some important findings of this study that should be highlighted, those are:-

- It has been found that 76% of schools under study where the Pupil-Teacher ratio is within 30:1.
- It has been observed that 24% of schools under study where the Pupil-Teacher ratio is above 30:1.
- It has been explored that 97% of teachers who are presently working as a teacher at the elementary level of students have Teacher Education Course.
- It has been explored that 3% of teachers who are presently working as a teacher at the elementary level of students have no Teacher Education Course.
- It has been found that only 49% of schools under study from where teachers have attended workshops, seminars, short-term training,

orientations etc for their professional development in last three years.

- About 51% of schools under study where in last three years no teacher has attended such type of professional development programme or training.
- It has been found that about 73% of schools under study where the numbers of classrooms are sufficient.
- It has been explored that about 27% of schools under study where the numbers of classrooms are not sufficient.
- It has been explored that about 98% of Schools' heads of Institutes said that teachers use Teaching-Learning Materials in their daily classes.
- It is a very alarming situation that 2% of heads of Institutes said that teachers do not use Teaching-Learning Materials in their daily classes though there is no scarcity of Teaching-learning materials in those schools.
- It has been found that about 76% institutes under study have sufficient Teaching-Learning Materials.
- The scarcity of Teaching-Learning Materials is found in 24% of institutes under study.
- It has been found that about 82% of schools in Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal where Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation have been implemented fully.
- It has found that about 18% of schools in Purba Medinipur district, West Bengal where Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation have been implemented moderately.
- It has been found that 98% of schools where Parent-Teacher meetings are held on a regular basis.
- It has been found that 2% of schools where Parent-Teacher meetings are not held on a regular basis.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we may highlight both positive and negative findings. This study reveals some positive findings. These are — about 76% institutes have good pupil-teacher ratio i.e. within 30:1; about 97% teachers who are presently working have professional teacher education course; about 49% of schools under study from where teachers have attended workshops, seminars, short-term training Programme, orientations etc for their professional development in last three years; about 98% of Schools' heads of Institutes said that teachers use Teaching-Learning Materials in their daily classes; about 82% of schools in Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, where Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation have been implemented fully;

and about 98% of schools where Parent-Teacher meetings are held on a regular basis.

Now, we may highlight the negative findings of the study. It has been found that about 24% of elementary institutes in the Purba Medinipur district in West Bengal, where a scarcity of teachers sustained. Among the studied institutes in the Purba Medinipur district of West Bengal, it has been found that about 3% of teachers are presently working as a teacher of the elementary level, who have no such Teacher Education Course. About 51% of schools, no teacher has attended the workshop, seminar, short-term training, and orientation programme etc. since last three years for their professional development. It has been found that there are 27% of schools where the numbers of classrooms are not sufficient. It is very alarming that there are 2% of Head of the Schools who reported that teachers do not use Teaching-Learning Material in their daily classes. The scarcity of Teaching-Learning Materials has been found in 24% of institutes under study. It has been found that about 18% of schools in the Purba Medinipur district have implemented the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation 'moderately' in the classroom. Still, 2% of schools, where Parent-Teacher meetings are not conducted on a regular basis. For the interest of providing quality elementary education to every child concerned authorities, policy-makers should immediately focus on the abovementioned negative findings for the betterment of elementary education in India.

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