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Gunotsav: A Great Initiative for Qualitative Improvement of Primary and Secondary Education in Assam

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Abstract:

Since independence, Indian government has adopted many policies and programmes for qualitative improvement of educational system. Right to education was an important Act in this direction. Right to Education Act, 2009 was passed for providing free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years. Assam government was inspired by the initiative of Gujarat government and adopted the strategy of Gunotsav for the first time in 2017. Gunotsav is an evaluation process. Evaluation of schools is done by self-evaluation and external evaluation process. Self-evaluation and external evaluation are conducted for assessment of performance of the children as well as schools. It is an initiative of government of Assam focusing on assessment of learning outcomes of children for identifying learning gaps and framing remedial measures for improvement of educational system in the government schools of Assam. First gunotsav in Assam was held in 2017, second in 2018, third in 2022, and fourth in 2023. In this paper an attempt is made to examine the objectives of Gunotsav, criteria of school evaluation, role of external evaluator and impact of Gunotsav.

Key Words: Education, Children, Quality, Primary, Secondary, Evaluation, Gunotsav.

Introduction: India got independence in 1947, but still, we are facing various problems relating with quality of education in our country. Since independence, Indian government has adopted many policies and strategies for qualitative improvement of our educational system. Right to education was an important Act in this direction. Gunotsav is an evaluation process. Evaluation of schools from class I to class IX is done by self-evaluation and external evaluation process. Self-evaluation and external evaluation are conducted for assessment of performance of the children as well as schools. Evaluations help in identifying the learning gaps and taking appropriate remedial measures for quality education. Gunotsav was an initiative of the Gujarat government which was adopted on 2009 to evaluate the quality of education in government schools. Assam government was inspired by the initiative of Gujarat government and adopted the strategy of Gunotsav for the first time in 2017 with an objective to evaluate the Elementary & Secondary education

scenario in the State and to grade the schools accordingly. First gunotsav in Assam was held in 2017. In this paper an attempt is made to examine the following objectives.

Objectives:

1. Objectives of Gunotsav.
2. Criteria of School Evaluation
3. Role of External Evaluator
4. Impact of Gunotsav

Methodology: This paper is based on primary and secondary sources. Secondary data are collected from Assam SSA website and from various web sources. The writer of this paper was an External Evaluator in many schools of Hojai, Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts of Assam. So, some data are also based on personal experiences of the scholar.

The Right to Education Act, 2009: Education makes man a right thinker and a correct decision-maker. With education, people finds themselves in a room with all its windows open to the outside world. A well-educated man is a better citizen, a centre of wholesome influence, pride to his community and honour to his country. A nation is great only in proportion of its advancement in education. Education is a fundamental human right, without which capabilities for a decent life and effective participation in society are less likely to be developed.

The Right to Education Act 2009, also known as the RTE Act 2009, was enacted by the Parliament of India on 4 August 2009. The Right to Education Act (RTE Act), is a Central legislation that details the aspects of the right of children of age six to fourteen years to free and compulsory elementary education (Classes I to VIII). This is now a Fundamental Right under India's Constitution (Article 21A). The Right to Education Act 2009 maps out roles and responsibilities for the centre, state and all local bodies to rectify gaps in their education system in order to enhance the quality of education in the country. It describes modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children aged between 6-14 years in India under Article 21 (A) of the Constitution of India. This act came into effect on 1 April 2010 and made India one of the 135 countries to have made education a fundamental right for every child. It prescribes minimum norms for elementary schools, prohibits unrecognised schools from practice and advocates against donation fees and interviews of children at the time of admission. The Right to Education Act keeps a check on all neighbourhoods through regular surveys and identifies children who are eligible for receiving an education but do not have the means to.

The Right to Education Act, 2009 was passed for providing free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years. The Act mentioned that every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till the completion of his or her elementary education. No child shall be liable to pay any kind of fees or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing the elementary education. For carrying out the

provisions of this Act, the Government shall establish, within such area or limits of neighborhood, as may be prescribed, a school, where it is not so established. The Central Government and the State Governments shall have concurrent responsibility for providing funds for carrying out all the provisions of this Act. As per the mandate of the Right to Education Act, 2009, more focus has been laid on quality education at elementary level which is the foundation of learning among children. Sustainable Development Goal- No:4 (SDG) has also emphasized on ensuring equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030.

The Salient Features of the RTE Act are:

1. School and social mapping.
2. Catching those out of school.
3. Re-deployment of teachers.
4. Filling vacancies.
5. Grievance redressal.
6. The funding. This will take care of the 'threefold educational object'. It would also result in bridging the access and enrolment gaps, to a large extent.

Monitoring compliance of RTE norms: School Management Committees (SMCs) play a crucial role in strengthening participatory democracy and governance in elementary education. All schools covered under the Right to Education Act 2009 are obligated to constitute a School Management Committee comprising of a headteacher, local elected representative, parents, community members etc. The committees have been empowered to monitor the functioning of schools and to prepare a school development plan.

Gunotsav in Assam: Gunotsav was an initiative of the Gujarat government to evaluate the quality of education in government schools (2009). Assam government was inspired by the initiative of Gujarat government and adopted the strategy of gunotsav for the first time in 2017 with an objective to evaluate the Elementary & Secondary education scenario in the State and to grade the schools accordingly. First gunotsav in Assam was held in 2017, second in 2018, third in 2022, and fourth in 2023. It is an initiative of government of Assam focusing on assessment of learning outcomes of children for identifying learning gaps and framing remedial measures for improvement of educational system in the government schools of Assam.

Assessment of learning outcomes of student is an integral part of pedagogical interventions. Assessment helps in identifying the learning gaps and taking appropriate remedial measures for quality education. Gunotsav is an initiative framed for qualitative improvement in primary and secondary educational system of Assam. It means a programme, by which quality of education is evaluated in schools on the basis of internal and external evaluation. It is a process by which evaluation of schools is done by external evaluators. It was started to identify the learning gaps and to design remedial measures and fruitful strategies for quality education. Gunotsav is an evaluation process. Evaluation of

schools from class I to Class IX is done by self-evaluation and external evaluation process. Self-evaluation and external evaluation are conducted for assessment of performance of the children as well as schools. This process includes scholastic, co-scholastics, community participation. There are two types of OMR sheets. One category of OMRs is for students and another OMR for External Evaluator. This process helps to identify the gaps in learning process in schools and on the basis of these gaps necessary measures may be adopted by the government for improving the quality of education in schools.

Quality in elementary education is a major concern of the State Government. The Government is concerned about ensuring quality elementary education to all children. Over the years, various efforts and initiatives had been taken for improvement of children's learning outcome across the State. Gunotsav is a convergence exercise involving State Government of Assam, SSA, SCERT, Directorate of Elementary Education and Directorate of Secondary Education. Gunotsav, is an accountability framework for improving quality of primary education which includes learning outcomes of children along with co-scholastic activities and use of resources including community participation. Hon'ble Chief Minister, Education Minister, Ministers of other Departments, MLAs, IAS, IPS, IFS, ACS and other Grade-I & II officers visited the schools to assess the performance of students as well as other indicators of the school. Their observation and views/comments are taken into considerations while framing policies/strategies in respect of elementary education.

Features of Gunotsav:

1. Ensuring quality elementary education with improved learning outcome.
2. To create a spirit of a high priority to quality education among all stakeholders.
3. Ministers, IAS, IPS, IFS officers, Class-I & II officers will visit schools and take part in the process of evaluation.
4. Actionable feedback of learning gaps, common errors, and misconceptions, strong & weak competencies will be taken into consideration for policy formulation.

Evaluation process of Gunotsav: There are two kinds of evaluation i.e., self-evaluation and external evaluation. Evaluation will be for two days for each school. On the 1st day of the two- day evaluation, all schools will conduct self-evaluation. The external evaluation of respective school as per schedule will be done on respective date of external evaluation. Evaluation will be OMR based. For class I &II, class wise OMR sheets will be there for marking/transferring of responses. From Class –III level onwards, students will fill up the OMR sheet themselves. Individual question papers will be provided to each student.

Evaluation of every school is conducted on the basis of various aspects. These areas are mentioned below.

1. Scholastic (Both Skill-Reading, Writing & Numeracy/Basic Mathematical Operations) - 90%
2. Co-scholastic – 5%
3. Community Participation - 5%

4. Infrastructure part will not be considered for Grading of School.

Self-Evaluation: On the 1st day of the two- day evaluation, all schools will conduct self-evaluation. Self-evaluation i.e., Reading skill and School Evaluation will be conducted by schools in presence of SMC/SMDC. This will ensure greater participation of all teachers of schools, SMC/SMDC member and community.

External Evaluation and the Role of External Evaluator: The external evaluation of respective school as per schedule will be done on respective date of external evaluation. External evaluators are to conduct impartial evaluation. It is expected that they will motivate and encourage for qualitative improvement in educational system.

External Evaluation will be done for all students on three skills i.e., Reading, Writing & Numeracy/Basic Mathematical Operations on the day of external evaluation. However, external evaluator will randomly select 20% students for each of the three skills (Reading, Writing & Numeracy- Basic Mathematical Operations and will assess their performance. He/She will closely monitor the overall evaluation process.

External evaluator will assess the areas of school evaluation and will fill up the OMR sheet by himself/herself. All confidential packets are to be opened in front of External Evaluator. However, if External. Evaluator is not able to reach in time due to unavoidable circumstances; the packets will be opened in presence of SMC, record of which will be kept as per annexed format. All filled up OMR sheets will be packed as per instruction of packing and sent back to state level for scanning, analysis and result generation.

Criteria of External Evaluation: There are thirty criteria of school evaluation by External Evaluator. It is the duty of External Evaluator to examine all these aspects on the basis of school records, interaction with all stake holders and on the basis of observation. External evaluator has to prepare all the reports and have to submit it to higher authority for verification and gradation of school. These points are mentioned below:

- 1) Morning Assembly (As per observation).
- 2) Record Keeping (observation and interaction).
- 3) Learning outcome (observation and interaction).
- 4) Sports and physical education (observation and interaction).
- 5) Student Parliament (as per school record, interaction with children and teachers).
- 6) Teaching Learning Materials.
- 7) Innovative practices.
- 8) Use of library.
- 9) Use of academic packages during covid period.
- 10) Receipts of free uniform (as per record and interaction).
- 11) Receipts of free textbooks within one month of start of academic year (as permrecord and observation).
- 12) Teachers attendance.

- 13) Inspection/academic visit by government officials (as per inspection register).
- 14) Bio-Diversity register (as per record and interaction).
- 15) SMC/SMDC involvement (as per record and interaction)
- 16) PM- POSHAN (earlier known as MDMS) as per observation.
- 17) Vidyanjali.
- 18) Twining/ Partnership.
- 19) Students attendance.
- 20) Teachers reached out to students by during Covid pandemic.
- 21) Health record.
- 22) Toilets facilities (as per observation).
- 23) Hand washing station (as per observation).
- 24) Desk and Benches (as per observation).
- 25) Electrification (as per observation).
- 26) Safe drinking water facilities (as per observation).
- 27) School is CWSN Friendly (as per observation)
- 28) Safety and security including COVID appropriate measures (as per observation)
- 29) Integrated Science Lab/Computer/Tinkering Lab (as per observation and interaction).
- 30) Schools covered by Vocational Education subjects in Class 9 and 10 (as per observation and interactions).

Conclusion: Gunotsav was implemented by the Assam Government in the academic year 2017. It has a great impact on primary and secondary educational scenario of Assam. It has played a crucial role in promoting accountability and transparency in the education system of Assam. It has helped in identifying and addressing challenges faced by government schools, leading to better quality education and improved learning outcomes for students. Awareness has been generated amongst functionaries of all departments on importance of quality education at elementary level. Positive change in the mindset of all concerned has also been witnessed, which will go a long way towards improving the quality of education in the State. It helps in the increasing involvement of the community in school activities. It helps in generating awareness amongst teachers, students, parents, the community and other stakeholders. It brings positive feelings among the community and parents towards the Government schools. The dropout rate has decreased and teachers' accountability has increased.

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