

Perception of Teachers and Resource Persons Towards Utkarsha: An Analysis

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Received: 20-05-2021

Revised: 29-07-2021

Accepted: 04-08-2021

ABSTRACT

The changing scenario of education is demanding quality in all aspects at all level of learning improving both teachers' and students' performance level to an extent so that they can accumulate, adapt and address the global changes directing towards education. Education at secondary level being a transition period of education and an era of addressing new challenges, the quality factor has become essential. Teachers acting as a catalyst to boost the performance of students through training with new knowledge and skills. An attempt has been made through this study to explore about an in-service training programme of Odisha meant for secondary education which aims to improve the learning level of students by training the teachers for each subject. Following a descriptive survey design with a sample of 40 teachers and 5 resource persons involved in the training programme, the study has been undertaken to find out the perception regarding the professional development which is the alternate aim of the programme. Mixed method approach has been followed to analyse the data collected through a questionnaire and an interview schedule. The study found a positive response towards the programme in the aspect of professional development but some constraints like lack of time, improper planning and supervision are found creating hinderance in the success of the programme. Further studies in a comparative approach with other innovative programme as well as evaluative study on the programme from all participants' perspective are recommended.

Keywords: Perception, Utkarsh, professional development

"The highest education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes our life in harmony with all existence."

— Rabindranath Tagore

Secondary education is the link between the elementary and higher education. It plays an important role in child's life for bringing their education towards building the career and future perspective. It is considered as the transitional period on which the child's future depends upon how and what type of education s/he receives and is going to apply in future. Secondary education occupies a very strategic position in the educational pattern of the country. It is the link between primary education and higher education. Primary education is intended to provide minimum requirements

for survival whereas secondary education enables an individual to become a full member of the complicated society. The Government of India, soon after attainment of independence appointed a number of committees and commissions to review the system of secondary education.

This stage of education serves to move on higher secondary stage as well as to provide generic

How to cite this article: Rout, S. and Parida, A. (2021). Perception of Teachers and Resource Persons Towards Utkarsha: An Analysis. *Educational Quest: An Int. J. Edu. Appl. Soc. Sci.*, 12(2): 123-130.

Source of Support: None; **Conflict of Interest:** None



competencies that cut across various domains of knowledge as well as skills. Providing secondary education to all, both boys and girls with a focus on quality education assumes greater meaning today, when we consider the emerging challenges in our society. Quality in secondary education is important as it defines the standards of education received by the child. Different quality indicators of secondary education like learner friendly and inclusive curriculum, classroom process, quality of teacher, innovative and learner friendly pedagogy, effective school management, appropriate evaluation, infrastructure and other resources, school development plan, learners' progress in all areas and teachers' professional development are defined by NCERT. Maintaining quality of education to the standard is not the matter of one day or a single effort of a single person. It requires rigorous effort of all the stake holders to achieve quality in education. Government has always stepped forward to provide equitable access to quality education to all sections of the society through equity and inclusion. Several initiatives have been taken by Government to ensure quality in all levels of education. Starting with Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rastriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan are some milestone programmes initiated by Government in accessing quality. Different notable programmes of quality enhancing in secondary education are ICT@School Scheme, Salasidhhi, Girls' hostel scheme, Model School Scheme, Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Scheme, Scheme of vocational education, IEDSS, National Merit-cum-Means Scholarship Scheme, SPQEM, National scheme for incentives to girls for secondary education etc. Government of Odisha has also initiated different programmes like INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research), IDMI (Infrastructure Development in private aided or Un-aided Minority Institutions), MLE (Multilingual Education), SAEP (State Adolescence Education Programme), UJJAWAL and UTHHAN - for boosting primary education as well as UTKARSH for enhancing the quality in secondary education.

Secondary School Readiness Programme (SSRP): UTKARSH

It has been found from the "NAS Report" and other studies that the learning level of students of Class-9

is lagging behind on key skills they need to know in secondary education. Keeping this in view to help in improving the quality of education, Government of Odisha in association with Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and KUSUMA Foundation has initiated a programme called "Secondary School Readiness Programme (SSRP)-UTKARSH" from the academic year 2017-18 for two academic session. It is considered as a targeted project for optimising the learning level of secondary students through effective teaching and learning process.

Through this project the learning level of students has been found out and accordingly the grouping has been done for teaching and learning with the help of "Students Handbook" and "Teachers' Handbook". The focus is to improve the learning level of students in the subjects Odia, English, Mathematics and Science through training of teachers and carrying out the teaching learning process with the help of link chapters. The project started from 2017-18 in 09 districts in first step, in 15 districts for next academic year 2018-19 and in 2019-20 for 27 districts of Odisha (except Puri, Dhenkanal and Jajpur). It is being implemented for all the secondary schools of these 27 districts by providing training to the teachers for improvisation of teaching skills as well as to achieve the basic learning skills of students of class 9 by simplifying the complex concepts. For training of teachers and to run the programme effectively a group of District resource personnel, Master trainer, Block Resource Person and Cluster Resource Person has been formed with the assistance of State Resource Group (SRG). Utkarsh can be visualised in two ways on the basis of its vision:

- ❑ Secondary school readiness programme
- ❑ Programme for enhancing effectiveness of teacher

Objectives of Utkarsh

Utkarsh is a school readiness programme for secondary students specially for class 9 to bring improvement in learning level of students through training of teachers and implementing innovative practices in teaching learning process. The objectives of Utkarsh programme are as follows:-

- ❑ To make the students ready to achieve the expected level of learning in secondary education.

- ❑ To enhance the learning level of students.
- ❑ To enhance the effectiveness of teacher
- ❑ To bring improvement in teaching learning process

Improving Students' Performance

Utkarsh programme is to bridge the gap between the expected level of learning and actual level of learning and to put effort to lead the teaching learning process in an effective way. The steps involved in carrying out the programme effectively are as:

- ❑ **Baseline assessment:** In this step, the learning level of students is determined through assessment done by teachers.
- ❑ **Foundation Camp:** It is the first step which involves carrying out the teaching learning process on the basis of level of learners. Teaching learning activities are carried out for 4 hours on daily basis for subjects like Odia, English, Mathematics and Science for 18 working days or 3 weeks.
- ❑ **Supported Learning Phase:** This step involves the self-practice of what is learned with assistance of some teaching learning resources. It is practised for 45 days with the purpose of achieving the basic skills of Level 3 or Class 8. Students do practice for 3 hours per day in this step for the subject Odia, English, Mathematics and Science.
- ❑ **Consolidation Camp:** This phase involves the process of making ready the students for the class 9 textbook learning, it involves working on what they have achieved through foundation camp and supported learning phase. It is for 6 days camp which includes working of 3 hours per day.
- ❑ **End-line Assessment:** It involves the final assessment of what the students have achieved after the consolidation camp. Though in each step teachers are assessing the students but to see the effectiveness of the process and to plan for the further step this assessment is done for all the subjects.

Promoting Teacher Effectiveness

It is the first and foremost step of this programme after the baseline assessment. The concern subject

teachers are trained by the experts with assistance of DRG, Master Trainer, BRCC, CRCC. The teachers are trained in two phases through workshops; first phase is in between the starting and the second phase of the programme where the teachers get familiarized with the learning level of the students according to their age group, different teaching learning resources or supported materials, way of dealing with the students of different levels and classroom management as well as innovative pedagogical approaches.

There are two phase of training session for promoting teacher effectiveness. The first session is at the beginning of the programme and the second one is in the middle of the programme. In this training the teachers are exposed to different teaching learning resources, innovative approaches of teaching, dealing with students of different level, classroom management process to carry out the programme effectively. A team of experts known as District Resource Group (DRG) with Master trainer, BRCC, CRCC is formed to supervise the whole process. They are trained about the programme, its objectives, implementation and evaluation to help the teachers in the process. They help in evaluating the quality of classroom transaction with promoting teacher effectiveness. An orientation programme is done for the heads of the schools to orient them about the programme and how to carry out the process of Utkarsh. The programme is done for one day. The head teachers of the respective schools are trained to develop the knowledge and skill of them about the programme and to implement it in an effective way to fulfil its objectives. An evaluative meeting of teachers is done to discuss about the details of planning and process of the programme.

Review of Related Literature

Students' achievement and teachers' effectiveness are the two important factors of focus for addressing the quality in education. Teacher training is considered as one of the vital approaches for addressing these issues. In-service teacher training has a positive impact on teachers' professional skills and students' achievement which has a research-based background with many studies conducted. INSET had promising aspect in improving the teaching learning process which can improve students' performance (Fredence Serapion, 2018). In-service training was beneficial for

the teachers' effectiveness and students' academic performance is higher on those subjects on which teachers had undergone through in-service training programme (Romina Asiyai, 2016). In-service training programme for teachers is needed to equip them with new knowledge and skills to face the new challenges and reformation in education (CMZC OMAR; 2014). Kumar S (2017) found through a study on DIET that quality of institution determines the quality of teachers and training as well as implementation of any programme effectively can reflect the effectiveness of teachers. There exist a significant relationship between the in-service teacher training programme and teachers' skill of planning, transacting and evaluating the lesson and a positive impact on development of teacher-students' relationship and use of teaching learning resources (Manduku *et al.* 2017). Saeed Ahmadi and Abdullah Keshvarzi (2013) through a study found that there was no relation between the effectiveness of in-service training programmes and teachers' skill of lesson plan preparation and a significant relationship between in-service training programme and demonstration skill while no significant relationship between in-service training programme and demonstration skill while no significant relationship found between in-service training effectiveness and evaluation skill of the teacher and teaching skills of male and females don't vary significantly due to the in-service training programme effectiveness. Teachers' attitude had been changed significantly but the performance of teacher training had not been led in an acceptable way of change found through a study conducted by Shahmohammadi N (2013). Yadav S.K and Viswanathappa G (2012) through a study found that the in-service training had improved the teachers' knowledge as well as their proficiency in teaching which had proved effective for their classroom to carry out the teaching learning process effectively. It was also found that the trained teachers encouraged their students in learning through the use of TLMs, teaching aids, models in the classroom transaction.

Rationale of the Study

Quality of learning gets reflected from the teaching learning process of classroom transaction as well as the students' performance level which can be addressed. It should be always in focus that how the level of learning can be optimised to achieve

the basic quality of teaching learning process. Some studies found teachers' training as the catalyst to improve teachers' knowledge, skill and attitude which can address the students' low level of learning through some innovative processes.

Utkarsh (Secondary School Readiness Programme) being an initiative of RMSA, Kusuma Foundation and Govt. of Odisha to address the issue of low level of learning of secondary school students who are lagging behind the particular standard by training the teachers of concerned subjects and carrying out the classroom transaction with innovation has completed 3 years of successive implementation. As the training is focused towards the teachers' effectiveness, so the researcher intended to conduct a study on perception of teachers and resource persons towards Utkarsh in the particular aspect of professional development.

Statement of the Problem

Utkarsh is a quality flagship programme of Odisha to ready the students for secondary schools. It is very important to study the perception of stakeholders on Utkarsh programme after the training. Thus, the study aimed to explore the perception of major stakeholders of Utkarsh training programme and hence it was entitled as "*Perception of teachers and resource persons towards Utkarsh: An Analysis*".

Operational Definitions of the Key terms

- ❑ **Perception:** It refers to the views of teachers' and resource persons' regarding different aspects of the programme like purposes, training, implementation and evaluation.
- ❑ **Utkarsh:** It refers to the in-service training programme for secondary school teachers of Odisha to address the lower achievement of students of class 9.
- ❑ **Professional Development:** It refers to enhancement of performance of the teachers' and other persons involved in a process for smooth transaction and effective administration.

Research Questions of the Study

The following research questions are formulated on the basis of the programme:

- (i) What is the perception of the teachers towards Utkarsh training programme?

- (ii) What is the perception of the resource person towards Utkarsh training programme?
- (iii) What are the challenges being faced by the teachers in implementing knowledge and skill acquired from Utkarsh training programme?
- (iv) What are the challenges being faced by the resource persons in carrying out the Utkarsh training programme?

- (i) **Questionnaire for Teachers** (Views of teachers' regarding status, objectives, implementation and challenges of Utkarsh specifically focusing on professional development)
- (ii) **Interview Schedule for Resource Personnel** (Views of Resource personnel regarding status, objectives, implementation and challenges of Utkarsh)

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) To study the perception of teachers towards Utkarsh programme.
- (ii) To study the perception of resource persons towards Utkarsh programme.
- (iii) To find out the challenges faced by teachers and resources persons in implementation of Utkarsh programme.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is limited to only one block and 10 secondary schools with 40 secondary school teachers and 5 resource persons of Odisha. It reflects only perception of teachers and resource persons related to Utkarsh programme in the particular aspect of professional development.

Design of the Study

The study followed a Descriptive Survey design followed by Mixed method approach. All the secondary schools of all the district of Odisha are the population of the study from which one district (Kendrapara) has been selected randomly. Using Multistage sampling, Aul block of Kendrapara district has been selected randomly. 10 (ten) numbers of schools have been selected randomly out of 42 Govt. secondary schools of Aul block and all the teachers who have undergone the training programme of Utkarsh, and resource personnel of the block have been included in the sample for collecting the data. So, the study has undertaken on a sample of 40 teachers and 5 resource persons associated with the training programme.

Tools Used

The following tools have been used to collect the data from the participants.

Procedure of Data Collection and Analysis

The data have been collected from 40 Govt. Secondary Schools Teacher by online mode through Google form and telephonic interview have been conducted with the resource personnel who are the members of the BRG (Block Resource Group) to collect the data. The data have been analysed through simple percentage by coding decoding method. The suggestion and views of teachers, students and resource personnel regarding challenges are analysed qualitatively.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Teachers' Response on Different Aspects

Items	Responses N (%)
Awareness of teachers towards Utkarsh Programme	40 (100%)
Subject of training	Mathematics, Science, English and Odia
Period of training	10 days
Innovative approaches follow-up in training session	36 (90%)
Delivering lesson in training session	24(60%)
Using TLMs in delivering the lesson	24(60%)
Types of TLMs using	Models, Graphs, Charts, Audio and Video clips etc.
Effectiveness of knowledge and skill acquired for classroom transaction	32(80%)
Helpful in professional development	40(100%)

From the above table it was found that all the teachers were aware about Utkarsh programme. They got training in the Mathematics, Science, English and Odia subjects. 90% (36 no.) agreed that in the training programme innovative approach was

used. 60% (24 no.) got chance to deliver a lesson in the training programme and all of them used TLM during teaching. 80% (32 no.) agreed that the training programme will be helpful for their future teaching as they acquired adequate knowledge & skills. All of them said that the training programme will be helpful in their professional development.

Major Finding of the study

The findings of the study are as follows:

(A) Teachers' perception regarding the Utkarsh training programme and challenges

1. All the teachers are aware about the purpose of Utkarsh programme.
2. All the teachers perceive Utkarsh programme as a programme for improving teachers' effectiveness as well as innovation addressing students' low level of learning.
3. 80% of teachers perceive it as boosting programme for wholistic development of teaching learning process.
4. All the teachers are attending the training programme for their respective subjects out of four subjects Mathematics, Science, English and Odia for almost 10 Days.
5. All the teachers responded that the quality of the teachers' handbook is good.
6. 90% of teachers said that different innovative approaches are being followed by the resource personnel while carrying out the training session.
7. 60% teachers deliver their lesson in the training session using different TLMs like models, flashcards, video and audio clips etc.
8. 80% of teachers view that knowledge and skill acquired from training session helpful in classroom transaction and addressing the low-level performance of students.
9. All the teachers view about Utkarsh is helpful in professional development of teachers through its training.
10. All the teachers view that Utkarsh practice book helps students in improving the student' performance in all subjects with boosting teachers' knowledge and skills of teaching.

11. All the teachers use lecture method while nine-tenth of teachers use TLMs,40% of teachers use ICT, 80% of teachers use activity-based method and 20% of teachers use any other method for transacting the lessons of the Utkarsh practice book.
12. All the teachers view that carrying out both the practice book and course book at a time is creating a problem in terms of time and scope of participation.
13. All the teachers view that lengthy and difficult procedure of some concepts creating problem in clarifying the concept.
14. All the teachers suggested for the integration of concepts with the course book as well as to carry out the process before the session can be helpful.
15. All the teachers suggested for organizing workshops with the effective carrying out of the practice book to boost the leaning level of the students in an effective way and fostering the teachers' performance.

(B) Resource persons' perception towards Utkarsh programme with the challenges faced

All the resource persons stated about the objective of Utkarsh as to improve the level of performance of students who are below the minimum level of learning of class 9 by training the teachers in the subjects Odia, English, Mathematics and Science. They perceive the phase of training of teachers as the important one because it forms the base of the whole programme. All the resource persons stated about the planning phase as a complex one which includes the formation of resource group to carry out the training process as the foundation camp of teachers.

Teachers are interested towards the training session if it is carried out following different innovative approaches but some challenges like limited scope for participation for all the teachers, time duration of training session are creating hinderance is also felt by the resource persons. The means to evaluate the implementation of training are stated as supervision of progress of practice book in regular interval, supervision of classroom transaction of teachers and comparative analysis of foundation camp and consolidation camp through the help of resource

group and master trainer. Though the effectiveness is found to the particular level but evaluating the effectiveness through the limited scope of support materials of learning and time is found out as the challenge faced.

Discussion and Conclusion of the Study

Present study is a significant attempt to study the purpose, implementation, effectiveness and challenges of UTKARSH programme which is an initiative of RMSA, Govt. of Odisha and KUSUMA foundation. It can be considered as an in-service teacher training programme through which students' low level of learning can be addressed. Many investigators have conducted studies on in-service teacher training programmes and they found it as effective one for developing teachers' professional skills as well as students' academic achievement.

The result of the study found that training the teachers in the session involves the training of all concerned subjects which follows delivering the lesson using different TLMs like models, flashcards, video and audio clips which ultimately results improvement in classroom transaction. Manduku J *et al.* (2017) through a study found a significant relationship between the in-service teacher training programme and teachers' skill of planning, transacting and evaluating the lesson. In-service training programme for teachers is needed to equip them with new knowledge and skills to face the new challenges and reformation in education which has been found through a study conducted by CMZC Omar (2014). The study found that teachers are perceiving the Utkarsh training programme as a medium to boost their knowledge and skills. The students' performance as well as the teachers' skills have been found to be improved through the training programme which is also reflected in a study conducted by Romina Asiayi (2016). The objectives of this programme are somehow attained to a level and all the teachers and students found it as a catalyst to bring improvement in the teaching learning process has been found through the study. But the teachers are facing challenges like lack of proper planning about the phases of the programme, limited scope of time and participation in the training session which hinders

their approaches of implementation. Fredence Serapion (2018) found through a study that INSET was constrained by some problems like lack of teaching learning materials, lack of programme inclusiveness, limited time allocation, financial resources.

The result of the study shows that though the involvement of resource personnel and teachers to a greater extent with a positive enthusiasm but some constraints creating a gap between the set objectives and achieved level of learning. So, the participants and beneficiary of the programme suggested for the proper allocation of resources with effective carrying out to reflect a positive change and to address the challenges. The study also highlighted that the effectiveness of the programme can lead to the effectual professional growth of teachers' and resource persons if it detached from the constraints with a proper planning and implementation strategy. Utkarsh is an innovative programme to address the low achievers by training the teachers on different subjects. Making the students to achieve the level of class 9 or making them ready to learn the concepts of class 9 can be effective through the effective planning, execution and evaluation of the training programme.

All the stakeholders/ participants are being involved and well aware about the purpose of the initiative. Both the students and teachers are satisfied with the programme and activities. Well trained resource group are being involved in both training and evaluation process to address the effectiveness. Time factor and lack of resources are found to be great challenges for both the teachers and resource personnel. Professional development of teachers and resource personnel is being achieved through the training programme as the training session allows the teachers and resource persons to be well equipped with new approaches of classroom transaction. Though the supervision is there but scope for integration of learned skills and activity is somehow limited to some extent. Enabling the students to learn the concepts to learn effectively not focusing the mastery can lead to the improvement in their learning level by carrying out the classroom transaction with adaptation of innovative approaches.

Educational Implication of the Study

- ❑ The study will be helpful for the officials to know about the effectiveness and challenges of the programme.
- ❑ The study will be helpful for the teachers to adopt innovative approaches to improve the classroom transaction.
- ❑ The study will be helpful for the overall development of the school process.
- ❑ The study will be helpful for organising the in-service training programme effectively.
- ❑ The study will be helpful for evaluating the effectiveness and suggesting for improvisation of the teaching learning process.
- ❑ The study will be helpful for administrative bodies in organising in-service training for teachers to equip them with new knowledge and skills for making classroom effective.

Suggestions for Further Research

The present study suggested for further study on other aspects of Utkarsh programme as well as comparison of classroom transaction with the implementation guidelines. It is also suggested for the intensive study of the in-service training and its effectiveness. Comparative studies can be conducted on other innovative programme and Utkarsh to find out their effectiveness and challenges.

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