



EDUCATION IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN INDIA

DR. SHARMISTA

Associate Professor
Dept. of Studies in Education
BGS. B .Ed. College
University of Mysore
Manasagangothri, Mysore – 06
Karnataka, **INDIA**

ABSTRACT

Quality in school education is a matter of concern in India. Under various articles of the Indian Constitution, free and compulsory education is provided as a fundamental right to children between the ages of 6 and 14. While quantitatively India is inching closer to universal education, the quality of its education has been questioned particularly in its government run school system. India adopted a National Policy for Children in 1974, declaring children to be the nation's most precious asset. The population of children in a country comprise its human resources of the future. The social, economic and cultural growth development of any society or community hinges upon the quality of its human resources. There has, unfortunately come into existence, a big class and caste-divide coupled with a rural-urban divide in education, in terms of facilities and quality, which has serious social consequences and could lead to social upheaval. Schools in backward rural and tribal areas are the most neglected, and the standard of teaching deplorable. Most schools are miles away and largely inaccessible to the students. Even in other areas, schools to which children of the underprivileged have access are run by the State or local authorities. By and large, these have a poor record of performance. There is a need to implement a 'quality package' across the states in India that aims at improving the quality of curricula and classroom environment. Their should be a conscious and joint effort of all the stakeholders of education to alleviate the prevailing problems of the government run schools in India.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Millennium Development Goal 2 is to achieve universal primary education by the year 2015, by which time they aim to ensure that all children everywhere regardless of race or gender, will be able to complete primary schooling Also, not only is it important for children to be enrolled but countries will need to ensure that there are a sufficient amount of teachers and classrooms to meet the demand (Marilyn,H(2008). The Indian government lays emphasis on primary education, also referred to as elementary

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education, to children aged 6 to 14 years old. 80% of all recognised schools at the elementary stage are government run or supported, making it the largest provider of education in the country. However, due to a shortage of resources and lack of political will, this system suffers from massive gaps including high pupil to teacher ratios, shortage of infrastructure and poor levels of teacher training. Figures released by the Indian government in 2011 show that there were 58,16,673 elementary school teachers in India¹ As of March 2012 there were 21,27,000 secondary school teachers in India. Education has also been made free. for children for 6 to 14 years of age or up to class VIII *under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009*. There have been several efforts to enhance quality made by the government. The District Education Revitalisation Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalise primary education in India by reforming and vitalising the existing primary education system. 85% of the DERP was funded by the central government and the remaining 15% was funded by the states. The DERP, which had opened 1.6 lakh new schools including 84,000 alternative education schools delivering alternative education to approximately 35 lakh children, was also supported by UNICEF and other international programmes. In January 2016, Kerala became the 1st Indian state to achieve 100% primary education through its literacy programme Athulyam. (IBT, 2016). This primary education scheme has also shown a high Gross Enrolment Ratio of 93–95% for the last three years in some states. Significant improvement in staffing and enrolment of girls has also been made as a part of this scheme.¹ The current scheme for universalisation of Education for All is the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. Enrolment has been enhanced, but the levels of quality remain low. According to global education report of 2004, India's ranking was 106 out of 127 countries in the education sphere. Although India is amongst the ten fastest growing economies in the world, India has the largest number of illiterates by far - close to 40%. .Sixty years after independence, possibly the greatest challenge India faces now is the failure to educate its citizens, notably the poor. Education is believed to be the only means for a developing nation like India to develop widely and hence the **RTE (Right To Education)** Act was implemented in the year 2009 enforcing free and compulsory education to all children between 6 to 14 years. RTE Act's main goal has been to achieve 100% literacy rate across the country and increase the awareness levels.

As per a survey conducted by The Times of India (TOI) maximum number of primary schools have the teacher-student ratio of 50:1. Teacher plays multiple roles. Many government schools exist on paper only, actually either their infrastructure is fully or partially ruined. Most of the government schools in the rural areas are not proper schools but confined to one room. Issues like these add to low attendance and high drop-out rates from the government schools. NDTV has in a survey disclosed that most of the government schools in India lack basic amenities of toilets and drinking water. On the implementation of Right to Education (RTE), they surveyed 780 government schools in 13 States of India. The results were shameful. Sixty-three percent of them had no playgrounds. More than a third of the

schools had unserviceable toilets or in extremely poor condition. In case a student wants to go to washroom he goes back home. The channel cited it as one of the biggest reasons for high drop-out rate of girl students. Against this backdrop of the governments schools in India the present study was conceived.

On Government school infrastructure:

According to a recent survey conducted in 780 Government Schools across 13 Indian States key facilities (including toilets/ drinking water) were mostly found missing or in a poor condition. The survey further shows that while the RTE act called for sufficient infrastructure, less than 5% schools have all the 9 facilities mentioned in the act. Over 30% schools had no toilets (many girls quote this has a big reason for dropping out of school), over 60% had no playgrounds (it's no wonder that we struggle with health and fitness both!)

On Government school quality of teaching:

Another survey from 2007 in rural India (across 16,000 villages) showed that while class enrollments were high, the quality of education, rather what children were learning was very limited. Most of the students could not read, write or do basic maths. The key hurdle however is often bureaucratic, the schools often need circulars for allowing programmes to be conducted with them, something that is easy for a private school to do, as the decision making is more direct there.

Results of the survey

A survey was undertaken by the investigator to find the quality of education in 50 government run primary schools of Mysore city. The study sampled 100 respondents which comprised of teachers and heads of the institutions. Tools used for the study were questionnaires developed by the investigator. Data analysis was done using descriptive statistics. The results were as follows

- It was found that admission was not according to the age in more than 80 percent of the schools. Majority of government schools had not been renovated since long time. Sometimes students were made to sit on floor outside the classroom as the roof could fall anytime.
- The most glaring of the problems was that of infrastructure. It was found that 73 percent of the schools had poorly maintained buildings, dilapidated classrooms, 86 percent had ill-equipped libraries and laboratories, 92 percent had lack of sanitation facilities and even drinking water were issues that the students grappled with everyday

- Availability of qualified teachers and the student-teacher ratio was another tale to tell .Only 25 percent of the schools had facilities for ICT and 10 percent of the schools had a trained teacher for ICT.
- The curriculum and teaching methodologies stood obsolete and outdated, with the emphasis being on rote-learning and merely developing reading and writing skills instead of holistic education. Lack of vocational training and non-availability of such courses rendered students with barely any employable skills at the end of their schooling. These factors, coupled with other social circumstances have lead to alarmingly high dropout rates in the country. The government schools are over-packed. In such a pathetic condition access, quality and equity in basic education are the three themes that have to be looked into.

Conclusion

We do not want to present just a grim image, we also want to inspire young people to see what the opportunities are. We want to use this as a reminder for ourselves, on finding where we can make a difference, what can have a big impact- when we are on our way to changing an entire nation. It often begins with understanding the problems.

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