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QUALITY CONCERNS IN UNIVERSALISATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION A PROSPECTIVE ISSUE



Runjun Kalita

Phd Scholar , Utkal University , Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Short Profile

Runjun Kalita is Ph.D. Scholar at Utkal University in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. She has completed B.Ed. and M.A. She has Professional Experience 14 years.



ABSTRACT:

In a democratic country like India, it is a right of the individual to receive at least primary and secondary education. For democracy to succeed every country needs able citizens and it is only through good education that good citizens may be produced. To build up able citizens, secondary education may be regarded as paying a significant role because during this period of education the individual is in such a process of development that he may learn a great deal if he is given the necessary opportunity. And for all these reasons receiving primary and secondary education in a democratic country should be considered as fundamental

right of every citizen. Quality in secondary education is a fundamental requirement. Only increasing the number of schools and enrolment of the students in school aren't enough. But, the success of the students should be the prime aim of education. And for that with quantity of education, quality should go hand in hand. In this article the author tries to explore the different issues of quality management in universalisation of secondary education in India as providing quality education to students is far from being realized.

KEYWORDS

Quality, universalisation of secondary education, issues.

INTRODUCTION

Education in India comprises of two distinct stages i.e. the stage of school education and the stage of higher or tertiary education. Secondary stage as the second stage of school education begins where the stage of primary education ends, and goes before the stage of the first degree course. Thus it forms central link in the chain of formal education, because it is through this stage backward and forward linkages of education are established. As the teachers for primary school come from secondary schools, a good standard of secondary education helps ultimately to improve primary education. On the other hand the university students are drawn from the secondary schools. Therefore the student of higher education also depends considerably upon the quality of secondary education. Secondary education plays a pivotal role in overall development of a nation. A secondary education system with good quality provides future adults of the country with the skills, outlook and attitudes to live and adopt in a rapidly changing society of the 21st century. In particular it empowers individuals to be fully active, intelligent citizen in a world where climate depredation, health hazards and technological innovation are transforming quickly everyday life (UNESCO, 2010). With the successful implementation of the Operation Black Board (OBB), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), in India to universalize elementary education, a large number of students are passing out from upper primary classes and creating a huge demand for secondary education. In order to fulfill this demand the Government of India has launched a scheme in name of Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA) for universalisation of secondary education (USE) on the line of SSA.

VISION OF RMSA VISION

In order to meet the challenge of Universalisation of Secondary Education (USE), there is a need for a paradigm shift in the conceptual design of secondary education. The guiding principles in this regard are; Universal Access, Equality and Social Justice, Relevance and Development and Curricular and Structural Aspects. Universalisation of Secondary Education gives opportunity, to move towards equity. The concept of 'common school' will be encouraged. If these values are to be established in the system, all types of schools, including unaided private schools will also contribute towards Universalisation of Secondary Education (USE) by ensuring adequate enrolments for the children from under privileged society and the children Below Poverty Line (BPL) families (CABE, 2005).

Quality management of universalisation of secondary education (USE)

Universalisation of secondary education implies creating universal access and opportunity for all children within the age group of 14 to 16 years to receive secondary education. Universalisation of educational opportunity at the secondary level is a major instrument of social change and transformation. As secondary education deals with the children between the group of 15 to 16 years which is most critical and precious period of an individual's life and thereby determines the quality of nation's citizen (Buragohain, 2010). The goal and objectives of USE will be fulfilled in true sense only if quality aspect of secondary education is maintained properly. In this regard it is said that quality and quantity should go hand in hand. However, the experience in the field of education does not reveal this kind of relation. Expansion of Education, at the primary stage, has added to the natural flow of students in secondary education) (Karandikar; 2002). After independence, government's efforts to expand school education have given an increase in secondary education, but it is not coupled with quality. For

the better development of students and ultimately for the better development of the nation, quality schooling at both primary and secondary level is urgently needed. In India quality of school education has been one of the major concerns since 1950. Emphasizing on qualitative aspects of school education, National Policy of Education (1986) stated "Education not for access but for Success". This success is understood in terms of quality and not in terms of quantity. The term quality generally refers to high degree of goodness, worth or excellence in an object or system. In the social context, it represents rather an abstract idea, which needs to be exemplified through certain indications. Quality is an attribute of any object, structure or system that is relative in nature and cannot be measured in isolation (NCERT, 2004). Emphasizing the need for a stronger and quality school education system in the country, former president of India, Pratibha Patil said that the stronger the foundations of school education, the greater the possibilities of progress. Indeed, at a macro level it can be said that the quality of education imparted in schools, determines the nation's future.

Quality of school education has been described as "Quality is at the heart of education and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important to the future well-being of children, young people and adults. Quality is one that satisfies basic learning needs and enriches the lives of learners and their overall experience of living. Quality is performance in life, i.e. after the students leave the institution" (UNESCO, 1990). Quantity issue of USE is understood in total number of schools, number of teachers, infra-structural facilities of schools and quantity of students enrolled in secondary schools. With rapid progress of universalisation of basic education which combines primary with lower secondary-pressures to expand participation in secondary education are mounting. In 2004, there was 20% increase in enrolment in secondary schools over 1999. In spite of the expansion, the participation rate at this level remains relatively low, with an overall GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) was around 51% in 2004. The level of participation in lower secondary is much higher than in upper secondary, with rates of 64% and 40% respectively. Demand for secondary education has increased as more pupils graduate from primary school. Girl's participation also grows over the period (Shirname, 2007). The Government of India has launched Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhijan (RMSA) to provide quality secondary education to all. Under A sum of Rs. 120 crore also has been allocated for the implementation of this scheme during 11th Five Year Plan. A study made by Corporate Planning & Economic Studies Department (2009) revealed that the following physical targets are included in this scheme of RMSA ----

- Improving the enrolment ratio for secondary education to 75% within 5 years, this could imply an additional enrolment of 32.20 lakh students by 2011-12.
- Strengthening of about 44,000 existing secondary schools
- Opening 11, 188 new secondary school
- Appointment of 1.79 lakh additional teachers and
- Construction of 80, 500 additional classroom

Management of quality and quality improvement in the context of school education, especially secondary education has to have a multi-pronged approach covering enhancement of the following aspects-

- access and equity;
- school infrastructure and other basic facilities;
- school and classroom environment;
- teacher efficiency;

- suitable curriculum
- teacher-learning material;
- teaching methodology;
- awareness among illiterate parents towards education;
- active community participation; and,
- monitoring and evaluation.

In order to make secondary education accessible and affordable for all students and also to manage the quality aspect of universal secondary education in the country, RMSA has provided some suggestions and these are as follows-

- To ensure that all secondary schools have physical facilities, staffs and supplies at least according to the prescribed standards through financial support in case of Government/ Local Body and Government aided schools, and appropriate regulatory mechanism in the case of other schools.
- To improve access to secondary schooling to all young learners according to norms – through proximate location (say, Secondary Schools within 5kms, and Higher Secondary Schools within 7-10 kms) efficient and safe transport arrangements/residential facilities, depending on local circumstances including open schooling. However in hilly and difficult areas, these norms can be relaxed. Preferably residential schools may be set up in such areas.
- To ensure that no child is deprived of secondary education of satisfactory quality due to gender, socio-economic, disability and other barriers.
- To improve quality of secondary education resulting in enhanced intellectual, social and cultural learning.
- To ensure that all students pursuing secondary education receive education of good quality.
- Achievement of the above objectives would also, inter-alia; signify substantial progress in the direction of the Common School System (MHRD, 2009).

Issues of Quality management in Uniiversalisation of Secondary Education

Universalisation is one problem of secondary education; another is the poor quality of such education as is provided. Admission of children to school at secondary level was not sufficient, in itself, to desired objectives. Despite schooling, the children remained educationally backward (NCERT, 1991). Quality is defined as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs. Quality issues in school education may be understood from different research evidences in school education. Quality in school is concerned with-1) process of teaching and learning, testing, managing which must be, 2) investigated deliberately on insider perspectives of what happens inside school and classrooms 3) material conditions and classroom input, 4) teacher characteristics, 5) teacher' s pedagogical beliefs and efficiency, and 6) teacher practices and classroom rule. The various studies conducted on quality issues in school education of India revealed a number of variables responsible for deterioration of quality in education like (a) quantitative expansion for meeting educational needs of the people, (b) wrong policy of admitting students to educational institutions, (c) the unfavorable condition of teachers, (d) neglect of primary and secondary education, (e) un-psychological teaching methods, (f) inappropriate curriculum, (g) defective examination system, (h) huge size of class, and (i) inadequate teachers' training (Sujatha and Rani, 2006). For quality improvement in universalisation of secondary education these factors are to be revamped. Here, some major issues/challenges which should be effectively dealt for successful implementation of the scheme of univrsalisation of secondary education are briefly discussed below-

- **Infrastructure facilities related issues:** Most of the schools of secondary education in the state are being run without minimum facilities i.e. inadequate facilities of building, laboratory, library, playground, inadequate lavatory system, separate toilet for girls, hostel facility for students, lack of drinking water facility, and lack of running water all the time in school and other equipments necessary for a good secondary school. Most of the secondary schools do not have separate computer room, separate staff room, principal's room, common room for students, auditorium or conference hall (Veer, 2004). There are not adequate numbers of instructional materials in the classroom, no proper seating arrangements for students with disabilities in most of the government secondary schools.
- **Curriculum related issues:** According to the academic specialists and experts in educational field, curriculum at secondary level should be diversified, useful and productive to students. Equal weightage should be given to theory and practice, but the existing pattern of curriculum is not relevant to suit the diverse needs, demands and talents of secondary students and thus fails to enable our students to face the challenges of life in modern society (Panda and Sahu, 2007).
- **Teacher related issues:** secondary education in the state is characterized by lack of subject teachers, lack of female teachers, overworked teachers and untrained teachers and non-availability of specially trained teachers for special subjects. Teachers are called as the backbone of providing quality education in the schools. But for that teachers of the schools should be well trained, knowledgeable and devoted towards their profession and students.
- **Teaching-learning process related issues:** In most of the secondary schools of the state, teaching-learning process in the classroom is mainly dominated by lecture and traditional methods. There is a lack of interactive and participative learning methods at secondary level which makes the students passive learner. In most of the schools there is no provision of remedial teaching for slow learner and also no provision of enrichment materials activities for fast learner.
- **Administrative difficulties related issue:** There are some administrative difficulties in achieving quality secondary education viz. transfer of teachers, casual attitude of towards secondary education among authorities, non-payment of salaries to teachers in time, lack of coordination among administrative officers, secondary school teachers engaged in election duty, census report and economic survey etc. In order to improve quality secondary education these problems should be solved at administrative level.
- **Finance related issues:** It should be realized that school that school can be run effectively only when the required resources to run it is available. The state government is not able to raise the financial resources needed to support this huge programme for universalisation of secondary education. There is a lack of coordination between local community and Non-Government Organization to help the Government in this connection (Kathuria, 2005).
- **Evaluation/Examination System related issues:** The process of evaluating the students' knowledge and performance is largely dominated by written examination and emphasis is given on development of rote-learning which is not supported by psychological principles of learning. Besides, there is no provision of self- evaluation of the students in the teaching-learning process in the school. Regarding monitoring and school based supervision process at secondary schools, it can be said that there is no regular supervision of teacher's diary and inspection of class work, achievements, integrity and honesty in doing their duties.
- **School management related issues:** In most of the Government schools heads/principals are less effective in using their leadership skills for motivating teaching and non-teaching staff to do their duties with competency and in maintaining discipline in school environment. Due to the lack of skills and interest most of the heads of the schools become failure to get proper support, co-operation and suggestions from members of school managing committee, parents and community members regarding the problems and developmental issues of the school.

- **Health care related issues:** In India, the provision of health care facility is not satisfactory in schools at both primary and secondary level. In most of the schools, there is no provision of regular health check-up of students, shortage of ambulance, no provision of physical education, no hygienic practices in school premises make the schools incapable for all round development of students.
- **Community participation related issues:** If the community is indifferent towards its teacher, its school and education system, it has no reason to expect its children to get good education. Generally, it has been observed that there is a lack of community support and care regarding certain issues like infrastructure facilities/basic amenities, strength of teachers in relation to number of posts sanctioned, encouragement and moral support to teachers and all possible help for the solution of various problems as and when faced by the school and so on because education of good quality has become an issue of national concern (Panda and Sahu, 2007).

Measures for Improving Quality in Education at Secondary Level

The quality of existing school education is currently being debated in many countries. In India the challenge to introduce quality school education (including both primary and secondary education) for mass people seems to be a daunting task sometimes, but the development of a country absolutely depends on the quality of its school education. Quality is at the heart of education and what takes place in classrooms and other learning environments is fundamentally important for the future well being of the learner. Quality of secondary education cannot be improved by itself, as it requires reformation in teacher training, improvement in the facilities and infrastructure in schools, teachers' motivation, students' feedback and many more things which need to be updated according to the changing conditions. In order to remove the problems in providing accessible, affordable and quality secondary education to all, some strategies can be adopted by the government, school authority, stakeholders of education to achieve the goals of USE in India and these are as follows-

- Providing adequate number of school building and equipment to all secondary schools.
- Providing provision of in-service and pre-service training for teachers of secondary schools.
- Providing trained and committed teachers in each secondary school.
- Appointment of teachers with regular pay scale and other benefits.
- Decreasing pupil-teacher ratio i.e. 30:1
- Improving the both physical and social environment of the school.
- Revitalizing supervision system for secondary schools.
- Providing remedial teaching and enrichment programmes at due occasions in classrooms.
- Introduction of formative evaluation and grading system to make it stress free for students.
- Introducing participatory management of secondary education with community support.

CONCLUSION

The demand for universal secondary education is coming largely due to enhanced literacy among parents, greater success of universal primary and upper primary education and growing awareness about value of education among people. Now in India with the success in elementary education due to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, a large number of students have knocked the doors of secondary education. Therefore, universalisation of secondary education with quality in our country is the need of the hour and the cost of ignoring this issue of secondary education will be much heavier for the nation than responding to the needs. Without the expansion and development of secondary education and its quality overall development of the education system of a country is not possible.

Therefore at present, providing quality secondary education to all irrespective of cast, creed, sex and socio-economic background should be considered as the matter of prime importance for the country.

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