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(A Study based on Implementation of Right to Education Act. 2009, India)

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Education is the basic means for accelerating the human development process of a country. Under the sphere of education system, primary education gets the highest priority as it forms the foundation of formal education. Primary education in West Bengal, as all over the country, suffers from many deficiencies including problems of infrastructure, shortage of schools, shortage of teachers, the financial handicap of the parents, and so on. These deficiencies have long been recognised and formed part of the popular discourse on the shortcomings of primary education in the state. The student-teacher ratio is an important factor for school management. It has been clear by our general observation that the 30: 01 pupil teacher ratio (PTR) negatively affects primary education in both rural and urban areas. Only two or three teachers are employed in most primary schools situated in different parts of India as well as West Bengal. Directly or indirectly, the scarcity of teachers as opposed to the large number of students has negative effects on school management. There are a number of daily duties that a head teacher as well as the teacher-in-charge has to perform in a primary school. This heavy load of work adversely affects the quality of classes as well as the teaching/learning process in a primary school. Besides, this also has an effect on the students' achievement. Mainly by this study we would try to understand the effects of pupil teacher ratio on the primary school management in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, in light of the Right to Education Act, 2009. The main objective of this study was to know the effect of pupil teacher ratio on the maintenance of the school's daily time table and on the students' achievement. The study reveals that the pupil teacher ratio is important but the number of teachers for each class is equally important for preserving and increasing the standard of primary school education.

Keywords: *RTE- 2009, primary education, class management, student teacher ratio.*

Background

Primary education in West Bengal, as all over the country, suffers from many deficiencies including problems of infrastructure, shortage of schools, shortage of teachers, the financial handicap of the parents, and so on. These deficiencies have long been recognised and formed part of the popular discourse on the shortcomings of primary education in the state. Our study, however, has focused on the qualitative aspect of the delivery of primary education and it is clear that here too, there is a long way to go. Improving infrastructure and the student-teacher ratio, while very important, do not in themselves provide a guarantee of improvement in either the quality or the spread of primary education. There are several important factors that need, in addition, to be addressed with some urgency.

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Free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen years is the Constitutional commitment in India. At the time of adoption of the Constitution in 1950, the aim was to achieve the goal of *Universalisation of Elementary Education* (UEE) within the next ten years i.e. by 1960. Keeping in view the educational facilities available in the country at that time, the goal was far too ambitious to achieve within a short span of ten years. Hence, the target date was shifted a number of times. Till 1960, all efforts were focused on provision of schooling facilities. It was only after the near realization of the goal of access that other components of UEE, such as universal enrolment and retention, started receiving attention of planners and policy makers. It is the Q*uality of Education*, which is at present in the focus in all programmes relating to elementary education in general and primary education in particular.

Significant efforts have been made in the last fifty years to universalize elementary education. Since 1950, impressive progress has been made in every sphere of elementary education. In 1950-51, there were about 210 thousand primary and 14 thousand upper primary schools. Their numbers are now increased to 627 thousand and 190 thousand respectively as in the year 1998-99; thus showing an average annual growth of 2.30 and 5.58 per cent per annum. As many as 83 per cent of the total 1,061 thousand habitations have access to primary schooling facilities within 1 km and 76 per cent habitations to upper primary schooling facilities within a distance of 3 km. About 94 and 85 per cent of the total rural population is accessed to primary and upper primary schools/sections. The ratio of primary to upper primary schools over time has improved which is at present 3.3. More than 84 per cent of the total 570 thousand primary schools in 1993-94 had school buildings. The number of single-teacher primary schools has also considerably declined.

The number of teachers both at the primary and upper primary levels of education over time has increased many folds. From a low of 538 thousand in 1950-51, the number of primary school teachers in 1998-99 increased to 1,904 thousand (MHRD, 2000). Similarly, upper primary teachers during the same period increased from 86 thousand to 1,278 thousand. The pupil-teacher ratio is at present 42: 1 at the primary and 37:1 at the upper primary level of education. Despite the significant improvement in number of teachers, the percentage of female teachers is still low at 35 and 36 per cent respectively at the primary and upper primary level of education. However, the majority of teachers, both at the primary (87 per cent) and upper primary (88 per cent) levels, are trained.

Over a period of time, enrolment, both at the primary and upper levels of education, has increased significantly. From a low of 19 million in 1950-51, it has increased to about 111 million in 1998-99 at the primary and from 3 to 40 million at the upper primary level. At present, the enrolment ratio (gross) is 92 and 58 per cent respectively at the primary and upper primary level of education. The percentage of girl's enrolment to the total enrolment at the primary and upper primary level of education in 1998-99 was about 44 and 41 per cent. Despite improvement in retention rates, the dropout rate is still high at 40 and 57 per cent respectively at the primary and elementary level of education. The transition from primary to upper primary and upper primary to secondary level is as high as 94 and 83 per cent. However, the learner's achievement across the country remained unsatisfactory and far below than the expectations. The Government of India initiated a number of programmes and projects to attain the status of universal enrolment. Despite all these significant achievements, the goal of universal elementary education remains elusive and far a distant dream.

It is more than six decades since India gained independence. The condition of primary education has not yet reached the satisfactory level in state schools (state schools in this assignment refers to state primary school from classes 1st to 5th) (Kaushik, 2010). In 1964 government of India appointed Education

Commission to advise government about the national pattern of education in the country and the policies and plans for the holistic development of education at all stages (MHRD, 1968). In National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968, provisions were made for free and compulsory education for all the children till the age of 14 years, after the recommendation of Education Commission (ibid). However it was only 1st April 2010 when the Right to Education (RTE) Act was enforced in India, which made elementary education compulsory for the children from 6-14 age groups (Sengupta, 2010). During this period Indian government made several efforts to ensure the quality and accessibility of primary education throughout the country by introducing NPE 1968, NPE 1986 and programmes such as Operation Blackboard (OB) in 1980s, establishment of District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), District Primary Education Plan (DPEP) in 1990s, Education For All (EFA) popularly known as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) in 2000s and many others (Babu, 2009; Little, 2010).

However, the above mentioned efforts of Indian government do not seem to achieve their aim of UEE in India. Consortium for Research on Education, Access, transitions and Equity (CREATE), 2009, an educational researching agency, found that the level of learning of students is very miserable in state schools in rural India. The rate of attendance is very low and the children from poor and disadvantaged families have less access or access to poor quality of education. The 2008 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2008) found that nationally 44% of pupils in class 5 cannot fluently read the text of class 2 level nor can divide a number of three digits by one digit (Kingdon and Benerji, 2009). It is alarming that even after several efforts of Indian government to make primary education universal and accessible throughout the country the level of student attainment in state schools is very low. This raises a question on the effectiveness on the Indian government's education policy for primary education in rural India.

The student teacher ratio have been an effect on school management where the number of student is very low number, but according to our Right to Education Act 2009, it have been clear by our general observation that the 30: 01 student teacher ratio effect on the primary school in both rural and urban areas. In where, mainly two or three teachers primary school, situated in different parts of India as well as West Bengal. Directly or indirectly our educational system means student teacher ratio has been effect on school management. There are so many works which are very essential to do for a head teacher as well as teacher-in- charge to maintain the official works which are also effect on the class as well as the teaching learning process in a primary school. Beside this also effect on the student achievement, it is also leads to minimize the learning quality in a primary school.

Mainly by this study we would try to understand the effect of student teacher ratio on the class management of primary school in North 24 Parganas according to Right to Education Act, 2009.

Methodology
The study employed descriptive /non-experimental survey design. This is because the researcher had no control over the independent variables i.e. Student Teacher Ratio (STR). According to Creswell (1994), such a design intends to present facts about the nature and status of a situation as it exists at the time of the study. Therefore the design was helpful in order to describe the current condition and situations based on data collected on STR and pupils performance. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered for the study, this ensured that both statistical and non-statistical analysis was used in order to support the findings of the results of the study.

Population of the Study
The study was carried out in the all primary school in the North 24 Parganas of West Bengal District in India. This is a district in southern West Bengal, of eastern India. North 24 Parganas extends in the

[tropical zone] from latitude 22º11'6" north to 23º15'2" north and from longitude 88º20' east to 89º5' east. It is bordered to Nadia by north, to Bangladesh (Khulna Division) by north and east, to South 24 Parganas and Kolkata by south and to Kolkata, Howrah and Hoogly by west. Barasat is the district headquarters of North 24 Parganas. North 24 Parganas is West Bengal's most populous district. It is also the tenth-largest district in the State by area and second-most populated district in the country, after Thane district of Maharashtra.

According to the 2011 census North 24 Parganas district has a population of 10,082,852, roughly equal to the nation of Bolivia or the US state of Michigan. This gives it a ranking of 2nd in India (out of a total of 640) and 1st in its state. The district has a population density of 2,463 inhabitants per square kilometre (6,380 /sq mi). Its population growth rate over the decade 2001-2011 was 12.86%. North Twenty Four Parganas has a sex ratio of 949 females for every 1000 males, and a literacy rate of 84.95% and Total no of primary School is 2353,799 (District Census 2011).

Sample of the Study
In the north 24 Parganas there are 22 blocks and 57 Circle offices of the Primary Schools under the North 24 Parganas Primary Education Council. From this blocks I have been chose Gaighata Block. I have been selected one Circle office, named Gaighata Circle under this block. After that, I have been collected the total number of primary schools under this circle office.   Then, I have been categorised these 85 schools on the basis of their existing teacher. After that, I have been selected 20 schools on the basis of the systematic sampling.   The respondents of the study included, head teachers of primary schools who represents the administrative authority in the schools and act as secretaries of school management committees, the subject teachers who deliver syllabus content to students.

Tools and Techniques Used for Data Collection
The study collected both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were the most common form of research method for collection of primary data. Secondary data was gathered from different sources such as examination results, enrolment records, and policy documents from the School Register book that is available in the schools. The questionnaires contained both open and closed ended questions.

Procedure of Data Collection
The questionnaires were administered to the head teachers and the subject teachers in their respective schools by the researcher. The researcher personally visited the schools to administer the questionnaires to the head teachers and the subject teachers. Beside this, to know the effect of student teacher ratios on School Management at primary level from the H.T have been collected by case study method.

Procedure of Data Analysis
The data was presented in form of tables and graphical presentations such as bar graphs and pie charts. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, means, standard deviations and percentages. The data collected was processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with aid of MS-Excel software.

Loss of Class Time Management
Student Teacher Ratio (STR), it's importance and necessity is more or less well known to all. To increase the quality of education and to make the good practices in the institutions, and to grow the system in Wright mode it is truly noteworthy. However, here we want to emphasize not only on the STR but also on the number of teachers against each classes.

In a primary school there are five classes which are pre-primary (PP), class one, class two, class three and class four. Nevertheless, in maximum schools the number of teacher is less than five. That means one teacher have the responsibilities of more than one classes. The thing is that in such cases, student teacher ratio is under the ideal figure (i.e., 30:1) but still it creates nuisance. How it is becoming a serious issue in the educational fields of the children? Tough STR is under the ideal figure still how its impact on the school management to class management? Is there any loss of the children from that?

Generally, for the lower class students (PP, class one and two) there are three classes before the launch time and one class after the launch. For the higher class students (class three and four) there are six classes, three before launch and remaining three are after the launch. Last class is for the extracurricular activities for both of the groups. Each class is for forty minutes. Therefore, lower classes have 120 minutes (two hours) class time before launch and forty minutes after launch and higher classes have 120 minutes (two hours) class time in each session, before and after the launch. This is the model class routine for the primary school in West Bengal. Yet, it is not maintained properly. In maximum case, the teachers have not taken last class. Teachers are compelled to do that for maintaining other administrative and organizational works like official works, assembling meetings, conducting midday meal etc.

If we divide the schools into two groups, one having less than five teachers and other having five or more teachers then we can get a completely different scenario. Schools having two or three teachers, there teacher have to take more than one classes at a time. As for example, where three teachers are there (including head master), in maximum time head master is being busy cannot take part in the taking class. Then remaining two assistant teachers take all the five classes. If one teacher take class of two groups (e.g., class three & four), then 40 minutes allotted for a class is divided into two means each groups get 20 minutes for them. Then the total class time becomes half for the students. For lower classes from their two hours of main subject classes, they get one hour only. Similarly, higher-class students get only 100 minutes (one and half an hour/1:40 min). But in the school where there are five of more teachers they can take all the classes following perfect routine.

Table-1
Total Time for the Main Subject Classes According to Routine

For lower class students (P.P to Class II)				
Number of class per day	Time for each class	Total time (per day)	Total time (per week)	Total time (per month)
3	40	120 min or 2 hours	120×6 = 720 min or 12 hours	720×4 = 2880 min or 48 hours
For higher class students (Class III- IV)				
Day	Number of class per day	Time for each class	Total time (per day)	Total time (per week)	Total time (per month)
Monday to Friday	5	40	200 min or 3.33 hours	200×5=1000 min + 120 min = 1120 min or 18.67 hours	1120×4 = 4480 min or 74.67 hours

If we sum up the total loss of main class time then it will clear the situation and help to understand how deep the root of the problem is.

Table-2
Loss of Education Time in Lower Class (for the main subjects)

For lower class students (P.P to Class II)					
Day	Total loss of class time				
	Per day	Per week	Total	Per month	Total
Monday to Friday	60 minutes or 1 hour	60×5 min	300 min	60×20	1200 min
Saturday	60 minutes or 1 hour	60×1 min	60 min	60×4	240 min
		Total loss per week	360 min or 6 hours	Total loss per month	1440 min or 24 hours

Table-3
Loss of Education Time in Higher Class (for the main subjects)

For higher class students (Class III- IV)					
Day	Total loss of class time				
	Per day	Per week	Total	Per month	Total
Monday to Friday	100 minutes or 1:40 hours	100×5 min	500 min	100×20 min	2000 min
Saturday	60 minutes or 1 hour	60×1 min	60 min	60×4 min	240 min
		Total loss per week	560 min or 9.33 hours	Total loss per month	2240 min or 37.33 hours

From the three tables above, we get a clear picture of total time of class with total loss of time allotted for the main subjects in every day, every weak and every month basis for both groups. Here lower class students lose their half of allotted time like one hour from two hours in every day, six hours from twelve hours in every week, and twenty-four hours from forty-eight hours in every month.

Similarly, on the other side, higher class student lose their one hour forty minutes from three hours thirty-three minutes per day (for Saturday, loss of time is one hour from two hours), nine hours thirty-three minutes from eighteen hours sixty-seven minutes per week and thirty-seven hours thirty-three

minutes from seventy-four hour sixty-seven minutes per month. Therefore, in case of time it is huge loss of the children. They do not get the time allotted only for them, for their achievements, betterment and prospects.

If we exclude the quantitative loss then there are many qualitative losses of the children as well as of the institutions. Students, teachers and the institutions have been facing various problems due to crisis of number of teacher in schools. These are as follows:

- Due to merging of class, two or more groups in a class at the same time, the classroom environment become hampered.
- It is quite unmanageable.
- Students become impatient and chaotic.
- Educational quality decreased.
- Teacher cannot pay full attention to the students in the matter of their education as well as health-hygiene, psychological development, mental growth and other parts of character building.
- Teachers become tired and stressed.
- They loss their energy to taught joyfully based on scientific and authentic process.
- Teachers cannot find out the new methods of teaching-learning process for their students.
- Official and administrative works also hindered.

Overall, it can be said that Student Teacher Ratio is important but number of teacher against each class is equally important for preserving and increasing the standard of the school.

Acknowledgement

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