

## Knowledge and Awareness in Teachers about Government Programmes to Combat School Drop outs

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A cross sectional survey on 60 government school teachers to elicit their knowledge and awareness on or about ten ongoing government schemes/programs under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan-Karnataka (SSA-K) to combat school drop outs in rural settings was carried out by using an open ended interview format and another demographic data sheet. Details were collected regarding their awareness or otherwise regarding each of these programs, their conceptual clarity or understanding about their objectives, scope, operation and cost respectively. The results of the survey reveal a hierarchical linear nested model with design of embedded or concentric circles involving various levels of decrement in knowledge and awareness in teacher respondents for the different programs undertaken by the SSA-K to combat school drop outs in rural settings. The implications of the study based on a spatial analysis along with the need to enhance awareness levels of teachers are highlighted towards optimizing effectiveness of the government initiatives to minimize out of school rates in the country.

**Keywords:** Knowledge and Awareness, Government Programs, Drop Outs, Prevention,

**W**hile the rest of the world frets over economic effects of an increasing aging population, India is increasingly growing young. By 2050, the present billion populations will have at least half the share of school aged children below fourteen. As it appears, there are now about 4.4 crore out of school kids between 6-14 years (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, 2001). This constitutes 28.5 per cent of the total child population in this age group. Of course, during the 10<sup>th</sup> plan period, the numbers of out of school children as reported by several states and union territories in the country reduced significantly from 320 per thousand (2003-04) to 70.5 per thousand (2006-07). The figures on school drop outs in rural areas (7.8 %) are almost double the number in urban areas (4.34 %). Likewise, greater number of children in older age group (11-13 years) is out of school (8.5 %) as

compared to kids in the younger ages (6-10)(6.1 %) and more girls are affected (10.03 %) than boys (5.51 %) respectively (SRI-IMRB, 2006).

In view of the above, several states have initiated school enrolment drives and teachers have been entrusted the responsibility of maintaining appropriate registers/records to swell school attendance (NEUPA, 2009). It is possible that many of these children may not be actually attending schools. They may be only 'nominally enrolled'. Among the enduring initiatives adopted by several State governments across the country to minimize out of school children and foster the mission of 'Education for All' (EFA) are: 'Maabadi' (Our School) Scheme and Akshara Sankranthi Program in Andhra Pradesh, the 'Head Start' Program in small group of school clusters or 'Jan Siksha Kendras' of Madhya Pradesh, the

'Gyankalash' radio broadcast program of training teachers by the DPEP in collaboration with All India Radio in Himachal Pradesh by offering academic support to primary school teachers, the 'Shiksha Mitra Yojana' of recruiting and training local women as primary school teachers in Uttar Pradesh, etc.

Among the strategies adopted by the government-especially SSA-Karnataka, to bring back out of school children to classrooms is the 'Education Guarantee Scheme' (EGS) and 'Alternative and Innovative Education Scheme' (AIES). Apart from this, there are other diversified strategies like 'Back to School Camps', 'Balika Shivirs', starting of community schools for small unserved habitations, mainstreaming of children through transit school programs or bridge courses of different durations, targeting special groups like child labor, street children, adolescent girls, girls belonging to certain backward communities, children of migrating families, or programs involving innovating curriculum or pedagogic practices, starting of 'Schools on Wheels', etc. Even as these initiatives are on, it is important and imperative that teachers are simultaneously made aware about the various dimensions of these projects, schemes or programs to restrict school drop out rates in school children (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001; Croninger & Lee, 2001; Mc Partland, 1994; Melissa, 1993). The teachers are one of the primary instruments in combating the menace of school drop outs. Therefore, it is needed that we investigate the depth and extent of their knowledge and awareness about these ongoing schemes or programs at least in their local areas of work and station. Most studies in the area of parent/teacher knowledge have concentrated on problems or issues related to children with special needs and/or preschool education practices (Venkatesan, 2001; 2003). Some studies have focused on teacher knowledge on or about their technology skills (Brush, Glazewski, & Hewet, 2008; Hew & Brush, 2007), However, there are hardly any Indian

studies on teacher knowledge or awareness about contemporary government initiatives to combat or overcome wastage and school drop outs

**Objectives:**

- i. To elicit nature, extent and depth of knowledge/awareness in primary school teachers on or about ten ongoing government schemes/programs under SSA-K to combat school drop outs in rural settings; and,
- ii. To explore the relationship between such of their reported knowledge/ awareness to respondent variables like gender, experience, educational qualifications, class level taught and age of teacher respondents, etc

**Method**

**Participants:**

The study was carried out on a sample of 60 teacher respondents (including 30 males and 30 females) working as teachers in rural government schools under the SSA project. The targeted government schemes/programs under SSA-K to combat school drop outs that were chosen for inclusion to elicit knowledge/awareness of teacher respondents in this study were about Mobile Schools, Tent Schools, Bridge Courses of different durations between 2, 4, 6 and 12 months; Special Enrolment Drives, Home Based Education, Remedial Teaching, available Feeder Schools and transport facilities respectively.

**Measures:**

Data collection involved use of two semi-structured and open ended interview schedules developed exclusively for the purpose of this study. The 'Demographic Data Schedule' covered queries on personal details of teacher respondents who participated in this study. Another 'Interview Schedule' was used to record details on the level of respondent awareness and conceptual acquaintance along with their knowledge on the objectives, scope, operations and costs involved about

the various schemes/programs under SSA for decelerating out of school children. Open ended questions and non-directive interviewing techniques were used to gather as much information on these details. Wherever possible, several examples were collected to substantiate the declarative statements of respondents.

**Procedure:**

Data was collected individually and personally in the native language by the first author by interviewing each respondent. For the first 15 respondents inter-rater reliability was randomly established between the authors. The resulting Agreement Coefficient (C<sub>A</sub>) was measured for the two schedules to be between 0.94 and 0.89 respectively. Data was coded and compiled in Microsoft Excel format before subjecting them to statistical analysis by using freely downloadable statistical software/calculators on the web. Additional analytical procedures drawn from spatial statistics-which started in geography during 1970s, was carried out to help in visualizing the derived data in various geometrical forms or in producing a surface

map of the variable/s under study as well as in their interpretation (Bailey & Gatrell, 1995).

**Results and Discussion**

The results of the study indicate that most teacher-respondents are aware of the '2-month Bridge Course' (N= 51; 85 %), followed by information they have about 'Remedial Teaching' (N= 26; 43.33%), 'Tent Schools' (N= 23; 38.33%), 'Home Based Education' (N= 18; 30%), etc. As against this mere awareness, their conceptual clarity about these programs is less. For example, it is seen that out of the teachers who are aware of 'Tent Schools' (N= 23; 38.33%), a still fewer number of them are actually clear about the concept behind this program (N= 17; 28.33%)(Table One). Similar is the trend of teacher-respondents being aware or knowing the concept of 'remedial teaching' (N= 26; 43.33%), but not as much understanding its 'objectives' (N= 21; 35.00%), 'scope' and 'operations' (N= 14; 23.33%). Surprisingly, none of the teacher respondents in this sample was aware of the costs involved in most of these programs for battling the menace of school drop outs in rural children.

**Table 1. Overall Distribution of Knowledge and Awareness about Government Programs/Schemes to Combat School Drop Outs in Rural Settings**

SNo	Programs	Awareness (N60)	Concept (N60)	Objectives (N60)	Scope (N60)	Operations (N60)	Cost (N 60)
1.	2-Month Bridge Course	51	51	46	31	31	02
2.	4-Month Bridge Course	07	04	04	01	01	-
3.	6-Month Bridge Course	05	02	02	02	01	-
4.	12-Month Residential	05	03	02	02	-	-
5.	Mobile Schools	14	13	10	06	05	-
6.	Tent Schools	23	17	16	10	09	-
7.	Special Enrolment Drive	09	06	04	02	02	-
8.	Home Based Education	18	17	17	10	10	-
9.	Remedial Teaching	26	26	21	14	14	-
10.	12-Month Non Residential						
	(a) Feeder School	02	-	-	-	-	-
	(b) Transport Facility	17	16	11	05	05	-
	Total	177	155	133	83	78	02
	Maximum Possible Score	660	660	660	660	660	660
	Percentage	26.8	23.5	20.2	12.6	11.8	0.0

**Analysis in Terms of Teacher/ Respondent Variables:** In relation to gender, both, male as well as female teacher respondents appear to know equally either less or more and as much about the various schemes or programs undertaken by their authorities to fight the problem of school drop out (Table 2). The male teachers are only marginally more aware on or about the schemes/programs, their objectives, scope and operations than the females ( $p < 0.001$ ).

In relation to experience variable, the teacher respondents with lower experience (below ten years or those between 11-20 years) (24.2%) are better informed about the schemes or programs to overcome school drop outs than their colleagues with more than 20 years of experience (29.1%) ( $p < 0.001$ ) (Table 3). Probably, with increasing years of experience, their eager or motivation to know more is on the wane-the possibility of an attitudinal burn out that needs further exploration in future research.

In terms of educational levels of teacher respondents in this study, there is an observed

linear trend. Undergraduate teachers are least informed (19.2%) compared to graduate teachers (33.3%) and post graduate teachers activities for prevention or decreasing of school drop outs than primary and middle school teachers (20.0%) (Table 5)( $p < 0.001$ ). On the other hand, age of the teacher respondents does not seem to emerge as significant variable in determining their knowledge or awareness on or about the government initiatives, programs or activities for prevention or decreasing of school drop outs than primary and middle school teachers (25.5-27.8%)(Table 6)( $p < 0.001$ ) (41.2%) respectively (Table 4)( $p < 0.001$ ). This trend is true for all aspects of awareness covering the concept, objectives, scope, operations as well as cost of these programs. Likewise, the same trend is confirmed with regard to high school teachers on an average (40.0 %) being better informed and aware of government initiatives, programs or activities for prevention or decreasing of school drop outs than primary and middle school teachers (25.5-27.8%)(Table 6)( $p > 0.001$ ).

**Table 2. Distribution of Knowledge and Awareness about Government Programs to Combat School Drop Outs in Rural Settings in Relation to Male (N=30) and Female (N=30)**

No	Programs	Awareness		Concept		Objectives		Scope		Operations		Cost	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	2-Month Bridge Course	27	24	27	24	23	23	17	14	17	14	01	01
2.	4-Month Bridge Course	03	04	-	04	-	04	-	01	-	01	-	-
3.	6-Month Bridge Course	04	01	01	01	01	01	01	01	-	01	-	-
4.	12-Month Residential	03	02	02	01	02	-	02	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Mobile Schools	07	07	07	06	07	03	03	03	03	02	-	-
6.	Tent Schools	09	14	07	10	06	10	04	06	03	06	-	-
7.	Special Enrolment Drive	06	03	04	02	04	-	02	-	02	-	-	-
8.	Home Based Education	09	09	09	08	09	08	06	04	06	04	-	-
9.	Remedial Teaching	14	12	14	12	11	10	07	07	07	07	-	-
10.	12-Month Non-Residential												
	(a) Feeder School	01	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	(b) Transport Facility	09	08	09	07	06	05	04	01	04	01	-	-
	Total	92	85	80	75	69	64	46	37	42	36	01	01
	Maximum Possible Score	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330	330
	Percentage	27.9	25.8	24.2	22.7	20.9	19.4	13.9	11.21	12.7	10.9	0.3	0.3
	Chi-square	33.96	41.20	36.65	30.87	31.58	35.29	20.51	21.70	26.19	19.90	-	-
	P value	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.025	.017	.003	.030	-	-

**Table 3. Distribution of Knowledge and Awareness about Government Programs to combat School Drop Outs in Rural Settings in Relation to Experience of Teacher Respondents**

No Programs Years of Experience!	Awareness			Concept			Objectives			Scope			Operations			Cost		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
N!	23	27	10	23	27	10	23	27	10	23	27	10	23	27	10	23	27	10
1. 2-Month Bridge Course	20	23	08	19	23	09	18	20	08	10	12	09	10	12	09	10	12	09
2. 4-Month Bridge Course	04	03	-	03	01	-	03	01	-	01	-	01	-	-	01	-	-	01
3. 6-Month Bridge Course	03	02	-	01	01	-	01	01	-	01	01	-	-	01	-	-	01	-
4. 12-Month Residential	04	01	-	02	-	01	01	01	-	01	01	-	-	01	-	-	-	-
5. Mobile Schools	07	05	02	07	05	01	04	04	02	03	02	01	03	02	-	-	-	-
6. Tent Schools	09	09	05	07	06	04	06	06	04	04	04	02	04	04	01	-	-	-
7. Special3 Enrolment Drive	02	04	03	01	04	01	-	03	01	-	01	01	-	01	01	-	01	-
8. Home Based Education	06	08	04	06	08	03	06	08	03	04	04	02	04	04	02	-	-	-
9. Remedial Teaching	12	10	04	12	10	04	09	08	04	07	05	02	07	05	02	-	-	-
10. 12-Month Non Residential																		
(a) Feeder School	01	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
(b) Transport Facility	06	06	05	06	06	04	02	05	04	02	03	-	02	01	02	-	-	-
Total	73	72	32	64	64	27	50	57	26	33	33	17	30	30	18	01	01	-
Maximum Possible Score	253	297	110	253	297	110	253	297	110	253	297	110	253	297	110	253	297	110
Percentage	28.9	24.24	29.1	25.3	21.5	24.5	19.8	19.2	23.6	13.0	11.1	15.5	11.9	10.1	16.4	0.4	0.4	0
Chi-Square	20.90	23.85	13.85	23.14	30.86	19.19	25.72	24.06	15.29	14.86	15.39	14.722	20.76	18.28	13.19	-	-	-
P value	.022	.008	.186	.010	.001	.058	.004	.007	.122	.137	.119	.216	.023	.050	.199	-	-	-

Knowledge and Awareness

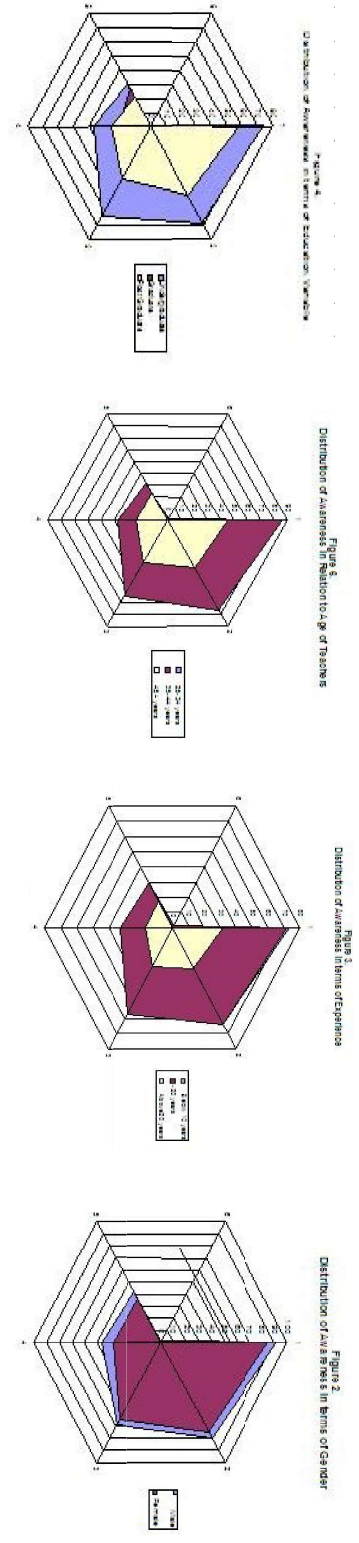


Figure 2. Distribution of awareness in terms of feeder school. Figure 3. Distribution of awareness in terms of transport facility. Figure 4. Distribution of awareness in terms of maximum possible score. Figure 5. Distribution of awareness in relation to age of teachers.

Figure 5.  
Distribution of Awareness in Terms of Levels Taught by Teachers

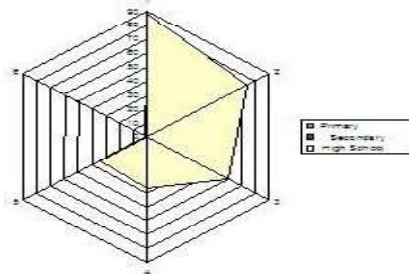
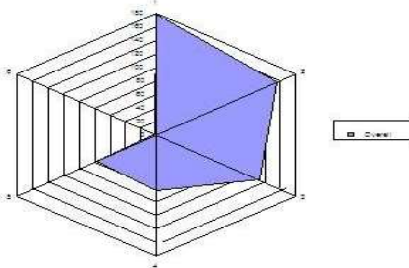


Figure 1.  
Overall Distribution on Awareness



(KEY: A denotes <10 years; B denotes 11-20 years; C denotes >20 years)

#### B. Spatial Analysis:

Additional analytical procedures drawn from spatial statistics was carried out to help in visualizing the derived data in geometrical form of concentric circles to map the results derived in this study. Concentric circles are circles with a common center. The region between two concentric circles of different radii is called an annulus. If the hypothetical individual teacher respondent in this study as described above is deemed as center or mid point of the imaginary and innermost circle (Figure 1), each surrounding concentric circle may be viewed as the different layers of their awareness (N= 177; 26.8 %), conceptual clarity (N= 155; 23.5 %), knowledge of the objectives (N= 133; 20.2 %), scope (N= 83; 12.6 %), operations (N= 78; 11.8 %) and cost (N= 2; 0.0 %) of the programs or initiatives undertaken by their own departmental authorities to wrestle with the problem of school drop out. Apparently, the percentage distance in terms of radius of each annulus does not seem to expand as much. Probably,

an orientation or sensitivity training program followed by another post test would enlarge this radius as an immediate pictorial depiction of their expanding awareness on or about the government initiatives, programs or activities for prevention or decreasing of school drop outs in rural school settings.

In sum, it is important to understand that there is a strong need to examine teacher knowledge on matters or issues beyond the concerns of their immediate curriculum or classroom teaching (Allsopp, McHatton, & Cranston-Gingras, 2009; Herbert, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2007). In this sense, the present study has demonstrated that a notional profile of a better informed teacher on or about the program and schemes for school drop outs is a typical respondent that has emerged as one, who is of any age (Figure 6) or belonging to either gender (Figure 2); but, with median experience (below ten years or those between 11-20 years), post graduate levels of education (Figure 4) and/or teaching high school pupils ((Figure 5) rather than one who is less qualified, over aged or more experienced (Figure 3) correspondingly. The phenomenon of school dropout is universal (Rosenblum, Goldblatt, & Moin, 2008; Kaufman, Alt & Chapman, 2001; Mc Millen & Kaufman, 1997; Fagan, 1995) even though its nature and dimensions appear to vary according to different nations and cultures. Further, the present study has demonstrated the feasibility of using an innovative statistical technique of spatial analysis to pictorially map and depict the extensity of knowledge and awareness of teacher respondents about the government initiatives, programs or activities for prevention or decreasing of school drop outs in rural school settings using concentric spatiograms (Steams & Glennie, 2006).

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