



RURAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Education is the backbone of every society. Most of the Indian population live in villages. A country's economy is not only determined by urban development but rural development is a major factor for the improvement of our economic system. According to the census 2011 literacy rate in rural and urban areas is 68.91% and 84.98% respectively, i.e. huge gap of literacy rate between there. Education is thus the major instrument for development of our rural economy. It not only closes the existing gap between urban and rural areas but will produce skilled and educated workers for agricultural economy to initiate and maintain progress. Besides, knowledge of education will increase the communication skills to represent oneself in the globalised societies. To explore this significant role of education in India, especially in rural India, this paper highlights the present condition of rural education, rural education v/s urban education, failures and the major problems of rural education. It also emphasises various initiatives taken by the government and some of the recommendations for improving the education system in rural areas.

KEYWORDS: Education, Rural, Economy, Communication, Agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

Now-a-days education acts as the powerful instrument for societal development. As more than half of the Indian population lives in villages, therefore education system in rural areas also plays an important role in the growth of economy. Education is the only means through which various problems of rural life such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, etc can be controlled. The present system of education in India is far from satisfactory. Rural education is so far has been. neglected. Functions of education include social change, making rural people aware about their rights and responsibilities, improving standard of living and providing employment opportunities to rural people.

Earlier rural development only means agricultural development. But today, with changing times the concept of rural development has gained a wider perspective. Now rural development includes development improving the quality of life of rural people. It means improvement in their health and nutrition, providing good education with safe and healthy environment, creating more job opportunities, fairness in income distribution and no

discrimination in gender. A well educated person adequately equipped with knowledge and skill is not only needed for country's economic growth but also helps in inclusive growth. Thus rural education needs to be made self supporting. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, "Our rural education ought to be made self supporting, if it is to be compulsory". Accordingly, when the child completes his school education at the age of 14 years, he should be able to earn his livelihood in the society.

NEED OF THE STUDY

Education in rural India is the need of the hour. It is not only important to eradicate poverty and illiteracy but also for a country's economic development. It is mainly essential for the agricultural economy in which skilled and educated workers are involved as development relies upon skilled workforce. In short education increases the quality of manpower and develops occupational skills which lead to increase in production and national development. We know that education is an investment and economic development of the country depends on the productive efficiency of the individuals. It is not possible for illiterate people to cooperate with government in the process of increased production. For example our five-year plans could not function properly because out of 600 million people 400 million were illiterates and majority of them lives in villages. But the comprehensive schemes of adult education, women education, distance education, non-formal education have increased skill and proficiency of millions of people. Mass media like newspapers, television, radio programmes help in this regard. Thus emphasis on rural education for productive efficiency can help to raise the country above the poverty line. Therefore rural education is needed in any society for sustainable rural development. Without qualitative education it will be difficult to reach the optimal level of sustainable rural development.

OBJECTIVES

- To know the present condition of rural education in India.
- To investigate the differences between student performance in rural and urban areas.
- To discuss the factors of low performance of students in rural areas.
- To know about the various initiatives taken by the government.
- To know about the suggestions for improvement of rural education in India.

METHOD

This is a qualitative study. The investigators here collected data from different secondary sources like research journals, books, websites, etc.

FINDINGS

Objective 1: To know the present conditions of rural education in India.

Right to education is the primary right of every citizen of India whether a child lives in developed societies or in villages. The conditions of rural schools in India is very poor, it is still improving. Most of the schools are situated far away from the localities and students have to travel far away distances to avail these facilities. Transport system in these areas is also very poor. Schools are fewer in number and as communication and transport system is not fully

available students could not attend regular classes. Schools do not have toilet and drinking water facilities. The quality of teaching is not up to the standard. Teachers get very low salaries therefore they are not motivated to teach properly.

However, inspite of these, most parents today are interested in sending their children to schools. Rural children nowadays walk miles to get the basic education. Rural schools pay special attention for children living in different localities so that every child gets equal opportunity of receiving quality education. Most of the schools in rural areas are providing basic education to their children with quality study materials. Mid- Day meal and free school medical service has also been provided to many students. Students are getting other benefits such as school uniforms, books free of cost, railway concessions, etc. Rural village schools also have implemented library system which provides journals, magazine, books, newspaper to the students. Some schools and colleges have digital library where students can learn online. Scholarship facilities are available for poor but deserving students.

Rural schools reflects child-centric and life-centric curriculum. Apart from English, Science, Mathematics and Languages, students' knowledge has been updated through value and computer education. Community Awareness Programme, Yoga Education, Total Literacy Campaign has been arranged by the school authorities to ensure all round development among the students.

Objective 2: To investigate the differences between student's performances in rural and urban areas.

Recent Educational Research has examined that there are differences of educational achievements between rural and urban students. Many educators, researchers believe that student's performances in rural schools is inferior compared to the students live in urban areas. Students belonging to rural areas have low academic achievement when we compared with students in urban areas. There are many factors that cause this gap between students in rural and urban areas. Students of urban schools get many facilities whereas students in rural areas are denied of such facilities. Students residing in urban areas are getting better quality of education; they are acquainted with various types of information from sources like mass media and electronic media. Besides, family and peer group are helping them for better performances. Students in rural areas are less exposed to the worldly current affairs. As agriculture is the main occupation in villages most of the students are engaged in agricultural work and therefore many of them failed to complete college education. The disparity is highest in rural areas where only 8 percent of rural residents over age 25 have a college degree, compared with 16 percent of the residents in urban areas (US Bureau of the Census, 1999). Some of the differences that exist in student's achievement between urban and rural areas are:-

- a) There are many schools in cities and towns whereas very few schools exist in villages.
- b) Transport facilities in urban areas is much better than in rural areas; In villages students have to walk miles to reach the proper destination.
- c) School infrastructure in cities and towns are much developed compared to the schools in villages. Most of the village schools do not have proper buildings, classrooms are not even well furnished, sometimes students used to sit on the floor due to non-availability of chairs,

tables and benches. Some schools do not have toilet and drinking water facilities. Schools located in remote villages do not have electricity.

- d) Most of the teachers in urban schools are well trained and highly educated therefore standard of teaching in those schools is much high compared to the teaching standard in rural areas where teachers are not trained, get low salaries and therefore not motivated to teach properly.
- e) Computer education is given high importance in urban areas whereas only some village schools provide computer training to their students.
- f) Teachers in urban areas used advanced teaching aids while providing instruction to students. They often use laptops and printers to provide notes, use chart, models, and overhead projector for demonstration. Nowadays many urban schools use LCD and LED for providing better quality of teaching to their students. On the other hand, teachers in rural areas are not so much acquainted with latest technologies; they only prefer some book notes for teaching their students.
- g) Some urban schools offer group classes through video and audio conferencing while students in rural areas are denied of such facilities.
- h) Students in rural areas do not get much opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities in comparison to the students in urban areas.

So from these we find that there is huge gap of performance between students living in rural and urban areas.

Objective 3: To discuss the factors of low performance of students in rural areas.

There are many factors that contribute to the low performance of students in rural areas.

(a) Family factor- Family is the important factor that determines child's performance in rural areas. Parents of rural children do not have much education. Survey found that rural students felt no pressure to attain good academic performance as their parents' expectations towards education is low. Parental encouragement has a positive impact towards their child's performance and at rural areas most of the parents are less bothered about providing quality education to their children.

(b) Low Socio-economic factor- The students' background relate to the low socio-economic factor of their family also one of the factor that affect their academic performance. Students residing in rural areas often come from low income families. Their parents are basically engaged in agriculture and most of them are unable to fulfil minimum requirements of their children. Students in rural areas are unable to pay tuition fees, could not afford to buy books and other study materials due to financial crisis. Sometimes boys have to work elsewhere to meet the basic requirements of the family. Some students due to shortage of money were not able to complete their education and therefore drop-out rates is higher among students living in rural areas than in urban areas.

(c) Lack of facilities and resources- Many schools in villages lack proper infrastructure facilities. Sitting arrangements are poor. Light and fans are not available in many schools. Teaching materials are not up-to-date. Several schools in rural areas do not have laboratories and thus students are being deprived of learning practical subjects. Libraries do not have the provision of providing reference books to students. Students in rural schools are not well acquainted with

latest technologies. Some are not aware of using computers. Students in remote areas are often face problems with internet connection. This will make their learning process less effective and their knowledge about current issues will remain vague. Some schools do not have sufficient funds to buy proper teaching equipments.

(d) Less qualified teachers- Teacher is one of the most important factors in determining academic achievement of students. There are many teachers who avoids posting in rural areas due to non- availability of transport and other facilities. So, the majority of teachers that were sent to the rural areas are new and they have less teaching experience. Most of the teachers do not possess sufficient teaching skills. Some are not well- trained also. Teachers in rural areas are often paid less in compare to the teachers in urban areas therefore they pay less attention to the teaching process. Teachers lack good communications skills in English. When we compared to students in urban areas they usually have teachers that have good communications skills in English.

Objective 4: To know about the various initiatives taken by the government.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009' has been introduced by Ministry of Law and Justice for promoting importance of Education in India. The Act was introduced to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of six to fourteen years. Central and State Government has taken several initiatives which have been in operation from the early 1980s. The main objectives of all these initiatives include increasing enrolment of girls in school, strengthening community involvement, improving educational outcomes and teacher training materials and providing in-service training to teachers in villages. Some of these initiatives are:

Mid-Day-Meal Scheme (MDMS) - The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme in 1995. Commonly referred to as MDMS, the main objective of this scheme is to increase enrolment, retention, attendance of children in schools apart from providing healthy nutrition. Children from poor and backward families come to school with empty stomach. The main aim of this Mid-Day Meal scheme is to feed those classroom hungers which is a major obstacle in the path of providing an effective system of education. Equalization Educational Opportunities are being realised with the help of this Mid-Day- Meal Scheme.

MDMS is managed and implemented by School Management/Village Education Committees, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Self-Help Groups. In 2010-11 MDMS covered 7.18 crore primary school children and 3.36 crore upper primary school children.

Lok Jumbish Project- The main aim of Lok Jumbish (LJ) project is to promote universalization of primary education. Recently LJ project has 75 blocks covering approximately 12 million of population. Various Government Agencies, Teachers, NGOs, elected representatives are working with it. It works on seven guiding principles. These are:

- i) A process rather than a product approach.
- ii) Partnerships
- iii) Decentralized functioning
- iv) Participatory learning
- v) Integration with the mainstream education system

vi) Flexibility of management

vii) Creating multiple level of leadership committed to quality and mission mode.

Shiksha Karmi Project- The main aim of Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) is universalization and qualitative improvement of primary education in the remote villages of Rajasthan. This Scheme is being implemented since 1987 with the effort of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). It mainly focuses on girls' education. To promote community involvement in primary education and village level planning SKP has set up Village Education Committees (VECs) in 2000 villages. It also runs non-formal classes called Prehar Pathshalas and Anganpathshalas for girls' education. The programme at present covers over 150,000 students in 1,785 schools and 3,250 Prehar Pathshalas, involving over 4,271 Shiksha Karmis.

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) - Launched in 2001, the main goal of this programme is that by the year 2007, all children of 6-11 years of age should complete primary education and all children of 6-14 years of age should complete 8 years of schooling by the year 2010. It emphasised mainly on girls' education and education of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Education of Children with Special Needs has also been looked by SSA.

SSA is being implemented in partnerships with the State Governments and reaches out to 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations across the country.

The main goals of SSA are:-

- (1) Enrolment of all children in school, Education Guarantee Centres, Alternative School;
- (2) Retention of all children in school till the upper primary stage.
- (3) Removing the gender and social category gaps that exist in learning, retention and enrolment.
- (4) Ensuring that there is a significant outcome in the learning achievement levels of children at the primary and upper primary stage.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) - This programme was launched in 1994 with objective of universalization of primary education. It put major emphasis Universal Access, Universal Retention and Universal Achievement. It aims that primary education should be accessible to each and every child of school going age, once a child is enrolled in school he/she must be retained there. The main components of this programme are:

- a) Construction of new schools and classrooms
- b) Setting up Early Childhood Care Centres
- c) Establishment of non-formal schooling centres
- d) Appointment of teachers
- e) Providing education to challenged children

It has been said that 1, 60,000 schools and 84,000 alternative schools have been opened under this programme. 4, 20,203 challenged children have been successfully enrolled into the schools.

Operation Blackboard - The scheme of Operation Blackboard was launched in 1987 in pursuance of NPE-POA, to provide minimum essential facilities to all primary schools in the country. The main objective of this scheme was to develop the learning capacities of students. A remarkable improvement was brought in primary education under this scheme. Nearly 5, 23,000 primary schools have been covered in the beginning.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) - Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) are upper primary residential schools which are created mainly for girls of SC, ST and Muslim Communities. The objective of KGBV is to ensure that all girls of disadvantaged sections of society must get quality education. For this it recommended setting up of residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level.

KGBVs provide for a minimum reservation of 75% seats for girls from SC, ST, OBC and Minority Communities and 25% to girls from communities that lives below the poverty line. Till 2009-10 there were 2570 KGBVs in the country. After the RTE Act came into operation, an additional 1030 KGBVs were sanctioned, taking the total number of KGBVs in the country to 3600.

Objective 5: To know about the suggestions for improvement of rural education in India.

Some of the suggestions for improving rural education in India are:

(1) Establishing more schools- More schools should be established in rural areas. As the days are progressing rural parents felt the necessity of sending their children to schools. For this, proper number of schools should be set up in rural areas. As studying in private schools is very much costly more and more Government schools have to be established in villages. Both Central and State Government must take initiatives so that all children must get an equal opportunity for education. This would be possible only if education can be spread more in the rural areas.

(2) Provision free education- In rural areas, poverty is the main reason for which many parents are unable to send their children to school. Free education is the only means to get rid of such difficulties. If education can be provided free of cost then many poor students will enjoy the advantage of free schooling. Proper text books, library and laboratory facilities have to be provided. Government needs to bear all kinds of expenses for education of children in rural areas.

(3) Improvement of school infrastructure- Infrastructure in rural schools must be improved. Classrooms should be well furnished with required number of table, chairs, desk, blackboard, chalk, duster, etc. Toilets should be clean and tidy. Drinking water facilities must be available in all schools.

(4) Updated Curriculum- The curriculum of rural education can be updated and should include subjects related to farming, agriculture, gardening, etc. Special emphasis should be given to English and Environmental Science. The curriculum must be flexible and reflect the local needs of students.

(5) Resources- Rural classrooms should be upgraded with modern teaching aids. Visual aids like projectors, television, etc can be used to make teaching-learning process more interesting. Computer with internet facilities must be provided in every rural school to improve the depth of knowledge among students. Besides, school library must be well-equipped with reference books. School laboratory must have all kinds of apparatus. Scholarship must be given to students for pursuing higher education.

(6) Teachers in rural areas must be provided with good remuneration. The teachers should be made to feel proud that by teaching in the rural areas they are actually helping in the development of rural economy.

CONCLUSION

Education is the basic need of every society. The development of any country depends on the education of its people. A nation cannot progress if half of the population remains uneducated. Education promotes human security, economic opportunity, knowledge, skill and capabilities. Rural parents need to be aware about education of their children. They should realize the importance of education. Besides parents, the role of teachers is also important. The teachers can motivate students to a large extent so that they come to school regularly. Teaching process should be technology oriented. More projects work should be included in the syllabus so that students felt the thirst for learning. "Earn while learn" should be the motto of village education. Rural students must know the value of basic education. Sometimes special classes can be conducted for parents to make them realize the significance of education for their children.

As Education is the birth right of every human being equal opportunity of education should be provided to every sections of the society without discrimination of caste, creed, sex, colour, region, religion, etc. For this reason 'The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009' came into picture. All educational innovations require strong community support and participation. People's acceptance and involvement in various programmes can be used as an indicator for measuring the progress of a nation. Therefore special efforts have to be taken by Government agencies, educated youths, teachers, scholars and politicians to spread awareness among rural people (especially first generation learners) about the need and significance of education. In this connection, it must be remembered that, 'Rural life remains incomplete without basic education; a satisfactory education gives a satisfactory life.'

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