Right to Education –Ground Reality

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Abstract:
Education is the foundation on which the economic and social progress of the society can be built. It can bring about social transformation. It is a powerful force which can bring about equality. Delhi Declaration of 1993 aptly state that, “The content and methods of education must be developed to serve the basic learning needs of individuals and societies, to empower them to address their more pressing problems – combating poverty, raising productivity, improving living conditions, and protecting the environment – to enable them to play their rightful role in building democratic societies and enriching cultural heritage.”. The budgetary outlay for education should be about 10 per cent of the GDP while currently it is hovering around 3.3 per cent. However, according the data published by the RTE Forum as of academic year 2013-14 in India there were vacancies of the teachers to the tune of 5.68 lakhs, and out of which only 22 per cent teachers were trained. Of the total school strength on 91.08 percent were one teacher schools. This very data reveals the need for greater attention to the education. Lack of basic infrastructure, availability of the trained teacher with new approach to teaching, resources crunch, use of the teachers for non-academic assignments, quality of education, are the current pressing problems of education and those need to be addressed on war footing. The government should increase the budgetary outlay in a phased manner and the school managements should also organize past students associations and try to explore their participation in improving the standard of education being provided. The thrust of the education policy should be on providing the quality education.

Key Words: Right to Education, need for providing infrastructure, imparting quality education, step up budgetary outlay on education.

Introduction: Education is the foundation on which the economic and social progress of the society can be built. It can bring about social transformation. It is a powerful force which can bring about equality. It has the power to bring about inclusive i.e. growth with social justice. In the year 1993, there was a conference of eminent educationists in Delhi. This conference came out with a historic Declaration which states, “the content and methods of education must be developed to serve the basic learning needs of individuals and societies, to empower them to address their more pressing problems – combating poverty, raising productivity, improving living conditions, and protecting the environment – to enable them to play their rightful role in building democratic societies and enriching cultural heritage.”.

India has a long standing heritage of age old values. Education should address this inculcation of these old age values amongst the youth. It should equip the youth to face the problems and difficulties of live with courage and confidence.

In fact even after attainment of independence in India, the education sector has been neglected considerably. This has weakened the Indian democracy to a great extent. Even today after 67 years of independence Indian has not been able to achieve cent percent literacy. No doubt, there is progress but any means it is not upto the expectation. The progressive countries like Japan and Germany have achieved 100 per cent literacy and have gone beyond that and have made further
progress in the field of education. Even today the budgetary allocation is short of what is needed to achieve the targeted growth of education. The budgetary outlay for education should be about 10 per cent of the GDP while currently it is hovering around 3.3 per cent. The govt. expects that the private sector should play a greater role in this nation building task. The Govt. has prepared a draft “National Education Policy” document and it is made available on the website. The govt. has solicited views of the public thereon. The govt. has assured that it will try to make a budgetary provision of 6 per cent of the GDP. It means not only the higher education is in the hands of private sector but also the private sector has also to share the burden of the primary and higher primary education. Once this position is accepted then naturally there will be impact on the quality of education. The govt. expects that the corporate sector which is capable to earn higher profits should come forward under the Corporate Social Responsibility provisions of the company act, and may help these schools for providing basic amenities. But then this cannot be uniformly possible. The choices of the corporate to provide assistance may be different.

India’s Current Education Scenario: The current Indian education scenario reveals that there is a growth of elementary schools from 168.3 million schools in 2005-06 has been increased to 193.3 million in 2014-15. The number of primary schools (from primary to senior secondary) in 2014 stood at 14,25,564 of which 7,90,640 were primary schools. There are 26.94 lakhs teachers in primary schools, 12.86 lakhs in secondary schools and 17.85 lakhs in senior secondary schools. According to the Right to Education Act, of 2009 the proportion of teacher in respect of primary schools is 30:1 and in respect of higher primary schools is 35:1. However, according the data published by the RTE Forum as of academic year 2013-14 in India there were vacancies of the teachers to the tune of 5.68 lakhs, and out of which only 22 per cent teachers were trained. Of the total school strength on 91.08 per cent were one teacher schools. This very data reveals the need for greater attention to the education.

The Right to Education: The Right to Education is not a Fundamental Right in India. However, the right to education is recognized as a human right by the United Nations and is understood to establish an entitlement to free, compulsory primary education for all children, an obligation to develop secondary education accessible to all children, as well as equitable access to higher education, and a responsibility to provide basic education for individuals who have not completed primary education.

In addition to this access to education provisions, the right to education encompasses also the obligation to eliminate discrimination at all levels of the educational system, to set minimum standards and to improve the quality of education.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act seeks to provide education to children aged between 6 to 14 years. As per the 86th Constitution Amendment Act added Article 21 A has been made to the Indian constitution.

Salient Features of Right to Education Act 2009

- Education has become a fundamental right of every child between the ages of six and fourteen
Right to Education (RTE) Act is in place since April 2010, which mandates free and compulsory education to every child in the country up to class 8.

Every child between the age of six and fourteen years can demand free elementary education.

Any time of the academic year, a child can go to a school and demand that this right be respected.

Private schools have to reserve 25 per cent of the seats to the disadvantaged students, starting from Class I in 2011.

A teacher student ratio of 1:30 should be maintained within a given timeframe.

The schools need to have some minimum facilities like playground and infrastructure.

The state govt. and local authorities will set up primary schools within walking distance of 1 km of the neighborhood.

For class VI to VIII students, the distance should be 3 kms of the neighborhood.

No discrimination should be shown against children belonging to the weaker sections.

The Act clarifies that “free” means no child is liable to pay any kind of free or charges.

RTE also strictly prohibits any form of physical punishment and mental harassment to the students.

**Current state of Infrastructure available in the schools:** Barring the schools in urban and metropolitan areas the infrastructure available in the schools is far from satisfaction. Even basic infrastructure of pure drinking water, health care facilities are very much lacking. Teacher’s strength is inadequate. Most of the time the teachers have to attend to non-educational work thrust upon them. E.g. census work, election work, etc. So far as introduction of modern technology i.e. the digital technology is concerned because of the limited resources the Govt. is not capable to introduce it in one phase. It has to do it in phases. And the govt. is doing it also. However, providing computer and computer education in the rural areas where there is absence of dependable electrical power it is of no use. Therefore the govt. has to apply multi-dimensional approach while providing computers and other gadgets like projectors etc. Else it has also to include generator set in the package.

**Quality of Education:** On this score also the condition is alarming. This is mainly because of the vicious circle that operates in the education field. E.g. In the State of Maharashtra the govt. recognized schools (which get grant in aid from the State) were until 1993-94 academic year, were getting non-salary grants. i.e. Govt. pays the salary of the approved staff of the school directly to the teachers and for the other non-salary expenditure i.e. teaching materials, municipal taxes, library, laboratory etc. grants were available. However, subsequently the state govt. has stopped releasing these grants. As a result in the rural and semi urban area for the private schools it has become very difficult to run the school because they have very limited resources to meet this non salary expenditure. This is the starting point of the vicious circle. Then the managements of such private school collect contribution from the teaching and non-teaching staff although the staff is reluctant to pay. Besides this also leads to a practice of getting donation from the prospective teachers and in that quality of the recruitment is also sacrificed. The absence of the library and laboratory and the quality of teachers affect the quality of education.
The quality of school education is disturbingly poor. Pratham a well-known NGO conducted a survey which revealed that 25 per cent of Class VIII students were not able to read Class II textbooks. The Annual State of Education Report (ASER) 2014, reveals that about 50 per cent of the children will have finish eight years of schooling but still not have learnt basic skills in arithmetic. According to the survey conducted by the National Council of Educational research and Training (NCERT) around 70 per cent of Class VIII students had no idea of freedom struggle. This survey covered 6722 schools in 33 states and union territories. Around 50 per cent of the students studying in VIII standard cannot name of the country’s major rivers. The teachers are also to be blamed for this situation.

In metropolitan areas because of the economical soundness the parents can seek admission of their ward in a private school even by paying huge donation. But this approach is not possible in the rural and semi urban area as the parents do not afford to pay fees leaves aside the donation. In the schools which get donations, by and large the quality of staff and the education is of good standard. But these schools are relatively less when we think of the whole of state position. This situation is also due to the fact that under the current ‘no detention system’ students are promoted from one class to another upto IX class, irrespective of the marks they secure in the examination. This has led to a lack of concern both from the students as well as the teachers. This is really a pitiable condition. The current method of setting up of questionnaires with majority of the objective questions which are multiple choice questions encourages the students to recite the probable questions by heart and they come out of the school exam, as if the exam is of their recital strength and not of their intelligence. The thrust of the policy should be on the quality of education rather than on the quantitative coverage.

**Alarming rate school drop outs:** Over 39% boys drop out from schools before completing elementary education compared to 33% girls. Poor academic performance, lack of interest in studies and need for employment to support family could be prime reasons. In 2012-13, nearly 41% female students had dropped out of the schools without completing elementary education, as against 40.3% male students. Poverty, poor academic performance, substandard teaching, migration and need for employment to support the family are major factors behind the higher dropout rate of the boys,¹ According to a study conducted in 780 government schools across 13 Indian states, basic facilities including toilets and drinking water were absent in a majority of them. Over 30 per cent of schools had no toilets. This leads to high dropout rate among girl students.

These drop outs and those who have failed standard 10th exam and have left the schooling do not have an opportunity to achieve skilling in any field. They simply add to the unskilled labour. They are not able to earn their bare minimum lively hood and continue to be under below poverty line.

¹http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-more-boys-than-girls-dropping-out-of-schools
The possible remedies: We agree that the resources are limited and the improvement cannot be brought about overnight. However, there is urgent need that the central govt. should drastically increase their budgetary outlay for education. But then our approach as far as infrastructure provision is concerned we will have to concentrate adopting a cluster approach. Instead of spending on infrastructure to a number of schools identify those prospective schools where the investment made will be reaching to a large number of students in the first place and then in a phased manner provide the infrastructure to the other schools. In the same manner concentrate the governmental effort in equipping the potential teachers with adequate training including the training of the new technology so that it will reflect on their teaching efforts. This concentrated and comprehensive approach will have a demonstrative effect and these schools will be role models for the other schools. The no detention system should be done away with and the earlier practice of assessing the students and retaining the below average student in the same class be resorted to. There should be an element of accountability of the teachers for low level of results. Currently in aided schools as the teachers’ salary is being directly received from the govt. to them, the school management has several limitations in enforcing their expectations from them. The students’ needs should be given priority. The school education should be made attractive for the students. Vocational courses should be popularized specially in the rural areas where the dropout percentage is higher.

The govt. may also come forward to extend some tax concession for those organizations who are willing to invest heavily in this cause of education. This will be a supplementary investment from the private sector. On the other hand the schools and colleges should develop their past students association and try their best to enlist their financial support to provide basic amenities required in the school campus. Because of the stipulation by NAAC this PSA activity has been introduced in some colleges and it is paying good dividend in urban and metropolitan areas. Conscious efforts be made even by the high schools in this regard so that it will supplement govt. investment.

Conclusion: Only those countries which take care of vital sector like education can achieve progress. We can achieve better results by toning up the quality of education, promoting accountability and full transparency and judicious use of available resources. Being a developing country there is bound to be resources crunch. But keeping in mind the fundamental nature of the need for providing quality education, the government should see that in times to come increases the budgetary outlay for education every year and reach to the target of 6 per cent of the GDP on the education.

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