

Efficacy of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) in Assam on academic performance of children

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Received: 25.02.2015; Revised: 12.04.2015; Accepted: 29.04.2015

■ **ABSTRACT** : The teaching- learning needs of girls in the KGBV are a challenge as well as an opportunity. All KGBV girls have a break in their schooling due to family or other circumstances. Many of the girls have in the past been out of school or have dropped out of the school at some stage. Across the board they come from families and from villages which were educationally backward. It is therefore to be expected that such girls are likely to be lagging behind academically. The challenge should be developed into an opportunity as the KGBV is a residential programme for three years. In most of the cases there are adequate numbers of teachers, possibilities of flexible time and methods, and overall a high motivation from the girls and from their families for improved learning. It is therefore essential for the teachers, wardens and the programme officers to work out what methods and material should be used to accelerate their learning level more, and enable the girls to reach grade level knowledge and skills. To balance academic learning along with other issues three years is a long period. If the teacher wishes and put in more efforts and introduces innovative ways then they can create wonder in the academic achievement of the girls.

■ **KEY WORDS**: Efficacy, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Academic, Performance

■ **HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER** : Gogoi, Sampreety and Goswami, Utpala (2015). Efficacy of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) in Assam on academic performance of children. *Asian J. Home Sci.*, **10** (1) : 161-167.

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Educating girls has a multitude of positive effects for the wider community, as well as the individual woman. Extensive research by the UN and the World Bank shows that when girls are educated birth rates fall and each four years of schooling reduces family size by one, family health improves and child mortality falls, educated mothers are 40 per cent more likely to immunize their children, literacy accelerates in future generations as educated mothers are five times more likely to educate their children, regions stabilize as violence and extremism declines, both family and national

income grow by 10 per cent for each additional year of schooling. Schooling contributes to a country's economic growth, longer life spans, lower infant mortality rates, lower fertility rates, improved hygiene, nutrition and higher educational attainment for children (Mehrotra, 1999 and Nagchoudhuri, 2005).

There are girl children in many communities who are not easily reachable and thus remain excluded from the benefits of education. This is especially true in tribal regions. It is well researched that educating a girl has a ripple effect, impacting health, population control, next

generation school enrollment and the potential to earn. Education enables girls to reason, make informed decisions and most importantly, live healthy, productive lives. But there are great disparities between genders, rural and urban settings, and different social groups in India (World Bank, 1997).

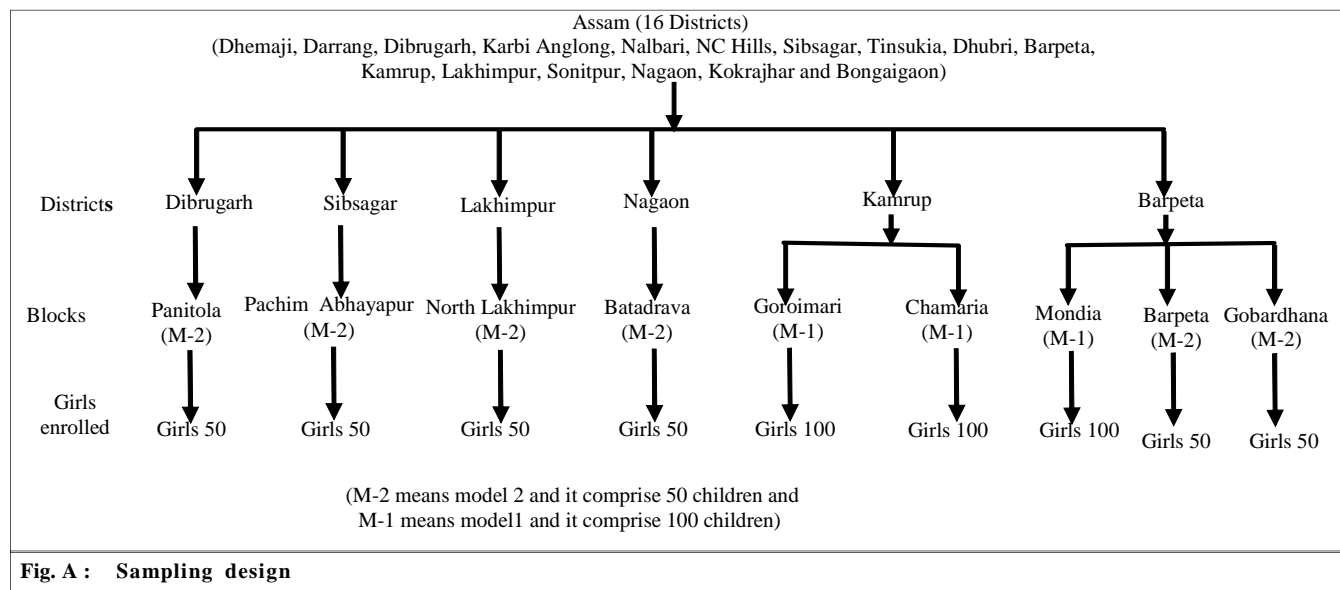
But making primary education available for all in India has also been one of the major challenges for the Government. Moreover, the quality of elementary education in India has also been a major cause of worry for the Government. Elementary education in India means eight years of schooling from the age of six years. The government has made elementary education compulsory and free. But, the goal of universal elementary education in India has been very difficult to achieve till now. Therefore, the nation has introduced innovative ways of universalizing elementary education (UEE). A concerted effort has been made in the past two decades through a number of Governmental and Non-Governmental schemes and programmes. Despite strong policy directives and launching of various programmes, to achieve the goal of UEE; the fact is UEE is still a distant dream. Discrimination against the girl child begins even before she is born. The girl child finds it difficult to find her space in the educational system of the country. Social exclusion is especially evident in girls from marginalized communities, the dropout rates of girls, specially from the marginalized sections of society and the rural areas continue to be abysmal and nine out of every ten girls enrolled in school do not complete schooling, and only one out of every hundred girls enrolled in Class I reaches Class XII in rural areas.

Enrolment of girls from marginalized communities, by itself is a challenge, which is further compounded by the phenomenon of dropping out, especially in the higher grades. In accessibility, financial constraints of the families, sibling-care, engagement in economic activities to supplement family income, and difficult and unfamiliar academic curriculum are some of the causes that often push marginalized girls out of school. Traditional social norms and beliefs such as early marriage further keep girls away from education. There is also a concern for the physical and moral safety of the girl child, which does not permit travel for long distances to school everyday, especially in areas with high crime rates. Adolescent girls are therefore structurally and culturally excluded from the learning opportunities available in the

country. Education of girls has been a high priority with the Government of India and reaching out to the girl child is central to the efforts to universalize elementary education. The Government of India has launch the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) to reach out to girls from marginalized social groups in country where the female rural literacy is below the national average and the gender gap in literacy is above the national average. Sharma *et al.* (2011) carried out an evaluative study on KGBVs in Sirohi, Rajasthan and he stated that the scheme has been able to create access to schooling facilities among the most disadvantaged. Though there is a mix of different age-groups of the girls enrolled, most of the schools have more of the older girls who are dropouts.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas are providing support to empower drop out adolescent girls, by giving quality education to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society through residential schools in the rural villages of Assam India. At the primary level the emphasis was on the slightly older girls who are out of school and were unable to complete primary schools (10+). However, in difficult areas (migratory populations, scattered habitations that do not qualify for primary / upper primary schools) younger girls were targeted. At the upper primary level, emphasis was on girls, especially, adolescent girls who are unable to go to regular schools. Chaudhari (2014) conducted a study on academic achievement of girls education in KGBV of Gujarat state and it revealed that the number of drop out have decreased over a period of time but still all never enrolled or drop out are yet to be covered under this scheme. The struggle is ongoing for them whether it was to enter KGBV or a life after the stay at KGBV. Baruah (2011) carried out a study on the education of the deprived social group: with special reference to the girl's education of Tinsukia district through KGBV with field study and stated that the education provided by these schools were of high qualitative value.

In view of the targeted nature of the scheme, 75 per cent girls from SC, ST, OBC or minority communities was accorded priority for enrolment in such residential schools and only thereafter, 25 per cent girls from families below poverty line. Keeping this background in mind the present study was conducted with the specific objective to see the performance of children after studying in the KGBV.



RESEARCH METHODS

The state of Assam in India was selected for the present study. Multi stage sampling design was adopted for the study. The sampling units at different stages were State, Districts and KGBV's. The six districts namely Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur Nagoan, Kamrup and Barpeta District were selected purposively for the study. The main reason for selection of the study areas was to study the KGBV's of Upper Assam, Middle Assam and Lower Assam to fulfill the criteria of representation of entire scenario of Assam. Out of total 16 numbers of districts with KGBV's, 6 numbers of Districts of Assam is selected purposively for the study as per Fig. A.

To assess the performance of the children after enrolment in KGBVs a focus group discussion and interview was organized with an interview schedule which was developed comprising various questions related to the academic achievements, information to the parents

about children progress and feed back collected from mainstreamed schools etc., among the teachers and wardens in all the nine KGBVs. Primary data collection method was used in the study. As the researcher belongs to the same community the interview were conducted in Assamese language in KGBVs. All the children of class eight were also taken purposively. Since the class eight children had studied for three years from class six, their marks in all the subjects of term end evaluation in the entry level that is (class six) and the exist level that is (class eight) were studied and analyzed. The total sample selected was 172. For analysis of class wise performance of children of class 8 the marks of all the subject of term end evaluation of class 6 and class 8 were studied by using the paired t-test.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 depicts that 100 per cent expressed that no

Table 1 : Distribution of responses on performance of girls		
Performance of girls	Frequency (n=9)	Percentage (%)
Test taken before enrolling girls in KGBV		
No	9	100
Record available in KGBV	(n=9)	Percentage (%)
No	9	100
Girls became more disciplined after getting enrolled in KGBV	(n=9)	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	100
Level of girls improved after getting continuous support	(n=9)	Percentage (%)
Yes	8	88.89
No	1	11.11

test was taken to access the ability before enrolling the girls in the KGBVs and, therefore, no such record was available in any of the selected KGBVs. Most of the KGBV teachers that the researcher spoke to said that the learning level of the girls at the time of their admission was quite low and that the tutor had to spend the first years helping the girls come up to class six level. In some case they had to start with the alphabets. There was no consistent, systematic bridging strategy across the KGBVs visited. It was also noticed that in some cases where the state has developed a bridge course that is in use in other programmes, the course was not used in the KGBV. The teachers were not offered in service training or orientation in assessment, classroom teaching methodologies or accelerated learning technique. No bridge course material was available in the KGBVs. The KGBVs appeared like a standalone programme operating within SSA with little linkage and even less academic support. According to Kumar (2009) the use of teaching and learning materials in KGBVs is very much essential to accelerate the learning level of the children of KGBV.

From Table 1 it can also be revealed that 100 per cent of the warden and teacher felt that girls had become more disciplined after getting enrolled in KGBVs. It was a difficult task to get a girl to KGBV after convincing their parents and to gain the faith of the parents that their ward will be secured and not abused at KGBVs. It was the most challenging and time consuming task. The other challenges faced by the teachers were to train them with regular habits of self hygiene and the routine at KGBV.

From the Table 2 it can be revealed that, 529 numbers of the girls had appeared in the term end

evaluation at KGBVs. Out of them, 12.29 per cent had acquired A grade in KGBVs, 27.98 per cent had acquired B grade, 40.45 per cent had acquired C grade and 19.28 per cent had acquired D grade in the selected KGBVs. Chaudhari *et al.* (2012) conducted a study on Impact of KGBVs on Girls' Education and Retention and the findings of the study revealed that in spite of the facilities being provided and so much of funds utilized for the academic upliftment of the girls, their achievement doesn't reflect a good status .

During data collection it was found that there was a lack of vision among the teacher and authorities regarding the academic achievement of the girls at KGBVs. Kumar and Gupta (2008) felt that the academic rigor in the scheme was missing. Girls enrolled in KGBV were not able to acquire competencies for passing classes eight and ten examinations.

There were very few authorities whose main concern was the academic education of the girls at KGBVs. They were more focused on other areas such as food, facilities, vocational training, cultural activities and their dwelling. This could be one of reasons for the low achievement among the girls. Verma *et al.* (2008) revealed that the major challenge that KGBVs need to address is not merely regarding curriculum and textual materials but also the pedagogy and environment of KGBVs. She suggested that the teacher in KGBV should encourage students to question and foster in them the quest for seeking knowledge. In other words the teachers must infuse in girls the skills of critical thinking so that they constantly ask questions and search for answers.

Hundred per cent of the respondent expressed that they regularly organize parent teachers meeting and in the meeting the issues discussed were mainly on girls

Table 2 : Distribution of responses on grades achieved by girls in term end evaluation at KGBV

Grade	Frequency (n=529)	Percentage (%)
A	65	12.29
B	148	27.98
C	214	40.45
D	102	19.28

Table 3 : Distribution of responses on parents' teacher meeting conducted at KGBV

Parents teachers meeting	Frequency (n=9)	Percentage (%)
Organize parent teacher meeting		
Yes	9	100
Inform parents about girls academic progress		
Yes	9	100

academic achievement, daily living skills, health issues and their performance in various skills. The parents were informed to look after their wards health and hygiene once they go back home after passing class eight or during their vacation. The parents were also advised to look after their girls studies and supervise whether they regularly do their home works and class works.

Hundred per cent of the respondents, expressed that they regularly informed the parents about their wards academic progress. This makes the parents happy, that their wards are learning many things in a conducive environment, which was otherwise not possible to learn in their homes or villages.

Table 4 indicates that only 44.44 per cent have the practice to collect the feedback from the mainstreamed schools. It was found that the girls were not tracked after leaving the KGBVs. Instead this should be the regular practice or a mechanism should be build to follow up whether the girls were continuing their education after class VIII. Their progress in academics and other aspects should be monitored. Records should also be maintained by KGBV wardens and teachers for girls who were successfully continuing their education as these girls can become role model in their community. The 44.44 per cent

wardens and teachers those who collected feedback from schools also expressed that 100 per cent got positive responses, from the schools about the girls and their performance in different areas. The girls were appreciated by the teachers for their expertise in conducting morning assembly which they have learned in KGBVs. The teachers of formal school took help of these girls in organizing the assembly in the schools. Swachitha *et al.* (2015) stated that KGBVs are success in empowering the girls especially the disadvantaged group by ensuring the continuity of their education. It is not only providing the basic need of food, clothing and shelter but also strengthening them through education so that they can confidently step into the world and succeed in their lives.

Hundred per cent of the respondents expressed that the teachers sit together to develop strategies for girls academic achievement and also plan for remedial teaching for slow learners. For proper functioning of the KGBVs it is crucial that the teachers sit and discuss with each other and develop strategies for girls' development. Mukherjee (2011) found that the dedicated teacher have transformed the school and are producing hundred per cent results in board examination.

Table 4 : Distribution of responses on collecting feedbacks from mainstream schools

Feedback from mainstream schools	Frequency (n=9)	Percentage (%)
Feedback from schools after mainstreaming		
Yes	4	44.44
No	5	55.56
Response from school		
Positive	4	100
Teachers sit together to develop strategy for girls academic achievement		
Yes	9	100

Table 5 : Distribution of progress of girls in different subjects in entry level class 6 and exit level class 8

Sr. No.	Variables	t
1.	Progress of girls in English in entry level and exit level at term end evaluation	11.852 (significant)
2.	Progress of girls in Assamese in entry level and exit level at term end evaluation	7.589 (significant)
3.	Progress of girls in Hindi in entry level and exit level at term end evaluation	12.89 (significant)
4.	Progress of children in Maths in entry level and exit level at term end evaluation	4.793 (significant)
5.	Progress of girls in Science in entry level and exist level at term end evaluation	7.576 (significant)
6.	Progress of girls in Social Science in entry level and exist level at term end evaluation	4.496 (significant)
7.	Progress of girls in Health Education in entry level and exist level at term end evaluation	4.036 (significant)
8.	Progress of girls in Art in entry level and exit level at term end evaluation	2.503 (significant)

Tabulated value at 5% level for 171 d.f = 1.960; d.f (degree of freedom)

The Table 5 reflects that as the class eight girls have studied for three years in the KGBVs, significant difference among the girls achievement in marks at all the subjects at entry level and exit level was observed. This reflects that there was achievement in performance of the girls within these three years.

To raise the level of learning in a considerably quick turnaround time, each KGBV starts with the three months readiness class. During this period, teachers are required to raise the learning level of the girls from zero to the basic understanding of reading, writing and arithmetic in addition to dealing with the girls' adoption process. However after the readiness classes, the challenges persist. The goal of KGBV is to raise the girls' level of learning to the class eight within three years. In other words, the girls learn and acquire the skills and knowledge, which are supposed to take eight years, within three years. Sinha stated that the role of teacher is critical to bring out the best in children and tapping their resources is essential for their overall personality development. Teacher orientation programmes should focus on making teaching sensitive to handling girls from rural and marginalized groups who have struggled to come to the portals of education. This struggle should be appreciated by the teachers. KGBV policy targets the rural girls who dropout after completing class five and have been dropped out for more than 2 years. The policy assumed that girls have basis 3Rs. as well as the knowledge up to class five. However, the reality is that almost everyone has discontinued school at second or third grade. Therefore, all of them don't remember even basic ideas and concepts of learning. Therefore to upgrade them the teachers expressed that they have continuously encourage them, listen to them, stay with them, and ask their problems and conduct need base remedial teaching. Parameswaran (2013) published out a study for Tackling school drop outs in a creative manner and in the KGBV they met Sheela near the small village of Kanauthi, near Jaipur in Rajasthan. A coy girl, she stood up on instructions of her class teacher and confidently said "My name is Sheela. I am studying English in this school. I like the school very much". What may surprise the average reader in this context may be the fact that Sheela is eighteen, never had any formal education and probably is the first person from her remote hamlet in Western Rajasthan to speak English. All because of the imaginative residential school

programme called KGBV for girls being implemented as part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

Conclusion :

A dream has to be natured in the girls for a better and secured future. The KGBVs should play an important role in individual empowerment, especially by being a residential institution that provides these girls a safe space where they get to express themselves freely. In KGBVs the girls experience a liberating environment for the first time in their lives and most importantly the KGBV act as a channel for adolescents to access education and open up future options through which their aspiration can both grow and be realized. The girls in future can be the role models for their fellow villagers as educated and independent women who have of their own voice.

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