

The status of Indian Primary Education, Developmental Measures and Teaching Competency of Primary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Primary teachers have unique characteristics which differentiate them from the other educators. Enhancing the capabilities, knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as professional profiles are the key factors in achieving the goals of primary education of our nation. Making education compulsory or even declaring it to be a fundamental right however may not ensure that the child attending the school will profit from it, unless of course there is meaningful quality education. The responsibility of providing quality education rests with the teacher. A teacher who is committed, competent with knowledge and skills and is aware of his social responsibilities, tasks and functions will contribute to the realization of goals making education compulsory and a fundamental rights.

Keywords: *Knowledge, Skills Attitudes, Emotionally, Implementation*

The Education Commission (1964-66) of Govt. of India has stated the aims of primary education, "What is expected is that primary education should lay the foundation for a child to grow into a responsible and useful citizen of the country."

Ishwar Bahi Patel Review committee (1977) suggested the following aims of primary education

- (i) Acquisition of tools of formal learning (i.e. literacy, numeracy and manual skills)
- (ii) Development of Physical ability and team spirit.
- (iii) Acquisition of skills in proper observation.
- (iv) Development of skills cooperation in family, school and society.
- (v) Acquisition of skills for planning and executing SUPW with a view to making education work-oriented.

- (vi) Development of aesthetic sense and creativity.
- (vii) Development of readiness to serve poor and disadvantaged.
- (viii) Development of a sense of desire to participate in community work and life successfully.

The NCERT, 1979 has emphasised the aims of primary education like to develop the child as (i) a good learner (ii) a good person (iii) a good citizen (iv) a good worker.

The revised National policy on Education (1992) has stated two main aspects of primary education, namely (a) universal enrolment and retention of children up to 14 years, (b) emphasis on qualitative improvement in primary education. The NPE, 1992 has laid emphasis on minimum levels of learning (MLL) in order to attain the goals of universalisation of primary education.

India is committed to provide free and compulsory education to all its children till they

attain the age of 14 years. Therefore a number of government and private schools are coming up speedily. Parents also want to educate their children by providing them a quality education. Hence Indian Govt. has encouraged the private sectors to enter in this field. Now this efforts of Indian Govt. has shown a positive sign and as per seventh all Indian Educational survey (2002), there is at least one primary school within a radius of one kilometre from their villages. Hence it can be said that primary schools are within the reach of the children. Now parents have put the responsibility of their children on the teacher's shoulders of these schools.

A successful institution is built upon productive teachers who utilize their knowledge, talents, creativity, skills and aptitude to the best of their abilities for the overall development of institution. Therefore now the institutions also want tremendous success by spending less and earn more and sometimes even these institutions do not satisfy the needs of their employees/teachers. But now it is worldwide accepted that a teacher if economically is well paid, well excel in his field.

Making education compulsory or even declaring it to be a fundamental right however may not ensure that the child attending the school will profit from it, unless of course there is meaningful quality education. The responsibility of providing quality education rests with the teacher. A teacher who is committed, competent with knowledge and skills and is aware of his social responsibilities, tasks and functions will contribute to the realization of goals making education compulsory and a fundamental rights and thus to success of EFA, UEE, NLM projects.

The success of reforms in primary education depends largely on the quality of teachers which in turn to a great extent depends on the quality of teacher education/training. The programme of Action of the National policy of

Education, 1986 modified in 1992 has called a complete overhaul of the system of teacher education particularly primary education level. Initiatives for quality improvement of teacher training are linked with several factors, such as quality of students entering the teaching career, the relevance of curricular inputs in the professional preparation of teachers, quality of per-service and in-service programme, teachers accountability etc.

Teacher have played always a pivotal role in the society. The future of the Nation is being shaped in our classrooms, as children are our future nation builders. Therefore, the teachers have great responsibility in moulding the character of children by giving quality education in the school. The performance of good teacher depends upon the specialization, of the subject or fields to be taught and professional knowledge and skill and an understanding of teaching process and teaching skills. In order to equip the teachers with these abilities, teacher education programmes are offered in various places in various levels. There are two teachers preparation courses at various level. D.Ed. course is a teacher preparation course (two years) meant for primary level. B.Ed. course is a secondary teacher preparation course. Students teacher of D.Ed. are exposed in methodology of teaching of teaching all the subjects that are taught at primary level based on pedagogy of children Psychology, and student teacher of B.Ed. course are exposed on two methods of school subjects based on their content specialisation at the graduation on the pedagogy of adolescent Psychology. It reflects that there may be difference in their teaching competency with different pedagogical knowledge.

Professional commitment in education in the modern sense is a recent arrival. Teaching profession had its roots, in missionary works in ancient times. Teachers were sages who adopted teaching as a mission. Emphasized the need for quality teacher education in terms of competency

based on commitment oriented teacher education. It is presumed that if teachers acquire professional competencies and commitment it will result in sound teacher performance. In the functional sense, professional commitment on the part of teacher-educators essentially consists not only on doing their best for introducing teacher-trainees to the competencies that they would need as teachers in schools but also particularly inspiring them to inculcate values of the profession of teaching. The performance in these two areas would require that the teacher educators are well equipped for it and are well oriented and motivated to achieve the desired results.

It is believed that satisfaction at work may influence various aspects of work such as efficiency, productivity, absenteeism, turnover rates and intention to quit and finally employees well-being (Baron, 1986; Magharadi 1999).

This premise holds for a variety of employees, including qualified educational staff. It is expected to hold their jobs longer to be able to engage in more responsive, positive and consistent interaction with children and to influence positively student's performance. Thus it is easy to understand why job satisfaction among teachers continues to be an enduring research issue. Research on teacher's job satisfaction suggests that educators are most satisfied from the teaching itself and their supervision and dissatisfied from their salary and promotional opportunities. These findings seem to be robust across several different countries and cultural contexts. As far as primary school teachers are concerned, Fenech (2006) reported poor work conditions low salaries, heavy workloads, unrealistic expectations from heads, low professional status, organisational conflict and reduced autonomy.

Primary teachers have unique characteristics which differentiate them from the other educators. For example, primary teachers have to teach indoors as well as outdoors. They are expected to be emotionally available and to expend lot of energy over long periods of time. During the last decade, one finds a fairly vigorous attention being paid to the problem of management and control of education, both at the policy and implementation level, and greater advocacy for the need to involve communities in the process of school education through decentralization. In particular there is in evidence a noticeable desire to decentralise primary education and literacy in the country. The National policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and 1992 recommended moving towards empowering the local community to take major management decisions in governance of education at all levels, (district and panchayat levels). The subsequent 72th. and 73th. constitutional Amendments passed in early nineties gave further fillip to this move towards decentralization and community empowerment in the governance of education. It recommended for the delegation of authority related to education, including primary and secondary schools, technical training and vocational education and spread of literacy and cultural activities in Panchayat Raj bodies. Recently some states have initiated concrete action passing appropriate legislation. Currently, a bill to amend the constitution is under consideration to incorporate education upto fourteen years as a fundamental right of every citizen which recently it is approved and implemented by the policy makers in the educational set up of our nation. In future it may prove a land mark in the development in primary education sector. This policy shifts fully lead to an accelerated progress towards the goal of universal elementary education is a matter that depends on how effectively the changed policies are translated into effective programmes on the field.

Under what conditions do children learn in the primary schools and how much do they learn?

These are core concerns of any meaningful discourse on quality. It may be noted that NCERT periodically brings out All India survey Reports on schools in the country which provide a benchmark to assess the status of learning conditions characterizing primary schools. A few other large scale studies conducted recently also give an idea of the situation at the macro level. The Operation Blackboard (OB) scheme, launched more couple of years ago, defined the broad parameters determining the basic educational facilities in a primary school. How far these specifications been implemented? Available empirical evidences indicate that the situation is far from satisfactory. In about 40 percent school children have no access to safe drinking water and separate toilet facilities for girls are available in only 15.20 percent schools.

It is worth satisfaction that enrolment figures have significantly increased, and the number of teachers in creased proportionately. Massive recruitment of teachers in order to fill posts offered under the OB scheme to convert single teachers school to at least two teachers schools.

Thereafter the specification of minimum levels of learning at the national level played an important role in bringing the issue of quality to the attention of all concerned. But it has made a sustainable impact on the way teachers teach and the way children learn discourse on MLLS. But there seems to be no clarity on the role of MLLS in quality improvement measures. In recent years, a few large scale external testing have been conducted mainly as part of the DPEP, to assess the achievement status of children in primary schools. But the tests used for the various surveys do not conform to any basic common parameters nor were they standardized norm-referenced tests. It should be remembered that these are not general ability tests; they are tests of school-based learning. Scholastic text is meaningful only in the context of

what has been taught and on the assumption that children have learnt what has been taught.

Another popular notion being discussed in recent years is the question of mobilizing private investment in elementary education. This idea seems to have emerged due to the apparent increase in private schools in recent years. However close examination of the ground reality shows that “it would be unrealistic to assume that private sector in education. Would provide any financial relief to the government. The unaided primary school do provide some financial relief, but the huge social and economic cost. The adverse effects include accentuating dualism, eliticism and class inequalities. It has also been found that the private sector has already reached ‘optimum’ levels in India, the “optimum’ level being defined in terms of the share of private sector in developed countries like U.S. “Yet if one accepts that the share of private schools is expanding, even if it is a short term phenomenon, how are we responding to it in readjusting the government sponsored sector? It government sponsored institutions fail to respond to quality concern, how should the people react? In fact the evidence show that in the face of low quality of government schools, many are cutting their family budget to pay for private education of their children.

The new millennium begins with new promises. The revised frame work of National Literacy Mission promises to reach a literacy rate of 75% by the year 2010. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which is the flagship programme of the national government promises to achieve the goal of UPE by 2005 and the goal of UEE by 2010. This would mean that all children (in all states) would complete at least five years of schooling by the year 2010. Are these targets reasonable? Can they be achieved without changing the strategy of intervention?

Conclusion:

The National policy of Education envisaged that the Districts Institute of Education and Training would play a leading role in improving the quality of primary teacher training in every district. It is being expected that the DIETS would become centres of innovations in teacher training and every teacher educator will be a practicing researcher. It is with this perspective that the adoption of a “lab area” by every DIET was advocated. It was assumed that this will provide the teacher educators to get involved in empirical explorations and help them get an authentic understanding of the reality in which the schools function. It is expected that through these field explorations, teacher educators would not only enrich their understanding but also contribute to innovations in the primary schools. Actual knowledge and skills transacted in the teacher training institutions lack authenticity. One can safely say that involvement in actual practice of school work and closer understanding of school practices through empirical research are two sources of authentic knowledge on primary education, a good teacher educator has to be either a practicing teacher or an active researcher. Enhancing the capabilities, knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as professional profiles are the

key factors in achieving the goals of primary education of our nation.

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