

Identifying Obstacles to Our Educational System

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ABSTRACT

There has been a veritable explosion in numbers – student numbers, institutions, and teachers. Institutions of excellence have been developed, producing highly specialized human capital. Important failures pertain to universalization of elementary education. Vocationalization of secondary education did not take off at all; and higher education is confined to less than 10 per cent of the relevant age-group population. The number of high-quality institutions is limited. Even the topmost Indian institutions do not figure in international rankings of universities. The paper proposes to discuss all these ills of our educational system in detail and endeavours to suggest a viable solution.

Keywords: Human Capital, Scientific Man Power, Universalization, Vocationalisation, Excellence,

Introduction:

It is being increasingly realized that the success of all socio-economic reform policies critically depends upon the human capital base created in a society. Without a large human capital base in the form of a literate and highly educated workforce, major economic reforms have been found unsuccessful as in the case of sub-Saharan Africa. With globalization and liberalization of the domestic economy, demand for skilled manpower will increase significantly. Higher education determines India's economic and technological progress. It is not adequate to focus all the attention on primary education and to ignore higher education.³ It may not be the best way of enhancing the international competitiveness of a developing economy like India. Concentration on elementary or school education does not and should not mean ignoring secondary and higher education. Neglecting of higher education would indeed be very costly. As a long-term strategy of 10-20 years, a threshold level of 20 per cent enrolment ratio seems to be critical for a developing country to take the path towards becoming a developed country. India should aim at reaching this minimum level of 20 per cent gradually in the near future.

Data Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from different journal, magazine, government

report, conference volume books and websites and different government report and economic survey. This paper will analyse the government scheme and programme that how these are helpful in removing poverty and employment generation.

Research and Discussion

Major Achievements and Conspicuous Failures in Education: As a consequence of sustained growth in expenditure on education, there has been a remarkable growth in education institutions at all levels – Primary, secondary and tertiary. The country was able to achieve a Gross Enrolment Ratio of 96% at the primary level, though the drop-out rate for class I to VIII was 51 percent which is quite high.

At the secondary and higher secondary level, total enrolment for the age-group 14-18 year was about 40 percent, though the drop-out rate for class I to X was as high as about 62 percent.

Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education reached a level of about 11 percent in 2019-20, though world average is 23.2 percent. The country has huge infrastructure in higher education with 378 universities and 18,064 colleges. The country was able to establish institutions of excellence in the field of engineering, medicine, management and also create national level research institutions in agriculture and

science.⁵ As a consequence, the country produces second largest educated and skilled manpower in the world, only next to China.

The development of huge educational structure of 378 universities and 18,064 colleges, 1.52 lakh secondary and higher schools, and 10.43 lakhs of primary and upper primary schools is a matter of legitimate pride.

Glaring Failure in Education: However, there are glaring failures which deserve urgent attention.

- Despite nearly 58 years of development planning, the country has failed to achieve universalization of Elementary Education – a goal set by the Constitution to be achieved by 1960. Even nearly six decades after independence, the number of children outside schools in elementary education is quite large.

- Drop-out rate in elementary education (I to VIII) was 50.8% in 2004-05 which is very high.

- Drop-out rate among STs and SCs higher at 65.9% and 57.3% respectively is even much higher than the over-all drop-out rate.

- Although secondary education up to class X is not in the real terminal stage, even then drop-out rate (I-X) is as high as 62-64% for girls and 60% for boys.

- Enrolment in Secondary and High Secondary level taken together was only 39.9% in 2004-05: 44.3% for boy and 35.1% for girls which is very low.

- Mid-day meal scheme which covers about 18 crore children in primary and upper primary schools, has improved attendance and retention rate, but serious weaknesses about the implementation of the scheme to provide standard meals have been highlighted by NGOs which need remedial action.

- Glaring inter-state variations in enrolment, drop-out rates and access to secondary and higher secondary level need remedial action so that these variations can be narrowed down.

- A sharp shift in the management pattern of the school has been noticed. The share of unaided public sector schools has doubled from 15% in 1993-94 to 30% in 2004-05. As against it, the share of

government and aided schools has come down from 85% in 1993-94 to 70% in 2004-05. This implies that parents are prepared to pay more for the education of their children, if they perceive of good quality education in particular category of schools.⁶ Thus, there is a need to make more investment in government and aided schools for improving the quality of education.

- To reach the objective of universalization of secondary education as our goal in future, it is necessary to strengthen the school infrastructure, both physical and human in a substantial manner.

- Even in government aided schools, there is a need to change some reasonably affordable fees so that management is provided more resources, besides state grants to improve quality of education.

- There is gross failure in the provision of vocational education since only 5% of the population in India of age-group, 19-24 in 2014-15 acquired some skill, whereas the target set by the Education Commission (1964-66) was 25% by 1986. There is a need to develop effective strategies so that demand driven vocational education programmes in partnership with employers can be drawn. These glaring shortages of skilled human power are being experienced in the rapidly computerizing knowledge economy.

- Higher education continues to be elitist since Gross Enrolment Ratio is only 11% of the population in the relevant age group against the world average of 23.2% and for the countries in transition at 36.5% to which India belongs.

- The share of private unaided higher education institutions increased from 42.6% in 2001 to 63.2% in 2015. Their share in enrolment also rose from 32.9% to 51.5% during the same periods. Since these schools operate purely for profit motive, and charge very exorbitant fees, they price out the weaker sections of the society and become elitist. This militates against our goal of inclusive development and is thus a conspicuous failure of the educational system.

- The dispersal of technical education in the country is highly skewed. Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra account for nearly

55% of engineering colleges and 58% of enrolment in country.

- Distance education was adopted to provide opportunities for the deprived sections of the society, but universities are using these institutions as milch cows to provide huge surpluses for their development. Even IGNOU, is charging very high fees for BCA, MCA, MBA and other vocational courses to either make them self-financing or surplus generating.

- Despite the target set at 6% of the GDP to be devoted to public expenditure in education by 1986, we have reached a level of 3.49% of GDP in 2014-15. This is another gross failure of our priorities towards education which is a potent instrument to promote inclusive growth.

It is heartening to know that in the Eleventh Plan, the Central Government envisaged an outlay of Rs. 2.37 lakh crores at 2006-07 prices for education. This is four-fold increase over the Tenth Plan expenditure of 0.54 lakh crores at 2006-07 prices. The relative share in the total plan outlay on education will correspondingly increase from 7.7% to 19.4%. Around 50% of the outlay is for elementary education and literacy, 20% for secondary education (VIII to XII) and 30% for higher education including technical education. The big boost to education proposed in the Eleventh Plan priorities will take care of the resource constraint and the country should devote its energies to improve effective implementation of the professed goals. Recently a legislation on Right to education has been brought by the government and Rs. 25,000 crore have been earmarked in Union Budget (2015-16) to implement this law.

Role of Information Technology: Major developments in information and communications technology (ICT) in recent decades have brought in new advances in the transmission of data, and the use of information technology (IT) as a vehicle for monitoring and management, among others. New possibilities have already opened up for use of IT in different ways, to not only manage the sector, but also directly assist in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Many new applications are in place. As developments in IT advance rapidly, new opportunities keep emerging, which could be appropriately

harnessed and adapted to assist in education. The other significant development relates to the Digital India programme being rolled out under the initiative of the Government of India. As the implementation of this game-changing process advances, the likelihood is that the urban-rural divide will be bridged with a reliable communication information network.¹⁴ Work is proceeding apace and the network is likely to be in place in the next three or four years.

Many experiments have taken place in the past few years, but a clear picture has so far not emerged as to the specific ways in which IT can be utilized in the classroom and elsewhere. Sufficient experimentation in specific fields has not been undertaken, either sponsored by the government or by individual initiative, though some sporadic attempts have been made. These include using ICT in education as an aid to the teacher in the classroom, as an aid in remedial education; to train teachers, for adult literacy, for modules as learning tools in higher education, and as a management and governance tool. Some remarkable experiments have been undertaken in the use of IT as an aid for teaching and remedial education, as also for teacher preparation, which show great promise. Yet, no major attempts to convert these pilot activities to large-scale field applications have been seriously attempted. The large and rapidly growing area of distance education, with enormous potential, particularly in the higher education sector, has not been given sufficient recognition in policy formulation. Indeed, even the need for a regulator in this field has not yet been officially felt.

Even though the Government of India sponsored the District Information System for Education (DISE) in 1994 as a powerful instrument for gathering data, its implementation has been tardy over the years. It must be noted that its validity depends on the reliability of the information/data being fed into it. Once reformed and revamped, an IT-enabled information system riding on Digital India has the potential to be a game changer. Every student (in every school, college, university or higher education institution), every teacher, principal, and school could have a unique identity – with real-time monitoring of the educational progress of students, teachers' contribution to it, principals' performance, and the

role of schools/institutions in the education process. This can be a powerful monitoring and management tool to sharply upgrade the education process in an open and transparent manner.

It is noteworthy that editorials in many national newspapers have raised the issue of a “move to ban all political activities”, expressing “alarm” at the undemocratic and unrealistic recommendations made by the committee. It is equally noteworthy that most English-language television news channels have not found it necessary to have a discussion on the state of education in the country, or on the need for reforms based on the major recommendations of the committee. The only suggestion from the committee picked up for national debate relates to the reasonableness or otherwise of “throttling” the right conferred by Article 19 (freedom of speech, of ideas, and of association)! One needs to remember that the primary purpose of the university is to educate. No charter stipulates that the prime purpose of a university is to generate politicians. If the by-product, desirable or otherwise, is to trump the main objective or purpose of the university, it is time for us to review the charter of these higher education institutions and declare that their main objective is to generate national leaders; that education of the student is only a desirable by-product.

Reorientation:

There is insufficient recognition in our governance mechanism that subjects such as “education” need to be treated on a different footing than the other responsibilities handled by government departments while implementing public policies. Thus, for example, the beat policeman or the patwari is the field representative of the law and other machinery or the revenue department, who supervises and oversees the implementation of procedures and policies of the department at the lowest level. Contrast this with the role of a teacher or principal. They are not meant to implement “procedures”, but to meet the learning needs of students. The nature of the field machinery in the education department is quite the reverse of other regulatory and management agencies—a teacher is the transmitter of knowledge and a catalyst in educating the child.

Once this fundamental role of the teacher is understood, the entire philosophy and approach of the state and central governments could be reoriented. The education department needs to shed its attitude of being a regulator, and transform itself to becoming a facilitator, to arrange the transmission of knowledge from teachers to students. Today, the focus of every state’s education department is on the minister, secretary, director, inspector of schools, State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), etc. This thinking and orientation need to be transformed – the key is the teacher, the principal, the school, and, of course, the student. The pyramid has to be inverted.

Conclusion:

It is no exaggeration to say that new policy measures are imperatively needed to revamp and upgrade the entire education sector. Band-aid solutions, ad hoc measures, or ushering in new miscellaneous schemes are not approaches that will transform the sector for the better. We have to recognize that investing national energies on quality and inclusively is possibly the only route that can lift the country from an also-ran status to being on the international stage. Even more importantly, it is the only way of meeting the needs of citizens in this democracy.

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