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Analysing Quality of Education in SVS Schools: Towards a Holistic Education System

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Abstract: This paper is based on research through secondary sources focusing on analysis of quality dimensions of education in general and quality of education in the schools under Shiksha Vikash Samiti, Odisha. It was revealed from a case study of a residential school run under SVS, Odisha that, a holistic education system was the base in the school. This paper also focuses on the aspects of holistic as well as quality dimensions of education corresponding to the system of education in schools of SVS Odisha. The perceptions of the stakeholders on quality education are being collected and this is a working paper on the research study. However, the theoretical aspect of this paper includes various dimensions of quality education, holistic education including, the process of knowledge construction, school and classroom environment, the teacher, curriculum, and curricular structure.

Keywords: Quality Education, SVS Schools, Holistic Education System

INTRODUCTION

The quality of education means to provide excellence, being exceptional (high standards), providing value for moneys, conforming to specifications, getting things right the first time, meeting customers' needs, having zero defects (consistency), providing added value, exhibiting fitness of purpose (Sanyal & Martin, 2007). Recent studies have shown that even when students are retained in schools, they do not learn what they are supposed to learn. Low levels of learning at the primary stage are almost a universal phenomenon in India (Dave, 1988; Shukla *et al.* 1944, Varghese,1996) .While the majority of the schools are of poor quality (by international standards), there are specks of excellence while the scenario is fraught largely with poor quality, and there has been an

increasing expression of concern for quality (Mukhopadhyay and Parhar, 1999). Most of the people view quality of education as the learning outcomes of students which are the primary concerns of all stakeholders. The quality education can be achieved only if quality is ensured at each level of the educational process from setting, learning environment, teacher training, teaching-learning process, student evaluation, assessment and monitoring. It is only possible in Schools i.e., from primary levels.

The *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, the flagship programme for UEE emphasizes a holistic and comprehensive approach and suggests community-based monitoring system and also encourages developing partnerships between communities and research institutions for effective monitoring. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which aims at providing useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 has strongly articulated the need for a substantial improvement in the quality of education. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) also emphasizes the significance of quality education and suggests various parameters to be addressed in State and district plans to achieve the desired goal.

The quality dimensions for elementary education have broadly been identified by the School and mass Education Department, Government of Odisha, as following:

❖ **School Environment**

- a) Strong boundary wall, fence with kitchen garden.
- b) RCC roof with long verandah and adequate classrooms available.
- c) Sufficient air and light in the classroom
- d) Toilets available and properly used and separate toilets for Girls
- e) Hygienic drinking water.
- f) Ramp and rail for CWSN
- g) Cleanliness of school, classroom and awareness for personal cleanliness.

❖ **Curricular Programme**

- a) Classroom named
- b) Ground level blackboard available and used.
- c) Availability of TLM Corner, Activity Bank, Question Bank and Display Board.
- d) Availability of Attendance Chart and filled up by children.
- e) Availability of Attendance Chart and filled up by children.
- f) Preparation of Discipline Rule and obeyed by all.
- g) Availability of required TLM.

❖ **Co-curricular Programme**

- a) Evaluation of student's achievement regularly by teacher
- b) Availability of Time Table in office and classroom.

- c) Availability of “SAMADHAN”, “SADHAN” and “SANJOG” and its proper use.
- d) Maximum availability and use of teaching time as per RTE Act
- e) Peer learning encouraged, seating arrangement as per activity and students ask question freely.
- f) Availability of TLM Corner with low cost and no cost TLM
- g) Indication of positive behavior towards CWSN, Girls, SC & ST children.
- h) Children take up and complete project work.
- i) Co-curricular activities in regular intervals and Health Card for all.
- j) Availability of Idea Box.

❖ **Evaluation and Achievement**

- a) Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).
- b) Student’s achievement (both curricular & co-curricular) reflected in progress card.
- c) Children’s attendance and achievement shared with parents.

❖ **School Management**

- a) Constitution of VEC / SMC as per rule. Preparation of Activity Calendar on the basis of School Development Plan.
- b) Monthly meeting of SMC & PTA.
- c) Formation of School Cabinet.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Holistic education prepares a pupil for a productive life and lifelong learning in which the educational aims move towards the life skills, attitudes and personal awareness that have become essential for pupils in the present dynamic society. Holistic education focuses on the fullest possible development of the person, encouraging individuals to become the very best or finest that they can be and enabling them to experience all they can from life and reach their goals (Forbes, 2003). It has its sources from the contributions of Rousseau, R.W. Emerson, J.Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner, Montessori, Parker, Dewey, Howard Gardner, Jiddu Krishnamurti, Maslow, Carl Rogers, Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire.

Aim of holistic education is to prepare pupils for a productive life in which their skills and attributes are constantly challenged, developed and applied as part of their lifelong learning. Collaboration rather than competition in classrooms, teachers help young people feel the world of human relations. By using real-life experiences, current events, the dramatic arts and other lively sources of knowledge in place of textbook information, teachers can promote the love of learning. Learning throughout life or lifelong learning only can meet the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world. In this connection UNESCO (1996) in its report, *Learning: the Treasure Within* has designed Four Pillars of Education: Learning to know, Learning to do, Learning to live together and Learning to be.

- **Learning to know** implies learning how to learn by developing one's concentration, memory skills and ability to think. From infancy, young people must learn how to concentrate -on objects and on other people. This process of improving concentration skills can take different forms and can be aided by the many different learning opportunities that arise in the course of people's lives (games, work experience programmes, travel, practical science activities, etc.).
- **Learning to do:** Education can equip people to do different types of work needed in the future either in paid employment and self-employment. In advanced economies there is a paradigm shift from physical work to the service industries where, personal competence is assessed by looking at a mix of skills and talents, combining certified skills acquired through technical and vocational training, social behaviour, personal initiative and a willingness to take risks.
- **Learning to live together:** Here, people will be able to work collectively for a common goal. Formal education should be set aside sufficient time and opportunity in its curricula to introduce young people to collaborative projects from an early age as part of their sports or cultural activities. Educational organizations should take over these activities (e.g. renovation of slum areas, help for disadvantaged people, humanitarian action, and senior citizen help schemes) from the schools. Another point is that, in everyday school life, the involvement of teachers and pupils in common projects can help to teach a method for resolving conflicts and provide a valuable source of reference for pupils in later life. Competitiveness will be converted to Collaborations.
- **Learning to be:** The complete fulfillment of man, in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and his various commitments - as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer. Education should enable each person to be able to solve his own problems, make his own decisions and shoulder his own responsibilities (UNESCO, 1972) children and young should be offered every opportunity for aesthetic, artistic, scientific, cultural and social discovery and experimentation, which will complete the attractive presentation of the achievements of previous generations or their contemporaries in these fields. At school, art and poetry should take a much more important place than they are given in many countries by an education that has become more utilitarian than cultural. Concern with developing the imagination and creativity should also restore the value of oral culture and knowledge drawn from children's or adults' experiences.

Aspects of Holistic Education vis-a-vis Education in Schools under SVS Odisha

The essential aspects for holistic education in the school education system are: the learner himself and construction of knowledge, school & classroom environment, curricular aspects, stage specific assessment process, enhancement of ICT etc. as described below with reference to the education system in a school run under SVS Odisha.

The Learners and Knowledge Construction

Learning is active and social in its character. Academic institutions should provide new opportunities for all learners to learn about themselves, others, and society, to access their inheritance and to engage themselves with it irrespective of family and a community. The formal processes of learning that school makes possible can open up new possibilities of understanding and relating to the world. The process of learning makes the learner as active-learners. We need to nurture and build on their active and creative capabilities. It must be based on 'Child-centred' pedagogy by giving priority to their experiences, their voices, and their active participation. This kind of pedagogy will definitely help for children's psychological development and interests. Learners actively construct their own knowledge by connecting new ideas to existing ideas on the basis of materials/activities presented to them (experience) (NCF, 2005). In the residential school as the case, the students get admission from class-VI and stay there till the completion of class-X. Fulllest care is taken for their optimal learning. The learning in the school is based of like skills education, project based education moreover it is based on construction of knowledge rather theoretical orientation.

School and Classroom Environment

Children perceive their world through multiple senses as they always want to be in a place that is colourful, friendly, and peaceful, with lots of open space offering with small nooks and corners, animals, plants, flowers, trees, and toys. In order to attract and retain children, the school environment must have all these elements in and around them. The emphasis should be given on creation of an inclusive environment in the classroom for all students with disabilities. Labeling an individual student or a group of students as learning disabled etc. creates a sense of helplessness, inferiority.

Educational transaction has to shift from the benefactor (teacher) and the beneficiary (pupil) to a motivator and facilitator and learner, all of whom have rights and responsibilities in ensuring that educational transaction takes place.

Common sources of physical discomfort in the schools (NCF, 2005)

- Long walks to school.
- Heavy school bags.
- Lack of basic infrastructure, including support, Books for reading and writing.
- Badly designed furniture that gives children inadequate back support and cramps their legs and knees.
- Time tables that do not give young children enough breaks to stretch move and play, and that deprives older children of play/ sports time, and encourage girls to opt out.
- Especially for girls, the absence of toilets and sanitary requirements.
- Corporal punishment-beating, awkward physical postures.

BOX-1:

A residential school run under SVS, Odisha does have the environment as:

The school is having 20 acres of land as the campus. The school infrastructure has been created in about 04 acres of land with pucca boundary wall and big Iron Gate. The 'U' shaped school building looks very beautiful. There are 20 classrooms with well sitting arrangement (Desk & bench) with place for keeping school bags. Each classroom is suitable for minimum 50 students to be seated. The classroom is provided with blackboards. The library is well arranged with good number of books, different magazines for both the students and teachers. The library is a suitable for the teachers to update their knowledge and helpful for the students. The science laboratory is quite good and also in the computer laboratory all the computers are in working condition, where the students learn about use of computer.

Residential Environment: Regarding Residential Environment, the School is having very good accommodation for 428 students in the hostel. Number of living rooms in the hostel are 28. Rooms for living are spacious, 06 or 09 or 16 students live in each room as per the size of the rooms. Furniture in the living room contains wooden cots, cup boards, table, chairs, and good electricity facility with fan (High powered silent generator available). Toilets for the children are well cleaned and proper hygienic environment is maintained by the workers allotted for the same in the hostel. Sufficient and safe drinking water facility is available with aqua guard fittings.

Health/Dispensary Facilities: The dispensary facility includes, first aid treatment, one pharmacist is appointed for the purpose. One ambulance is provided by the school management for the students and staff to carry them to the nearby hospital, if anybody becomes ill.

Sports Materials and Others: Sports materials like Volley ball, football, carom, cricket, badminton, ring ball, chess etc. are available in the school. The musical instruments such as harmonium, flute, tabla, dholak, ginni are available in the school. Mainly the musical instruments are played during the evening prayer in the assembly hall daily. Other infrastructures like notice board, display board, wall clock, school bell, newspaper, magazines

Classroom Environment : The classroom environment as observed directly during the data collection by the investigator with the help of a check list containing different aspects such as room size, space in the room, sitting arrangement for the students, table, chair, black board, and electricity facility with fan, well ventilation having windows, decoration with different images, space for keeping the school bags etc. After observation it was revealed that, there are 20 numbers of classrooms for Class VI to Class X with different sections in each class. The room size is very suitable for minimum 50 students to sit in the class. The inside and outside walls of the classroom are well decorated with different images, quotations pertaining to value, ethics.

The Teacher

Teacher autonomy is essential for ensuring a learning environment that addresses children's diverse needs. As the learner requires space, freedom, flexibility, and respect, the teacher also requires the same. Currently, the system of administrative hierarchies and

control, examinations, and centralized planning for curriculum reform, all constrain the autonomy of the headmaster and teachers.

The traditional role of teacher is an instructor who drills or pours "*info-acts*" into a student's head, treating knowledge as content, i.e., finite and this old-fashioned model has been reinforced by the computer age of how information gets processed. A "*holistic teacher*" is a "*facilitator of learning*." Holistic education is based on a concept of knowledge as a process of reasoning and of continuous learning, i.e., infinite. Holistic education challenges teachers to think differently about student cognitive and affective development and to examine critically how they practice their craft. The working relationship between the student and the teacher changes; it becomes more inclusive, dynamic and egalitarian. A holistic teacher must have the following characteristics as written by Carl Rogers (1967) in the book "Person to Person: The Problem of Being Human":

- Concentrate on creating a classroom climate to facilitate self-initiated learning, the freedom to learn and learning to be free.
- Allow the students to be free and responsible so they confront real life problems.
- Genuine and sincere, with a confident view of humanity and a profound trust in the human organism.
- Ability to accept their feelings as their own, they have no need to impose them on others.
- Valuing the feelings and opinions of students who are regarded as imperfect humans with many potentialities.
- Having empathetic awareness of the learning process and education from the student's point of view.

BOX-2:

Teacher-Pupil Relationship in Schools under SVS, Odisha

As observed, the pupil-teacher relationship is just like the father and the son. It is very cordial. Every care is taken by the teachers and other assigned members for the holistic development of the students. Emotional, social maturity is developed with the creation of the homely environment. Every teacher seems to be very cautious about the health of each and every student. Teachers enquire about the personal problems about the students. With this environment the student feels the teachers as their friends with whom they can share their problems. The teachers are really the friends, guides and the philosophers. The students see the teachers as the God. They encourage the students to utilize properly the study hours and the play hours as per their importance.

Curriculum

Curriculum refers to the total structure of ideas and activities developed/followed/implemented by an educational institution to meet the learning needs of students and to achieve desired educational aims. As holistic education aims to educate the whole person, some key factors that are essential for this education.

- Learn about *themselves*, which involves learning of self-respect and self-esteem.
- Learn about *relationships*, which emphasizes relationship with others; It includes social literacy to see social influence and emotional literacy to establish relationships with others.
- Learn about *flexibility*. It entails overcoming difficulties, facing challenges and learning how to ensure long-term success.
- Learn about *aesthetics*. It encourages seeing the beauty around us

Apart from curricular subjects, curricular activities have a major role to play in ensuring that children are socialized into a culture of self-reliance, resourcefulness, peace-oriented values and health.

Linguistic potential of children must be enhanced for smooth transaction of curricular aspects. Bilingual proficiency raises the levels of cognitive growth, social tolerance, divergent thinking and scholastic achievement. Societal or national-level multilingualism is a resource that can be favorably compared to any other national resource (NCF, 2005). Curriculum should be based on the following principle for the holistic development of the students (NCF, 2005):

- Connecting knowledge to life outside school
- Ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote to methods
- Enriching the curriculum to provide for overall development of children
- Making assessments more flexible and integrated with classroom learning and teaching
- Nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic policy of the country

Corresponding to the principles as recommended in NCF, 2005, the curricular activities in the school run by SVS Odisha was observed as presented in the box below:

BOX-3:

Curricular Activities

The findings related to curricular activities as revealed from the analysis of the data are presented below:

Sports Games and Physical Activities: The sports, games and physical activities include Badminton, Baseball, Basketball, Football, High Jump, long jump, discus throw, running, cycling, volleyball, Wheel Bell with one iron stick (low weight), Tick wood for malkhamb practice, kabadi , Kho-Kho etc. are played by the students under the guidance of the experienced physical education teacher. Besides, the indoor games such as card game, luddu, chess, carom mathematical games etc. are organised. The teacher seemed to be very active in game period and also the students actively participated in this period, because they are free to choose any one game.

Yoga and Meditation : The students practice yoga, pranayama, sakha, drills in the morning for concentration in mind. As the science of Yoga was evolved in India in ancient times. It is now being adopted all over the world. Practice of Yoga is the best way for physical, psychological, intellectual and spiritual development of the students. This has been proved both scientifically and by personal experience. All students seat straight and close their eyes for meditation. All teachers and students are actively involved in this process. The meditation is not compulsory for all but the students are doing perfectly and some students are blinking their eyes and open again and again.

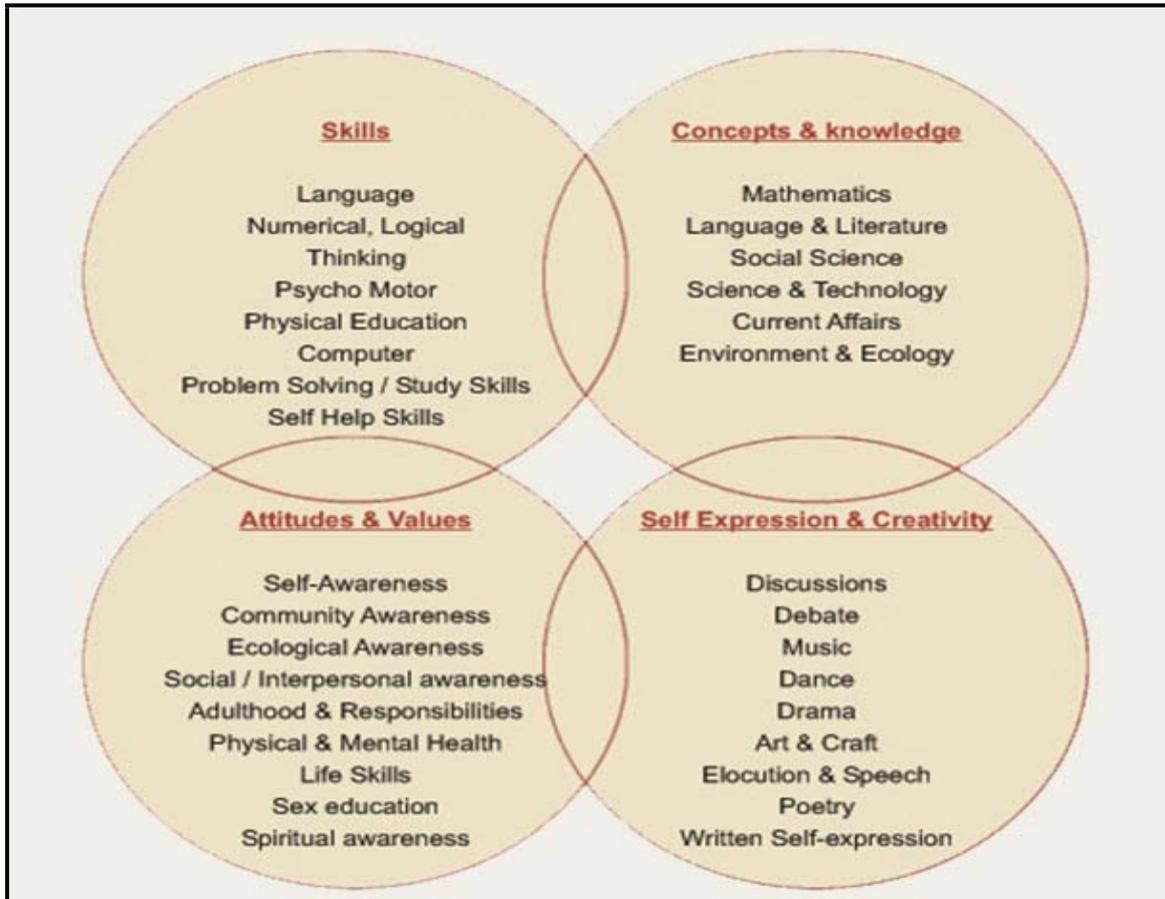
Moral and Spiritual Education: For development of moral and spiritual values and to make the life of the students in the school disciplined, different prayers are organized and all the students, teachers participate in the process. They worship the images / photographs of goddess Saraswati, Sri Guriji (the founder), the Bharat Mata in the assembly hall of the school. Vidya Bharati has accordingly developed the syllabus for inculcating moral and patriotic values and to foster proper spiritual outlook. It forms the foundation of the entire educational process. The primary aim of Vidya Bharati is to build the character and outlook of the children in accordance with Bharatiya Sanskrit, Dharma and ideal.

Literary Competition : The literary competition such as Essay, Debate (Sishu Sabha) , Quiz, Vedic Mathematics (Vaidika Ganita), general knowledge, and other creative writings in English, Sanskrit, Odia are organized in the school for the students of different classes separately and also in group. Spoken English classes are also organized for the students. This creates a competitive mind academically among the students. This will enable the students to face different competitive examinations in future and make them more creative in literary activities.

NCC and Ghosh: School is having its NCC wing. The students participate in the NCC and prepare them for serving the nation. This creates a patriotic feeling among the students who participate and others learn about the patriotic values out of NCC programme. Besides, there is Ghosh wing meant for parade. During the celebration of Independence Day and Republic Day, the Ghosh team performs its activities by playing Woodwind and brass instruments.

Curriculum Structure

The four pillars of education as described by UNESCO (1996) need to be incorporated in the curriculum to maintain the relationship between the acquisition of knowledge, development of concepts and skills, formation of values and attitudes, self expression and creativity.



Source: <http://www.theorchidschool.org/curriculum.html>

Process of Stage Specific Assessment

Starting from early childhood to higher secondary stages, the evaluation process needs to be stage specific. At early childhood stage, assessment must be purely qualitative judgments of children's activities in various domains and an assessment of the status of their health and physical development, based on observations through everyday interactions. Gradually, in higher classes, the students need to be aware that they are being assessed. It must be based on qualitative and quantitative. In later stages, more examinations, projects reports along with self-evaluation techniques are essential for assessing the physical, mental, socio-emotional and spiritual developments.

i. Assessment of Learning

- to measure pupil achievement and report evidence of learning
- For accountability purposes – grading, ranking and certification.
- tends to be summative in nature
- Carried out at the end of a unit, semester or year.

ii. Assessment for Learning

- To support classroom learning and teaching and improve pupil learning.

- To redirect learning in ways that help pupils master learning goals.
- Formative in nature, takes place all the time in the classroom, a process that is embedded in instruction.

iii. Assessment as learning:

- Encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning
- Requires students to ask questions about their learning
- Involves teachers and students creating learning goals to encourage growth and development
- Provides ways for students to use formal and informal feedback and self-assessment to help them understand the next steps in learning
- Encourages peer assessment, self-assessment and reflection.

Enhancement of ICT skill

With ICT skills Children can play and learn at their homes with their parent's supervision (family environment) or without it (self-learning environment). Informative and administrative tasks are also supported at home (parental environment). Children continue their learning activities with the support and collaboration of other peers and practitioners (classroom environment). ICT should be used as a tool for education as it provides ways to enhance the learning experience of the students. It enables the child to do his work from anywhere and doesn't restrict him to the classroom. It also makes the delivery and understanding of education easier.

CONCLUSION

In concluding remarks, it can be said that holistic education invites for an education system that trusts children's inherent motivation to learn and their potential to make learning happen. It is the education system as a whole, that gives the children freedom of choice in their learning experiences, supports their inquiries, fosters their independence and autonomy, and places them as the agent in the learning process. Finally gives importance to teacher as the facilitator.

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