

Effectiveness of newspaper in education (NIE) program on the student performance

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ABSTRACT

Newspapers have been the most important tool in shaping the growth and development of any society in the modern world. The newspaper industry of any country for that matter spreads knowledge and awareness amongst the people by propagating itself as a medium for a wide area of topics such as politics, sports, social issues, medicine, entertainment, advertising and marketing, and more recently in education as “Newspaper in Education (NIE)”. This study presents the effectiveness of Newspaper in Education (NIE) program and the impact on student performance with special reference to schools in Karnataka. 15 schools have been selected for the study comprising sample with students of Middle school (6,7) and High school (8, 9 and 10). NIE programs of three leading newspapers viz. The Hindu, The Times of India and Deccan Herald have been considered for the survey. A questionnaire containing 20 questions on the NIE content, delivery method, perceptions about NIE, academic performance and the areas of improvement was administered among the sample containing 200 students of Middle school and High School. Survey results were subjected to statistical analysis. Survey results indicated that two of the newspapers viz. Deccan Herald and The Times of India have similar NIE content and the delivery model, while, The Hindu has different delivery model. Analysis of responses to questions based on perceptions and the academic performance indicated that there is a significant increase in the general knowledge and skills in middle school students than the High school students after the introduction of NIE in schools. Areas of improvements in terms of NIE content and delivery method is discussed in this paper. This is the first report on effectiveness of NIE program on student performance from India.

Keywords: Newspaper in education, media in education, NIE

Newspapers have been the most important tool in shaping the growth and development of any society in the modern world. More than anything, they have been very instrumental in bridging the communication gap between people that contributes to the air of awareness in a society. Since the very first day that the oldest newspaper in the world had made its appearance, there have been seen

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progressive changes that have catapulted the status of every society to new levels of evolution from time to time. The newspaper industry in every country stands out as an influential body contributing to the development of the modern society by acting as one of the most potential platform for exchange of thoughts and opinions. Moreover, by covering a wide range of topics that are relevant to the daily lives of the people in a society, it promulgates the identity of the society, and acts as the dispenser of public opinions. One of the most crucial tasks of the newspaper industry is its contribution towards the economic and industrial development of a country through its assimilation of the people's voice (PRWeb, 2006).

The Indian newspaper industry has passed various stages of evolution to reach the status that it enjoys today – that of a leading press arena in the world (PRWeb, 2006). There are hundreds of newspapers that reach out to the people of this vast country in enormous numbers every morning. A typical Indian daily newspaper is the staple diet for a typical Indian, bringing him/her news from all over the globe. Since daily newspapers succeed in attracting more readerships, an Indian daily newspaper is the order of the morning for eager news hungry readers across the country. By garnering an increasing number of subscribers in the form of readers, newspapers clearly reflect the individuality of a reader and the country as well. The growth in the circulation of newspapers in the country results in the overall economic prosperity of the country, elevating it to higher levels. An Indian daily newspaper strikingly plays a significant role in the structural shaping of the country's economic development (PRWeb, 2006). The newspaper industry of any country for that matter spreads knowledge and awareness amongst the people by propagating itself as a medium for a wide area of topics such as politics, sports, social issues, medicine, entertainment, advertising and marketing, and more recently in education as "Newspaper in Education (NIE)".

The Newspaper in Education (NIE) is a program, which provides newspapers to classrooms. Begun as

early as the 1930's, Newspapers in Education (NIE) is a globally recognized program that delivers local and national news to area schools. The purpose of having newspapers in the classroom is to improve students' history, math, economics, science, reading, spelling, writing, and geography skills-to name a few at all grade levels (NAA, 2001). NIE makes newspaper reading accessible to young people by providing a free newspaper package containing a variety of national newspapers for each student. This way, the programme aims at connecting young people to current affairs, and wants to stimulate interactive ways of teaching to attain the goals that are often specified when the teaching of citizenship education is concerned. The programme, moreover, has the firm intention of creating a generation of critical thinkers and informed citizens (Ellen Claes & Ellen Quintelier, 2009).

Through the use of the daily news, editorials, features and even advertising, students at all grade levels can learn educational concepts like math and cost comparison skills, geography and meteorology, history and current events and how they shape our world, all while improving reading and comprehension skills (Lincoln Journal Star, 2012). NIE materials encourage students to read and evaluate informational text. Another perceived benefit of NIE is that it encourages students to be civic-minded and think about issues facing their communities and the world (NAA, 2011). According to study conducted by an expert panel of consultants, NIE workshop sessions would bridge the gap between classroom teaching and the real world (WAN, 2006).

Several research studies have proven that NIE programs make a big difference in student performance (Sullivan, 2002). Sullivan's research findings suggests that having an NIE program for at least some classrooms at a school will increase the overall performance of the school, on average, by about 10 per cent.

Much of the previous research on NIE is historical in nature and generally focused on program descriptions. The idea of using newspapers as a teaching tool goes well back before the inception of formal programs run by newspapers themselves. "Recorded references to the use of the newspaper in the classroom go back to the 1890s" (Haefner, 1967). Educators' associations

advocated this practice themselves for years. Newspaper companies first got involved in the late 1930s when the Milwaukee Journal sponsored and distributed a book about using newspapers to teach current events; The New York Times sponsored a similar book 10 years later (NAA, 2001).

A handful of empirical studies were done in the 1980s on the impact of NIE programs. All of these studies showed positive results. However, all were small scale, short-term, and made no effort to control for other factors. They should generally be characterized as marketing studies rather than serious academic research. More recently, a well-done experiment was conducted in Austin, Texas. However, that study focused on the effects of various teaching strategies and not on the effects of NIE programs in general. Most newspapers have done independent survey and currently do little to measure the impact of NIE programs on student performance. The primary reason is that most newspapers view teachers as their customers (NAA, 2001). There has been one significant recent effort to measure the effect of NIE programs on student performance under the "KidsWIN" project at the Star Tribune in Minneapolis. For four years, the Star Tribune and Minneapolis Public Schools conducted an experiment using a newspaper-based curriculum to improve the reading skills of students in the Minneapolis Public Schools. There is clear evidence that KidsWIN had a positive impact on the reading performance of a wide variety of students in many different situations (NAA, 2001).

Newspaper in Education (NIE) program in India

In India, The *Times of India* group introduced its NIE programme in 1985 and with the programme now reaching 5 million students of over 2,000 schools in New Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Mumbai, Calcutta, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Kolkata. In the year 2000, The Hindu introduced NIE programme in various schools. In 2003, Deccan Herald introduced NIE program in various schools in Karnataka. The Hindustan Times introduced NIE program in 2005. In Karnataka, several schools have opted for NIE program of Times of India, The Hindu and Deccan Herald.

Most newspapers with NIE program provide their regular edition or customized student edition as a NIE

paper to schools. NIE edition would cover various sections like sports, politics, Business, National news, state news, story, comic strip, crossword, Su-do-ku, Quiz, City News, Science, School Scene, Exam Speak, Cartoon Strip, History and Art etc. All the three papers selected for the study, have NIE paper and workshops as their delivery model. Times of India and Deccan Herald provide customized newspaper in the form of NIE student edition, while, The Hindu provides their regular edition to students at discounted price. The present study includes NIE programs of Deccan Herald, The Times of India and The Hindu.

All the three papers included in the study conduct workshops as a part of their NIE program, in which resource persons from various disciplines cover topics like Communication skills, Life Skills, Music, Photography, Craft, Environment, Dance, Vedic Mathematics, Theatre, Geography, Philately, and Numismatics. There will be a reading session for students and teacher reads stories in the class.

The objective of the present study is to measure the effectiveness of Newspaper in Education (NIE) program and the impact on student performance with special reference to schools in Karnataka.

Methodology

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Based on the literature review and theoretical background, a structured questionnaire was designed. As the respondents were middle school children, the questionnaire was designed in a simple language to enable them to understand. A questionnaire containing 20 questions on the NIE content, delivery method, perceptions about NIE, academic performance and the areas of improvement was administered among the sample containing students from Middle school (6th & 7th Standard) and High School (8th, 9th and 10th standard).

A total of 200 students were surveyed in the field study conducted across 15 schools in Karnataka. A total of 189 questionnaires were successfully collected representing the response rate of 94.5%. There were 98 males (52%) and 91 (48%) females. Out of 20 questions in the questionnaire, 7 close ended questions on 4-point

scale were related to NIE content and Delivery (Table-1), 6 questions on Five point Likert scale, from Strongly disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5) were related to performance (Table-2), and remaining 7 questions were either with multiple options or open ended. Survey results were subjected to basic statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

NIE Content and Delivery

The NIE newspaper delivered to the school students has various sections, which help them to get overall input on what is happening around them right from History to Mathematics and culture to entertainment. To know their interest and the effect of the content and delivery of the NIE paper on the students, seven questions were administered (Table 1). In response to NIE Content and Delivery related questions, 74% of the middle school children and 56% of High school children indicated that their NIE paper covers the school events once in a week. These results indicate that most schools have introduced NIE program of one newspaper for both middle and high school children. While, 20% of middle school children indicated that their NIE paper covers events fortnightly. Differential response to coverage of schools events can be attributed to some schools, where middle school and high school would have NIE program of different newspapers. 6% of middle school and 44% of high school children indicated that the NIE paper they use would not cover the school events. As *The Hindu* newspaper uses their regular edition as a NIE paper, while, *The Times of India Deccan Herald* have exclusive student edition of NIE, the school event coverage is evident. Quality of NIE services and resources has a positive effect, and the intensity of service appears to have a larger and significant effect on the success of the NIE program (NAA, 2001).

43% of the middle school and 11% of high School High school children indicated that daily they read stories covered in NIE paper. 43% of middle school and 44% of high school children read NIE paper weekly once. 8% of Middle school and 33% of high school children indicated that they are not aware of stories. 6% of middle school and 11% of high school children indicated that they never read stories in NIE paper. Results indicate that

middle school children are interested in reading stories from NIE paper than high school children. It is evident that significant percentage of high school children either never read stories or they are not aware of NIE stories. These results support the fact that in some schools have not introduced NIE program for high school children. Overall, NIE programs most likely to exist in middle schools and larger metro areas (NAA, 2001).

94% of middle school and 44% of high school children have indicated that activities included in the NIE paper are useful, while 6% of middle school and 33% of high school children indicated that activities included in the NIE paper are rarely useful and 22% of High school children indicated that activities are not useful. It is evident that middle school children are more satisfied with the activities included in the NIE program and useful for them to perform better than high school children. Earlier studies by Sullivan (2002) reported that largest impact of NIE occurred in middle schools than high schools.

92% of middle school and 44% of high school children indicated that NIE team encourages children to contribute to NIE paper. 6% and 33% middle school and high school respectively, indicated that NIE team rarely or never encourages them to contribute to Newspaper. It is imperative to have student reporters program under NIE to build future journalists and reporting should be made mandatory for high school children. New research conducted by NAA Foundation (2008) provides clear evidence that student journalists earn better high school grades, perform at higher levels on college entrance exams and receive higher grades in college writing and grammar courses than students who lack that experience.

94% of middle school and 67% of high school children indicated that resource persons from various disciplines conduct sessions as a part of NIE program delivery. 82% of middle school and 44% of high school children indicated that either daily or weekly, resource persons ask student to read the NIE paper in the class room. 63% of middle school and 33% of high school children indicated that teachers read a story from the newspaper. While, 37% and 67% of middle and high school respectively, indicated that teacher never read the story from NIE paper.

Table 1: NIE Content and Delivery Indicators

Questions	Indicator	Responses	
		Middle School	High School
1. How frequently your NIE newspaper covers school events?	Weekly	74%	56%
	Fortnightly	20%	0%
	Monthly	0%	0%
	No Coverage	6%	44%
2. How frequently you read stories from NIE paper?	Daily	43%	11%
	Weekly Once	43%	44%
	Never	6%	11%
	I am not aware	8%	33%
3. How useful are the activities included in the NIE paper?	Very Useful	72%	33%
	Moderately Useful	22%	11%
	Rarely Useful	6%	33%
	Not Useful	0%	22%
4. How often NIE team encourages student contribution to the NIE paper?	Very Often	33%	11%
	Often	59%	33%
	Rarely	6%	33%
	Never	2%	22%
5. How often NIE resource persons conduct sessions?	Daily	0%	0%
	Weekly	94%	67%
	Monthly	0%	0%
	Never	6%	0%
6. How frequently your NIE resource persons ask you to read the newspaper in the class room?	Daily	43%	0%
	Weekly	39%	44%
	Monthly	0%	0%
	Never	18%	56%
7. Does your teacher read important stories in the class room?	Daily	16%	11%
	Weekly	43%	22%
	Monthly	4%	0%
	Never	37%	67%

N=189

Survey results indicated that two of the newspapers viz. Deccan Herald and The Times of India have similar NIE content and the delivery model, while, The Hindu has different delivery model.

Areas of improvements in terms of NIE content and delivery method, middle school children indicated that there should some outdoor activities under the NIE program delivery.

Student performance

97% of middle school and 89% of high school students indicated that their General Knowledge has significantly increased after the introduction of NIE in their school.

Table 2: NIE Performance Index

Performance Indicator	School Level	SD	D	NO	A	SA	Total
1. My 'General Knowledge' has improved after introducing NIE program in my school.	Middle School	0%	0%	3%	74%	23%	100%
2. My 'Reading Skill' has improved after introducing NIE program in my school	Middle School	0%	4%	4%	69%	23%	100%
	High School	0%	45%	11%	44%	0%	100%
3. My 'Thinking Skill' has improved after introducing NIE program in my school	Middle School	2%	0%	6%	53%	39%	100%
	High School	0%	33%	12%	33%	22%	100%
4. My 'Vocabulary' has improved after introducing NIE program in my school	Middle School	2%	4%	0%	55%	39%	100%
	High School	0%	33%	23%	44%	0%	100%
5. NIE program has helped me to improve my academic performance.	Middle School	4%	2%	2%	63%	29%	100%
	High School	0%	12%	22%	66%	0%	100%
6. NIE program should be made compulsory in all schools?	Middle School	2%	2%	4%	31%	61%	100%
	High School	33%	0%	12%	44%	11%	100%

N=189

SA= Strongly Agree; A=Agree; NO=Neutral Opinion; D=Disagree; SD=Strongly Disagree

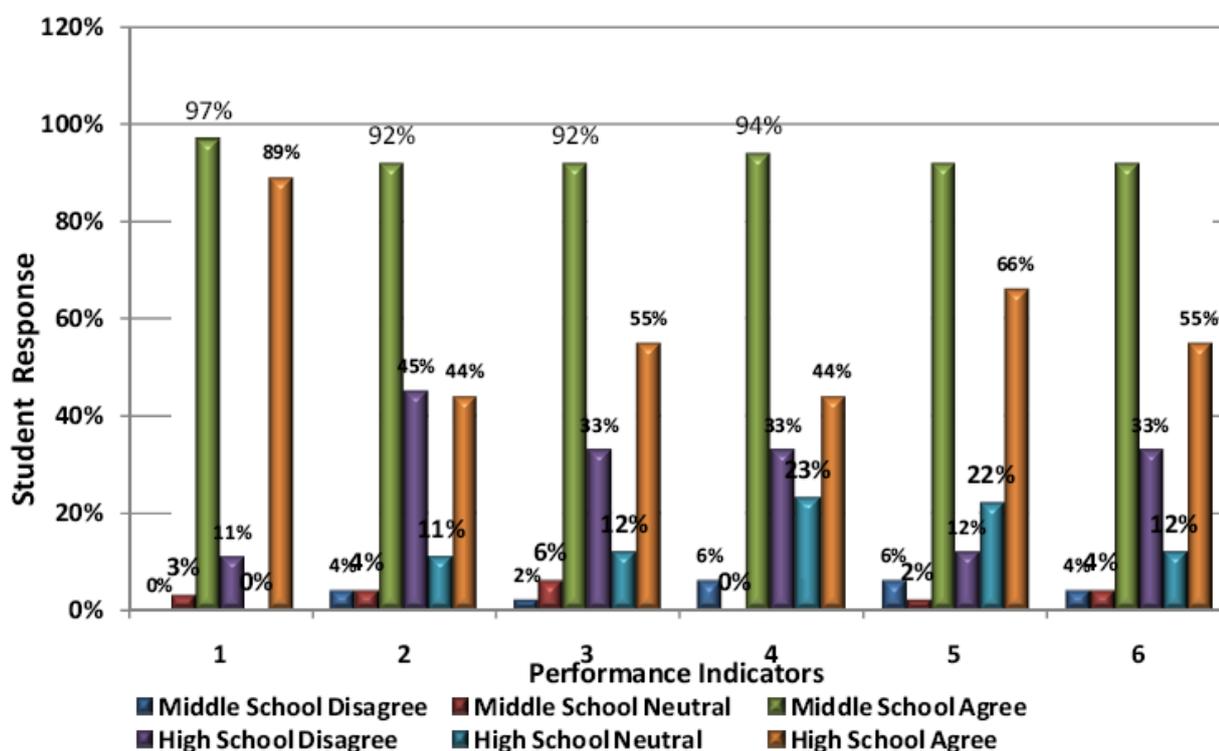


Fig. 1: NIE Performance Index

However the performance indicators regarding the students skill enhancement after reading the newspaper gave a very interesting results. They indicated that 92% of middle school and 44% of high students indicated that their reading skills have enhanced after the introduction of NIE program in the school. Similarly, 82% of middle school and 55% of high school children have indicated that their thinking skills have enhanced after the introduction of NIE program in school (Table 2, Fig.1). 94% of middle school and 44% of high school children have indicated that their vocabulary has improved, while 6% of middle school and 33% of high school children indicated that NIE has not helped them to improve their vocabulary.

92% of middle school and 66% of high schools indicated that NIE program has helped them to improve their academic performance. 92% middle school and 55% of high school children respectively, indicated that NIE should be made mandatory in all schools across the country.

Analysis of responses to questions based on perceptions and the academic performance indicated that there is a significant increase in the general knowledge and skills in middle school children than the High school students after the introduction of NIE in schools. There is a significant increase in the performance of students in middle school (6 & 7 th standard), as was evident in the publication of Dr.Sullivan (2002).

Survey Questionnaire included 7 questions with multiple options to know the coverage of the topics, 56% of the children indicated that their NIE paper cover mostly topics on Mathematics and English, about 12% indicated that their NIE paper covers Mathematics, English and Science, and about 20% students indicated that NIE program Mathematics, English and Social Studies. It is evident that coverage in terms of curricular content in NIE program is not uniform. It is essential that topics related to all the subjects included in the curriculum should be a part of NIE program to make it interesting to students. In all the three papers included in the study, NIE resource persons covers variety of topics like Communication skills, Vedic Mathematics, Craft, Drawing, Music and Geography. Most middle school and high school indicated in their responses that NIE

sessions by resources persons should be frequent and are useful in enhancing their knowledge and eventually help them to exhibit better academic performance.

Conclusion and Future Research

Analysis of NIE content and delivery methods of three newspapers viz. The Times of India, Deccan Herald and The Hindu, reveals that The Times of India and Deccan Herald have separate NIE student edition, which essentially focusses on student requirements and distributed to children at a discounted price. Both these papers cover school events in their NIE student edition on a regular basis, which motivate the students to actively participate in NIE program and its activities. Students are encouraged to contribute to NIE paper on a regular basis, which results in creation of future journalists. Times NIE Star Reporter and Correspondent program provided the platform for budding journalists to hone their skills - AnubhaSawhney who started as a Times NIE School Reporter is today one of the prominent Principal Correspondents with The Times of India main edition (WAN, 2006).

While, The Hindu uses its regular edition as a NIE paper and distribute to children at a discounted price. Survey in school with Hindu NIE indicated that there is no encouragement for students to contribute to NIE program, as The Hindu do not have exclusive student edition of NIE newspaper. At present, The Hindu is encouraging students to contribute to their children supplement "YOUNG WORLD".

The present study revealed that NIE program is effective for middle school children, and after introduction of NIE in school has significantly enhanced the performance of students in the areas like Reading Skills, Thinking Skills and Vocabulary, which eventually reflects in academic performance. It is suggested that newspapers with NIE program in India should focus more on the delivery part of the program and reading sessions should be made mandatory for both middle and high school students. The preliminary objective with which NIE was introduced is to inculcate reading habits in younger generation, which helps them to perform better in academics and also create the future readers of newspapers.

Further research would be required to refine the research approach to obtain more relevant data from pan India and to explore the impact of the NIE program on student performance at the national level.

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