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Comparative study of learning skills of academically backward children studying in government schools of Ludhiana district

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Abstract
The present study aimed at comparative study of academic skills of academically backward children studying in government schools of Ludhiana district. Sample of the study consisted of 120 students of government schools studying in 3rd, 4th and 5th class in Ludhiana District. Children of both groups were lacking in their basic operation skills. Majority of children could not achieved their desired level in both Punjabi and English language and in their Mathematical skills

Keywords: Academic backwardness, learning skills, primary school, children

1. Introduction
The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) included universal completion of primary education by 2015. Today there is general agreement among the stakeholders who are working in the direction of education of children that the quality of primary education in almost all the government schools of our country is poor in general and in the rural area in specific. A majority of children in rural and even urban areas are left with no option but to attend poor quality and often dysfunctional schools (Ramachandran 2004) [4]. Educationists perceived that quality of education was much better in British era though it was limited to the elite class. After the independence, the Indian government focused on increasing the accessibility and availability of education to large population by opening number of schools and by deputing large number of teachers with continuous efforts for years till date results were far from satisfactory. Then numerous schemes such as the mid-day meal scheme were started as an incentive to the deprived section to retain them in school. Ramachandran highlighted that further elaborated that the consistent efforts resulted in the creation of the educational system that was vast, with nearly 94% of the population having primary schools within a distance of one kilometer. However, these efforts could not inculcate efficiency, quality and motivation among teachers and learners.

Primary education is actually a foundation on which a child's overall development is dependent and his personality takes a shape. It may be interpreted that whatever experienced is a child is exposed to in these primary educational years will further have its manifestation in his behavior and attitude. Banerji (2013) [2] explained that the thrust of policy and practice in India is beginning to shift from 'schooling' to 'learning'. Accessibility to education can be improved by simply improving the quality of education this idea is already confirmed by Mirza (2003) [3] as the researcher reported that according to World Bank the best way to improve access is improve quality which would make going to school or staying a more attractive option from the perspective of both the parent and children.

1.1 Objectives
1. To assess the academic (reading and arithmetic) skills of government rural primary school children.

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2. Materials and methods
2.1 Sample
A sample of 120 students studying in 3rd, 4th and 5th class of rural government primary schools in Ludhiana district. These were further randomly drawn from rural government primary schools (RGPS) where in RGPS-1 n_1=60 and RGPS-2 n_2=60. Children having score less than 35% marks selected and assessed for their academic skills. For assessing the academic skills ASER (2010) academic tool kit was used to assess children's ability to read simple text in their first language and ability to do basic arithmetic.

3. Results and discussion
Class wise distributions of respondents as per their Academic Skills in Punjabi
3rd Class
Table 1.1 results indicated that 10.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1were at Beginner (B) level, whereas, none of the students from Control group were found at this level. Majority of the students in both groups (Govt. School 1=80.0 per cent

and Control group =70.0 percent) were at Letter (L) level. In RGPS-1 10.0 per cent were at Word (W) level and none of the students in Control group was at this level. No student in RGPS-1was found at Paragraph (P) and Story (S) level, whereas, in Control group 10.0 per cent of students were found at Paragraph (P) level and 20.0 per cent at story (S) level.

4th Class
The results indicated that 10.0 per cent of the students in RGPS-1were at Beginner (B) level and in Control group none of the students was found at Beginner (B) level. Forty per cent of students of RGPS-1and thirty per cent of students in Control group were found at Letter (L) level. Forty per cent of RGPS-1students and twenty per cent of Control group students were at Word (W) level. Only 20.0 per cent of students from RGPS-1and 10.0 per cent of students from Control group were found at Paragraph (P) level. In RGPS-1no student reached at Story (S) level, whereas, in Control group 30.0 per cent of students had attained Story (S) level.

Table 1.1: Class wise percentage distribution of respondents as per their Academic Skills in PUNJABI

| Punjabi Level | Rank | Classes | | | | | | Total N=60 | |
| | | 3rd | | 4th | | 5th | | | |
		RGPS 1 (%)	RGPS2 (%)	RGPS1 (%)	RGPS2 (%)	RGPS1 (%)	RGPS2 (%)	RGPS1 n_1=30	RGPS2 n_2=30
Beginner (B)	1	10.0	-	10.0	-	10.0	-	10.0	-
Letter (L)	2	80.0	70.0	40.0	30.0	30.0	40.0	50.0	46.7
Word (W)	3	10.0	-	40.0	20.0	50.0	20.0	33.3	13.3
Para (P)	4	-	10.0	10.0	20.0	10.0	20.0	6.7	16.7
Story (S)	5	-	20.0	-	30.0	-	20.0	-	23.3

Note: 1- alphabet recognition, 2- letter formation, 3- word formation from letter, 4- can read paragraph (4-5 lines), 5- can read one page story

5th Class
The results showed that the 10.0 per cent of students of RGPS-1but none of the students in Control group was found at Beginner (B) level. In Govt. School 1, 30.0 per cent of students and in Control group 40.0 percent of students were found at Letter (L) level. Fifty per cent of students of RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students from Control group were at Word (W) level. Only 10.0 per cent of students from RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students from Control group were at Paragraph (P) level. No student in RGPS-1was found at Story (S) level, whereas in Control group 20.0 per cent of students were found at Story (S) level.

Overall results
The results depicted that in RGPS-110.0 per cent of students were at Beginner (B) level in contrast to it no student of Control group was found at this level. Fifty per cent of the students from RGPS-1and 46.7 per cent of students from Control group were found at Letter (L) level. In RGPS-133.3 per cent of students and 13.3 per cent of students from Control group were found at Word (W) level. In Govt. School 1, 6.7 per cent of students and in Control group 16.7 per cent of students were found at Paragraph (P) level. No student in RGPS-1was found at Story (S) level but in Control group 23.3 per cent of students were at Story (S) level. Kumar (1994) assessed the success of quality of education in kerala which is said to have achieved total literacy. He reported that only 50 percent of the children who appeared in the primary school could pass and more than 45 percent of the primary school children could not even write five samples Malayalam words correctly.

Class wise distribution of respondents as per their Academic Skills in English
3rd Class
In the table 1.3 The results indicate that 50.0 per cent of students from RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students from Control group were at Beginner (B) level. In RGPS-140.0 per cent of students and 10.0 per cent of students from Control group were found at Big Letter (BL) level. In RGPS-1only 10.0 per cent of students and 40.0 per cent of students from Control were at Small letter (SL) level. No student in RGPS-1was found at Word (W) level whereas 40.0 per cent students from Control group were found at Word (W) level. None of the students was found in both groups (RGPS-1and Control group) at Sentence (S) level.

4th Class
The results showed that the students in both groups (Experimental and Control group) were found at same level i.e. Beginner (B) level. In Govt. School 1, 30.0 per cent of students and 10.0 per cent of students from Control group were found at Big Letter (BL) level. Fifty per cent of students in RGPS-1and 10.0 per cent of students from Control group were found at Small letter (SL) level. In Govt. School 1, none of the students was found on Word (W) level whereas 40.0 per cent of the students in Control group were found at Word (W) level In RGPS-1no student was found at Sentence (S) level whereas 20.0 per cent of students in Control group were found at Sentence (S) level.

Table 1.2: Class wise percentage distributions of respondents as per their Academic Skills in English

English Level	Rank	3rd RGPS1 (%)	3rd RGPS2 (%)	4th RGPS1 (%)	4th RGPS2 (%)	5th RGPS1 (%)	5th RGPS2 (%)	Total RGPS1 n₁=30	Total RGPS2 n₂=30
Beginner (B)	1	50.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	30.0	30.0	33.33	23.33
Big Letter (BL)	2	40.0	10.0	30.0	10.0	20.0	10.0	30.0	10.0
Small Letter (SL)	3	10.0	40.0	50.0	10.0	50.0	20.0	36.7	23.3
Word (W)	4	-	40.0	-	40.0	-	30.0	-	36.7
Sentence (S)	5	-	-	-	20.0	-	10.0	-	10.0

Note: 1 – alphabet recognition, 2– big letter formation, 3 – Small letter formation, 4 – word formation from letters, 5– can read sentences

5th Class
The results indicated that equal proportion (30.0%) of students in both groups (RGPS-1and Control group) were found at Beginner (B) level. In RGPS-120.0 per cent of students and in Control group 10.0 per cent of students were found at Big Letter (BL) level. Fifty per cent of students in RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students from Control group were found at Small Letter (SL) level. In RGPS-1no student of 5th class was at Word (W) level whereas 30.0 per cent of students of Control group were found at Word (W) level. In RGPS-1no students was found at Sentence (S) level whereas 10.0 per cent of students in Control group were found at Sentence (S) level.

Overall results
The results showed that in Govt. School 1, 33.33 per cent of students and in Control group 23.33 per cent of students from were found at Beginner (B) level. Thirty per cent of students in RGPS-1and 10.0 per cent of students from Control group were found at Big Letter (BL) level. In RGPS-136.7 per cent of students and 23.3 per cent of Control group students were

found at Small Letter (SL) level. None of the students in RGPS-1was at Word (W) level whereas 36.7 per cent of students in Control group were found at this level. Similarly none of the students of RGPS-1was found at Sentence (S) level whereas in Control group only 10.0 per cent of students were found at this level.

Class wise distribution of respondents as per their Academic Skills in Maths
3rd Class
In the table 1.4The results indicated that 50.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students in Control group were found at 3rd rank which means students were able to recognize (0-9) numbers. Thirty per cent of students in RGPS-1and seventy per cent of students from Control group were found at 2nd rank which means students were able to recognize (10-99) numbers. In RGPS-120.0 per cent and in Control group 10.0 per cent of students were found at 1st rank which means students can recognize and write (100-999) numbers.

Table 1.3: Class wise percentage distribution of respondents as per their Academic Skills in maths

Maths Level	Rank	3rd RGPS1 (%)	3rd RGPS2 (%)	4th RGPS1 (%)	4th RGPS2 (%)	5th RGPS1 (%)	5th RGPS2 (%)	Total RGPS1 n₁=30	Total RGPS2 n₂=30
0-9	3	50.0	20.0	30.0	-	10.0	20.0	30.0	13.3
10-99	2	30.0	70.0	30.0	50.0	60.0	60.0	40.0	60.0
100-999	1	20.0	10.0	40.0	50.0	30.0	20.0	30.0	26.66

Note: 3 – number recognition and write (0-9), 2 – number recognition and write (10-99), 1- number recognition and write (100-999)

4th Class
The results depicted that 30.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1were found at 3rd rank and in RGPS-2no student was found at this level. Thirty per cent of students in RGPS-1and 50.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were at 2nd rank. In Govt. School 1, 40.0 per cent of students and 50.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were at 1st rank.

5th Class
The results indicated that 10.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were at 3rd rank. Equal proportion (60.0%) in both groups was found at 2nd rank. Thirty per cent of students in RGPS-1and 20.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were found at 1st rank whereas, 20.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were found at 1st rank.

Overall results
The results showed that 30.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 13.3 per cent of students from RGPS-2were found to be at 3rd rank. Forty per cent of students in RGPS-1and sixty per cent of students in RGPS-2were found at 2nd rank. Thirty per cent of students in RGPS-1and 26.66 per cent of students in RGPS-2were found at 1st rank.

Class wise distribution of respondents as per their Academic Skills in basic operations of Maths
3rd Class
In Table 1.4 Pre-intervention assessment results indicated that when students were assessed for their performing ability in basic operations it was found that 60.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 70.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to do 'Addition'. In RGPS-1no student was able to do 'Subtraction' whereas, 20.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to do 'Subtraction'. Again, In Govt. School 1, no student was able to solve 'Multiply' sums, whereas 10.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to solve 'Multiply' sums. None of the students in both groups was able to solve 'Division' sums.

4th Class
Sixty per cent of students in RGPS-1and seventy per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to do 'Addition'. Equal proportion (30.0%) of students in both groups were able to do 'Subtraction'. Thirty per cent of students in RGPS-1were able to solve 'Multiply' sums, whereas, 40.0 per cent of students were found in RGPS-2of this level. Equal proportion (20.0%) of students in both groups were able to solve 'Division' sums.

Table 1.4: Class wise percentage distribution of respondents as per their Academic Skills in basic operations of maths

Basic opeations of maths	Rank	Classes						Total N=60	
		3rd		4th		5th			
		RGPS1 (%)	RGPS2 (%)	RGPS1 (%)	RGPS2 (%)	RGPS1 (%)	RGPS2 (%)	RGPS1 n_1=30	RGPS2 n_2=30
Addition (+)	1	60.0	70.0	60.0	70.0	100.0	50.0	73.3	63.3
Subtraction (-)	2	-	20.0	30.0	30.0	60.0	40.0	30.0	30.0
Multiply (*)	3	-	10.0	30.0	40.0	-	30.0	10.0	26.7
Division (÷)	4	-	-	20.0	20.0	30.0	-	16.7	6.66

Note: 1 can perform one operation, 2. Can perform two operation, 3. Can perform three operation, 4. Can perform all the four mathematical operations

5th Class
The results showed that 100.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1were solve 'Addition' sums, whereas, 50.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were found at this level. In Govt. School 1, 60.0 per cent of students solved 'Subtraction' sums but in RGPS-2only 40.0 per cent of students were able to do 'Subtraction' sums. No student in RGPS-1was able to do 'Multiply' sums, whereas, 30.0 per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to do 'Multiply' sums. Thirty per cent of RGPS-1students were able to do 'Division' sums where as none of the students of RGPS-2were able to do 'Division' sums.

4. Overall results
The results depicted that 73.3 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 63.3 per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to do 'Addition' sums. In Govt. School 1, 20.0 per cent of students and in RGPS-2only 30.0 per cent of students were able to do 'Subtraction' sums. In case of 'Multiplication' operation 10.0 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 26.7 per cent in Govt. School 2, students were able to do 'Multiplication' sums. Only 16.7 per cent of students in RGPS-1and 6.7 per cent of students in RGPS-2were able to perform 'Division' sums. The students who were academically backward they usually remained absent in the class because they developed fear for the subject and they lacked interest. Sharma and Singh (2002) conducted a retest on 378 class 5th students from three rural government schools in three villages of Patiala district of Punjab state. They indicated that though all these students had passed the class 5th examination conducted by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in March 2000, only two per cents of girls cleared the maths paper while 12 per cent boys and 14 per cent girls passed Punjabi paper (regional language)

5. Conclusion
Academic skills of students studying in government primary schools were not able to achieve the desired academic skills. In Punjabi language, students of all classes were at letter level which meant they were able to identify and read language letter only. Still they need skill in reading paragraph and story fluently. In English language, majority of students were at small letter and word level. In mathematics, students of 5th class were able to identify and write digits from 10-99 only. In basic operations of maths majority of students were able to perform addition and subtraction only. Students of 5th class were not able to do division sums.

6. Recommendations
1. Personal attention given to academically backward children can be helpful in the improvement of their performance.
2. If teacher teaches according to the level of students in academic skills in interesting manner like using games etc. This will produce desirable learning outcomes.

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