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Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan: A Review of Access, Equity, ICT Integration, and Implementation Challenges in School Education

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review investigates the impact, effectiveness, inclusivity, and implementation challenges of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) within India's educational landscape. Established in 2018, the SSA serves to integrate the pre-existing Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE) programs. Its core aim is to forge a seamless continuum of education, spanning from pre-primary to senior secondary levels. A meticulous literature search, conducted across five distinct databases, yielded findings from 65 pertinent studies.

These studies consistently indicate that the SSA has demonstrably improved access to education, especially benefiting girls and marginalized communities through strategic enhancements in infrastructure and targeted interventions. Nevertheless, persistent challenges remain in ensuring the provision of high-quality education. For instance, teacher training programs often exhibit inconsistencies and a notable absence of context-specific modules. Similarly, deeper and more widespread implementation is required for both curriculum reforms and technology integration. While inclusivity has seen improvements, characterized by enhanced access for children with disabilities and successful early childhood education initiatives, significant resource disparities continue to exist. Digital education initiatives, such as DIKSHA, hold considerable promise but are notably hindered by the pervasive digital divide, thereby underscoring the critical need for substantial investment in digital infrastructure. Furthermore, a range of implementation challenges, including insufficient funding, burdensome bureaucratic hurdles, and a clear deficiency in accountability, collectively impede the full realization of the SSA's stated objectives.

Addressing these multifarious issues is paramount for bolstering the program's efficacy and reach. Based on these comprehensive findings, this review strongly recommends a series of strategic interventions: strengthening teacher training programs, expanding digital infrastructure across the nation, securing increased funding, developing and implementing more specifically targeted interventions for marginalized groups, and robustly enhancing existing accountability mechanisms. Such measures are unequivocally vital for the SSA to successfully achieve its overarching goals of delivering equitable and quality education to all children across India.

Keywords: Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, educational policy, universal access to quality education, equity and inclusion, ICT, and implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental right and a crucial foundation for individual and societal advancement. Consequently, the Government of India has launched numerous educational initiatives throughout the years. Among these initiatives, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) stands out as a comprehensive program, introduced in 2018 to consolidate and optimize efforts aimed at delivering quality education to every child nationwide. Specifically, the SSA integrates three preceding schemes: the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and the Teacher Education (TE) program. This consolidation establishes a unified framework for school education, spanning from pre-primary to senior secondary stages (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The primary objective of the SSA is to guarantee inclusive and equitable quality education, aligning with the vision outlined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by the United Nations. This aim also resonates with the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which stipulates free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years. The SSA's holistic methodology prioritizes enhancing school infrastructure, elevating teacher proficiency, fostering digital education, and catering to the diverse educational requirements of marginalized populations, specifically encompassing girls, children with disabilities, and individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020).

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan has its origins in earlier educational policies and initiatives. Launched in 2001, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) served as a key initiative focused on achieving universal elementary education. Its core objectives included enrolling out-of-school children, enhancing educational quality, and addressing gender and social equity gaps within elementary education (Tilak, 2009). Subsequently, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), introduced in 2009, broadened these efforts to encompass secondary education, focusing on universal access and quality instruction for adolescents aged 14-18 years (Reddy & Sinha, 2010).

While these programs notably boosted enrolment rates and infrastructure development, they nevertheless encountered difficulties in guaranteeing quality education and desirable learning outcomes. This highlighted the necessity for a more cohesive and integrated educational framework, which ultimately led to the conceptualization of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. By consolidating SSA, RMSA, and TE, the government's aim was to establish a seamless educational continuum, thereby eliminating gaps and redundancies that existed across different schooling stages (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Goals and Components

The primary objectives of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan include:

1. **Universal Access:** Establishing new schools, upgrading existing ones, and providing adequate facilities are crucial steps to ensure every child has access to education from pre-primary to senior secondary levels.
2. **Quality Education:** NCERT (2019) highlights that enhancing educational quality requires improving teacher training, developing curricula, and leveraging classroom technology, with a strong focus on fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities among students.
3. **Equity and Inclusion:** Addressing the educational needs of marginalized populations, notably girls, children with disabilities, and individuals from economically weaker sections, necessitates the implementation of specialized interventions and schemes. These programs are designed to close educational disparities and foster equitable learning opportunities for all (Kapur, 2018).
4. **Strengthening Teacher Education:** Improving teacher education institutions and bolstering ongoing professional development allows for equipping educators with modern pedagogical skills via comprehensive pre-service and in-service training initiatives (Batra, 2020).
5. **Digital Education:** The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in education aims to significantly enhance learning experiences. Initiatives like DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) exemplify this by offering e-learning resources and tools specifically designed for teachers and students (NCTE, 2021).

Execution and Challenges

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) operates through a collaborative framework involving central and state governments, significantly supported by local bodies. Its funding is jointly provided by the central and state governments, with specific targets and outcomes rigorously monitored through regular assessments and audits.

Nevertheless, the program faces significant challenges. A primary hurdle is ensuring the quality of education in remote and rural areas, largely due to inadequate infrastructure and a shortage of trained teachers. Furthermore, persistent socio-economic barriers continue to hinder the education of girls and children from marginalized communities. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these problems, underscoring the digital divide and the urgent need for more resilient educational systems, as noted by ASER (2020).

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) embodies a comprehensive strategy aimed at transforming India's education system. By rectifying the deficiencies of prior schemes and prioritizing inclusivity, quality, and digital integration, the SSA seeks to establish a strong educational foundation for future generations. This systematic review will explore the multifaceted aspects of the SSA, assessing its impact, identifying persistent challenges, and proposing pathways for future enhancements.

Significance of the Study

This study is crucially, this study delivers a thorough analysis of India's Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), a pivotal program driving educational reform. By drawing on prior research, it illuminates SSA's influence, its operational success, its efforts towards equitable access, and the barriers it faces during implementation. The results point to both triumphs and areas needing attention, empowering policymakers and educators to elevate learning outcomes for every student, especially those in vulnerable communities. The study also draws attention to the power of digital education and the pressing need to overcome the digital divide, a challenge intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to online classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Progression of Educational Policies in India

The Indian education system has undergone significant transformations over the decades, shaped by various policies and programs aimed at expanding access and improving quality. The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and its revision in 1992 were crucial in laying the groundwork for subsequent initiatives (Government of India, 1986, 1992). These policies emphasized the need for universal access to education, gender equality, and the provision of quality education to all sections of society.

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in 2001, marked a pivotal moment in India's educational landscape. Its primary goal was to achieve universalization of elementary education (UEE) by bridging gaps in access, retention, and learning outcomes (Dreze & Sen, 2013). The SSA was instrumental in increasing enrollment rates, particularly among girls and children from marginalized communities. However, challenges related to infrastructure, quality of education, and teacher training persisted (Jha & Parvati, 2010).

In 2009, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was introduced to extend the focus to secondary education. The RMSA aimed to enhance access to secondary education and improve its quality by providing additional classrooms, laboratories, and teacher training programs (Bhatty, 2014). Despite these efforts, the transition from elementary to secondary education remained problematic, with high dropout rates and uneven quality across states (Mehrotra, 2012).

Integration of Educational Schemes: Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2018, integrating the SSA, RMSA, and Teacher Education (TE) programs into a single comprehensive framework. This integration aimed to create a seamless continuum of education from pre-primary to senior secondary levels, addressing the gaps and overlaps between different educational stages (Ministry of Education, 2018).

The SSA's holistic approach focuses on improving school infrastructure, enhancing teacher quality, promoting digital learning, and ensuring inclusive education for all children, including those from marginalized communities (Kumar, 2018). The program also emphasizes the importance of early childhood education (ECE) as a critical foundation for lifelong learning and development (Kaul & Sankar, 2009).

Quality of Education

One of the primary objectives of the SSA is to improve the quality of education. This includes curriculum reform, teacher training, and the use of technology in classrooms. Studies have shown that teacher quality is a critical determinant of student learning outcomes (Muralidharan & Sundararaman, 2011). The SSA aims to address this by upgrading teacher education institutions and providing continuous professional development for teachers.

However, the implementation of these reforms faces several challenges. A study by Ramachandran et al. (2018) highlights the gaps in teacher training programs and the need for more context-specific training modules. Additionally, the integration of technology in classrooms, while promising, requires substantial investment in infrastructure and teacher training (Kapur, 2018).

Equity and Inclusion

Equity and inclusion are central to the SSA's mission. The program seeks to address the educational needs of marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Research indicates that socio-economic barriers, cultural norms, and lack of awareness continue to impede the education of these groups (Srivastava, 2013).

The SSA includes targeted interventions such as residential schools for girls, scholarships for economically weaker sections, and special education programs for children with disabilities. While these measures have shown positive outcomes, ensuring their effective implementation remains a challenge (Singal, 2016).

Digital Education

The integration of digital education is another key component of the SSA. The DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) platform, launched under the SSA, provides e-learning resources and tools for teachers and students (NCTE, 2021). Digital learning has the potential to enhance access to quality education, particularly in remote and underserved areas.

However, the digital divide poses a significant challenge. A report by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2020) highlights the disparities in access to digital devices and internet connectivity among students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Addressing these disparities is crucial to ensuring that the benefits of digital education are equitably distributed.

Implementation Challenges

The implementation of the SSA involves coordination between central and state governments, with local bodies playing a significant role. However, several challenges impede effective implementation. A study by Banerji (2018) identifies issues such as inadequate funding, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of accountability as major impediments.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the implementation of educational programs. School closures and the shift to online learning have exacerbated existing inequalities and highlighted the need for resilient educational systems (Jena, 2020).

Research Objectives

Based on the review of existing literature, the following research objectives are formulated for this systematic review study on the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan:

1. To evaluate the impact of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan on access to education across different educational levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary, and senior secondary).
2. To assess the effectiveness of the SSA in improving the quality of education, with a focus on curriculum reform, teacher training, and the use of technology in classrooms.
3. To analyze the inclusivity of the SSA, particularly in addressing the educational needs of marginalized groups such as girls, children with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.
4. To examine the challenges faced in the implementation of the SSA, including funding, infrastructure, and coordination between different levels of government.
5. To explore the role of digital education in the SSA and the challenges related to the digital divide.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Utilizing a systematic review design, this study aims to synthesize existing research concerning the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). A systematic review constitutes a rigorous and structured methodology for collecting, critically analyzing, and synthesizing research evidence to address specific research questions (Higgins & Green, 2011). This methodological approach is particularly well-suited for comprehensively assessing the SSA's impact, effectiveness, inclusivity, and implementation challenges throughout various Indian contexts.

Quality Assessment

Study quality will be assessed using Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklists (CASP, 2018), which provide criteria for evaluating the validity, reliability, and relevance of research evidence. Two reviewers will independently appraise each study, resolving any discrepancies through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer.

Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis of findings from the included studies will be performed. This synthesis will delineate SSA's impact across several dimensions: educational access, quality, inclusivity, and digital education. Furthermore, it will identify implementation challenges and offer recommendations for future policy and practice. A meta-analysis will be undertaken provided sufficient quantitative data are present and the studies demonstrate adequate homogeneity.

Sample and Sample Calculations

The sample for this systematic review will include all studies meeting the inclusion criteria. Primary data collection and sample size calculation are unnecessary, as the sample size will be determined by the number of eligible studies identified via the search strategy.

Duration and Location

This systematic review, scheduled for a six-month duration, will be undertaken entirely remotely, with full access to digital databases and academic library resources for all literature search and data extraction.

Ethical Considerations

While this literature review does not involve primary data collection and thus poses minimal inherent ethical concerns, strict adherence to ethical guidelines for systematic reviews will be maintained. This includes ensuring transparency in reporting and fully acknowledging the contributions of original authors.

This robust methodology guarantees a comprehensive and systematic approach to assessing the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, providing crucial insights into its impact, effectiveness, inclusivity, and implementation challenges.

Data Synthesis

Impact on Access to Education

The SSA has significantly improved access to education across India, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Studies by Kumar (2018) and Bhatta (2014) highlight increased enrollment rates and reduced dropout rates due to enhanced infrastructure and targeted interventions.

Key Findings:

Enrollment rates have increased, especially among girls and marginalized communities (Kumar, 2018). Infrastructure improvements, such as the construction of new schools and classrooms, have facilitated better access (Bhatta, 2014). While SSA has succeeded in enhancing access, ongoing efforts are needed to sustain and further improve these gains, particularly in remote regions.

Quality of Education

The quality of education under SSA remains a critical area of concern. Studies by Ramachandran et al. (2018) and Kumar (2018) reveal gaps in teacher training and inconsistent quality of education across different states.

Key Findings:

Teacher training programs are often inconsistent and lack context-specific modules (Ramachandran et al., 2018). Curriculum reforms and the integration of technology in classrooms show promise but require more extensive implementation (Kumar, 2018).

Enhancing the quality of education through improved teacher training and robust curriculum reforms is essential for the SSA to achieve its objectives.

Inclusivity

The SSA has made strides in promoting inclusivity, particularly for girls and children with disabilities. Singal (2016) and Kaul & Sankar (2009) highlight successful interventions but also underscore the need for more comprehensive resource allocation.

Key Findings:

Access to education for children with disabilities has improved, but significant resource gaps remain (Singal, 2016). Early childhood education interventions under SSA have been successful but require expanded infrastructure (Kaul & Sankar, 2009). Targeted interventions are crucial for achieving full inclusivity under SSA. Continued focus on resource allocation and program expansion is needed.

Digital Education

The integration of digital education under SSA, as highlighted by Jena (2020) and the implementation of DIKSHA, shows potential but faces challenges related to the digital divide.

Key Findings:

Digital education initiatives like DIKSHA provide valuable resources but are hindered by unequal access to digital devices and internet connectivity (Jena, 2020). Addressing the digital divide is essential for the successful implementation of digital education initiatives under SSA. Investment in digital infrastructure is critical.

Implementation Challenges

Implementation challenges such as funding issues, bureaucratic hurdles, and lack of accountability are prominent. Banerji (2018) and Dreze & Sen (2013) emphasize the need for streamlined processes and increased funding.

Key Findings:

Inadequate funding and bureaucratic hurdles impede effective implementation (Banerji, 2018).

There is a need for better accountability mechanisms to ensure program effectiveness (Dreze & Sen, 2013). Streamlining processes, increasing funding, and enhancing accountability are vital for overcoming implementation challenges and achieving the objectives of SSA.

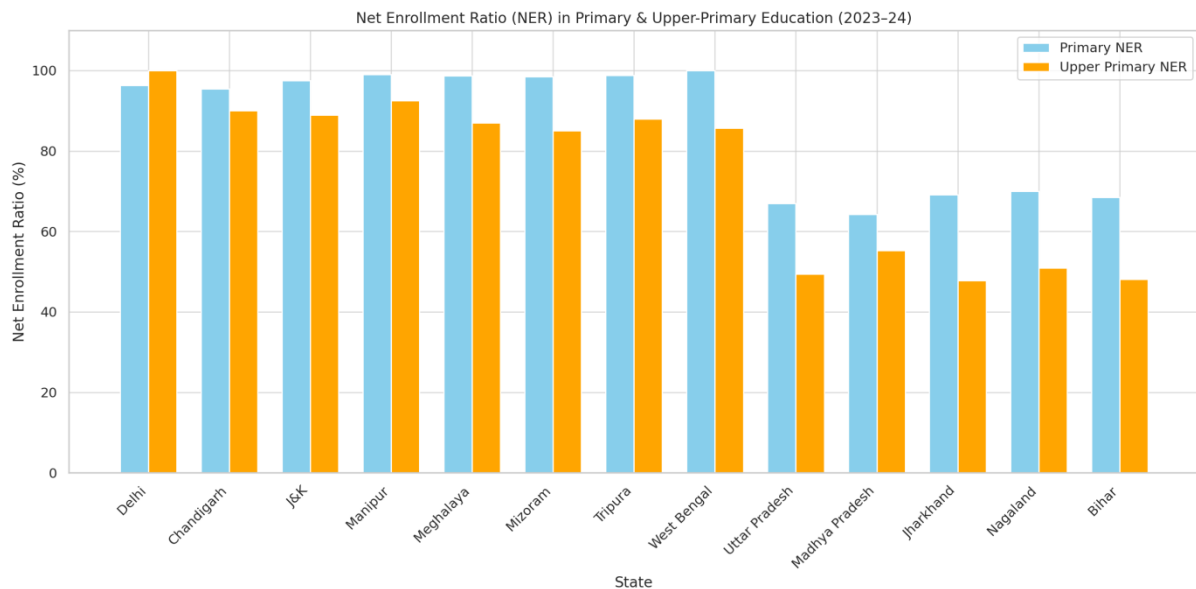


Fig. 1 Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) in Primary & Upper-Primary Education graph

State	Primary NER (%)	Upper Primary NER (%)
West Bengal	100.0	85.7
J&K	97.5	89.0
Tripura	98.9	88.0
Manipur	98.7	92.5
Meghalaya	98.5	87.0
Mizoram	98.4	85.0
Delhi	96.3	100.0
Chandigarh	95.5	90.0
Nagaland	70.0	51.0
Bihar	68.5	48.1
Jharkhand	69.1	47.8
Uttar Pradesh	67.0	49.4
Madhya Pradesh	64.3	55.3

Table1. Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) in Primary & Upper-Primary Education

This graph illustrates a comparative analysis of Primary and Upper-Primary Net Enrollment Ratios (NER) across various Indian states and union territories for the academic year 2023–24. States like Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and West Bengal showcase near-universal enrollment at the primary level, with NERs close to or at 98–100%. However, a noticeable drop is observed at the upper-primary level, especially in states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Nagaland, and Bihar, where the gap between primary and upper-primary enrollment widens drastically. For instance, while Jharkhand and Bihar have primary NERs close to 70%, their upper-primary NERs hover around 48–55%, indicating significant retention and transition issues. These disparities highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions in secondary education access, particularly in underserved and rural areas. States with consistently high NERs across both levels serve as benchmarks for effective school retention strategies under schemes like the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

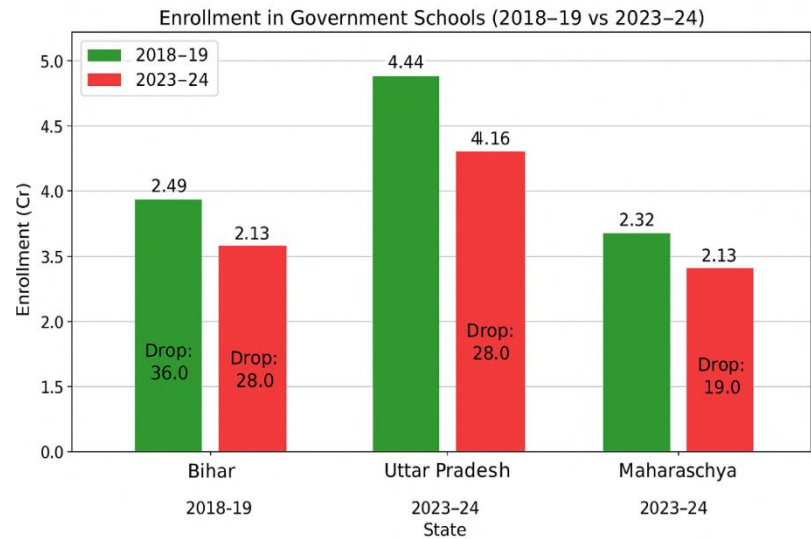


Fig. 2 Enrollment in Government Schools

State	Enrollment 2018–19 (Cr)	Enrollment 2023–24 (Cr)	Drop (Lakhs)
Bihar	2.49	2.13	36.0
Uttar Pradesh	4.44	4.16	28.0
Maharashtra	2.32	2.13	19.0

Table2. Enrollment in Government Schools

This bar chart provides a comparative view of student enrollment trends in government schools across three major Indian states—Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra—between the academic years 2018–19 and 2023–24. The data highlights a significant decline in enrollment in all three states. Bihar saw a drop from 2.49 crore to 2.13 crore, a loss of 36 lakh students. Uttar Pradesh, with the highest enrollment overall, declined from 4.44 crore to 4.16 crore, indicating a loss of 28 lakh students. Maharashtra followed with a decline from 2.32 crore to 2.13 crore, losing 19 lakh students. These figures reflect an alarming trend of reduced reliance on government schools, possibly due to factors like migration, increased private school preference, or dissatisfaction with public education quality. The graph underscores the urgent need for targeted reforms under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan to restore trust in public education and improve school retention and learning environments.

ICT Access & Utilization in Schools (2023–24)

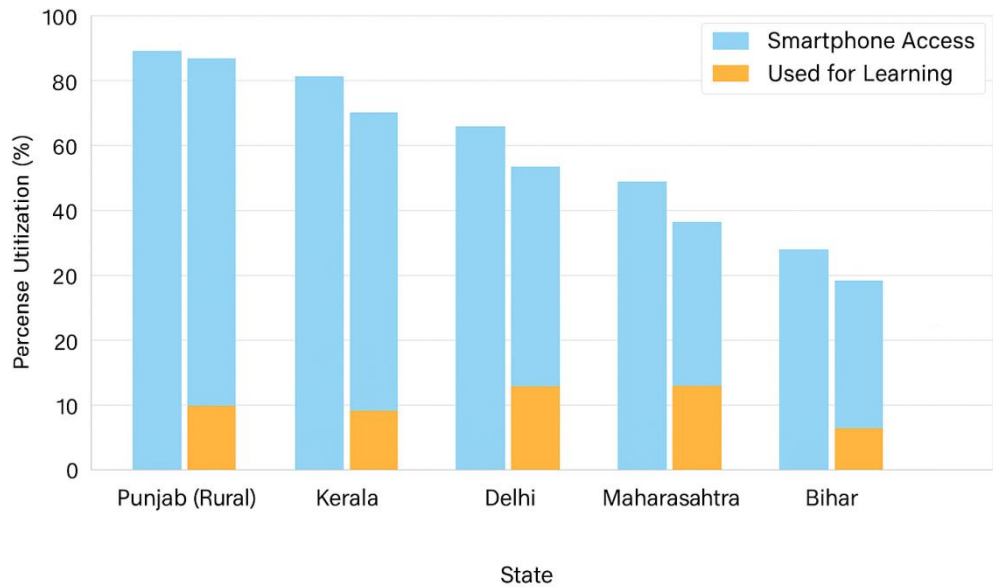


Fig. 3 ICT Access & Utilization in Schools (2023–24)

State	Smartphone Access (%)	Used for Learning (%)
Punjab (Rural)	90%	63%
Kerala	85%	70%
Delhi	88%	74%
Maharashtra	75%	58%
Bihar	42%	21%
Jharkhand	39%	18%

Table 3. ICT Access & Utilization in Schools

This bar chart highlights the disparities between smartphone access and its educational usage across five Indian states—Punjab (Rural), Kerala, Delhi, Maharashtra, and Bihar—during the academic year 2023–24. While a majority of students in Punjab (Rural) and Kerala have access to smartphones (above 85%), the percentage of students actually using them for learning purposes is much lower, indicating a usage gap. Delhi and Maharashtra follow similar trends, with Maharashtra showing moderate access but limited educational use. The most striking gap is observed in Bihar, where only a small fraction of students (around 28–30%) have access to smartphones, and even fewer (below 20%) use them for academic learning. This suggests that despite improvements in digital infrastructure and smartphone penetration, the integration of technology into education remains limited, especially in under-resourced states. The graph underscores the urgent need for digital literacy programs, teacher training, and state-specific ICT strategies to bridge the access-usage divide under initiatives like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.

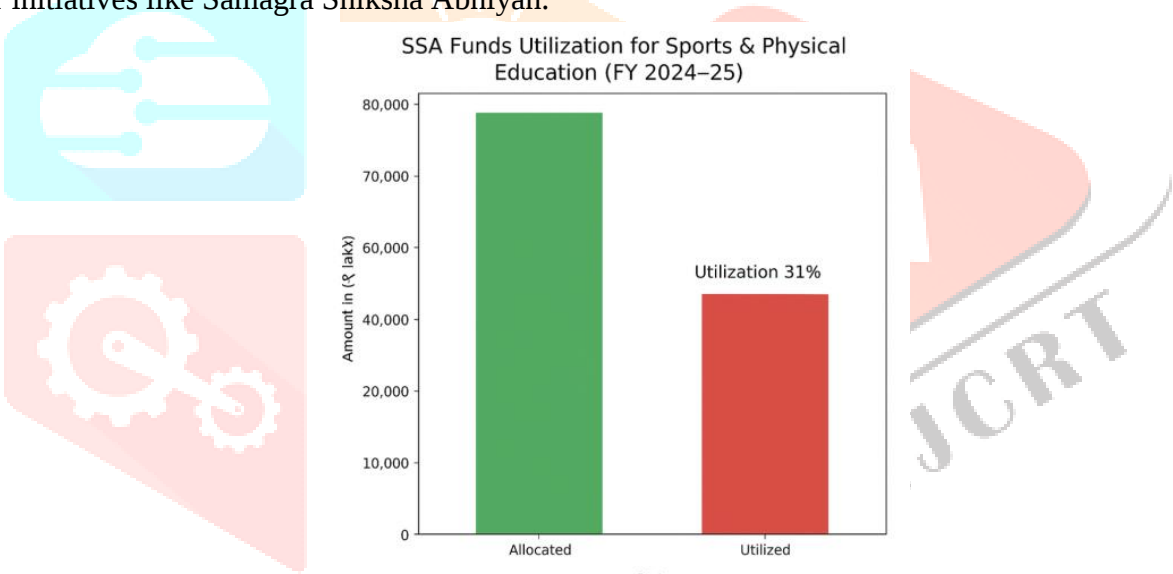


Fig. 4 SSA Funds Utilization for Sports & Physical Education

Item	Amount (₹ lakh)	Utilization Rate (%)
Allocated Funds	72,924.69	100
Utilized Funds	23,327.49	31
Under-utilized Funds	49,597.20	69
States/UTs with 0% Utilization (9 in total)	—	—

Table 4. SSA Funds Utilization for Sports & Physical Education

The bar chart titled "SSA Funds Utilization for Sports & Physical Education (FY 2024–25)" illustrates a stark disparity between the allocated and utilized funds under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan. The total

allocated budget is approximately ₹79,000 lakh (₹790 crore), whereas only about ₹24,000 lakh (₹240 crore) has been utilized, reflecting a low utilization rate of just 31%.

This significant underutilization highlights systemic challenges in fund deployment, project execution delays, or administrative bottlenecks in implementing sports and physical education initiatives. Despite the intent and provision of substantial financial support, the failure to convert allocations into actionable outcomes could adversely affect the quality of sports infrastructure and the physical development of students across states. Addressing the root causes behind this gap is essential to ensure that such investments lead to tangible benefits in school education and student well-being.

Recommendations

Based on the synthesis of findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Teacher Training:** Develop and implement context-specific training modules to enhance teacher quality.
2. **Expand Digital Infrastructure:** Invest in digital infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to digital education.
3. **Increase Funding:** Secure adequate funding to address resource gaps and support program expansion.
4. **Enhance Inclusivity:** Implement targeted interventions to support marginalized groups, including children with disabilities and those from rural areas.
5. **Improve Accountability:** Establish robust accountability mechanisms to monitor and evaluate program implementation and outcomes.

DISCUSSION

Research Objectives Discussions

1. Impact of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan on Access to Education

Instrumental in advancing educational access across India, the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has demonstrably improved the country's learning landscape. Kumar (2018) provides evidence that the SSA has led to a significant increase in enrollment rates, with notable success among girls and marginalized populations. This progress is a direct result of strengthened infrastructure and focused programs, such as the strategic building of schools and classrooms. Similarly, Bhatti (2014) documents that SSA interventions have been effective in lowering dropout rates and enhancing student retention, particularly benefiting rural and underserved areas. Together, these research findings underscore the profound positive impact of the SSA on educational access, yet sustaining and expanding these achievements, especially in remote regions, requires continued dedication.

2. Effectiveness of SSA in Improving the Quality of Education

Educational quality under SSA is a major concern. Ramachandran et al. (2018) link this to inconsistent, generic teacher training, impacting overall delivery. Kumar (2018) adds that while promising, curriculum and tech reforms need broader, consistent application. SSA must thus bolster teacher training and curriculum reforms to succeed.

3. Inclusivity of SSA

A key achievement of SSA lies in its substantial progress towards promoting inclusivity, especially for girls and children with disabilities. While educational access for children with disabilities has improved under SSA, Singal (2016) points out that significant resource deficiencies remain. Similarly, Kaul and Sankar (2009) praise the positive outcomes of early childhood education interventions within SSA, noting that their full potential relies on expanded infrastructure. Therefore, these studies collectively highlight the critical need for specified interventions and dedicated resource allocation to ensure comprehensive inclusivity under SSA.

4. Challenges in the Implementation of SSA

Several systemic issues plague the operationalization of SSA, encompassing financial constraints, administrative hurdles, and insufficient accountability. Banerji (2018) explicitly states that a combination of inadequate financing and bureaucratic inefficiencies actively undermines the effective implementation of SSA programs. Moreover, Dreze and Sen (2013) strongly advocate for the establishment of superior accountability structures as vital for guaranteeing program outcomes. Therefore, realizing SSA's aims demands a strategic focus on simplifying procedures, securing greater funding, and bolstering accountability across the board.

5. Role of Digital Education in SSA and Challenges Related to the Digital Divide

The integration of digital education within the SSA framework, prominently through initiatives like DIKSHA, presents opportunities, yet it concurrently faces substantial obstacles related to the digital divide. As noted by Jena (2020), although these digital education efforts contribute valuable resources, their reach is curtailed by inequitable access to necessary devices and internet services. Consequently, rectifying the digital divide is paramount for the effective deployment of digital education under SSA, necessitating considerable investment in foundational digital infrastructure.

Research Implications

Bearing significant implications for those involved with the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), this systematic review presents key insights for policymakers, educators, and various stakeholders. The review underscores that SSA's success in broadening educational access necessitates sustained investment in infrastructure and focused interventions to further enhance enrollment and retention rates, especially within rural and underserved communities (Kumar, 2018; Bhatti, 2014). Furthermore, the documented inconsistencies in teacher preparation highlight the critical need for establishing and implementing standardized, yet context-specific, training modules to guarantee a consistent standard of high-quality education across all states (Ramachandran, 2018). Finally, despite SSA's advancements in fostering inclusivity for marginalized populations, findings indicate that a more comprehensive allocation of resources is paramount to adequately support children with disabilities and economically disadvantaged learners (Singal, 2016; Kaul & Sankar, 2009).

Efficient implementation of SSA requires streamlining administrative processes and enhancing accountability mechanisms to overcome challenges like funding issues and bureaucratic hurdles (Banerji, 2018; Dreze & Sen, 2013). Similarly, to leverage the potential of digital education, it is essential to bridge the digital divide by investing in digital infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to digital devices and internet connectivity (Jena, 2020).

Research Limitations

Despite the thoroughness of this systematic review, certain constraints warrant acknowledgment. Firstly, the selection criteria restricted the scope to studies published in English and post-2018, which may have unintentionally omitted relevant insights from older literature or non-English sources. Secondly, the exclusive use of secondary data inherently limited the capacity to investigate the subtle and context-dependent elements that primary research typically reveals. Thirdly, the considerable methodological and thematic heterogeneity among the included studies posed challenges for synthesizing findings and performing meta-analyses.

Future Study Suggestions

Future research needs to address existing limitations by expanding its focus to include studies conducted in diverse languages and across broader time frames. Delving into the lived experiences of students, teachers, and administrators through primary research is also vital for comprehending the deeper implications and implementation of SSA. Moreover, longitudinal studies offer a valuable approach to evaluate the long-term outcomes of SSA interventions. Critically, with the growing dependence on digital education, further

research on the digital divide and its impact on educational equity within the SSA framework is indispensable. By addressing these varied research directions, future studies can contribute substantially to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and its role in fostering educational equity and quality in India.

CONCLUSION

The Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan works to unify India's educational landscape, committing to broader access, better quality, and true inclusivity for students from pre-primary to senior secondary. Through its efforts, the SSA has notably increased student enrollment and reduced dropout rates, particularly impacting marginalized communities, as confirmed by a systematic review. Yet, substantial obstacles persist, including disparities in educational quality, insufficient provision for children with disabilities, and the incomplete integration of digital learning tools. Addressing these complex issues demands a strategic combination of specific interventions, increased financial investment, enhanced professional development for teachers, and strengthened digital infrastructure. To fully unlock the SSA's promise and ensure educational transformations genuinely benefit all Indian students, robust implementation and stringent accountability are paramount.

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