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Garima–An Incentive Based School Assessment System in Odisha: The Case of Koraput District

Abstract

The success of a school can be determined based on the performances of the students. Generally, we judge the efficiency of a school according to the learning achievement of students. Learning achievement has been considered as the major outcome of quality education. In education system we devise different policies, strategies, and approaches to strengthen the support systems of education with the intention to realize the appropriate learning outcomes. For that we also experiment on many innovations and initiatives at different levels of education to enhance the learning achievements of students. Even we try to implement incentive programs to encourage the teachers and students as a little push to accomplish the goal. Because now a days the major challenge before the school authorities and functionaries is the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes by the students. It is not a problem in one or two schools or districts of the country rather it stands as major challenge throughout the county in India. In order to address this issue the government of Odisha initiated two Learning Enhancement Programmes in 2017 in collaboration with NITI Aayog. After implementation of these programmes assessment procedures were developed to find out the levels of achievements of students under Garima Programme. The programme launched by OSEPA with an objective to improve student outcomes in elementary schools through assessment based on encouragement and incentives. That programme is basically known as Garima- a school certification programme. In this paper an attempt has been made to discuss the significance of Garima programme and the implementation process of this assessment method with special reference to the prospective and challenges associated with Garima while implementing the same in Koraput district of Odisha.

Introduction

Quality improvement in education can be possible only with the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes by the students. This requires variety approaches in different dimensions of education, including curriculum, pedagogy and environment. There are different Acts, schemes and programmes designed and implemented to help teachers to enable the children to meet the expectations of learning needs. In order to achieve this target different state governments always try

to bring special innovations and initiatives in the area of learning achievement. Therefore, the performance of the school has been tagged with the effective learning outcomes of students. There are different categories of learners studying in one school and achieving the same standards among all the learners of the school is a big challenge for them, particularly in government schools. In Odisha there are around 60,000 schools functioning under the Department of School and Mass Education. The literacy rate of Odisha as per 2011 Census is 72.9%, however, in terms of learning outcomes

according to the latest NAS survey, only 53% students were able to answer question on basic competencies correctly.

On this backdrop the Department of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha launched different innovative programmes in collaboration with other agencies and institutions to improve the learning outcomes of students. In September 2017, SATH Programme was launched in partnership with NITI Aayog to improve the learning outcomes of students at elementary stage of education. Several initiatives have been launched under Project SATH in the past year. Two of these initiatives - Learning Enhancement Program (LEP) and Odisha School Monitoring App (OSMA) are particularly critical to drive learning outcomes and school improvement.

Both the programmes are being implemented in all schools, blocks and districts of the state. However, for the sustainability of the process, a comprehensive assessment method has been designed, including the components of recognition and awards to best performing schools by the government of Odisha. That programme is basically known as Garima- a school certification programme.

Garima: An Incentive Based School Assessment System

Garima programme has been designed basically for certification of schools at different levels. The major objectives of the programme are as follows:

- To motivate teachers to bring students to achieve grade level
- To ensure quality and transparency assessment by an unbiased party
- To identify good performing schools on the basis of good academic performance
- To encourage schools to help students to accomplish grade level learning outcomes

Garima programme has been designed to create healthy competitions amongst schools in the block/district. Because the recognition system can motivate the headmasters and teachers of the schools to engage themselves in the teaching learning process in an effective way.

Process of Certification under Garima Programme

- **Learning Outcomes are the basis of school certifications:** All elementary schools are assessed only on the basis of learning outcomes. There is a pre-certification exercise designed to check accurate reporting of a few important data points in the School Monitoring App.
- **Three levels of Certification:** Certifications are given at three levels based on the increasing levels of difficulty such as Bronze, Silver and Gold. Three levels of certification usually help the state to sustain the motivation of the schools and it also helps them to identify high performers early and handhold them to achieve higher levels of certification. The School level metrics of assessment is as follows:

Category	Academic Parameters
Bronze	80% of students of Grade 2 know basic competencies (Grade-l), Grade 3-5 know (Grade -2) basic competencies 80% of students of Grade 6-8 know Grade 3 competencies (Odia, Math and English)
Silver	80% of students of Grade 2 students know basic competencies (Class-1) 70% of students present Grade 3 students know Grade 2 competencies (Odia, Math) 70% of present Grade 4-5 students know Grade 3 competencies (Odia, Math) 70% of Grade 6-8 students know level 5 competencies (Odia, Math and English)
Gold	70% of students know grade level competencies in Odia, Math and English

- **Unbiased assessment:** Certifications also provided on the basis of a centrally prepared assessment for the nominated school. This assessment conducted by a team comprising of DIETs, as an unbiased assessor.
- **Rewards & incentives:** On achieving each level of certification, schools have been provided meaningful incentives and rewards in order to motivate them.
- **Standard Operating Procedure for Certification:** There are three rounds of Certification in a year- August, November and February for each phase in a cycle such as Nomination, Pre-verification, Assessment, Announcement of Certification.

Certain non-academic parameters like functioning of toilet, availability of drinking water facility, electricity connection, conduct of Learning Enhancement Programme, availability of LEP books are also put in place in the pre-verification phase to verify the data as per the report in the School Monitoring App for that month. A school can first apply for Bronze, once certified for Bronze then they can apply for Silver/Gold in the next cycle. If the attendance of students on the day of test is less than 70% then the school will be disqualified.

Phases of School Certification Under Garima Programme

The phases for school certification are as follows:

Phase-I: Self-nomination

When a school feels that it has achieved the targets defined for a particular level of certification, it may choose to nominate itself for that level of certification by informing the same to their CRCC, who can fill the nomination form. Thereafter the application will automatically be forwarded to the next level. A school has to nominate itself by the 15th of the month of the certification. On attainment of one level of certification, schools are required to wait for next cycle before they can apply for the next level of certification.

Phase-II: BEO/Block team pre-verification

A block team headed by the BRCC/ BEO verifies these schools who nominate themselves for certification. In this phase CRCCs of an adjoining cluster verify the list of pre-verification parameters, BEO only coordinate the process because no CRCC is pre-verifying their own school and conduct sample checks to ensure quality. The verification has to be done based on the following aspects in order to avoid any discrepancy:

- List of non-academic parameters
- Teacher attendance register for past 30 days to verify attendance criteria
- Re-checking of sample papers of latest SAI/SA2 of the students to assess if the academic parameter

If any school fails to fulfill these criterions during verification the BEOs reject the application at this stage.

Phase-III: Assessment by District team

Only schools passing the above pre-verification are eligible for the assessment as per the level of certification applied for. The assessment generally conducted by a district team consisting of DIET faculties & students. This team conducts the assessment from the question papers prepared by the DIETs and DEOs/BEO ensures smooth implementation. DIETs prepare the question paper using the centrally prepared guideline/rubric for Bronze and central question bank for Silver and Gold. The test usually conducted for all present students, if the student attendance on the day of the test is less than 70% the test referred to the next cycle. The faculties of DIETs evaluate the test and results of the test decide the academic certification criteria of the schools.

Phase-IV: Approval/ Rejection

After the completion of the assessment data analysis done by the DIETs and the results

declared before the 10th of the following month. Approved cases receive certification and avail the associated rewards. Thereafter the school is eligible to apply for the next level of certification in the next cycle. If rejected, the school cannot nominate itself for the next cycle.

Significance of the Study

The literacy rate of Odisha as per 20ll Census is 72.9%, however, in terms of learning outcomes according to the latest NAS survey, only 53% students were able to answer question on basic competencies correctly. In view of that Odisha Government launched Learning Enhancement programme and Odisha School Monitoring App (OSMA) to improve the learning outcomes of children in 2017 in partnership with NITI Aayog. Both the programmes are being implemented in all schools, blocks and districts of the state. In order to recognize the efforts of the schools and inspire the best performing schools, government decided to launch the School Certification programme in 2019. The basic intention of the programme is to motivate teachers to bring students to achieve grade level competencies. Under this program, schools can nominate themselves to be assessed and certified under three categories. As per the guideline of the programme only those schools will be recognized and rewarded who will qualify the standard criteria fixed by the government. Further the assessment was done by the third party in order to ensure quality and transparency in the process of assessment. As it is a new kind of programme and implemented throughout the state it is necessary to identify the prospective of the programme. The present study aimed to find out whether the assessment programme is implemented as intended and to know the issues and challenges experienced by the important stakeholders of the programme during the certification process.

The Area of the Study

Koraput district – a Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) district of Odisha constitute study area for the present study. It is declared as a district of Odisha state on 1st April 1936. After the reorganization of districts in 1992 it converted into four districts, namely, Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Nowrangpur. The entire District has been declared as a scheduled Area under the Presidential scheduled Areas Order, 1950. The district is surrounded with natural forests and mountains. Some of the villages of the district are spread over the inaccessible hilly terrains, remain in a state of near isolation and cut-off from the main stream of socio-economic development process. Most of the villages are inhabited by tribes who constitute as much as 50% of the total population of the district (Census, 2011). Koraput district occupies a unique position in the tribal map of Odisha. The major tribes of the district constitute: the Kandha, the Paraja, the Gadaba, the Kotia, the Dhurua, the Bhumiya, the Bhunia, the Bhatra, the Pentia, the Halva, and the Amantya. The literacy percentage of the district is 49.2 as against 72.9 of the state. The languages spoken by the people of this district are Tribal, Oriya, Telugu, Hindi and English.

Objectives of the Study

The current study is undertaken with the following objectives:
- To study whether the Garima Programme is implemented as intended or not.
- To study the perception of teachers and monitoring authorities regarding the is-sues and challenges experienced by them during the implementation of Gari-ma Programme.
- To study the strengths and prospective of Garima Programme towards meeting the appropriate learning outcomes of stu-dents.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used to carry out the study. For this a sample of 70 teachers from different schools of the district and 15 members of school authorities were selected

by following purposive sampling techniques to know their perceptions towards the implementation of Garima programme and to explore the challenges and prospective of the programme.

The author developed a questionnaire with 10 close ended and 15 open ended questions to collect necessary information and perception of stakeholders regarding the pros and cons of Garima programme. The main objective of the questionnaire was to explore the perceptions and opinion of teachers regarding the challenges experienced by them while implementing Garima programme in schools. Some of the questions were also asked to know the strengths and prospectives of Garima programme for the development of learning outcomes among the students of elementary schools. The complete instructions were provided in the questionnaire so that the respondents find themselves free to respond. Different qualitative and quantitative techniques like percentage, frequencies were used to analyse the data.

Implementation of Garima Programme in Koraput District

The programme is implemented in the district in 2019, however the district has completed two levels of certification. But based on the availability of data only one level of certification has been presented in the paper.

Phase-I: Self-nomination

There are 14 blocks and 4 urban units in Koraput district and 338 clusters have been formed by clubbing 10 to 15 schools in each cluster. The details of cluster-wise nomination of schools by the teachers and CRCCs for level -1 certification are as follows:

Table-1: Cluster wise Nomination of Schools for Level-I Certification

S.No	Name of the Block	Total Clusters Participated	Schools Nominated for Level -1 Certification
1	Bandhugam	9	65
2	Bioipariguda	13	55
3	Borigumma	17	64
4	Dasamanta-pur	13	51
5	Jeypore	11	51
6	Jepore (MPL)	4	14
7	Koraput	13	60
8	Koraput NAC	3	19
9	Kotpad	10	60
10	Kotpad Nac	1	11
11	Kundra	9	50
12	Lamtaput	10	44
13	Laxmipur	11	72
14	Nandapur	13	42
15	Naraynpatna	10	57
16	Pottangi	12	68
17	Semiliguda	11	85
18	Sunabeda NAC	4	37
	Total	174	905

(*Source:* Samgra Sikhya, Koraput)

Table-1 presents cluster wise nomination of schools for pre-verification for 1st level certification. After proper preparation 905 schools from 174 clusters nominate themselves for level-1 certification.

Phase-II: BEO/Block team pre-verification

In phase–II the block level team headed by BEO verified these schools who nominated themselves for certification. In this phase CRCCs of an adjoining cluster verified the schools based on the pre-verification parameters. The results of pre-verification process of the districts are presented in the following table:

Table-2: Block wise Percentage of Schools Qualified in Phase-II

Name of the Block	Schools Nominated	Qualified in the Pre-verification Stage	Percentage of Schools Qualified in the Pre-ver-ification Stage
Bandhugam	65	51	78
Bioipariguda	55	42	76
Borigumma	64	62	97
Dasamantapur	51	42	82
Jeypore	51	47	92
Jepore (MPL)	14	14	100
Koraput	60	57	95
Koraput NAC	19	18	95
Kotpad	60	59	98
Kotpad Nac	11	10	91
Kundra	50	47	94
Lamtaput	44	30	68
Laxmipur	72	72	100
Nandapur	42	42	100
Naraynpatna	57	30	53
Pottangi	68	43	63
Semiliguda	85	84	99
Sunabeda NAC	37	35	95
Total	905	785	87

*(**Source:** Samgra Sikhya, Koraput)*

As per the Table-2 there are only three blocks where all the schools qualified in the pre-verification stage. However, 9 blocks and urban units of the district where more than 90% of schools qualified for next phase. But there are three blocks such as Narayanpatna, Pottangi and Lamtaput where less than 70% schools only found eligible for the next phase of assessment.

Phase-III: Assessment Conducted by District team

After the pre-verification stage 87% of schools (785 in number) were declared eligible for the final assessment. The final assessment conducted by a district team consisting of DIET faculties & students. The faculties of DIETs evaluated the test and results of the test. The results of different blocks of the district are presented in Table-3.

Table-3: Block wise Percentage of Schools Qualified in Level-1 Certification (Bronze)

Name of the Block	Total Appeared	No. of Schools Qualified in Level-1 Certification	% of Schools Qualified in Level-1 Certification
Bandhugam	51	23	45
Bioipariguda	42	17	40
Borigumma	62	9	15
Dasamantapur	42	20	48
Jeypore	47	13	28
Jepore (MPL)	14	10	71

Koraput	57	48	84
Koraput NAC	18	14	78
Kotpad	59	27	46
Kotpad Nac	10	2	20
Kundra	47	4	9
Lamtaput	30	18	60
Laxmipur	72	33	46
Nandapur	42	19	45
Naraynpatna	30	17	57
Pottangi	43	17	40
Semiliguda	84	30	36
Sunabeda NAC	35	17	49
Total	785	338	43

(Source: Samgra Sikhya, Koraput)

As per the data of Table-3 only 43% of schools (338 in number) qualified in the assessment conducted by the district team in level-1 certification, i.e., Bronze award. Majority of the blocks and urban units, i.e., in 9 units where only 40% to 50% of schools qualified in the assessment. Even four blocks where below 40% of schools qualified in the assessment. However, there are 2 blocks where more than 50 to 70 schools qualified in the assessment process and three blocks and urban units where more than 70% schools qualified in the level-1 certification.

Phase-IV: Approval/ Rejection

After the completion of the assessment, approval cases received certificates and availed the associated rewards. Thereafter the eligible schools prepared for next level certification and the rejected schools were asked to prepare themselves to nominate for re-assessment for the next cycle. The approval and rejection cases of the district are presented in Figure-1
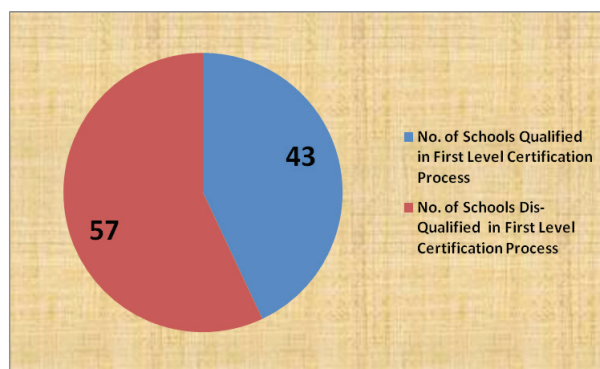

Figure-1: Percentage of Approved and Rejected Schools of the district in Level-1 Certification

Special Initiative by the District

Garima Koraput

GARIMA
SSA Koraput
ed by eResource Team,K

racticing the sample

Guideline
Full Book

Odia
Full Book

Mathematics
Full Book

English
Full Book

During the process of certification, a special initiative has been taken by the district team with the help of few resource members in order to orient the teachers for better performance of their students. An e-resource team has been constituted consisting of the expert teachers from different subjects having technological backgrounds. The team prepared a sample set of question papers based on each competencies of the learning enhancement programmes in two to three

workshops. Sample questions have been prepared from each subject and from each class. As it was not possible to orient all the teachers of different blocks of the district. Therefore, the e-resource team prepared an App "Garima" to help all the teachers to orient themselves for the final assessment in the certification process. The App consists of the Guidelines of Garima programme and subject-wise and competency-wise sample questions. On the basis of this App most of the teachers are able to prepare their students for the test.

Findings and Discussions

1. **Challenges experienced by Teachers during the Implementation of Garima programme**

   Teachers of different schools were having opinion that they face few challenges while implementing Garima programme such as:

   i. The field investigators engaged by DIETs are required to visit the interior pockets of the district who are not well versed with the languages of different tribes of the district. The students of some of the tribal schools are not able to understand the instructions of field investigators during the conduct of the tests.

   ii. There is no scope for the teachers to involve themselves in the assessment process and the field investigators deputed by DIETs are not able to explain the process of assessment to the students. As a result, the students cannot perform better in the achievement tests.

   iii. The teachers do not have the scope to understand the question patterns and prepare the students accordingly.

   iv. In the external evaluation system teachers are not able to get immediate feedback on what pupils are learning and not learning, and thus cannot plan for subsequent instructions.

v. This assessment process does not have any scope to evaluate skills such as oral facility or the ability to organize a hands-on project.

vi. No feedback system for the schools those who do not qualify in the Garima certification process

vii. One pattern of evaluation system for all the schools of the district may not determine the appropriate learning outcomes.

2. **Challenges experienced by the Monitoring personnel and Teacher Educators during Assessment under Garima Programme:**

During the interaction with the Teacher Educators and monitoring authorities most of them expressed some of the administrative and academic difficulties experienced by them during the implementation of Garima programme. Some of the important issues perceived by them are as follows:

i. The DIETs of the district have been assigned the responsibility of assessment and students and teacher educators of DIETs are involved in the assessment process. They are responsible for quality of data and reporting the results. As a result the DIET students are required to spend lots of time for the assessment of schools in different blocks and not able to focus on their studies. The regular teaching learning process of DIETs hamper a lot.

ii. Monitoring authorities of the district are not a part in the assessment process as a result they are not able to provide necessary support to the teachers to enhance the learning outcomes of students.

iii. Preparation of questions for each cycle of certification process and coordinating the entire assessment process of the district is a time-consuming process with limited human resources of DIETs.

iv. The field investigators get minimum amount to manage their TA and DA during the assessment process. Most of the time they experience lots of difficulties while visiting the interior and distant pockets of the districts.

v. There is no mandatory rule to involve all the schools in the assessment process as a result most of the schools are excluded from assessment process and teachers are also not interested to take risks.

vi. There is a gap in the review of results and follow up by the monitoring personnel at school level for improvement of the learning achievements by the students of those schools who do not qualify in the process.

Strengths and Prospective of the Assessment Process under Garima

Major strengths of Garima programme as perceived by the teachers and teacher educators are as follows:

- This assessment mechanism provides the schools to assess the performance of the learners through standard assessment procedures.
- It fosters accountability for schools and school systems.
- This programme ensures attendance and achievement of appropriate learning competencies by the learners.
- Develop a healthy competition among the teachers and authorities towards the achievement of learning outcomes by the students.
- This system demands a mandatory engagement of teachers in the learning enhancement activities of schools.

Conclusions

Every institution must prove their ability to lead in times of struggles. This programme provides an opportunity to the schools and authorities to work on their resources and talents and to prosper them in the right direction. This programme provides

a support and constructive criticism to the schools to improve the teaching strategies of the schools. This certification demonstrates that a school can ensure and achieve the learning of all students. It provides a scope to the institutions to inspire their students and teachers to have complete knowledge of their potentials and skills and to use the same for their prosperity. The programme launched by OSEPA is an initiative to review on evaluation and assessment frameworks for improving school outcomes.

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