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ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF INDIAN EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW

Dr. Subhash Misra*

Declaration

The Declaration of the author for publication of Research Paper in SAARC: International Journal of Research ISSN 2347-8373 Six-monthly Journal of all Research: I, *Subhash Misra* the author of the research paper entitled ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF INDIAN EDUCATION: AN OVERVIEW declare that , I take the responsibility of the content and material of my paper as I myself have written it and also have read the manuscript of my paper carefully. Also, I hereby give my consent to publish my paper in SAARC Journal, This research paper is my original work and no part of it or it's similar version is published or has been sent for publication anywhere else. I authorise the Editorial Board of the Journal to modify and edit the manuscript. I also give my consent to the Editor of SAARC Journal to own the copyright of my research paper.

Abstract

Education is potent instrument for the progress of any nation. It is a major instrument for social transformation. The education that can fulfill the needs of a changing society is needed for the development of nation. Changes in our educational system have been an impetuous in last few decades. Of course, there has been a marked expansion in every sector of education and quantitative improvement may be considered to be the great achievement but quality is still in vogue. In spite of various commissions and committees appointed by the government from time to time to enhance the quality of education and various initiatives taken by the government Indian education is still at the cross-roads. Education being in concurrent list of the constitution of India enjoys the efforts of both the central and state governments. India, being a an over populated country and being a developing nation having federal characteristics in administration, struggles with various inherent issues and challenges in its education system which needs attention for its improvement. The present paper is an endeavour to highlight the issues and challenges of Indian education with an overview of initiatives of government taken to handle them.

Key Words: Issues, Challenges, Pre-primary, Secondary, Higher, Technical Education

We are moving towards 21st century and society is progressing at vary fast pace, which needs overhauling of entire educational system of the country. Ineffective and irrelevant education cannot transform our huge human potential into an asset. There is need to reform our educational system which may become capable of creating a self-reliant and creative generation and all those who are aspirant of quality education may access it at the all levels of education irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex and may become an asset for the country. Expansion, inclusion and rapid improvement with quality throughout the whole education system are needed to improve our education system. In spite of various issues and challenges,

*Head, Department of Teacher Education, Unity Degree College, Lucknow (U.P.) India. e-Mail : subhashmisr@gmail.com

our country has witnessed various developments in all the sectors of education -pyramid, be it pre-primary, elementary, secondary, higher or technical education. Now, we will have an overview of these developments and the issues and challenges which are needed to be addressed.

Pre-Primary education; refers to the education of the infants in the age group of 2½ to 6 years. It begins from the early age and continues till the child's compulsory schooling commences. The significance of pre-school education popularly known as nursery and pre-primary education has been increasingly recognized and consequently there is a growing demand of pre-primary education especially in the urban areas where parents are more aware about the importance of pre-schooling. Government intervention is very limited through Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) programme only. Due to lack of proper intervention of government pre-primary education is not properly regulated and monitored in our country and consequently mushrooming of nursery schools in every street of urban areas has become the ground reality. There is vital necessity of considering its educational importance as it nurtures varied types of imaginative powers and interests of the children, social experiences, encourage a healthy, happy and regular life, habits of personal hygiene. Besides the above merits, this level enables the children to learn to control their emotions. Despite the urgent need and requirement of pre-primary education, a number of problems, like- problem of expansion in rural areas, problem of untrained teachers, meager allocation of budget etc are the hurdles in the path of Pre-Primary education. Pre-primary education has not been very serious concern in India which needs attention of policy planners.

Elementary Education; It has been considered as a foundation of the education system. Article 45 of the Constitution stipulates that the 'State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.' But still it was an unrealized dream. The National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 (revised in 1992) played significant role in concretizing the task of universalization of elementary education consequently central and state governments initiated a number of programmes to fulfill the Constitutional obligation and national aspirations like- Scheme of Operation Blackboard (on improving physical infrastructure), Non formal Education (NFE), Mahila Samakhya (MS), State specific education projects like the Andhra Pradesh Primary Education project (APPEP), Bihar Education project(BEP), Lok Jumbish in Rajashthan (on girls' education) , Shiksha Karmi Project in Rajashthan (On teacher absenteeism) , Education for All Project in Uttar Pradesh, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, Commonly known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Teacher Education Scheme, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBVS) (KGBV has now been subsumed within SSA.). Consequently to several efforts, India has made enormous progress in terms of expansion of primary education leading to universal primary education-access, retention, attainment of minimum level of learning, infrastructure, and increase in institutions, teachers, and students. The Government of India launched Sarva Shiksha abhiyan (SSA) in 2002, which is Government of India's flagship programme for achievement of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 20 crore children in 1.1 million habitations. SSA has been the single largest holistic programme addressing all aspects of elementary education covering over one million elementary schools and Education Guarantee Centre (EGS)/Alternate and Innovative Education (AIE) Centers and about 20 crore children. SSA has two aspects- (i) - It provides a wide convergent framework for implementation of Elementary Education schemes. (ii)- It is also a programme with budget provision for strengthening vital areas to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education.

The result is, education has reached the masses and there has been a phenomenal expansion of primary schools with attainment of high growth enrollment rates of children all over the country. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 for the first time guaranteed the right to quality elementary education. This Act provided a legal framework that entitles all children between the ages of 6-14 years free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education based on principles of equity and non-discrimination.In spite of the best efforts, the goal of Universalization of elementary education on ground has still remained unachieved. The growing needs of elementary education have not been met by all the efforts made so far and there continues to be fairly large gap in achievement level. A large number of children have remained non-enrolled or found to be out of school or receiving a very poor quality of education. Due to rapid expansion of growth in elementary education without fulfilling the requirement of the student as well as society, its quality has suffered greatly and gets degrading day by day.

Secondary Education; Secondary Education being a link between the elementary and the higher education as well as foundation for technical and vocational education has become major challenge. Secondary Education is a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work. Secondary education should be comprehensive; both to be terminal for those who did not want or could not proceed for further education, and to have a strong academic foundation for higher studies, for those who have aptitude and interest. It is also necessary that besides general education up to secondary level, opportunities for improvement of vocational knowledge and skill should be provided at the higher secondary level to enable students to be employable. Secondary education has to be so restructured that students could be sufficiently equipped, both in knowledge and skills to enter in social and economic life. At present, the various schemes targeted at secondary stage are being implemented in the form of Centrally Sponsored Schemes to address the challenges of Secondary education:

RMSA: The scheme was launched in March, 2009 with the objective to enhance access to secondary education and to improve its quality. The implementation of the scheme started from 2009-10. It is envisaged to achieve an enrolment rate of 75% from 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage within 5 years of implementation of the scheme by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation. The other objectives include improving quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removing gender, socio-economic and disability barriers, providing universal access to secondary level education by 2017, i.e., by the end of 12th Five Year Plan and achieving universal retention by 2020.

ICT : The scheme of ICT at schools was received during the year 2009-10 to allow states to have a dedicated ICT teacher in each secondary or higher secondary school. As there has been a significant impact of ICT in the delivery of educational services across the world, an amount of Rs 5000 core is being provided during the 11th plan for providing ICT infrastructure in schools. Under this programme, each school will be provided with ICT infrastructure consisting of a networked computer lab with at least ten computers, a server, a printer connected on LAN and broadband Internet connectivity.

Inclusive Education : Education of the differently abled in the country like India is of great importance where approximately more than 35 million populations in some or other way is possessing disability as statistics reveal. In the course of time it took many changes in its approach towards the differently abled, like the transformation from sympathetic approach to the empathetic approach. Gradually the services for the differently abled came under the umbrella of Inclusive Education. Inclusion is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent possible. No student is excluded from or discriminated within education on the ground of race, colour, sex, language and disability. The earlier scheme of Integrated Education for Disabled children (IEDC) was replaced by the scheme of Inclusive Education of the Disabled it the Secondary Stage so as to mainstream children with disability in the secondary stage into the regular schools.

KVS and NVS : In 2013, there was enrolment of 11, 21,012 students in 1094 Kendriya Vidyalayas and about l.80 lakh students were on the rolls of Navodaya Vidyalayas, both of which as shining examples of quality and performance. In 2012-13, Board Exams show that the results of these schools were far better than the result of the students of independent schools across the country.

Education of Girls: Education of girls is important not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation. Promotion of gender equality in education is essential for human resource development. Current framework of National development recognizes women as a unique power unit and potential resource of National Development. Though policy documents have always laid emphasis on gender equality since the past three decades, yet it has always had a laid back approach in implementation. Though school enrolment ratios have been rising, high rate of drop- outs, particularly girls, still continues to be a major problem. In actual terms, the dopout rates of girls , specially from the marginalized sections of society and the rural areas continues to be grim 9 out of every 10 girls ever enrolled in school do not complete schooling and only 1 out of every 10 girls enrolled in class I reaches class XII in rural areas. Most of the states implemented in centre scheme for education of girls, but generally with very limited coverage. Measures should be undertaken to overcome obstacles to girl's education posed by factors such as poverty, domestic/sibling responsibilities, girl's child labour, low preference to girls' education etc.

Bridging Social Disparities : To abridge social gaps in secondary education in respect of SCs , STs minorities and OBCs, there should be up gradation of elementary schools to secondary schools in geographic concentration areas of relevant social groups, supply of free uniforms, test books, foot weal, hostels for boys and girls, scholarships for deserving students, remedial teaching for weaker sections etc.

Burden of Fees : There should be a generous provision of scholarship to those who cannot afford fees, especially girl students who are at the verge of dropping out and early marriages.

Vocationalization of Secondary Education : It was always expected that vocationlization of secondary education should be linked to manpower planning but it has been never possible. The vocationalization of secondary education was a well considered but poorly implemented programmes made it a failure .It requires budge plants and workshops in order to provide training in practical skills. There should be rigorous apprentice ship training.

Quality Improvement in Schools : There should be improvement in Science Education in Schools, Promotion of Yoga, Environment orientation to School Education, National Population Education project etc.

Problem of Efficient Teachers and Poor Infrastructure Facilities : In spite of several efforts of the government, the scarcity of trained and efficient teachers is a very serious concern for the quality enhancement of secondary education. Secondary education is having problem of sufficient infrastructure also which are hindering the quality of secondary education.

Initiatives have been taken in the last few years to universalize elementary education. Towards that end, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is being implemented all over the country. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan at the elementary level to universalize elementary education for the age group 6-14 years has already set the stage for an exponential growth of demands for secondary education, therefore, in that perspective, it has become essential to move towards the Universalization of Secondary Educaion. Keeping this view, The Government of India has started Rashtriya Madhyamik Shikha Abhiyan(RMSA) which is a mission with a Vision to make good quality education available , accessible and affordable to young person of age of 14-18 years by 2017, especially to economically weaker sections , educationally backward minorities, the girls and the differently able children in rural and remote areas. The Main guiding principles of this programme are - Universal access, Quality, Equality, Justice, Institutional Reforms, Strengthening and development of curricular and structural aspects. Steps should be taken to expand facilities for secondary education in a way to achieve the goals of RMSA. More over the social gender based and regional disparities need to be addressed. Educationally backward districts should receive greater support for school infrastructure. The quality of education needs to be improved with investment in teacher education. The state boards of Secondary Education need to be strengthened.

Higher Education; he higher education institutions are always valued as national assets because they are the organizations which provide support to socio-economic development of the country. They are always engage in searching new knowledge and refreshing knowledge as per the requirements of the society. The higher education system of the country has witnessed phenomenal growth after independence and has provided skilled manpower needed in the country. The University Grants Commission (UGC) was established in 1953 and became a statutory body of Government of India in 1956 for the coordination, determination and maintenance of Standards of higher education. Although

UGC as a regulatory body of higher education institutions is coordinating to maintain the standard of higher education institutions, other professional statutory bodies like National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), Bar Council of India (BCI), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), Medical Council of India (MCI) etc are also playing important role in maintaining the standards. The 11th plan of UGC started with the objective of expanding enrolment in higher education with quality, inclusiveness and relevance together with effecting academic reforms by increasing number of institutions and enhancing the intake capacity of the existing institutions. Despite several efforts of the government, statutory and regulatory bodies, there is still need of large number of higher education institutions to burn out quality manpower in areas required by the industry and society. With the expansion of higher education our government has tried to provide access of higher education but quality concern is still in vogue. There is need of reorganizing and restricting the higher education system. There is need to reframe the curriculum and change the evaluation pattern to make higher education more productive. But due to lack of coordination among the regulatory and professional statutory bodies and their malfunctioning, they are unable to establish land mark in maintaining the standards in their concerned professions. Autonomy of higher education institutions is another most important issue which has been very serious concern among the institutions committed for quality and identity. There is usher need of reformation in governance also.

Issues and Challenges

Higher education is witnessing various challenges which need to be addressed. The important are as follows:

1. *Enrolment, Curriculum and Evaluation;* These are the major problems of higher education across the country. As per UGC Annual report of 2011-12, Out of the total enrolment of students(203.27 lakhs), 39.07 % students are in the faculty of arts, 18.64 % in Science, 17.57 % in commerce and remaining 26.70 in professional faculties. This uneven distribution in enrolment shows that we need policy reformation. Value based education has been another serious concern of higher education so we need to promote career oriented courses and modify our existing curricula to make our curriculum market and society oriented. Hence, there should be :

- Common Entrance Test for all major courses.
- More opportunity for professional courses
- Universalisation of semester system.
- Contentious internal evaluation which should replace annual examination.
- Introduction of credit system to provide students some flexibility.
- Curriculum revision at least once in every three years to keep syllabi in tune with job market dynamics, social demand and advancement in research.

2. *Lack of Quality Institutions ;* To improve the quality of higher educational institutions, there should be introduction of a mandatory accreditation system for all educational Institutions. Quality improvement in higher education will be brought about through restructuring academic programmes to ensure their relevance to modern market demands. There should be complete revamping of teaching /learning methods by shifting from traditional repetitive experiments to open-ended design-oriented work from encouraging invention and innovation, compulsory interactive seminars, tutorials, improving learning opportunities and conditions by updating text books & learning material.
3. *Lack of Quality Teachers;* There is a dearth of qualified teachers. National Eligibility test (NET) should be restructured with greater emphasis on recruitment of adequate and good quality teachers. Also there should be expansion of research programmes and research projects through funded projects. There should be short and long courses to upgrade teachers' capabilities.
4. *Problem of Autonomy;* Autonomy is the *sine qua non* of excellence. An autonomous institution strives for quality and acts with full potential by its own choice for its chosen mission. Erosion of autonomy adversely influences quality. Autonomy should be linked to accountability furthermore; the government must ensure that fee structures do not lead to profiteering. Beyond this, the government must not interfere in institutional governance. With least interference of

government, the institutions move towards the students, teachers and society who are the main stakeholders of educational system. Higher educational institutions of India suffer due to lack of autonomy as government enforces regulations to ensure the quality and interfere in the system. Autonomy is the only way to achieve excellence which has been proved by IITs and IIMs in the country. We need such kind of autonomy in other higher education institutions to make them world class.

5. *Other Issues;* It is increasingly recognized that in the context of major economic and technological changes, the system of higher education should equip students with adequate skills to enable their full participation in the emerging social, economic & cultural environment. Universities are witnessing a drastic change in their outlook and perspective. Also, information and communication technologies are leading to fundamental changes in the structure, management and mode of delivery of the entire educational system. Therefore, many universities have already recognized the strategic significance of open and distance learning and offer correspondence courses. The developments in the field of information and communication technology and expansion of infrastructure for communication all over the country have created an unprecedented opportunity to serve the needs of continuing education and also to meet the demands for equal opportunity for higher education.

Technical Education

Technical Education plays a vital role in human resource development of the country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. India's technical education institution comprises of 15 Indian Institute of Technology (IITS), 04 IIITs, 13 Indian Institutes of Management (IIM), which are Institution of National Importance, 30 National Institutes of Technology (NITs), schools of Hotel Managements, Engineering Colleges and polytechnic etc. The technical education sector has made immense contribution to the country's economic & industrial development. It has produced high quality skilled, technical and managerial manpower .The number of Institutes has grown phenomenally. In 1947, there were only 46 engineering college & 53 polytechnics. Due to initiates taken during successive plan periods, especially become of large scale private sector participation, Institutions has risen to above 5000. Former HRD Minister Kapil Sibbal was aware of the ills affecting the best technological institutions- IITs and IIMs. According to him, the curriculum of IITs and IIMs need to revise their curriculum to compete at the International level.A separate mechanism may be setup which would advise U.G.C. regarding the financial needs and priorities of the Technical Institutions while Planning Commission should allocate appropriate earmarked outlays for covering all technical institutions such as IITs, IIMs and Polytechnics.

Conclusion

After the SSA and RMSA results in huge expansion of the school system, steps should be initiated to overcome the shortage of trained teachers. As there is a need for efficient teachers if the schemes of present five year plan are to be implemented successfully. The lackadaisical approach witnessed so for in the teacher education sector as recognition is being given to hundreds of below average training institutes. It should be abandoned immediately with a comprehensive policy guided by strong monitoring being put in place. Our education system has been slow in responding to the changes around us.

Education, whether Primary, Secondary, Higher or Technical must have links with all nations goals. A large number of centers for excellence to turn out quality manpower in areas relevant to industry and society need to be established with the triangular partnership of academia, industry and government .The institutes of excellence are essential to make India a knowledge superpower and would help in returning our competitive edge in the global economy .To ensure quality of education, it is necessary to make our accreditation process more transparent ,time –bound and free from the regime of controls.

For the above requirement, there is dare need of a commission which should simultaneously deal with Pre-primary, Elementary, Secondary, Higher and Technical education. There is also a necessity of reequipping and restructuring "University System" to shape Indian Education. Now we are dreaming of a knowledge based society which is unimaginable if the

quality of education is ignored. It may be possible by expanding the modified traditional concepts of teaching and enriching them with addition of the new methods based on the new technology that has revolutionized the teaching – learning process. For this we have to start to approach right from the beginning i.e. from the pre-primary level and to proceed up to the highest level of education. For this, right from the awareness campaigns to the universalisation of elementary education, providing the both infrastructure and the facilities of international standard, facilitating the entrants to approach the schools with their very limited means, overcoming the financial problem of the guardians in providing the learning environment at home also without any strain, providing value based education to make the children ideal citizens of the society and to provide them guidance facilities for their all-round development and the maximum utilization of their inherent potential has to be aimed.

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