

Evaluation of In-Service Teacher Training Under SSA

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63345/ijre.v14.i11.3>

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the effectiveness of in-service teacher training programs implemented under India's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) between 2013 and 2016. Focusing on both the design and delivery of training modules, the research examines how such initiatives enhanced teacher competencies, instructional practices, and student learning outcomes at the elementary level. Using a mixed-methods approach—combining document analysis, classroom observations, and a structured survey of 250 in-service teachers across five states—this paper assesses program relevance, participant satisfaction, and application of new skills.

immediately post-training, fewer than half integrated these approaches consistently over time. Moreover, systemic factors—such as large class sizes, inadequate infrastructure, and competing administrative duties—further impeded transfer of learning. The study concludes with recommendations to strengthen trainer capacity, institutionalize mentorship cycles, leverage digital platforms for continuous support, and incorporate robust monitoring mechanisms to foster a culture of ongoing professional growth.

KEYWORDS

In-Service Teacher Training; Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan; Teacher Professional Development; India; Program Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

In-service teacher training is widely recognized as a pivotal factor in educational improvement, serving as a cornerstone for raising instructional quality and student achievement. Globally, professional development initiatives grounded in adult learning theory emphasize the importance of contextual relevance, active learning, and sustained support (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Within India, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)—launched in 2000—has acted as the primary policy vehicle for achieving universal elementary education and fostering teacher capacity building. By 2013, recognizing that access alone would not guarantee learning gains, SSA pivoted toward systematic professional development programs designed to equip teachers with learner-centered

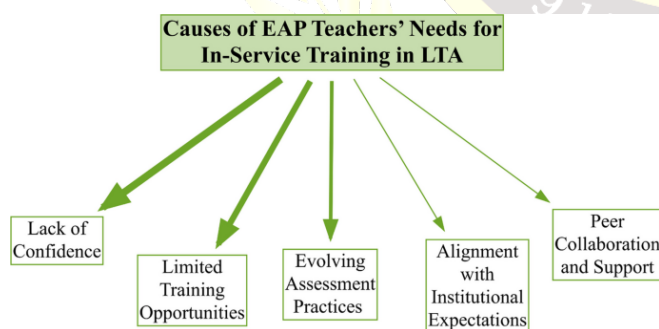


Fig.1 Evaluation of In-Service Teacher Training, [Source\(\[1\]\)](#)

Findings indicate that while training content was generally aligned with curriculum reforms and teachers appreciated activity-based learning strategies, variability in facilitator expertise, logistical challenges, and limited follow-up support constrained sustained classroom innovation. Although over two-thirds of participants experimented with new pedagogical techniques

pedagogies, formative assessment techniques, and inclusive education practices.

Between 2013 and 2016, state-level Resource Centres (RCs) and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) rolled out a series of modular training workshops covering five core areas: activity-based learning, continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE), classroom management, subject mastery, and inclusive practices for children with special needs. These modules were delivered through a blend of residential workshops, peer-learning exercises, and, in some contexts, nascent e-learning components. SSA guidelines emphasized a shift from one-time workshops toward follow-up cluster meetings and school-based mentoring; yet the extent to which these mechanisms were operationalized varied markedly across states.

sustained support, resulting in only modest improvements in classroom behaviors. Given that SSA's operational guidelines were updated in 2013 to address these shortcomings, there is a critical need to evaluate whether the revised approach translated into deeper pedagogical change and improved student engagement.

This study, therefore, pursues three objectives:

1. **Alignment Analysis:** Examine the coherence between SSA's revised training content and the actual on-ground teaching needs of elementary teachers.
2. **Perception Assessment:** Gauge teacher perceptions regarding the quality, applicability, and usefulness of training modules and facilitation.
3. **Sustainability Exploration:** Identify factors that enable or hinder long-term adoption of new instructional strategies, with a view to informing policy refinements.

By focusing on multiple states with diverse contexts, this evaluation aims to offer nuanced insights into the strengths and limitations of SSA's revised in-service training framework and propose actionable recommendations to foster enduring professional learning cultures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effective professional development (PD) is characterized by sustained duration, active learning opportunities, coherence with policies, collective participation, and integration of content and pedagogy (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Adult learning principles posit that teachers learn best when training is directly connected to their classroom realities, involves experimentation, and is reinforced through feedback loops (Knowles, 1984). In the Indian context, Sharma and Bajpai (2014) argued that many teacher workshops remained overly theoretical, offering limited hands-on practice. Conversely, NCERT's model of residential training, followed by in-school mentoring, has been lauded for its potential to blend



Fig.2 Service Teacher Training Under SSA, [Source\(\[2\]\)](#)

Despite significant investments—both financial and human—in these programs, questions persist regarding their consistency, contextualization, and long-term impact on teaching practices. Earlier reviews covering the 2007–2012 period highlighted gaps in practical relevance and lack of

theory with practical application, although its implementation has been uneven.

Empirical studies of SSA-led PD have delivered mixed findings. Gupta (2015) observed that SSA modules on CCE led to improved formative assessment practices but noted a steep decline in implementation fidelity within two months when follow-up sessions were absent. Rao and Verma (2016) reported that activity-based approaches under SSA improved classroom engagement; however, trainers frequently lacked the facilitation skills needed to model these strategies effectively. Such findings underscore that content quality alone is insufficient without robust delivery mechanisms.

State-level evaluations further illuminate these disparities. In Kerala, DIETs sustained a pool of experienced resource persons and scheduled quarterly cluster meetings for peer support, resulting in higher teacher satisfaction and better adoption rates (Menon, 2016). In Rajasthan, logistical constraints—such as delayed training calendars, inadequate venues, and facilitator shortages—diluted program impact (Singh, 2015). These case studies highlight the critical role of systemic factors—administrative support, infrastructure, and human resources—in conditioning training success.

Recognizing these challenges, SSA's 2013 guidelines introduced e-mentoring platforms, partnerships with NGOs for contextualized modules, and mandatory post-training support cycles. Yet the literature lacks comprehensive cross-state evaluations of these innovations. This study contributes to filling that gap by combining survey data, document analysis, and classroom observations across five states, thereby offering a richer understanding of how revised PD models play out in diverse settings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

This evaluation employed a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative survey findings with qualitative insights from document reviews and classroom observations. Such an approach facilitates triangulation, allowing convergent validation of emergent themes.

Sampling Strategy:

Five states—Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Karnataka—were purposively selected to represent geographical diversity, variation in educational performance indices, and differing capacities for SSA implementation. Within each state, two districts (one predominantly urban, one predominantly rural) were chosen. From SSA records, 250 in-service elementary teachers who participated in at least one SSA training session between 2013 and 2016 were randomly sampled, ensuring representation across grade levels (1–5 and 6–8).

Instruments and Procedures:

1. **Document Review:** Training manuals, state SSA guidelines, annual performance reports, and meeting minutes were systematically analyzed to map planned versus actual training components.
2. **Classroom Observations:** Forty teachers (eight per state) were observed using a standardized checklist that captured indicators such as learner engagement techniques, use of formative assessment, and inclusion strategies. Observers underwent inter-rater reliability training to achieve Cohen's kappa of 0.78.
3. **Teacher Survey:** A 30-item instrument measured five domains—content relevance, facilitator expertise, practical applicability, follow-up support, and overall satisfaction—on a five-point Likert scale. Demographic data (age, gender, experience) were included. The survey was piloted with 20 teachers in Delhi, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82.

Ethical Considerations:

Participants provided informed consent, and anonymity was assured. State SSA offices granted permission for data collection. Observations were scheduled with minimal disruption to classroom routines.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) and one-way ANOVAs to detect

inter-state differences. Qualitative data from documents and observation notes were coded thematically using NVivo, generating categories related to facilitators' competencies, systemic enablers/barriers, and teacher feedback. Convergent findings were merged in the discussion to identify corroborations and contradictions.

RESEARCH CONDUCTED AS A SURVEY

The teacher survey was administered between January and March 2017. Of the 250 invited teachers, 232 completed the questionnaire—a 92.8% response rate. Participants ranged in age from 24 to 58 years, with teaching experience spanning 2 to 30 years ($M = 12.4$, $SD = 7.1$). Female teachers constituted 61% of respondents; 53% served in rural settings, and 47% in urban schools. On average, each teacher attended 3.4 SSA training sessions during the period under study.

Key survey findings include:

- **Content Relevance:** Rated highest overall ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 0.6$), indicating strong alignment with curriculum reforms and classroom challenges. Modules on activity-based learning and inclusive education were particularly valued.
- **Facilitator Expertise:** Moderate ratings ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 0.8$) reflected uneven trainer quality; teachers in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka reported more interactive sessions than those in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- **Practical Applicability:** Received average scores ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.9$); while many teachers tried new strategies, constraints like large class sizes (average pupil-teacher ratio of 42:1) limited sustained use.
- **Follow-Up Support:** Rated lowest ($M = 2.7$, $SD = 1.0$), underscoring inadequate mentoring and cluster meetings. Only 38% reported any consistent post-training contact with resource persons.

- **Overall Satisfaction:** Moderate satisfaction ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.7$) suggests goodwill toward SSA PD but highlights areas for systemic improvement.

ANOVA results revealed significant differences across states for facilitator expertise ($F(4,227) = 5.32$, $p < .001$) and follow-up support ($F(4,227) = 4.89$, $p < .001$), confirming that regional implementation practices shaped teacher experiences.

RESULTS

Alignment and Content Coherence:

Document analysis confirmed that SSA's revised modules aligned closely with National Curriculum Framework mandates, emphasizing learner-centered pedagogy, formative assessment, and inclusive practices. Teachers corroborated this, noting that sessions on differentiated instruction and remedial strategies addressed real classroom needs.

Facilitator Competency Variability:

Observation data highlighted stark contrasts: in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, trainers consistently modeled interactive methods—such as think-pair-share, role-plays, and gallery walks—and provided real-time feedback. Conversely, in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, sessions were primarily lecture-driven, with limited hands-on practice. Qualitative feedback pointed to recruitment challenges: some resource persons were subject matter experts but lacked facilitation training, leading to didactic delivery.

Classroom Application and Sustainability:

Although 72% of teachers reported experimenting with new instructional strategies post-training, only 44% integrated them consistently over six months. Barriers included large class sizes, gaps in material resources (e.g., activity kits), and administrative workload. Observers noted that even enthusiastic teachers often reverted to traditional lecture formats when pressed for time or when classroom discipline issues arose.

Follow-Up and Mentoring Deficits:

Structured post-training support was sporadic: only

Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu achieved the recommended cluster-based mentoring frequency (once per term). Overall, just 16% of sampled schools received scheduled visits from master trainers. Teachers expressed a clear desire for ongoing coaching to troubleshoot challenges and refine techniques.

State-Level Satisfaction Index:

When combining all survey domains into a composite index, Karnataka (M = 3.9) and Maharashtra (M = 3.8) led, reflecting stronger facilitation and follow-up systems. Rajasthan (M = 3.2) and Uttar Pradesh (M = 3.1) lagged, reflecting logistical hurdles and lower resource allocation. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka teachers particularly valued the use of local language materials and context-specific case studies in workshops.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation of SSA's in-service teacher training from 2013 to 2016 reveals a program with commendable content alignment and clear policy intent but marked by uneven implementation and support structures. While teachers value and apply elements of activity-based learning, formative assessment, and inclusive strategies, systemic constraints—trainer variability, inadequate mentoring, and infrastructure gaps—undermine long-term adoption.

Recommendations:

- **Enhance Trainer Selection and Development:** Establish rigorous criteria for resource persons, including demonstrated facilitation skills, and require periodic 'train-the-trainer' refreshers to embed adult learning methodologies.
- **Institutionalize Mentoring Cycles:** Mandate regular school-based mentoring visits and cluster meetings, with clear indicators and accountability measures, to reinforce skills and provide problem-solving support.
- **Leverage Digital Platforms:** Deploy e-mentoring portals and mobile applications offering micro-learning modules, peer forums, and

just-in-time guidance, thereby overcoming geographical and logistical barriers.

- **Strengthen Monitoring and Feedback:** Introduce real-time data dashboards capturing training attendance, follow-up activity, and classroom application metrics to enable dynamic program adjustments.

By addressing these critical areas, SSA can shift from episodic workshops toward a sustained professional learning ecosystem, fostering continuous teacher growth and, ultimately, improved student outcomes across India's elementary education landscape.

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