

Executive Summary of Minor Research Project entitled “Free Bicycle Scheme of Government of Karnataka-Issues, Problems and Prospects” By Dr.C.Sumangala

The Free Bicycle scheme was launched with the aim of addressing the commutation problems of girl students. It aimed at improving their attendance in schools. Later, boys were included too. “In fact, the scheme was launched for girl students living in rural areas as they were finding it difficult to commute to their schools; this was resulting in their dropping out. Children studying in classes VIII and IX in government and aided high schools in the State will have fewer excuses to skip classes this year.

The scheme of free bicycles started in the year 2006-07 aiming to facilitate transport of students for rural and hilly regions. The target groups were girl students enrolled to class 8th in Government and Government aided schools. Girl students having bus pass and hostel facility were excluded from the scheme. Bicycle Distribution scheme was extended to 8th standard girls from families of below poverty line in the city corporation limit and also to boys from the year 2007-08.

The *Present Study* attempted to assess the Free Bicycle Scheme for students by the Government of Karnataka: Issues, Problems and Prospects. A total of 500-800 respondents (students, parents, teachers and official in the education department) were chosen to complete the questionnaire prepared for the purpose. Based on their responses analysis has been made with regard to the effectiveness, performance, lacunae and recommendations given by them. The study also tried to analyse the knowledge, attitude, of the participants and practicality of scheme.

Objectives of the study

- Evaluate the opinion of various respondent groups among taluks of Mysore District towards implementation of the scheme.
- Evaluate the impact of this scheme on reducing drop out and improving academic performance of the students.
- To assess the difference in the views of the teachers, Students and Parents on several issues (empowerment, enrollment, attendance, dropout, learning achievement of children) relating to free bicycle scheme.
- Evaluate the utility of the scheme with regard to percentage of bicycles brought to school; reasons for not bringing; being misused by other family members etc,

- Evaluate the maintenance of the bicycle and related issues
- To suggest proper measures for optimum utilization of the scheme

The study covered a total of 261 headmasters, 309 parents and 311 students for whom separate questionnaires were designed. Out of the 311 students 61 (30 boys, 31 girls) were from class 8, 174 (80 boys, 94 girls) from class 9 and about 76 (25 boys, 51 girls) from class 10.

Out of the 311 students 61 (29 boys, 32 girls) were from aided schools, 9 (5 boys, 4 girls) from trained graduate type school and about 241 (101 boys, 140 girls) from Government schools.

Out of the 311 students 52 (21 boys, 31 girls) were from K.R.Nagar taluk, 67 (28 boys, 39 girls) from T.Narasipura, 66 (26 boys, 40 girls) from Mysore taluk, 22 (9 boys, 13 girls) from H.D.Kote, 32 (9 boys, 23 girls) from Periyapatna and 72 (42 boys, 30 girls) from Nanjangud.

Findings:

After obtaining the opinion of the BEOs, teachers, parents and students on the 'Free Bicycle Scheme of Government of Karnataka, it has been observed on the *whole the scheme is able to achieve the purpose for which it started*. The BEOs gave a positive opinion on the result that the scheme has achieved, by making an impact on *empowerment, enrolment, attendance, reduction in dropout and help completing high school, helping the child come to school and help improve academic performance*.

The BEOs also opined that the responsibility of implementation of the scheme rested with the education secretary, the Commissioner for public instruction, the department of Industries and Commerce, the DDPIs, and the taluk level BEOs. The education secretaries were responsible for planning and budgeting for the scheme and providing directions to the concerned officials, Commissioner for public instructions were responsible for calling up tenders for supply of free bicycles and choosing from among the suppliers. The DDPIs were responsible for timely implementation of the scheme, ensure quality bicycles, obtaining data on student enrolment after the implementation for the scheme, and submitting report to the Commissioner for public instruction on the improvement in enrolment and attendance. The BEOs were responsible for supervision of bicycles and ensuring quality.

The school head masters were responsible for identifying the beneficiaries and their continuous utilization of bicycles. Quality check is done by the taluk level committee that comprises of the BEOs, the head masters and the extension officers of the industries and commerce.

The beneficiaries of this scheme include class 8 students from Government Schools, Aided Schools and Trained Graduate Type Schools. Further they opined that ISI certification is mandatory for bicycles. The Commissioner for public instruction and the BEOs are responsible to check the ISI certification.

The social implication of the scheme is that it serves the purpose of helping the girl child come to school. It was also felt that there is no facility for maintenance of the bicycle. Further it was felt that the scheme has to be extended to students with bus pass and hostel facility as it de-motivates and disappoints the students who did not avail bicycles.

The parents were very positive on the way the scheme has been implemented. They opine that the scheme has helped improve their Childs academic performance; provides time and space for other activities; has empowered the girl child. They also opined that the scheme has been implemented in a fair and transparent manner. However the opinion of the parents on the quality of bicycles was that it is only satisfactory.

The students opined that the bicycles have been very helpful for them to go to school. It saved about 15-30 minutes of their time. The time saved was utilized by them for studies. Majority of the students were satisfied on the use of bicycles. However no considerable improvement in the marks obtained was found even after the use of bicycles. The students opined that their *self confidence and interest in studies have increased* after they have started using bicycles. Thus the ***researcher infers that the scheme though not have made a direct impact, has been indirectly helping students to continue education.*** The students were not positive on the quality of bicycles.

Suggestions:

After going through various news articles in papers and magazines, several issues were raised as questions to the respondent groups. However their opinion on them seemed to be positive. This clearly reveals that ***the problem is not too severe.*** The researcher tried to interact with some BEOs, teachers and students to find out if there need to be some improvement in the

scheme and extracted some inputs. On the lines of those inputs some suggestions have been made by the researcher, which is as follows.

- There need to be a check on the supply of poor quality bicycles.
- The supplier should give warranty for bicycles.
- The Government should make arrangements for repairs and maintenance of bicycles.
- Tool kits should be provided along with bicycles.
- Bicycle needs servicing after a gap of few months which needs to be provided.
- Make provision for parking space.
- Make it mandatory for the students to bring bicycles to school.
- Give prominence for quality of bicycles while choosing the supplier.
- Favours suppliers for various reasons should be avoided.
- Give attention to timely supply of bicycles.
- Bicycles should be made available immediately after admission.
- Deciding the number of students can be made based on the previous year's admission.
- Penalty has to be imposed even if few bicycles were of poor quality.

Recommendations for future research:

This study has taken the opinion of several group of respondents, based on which it has derived its conclusions. However following suggestions are made.

- Obtain hard data on the admissions and attendance, before and after the implementation of the scheme.
- Take the statistics of admissions over a period of time after admissions.
- Obtain separate statistics of admissions for reserved groups like SC/SC/Minority/ girls etc.
- Check whether there is improvement in admissions in all categories.
- Make it a point that all the questions asked for is left unanswered.
- Make a comparative view of the hard statistics and the opinion survey.