



Progress of Primary Education in India

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Abstract

India was the world leader in education. Actual practical education with theories and principles was imparted in India since long-long days. Education and education system of India started changing during British period and after independence it has changed completely in various facets. The principal object of this part of introduction is to trace the growth of the modern system of elementary education which came to be established in today's India since ancient period to present time.

For various reasons, the first four years of independence formed a period of great unforeseen difficulties. Consequently, not enough attention could be given to the development of education between 1946-47 and 1950-51. One of the first acts of the independent country was to give a new constitution to itself. This great document was finalized by the Constituent Assembly after months of intensive work and was adopted on January 26, 1949. Relishing the importance of universal primary education for the proper development of democracy, Article 45 of the Constitution, a directive principle of state policy, provides that "the state shall Endeavour to provide, within a period ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years".

Dakar Framework for Action- Provisions in India Constitution on Universalisation of Elementary Education, Recommendations of Various Commissions on Universalisation of Elementary Education (Education Commission 1964-66, National Policy on Education 1968 and National Policy on Education 1986). Global Concern towards Primary Education for 21st Century, Over the past few decades the achievement of universal primary education (UPE), under the somewhat misleading rubric of 'education for all', has steadily built momentum as a focus for discussion and action within the international community.

The Jomtien Conference fixed some goals and the ultimate goal was to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. It did not affirm education as a human right but spoke about 'access to education' and 'meeting learning needs'. Terms with defined meaning such as 'primary' or 'compulsory' education were replaced by the term 'basic education'. The previous emphasis on governmental obligations to ensure that education, at least at the elementary level was free and compulsory was replaced by the 'social responsibility' and 'partnership' (Tomasevski, 2003:93). It propagated the slogans, 'education for all' and 'lifelong learning opportunities', without questioning the fundamental structural reasons for why children remain outside the school.

Keywords: primary education, education system, progress

Introduction

Primary Education in India: Historical perspectives

The development and well being of any nation are directly linked to the level of education among its people. Primary education is the framework over which entire building of education is erected. One cannot even imagine the development of person, society or a nation without quality primary education. Primary education is an indispensable "Passport to life."

India was the world leader in education. Actual practical education with theories and principles was imparted in India since long-long days, other countries were lagging behind. India was the first to have world level universities viz. Nalanda in Magadh. Vikramshila in Anga and Takshashila in Punjab (presently under Pakistan.) Apart from these universities, ancient India witnessed Gurukul system of education. Thus, Indian educational history dates back over 5000 years. Education and education system of India started changing during British period and after independence it has changed completely in various facets. The principal object of

this part of introduction is to trace the growth of the modern system of elementary education which came to be established in today's India since ancient period.

Primary Education after Independence

A new era in the history of education in India was ushered in with the attainment of independence in 1947. For instance Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the first Minister of India, observed in his inaugural address to the All-India Educational Conference convened by Shri Maulana Azad, the Union Education Minister, in January 1948:

"Whenever conferences were called to form a plan for education in India, the tendency, as a rule, was to maintain the existing system with slight modifications. This must not happen now. Great changes have taken place in the country and the educational system must also be in keeping with them. The entire basis of education must be revolutionized".

For various reasons, the first four years of independence formed a period of great unforeseen difficulties. Consequently, not enough attention could be given to the

development of education between 1946-47 and 1950-51. One of the first acts of the independent country was to give a new constitution to itself. This great document was finalized by the Constituent Assembly after mother of intensive work and was adopted on January 26, 1949 Relishing the importance of universal primary education for the proper development of democracy, Article 45 of the Constitution, a directive principal of state policy, provides that “the state shall Endeavour to provide, within a period ten years from the commencement of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years”.

World declaration of Education for All (EFA)

A meeting of world education in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 was convened and sponsored by the executive heads of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank. It was organized by an interagency commission established by them. As many as 155 countries, 20 Inter – Governmental bodies and 150 Non Governmental Organizations participated in the conference. The Conference adopted an epoch making resolution calling on all member states and agencies to strive for achieving Education For All (EFA) by the year 2000. The ultimate goal affirmed by the World Declaration on Education for All is to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. These needs were further specified as consisting of: (a) essential learning tools such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving; and (b) the basic learning content such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Towards fulfillment of these learning needs, the Declaration of EFA took a broadened vision of basic education as consisting of formal schooling, non – formal education programmers as well as open learning system which together attempt to reach basic education to all children as well as adults.

The ideas that culminated in the declaration were not entirely new, but rather a development of the previous declarations: Karachi 1960; Addis Ababa 1961; Santiago 1962; and Tripoli 1966, when participants committed themselves to achieving Universal Primary Education by the year 1980. Much of the rationalization and justification for the target of UPE was based upon viewing education uncritically as a human right, a good investment, an instrument that promotes equity, helps with national cohesion, reduces population growth rates and improves health.

Dakar Framework for Action- Provisions in India Constitution on Universalisation of Elementary Education, Recommendations of Various Commissions on Universalisation of Elementary Education (Education Commission 1964-66, National Policy on Education 1968 and National Policy on Education 1986)

The New Education Policy 1986 was formulated with a view to preparing students for the 21st century to face the challenges associated with global developments, emerging technologies and cross-cultural complexities. Some of the Cardinal Principles contained in the National Education Policy 1986 were old but they had been stated in new spirit and perspective. The policy laid emphasis on creation of common school system as recommended by Kothari Commission. The NPE (1986) reiterated the issues of educational opportunity

and free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years. The NPE (1986) opined the National System of Education and envisages a common education structure. It also launched the programmed of NFE (Non Formal Education) to solve the problem of children dropping out of school and to adopt an array of meticulously formulated strategies based on micro planning and applied at the gross-root level all over the country, to ensure children’s retention at school. The NPE also had a special provision for afternoon centers for girls.

The National Policy on Education (1986) also lead to Operation Blackboard in 1987, which aimed at strengthening the infrastructure in primary school making them fit place as seats of learning. National policy of Education 1986 and its programmed of Action, 1992, accorded unqualified priority to universalisation of elementary Education (UEE). The policy received a further impetus as a consequence of the declaration of the 1990 Jomtien World Conference, which was sponsored by the executive heads of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank called upon the countries to take effective steps for achieving Education for All (EFA) by the year 2000 AD.

So, to review these syllabi and books prepared by NCERT, a “Review Committee on the Curriculum for the Ten Year School” (1977) was appointed in the Chairmanship of Ishwar Bhai J. Patel. This committee is also named as “Patel Committee” Evaluating the curriculum of elementary level, the committee gave major emphasis on realism and flexibility and suggested that:

- i) There should be no rigid time-table for lower primary level and teaching time should 2.5-3 hours;
- ii) Education session should be based on local needs;
- iii) Home work should not give to student, therefore, self study under the guidance of teachers have to be managed in the school;
- iv) There should be only one book of language for class I and II, and three books of language, math and environment study for the classes III, IV and V; and
- v) Need of teacher’s guidebooks and assisting materials at this level.

Again, NCERT made a Steering Committee (1984) to frame a national curriculum after a lot of mental exercises and published a National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 1985. NCF (1985) was based on so many social and educational factors such as equity, national identity, scientific temper, art and creativity, explosion of information and technology to cope with it, inter face between work and education, value education, environment resources and population, centrality to learner, professional role of school and focus on learning. This national curriculum was a step in the direction of a national system of education. This was also named “Core Curriculum” (S.P. Gupta, 2004, p. 255). It proposed language 30% environmental study 15% mathematics 15% SUPW 20% art 10% and health and physical education 10% for lower primary education.

The NPE (1986) recommended a common core component in the school curriculum throughout the country. The Policy also entrusted NCERT with the responsibility of developing the National Curriculum Framework, and reviewing the framework at frequent intervals. NCERT in continuation of its curriculum-related works carried out studies and consultation

subsequent to 1975, and had drafted a curriculum framework as a part of its activity in 1984. This exercise aimed at making school education comparable across the country in qualitative terms and also at making it a means of ensuring national integration without compromising on the country's pluralistic character. Based on such experiences, the Council's work culminated in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, 1988. However, the articulation of this framework through course of studies and textbooks in a rapidly changing development context resulted in an increase in 'curricular load' and made learning at school a source of stress for young minds and bodies during their formative years of childhood and stress for young minds and bodies during their formative years of childhood and adolescence.

Global concern towards primary education for 21st century

Over the past few decades the achievement of universal primary education (UPE), under the somewhat misleading rubric of 'education for all', has steadily built momentum as a focus for discussion and action within the international community. The idea of UPE is not, of course, a new one. The Foundation of this regime (Monday, 2006) were laid in the establishment of system of mass public education in western countries in the period between the late 19th and mid-20th century when many features of the social welfare state were institutionalized and accepted as 'norms' for state behavior. Not surprisingly, efforts to remake world order following World War II saw the inclusion of education as a universal right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Right (Article 26), and the establishment of UNESCO with its broad mandate to support (among other things) the Universal right to education. UNESCO became neither center nor coordinator of the new regime. Instead, a rather diffuse regime for educational cooperation grew alongside the emergence of international development as a field of activity for United Nations organizations and for newly formed bilateral aid organizations. These organizations quickly took up the notion that education could be used as a tool in national development, and education aid began to account for something between 5 and 10% of all aid flows.

Three key features of the education for development regime in the period from 1960 to 1995 deserve specific attention. First, although the notion of a universal right to education and of mass public education figured strongly in the international discourse (for example, in the UN Charter, UNESCO's mandate, and host of international declarations at regional meetings of developing country governments in the 1950s and 1960s) this was not what was supported by major flows of funding or technical expertise. Most aid flows to education were focused at levels beyond primary schooling.

Another step in the way of UEE is the provision through Article 30, which states that all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice and Article 350- A pointed out that it shall be the Endeavour of every state or of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic groups. While the constitution provided a basic framework, policies and programmers in education are also formulated on

the basis of recommendations of various commissions and committees set for the purpose.

Recommendations of various commissions on Universalisation of primary education

Education Commission (1964-66): Kothari Commission very well recognized the role of education in the national development. The Commission was having opinion that it is the responsibility of educational system to bring the different social groups together. It further remarked that instead of removing the class distinctions education is perpetuating them. A large proportion of the good schools are private but charge high fees, which are normally beyond the means of many therefore only the top ten percent of the people send their children to them.

So, the Education Commission (1964-66) recommended a Common School System of Public Education (CSS) as the basis of building up the national System of Education with a view to bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promoting the emergence of an integrated society. It opined about equalization of educational opportunity to all without any discrimination on the basis of merit and also to provide a prescribed proportion of free studentship to prevent segregation of social classes. It recommended that all these provisions made for universalisation of elementary education are for the fulfillment of the directive principal contained in Article 45 of the constitution and the state should to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years.

National Policy on Education (1968): Human Resource Development is considered to be a key instrument of national development and individual welfare. On this path the National Policy of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in the post-independence of India. It aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. The government of India accordingly resolves to promote the development of education in the country with the principles of free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, give attention of status of teachers and equalize educational opportunity.

National Policy on Education (1986): The New Education Policy 1986 was formulated with a view to preparing students for the 21st century to face the challenges associated with global developments, emerging technologies and cross-cultural complexities. Some of the Cardinal Principals contained in the National Education Policy 1986 were old but they had been stated in new spirit and perspective. The policy laid emphasis on creation of common school system as recommended by Kothari Commission. The NPE (1986) reiterated the issues of educational opportunity and free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years. The NPE (1986) opined the National System of Education and envisages a common education structure. It also launched the programmed of NFE (Non Formal Education) to solve the problem of children dropping out of school and to adopt an array of meticulously formulated strategies based on micro planning and applied at the gross-root level all over the

country, to ensure children's retention at school. The NPE also had a special provision for afternoon centers for girls. Thus, NPE (1986) stressed on essentiality of NFE for universalisation of elementary education and the reason was that the formal education could not cope up the increasing demands of elementary education for universalisation. Alternative had therefore been developed in the form of NFE, Distance Education, and Correspondence Courses etc. Which the help of NFE, NPE (1986) wants to solve the problem of children withdrawing from education which was the biggest challenge on the path of UEE. But through this provision the quality of education got diluted where instructors took the place of teacher.

The National Policy on Education (1986) also led to Operation Blackboard in 1987, which aimed at strengthening the infrastructure in primary school making them fit place as seats of learning. The Policy of 1986 was modified in 1992 and was tabled in the parliament on 7th May 1992. The scheme of OB which was launched by 1986 was extended by the 1992 by covering more area under the OB with minimum three rooms, three teacher in which 50% teachers to be women and the scheme OB was extended to upper primary. In 1992 Minimum Learning Levels were also introduced. The policy commended MLL to be laid down for each stage of education. This was a very important contribution of the policy towards equity and quality. The 'minimum' was not something which was of lower quality for some, but it meant some assurance of essential learning to be internalized by every learner. The MLL was also stated in operational terms keeping in view the hierarchy involved in the learning of different concepts.

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