

# LEARNERS' ASSESSMENT: ANDHRA PRADESH SCHOOL CHOICE STUDY

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**Introduction:** The assessment is a tool of measurement in gauging the impact of various aspects in the education system. These ranges from evaluating children's learning as cognitive achievement in specific subjects to teachers' proficiency in the teaching - learning process and from the impact of various kinds of schools to mediums of instructions on children's performance. Assessment is a diagnostic test which actually helps students improve, unlike regular tests which try only to find out how much a child knows (or has memorized), assessment measures how well a student has actually understood concepts and a detailed feedback on the same is given, to help them improve. Assessment is distinct from other tests in many different ways.

- It has interesting questions that require thinking, not simply recall or recollecting of information.
- It provides detailed skill-wise feedback highlighting strengths and weaknesses
- It provides a benchmark of the student's performance with peers all over the school, Mandal and district.

In this paper, data from series of summative assessments of scholarship students have been used to put forth the impact of the medium of instruction on cognitive achievements of scholarship students in AP School Choice Study. In which, two rounds of summative assessments have been conducted as Lower End Line and Higher End Line assessments in Telugu, Math and English Subjects at end of every academic year from 2008 to 2011 for three years. These

assessments were designed by Educational Initiatives (EI) based on the TIMSS framework.

1. Lower End Line Assessments are to evaluate the students' learning in the competencies of previous class and their ability in carrying forward those concepts for current class. With this assessment, we understand that whether the children had been taught conceptually or just practiced rote learning in Telugu and Math.
2. Higher End Line Assessments are to assess the students' learning in the competencies of the current year class with appropriate level of difficulty in Telugu, English and Math.

**Background:** AP School Choice is an experimental research study being conducted by the Azim Premji Foundation in collaboration with the Government of Andhra Pradesh in five districts representing three regions of Andhra Pradesh (Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Kadapa, Medak, and Nizamabad). The objectives of this study are to find out the relative impact of the choice of the school and socio-economic background on learning achievements of students. APSC study provided randomly selected sample of government schools' students with scholarships to enable them to attend private schools of their choice in their villages and compare them with their counterparts in government schools.

## Context

Educational learning in native language-Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow: The medium of instruction should be understandable to teachers and students. It should also enable

them to attain comfort levels so that they can both deliver and receive messages using the chosen medium. Mostly, the educational experts recommend that the mother language of a child should be adopted as a medium of instruction at the primary level. Zubair (1993) proposed mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the primary level and argued that, “Ideally, the medium of instruction of a child living in its own language environment should be the mother tongue. Children should be taught in their mother tongue and the second language i.e. English, should be adopted/taught as a subject”.

### Debate

In fact, medium of instruction is a matter of great debate among teachers, educationists and parents. The majority of teachers and academicians say that English should not be the medium of instruction but should be taught as a subject right from very beginning of schooling. However, parents in rural areas too say that English should be the medium of instruction at all levels. But as we all are well aware that English is a widely used international language. It has (as a medium of instruction and as a subject) its roots in colonial India, when the controversy started with the emergence of two distinct opinions at the time of making educational policy for India by the British Government. The controversy was between the Orientalists and Occidentalists (Ahmad, 1997).

### Objective of this Paper

- To compare the cognitive achievement of scholarship students who have undergone English and Telugu medium of instruction in private schools by conducting series of assessments in Telugu, Math and English.

### Impact of Medium of Instruction on students' performance

The present paper aims at analyzing the effects of mediums of instructions on scholarship students'

cognitive achievements in the subjects Telugu, Math and English at primary level by summative assessments. On the whole, it was found that in all most all cases performance of scholarship students from Telugu medium schools was better than that of English medium students. In only one case, students of English medium schools were good in English only. The following table shows the performance of the scholarship students of both mediums of instructions in competency based learning achievements in AP School Choice Study.

Scholarship Students' Performance		Lower End Line		Higher End Line		
Year of Assessment	Medium	Telugu	Math	Telugu	Math	English
2008-2009	Telugu	53.29	44.53	41.52	37.13	38.45
	English	39.77	26.81	32.87	25.77	37.13
2009-2010	Telugu	44.71	36.53	43.74	34.75	43.68
	English	42.13	29.20	41.96	31.69	41.75
2010-2011	Telugu	54.81	47.13	33.44	22.46	41.63
	English	51.61	46.21	29.69	18.69	52.20

The medium of instruction especially in mother tongue at an early age would facilitate the process of teaching by the teachers and the understandability and learning ability by the students is necessary at primary level either in private schools or government schools. In AP School Choice Study, the scholarship students (1980) who opted both mediums of instructions' schools and they executed their option of school choice. The scholarship students who chose Telugu medium of instruction performed well in the Telugu, Math and English subjects subsequently over the years, whereas the scholarship students who opted for English as medium of instruction performed well only in English for one year only.

The reasons for this are probably that the scholarship students have experienced Telugu medium when they were in government schools for class 1 before accepting scholarship and

making the choice of school. So, the Telugu medium students continued in the same language as medium of instruction in private schools too when they continued and performed well without any language barriers. Scholarship students who chose English did not have sufficient knowledge or experience in English as a medium of instruction or subject when they shifted to private schools.

The other sociological issue in assimilating scholarship students in private schools was peer group association and learning among different kinds of students. Peer association plays a pivotal role in education and learning in schooling. Non-scholarship students in private schools of English medium come from relatively advantaged family backgrounds compared to scholarship students and they were almost never integrated with scholarship students in classrooms and hence there was no peer learning and association between scholarship and non-scholarship students. Whereas, the scholarship students in private Telugu medium schools continued to improve and perform better in learning and education because, non-scholarship students in private Telugu medium schools have similar socio-economic background with scholarship students and there has been good integration and interactions among all students in those schools, it resulted in peer group association and learning in Telugu medium schools.

### **Summary and Conclusion:**

The scholarship students from Telugu medium schools have continued to improve and perform well in all the subjects of learning assessments.

Learning math and other subjects in English placed students at a disadvantage in learning assessments. Use of English as medium of instruction indeed contributed to their performance in English at least, which is a positive contribution to scholarship students. The medium of instruction should be in native language at least in primary education so that the students will get adapted to the subjects. Shift in the medium of instruction course of midterm would not only be disruptive but also counterproductive. Telugu as medium of instruction would contribute to improvement of scholarship students in Math and other subjects including English.

- Assessments showed that scholarship students had understood the concepts well, irrespective of schools and medium of instructions that they studied in.
- Teachers used assessments papers as model papers for their schools' tests.
- The scholarship students from Telugu medium have performed well in Telugu and Mathematics in all the learning assessments in subsequent years.
- Shift in medium of instruction in government schools made scholarship students unlearn what they learned in math and EVs. They needed to learn all subjects afresh in English medium.
- Scholarship students who entered a lower class have taken some time to acquire basics in Math and English in private schools and performed well later years in competency-based learning assessments.

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