

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT:

The most remarkable achievement for any individual is being Literate. Since the population explosion is taking place at a rapid rate and India is surpassing China to become the most populated nation of the world, it becomes challenging to ensure that every citizen of India is a literate citizen. The increasing poverty rate, declining GDP, increasing inflation and decreasing employment rate are factors acting as obstacles to attain education for many. The 3 R's of basic education i.e. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (Literacy) skills should be learnt by almost every citizen of every country. Education and skill development help people to attain their goals and be prepared for uncertainties of life. "The Education for All" movement initiated by Government of India is a commitment across nations to ensure provision of basic knowledge and education to almost all the citizens of India i.e. young children, the youth of the nation and the adults. Education is not one time learning but it is a life long journey where you keep on learning skills and talents at different points of time. It is focal point of development of oneself and the entire nation. According to the Millennium Report, the main aim of Education for All (EFA) is to have sound and sustainable development. India's government also ensures implementation of this sustainable goal through its sound curriculum of primary, secondary and elementary education. Therefore, there has been tremendous stress on New National Education Policy 2020 implementation which focuses on all round development of an individual. However, there are few hurdles being faced in successful implementation of it. This paper aims to put a light on these challenges and gives suggestions to overcome these challenges.

Key words: Education, New National Education Policy , Sustainable development

INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION IN INDIA

Education and knowledge play an important role in the building of a nation. Provision of knowledge is one of the fundamental rights of a citizen of a nation and plays a very important role in the shaping of the identity of individuals, societies, and nations. Hence it must be ensured by governments of a nation to provide educational opportunities to each citizen.

In the year 1948, Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated that 'Everyone has a right to education' and on the same lines, in the year 2000, the world's governments adopted the six Education for All (EFA) goals and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The six Education for All (EFA) agenda as relating to six areas are: early childhood care and education, primary education, youth and adult learning needs, literacy, gender equality and quality in education. The eight Millennium Development goals are : To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, To achieve universal primary education, To promote gender equality and empower women, To reduce child mortality, To improve maternal health, To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, To ensure environmental sustainability and To develop a global partnership for development. (source: <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/education-all> United Nations, Education for All education.gov.in)

The report submitted by International Commission on Education to UNESCO emphasised on providing an all -round view of education consisting of four main things i.e. learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. The education priorities of UNESCO are shaped by

the above mentioned objectives. The global Education for All (EFA) movement hence is directed towards attainment of meeting the learning needs of children of different age groups, youth and adults by 2025. The same text has been adopted by the government of India also. Indian Constitution states that compulsory education for all children and preferably without any fee being charged, up to the age of 14 years should be strictly implemented along with the provision of universal elementary education. Article 45 and 21A of the Constitution emphasise on special provision of education where in both the Central government and the State government should make efforts to increase the spread of education in the country for attainment of sustainable goals. The various initiatives of the Government of India are Operation Blackboard (OB); Non-Formal Education (NFE); Teacher Education (TE); Mahila Samakhyas (MS); Lok Jumbish Project (LJP); Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP); National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (MDM); District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The landmark passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, etc. Children should be given quality elementary education by the state with the help of different stakeholders coming forward to help them. Data suggests that it will be difficult to reach the goal of making every child complete his primary school by the end of year 2025 especially without participation of India. Keeping this in view, Indian education system has made many changes over the years to ensure the same. The "Education for All" movement was initiated at the World conference by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Program, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank in the year 1990. In this year various delegates from 155 nations representing different governments, inter-governmental and Non profitable bodies had a meet at Thailand and they discussed and deliberated different ways on how to impart primary education to all children which are similar on global terms and also how the global illiteracy rate could be brought down. The World Declaration on Education for All affirmed: 'Every person- child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from these educational opportunities being provided to them and globally help in increasing literacy numbers. UNESCO acts a common medium to synergise the efforts globally and ensure that there is "Education for All". The Government of India, started the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) for ensuring reforms in the elementary education program of the country. Also approximately 194 million children in around 1.1 million habitations are to be provided the elementary education. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is hence one of the biggest programs of its kind being run by any government of a nation. Hence, a lot of efforts are to be channelised for the attainment of this big mission. Thus, this paper aims to discuss the problems hindering the achievement of universal education in India and propose potential suggestions to address these issues.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the various problems in Education Sector in India.
- To suggest ways and measure to overcome the problems being faced by the education system in the nation.

PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION SECTOR IN INDIA

In India education system is sound system as compared to the rest of the World. It stands second to the other countries but inspite of this the country lacks in parity between education provided to boys and to girls. Also the target of providing education to all the children in the age group of 6-14 years till the year 2020 could not be attained as per the requirements. This missing of the target led to failure to claim attainment of the education plans laid down under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) of the government. As per government reports the EDWATCH Survey (2020) also showed that around four percent of the children in the age group of 6-10 years and around seven percent in the age group of 11-14 years were not enrolled in schools. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2021 released by Human resource development centre of India found out that the student enrolment in rural India saw a rise of around ninety six percent in the year 2021. But there has been a decline in

students basic reading skills, mathematics skills and different academic levels. Some of the main obstacles were increasing Poverty levels, distant geographic locations, gender parity, lack of awareness amongst the people, increasing corruption levels, lack of duly qualified teachers, ever increasing population levels, less basic resources, and uninterested political leaders. Also, they observed inefficient work culture and missing future vision to provide good quality education. If these hinderances are catered to improvement in Indian education system can be done. As per the findings of the Central Advisory Board of Education, over 12,000 new schools could not be opened as per expected date, and over 2,50,000 additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water -facilities and ramps are still not fully constructed. The progress in attainment of the EFA goals is also not satisfactory. The New Education Policy of the Government should ensure taking sufficient steps for providing better quality education opportunities to the masses.

1. Inadequate Access to Quality Education:

- **Rural-Urban Divide:** In Indian context there are differences in educational opportunities between rural and urban areas with rural regions lacking good and proper infrastructure, lacking qualified or well-educated teachers and insufficient educational resources.
- **Socio-economic Disparities:** Many a times the children from economically weaker backgrounds tend to face certain barriers in education due to their weak financial health which leads to a vicious cycle of poverty and restricted opportunities.
- **Gender Inequality:** Women in rural areas still experience gender-based discrimination which may limit their access to quality education.

2. Poor Infrastructure and Resources:

- a) **Lack of Adequate Schools:** Many remote areas lack schools or have poorly maintained ones which force children to travel long distances or abandon education altogether.
- b) **Insufficient Basic Facilities:** Inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of clean drinking water and no electricity in schools often hamper the learning environment for children and thus lead to high dropout rates of children from children.

3. Low Quality of Education:

- a) **Shortage of staff:** There is a shortage of well-qualified and trained teachers especially in the distant and remote areas across the nation. There is a need to have teacher -training programs and various skill development programs to improve and enhance the teaching methodologies. Also there is shortage of good and experienced teachers in rural areas which adds to the woes of the teaching sector.
- b) **Outdated Curriculum:** The curriculum framework sometimes fails to align with the needed practical skills which are required in the modern world thereby resulting in a gap between education and employability.

4. High Dropout Ratio:

High dropout rates are a major challenge in the Indian education system. Many children drop out of school due to bad financial condition at home, lack of interest or the need to work to earn money to support their families.

SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION IN INDIA:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ensures the implementation of the elementary education programme in phased manner and the National Literacy Mission ensures eradication of illiteracy.

However, emphasis should be on increasing the number of qualified teachers into the system and ensuring good coordination between managements of schools and unions of teachers thereby engaging more students in education. This requires more innovative ways of delivering lectures and providing various learning opportunities to the students from different rural areas and remote areas across the country. Therefore, it is suggested that appointment of regular and duly specialised teachers for the same should be considered for the attainment of the education goals. Also, Government should keep a check on the flow of funds for education development and audit the fund flow so that fund utilisation is done properly. Need is also felt to reform the curriculum although New National Education Policy but to intensify its progress and providing pedagogical supports like new technology or audio- visual aids to schools even in backward areas still needs to be emphasised upon. All this will help in improving the overall quality of teaching-learning inputs.

In Samagra Shiksha campaign emphasis has been laid on overall commitment and dedication to universalisation of education across different schools in India. Major thrust has been laid on building child centred pedagogy which will cater to individual needs of students, lay down a comprehensive curriculum which is relevant and customised with local needs of students, assessment of learning and providing equitable opportunities for all.

1. Enhancing Access and Equity:

- a) Infrastructure Development: Need is felt to invest in building and renovating schools particularly in remote and marginalized areas and ensure adequate facilities in the school premises.
- b) Scholarships and Financial Support: There should be enough budget to provide scholarships and financial assistance to economically disadvantaged students thereby enabling them to access quality education.

2. Improving Quality of Education:

- a) Teacher Recruitment and Training: Sound Recruitment system of teachers through proper test and exam clearance and orientation training will ensure more qualified teachers in the education system especially in rural areas and provide ongoing professional development programs to improve teaching standards.
- b) Curriculum Reform: There is a need to regularly update the curriculum to incorporate practical skills, critical thinking and digital literacy so as to ensure proper alignment of education with the needs of the job market.

3. Empowering Marginalized Groups:

- a) Girl child Education: Suggestion is to implement initiatives to promote girl child education such as providing safe transportation, constructing girls-only schools and raising awareness about the importance of gender equality in education.
- b) Inclusive Education: There is a need to develop inclusive policies and practices to support children with disabilities, girl child education measures to ensure their access to quality education.

4. Public-Private Partnerships:

Need is felt to foster collaboration between the government, private sector and civil society organizations to mobilize resources, share expertise and address educational challenges effectively.

5. Vocational training:

The government should provide vocational training or skill-based training to students who don't have much interest in the traditional academic subjects. This will help them acquire the necessary skills to enter the workforce and support themselves and their families.

6. Use of technology:

The government should explore the use of technology such as online learning platforms to improve access to education. This will help students in remote areas access to good basic education without the hassle of moving to long distances. Diksha, Digital infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing platform was launched in 2017 to provide access to e-content through cases and solutions such as QR- coded Energised Textbooks, Quizzes, etc. As a part of PM e- vidya it is being developed as One Nation One Digital Platform for meeting needs of school children in India.

Also Performance Grading Index (PGI) is a complete and comprehensive framework which consists of 70 indicators for the purpose of grading the performance of education parameters in different states and Union territories. It should be considered as an essential element in the roadmap of Government of India to promote education.

7. Addressing gender and socio-economic disparities:

The government must work to overcome any cultural differences that act as a barrier in smooth provision of education to all. Also it should initiate to provide some financial assistance to those who wish to pursue school education but cannot afford to attend school. Initial stress should be on provision of basic or primary education to many and then shift focus to higher education. Various capacity building programmes, programmes for educating girl child and technical and vocational education should be on the priority list of the education ministry.

Low Performance districts in the nation should be identified and specific action plan should be laid own to improve the learning outcome in these districts in a year's span of time.

CONCLUSION:

Education is the most important element for the development and progress of any country and India is also on the mission of laying down parameters for attaining Inclusive education in the near future. There is a need for achieving education for all in India which requires much efforts to address certain problems like inadequate access to education and schools, poor infrastructure, outdated educational programmes and regional disparities in educational framework. Thus by implementing the above few suggested measures like vocational training, skill based training, opening more schools, reducing gender parity in education and inculcating sense of responsibility amongst the masses, education in India can be made Inclusive education with significant progress in providing quality education to masses leading to a brighter future for the nation.

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