
Do Good Schools Continue to Remain Good?

Do high-performing schools maintain their high performance after incentives are withdrawn?

A research study by the Azim Premji Foundation suggests good schools continue to perform well even after incentives are withdrawn.

This report presents the data behind these findings, and suggests implications of this data.

Do Good Schools Continue to Remain Good?

- A longitudinal research study

This paper studies schools that participated in Azim Premji Foundation's Learning Guarantee Programme (2002-05) and looks at their performance, attendance and dropout rate during and after the programme. The findings show that good schools are in a class of their own and continue to perform better than other schools even after recognition and incentives are withdrawn.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Do good schools have a drive that helps them maintain their high standards in the long-term? Does the performance of all schools decline uniformly after the withdrawal of programmatic interventions? These were questions that piqued our interest during and after the Learning Guarantee Programme (LGP). To answer these questions we conducted a longitudinal cohort study to see if schools that performed well in LGP continued to do well three years later, and whether the programme had made a perceptible impact on the schools over a period of time, beyond and after the withdrawal of LGP in 2005.

The study found that the '3 time winners' groups, i.e. schools that performed the best during LGP continued to out-perform the other groups, the 'winners' and 'others'. The schools in this category out-performed the other groups on various parameters like learning achievement, percentage

of drop-outs and grade completion rates. Some of the key observations were:

- In the 3 time winners group of schools nearly 32% children who have attained more than 90% of the competencies tested, as compared to 12% in the winners group and 2% in the others group.
- In terms of drop-out rates 3-times winners group's drop-out rate is 9 percentage points lower than that of the winners group and 19 percentage points lower than that of the others group.
- Girls performed around 1 percentage point better among the winners and 2 percentage points better among the 3 time winners in learning achievement tests.
- The performance of the '3 times winners' group has declined since post-LGP, but it is still far ahead of all the other groups.
- Performance incentives push all schools to do better, though the levels of impact vary.

LEARNING GUARANTEE PROGRAM: A BACKGROUND

Learning Guarantee Program (LGP), a joint initiative of the Karnataka state government and Azim Premji Foundation, was a study conducted in 1,887 government schools in the 7 most educationally backward districts of North East Karnataka during 2002-2005. This paper is based on the analysis of data from the evaluation of 766 lower primary schools and 1,121 higher primary schools.

The participating schools and were assessed on the criteria of enrolment, attendance and learning achievements of the children in grades 1 to 4. Learning achievement was based on test scores of children in Language (Kannada) and Math.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Are schools that performed well in the Learning Guarantee Programme (LGP) continuing to do after the programme was withdrawn in 2005?
- Can a perceptible impact of the programme be observed on the schools over a period of time, beyond and after the withdrawal of the programme?

To answer these questions a longitudinal cohort study was conducted to track children of the 896 schools who participated in all the three years of assessment. Schools were classified as:

- Schools successful across all the three years (called 3 Time Winners)
- Schools successful in one or two of the three years (called Winners)
- Schools not successful in any of the three years (called Others)

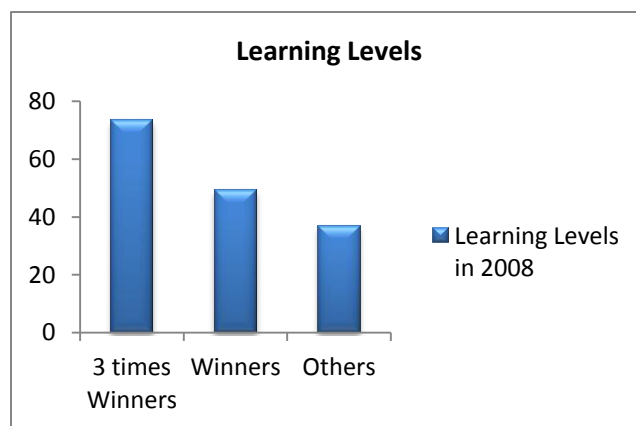
For this study all the Three Time Winners, and a sample from the other two categories have been examined. A sample of schools that did not participate in LGP (called Non-participants) has also been taken into account.

ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Learning Levels

In 2008, three years after LGP was over, the average of test scores for the three groups of schools clearly indicates that the 3 time winners group has the highest scores. This group's average score is nearly 24 percentage points higher than that of the winners group, and more than 35 percentage points higher than the others group.

In the 3 time winners group of schools there are nearly



32% children who have attained more than 90% of the competencies tested. This figure is around 12% in the winners group and 2% in the others group.

However when we compare the performance of these schools in 2008 to their performance in 2004 and 2005 we see that performance has fallen over a period of time. The performance of the 3 time winners has fallen by nearly 16 percentage points from 2005 to 2008. The fall in scores of the winners group is more drastic. There is a 37 percentage point drop in scores for this group from 2005 to 2008, 23 percentage points more than that of the 3 times winners group.

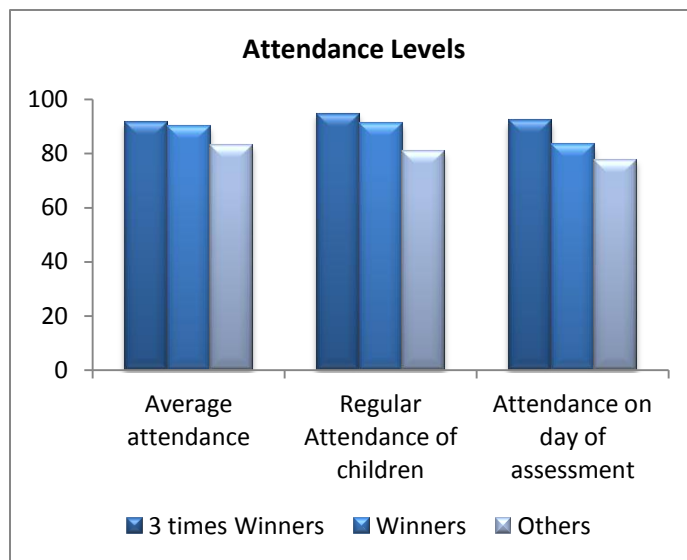
A recognition and incentive programme like LGP incentivizes schools to perform better and therefore it is natural that once the programme is withdrawn there will be a decline in performance. However, the decline in performance is not so drastic for the best performing schools which maintain a certain level of performance without or without outside intervention.

The performance of the 3-time winners also indicates that performance incentives to schools push all schools to do better. Regular performance incentives are desirable in the system as it makes a positive impact on all kinds of schools, though the levels of impact vary.

Attendance

The difference across the three groups with regard to attendance is much less when compared to the difference in learning levels across these same groups.

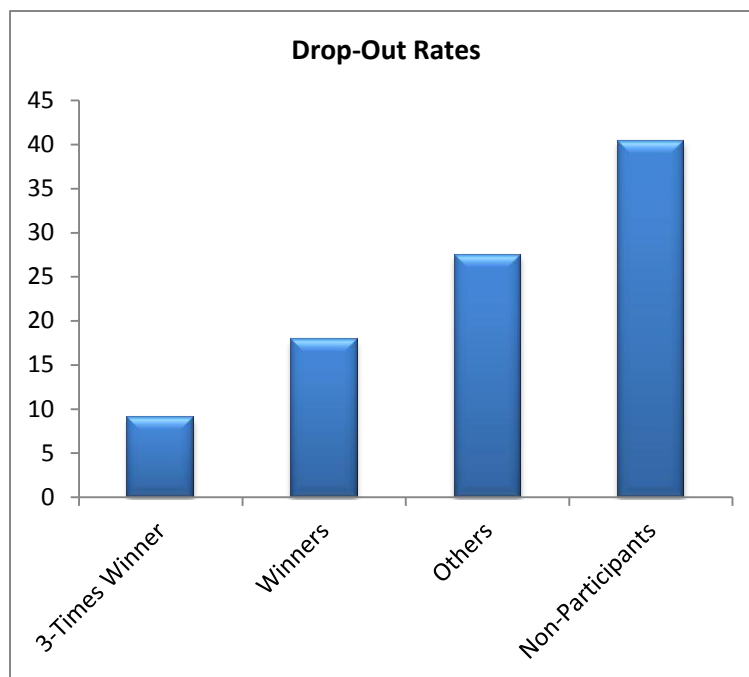
The 3 times winners group has better attendance than the other two groups but the variations are not significant.



Dropouts

In 3-time winners schools, over 9% children dropped out. This figure is close to 18% in the winners group. Across all the groups of schools, the percentage of girls dropping out is higher. Even in the best performing schools, two girls drop out for every boy.

In 3 time winners school, most students complete class VII. The drop-outs occur mostly in class VIII and IX. But in other categories of schools, more than half the drop-outs occur before class 7. Overall, looking at all categories together, 65% of the children drop-out anywhere between class 5 and class 12



A study of the pre-LGP children showed that at best only 35% of the children who were in class 5 in 2002-03 were continuing with formal education at the time of the study. The drop-out rate for girls is quite high at 75% compared to 55% for the boys.

Less than 10% of drop outs were interested in re-joining school. Poverty, working for a living, marriage, lack of interest, indifferent parents were the reasons cited for dropping out.

Equity

Even when equity parameters are examined we find that better performing schools produce more equitable results. Girls performed marginally better (around 1 percentage point better among the winners and 2 percentage points better among the 3 time winners). The average score for girls is lower than for boys in the other group of schools. The least difference in the averages of children belonging to four different caste groups (SC, ST, OBC, and General) is also found among the 3-time winners group.

Grade Completion Rates

Grade completion rate is defined as the percentage of children who are continuing education in the class they are supposed to be in with a logical progression of a higher class every year since the cohort year

In the 3-time winners group the oldest cohort group of 2002-03 comprised 271 children in class 5 that year. 43% of them have carried on with a logical progression and have reached higher secondary (class 11 and 12) level. Similarly, 85% of 2003-04 and 2004-05 cohorts have progressed to the expected grade. In the winners category, less than 20% for children made it to the expected grade. In the others category while 48% of children in 2002-03 cohort reached class 9, the figure for 2003-04 (LGP year) rose to 56.86%. Children in schools that never participated in LGP had the poorest grade completion rates of the four categories of schools. Only about 17% of the oldest cohort have reached the expected grade.

CONCLUSION

Given the improvement of attendance rates and grade completion rates during the LGP programme when compared to non-participating schools, it is reasonable to assume that the Learning Guarantee Programme has enhanced school performance across all categories. Good schools have inherent characteristics which enable them to respond well even when incentives are withdrawn. Findings showed that those schools that were successful in the LGP programme all three years of its implementation (the 'three time winners') continued to stand apart from the 'winners' and 'others' group despite slight decreases in performance levels over time. The schools in this category continued to perform on learning achievement levels and have lower percentage of drop-out and higher grade completion rates. While incentives from the programme such as recognition seem to have encouraged the schools to perform better, the schools which scored the highest during LGP, have been in a different league for a long time.

For those in the 'others' group i.e. schools which participated in the LGP with minimal success, appeared to have performed at a slightly better levels during the programme despite already performing at relatively low levels. The 'winners' or those schools who had won incentives for their performance at least once during the last two years of the LGP, had the potential; however, their processes were not quite in place. This prevented them from achieving consistent performance. Without an incentive based programme like the LGP these schools have been the most affected in terms of their performance. For example, during the LGP days, their average performance was close to that of the '3 time winners' but now it has moved closer to the 'others'.

Azim Premji Foundation is a not for profit organization established in 2001 with a vision to facilitate a just equitable humane and sustainable society