
An Assessment of Educational Roles in India

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ABSTRACT:

The primary objective of education is bridging gaps in diversified forms and stimulating social culture for positive change. The ancient society established education with varied subjects. Western education gradually subsumed the 'guru-shiksha' tradition and caused disappearance of indigenous dialects. With time, educational policies were implemented for CCE, teachers training, vocational training, technical education, and innovative teaching aids.

However, the wide gaps in policy implementation, especially in the North-East are the cause for high dropout rates, imbalanced student –teacher ratio and interactions, teacher-dominated learning, lack of transport, communication, scientific and technical facilities, industrial development, validity, objectivity, standardization of topics, infrastructure, identification of students' creative and analytical ability, and cultural integration with the mainstream.

Removing these loopholes require professionalism, computerization, accountability in scrutiny of scripts, formulation of educational policy for local needs, job-oriented programs and adequate funds.

Keywords: *educational policy, vocational education, innovative teaching*

INTRODUCTION-MEANING AND OBJECTIVES

Education is the torch that enlightens the human mind. It is an instrument that brings about social change by imparting knowledge, skills, values, and influencing lifestyles, motivating one to achieve social mobility and class ascendancy. Hence, it must be designed to suit the needs and aspirations of people and raise their standards at all levels. The curriculum at school should be framed to reflect social values, norms, and day to day changes.

According to a UNESCO report, education is “the mandate to bridge the knowledge gap between countries and communities enriching dialogues between people, culture, international living and networking of ideas, research and technologies”.

Educational programs should aim for stimulating social cultures in a manner that both work to meet the demands of the changing world. The needs of yesterday are no longer valid for future needs. But to understand how far we have come, we need to take a brief look at the past.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on primary and secondary sources like books, articles and web- pages to identify the difficulties in education and solutions to overcome those loopholes to enhance the quality of education.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN THE ANCIENT PERIOD

In the traditional society, the quantum of knowledge was limited, although there was a focus on the preservation of existing culture. In the ancient period, there were various important centers of learning. Famous universities like Nalanda, Takshila, and Vikramshila University emphasized education that brought about all round development of a student's personality. The curriculum in these universities were Mathematics, Astronomy, Religion, Astrology, Hunting, Archery, Medicine, Science, Literature and Philosophy which attracted students from distant lands like Tibet, China, Korea, and Central Asia, and produced eminent scholars. India was a magnet for enlightened seekers of knowledge.

EDUCATION DURING THE BRITISH PERIOD

The next significant forward leap came with the arrival of British missionaries in India. With their arrival, the modern secondary education system started developing. While the main objective of the missionaries was to spread English education, Western culture, and Christian faith among the Indians who could assist them in work, the national leaders and social reformers wanted Indians to be educated to inculcate national ideas, spread awareness among them and remove socio-cultural barriers that existed in the form of class prejudices and other disparities.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF SOCIAL REFORMERS

Reformers like Gandhi, Tagore, and Aurobindo Ghosh established their individualistic philosophy of education within the Indian context. They discarded the stereotypical education system, encouraged spiritual learning, cultural awareness and vocational skills for well-rounded development. They wanted pupils to stretch their imagination to go beyond pedantic learning. Education remains incomplete without self-realization and moral virtues. It was meant to be for all – especially for rural India which was largely bypassed. According to Indian thought leaders, education should cater to other needs and bring about social, physical, moral and intellectual development, breaking all boundaries of caste, creed, and gender to unite all under one umbrella and arousing nationalistic fervour. Their innovations found expression in places like Shantiniketan and Sabarmati Ashram.

With the exposure to the Western system, and contributions from India's homegrown educationists, learning witnessed an explosion during the last century. The modern framework for education started to be formed.

IMPLEMENTATION OF VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

With time, many educational policies were implemented like Lord Macaulay's Minute of 1835, The Wood's Dispatch (1854), The Hunter Commission (1882), The Hartog Committee (1929), The Sargent Commission (1944), The Mudaliar Commission (1952) and The Indian Education Commission (1964-66).

All these had similar objectives of promoting European Literature and Science, encouraging practical courses, setting up of private institutions, diversified courses for male and female

students as per requirements, use of mother-tongue as a medium of instruction with Hindi as federal language and English as international language, introduction of elementary education, establishing vocational and skill-training programs, providing facilities for guidance, counselling, higher and technical education, professional training courses for teachers, construction of proper school infrastructure, provision of proper audio-visual aids, libraries and laboratories, introduction of new, innovative methods of teaching, implementation of continuous, comprehensive evaluation and raising standards of textbooks.

THE URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE IN EDUCATION

In India, development has to be dissected in the context of rural and urban demographics. Quoting from Biloris Lyndem and Utpal Kumar De's study on *Education in North East India: Experience and Challenge*, 90% of the population in the North East region lives in the tribal rural belts. Paradoxically, a measly 10% of educational funds are spent on them. Educational progress – for want of a better word – is not spreading to all sections as rapidly as desired. Meghalaya hasn't fallen too far behind as its literacy rate (74.43 as per the 2011 census) has kept abreast of the national rate of 74.04%. To put it in a better context, Meghalaya is 6th among the North-East states, so there's a lot of work to be done. But let us remember that we are still far away from the world average of 84%.

The centrally sponsored Total Literacy Campaign has helped to spread awareness among the adult population. Innovative programs like Jodo Gyan has seen traction in 1000 government schools in Grade I and II in East Khasi, West Khasi, Jaintia Hills and Ri-Bhoi districts. The recent \$100 million loan from the Asian Development Bank is aimed at enhancing the employability of the state's youth through improvements in secondary education and vocational skills training programs.

PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION IN THE NORTH EASTERN REGION

Although these policies aimed at improving education, the North Eastern region continues to remain backward with regards to educational facilities since they are detached from the national mainstream due to lack of inadequate transport and communication, lack of marketing facilities, industrial development, proper urbanization, scientific and technical input, reliability, validity and objectivity in the examination system. Other factors include low per capita income, politicization of education and administration, imbalance in the teacher- student ratio. More importance is given to quantitative education rather than qualitative and analytical learning.

The level of reasoning in students still continues to remain underdeveloped, rural schools lack proper infrastructure, learning environment, innovative teaching aids, lack of standardization of topics which surface during mobility, improper mode of teaching. Being an agricultural based society, most children are unable to attend schools, some live below poverty line where parents encourage participation in field activities rather than going to schools.

ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN IMPROVING LEARNING OUTCOMES

Educational delivery has significantly evolved down the years. Radio and television have also been used for educational purposes since 1959. A significant development in the area of

educational television was the launching of Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) which provided access to primary education. The INSAT program followed SITE providing learning programs to primary school children as well as area specific programs for rural viewers in selected clusters in some states.

Correspondence Courses at secondary level started in 1965 when Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) recommended such courses to improve the academic standards of private candidates. The Board of Secondary Education, Madhya Pradesh, was the first to start correspondence courses in 1965. The Boards of Delhi, Rajasthan, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are other institutions offering correspondence education at Secondary and Higher Secondary levels.

The Open School Education was first started in New Delhi in 1979 to provide Distance Education to school dropouts. Later, Distance Learning for Higher Education was initiated in the form of Correspondence Courses in 1962. The UGC also formulated guidelines for introducing correspondence courses in Universities. The establishment of IGNOU at New Delhi in 1985 proved to be a significant milestone in the development of distance learning in India.

With the explosion of Web technologies, there has been movement in the area of educational delivery, but scant regard has been paid to the learning development of young minds. We still follow the rote based system of learning propagated by the British. Marks continue to be the benchmark for academic excellence. This is compounded by the drastic fragmentation in the educational structure in the form of state board examinations. Each board follows a typical pattern of examination leading to barriers of talent movement. A student from the North-East finds it difficult to cope and compete in other states. The lack of standardization across the country impedes this critical free flow of knowledge.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve learning outcome, firstly the academic standard and adequate coverage of the syllabi need to be ensued while framing the question papers. There should be professionalism and computerization for timely declaration of results along with seriousness and accountability in scrutinizing answer-scripts. The syllabi should be so structured that would consist of skill and practical-based activities, learning through didactic, natural and project method.

Secondly, a team consisting of experts from industries, universities, research institutes and legal fields may be constituted to formulate policy on the technological development on the basis of local needs and available local resources.

Next, educational institutions should focus on extending job-oriented programs because without establishing a relationship between job and employment, education cannot create interest or attract raw talents of the region.

Health and nutrition should be looked into seriously since most students of the North- East come from rural areas and live below poverty line. Evening schools should be introduced to make learning more flexible for rural students.

Further, teachers and teaching community should be acknowledged. They shoulder responsibility of building the nation by igniting young minds who are the torch-bearers of the next era. Proper incentives, increments, pay-scale, medical facilities, especially in private institutions should be provided for their motivation.

Lastly, the government and UGC should come up with specific strategies to eradicate the problem of increase in the number of educationally backward districts and improve the educational scenario with proper support in terms of providing adequate funds.

Today, we should question our assumptions about the fabric of our education system. Is it time to forego the archaic and return to the best ideas of innovative teaching that were once propounded by thinkers like Tagore and Shri Aurobindo? Education is no longer a means for mental and moral development. It has been stigmatized as a job seeking tool. The negative competition of the rat race finds its roots somewhere in our overloaded classrooms which are killing creativity. This is an ill which a developing country like ours can ill afford. Education and development are two sides of the same coin. Education is the barometer for progress. With positive learning, the beneficial outcomes will enable the students here to vault over some of the age-old handicaps.

To improve learning outcomes from the grassroots, let us believe in the old Chinese proverb –

Tell me, I'll forget

Show me, I'll remember

Involve me, I'll understand.

CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, one can say that education is a revolution that should bring about positive changes and transformation in society. The flame of knowledge is being carried forward by the Nobel Prize winners of Peace from Asia, Kailash Satyarthi (Founder of Bachpan Bachao Andolan) and Malala Yousafzai (Pakistan activist for female education) crossing multiple hurdles to pave a way for literacy and upliftment of educational rights for their nations. If there is a determined objective, one can surely find a positive outlet.

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