

# Challenges in Providing Free Education in Self-Financed Schools: Case Study of Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is based on the outcomes of a case study based on a school run by a trust, i.e. Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan, situated at Village Khalui (near Salet Godam) in Khaniyara Panchayat of Kangra district in Himachal Pradesh. The major aim of the study was to explore the quality of Education in this residential school known as Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan meant for weaker sections of the society. One of the objectives of the study was to make an in-depth case study of selected school so as to explore the grass root realities of school pertaining to the major variables under investigation, e.g. teaching learning process, social and physical environments of school, infrastructure, daily-life activities, teaching workforce and barriers in running schools at its own. Sai Educare Vidhya Pratishthan, situated about 17 kilometers away from the district headquarters which is selected for case study. The paper reflects the state of education in this School and reveals many facts pertaining to the variables under study that have immense implications for the major stakeholders of elementary education in the area, including teachers, school administrators/supervisors, parents, community members and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Authorities.

**Keywords:** Vidya Pratishthan, quality education, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe.

Education is considered as a key pointer of human growth and progress. Education is an indispensable need of mankind. It aims at educating the masses to become better citizens and more useful members of society. Manifestation of education is the key to maximization of human welfare (Santhi, 2017). Education in Himachal Pradesh, right from the primary stage, assumes significance because of its literacy rate. In April 2010, Sai Sarv Dharm Seva Trust laid the foundation stone of the school for the purpose of providing free education to the weaker section of the society. Financial assistance of this school is totally dependent on devotees of Sri Satya Sai Baba and the social workers, and approximately 90 devotees are contributing for this school. There are 188 students enrolled in school in 2015-16 and trust is providing everything free to them. Total budget of the school for free education in approximately 40 lakhs annually and this budget totally depends upon the donors.

## Sai Educare Vidhya Pratishthan

The major objective of the school is to promote culture-friendly spiritual education of good quality. The school is operational in the backward area of District Kangra. Necessary facilities, including infrastructure, smooth and peaceful environments have been created; human resources as well as material resources have been provided to impart quality education in this school. The present paper aimed at exploring the educational environment, living condition of students and life enjoyed by them, infrastructure and facilities available and quality of education in terms of teaching learning process, class room interaction and challenges in self-financed school. The focus group discussion and qualitative case study approach was adopted to conduct the study which helped to explore phenomena within its context using variety of data sources. The features of qualitative case study research method such as collecting data from in

**Table 1:** Enrollment in 2010-2011

Class	Category								
	Boys				Girls				Grand total
	SC	ST	OC	Total	SC	ST	OC	Total	
6 <sup>th</sup>	3	1	3	7	1	3	2	6	13
7 <sup>th</sup>	6	2	2	10	2	1	1	4	14
8 <sup>th</sup>	3	2	0	5	1	0	0	1	06
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>

SC=Scheduled Cast, ST= Scheduled Tribe, OC=Other Casts

natural setting with the help of qualitative data gathering tools, e.g. interviews, observation, focus group discussion; and making research holistic as well as expressive were taken into account.

**Objectives of the Study**

To make an in-depth case study of self-financed school of the Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan of Kangra district, so as to explore the grass-root realities and problems pertaining to the variables under investigation i.e. School environment, Co-curricular Activities, Daily-life activities, Food and Nutrition, Residential facilities, Teaching learning process, Teaching workforce and problems in establishing and running the school.

**Research Questions**

1. How conducive is the school environment (e.g. classroom, playground, boundary wall, toilets, residential rooms, drinking water, kitchen, and dining hall) for learning?
2. Which co-curricular activities are being organized in the school?
3. What problems/issues do the students, teachers, and other supporting personnel face in discharging their duties?
4. What are the various sources of funds and how they are being managed?

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Selecting the Case and its Profile**

The Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan, situated at Khanui village in the Kangra district was selected as the case because it is only one school in this district which is providing totally free education to students of that area of poor background, and for

finance, it is totally depend upon the donors. The Sai Educare Vidya Pratishthan was established in April 2010 at a distance of about 17 kms from the District Headquarter. A partly pucca and partly kahha road is there to connect the school with the district head quarter. Some part of this road is made by the persons living around the school by *shramdan* to reach the school easily. The school is situated in the lap of the nature surrounded by the lush greenery and away from the noise of the city in peaceful environment. There are 125 students on the roll in the school. All these students are first generation learners of their respective families. The distribution of students by class, sex and caste / tribe is shown in Table 1.

The data shown in table 1, explains that in the very first year in 2010, only 33 students from 6<sup>th</sup> class to 8<sup>th</sup> class were enrolled in school. Out of which, 67% students were boys and rest 33% were girls. 48.48% students were from scheduled caste and 27.27% students were from Scheduled tribe category from the nearby villages. 24.24% students from other category were enrolled in establishing year of this school.

An inspection of table 2, leads us to the conclusion that the students belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other casts are 38.33%, 55.35% and 5.32% respectively. Whereas the number of boys (49.47%) and girls (50.33%) students are more or less equal.

An analysis of data presented in table 3 reveals that the number of male teachers (38.46%) is less than the female teachers (61.34%) in the school. The table further reveals that the majority of the teachers are of trained teachers. Out of 13 teachers, 5 teachers having Masters’ degree and 5 have graduation degree in their respective subjects. The

**Table 2:** Enrollment in Session 2016-17

Class	Category								
	Boys				Girls				Grand total
	SC	ST	OC	Total	SC	ST	OC	Total	
1 <sup>st</sup>	01	08	01	<b>10</b>	02	03	00	<b>05</b>	<b>15</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	02	06	00	<b>08</b>	03	01	02	<b>06</b>	<b>14</b>
3 <sup>rd</sup>	01	03	00	<b>04</b>	08	03	01	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>
4 <sup>th</sup>	02	06	01	<b>09</b>	02	05	00	<b>07</b>	<b>16</b>
5 <sup>th</sup>	03	02	00	<b>05</b>	04	02	01	<b>07</b>	<b>12</b>
6 <sup>th</sup>	03	05	01	<b>09</b>	04	03	01	<b>08</b>	<b>17</b>
7 <sup>th</sup>	03	07	01	<b>11</b>	04	05	00	<b>09</b>	<b>20</b>
8 <sup>th</sup>	02	03	00	<b>05</b>	06	03	00	<b>09</b>	<b>14</b>
9 <sup>th</sup>	05	09	00	<b>14</b>	06	08	01	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>
10 <sup>th</sup>	07	11	00	<b>18</b>	05	12	00	<b>17</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>06</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>188</b>

SC=Scheduled Casts, ST= Scheduled Tribe, OC=Other Casts

qualifications of teachers show that the school is trying its level best to appoint the good teachers in the school because Teachers have always played a pivotal role in the society. The duty of the nation is being shaped in our classrooms, children being our future nation builders. Therefore, the teachers have a great responsibility in molding the character of children by giving quality education in the school (Santhi, 2017).

**Table 3:** Profile of School Teachers

Sl. No.	Sex	Qualifications
1.	Female	J.B.T.
2.	Female	M.A. B.Ed.
3.	Female	M.A. B.Ed.
4.	Male	M.A., B.Ed. M.Ed.
5.	Male	Shashtri
6.	Male	B.Ed. TET
7.	Male	B.Ed.
8.	Male	M.A. Sanskrit
9.	Female	M.A. B.Ed.
10.	Female	JBT
11.	Female	M.A. B.Ed.
12.	Female	B.A. B.Ed.
13.	Female	M.Sc. B.Ed.

### Conducting Field Work

The field work was participatory in nature. The researchers visited the school in a working day

and interacted with the beneficiary students and the school level functionaries, including teachers, parents of students and non-teaching staff, e.g. cook, night watch personnel, on the variables/ aspects of the study.

## THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### The Physical Setting -Infrastructural facilities

The major part of school infrastructure, including playground, classrooms, office etc. has been constructed by Sai Sarv Dharm Seva Charitable Trust. The school infrastructure has been created in about 2 kanal of land with pucca boundary wall and a big play ground of almost 6 kanaal. The school is newly constructed and looks beautiful. The Infrastructure consists of the, Classrooms (10), Office (01), Kitchen (01) Playground (01) Water cooler and purifier (01) Kitchen Garden (0.5 acre) Bathrooms (02) Toilets (06), Hostel facility is available only for 9<sup>th</sup>&10<sup>th</sup> Class Students (23 Students)

Thus, there are 10 classrooms for 10 classes/ sections (I to 10). Two male and two female teachers along with students stay at school every day. The playground with an area of about 6 kanaal is used for organizing various activities such as games and sports, and holding prayers, functions. There are separate toilets and bathrooms for boys and girls in the campus with hot and cold water facilities. The students, as reported, are using toilets. The classrooms are well ventilated and fitted with fans

and well lighted electric lamps. There is a diesel generator to facilitate power supply to the school during power cut. In the school, hostel facility for students of class 10<sup>th</sup> is available. There are 23 students (17 Boys and 6 girls) are using hostel facility.

For water supply in the school, a natural resource of water is there. The water is coming from a distance of 3000 feet. This is made available by the parents who live nearby the school. Water purifier/water cooler is also available in the school to provide pure drinking water to the students.

### Co-curricular Activities in School

The school organizes various co-curricular activities like spiritual activities, games and sports, dance, song and music during and after the school hours. The students have interest to learn music, cricket and other games. The school has adequate sports materials to organize these activities effectively. The music teacher guides students in the organization of these activities.

### Daily Life Activities

Students have reported to preserve a disciplined life. They use to get up at 5.00 hrs in the morning and go to bed at 10.00 hrs in the evening. Between these times they perform various activities as per the schedule, e.g. Morning Prayer, breakfast, study, lunch, games and sports, evening prayer, self-study, dinner.

They follow a separate schedule of activities on Sunday. On working days the timings of school hours is different, which is as follows:

Class 1 <sup>st</sup> to 4 <sup>th</sup>	9:30am to 3:30pm
Class 5 <sup>th</sup> to 9 <sup>th</sup>	9:30am to 4:30pm
Class 10 <sup>th</sup>	Stay at school for 24 hours (Residential)

### Food and Nutrition

Students are provided food as per menu prescribed by the trust. Hostellers are provided breakfast & mid day meal. Rest of the students bring their own lunch from home. Snacks and local food items are also provided, time to time, on demand of the students. All students of the school get milk in the afternoon daily.

### Residential Facilities

There is no special building for hostel yet. A mud house in front of school, which is donated by a devotee family, is hostel for the boys and girls. There are adequate numbers of toilets with water taps. Students are happy with the quality and quantity of daily needed items supplied to them, e.g. oil, soap, tooth paste, tooth brush, winter clothes, bed sheets, reading-writing materials.

### Health Facilities and Check-ups

Health workers visit the school from time to time for health check-up. Students are taken care of their illness and are provided free medicines.

### Learning Needs of Children

Students find difficulties in learning subjects like Mathematics and English. They need extra coaching in these two subjects. Majority of the girl students have shown interest to learn stitching, music, cycle riding, Hindi, Sanskrit. The boys, on the other hand, have shown interest to learn song, yoga, games etc.

### Problems and Demands of Students

Majority of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students face language problems in the initial years of schooling (classes I and II). In these years, children fail to understand and/or communicate in Hindi and language which is their second language.

Majority of students at Upper Primary Level have demanded for teachers in the subjects like Hindi, Sanskrit, Science and Mathematics. The other demands includes: cots/beds, bench-cum-desks, dining room and sports/play materials etc.

### Outcomes of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the Students

Focus Group Discussion was held with the students-separately with the girls and boys, in their respective hostels on the issues associated with their learning and residential provisions, e.g. daily life activities, learning needs, aspirations, daily life needs.

### The major outcomes of the discussions are as follows:

- ❑ Students/boarders were satisfied with the menu and quality of food provided to them in the

hostels. They were also found satisfied with the quality and quantity of daily life necessities, e.g. oil, soap, tooth paste, winter clothes provided to them.

- ❑ Students in the hostels were seen cheerful and clean.
- ❑ Majority of students have reported to face language related problems during initial years of schooling (class- I and II). They fail to understand and communicate in English language, which is their second language, with their classmates, inmates and teachers.
- ❑ Majority of students of both the sex have aspirations to be teachers, doctors.
- ❑ Students find difficulties in learning curricular subjects like English and Mathematics, but easy to learn Hindi language. The students, however, like to learn English language.
- ❑ Majority of students expressed their concern about the posting of teachers in Science, Mathematics, Hindi and Sanskrit.
- ❑ Majority of students put forth their demand for construction of dining halls.

### Outcomes of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the Teachers

Focus group discussion was held with the teachers. On the issues relating to teaching-learning, training needs, organization of co-curricular activities and management of school etc. The discussion revealed the following facts:

- ❑ Teaching-learning materials available in the school were adequate but some more science kits and mathematics kits are needed.
- ❑ The school lacks required sports materials. No other sports materials than cricket bat and ball were found available in the school.
- ❑ There is a need for training in the subjects like English, Mathematics and Science.
- ❑ Students face problem of communicating in English language in the initial years of schooling (classes I and II).
- ❑ Co-curricular activities like song and debate are organized every Saturday.

### Outcomes of Focus Group Discussion with the Non-teaching Staff

FGDs was conducted with the non-teaching staff of the school, including attendants, cooks and watchmen on the issues of training needs, student discipline, security and care etc. The major outcomes of discussion are as follows:

- ❑ There is need for training of non-teaching staff, including cooks, attendants and watchmen on first aid and child care.
- ❑ These members are fully satisfied with the restriction on them by the school administration in the matters of dealing with the student and parents.
- ❑ The members seem to work together in the discharge of their duties.

### Strengths and Problems in Providing Free Education

**Devotees:** The school is totally dependent on devotees of Shari Satya Sai Baba and social workers for the financial needs. But the trust and authorities planned it in systemic way. Salary of staff is given through Bank transaction. According to staff, salary is quite satisfactory in comparison of other private schools.

**Hard working staff:** The teaching faculty is also much self-motivated towards the contribution to run this school and they are also well qualified and have much teaching experience.

**Spiritual education:** Education is a continuous and creative process. Its aim is to develop the capacities latent in human nature and to coordinate their expression for the enrichment and progress of the society by equipping children with spiritual, moral and material knowledge. But today the primary focus of education is on providing material knowledge.

As a result of this education, today is threatened by two challenges namely: a challenge that education is subject to market, meaning that present day education system offers very few choices to students who have diverse interests (Nadda, 2017). The school starts with the spiritual aarti and prayers, which help to inculcate values among students.

### **School Managing committee and Parents Teachers Association:**

Parents are the primary socialization agents that most influential in process of children grow up (Nor & Hussin, 2017). The researchers attended the meeting of Parents Teacher Association (PTA). During meeting of PTA, it was noticed that the parents are not in the position of any decision, because school and trust is providing everything free of cost to the students, so they are agreeing with the decisions of the school. In any case they are not in position to protest. Regarding this when researchers asked one of the parents, it was found that he himself is not in the position to provide education to his child but the school is providing every facility and one day his son/daughter will surely become a successful one.

### **Different from Other Schools**

Following are the main features of the school, which distinguish this school from other schools:

1. School is located in such a remote area where people don't have access to quality education.
2. 98% students belong to socially and economically backward classes (95% of SC and ST).
3. School education is imparted on the principals of Shari Satya Sai system of education which aims at building character based generation.
4. The funds for running the school come out of the selfless love of the devotees of Shari Satya Sai Baba and other philanthropists.
5. Free tuition to week students and additional learning inputs are provided to advance learners without any charge.
6. The children are trained to take up social work as respect people of all castes and religions.
7. The result of class X is 100%
8. The trust supports the students after completing the school for further studies.
9. The teachers are well trained to impart quality education and value education.
10. Since all the students of first generation learners the school works beyond the regular working hours and even regular working days.

### **Findings of the study**

Following findings were emerged out from this case study:

- ❑ English and mathematics is not only difficult but also liking subject of students. Students need extra coaching in these two subjects.
- ❑ The learning achievement in English of majority of students across grades is not satisfactory. It needs more efforts.
- ❑ Students face difficulty in learning Hindi and Sanskrit languages.
- ❑ Many students have shown their interest in learning vocational skills such as painting, agriculture and stitching.
- ❑ Majority of students, particularly tribal students, face problems of understanding and/or communicating with their friends and teachers in English language in the initial years of schooling (Classes I and II).
- ❑ The students are satisfied with the quality, quantity and frequency of food and milk provided to them. They are also satisfied with the daily need items such as oil, soap, and clothes supplied to them.
- ❑ The incidence of dropout is rare in the school. The students seem cheerful and leading towards a spiritual literate life.

### **CONCLUSION**

Although, Government of Himachal Pradesh is running thousands of schools in the state but to what extent these schools are providing qualitative education to students and what type of facilities these schools are providing is a well known fact. In Government schools there is lack of hostel facilities and the schools run by government are facing the problems of vacant posts of the teachers. In private sector, a few schools in the state are providing residential facility to the students but they are charging a huge fee for this.

Residential schools were conceived to provide qualitative and relevant education to children in consonance with their culture and ethos of rich people, but when we try to provide free education and residential facility to the students belonging

to poor families, the meaning for culture and ethos changes according to their status of living. Opening of residential schools in private sector to provide free and compulsory education along with food and other facilities is not an easy task. Such facilities in education can be provided with the help of government aid. But Satya Sai Vidya Pratisthan is providing such facilities with the help of few peoples of nearby areas, who are employed in good jobs. Trust and the eminent persons are providing funds from their pocket for the salary of staff and other basic needs. School is providing spiritual education; moral education along with formal education to the students belonging to the poor families. Teachers who are satisfied with the salary provided to them because donors are transferring salary in to their accounts regularly and directly. Such type of collaboration of peoples in society can enrich their culture and students can get better education and facilities.

This is a great effort to serve the humanity. Peoples from lower strata of the society are getting benefit from this school, so the common men and philanthropists should come forward to support this school, which is involved in a pious work of serving the down trodden and poor people of the society. It is hoped that the school soon will reach at great heights in providing quality education.

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