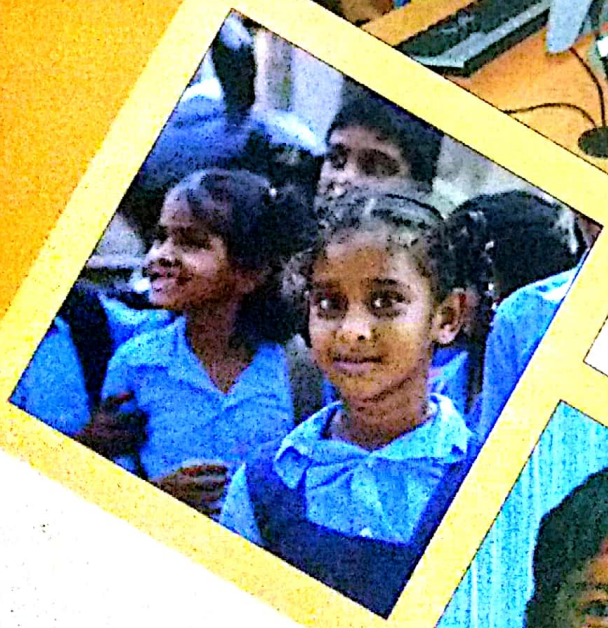
Kurukshetra

A JOURNAL ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Vol. 68 No.1 Pages 52 November 2019 ₹ 22



RURAL EDUCATION

Prime Minister Inaugurates Swachh Bharat Diwas 2019

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi speaking at the inauguration of the Swachh Bharat Diwas 2019, in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on October 02, 2019.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Swachh Bharat Diwas 2019 in Ahmedabad on 2nd October 2019. He released postage stamp and silver coin to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. He also distributed the Swachh Bharat Puraskar to the winners. Earlier in the day, he paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram. He visited the Magan Niwas (Charkha Gallery) and interacted with the children there.

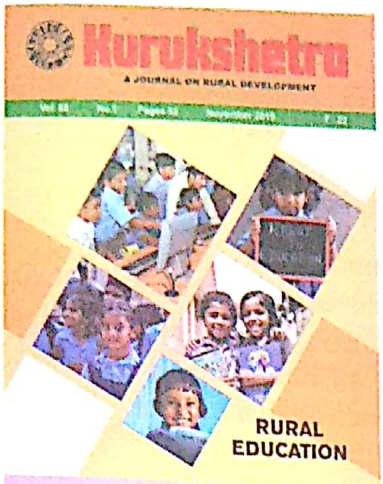
Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi while addressing a gathering of Sarpanches at the 'Swachh Bharat Diwas' programme said, the entire world is commemorating 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and the event has been made more memorable after UN released a postal stamp on Gandhiji a few days back. He said he had the opportunity to visit Sabarmati Ashram many times in his lifetime and today like every other time got new energy there as well.

The Prime Minister said, the villages have declared themselves free from open defecation and he congratulated every countryman, especially those living in villages, Sarpanches and all those who have worked for 'Swachata'. He added that irrespective of age, social and economic status, everyone has contributed in this pledge of cleanliness, dignity and respect. He said that today the world is amazed by this success of ours and they are rewarding us. Entire world is amazed that India has provided toilet facilities to more than 60 crore population in 60 months by constructing more than 11 crore toilets, he added.

Public participation and voluntarism has been the hallmark of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the reason for its success, the Prime Minister said. He thanked the entire country for the whole hearted support provided for the mission. Stressing on the importance of public participation, Prime Minister said that collective efforts are essential for the success of important government initiatives like Jal Jeevan Mission and eliminating single use plastic by 2022.

The Prime Minister said his Government is committed towards realizing the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi. In this context, he mentioned about the initiatives of the government to ensure self-reliance, provide Ease of Living, and taking development to the last mile. He urged the public to take a resolution for the betterment of the nation and strive hard to make it successful. He added that such 130 crore resolutions can bring about a massive transformation.

Source: PIB



CHIEF EDITOR
RAJENDRA BHATT

SENIOR EDITOR
RAKESHRENU

EDITOR
SHIELA R. CHAUDHARY

JOINT DIRECTOR (PRODUCTION)
VINOD KUMAR MEENA

COVER DESIGN
RAJESH KUMAR

EDITORIAL ASSITANCE
PURTI PURWAR

EDITORIAL OFFICE
ROOM NO. 653,
Publications Division,
Soochna Bhawan,
C.G.O. Complex, Lodhi Road,
NEW DELHI-110003
Phone : 011-24362859
E-MAIL : kurukshetra.english@gmail.com

FOR SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES,
RENEWALS AND AGENCY
INFORMATION
PLEASE CONTACT:
JOURNAL UNIT, PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
MINISTRY OF I & B, ROOM NO. 48-53,
SOOCHNA BHAWAN, CGO COMPLEX,
LODHI ROAD, NEW DELHI-110 003
TELE : 24367453
FAX: 24365610
E-MAIL : pdjucir@gmail.com
WEBSITE : publicationsdivision.nic.in

For Online Sale, please log on to bharatkosh.gov.in/product, and for e-books, please visit Google Play, Kobo or Amazon.

SUBSCRIPTION* :
INLAND
1 YEAR : ₹ 230
2 YEARS : ₹ 430
3 YEARS : ₹ 610
ABROAD (AIR MAIL)
ONE YEAR
₹ 530 (SAARC COUNTRIES)
₹ 730 (OTHER COUNTRIES)
* REVISED FROM APRIL 2016
ISSUE ONWARDS

The Monthly Journal
Kurukshetra
MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
Vol. 68 No. 1 Pages 52
November 2019

CONTENT

Sales Emporia : Publications Division: *Soochna Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi -110003 (Ph 24365610) *Hall No.196, Old Secretariat, Delhi 110054 (Ph 23890205) * 701, B Wing, 7th Floor, Kendriya Sadan, Belapur, Navi Mumbai 400614 (Ph 27570686)*8, Esplanade East, Kolkata-700069 (Ph 22488030) *'A' Wing, Rajaji Bhawan, Basant Nagar, Chennai-600090 (Ph 24917673) *Press road, Near Govt. Press, Thiruvananthapuram-695001 (Ph 2330650) *Room No.204, IInd Floor, CGO Towers, Kavadiguda, Hyderabad-500080 (Ph 27535383) *1st Floor, 'F' Wing, Kendriya Sadan, Koramangala, Bangalore-560034 (Ph 25537244) *Bihar State Co-operative Bank Building, Ashoka Rajpath, Patna-800004 (Ph 2683407) *Hall No 1, 2nd floor, Kendriya Bhawan, Sector-H, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024 (Ph 2325455) *Akhandanand Hall, C/o PIB, 2nd Floor, Nr CNI Church, Mother Teresa Road, Bhadra, Ahmedabad-380001, Gujarat (Ph 26588669) House No. 4, Pension Para Road, Post Office - Silpukhuri, Guwahati -781003 (Ph 2665090)

Editorial

Quality Education is a prerequisite for the overall development of any human being. Education plays a crucial role in balancing the socio-economic fabric of the country as well as ensuring growth of any country. The present government through its various steps and schemes is making all out efforts to provide basic education to each one of its citizens. High priority has been accorded by the Government to the over-all development of education sector and a number of flagship programmes are being implemented in this regard such as Rashtriya Ucchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, Samagra Shiksha, Swachh Bharat-Swachh Vidyalaya, Mid-Day Meals Scheme, etc. These have been put in place towards promoting quality education and building the essential infrastructure. As the teacher is vital to quality education, the Government is dedicating many of its resources towards teachers training programmes to ensure the presence of skilled educators.

The Government is working round the clock to bring positive changes in the education system in the country so that world-class education can be provided to the students. Efforts are being made to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge and to eliminate the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry.

Quality infrastructure is also being developed by the centre and the states—especially in the north-eastern region—for better education prospects. Special focus is being given by the Government to develop the education infrastructure in the rural and backward areas of the country through wide ranging schemes, policies and programmes.

In accordance to the clarion call of the Prime Minister of 'Sabka Saath, Saath Vikas', the Government of India has taken significant steps in improving education facilities in the rural and poverty-stricken regions of the country. An ambitious programme like Samagra Shiksha has been introduced to promote holistic education, while incorporating three major initiatives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE), for providing integrated school education from pre-school to higher secondary level. Special provisions for Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Educationally Backward Blocks (EEBs), LWE (Left-Wing Extremism) affected districts, etc., are a major part of this umbrella scheme. Interventions like in-service training of teachers and school heads, grants for library, sports and physical activities also fall under the programme.

Digital Literacy is an important part of education, especially in a world where technological development is the flag-bearer of progress. Development of any nation is dependent on the education of its citizens. The numerous policies and schemes aimed at providing education to all shows the Government's endeavour towards inclusive development. Education in its hands holds the promise of a prosperous future, a future where even the last citizen of the nation enjoys the fruits of its progress.

POLICY AND PLANNING TOWARDS RURAL EDUCATION

Nanu Bhasin and Arvind Kumar Jain

Government of India has taken determined steps to correct the rural–urban imbalance in literacy rates which affect the overall development of the economy as well as the country as a whole. The Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India works through two departments: 1) Department of School Education & Literacy 2) Department of Higher Education. And since education is a subject of Concurrent List, therefore Central Government and State Governments work together for the betterment of education sector.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "India lives in her villages." And even after fast-paced urbanisation in India, the statement made by the Father of the Nation several decades ago still seems to hold true. According to the World Bank figures compiled from officially recognised sources, rural population as per cent of total population in India was reported at 66.46 per cent in 2017. And as we celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi this year, we are once again reminded that rural India needs to be accorded top priority to ensure sustainable growth and development of the country.

Talking about literacy, level of education is not only a reflection of the level of development attained by a society but in turn it also gives impetus to growth and modernization of the society. As a result, promoting rural education becomes a prime objective of the Government to ensure an overall balance in development.

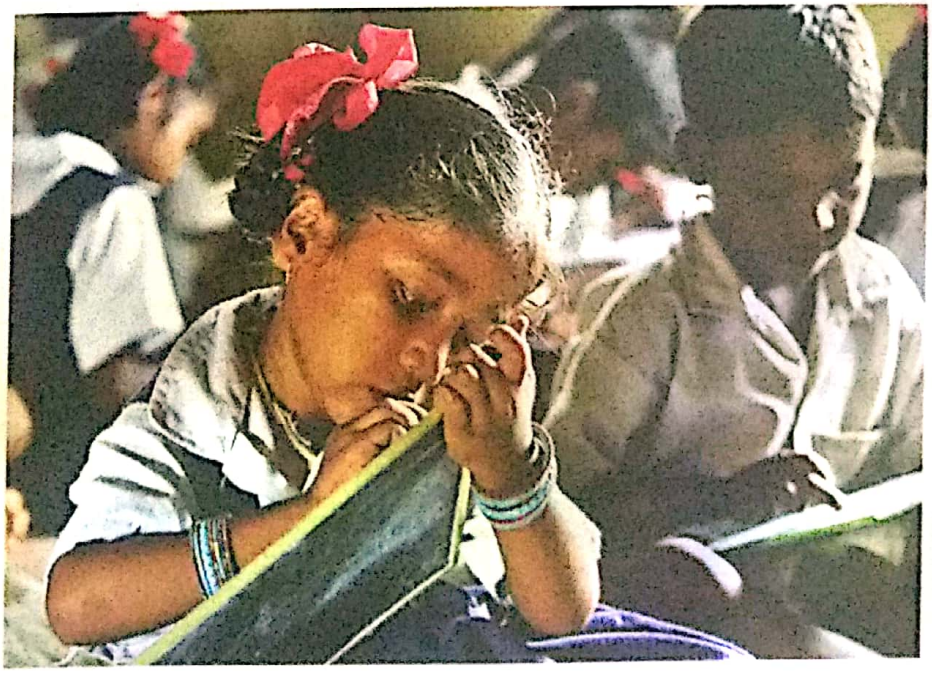
I. Status of Education in India (Rural vs. Urban)

As per Census 2011, literacy rate in rural areas was around 68 per cent while it was 84 per cent in urban areas. Furthermore, only 59 per cent of rural women were estimated to be literate as compared to nearly 80 per cent urban women being literate in 2011.

Some interesting findings have been thrown up by the survey on 'Social Consumption: Education' during the National Sample Survey (NSS) 71st Round, January to June 2014, conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). It has brought to light several ground level realities of education in rural India vis a vis urban India which are of relevance to a policy maker.

Findings of NSS 71st Round (January-June, 2014)

The Survey found that literacy rates in rural India were much lower in comparison to urban India across different age groups. While overall Literacy Rate among persons (aged 5 years and above) in India was 76 per cent, in rural areas it was 71 per cent compared to 86 per cent in urban areas. In both rural and urban areas, more than 90 per cent per cent households reported availability of primary school within 1 km from the house as per the survey. However, a far lower proportion of households in rural areas as compared to those in urban areas reported existence of upper primary or secondary schools



within 1 km. As per the survey, the gender gap between male and female literacy rates stayed nearly the same for the period 2007–08 to 2014 in rural areas, this gap appears to be narrowing in urban areas whereby female literacy appears to be picking up faster as compared to rural areas. The proportion of persons having completed higher level of education like graduation and above was more in the urban areas than in the rural areas. Similarly, the percentage of students getting/availing free textbooks and mid day meals in rural areas is substantially higher than their counterparts in urban areas. In rural areas, the major reason for 'never-enrolment' for persons of ages 5-29 years was 'not interested in education' (33 per cent male and 27 per cent female) while in urban areas, nearly 33 per cent males and 30 per cent females in the age group of 5-29 years never enrolled because of 'financial constraints'.

Access to Computer and Internet (NSS 71st Round)

The Survey showed that nearly 6 per cent of rural households and 29 per cent of urban households possessed a computer. Among households with at least one member of age 14 years and above, nearly 16 per cent among rural households had internet access as compared to 49 per cent urban households. Among persons of age 14-29 years, nearly 18 per cent in rural areas and 49 per cent in urban areas were able to operate a computer.

U-DISE (2016–17) Report

Some of the highlights of NSS 71st Round may not appear to be encouraging, however, going by the figures stated in the last U-DISE (2016–17) Report brought out by M/o Human Resource Development, there has been a major thrust on providing rural school infrastructure and stepping up school enrolments in rural areas through various schemes and interventions. As per U-DISE 2016-17, total number of schools in India were 15.3 lakhs out of which nearly 12.97 lakh schools were in rural areas. Total enrolment in schools was 25.13 crore out of which 18.02 crore was enrolment of students from rural areas. This data pertains to all the schools from Class I to Class XII across the country. Therefore, rural areas account for 84.46 per cent of total schools in India and 71.72 per cent of total student enrolment in India. In addition, 73.04 per cent teachers are placed in rural locations.

The National Achievement Survey 2017

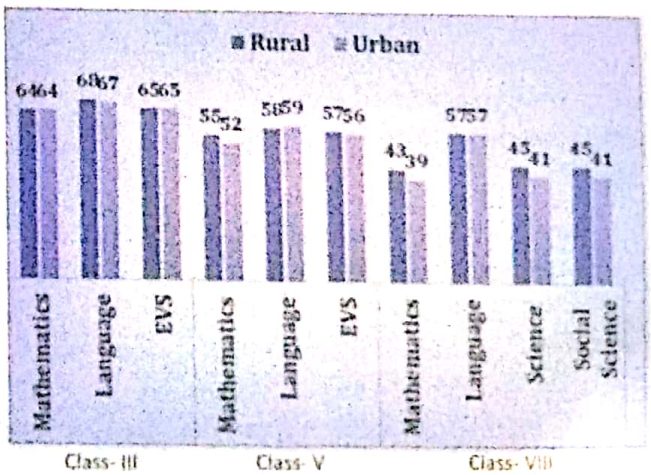
The National Achievement Survey 2017 (NAS 2017) of Ministry of Human Resource Development, GoI is amongst the largest surveys conducted in the world. It tried to assess the attainment of competency-based learning outcomes of 2.2 million students from 1,10,000 schools across 701 districts in all 36 States/UTs. NAS 2017 has thrown interesting light on learning outcomes for rural vs urban student populations.

A surprise finding of NAS 2017 with respect to learning outcomes in Rural vs Urban areas is that the learning outcomes are similar in rural and urban school going population and in fact, even higher for rural students over urban ones for class 8th in Mathematics, Science and Social Science subjects. This has, to some extent, broken the myth that rural students are laggards as compared to urban ones.

Some of the concerns which have been thrown up by various studies taken up by both public and private institutions include not only availability (infrastructure like schools/colleges etc.) but also accessibility (distance), quality (learning outcomes), education of girl child, quality of teaching, skills education among others.

Taking a cue from the same, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India has now taken determined steps to correct the rural–urban imbalance in literacy rates which affect the overall development of the economy as well as the country as a whole. The Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India

National Achievement by Classes and Subjects with respect to Rural and Urban areas in NAS 2017



works through two departments: 1) Department of School Education & Literacy 2) Department of Higher Education. And since education is a subject of Concurrent List, therefore Central Government and State Governments work together for the betterment of education sector.

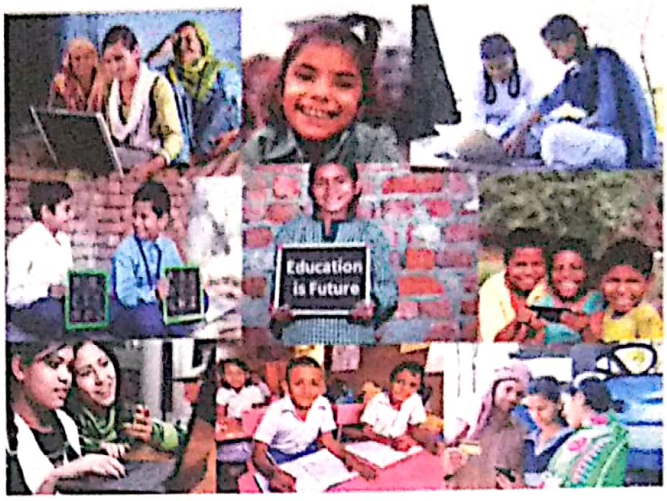
II. Government Initiatives for Rural Areas

Expansion of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, pan-India expansion of Samagra Siksha and voluminous increase in budgetary allocations, expansion of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, improvements in quality of Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, Swachhta Abhiyan, Massive Online Courses, expansion of Eklavya Model Residential School Scheme, digital initiatives and promoting several other education related interventions by the states are some of important efforts of the Government for the development of rural education. While some of the programmes/ schemes/projects are specific to rural areas; expansion of infrastructure and quality improvement of teachers in rural areas are also likely to receive a major thrust under flagship programmes like Samagra Shiksha.

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya

This is a rural specific scheme meant for talented children from rural areas. Ministry of HRD is running Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas in states across the country (except Tamil Nadu) and provides free and quality education to talented rural children, comparable to the best in a residential school system for Class VI to XII. Total 661 Navodaya Vidyalays are running successfully with provision of at least 75 per cent seats for rural children.

The success story of this scheme is highlighted by the fact that the overall pass percentage of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas was 96.62 per cent in Class XII which is much higher than the national pass percentage of Class XII which was 83.4 per cent as per 2018–19 results. Many students who have passed from JNV are working successfully on the strength of their talent in several prestigious fields like IAS, Medical and Engineering etc. Last year approximately 4451 students in JEE Mains, 966 students in JEE advance and 12654 students in NEET have successfully qualified.



Samagra Shiksha

This is an ambitious programme of the Government to promote holistic education. It subsumes the three earlier centrally sponsored schemes i.e. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE) and has been recently launched as an Integrated Scheme for School Education extending from pre-school to class XII. The budgetary allocations under the scheme have been enhanced substantially with Rs. 36,322 crore allocated in 2019–20 which saw a huge jump of 20 per cent in comparison to 2018–19 budget.

The advantages of Samagra Shiksha are manifold and are expected to bring huge benefits in rural areas. Under the scheme, provision has been made for giving preference to Special Focus Districts (SFDs), Educationally Backward Blocks (EEBs), LWE affected districts, and aspirational districts while planning interventions like setting up of primary schools, upper primary schools, construction of additional classrooms, toilets and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs). The Samagra Shiksha scheme supports States for strengthening of school infrastructure including in rural areas.

Special provision of Library Grant under Samagra Shiksha will benefit schools in rural areas, most of which have dearth of such reading facilities and will be able to provide this facility for the first time to their students.

Similarly, Samagra Shiksha focuses on improvement in quality of education by providing support for different interventions like in-service training of teachers and school heads, grants for library, sports and physical activities, support for

Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan, ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and digital initiatives, remedial teaching for academically weaker students, support for Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat, which will make an enormous impact on quality of education in rural areas that are likely to be the main recipients of these benefits.

Revamped Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) Scheme

The revamped scheme of KGBVs under Samagra Shiksha will now provide the facility of at-least one residential school for girls from Classes VI-XII in every educationally backward block which does not have residential schools under any other Scheme. Approximately 3700 KGBV hostels for rural underprivileged girls are to be expanded up to 12th class under the scheme benefitting more than 6 lakh rural girls mostly from SC, ST, OBC, minority & other deprived sections of the society.

In a nutshell, though Samagra Shiksha Scheme covers both urban and rural areas but the emphasis will be primarily on rural areas in every aspect of the education such as infrastructure, learning outcomes, trained teachers, library grant, sports grant and vocational education amongst others which will benefit an already existing network of about 12.97 lakh rural schools and also create scope for setting up more facilities for the rural education system.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme

Another centrally sponsored scheme meant to promote rural education is Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Although the scheme is meant for both urban and rural areas, NSS 71st Round shows a high percentage of students in rural areas availing of Mid-Day Meal i.e. as high as 70 per cent students getting mid-day meals in rural areas. One of the objectives of this scheme was to attract children from disadvantaged sections like poor, dalits, tribals, girls and children of labour workforce including farm labour. Around 9.12 crore children were benefitted from hot cooked nutritious food in 11.35 lakh schools during 2018–19. It is universally accepted now that Mid-Day Meal Scheme is one of the reasons for increment in the enrolment in schools.

Revamped Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) Scheme

An important intervention by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the objective of EMRS is to provide quality and free of cost middle and high level education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) students especially in remote areas. Rural education is sought to be brought to the forefront through Eklavya School model for tribal populations. Eklavya schools will be on par with Navodaya Vidyalayas.

By the year 2022, every block with more than 50 per cent ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an Eklavya Model Residential School. Out of 564 sub-districts, at present 102 sub-districts have EMRSs.

Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative

In response to the clarion call made by the Prime Minister on 15 August, 2014, the Department of School Education and Literacy launched the Swachh Vidyalaya initiative (SVI) for the construction and repair of separate toilets for girls and boys in every school which was completed within a year in 2015. With this, all 13.77 crore children in 11.21 lakh government schools all over the country now have access to toilet facilities. This has particularly helped in creation of separate girls' toilets in schools in rural areas.

Digital Initiatives

The digital initiatives can become a game changer for rural areas since they revolutionise the delivery mechanisms for education in the country. They have a special role to play for imparting quick, meaningful and quality education to students in far flung and rural areas as well as in-situ training of teachers.

The recent launch of *Operation Digital Board*

aims to introduce digital boards all over the country in government and government-aided schools for nearly 1.5 lakh Secondary/Sr. Secondary schools. Similarly, UGC proposes to take up 300 universities and about 10,000 colleges in the first phase covering 2 lakh classrooms.

e-PATHSHALA- NCERT books are now available in digital version for free for anybody. Approximately 15 lakh students have downloaded e-Pathshaala app. As on 26 February, 2019, visits to e-Pathshala crossed 4.0 cr. The App enjoys a rating of 4 out of 5 on Google play store and 4.5 out of 5 on Windows store.

Diksha is digital platform for teachers to enable capacity building of all categories of teachers. It will help over 50 lakh teachers in improving the quality of education.

MOOCs on SWAYAM Platform- It is an integrated platform for offering online courses and covering school (9th to 12th) to Post Graduate Level. Till July 2019, 2769 MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) have been offered on SWAYAM, wherein about 1.02 crore students have enrolled to various courses till date. The online courses are being used not only by the students but also by the teachers and non-student learners, in the form of lifelong learning.

SWAYAM PRABHA (Kishore Manch) DTH-TV Channels have been launched for transmission of educational e-contents through 32 National Channels i.e. SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV.

National Digital Library of India (NDL) is a project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. There are more than 3 crore digital resources available through the NDL. More than 50 lakh students have registered themselves in the NDL, with about 20 lakhs active users.

The increasing popularity of digital initiatives in education shows that it is digital technology which will show the way to solve complex problem of educating a huge and diverse population spread over large geographical areas, providing instruction in a speedy and effective manner ensuring all round quality especially in far flung and rural areas. Digital tools make learning interesting, make learning-teaching process interactive as well as increase availability of e-resources at any time and at any place to students, thereby making it possible to introduce them to higher as well as specialised levels of learning across length and breadth of the country which has special implications for rural areas plagued by shortage of learning materials and textbooks of higher learning.

The 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' Programme

If we talk about Higher Education, as per AISHE 2018–19 Report (All India Survey of Higher Education) 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges and 10725 Stand Alone Institutions are listed on AISHE web portal. AISHE report is an eye opener since as per its findings, 60.53 per cent Colleges are located in rural areas. It shows that even though we have enough colleges in rural India but they are lacking in quality. Therefore, NITI Aayog has identified some aspirational districts and the 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' Programme aims to expeditiously improve the status of Higher Education in 117 aspirational districts from across 28 states. During the first phase of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), central assistance to States has been provided for creation of one Model Degree College each in 60 Educationally Backward Districts which includes provision of appropriate number of class rooms, library, laboratory, faculty rooms, toilet blocks and other essential requirements for technologically advanced facilities. During the second phase of the RUSA, central assistance is provided for opening of new Model Degree Colleges (MDCs) in 'Aspirational Districts' identified by NITI Aayog and in unserved & underserved districts in North Eastern and Himalayan States. The Project Approval Board (PAB) of RUSA has approved central support for one Model Degree College each in 70 such districts.

NISHTHA

National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) has been launched very recently to build capacities of 42 lakh elementary school level teachers, principals, block resource centre coordinators and cluster resource centre coordinators. The basic objective of 'NISHTHA' Programme is to motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students. Teachers will get awareness and develop their skills on various aspects related to Learning Outcomes,

Competency Based Learning and Testing, Learner-centred Pedagogy, School Safety and Security, Personal-social qualities, Inclusive Education, ICT in teaching-learning including Artificial Intelligence, Health and well-being including yoga, initiatives in school education including library, eco club, youth club, kitchen garden, school leadership qualities, environmental concerns, pre-school, pre-vocational education and school based assessment in a joyful learning manner.

Vision of Draft New Education Policy (NEP) to Increase Supply of Good Quality Teachers in Rural Areas

To ensure that truly excellent students enter the teaching profession - especially from and in rural areas, the draft NEP envisions creating special merit-scholarships which will also include guaranteed employment in their local areas upon successful completion of their four-year integrated B.Ed. programmes. To further encourage outstanding teachers to be deployed to rural areas, incentives like housing will be provided for teachers to take up teaching jobs in rural areas, especially in those rural areas with the greatest current teacher shortages.

Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) is a programme run by Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog to foster curiosity and innovative mindset in young students across India to encourage research and innovation in schools across the country. The vision of the initiative is 'To create one million children in India as Neoteric Innovators'. As per latest data, 8878 schools have been selected for establishing ATLs, out of which 3020 have completed their compliance process and have been funded successfully. The selected schools are from both urban and rural areas. Around 117 Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas are also been selected for Atal Tinkering Labs.

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan & Swachch Bharat Summer Internship

These revolutionary programmes are based on the concept that the rural areas cannot be expected to grow in isolation and require handholding by student community from urban areas.

Under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, each Higher Education Institution will be linked with at least 5 villages to engage the faculty and students of these Institutions in understanding rural realities; to identify technologies, innovative methods to solve problems of rural people; and to allow Higher Educational Institutions to contribute in devising systems for smooth implementation of various Government programmes. Currently 688 Institutions covering 33 States/UT's are participating under the scheme.

Swachh Bharat Summer Internship (SBSI) aims at engaging the college youth with Swachhata work. In line with the Prime Minister's clarion call on 2 October 2014, candidates are required to undertake 100 hours of swachhata related activities including shramdaan, creation of sanitation infrastructure, behaviour change campaigns and other IEC initiatives in and around nearby villages. As per last reports, 2 lakh students have been enrolled in the internship programme for which they will earn 2 credit points as an 'elective'.

Apart from the above, several direct interventions have been launched successfully by states for improving rural education. States like Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, among others have distributed free bicycles to girls in rural areas to step up their enrolment ratio. Similarly, several states like UP, Kerala, Tamil Nadu have launched schemes to provide free laptops to students.

III. Conclusion

The massive effort in recent times to revamp and expand the education system in India has far reaching implications. Not only is the thrust on infrastructure but also on quality and unique solutions through technology to improve delivery systems of education. The student community has shown great enthusiasm for e-Resources for learning. This holds great promise for the future since as the internet penetration increases, the major beneficiaries of online courses and facilities will be the rural and far flung areas.

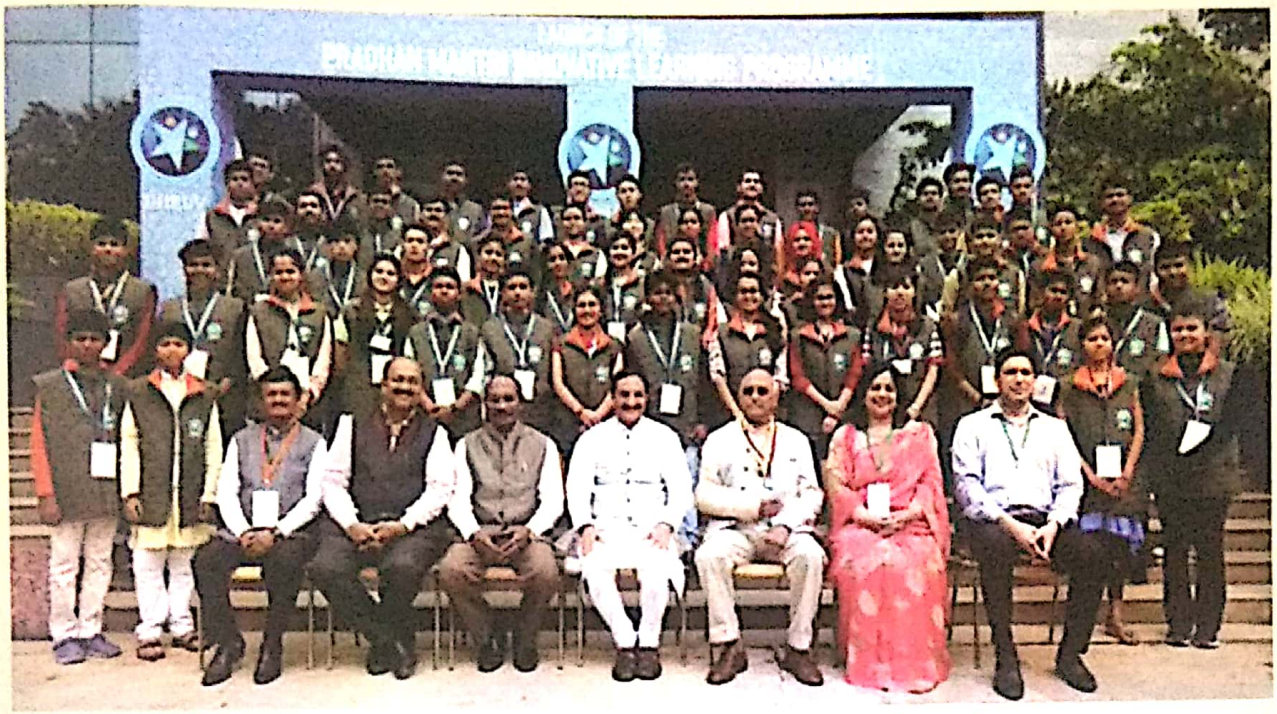
Nanu Bhasin is Additional Director General (Media & Communication) for Ministry of HRD, New Delhi.

E mail: adgnanubhasin@gmail.com

Arvind Kumar Jain is Deputy Director (Media & Communication) for Ministry of HRD, New Delhi.

Email: jain.arvind@nic.in Statistical inputs by Ms. Aanchal Katiyar, Media & Communication Officer for MHRD)

Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat



Dhruv: A unique initiative for talented students
'Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme' Launched

Union Minister of Human Resource Development Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' launched a unique initiative, the Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme-Dhruv, which will act as a turning point in the lives of extraordinarily talented students, from the premises of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Headquarters at Bengaluru on 11 October 2019.

Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Union Minister of Human Resource Development

"The Programme represents the vision of the Prime Minister and will prove to be a turning point for the students as well as the society. It is through their achievements that the world will know 'Saare Jahan se accha Hindustan Hamara'."

Dr K Sivan, Secretary, Department of Space and Chairman, ISRO

"Dhruv will provide a source of inspiration to the young minds. India's Space programme has reached unexpected heights due to the talented and bright young minds over the last 60 years and the Dhruv Taras are also expected to make similar contributions to solve problems faced by the people."

Wing Cdr. (Retd.) Rakesh Sharma, Ashok Chakra Awardee, First Indian citizen to enter into space

"These Dhruv Taras are the future innovators in their respective fields. Youngsters should choose the purpose higher than them and revisit their personal definition of success. It is not wealth but cutting edge work which brings greater satisfaction in life."

The new Programme, Dhruv, will act as a platform to explore the talent of outshining and meritorious students and help them achieve excellence in their specific areas of interest, may it be science, performing arts, creative writing, etc. In this way, these talented students will not only realise their full potential but also contribute to the society in a big way.

The Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme has been started to identify and

encourage talented children to enrich their skills and knowledge. In centres of excellence across the country, gifted children will be mentored and nurtured by renowned experts in different areas, so that they can reach their full potential. It is expected that many of the students selected will reach the highest levels in their chosen fields and bring laurels to their community, State and Nation.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Pokhriyal said that the programme represents the vision of the Prime Minister and reflects the true spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat.

While sharing his experiences, Shri Sharma said that 60 outstandingly talented students have been selected in the first batch of Dhruv Programme. The students will thus both shine through their achievements and light a path for others to follow.

To begin with, the Programme will cover two areas, i.e., Science and Performing Arts. There are 60 students in all from across the country, 30 from each area. The students have been broadly chosen from classes 9 to 12, from all schools including government and private. Further, a 14-day programme has been organised for these students. This is the first phase of the programme which will be expanded gradually to other fields. These students will be visiting important places of scientific and cultural interest in Bengaluru and New Delhi.

Students will be able to interact with renowned mentors both in Delhi and abroad through video conferencing with global personalities. In addition, mentors who have excelled in innovation in non-science and non-performing arts fields will also interact with the students.

Report: B K Kiranmai, Bengaluru

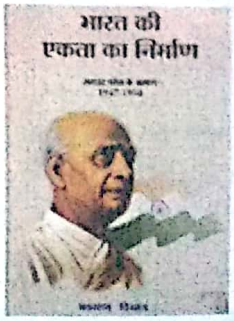
'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat' to be the Theme of IFFI 2019 – The Flagship International Film Festival of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting

The Golden Jubilee edition of International Film Festival of India to be held from 20-28 November, 2019 will have 'Ek Bharat Shresht Bharat' as its theme. The 50th International Film Festival of India, 2019 will witness over 200 best films from 76 countries, 26 feature films, and 15 non-feature films in Indian Panorama section and around 10,000 people and film lovers are expected to participate in the Golden Jubilee edition.

Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Shri Prakash Javadekar said, "IFFI this year will be very special. The theme of IFFI 2019 is Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat. The opening and closing ceremonies will reflect this theme." The Minister also stated that as IFFI is celebrating its Golden Jubilee edition, 12 prominent films in different languages that have completed 50 years in 2019, will also be showcased in the Festival.

Indian Panorama is a flagship section of IFFI, which showcases the best of contemporary Indian Feature and Non-Feature Films of the years. This year, the Feature film Jury was headed by acclaimed filmmaker and screenwriter Shri Priyadarshan. The Jury has chosen the film Hellaro (Gujarati) directed by Abhishek Shah as the Opening Feature Film of Indian Panorama 2019. The Non-Feature Jury was headed by wellknown documentary Filmmaker Shri Rajendra Janglay. The Non-Feature film Jury selected the film "Nooreh", story of a Kashmiri girl, directed by Ashish Pandey as the Opening Non-Feature film of Indian Panorama 2019.

Publications Division building a repository of books on 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat'



Publications Division is working to bring out a series of books on 'Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat' based on the lives of India's great personalities. Apart from Hindi and English, these books will also be produced in 13 regional languages. Around 150 books in major Indian languages have already been published and 50 are at different stages of production.

Four books namely Razia Sultan (15 languages); Rani Laxmi Bai (14 languages); Sardar Patel (14 languages), and Swarajya ke Mantradata Tilak (15 languages) have already been released.

STRATEGY TO PROMOTE RURAL EDUCATION

Ashish Kumar and Sarah Iype

From being a luxury only a few could afford, today the sight of children in school uniforms even in the most remote regions of the country, has become common place. With a marked increase in first-generation learners, students are transcending the educational attainment of their parents.

Celebrated as the 'soul' of the nation, rural India comprises 70 per cent of India's population and is, in fact, home to more people than the entire continent of Europe. Despite an increasing trend in urbanization, it is projected that the majority of India will still reside in rural regions even in the year 2050. Given the country's ripe demographic opportunity, the development of rural India is critical to forge the nation's progress.

An Overview of the Education Sector in India

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Education in India

	Rural	Urban
Number of schools (in lakhs)	12.97	2.39
Number of students enrolled (in crores)	18	7.1
Number of teachers (in lakhs)	65	24

Source: UDISE 2016-17

Spread over an enormous landscape, impacting over 18 crore students (71 per cent of the nation's students), the rural school education sector accounts for over 84 per cent of the total schools in India. Historical analysis depicts admirable progress in this sector and unravels a transformation in the narrative around education. From being a luxury only a few could afford, today the sight of children in school uniforms even in the most remote regions of the country, has become common place. With a marked increase in first-generation learners, students are transcending the educational attainment of their parents. The United Nations Human Development Report reveals a doubling in the mean years of schooling from 3.0 to 6.4 between the years 1990 and 2017.

The Government of India has been successful in its efforts to universalize access to education. The *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education For All) launched in 2000, the Mid-Day Meal Scheme initiated in 2001, as well as the enactment of the Right to Education Act in 2009, have been instrumental in increasing enrolment and providing equitable educational opportunities. In fact, enrolment in the age group between 6 to 14 years, across both rural and urban areas, has been above 95 per cent since 2007.

A Rural-Urban Comparison in School Education

A deeper analysis comprising a rural-urban comparison of critical indicators offers interesting insights.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics A Rural-Urban Comparison in School Education

Indicator	Rural	Urban
INFRASTRUCTURE PARAMETERS		
Percentage of schools with drinking water	96.81	98.78
Percentage of schools with girls' toilet	97.30	98.71
Percentage of schools with electricity connection	54.84	87.60
Percentage of schools having library facility	82.13	87.20
Percentage of schools established since 2002	27.40	30.63
Percentage distribution of classrooms in good condition	78.35	92.37
SCHOOL PROFILE		
Average enrolment in schools	108	208
Average number of teachers per school	5	10.2
Student Classroom Ratio	24	28
Pupil Teacher Ratio	23	22
Percentage of distribution of classrooms with enrolment <50	37.86	21.11
Percentage distribution of single teacher schools	7.77	3.84
Percentage of schools with regular head-master/ principal	40.19	49.71
Percentage of girls enrolment to total enrolment	48.69	47.04

Indicator	Rural	Urban
Percentage of schools inspected in previous academic year	46.13	31.68
Average number of instructional days	225	223
Average number of working days spent on non-teaching assignments	1.27	1.34

Source: UDISE 2016-17

In terms of school infrastructure, while there are marginal differences in the availability of drinking water facilities and toilets, the urban-rural divide is evident in terms of the provision of electricity. With a difference of over 33-percentage points, urban schools have greater access to electricity. Similarly, urban areas tend to have more schools with libraries and classrooms in good condition. Given the increasing trend in urbanization, it is no surprise that more schools were set up in urban regions.

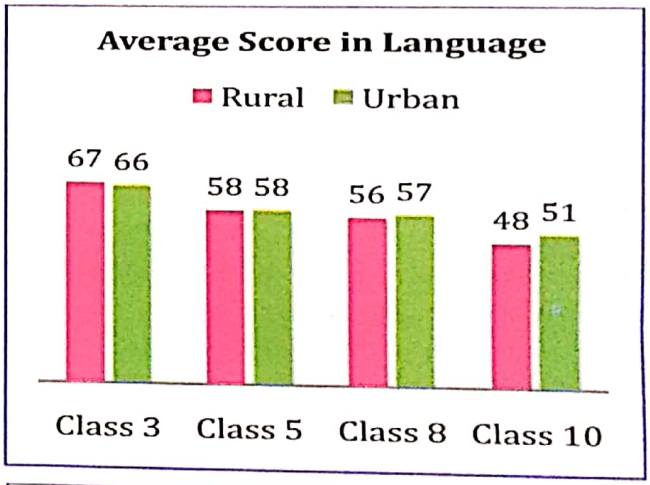
It is interesting to note that the rural regions perform better in terms of gender parity, as evident in the ratio of girls' enrolment to total enrolment. Further, monitoring of schools seems to be more prevalent in rural areas where the coverage of school inspections exceeds urban areas by ~15 percentage points. However, data analysis suggests that rural regions fall short in terms of having optimally resourced schools. Rural schools, on average, enroll 100 less students than urban schools. While the pupil-teacher ratio is almost equivalent, rural regions have more than double the number of single-teacher schools than urban areas. This implies greater multi-grade instruction, which directly correlates with poor delivery of quality education. Similarly, rural areas also tend to have lesser schools with regular head-masters or principals, revealing weaker school leadership.

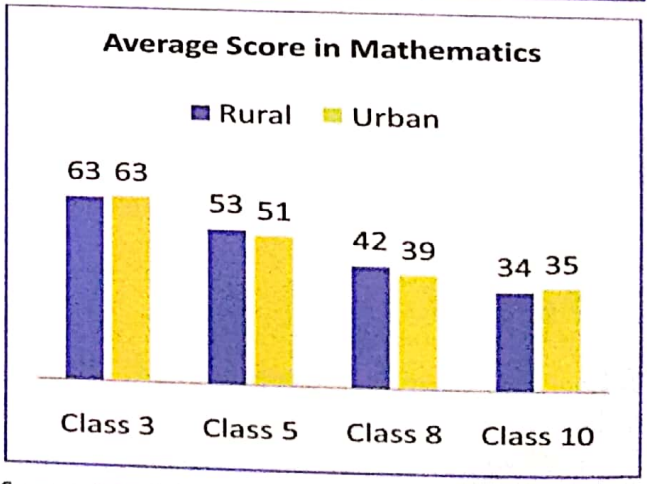
The National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2017, a competency-based assessment of learning outcomes conducted throughout the country reveals parity in learning outcomes across most grades in language and mathematics. Marginal differences exist in the average score in language in class 10, where urban areas perform better, in contrast to the average score in mathematics in class 5 and 8, where rural attainment is slightly higher. Yet, the key takeaway is the urgent need to improve the delivery of quality education across the country. Figure 1 shows that the learning outcomes decline in higher grades, as lesser students are attaining grade-level competence. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), a rural survey assessing basic literacy and numeracy, presents a similar picture of low-quality education. The 2018 survey estimates suggest that only half the children can read and less than a third can do basic arithmetic. However, the survey establishes a sense of optimism. There has been a drastic reduction in the gender gap in enrolment as well as the number of out-of-school children. Further, learning outcomes have shown steady improvement since 2016.

Strategies to Promote Equitable Education

Progress from Millennium Development to Sustainable Development entails a shift in the focus from universalizing access to education, towards the delivery of quality education. India's achievement, in terms of equitable and universal access at the primary school-level, establishes an opportune platform for the education system to now deliver 'learning for all'. And, the Government is taking right steps in this direction.

Figure 1: A Rural-Urban Comparison of Learning Outcomes





Source: NAS 2017

Launched by the Prime Minister in 2018, the Transformation of Aspirational Districts Program aims to expeditiously improve the socio-economic status of some of the most backward regions in the country. With the highest weightage accorded to education, 112 Districts across the country are consistently monitored and ranked in terms of progress made, on a critical set of indicators. Anchored at the NITI Aayog and in line with its mandate to promote 'cooperative and competitive' federalism, the program is resulting in tangible progress. More than 71 districts improved their language scores in Class 3 within just 6 months since the launch of the program. There has been exceptional progress in infrastructure parameters as well, especially in the 25 districts mentored by NITI Aayog. In less than one year, between the baseline (June 2018) and midline (February-March 2019), the percentage of secondary schools with electricity has increased by over 10 percentage points, from approximately 84 per cent to 95 per cent.

NITI Aayog is also steering the Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital (SATH) program in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. Home to 7 per cent of India's rural population and 8 per cent of the total schools, these three States are undertaking simultaneous academic and administrative reforms with an aim to - create efficient schools, enhance human resource capacity, strengthen organization structure and most importantly, improve learning outcomes. Implemented in partnership with the State Governments, initiatives like the learning enhancement programs, school consolidation, teacher recruitment and restructuring of the State Education Departments are leading to strengthened governance systems and resulting in greater resource efficiency. The large-scale learning enhancement programs have also led to a 10-15 per cent improvement in learning outcomes across all SATH States. Further, NITI Aayog is working towards documenting all the lessons from SATH, and is creating an implementable toolkit for other States to adopt, facilitating systemic transformation across the country.

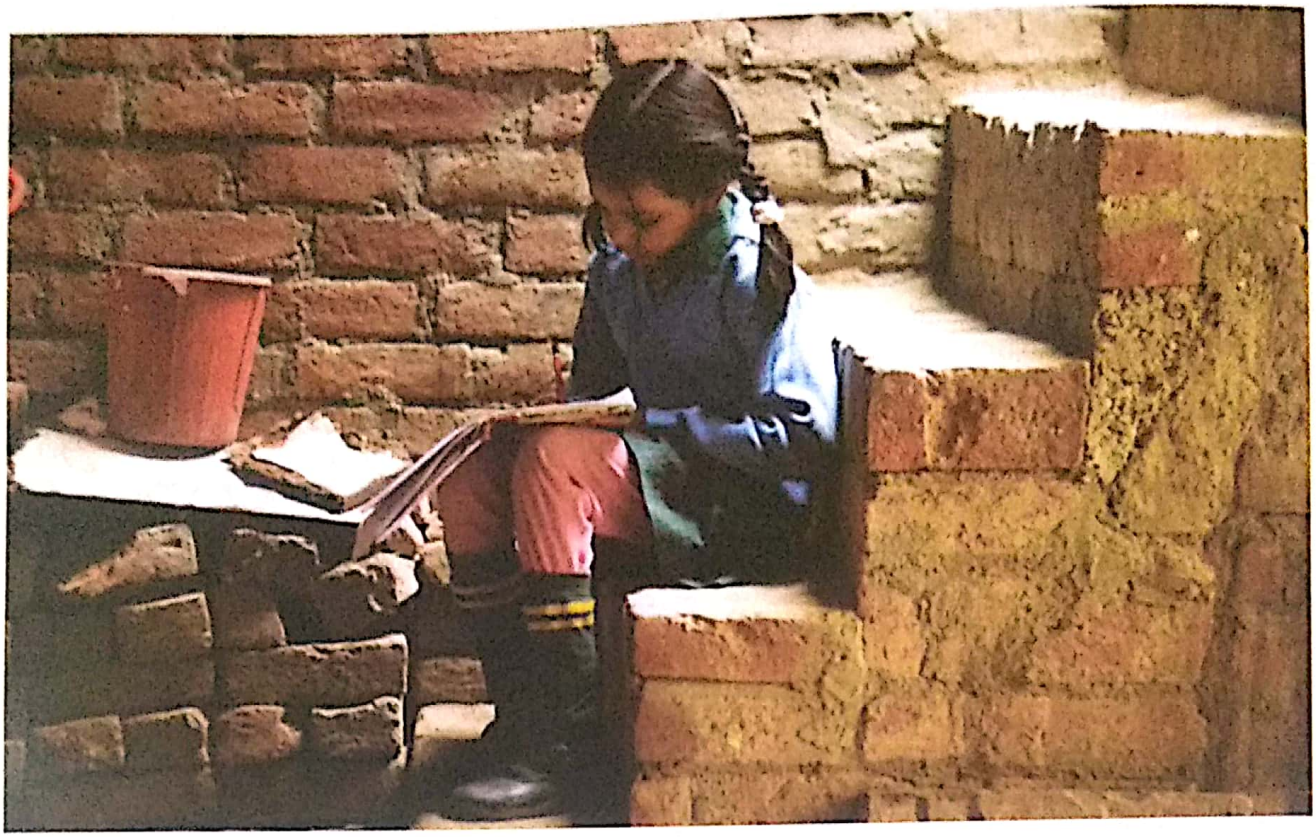
In a novel effort, NITI Aayog released the School Education Quality Index-SEQI. The Index provides the first national ranking of States, based on the success of their school education systems. Covering critical parameters including learning outcomes, access, equity, infrastructure as well as governance processes, the index provides a relative and fair comparison of States and Union Territories (UTs). SEQI strives to drive evidence-based policymaking and will facilitate cross learning among States/UTs. Its granular analysis includes an assessment of the overall performance in States/UTs as well as their progress over time. While the index's 30 indicators have been weighted in accordance to their correlation with the quality of education, the Equity domain is critical to ensure that States/UTs provide equitable educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of gender, region or caste. With a net weight of 21 per cent, the Equity domain captures differences in access and learning outcomes across social categories and regions. 24 out of 35 States and UTs record Equity scores above 60 per cent, with Rajasthan receiving the highest score of 79.4 per cent in the overall performance ranking. Uttarakhand stands out for parity in learning outcomes between urban and rural areas, where there is zero difference in the average scores for language and mathematics in Class 5. In fact, on aggregate, 19 States and UTs have also recorded an increase in their equity score, from the base to reference year, highlighting a positive trend towards achieving quality education for all.

India is on the verge of finalizing a new education policy. The draft National Education Policy 2019 envisions an inclusive and equitable education system where all children have an equal opportunity to learn and thrive. It advocates for equalizing participation and learning outcomes across regions through concerted policy action. Through the establishment of special education zones, targeted funding for inclusion as well as district-wise assistance for independent research on inclusive education, the policy lays the road ahead for India, building on existing efforts to this end.

As India commemorates the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, it is time we foster our school education system to 'draw out the best in child and man, in body, mind and spirit'. With over 50 per cent of the workforce estimated to come from rural India in 2050, it is imperative to establish the strongest foundations of learning through school education.

(Ashish Kumar is Director with NITI Aayog. Email : ashish.iofs@gov.in

Sarah Iype is Young Professional with NITI Aayog. Email : sarah.iype@nic.in)



IMPACT OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Shalender Sharma and Dakshini Bhattacharya

The Right to Education (RTE) Act has been one of the country's most defining moments. Like all momentous decisions, the decision to bring about this legislation was also the culmination of deep thought and earnest attempts over a number of decades, to usher in universal education. We have come a long way from 1910 when Gopal Krishna Gokhale demanded 'Free and Compulsory Primary Education' in India to 2002 when the Article 21-A was inserted in the Constitution of India which declared that "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

Just like human beings, nations too, have their own chequered stories to tell. India's story has been particularly interesting: from a glorious past to a tiresome colonial struggle to finally becoming an independent, aspirational nation with potential to become a global superpower. In this eventful journey, the passing of the Right to Education (RTE) Act has been one of the country's most defining moments. Like all momentous decisions, the decision to bring about this legislation was also the culmination of deep thought and earnest attempts over a number of decades, to usher in universal education. We have come a long way from 1910 when Gopal Krishna Gokhale demanded 'Free and Compulsory Primary Education' in India to 2002 when the Article 21-A was inserted in the Constitution of India which declared that "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

Given that a dismal 18 per cent of Indians had basic literacy at the dawn of independence and the transformative value of education in empowering entire generations, this law is a huge landmark that demonstrates India's serious intent to invest in building a bright future for its citizens.

Main features of the Act:

It is important to be familiar with the provisions of the RTE if we are to fully comprehend its intended and actual impact. The Act makes

education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 years and specifies minimum conditions or input criteria that have to be met in all elementary schools. It mandates all private schools to reserve 25 per cent of seats, absolutely free of cost, for children belonging to disadvantaged categories, which is to be reimbursed by the State. It prohibits all unrecognised schools from practice, and also states that provision for donation or capitation fees is not permissible as well as that no child or parent should be required to appear for interviews prior to admission. In addition, the Act recognises the large number of children who have had to drop out for financial and/or other considerations and provides for their mainstreaming in schools through special training so as to bring them at par with their peers in school. The RTE Act also requires surveys that will take stock of the education situation in all neighbourhoods, identify children who should be getting an education in school and set up facilities for providing it. The Act also states that necessary provisions such as teacher-student ratio, minimum infrastructure (drinking water, separate toilets for girls and boys, libraries, playgrounds, classrooms, ramps, boundary walls, etc.) shall be made available in all schools.

Quality of education in school has also been given a top priority in the RTE Act. Section 29 of the Act provides for curriculum and evaluation procedure in elementary schools. State Governments are required to prescribe the academic authority to lay down the curriculum and evaluation procedure. In doing so, the academic authority must ensure adherence to the following eight factors as stated in the RTE Act:

1. Conformity with Constitutional values;
2. All round development of the child;
3. Building the child's knowledge, potentiality and talent;
4. Development of physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent;
5. Learning through activities, discovery and exploration in a child friendly and child-centred manner;
6. The child's mother tongue serving 'as far as practicable' as the medium of instruction;
7. Making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety and helping the child to express views freely and
8. Comprehensive and continuous evaluation of the child's understanding and knowledge and the ability to apply it.

The aforementioned factors provide comprehensive coverage of the indicators of child-centred curricular policy for the elementary stage of education spelt out in the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986/92 and elaborated in the National Curriculum Framework, 2005.

Notification of teacher qualifications under section (23) of the RTE Act and the prescription of a Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) are other significant developments to improve the quality of education in schools and pursuant to the RTE Act becoming operative in the country.

The policy initiatives under the Act have contributed to a new vibrancy, meaning and urgency in the country's efforts to universalise elementary education, and are expected to infuse new energy in the schooling system in the years to come.

Why does the RTE stand out?

The Indian school education landscape is of global significance with approximately 1.5 million schools, 259 million students, and 9 million teachers. There are many reasons why the RTE is considered as a breakthrough in this landscape and has garnered applause even from governments of highly developed and educated countries. To

quote the Sam Carlson, Lead Education Specialist for the World Bank in India: "(This) is the first legislation in the world that puts the responsibility of ensuring enrolment, attendance and completion on the Government (whereas) ...It is the parents' responsibility to send the children to schools in the US and other countries."

Let us briefly pinpoint what places the RTE notches above similar legislation in many other countries.

First of all, "free" education does not merely mean waiving off tuition fees. It excludes any charge that may hinder a child's pursuit of her elementary education in a school of her choice. It, therefore, alleviates the burden of school expenses by encompassing provisions of textbooks, uniforms, stationery, special educational material and/or teaching/learning material and requisite aids and appliances for children with disabilities. *Secondly*, it looks at learning and education as a process and prescribes quality principles for the same. *Thirdly*, by making it a Fundamental Right, that is, by enshrining it in the fundamental law of the land, it makes it the duty and obligation of the government towards its people. This is a giant leap ahead from Article 45 which was merely a Directive Principle and hence not justiciable in a court of law. Such legislative design, therefore, plays a chief role in its potential as an agent of inclusive growth. *Fourthly*, an external constitutional body is necessary to monitor the implementation of the Act which brings in transparency and accountability; both are hallmarks of good governance. *Finally,* by requiring that psychological and emotional issues of children are addressed, the Act becomes a holistic and exemplary model for revamping the education sector in India and in countries with a similar milieu, especially in the context of education.

The RTE: A Great Leveller

The June 2014 Report published by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) shows that the Central Government has achieved a reasonable degree of success in ensuring that the policies outlined in the RTE have been implemented in many states. Increase in enrolment has been one of the most significant achievements under the RTE. In 2016, only about 3 per cent of children in the 6-14 years of age were out of school. Enrolment in schools is the very first step to overcome the malaise of illiteracy. A crucial factor that merits mention here is the Swachh Bharat-Swachh Vidyalaya campaign which has been responsible for creation and maintenance of hygienic sanitation and drinking water facilities in schools. This has resulted in a large number of female students not only enrolling but also staying on in schools up to higher grades than before.

The 2015 Annual Report of the MHRD also suggests that most states have adopted the curriculum mandate under the RTE Act. About 80 per cent government teachers are professionally qualified as per the prescribed norms, which is a positive indicator for quality of teaching.

The same Report also shows a significant improvement in measures of social infrastructure as mandated by the RTE. Apart from gender-sensitive sanitation as mentioned before, there has been a substantial increase in number of ramps for the disabled, playgrounds, boundary walls and kitchen areas.

The goal of 'access to education' is more or less considered to be achieved at elementary level and the focus is now shifting to Secondary and Higher Secondary level. However, considering the challenges in actual realisation of the RTE objectives, high dropouts and residual (disadvantaged) children remaining out of school, there is a demand of continuous efforts at elementary level also.

Identifying and Correcting Some Implementation Gaps

Ultimately, the true value and transformative potential of a policy can be realised only when those responsible for implementing it, do so effectively and conscientiously. The RTE, too, is path-breaking in the sphere of education reforms in India; however, there do exist certain areas which have not had lived up to their intended expectations and are, therefore, focus areas for remedy and improvement.

Section 12(1)(c) of the Act has been the subject of much research in the education policy space. It is this section that mandates non-minority private unaided schools to reserve 25 per cent of their entry-level seats for children belonging to

disadvantaged categories to create a more socially integrated and inclusive schooling system. It is also the most noteworthy feature of the Act as it makes the RTE one of the largest programmes in the world that combines public funding and private service delivery in education. However, the MHRD reports says that only 5-6 lakh seats annually are being filled under this provision. This means that there is a massive untapped enrolment potential with respect to children from disadvantaged categories. Delays or non-payments of dues to schools by the respective State Governments are a major reason for private schools refusing to admit students under the RTE provision. The State and Central Government needs to ensure implementation of this Section in letter and spirit.

The MHRD reviews and monitors implementation of the Act regularly with the States and UTs at different fora, such as the State Education Ministers' Conference, Conference of the State Education Secretaries, Project Approval Board meetings, etc. During these conferences/ meetings, RTE implementation is also touched upon. However, there is a need to discuss all the RTE provisions and their compliance by the States in a regular fashion. The Ministry may also continue and strengthen its engagement with dedicated non-profits which work hard to ensure that this seminal Act is monitored closely at the local level.

An IIM Ahmedabad report suggests a number of vital measures needed for the RTE's Section 12(1)(c) to be realised in letter and spirit. These are: "Clarity and enforcement (of rules regarding admissions, eligibility criteria, free entitlements), building a robust Management Information System to manage expenditure and reimbursement effectively, creation of school profiles, awareness campaigns, availability of alternate mode of application (other than the online mode), RTE cell and help centre, active participation of officials, judiciary, and private stakeholders and training and capacity building."

Another issue is India's historically conservative spending on education. The reforms envisaged through the RTE and Draft New Education Policy, 2016 would require substantial increase in public expenditure on education as well as support through CSRs and CSOs. Fortunately, the recent budget announcements have not only increased the outlays but also highlighted ways to strengthen education quality and reduce inequalities by extending ICT-enabled learning particularly in Educationally Backward Blocks. Further, conducting annual learning level assessments is other crucial decision.

Looking Ahead

Qualitative improvement in education is a much-needed outcome for India to remain competitive in the global sphere. This would require education policy to acknowledge that quality spans on a wide range of aspects ranging from the size of the school system, financial capabilities, strength of teachers' unions, existing teacher capabilities and variability in performance across the State. It also needs to account for transparency in decision-making within the State. These intricacies inform the implementation of interventions for an educational transformation to be successful.

The Central and State Governments should partner with international agencies for providing technical strengthening support in the education sector. International development partners like the World Bank, DFID, ADB, etc., not only contribute through additional funding but also bring in their rich international experience and practical knowledge of best practices. These same organisations could also contribute by designing tailor-made technical assistance and capacity building programmes.

It goes without saying that the big leap towards skills development may not be successful unless it is accompanied by concerted efforts to raise the learning levels of rural and marginalised students for promoting equitable basis for employment and inclusive growth. Most importantly, no other quality intervention can succeed that of improvement in the quality of teachers when it comes to creating a better future for our students.

Focus should be on improving quality by developing bespoke solutions instead of a standard straitjacketed programme design. "Education for All" should not imply "One Programme for All". This thwarts innovations which should devise local solutions to local problems.

During the last decade or so, the enrolments of all categories of students (including girls, SCs, STs and other disadvantaged categories) have

gone up. A major contributor to this increase in enrolments is children from disadvantaged categories and first-generation school-goers. These children bring in much-needed diversity in the classrooms. However, the schools' and teachers' response to these children has been far from adequate. Teachers are hardly trained/re-trained/provided much-needed support to handle this diversity in the classrooms. It is necessary that they be adequately sensitised and trained in a way that students from various backgrounds become one cohesive and happy entity, which is what the RTE aspires to do.

Another praiseworthy aspect of the Act is that it demands that the School Management Committee (SMC), the Local Authority and the Education Department have concurrent responsibilities rather than concentrating responsibility on a single unit. The SMCs could play a vital at the local level by developing a robust and feasible School Development/Improvement Plan. In the initial days of the RTE, there was much talk about creating and strengthening these but the enthusiasm and focus has since, died down.

The RTE is not just any other Act. When an uneducated, rural women proudly saying that her daughter now goes to a school she never thought she could afford, that she can now dream for her to have a flourishing career—we grasp just how far-reaching and profound this legislation is. We sincerely hope that we as a society work steadily towards implementing the RTE and that India can, in the near future, reap the rich dividend that the Act promises her.

(Shalender Sharma is Director, Education and Skills Development, IPE Global Limited. Email: s.sharma@ipeglobal.com

Dakshini Bhattacharya is Analyst, Education and Skills Development, IPE Global Limited. Email: dbhattacharya@ipeglobal.com)

MHRD Announces National Educational Alliance for Technology Scheme

Ministry of Human Resource Development has announced a new PPP Scheme, National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) for using technology for better learning outcomes in Higher Education on 19th September 2019.

The objective is to use Artificial Intelligence to make learning more personalised and customised as per the requirements of the learner. This requires development of technologies in Adaptive Learning to address the diversity of learners. There are a number of start-up companies developing this and MHRD would like to recognise such efforts and bring them under a common platform so that learners can access it easily. Educating the youth is a National effort and MHRD proposes to create a National Alliance with such technology developing EdTech Companies through a PPP model.

MHRD would act as a facilitator to ensure that the solutions are freely available to a large number of economically backward students. MHRD would create and maintain a National NEAT platform that would provide one-stop access to these technological solutions. EdTech companies would be responsible for developing solutions and manage registration of learners through the NEAT portal. They would be free to charge fees as per their policy. As their contribution towards the National cause, they would have to offer free coupons to the extent of 25 per cent of the total registrations for their solution through NEAT portal. MHRD would distribute the free coupons for learning to the most socially/economically backward students.

AICTE would be the implementing agency for NEAT programme. The scheme shall be administered under the guidance of an Apex Committee constituted by MHRD. Independent Expert Committees would be constituted for evaluating and selecting the EdTech solutions. MoUs will be signed with the shortlisted EdTech companies. Awareness programs would be taken up by MHRD to create awareness of the NEAT solutions to teachers and students.

MHRD proposes to launch and operationalise NEAT in early November 2019.

Source: PIB

TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL INDIA

Sanjay Singh

Teachers are builders of our national edifice. A good teacher will mould his students as informed and responsible citizens. A capable teacher makes a strong nation just as a capable builder erects a strong building. As education and training lead to capability augmentation, a good Teacher Education (TE) would make capable teachers leading to a strong and prosperous nation.

Teachers are builders of our national edifice. A good teacher will mould his students as informed and responsible citizens. A capable teacher makes a strong nation just as a capable builder erects a strong building. As education and training lead to capability augmentation, a good Teacher Education (TE) would make capable teachers leading to a strong and prosperous nation. For preparing good teachers, the nation had elaborate panoply of Government-owned Teacher Education Institutions (TEI) having B.Ed., D.El.Ed. and other courses. Till the twentieth century, they turned out to be sufficient not only in terms of the numbers but also in terms of methodology of teacher training. The number of B.Ed. colleges along with their intake capacity was enough to cater to the existing vacancies. Till as late as the last century, the students in schools belonged to families who knew the importance of educating their children and were also able to pay for it. Thus the much-touted learning outcomes of those generations were not only on account of school education but also due to a family environment conducive for it. On the other hand, the poor, crushed by drudgery, could not look at anything beyond their daily lives. Education came second to survival.

When the clarion call for universal education met with programmatic and financial support of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the year 2001, the demand for schools and that of teachers escalated. The improved access to schools together with the pulls of monetary incentives shored up the enrolment. Public schools expanded and private schools proliferated—good as well as substandard.

The available Teacher Education (TE) infrastructure proved to be inadequate. While universities tried to expand their department of TE, many private B.Ed. colleges cropped up to meet the burgeoning demand. After introduction of the Right to Education (RTE), proliferation degenerated into mushrooming. While students rushed into these courses for the prospect of employment, private B.Ed. enterprises cashed in on the demand. While the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), with

its skeletal presence in states, failed to enforce these regulations, the officials of affiliating universities were often found to be in cahoots with these shady Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). The students came to be seen as mere employment seekers; the TEIs as degree shops.

This backdrop provides the present status of Teacher Education (TE) and highlights the need to revamp and revitalise it. With implementation of the SSA and then of RTE, the reach of education and the presence of schools have percolated to the remotest corner of countryside. Increase in the number of schools has led to increased demand for teachers.

To provide quality in TE, many states, notably Bihar, have worked tremendously to enhance teacher effectiveness. These initiatives attempt to revamp the infrastructure and to introduce new age pedagogical practices to the trainee teachers or B.Ed. students.

The rural TE landscape is imbued with District Institutes of Education Training (DIETs), Primary Teacher Education Centres (PTEC) in addition to the B.Ed. colleges. In view of the amendment to Section23 (2) of RTE which mandates that all teachers should be trained, a widening and deepening of TE, particularly in the rural areas, is the need of the hour. The spread of TE has to match with the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) requirement of the RTE.

The widening of TE means spatial coverage of TEIs to all districts and also to some of the blocks, if needed. These institutes are intended to impart affordable quality education as against mushrooming degree-shops in the form of private B.Ed. colleges. The government DIETs had a strong tradition of Gurukul-type teaching-learning, of cost-effective pedagogical innovations and of action-research and school—TE symbiosis. The new initiatives of Government of Bihar as also of many other states seek to strengthen infrastructure and revive traditions of these TEIs. These TEIs have increased their intake capacity to meet the ever-growing demand.

The deepening of TE involves—(1) enlarging the bouquet of courses; (2) bringing in new techno – pedagogical practices; (3) leveraging Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education; and (4) designing and conducting several thematic modular courses for the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of the teachers. This, of course, would be in addition to the existing pre-service and in-service TE programmes. The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and the DIETs would constantly conduct Teacher Need Analysis (TNA) and devise CPDs to address them. There are many such CPDs like school readiness programmes, school leadership programmes, sports in education, art-integrated learning, happiness in schools and various topical courses which are in vogue. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), under the aegis of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), has started a condensed one-week CPD for all elementary teachers of India. This ambitious CPD programme has been named National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA).

Another aspect of deepening TE entails attracting good students to the profession of teaching. The draft New Education Policy (NEP) envisages a four-year integrated B.Ed. course with attractive variations to attract bright students to B.Ed. It is expected that quality of intake of B.Ed. students would become much better. The integrated B.Ed. intends to do to TE, what integrated LL.B. did to legal education. The redesigning of curriculum and faculty orientation is already underway. All B.Ed. colleges are to introduce this course, if they are to continue after 2030.

The next logical step after intent of widening and deepening TE would be to bring in effective regulation as well as infuse necessary functional autonomy into the TEIs. The draft NEP envisages to bring TE under the umbrella of higher education and the proposed National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) would be the sole regulator whereas the NCTE would transform into a Professional Standard Setting Board (PSSB). It is hoped that the good TEIs would be encouraged and incentivised and the spurious ones will be closed down. The proposed changes in the structure of B.Ed. as well as other TE courses together with the newfound "light but tight regulation" regime of draft NEP is sure to usher in a new and vibrant air to teacher education.

It is expected that widening and deepening of TE would not only meet the rising need of teachers but would also bring honour and pride to the profession of teachers, a profession which has been exalted to the status of the gods in our holy scriptures.

(The author is an IAS officer of Bihar Cadre and is currently State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Bihar.
Email: sanjaysingh.ias@gmail.com)

Shri Narendra Singh Tomar Launches Two Agriculture Related Mobile Apps

Farmers will now have easy access to high value and technical agricultural equipments at their doorstep Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare said this while launching two mobile Apps–'CHC Farm Machinery and Krishi Kisan App for Geo Tagging' in New Delhi on 24th September.

The Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar addressing a press conference on the multilingual mobile App 'CHC Farm Machinery', in New Delhi on September 24, 2019.

The Minister said that through CHC Farm Machinery App, farmers can select and order the required machinery at the rates feasible for them from the Custom Hiring Centers located in the radius of 50 Kms. The Minister added that till date more than 40,000 custom hiring service centers have registered on this mobile app for renting over 1,20,000 agricultural machineries & equipments.

Shri Tomar said that the Krishi Kisan App will provide farmers the information of best demonstration of high-yielding crops and seeds in their nearby area. Any farmer with high quality of crops can utilise this platform to demonstrate best practices of cultivation to other farmers so that this will help other farmers also to adopt these methods. The App will also help in geo-tagging and geo-fencing of crop and give weather forecast message to farmers. The Minister requested every farmer to utilize these services for betterment of their cultivation methods and thereby ensuring higher agricultural productivity.

The Multi-lingual Mobile App CHC Farm Machinery is already available to custom service providers for registration and uploading with geo-reference photographs of agricultural machinery custom service centers and photographs of machinery available in it. Through this app, farmers, especially small and marginal farmers, will have easy access to high value and technical agricultural equipments which will facilitate optimum use of all types of inputs using these farming machines. This will not only increase the income of the farmers, but it will also take mechanization to maximum farm holdings in a short time frame. This app connects the farmers with Custom Hiring Service Centres in their area. The app can be downloaded on any android phone from Google Play Store.

Custom Hiring Centers/ Farm Machinery banks and Hi-tech hubs have been established under the various Schemes like Sub –Mission on Agricultural Mechanizatio, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and Crop Residue Management Schemes of the DAC&FW, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare to provide Agricultural Machinery on rental basis to the Farmers, specially small & marginal farmers who cannot afford to buy the high value machinery & equipments.

(Source: PIB)

AVAILABILITY OF TEACHERS FOR BETTER EDUCATION

Dr. Anupriya Chadha

The teacher is central to good education; at its core, education is the process between the teacher and the student. If education is to improve, teaching has to improve. Any change effort has to recognize the centrality of the teacher. Teaching is an intellectually and ethically demanding profession.

"Ensure that all students at all levels of school education are taught by passionate, motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained, and well equipped teachers".

The Draft National Education Policy -2019

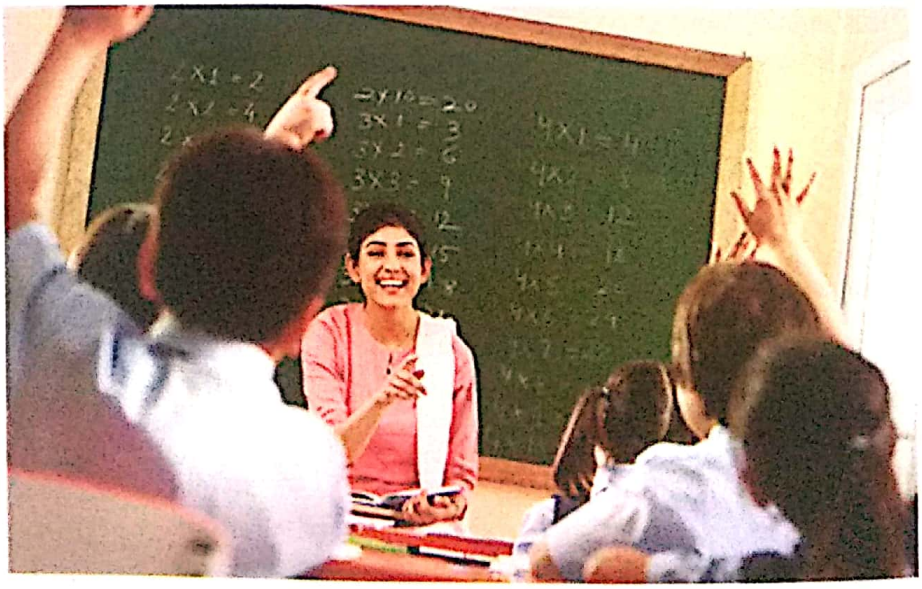
What is the purpose of Education? As Swami Vivekananda says, "Is it book learning? No. Is it diverse knowledge, No, not even that. Education is that by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet." I will start with the problem of our current education system. The biggest problem is that it does not motivate our children. Millions of students do not know any rationale of going to school, except obligation. Today education fails to retain the knowledge, once students have completed their examinations. *This leads to young minds being stifled and stunted at an age when they should be asking questions, learning and gaining knowledge, and developing a thirst for more knowledge.*

As per the Draft NEP (2019), "Teachers truly shape the future of our children - and, therefore, the future of our nation. It is through teachers that our children are imparted with values, knowledge, empathy, creativity, ethics, life skills, and social responsibility. Teachers form the very heart of the education process, and represent an indispensable vehicle towards a progressive, just, educated, and prosperous society." From ancient times, teachers have been playing an important role in our society. A teacher's role in inculcating knowledge, kindling inspiration and encouraging creative thought in children cannot be understated.

Current Situation

While India has done well in terms of access and equity, and brought almost every child to school, the learning levels of children need considerable improvement. This is borne out by the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and public studies such as Annual Status of Education Report (ASER). Provisioning of quality education to school children entails the use of multi pronged strategies and interventions at various levels. The key components of quality include: teachers, effective classroom processes, assessments and evaluations of student's learning, school infrastructure, school leadership and community participation.

There are a total of 43.31 lakh teachers in the elementary stage and 6.11 lakh teachers at the secondary level. Data shows that currently 8.33 lakh teacher posts are vacant at the elementary stage and 1.11 lakh teacher posts are lying vacant at the secondary level. This indeed is an area of serious concern and needs immediate attention. States and UTs need to urgently address the issue of teacher vacancy and need to have Teacher Recruitment and Deployment Policy in place. And while doing this, it



should be ensured that teachers serve a minimum tenure in rural areas.

There is an uneven availability of teachers across schools and subjects, even while most states have an overall PTR which is within the norms. Most 'easy' districts/schools seem to have too many teachers and 'difficult' districts/schools seem to be short of teachers. There are large numbers of subject teacher vacancies (especially in Mathematics, Science, and Language) at the upper primary level.

Classroom processes remain mostly 'traditional' with mostly one-way transmission and little interaction. Teachers ask questions and students speak only when spoken to. Students are mostly treated as passive receivers of knowledge with very little active participation in their own learning. Where activities are being conducted, the focus seems to be on memorization and recall with not much analysis or reasoning. Most regular teachers struggle to address individual learning and the social needs of children with disabilities.

Most in-service teacher needs are still met by a one-size fits all 'training' approach. Transaction in this training is also largely one-way. It is important to involve teachers as professionals in any training programme and discuss their experiences and understanding. Training sessions that are connected to teacher experiences are likely to be useful for practice. Coverage of teachers in in-service training is also dropping in many states. There is also very little information available on the impact of training except for anecdotal reports.

The academic role of the Block Resource Persons (BRPs) has not been fulfilled. Research studies indicate that teacher mentoring is critical for pedagogical reform, and has a much deeper impact than training. Strong academic lifelines for schools like the BRPs are critical for this, as they do not have the adequate skills and experience to play an academic mentoring role, though many of them are very enthusiastic and committed. Teachers do not receive the kind of academic and pedagogical support that they need. Also, Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) can flourish only with strong academic institutions like District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERTs) supporting them. The DIET remains a very weak link in most states and the SCERT too needs significant strengthening.

There does not seem to be enough focus on building the capability of the Head Teacher. For change to happen at the school level, school leadership is a key factor. Wherever there is an active, dynamic school leader, its impact on school functioning is clearly positive, as indicated by many research studies. A good relationship between the school and the community is very often the result of having a good Head Teacher. Systems for teacher accountability at the school level need to be built. This is closely linked with a capable Head Teacher and a good relationship with the School Management Committee.

Issues Regarding Teachers

There are a number of issues affecting teachers and teacher education today. These are listed below:

- Lack of initiatives and mechanisms that explicitly aim to recruit the best performing students, or those that have the most talent for teaching, into the teaching profession. In particular, current teacher recruitment does not involve any interviews or classroom demonstrations that assess motivation and passion
- Quality teacher education is severely lacking and indeed in a crisis at the current

time. There are approximately 17,000 teacher education institutions in the country, of which over 92 per cent are privately owned. Various in-depth studies have shown that a large proportion of these teaching colleges are not even attempting to provide a good education. Moreover, many teacher education institutions are 'stand-alone' teaching colleges; thus despite their good intentions, they generally do not have the capability of providing teacher education that includes a strong pedagogical and practicum training.

- Next major issue is that of deployment of teachers. According to government data, the country faces over 10 lakh teacher vacancies—a large proportion of them in rural areas—leading to Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs) that are even larger than 60:1 in certain areas. Even more worrisome than the problem of PTRs in some areas is the issue of lack of teachers in schools across the necessary subjects.
- Associated with the challenge of deployment of teachers is the sudden and unpredictable transfers to which teachers and indirectly their students and schools are often subjected. Losing teachers suddenly can have harmful effects on students, and their learning. Transfers also prevent teachers from becoming truly invested in and building relationships with the schools and communities in which they serve. Hence, stability of tenure of teachers must be ensured for better and enhanced educational outcomes.
- Lack of sufficient infrastructure, resources, and supplies are other impediments that affect the availability of teachers, especially in rural India. Lack of safe drinking water, working toilets, and electricity in some schools pose grave challenges for effective learning to take place. In addition, there is lack of availability in support mechanisms and structures that can help support teachers in their duties.
- Inspite of the Right to Education Act mandating teachers not to indulge in non teaching activities, teachers are often asked to spend large portions of their time on these activities, such as midday meal preparation, administrative tasks, data management, etc. This prevents teachers from concentrating on their actual teaching jobs.
- Education sector is a rapidly changing industry. A

teacher needs to be constantly updated with the best teaching practices and methodologies that have proven to be useful. This means revaluating and reflecting one's pedagogical skills by adopting novel and innovative techniques. The system does not promote constant update of teaching skills and capacity building in such a way that it does not lead to training fatigue. The high performing countries keep professional development and training as the top most priority and conduct regular rigorous in-house trainings to improve the quality of teaching.

- Finally issues like salary, promotion, etc, in the school system are hardly based on merit and competence. There is a dire need to revisit and overhaul service conditions and career management to restore the high status of the teaching profession. This will facilitate productivity and efficiency on the part of teachers.

Suggestions to Improve Teacher Efficacy

What is needed is a complete transformation of the teaching profession in the key areas listed above and so that education and learning standards could be improved. There is a dire need to improve the efficacy of teacher and teaching standards. Some suggestions that can help achieve these are listed below:

- To ensure that truly excellent students enter the teaching profession from and in rural areas, merit-based scholarships need to be instituted across the country. In rural areas, special merit-scholarships that also guarantee employment in their local areas should be established upon successful completion of their four-year integrated B.Ed. Programmes. Incentives will be provided for

teachers to take up teaching jobs in rural areas, especially in those remote rural areas with the greatest current numbers of teacher shortage and vacancies.

- Finally, in order to gauge passion and motivation for teaching, a classroom demonstration or interview should become an integral part of teacher hiring at schools.
- A comprehensive teacher requirement planning exercise needs to be conducted in each State to assess expected teacher and subject vacancies over the next two decades.
- To ensure decent and pleasant service conditions, all schools need to be equipped with adequate and safe infrastructure, including working toilets, clean drinking water, clean and attractive spaces, electricity, computers and internet in order to ensure that teachers and students are comfortable and inspired to teach and learn.
- In collaboration with parents and other key local stakeholders, teachers will also be more involved in the governance of schools and decision making, including as members of School Management Committees.
- Finally, teachers need be given more autonomy in choosing finer aspects of curriculum and pedagogy, so that they may teach in the manner that they find most effective for the students in their classrooms and communities. Teachers should be recognised for novel approaches to teaching that improve learning outcomes in their classrooms.
- Teachers must be given constant opportunities for self-improvement and to learn the latest innovations. To ensure that every teacher has the flexibility to optimise their own development as teachers, a modular approach to continuous professional development will be adopted. Opportunities, in the form of local, State, national, and international teaching and subject workshops, as well as online teacher development modules, will be available to all teachers so that each teacher may choose what is most useful for their own development.

Recommendations

Other recommendations to improve teacher availability and quality of teaching in schools are as follows:

- Ensure availability of a full complement staff of teachers in every school with a focus on remote schools and remote districts. States should rationalize teachers across districts and schools, ensuring that every primary school has at least two teachers and that every upper primary school has teachers for all subjects.
- Strengthen BRCs and CRCs for teacher professional development. BRCs and CRCs need to build a repository of curricular material and resources (print and digital) to help teachers in preparing for their classes and working on self-guided study.
- States should develop a strong core group of outstanding teacher educators through a rigorous process of selection and professional development in partnership with identified institutions.
- Make material for teachers and teacher educators available in the state/local language. Create a digital repository of existing material at the state level which could be aggregated at the national level. Identify universities/ departments that could take responsibility for creation, translations and validation of the new materials.
- Significantly strengthen SCERTs and the DIETs. These two institutions are, in the long-term, the academic lifelines for the school system. It is critical to build strong leadership in these institutions, create a cadre of teacher educators and ensure full faculty availability, assure availability of quality infrastructure and learning resources (including vibrant libraries in both institutions) and strong linkages with all departments of school education.

The teacher is central to good education; at its core, education is the process between the teacher and the student. If education is to improve, teaching has to improve. Any change effort has to recognize the centrality of the teacher. Teaching is an intellectually and ethically demanding profession. Teachers must be seen as independent, capable, and responsible professionals with respect given to their professional identity and knowledge.

(The author is an expert in Inclusive Education and works for Samarthanam Trust.
Email: anupriyadiya@gmail.com, anupriya@samarthanam.org)

INVOLVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN RURAL SCHOOLS

Dr. Anand Pradhan

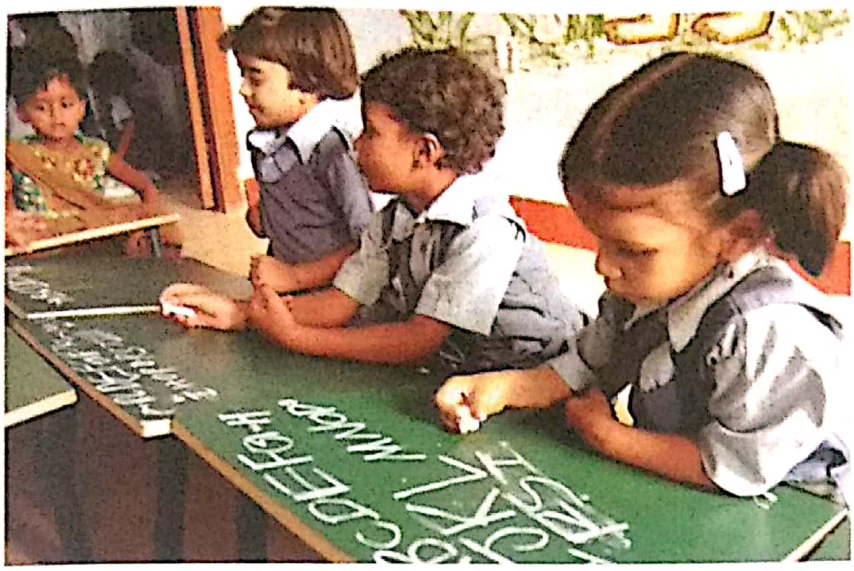
Undoubtedly India has made remarkable strides in educating its rural masses by fighting illiteracy and opening new avenues for its rural population. It's worth noting that when India got independence the rural literacy rate was just 12.1 per cent in 1951 but it reached to a respectable 67.8 per cent in 2011.

Educating and imparting quality education to the rural masses to empower and make them equal partner in the development process is one of the challenges India is still grappling with even after 72 years of independence. There is no doubt that India has made remarkable strides in educating its rural masses by fighting illiteracy and opening new avenues for its rural population. It's worth noting that when India got independence the rural literacy rate was just 12.1 per cent in 1951 but it reached to a respectable 67.8 per cent in 2011. It was not an easy task before the new government in 1950s. But enormous efforts by central and state governments in educating the rural masses in the last 60 years ensured more than five times growth in rural literacy rate.

However, it's still an unfinished and humongous task to achieve 100 per cent literacy in rural masses especially among women, SCs/STs and marginalized sections of the society. The challenge is how to drastically improve female literacy rate which is still 58.75 per cent while literacy rate in SCs is 62.8 per cent and only 56.9 per cent STs are literate in rural areas. But the bigger challenge is how to ensure access and equity in educational entitlement of the rural masses and simultaneously improve the quality of education in rural areas. It's because the real challenge is not just achieving 100 per cent literacy but providing quality education at every level to the rural masses to equip and empower them to realize their true potential.

Quality of Education

Despite the fact that India has made remarkable gains in achieving higher literacy among the rural masses in the last few decades the poor quality of education, drop out from the school and shortage of higher and technical/ professional educational institutions in rural areas are some of the most pressing challenges before the governments and policy makers. While central and state governments have been able to quickly expand the network of schools and colleges in rural areas the quality of education is still not satisfactory. Number of surveys conducted either by non-governmental organizations like ASER



(Pratham) year after year indicate that more than 50 per cent children in class 5 are unable to read the text prescribed in class 2 or government's National Achievement Survey (NAS) which shows that the average scores in many grades and subjects still ranges between 40–50 per cent.

The situation in rural areas is more worrisome. While central and state governments have almost resolved the access problem in rural areas by providing primary schools in and around every habitation/village but surprisingly, according to the NITI Aayog majority of these schools have less than 50 students. These schools are also facing the shortage of qualified and trained teachers, perennial problem of poor infrastructure including no toilets or non-functioning toilets, no electricity, no running water, no library or computer labs, absenteeism in teachers and poor governance. Unfortunately, in public perception government schools are now synonymous to poor quality of education. Due to this wide spread perception substantial numbers of parents in rural areas too are not sending their children to the government school and in fact, preferring private schools. It is not surprising that the percentage of children going to private schools is increasing every year.

The conditions of rural high schools and colleges are not better either. It is certainly affecting the employability of young people from rural areas as employability is directly related to the educational outcomes. If the quality of rural education is poor in terms of basic skills, knowledge and language efficiency required for number of jobs, it will affect the chances of rural youth. On the other hand, it has another ramification for the country's growth and development as India requires manpower with better schooling and skilling. Clearly, India may miss the much talked about 'demographic dividend' benefits if it fails to improve rural education as majority of workforce will come from the rural areas.

Finding Creative Solutions

Now, the real challenge is how to tackle the quality issue in school as well as college education in rural areas of the country? It genuinely requires out of box thinking to deal with this complicated challenge. But it's easier said than done. There is no dearth of good ideas and suggestions on improving the quality and governance of education and making it vibrant and performing. In fact, there are dozens of reports by expert committees and groups offering hundreds of suggestions and excellent ideas to improve the quality of education in rural areas. But things are not improving as fast as one may expect.

Where to start? Firstly and most importantly the solution must come from the grassroots. Time has come to discard the 'top down' approach of policy formulations and instead go to the masses to find solutions to the grassroot problems. If rural schools and colleges are suffering due to poor governance, shortage of infrastructure, facilities and teachers the solution to these problems must come from the grassroots. It is very important to involve the local communities in rural areas as the most crucial stakeholder in educating the rural masses with quality education. They must take the ownership of rural education. Their active participation and engagement in the process of improving the quality of education in rural areas is a necessary condition for educating and preparing the rural masses for the future challenges.

Decentralization in School Management

There is no doubt that decentralization in school/college management and governance is the key for fixing and reviving the broken governance system of rural education in India. In this connection, the role of local bodies and self-help groups becomes most crucial in reviving and improving the quality of education in rural areas of the country. While local bodies like Panchayats, Block Development Committees (BDC) and Zila Panchayats are elected

and hence representative bodies of the rural communities, the self-help groups are grassroots initiatives by the local communities to work together and help each other for creating opportunities and opening the avenues for the financial betterment of the member families.

It is important to note that the local bodies are directly accountable to their electors. The members and head of the local bodies come from local villages and block and district and also most of the time present in their areas. Similarly members particularly women members of the self-help groups are also active members of the rural communities. Both local bodies as well as self-help groups are best suited to lead and manage the affairs of schools and colleges. They can play very crucial role in opening of the schools and colleges, developing its infrastructure and managing and maintaining it as well as in monitoring the performance of teachers and students.

Both can mobilize local communities to take the ownership of the local schools/colleges and motivate its members to contribute physically and financially (for example Shramdaan or giving land or other resources for school/college) in expansion and maintenance of the school/college infrastructure on regular basis. There are hundreds of examples in rural India where local communities have built and ran efficient and well performing schools/colleges. It is high time to learn, revive the spirit and replicate those examples.

Self Help Groups in Education

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are now integral part of development process and discourse in India. The idea of SHGs articulated and promoted by Bangladesh Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus in 1970s is now accepted by many developing countries including India. The central and state governments are incorporating and actively promoting SHGs in many development programmes. For example, SHGs are playing a very crucial role in implementation of DAY-NRLM scheme launched by the central government. SHGs are main drivers of financial inclusion. They are also actively used by the governments in service delivery.

These SHGs can be used in management and governance of rural schools on pilot basis after giving proper training and capacity building programmes. It will ensure local participation and monitoring in school management. SHGs know local problems

and issues and can offer local solutions to rural schools. In the beginning, on experimental basis the state governments can hand-over the operational management of five rural schools to different SHGs with a clear mandate and full financial as well as manpower support to improve the quality of education in three years time period. A local body like BDC of the area can monitor and review the functioning of those schools on periodic basis. There must be inbuilt system of reward and punishment for the success of this experiment.

Another area where SHGs can play an important role is managing the mid-day meal in rural schools. There are regular complaints appearing in news media regarding the quality of food, mismanagement and corruption in the ambitious mid-day meal scheme. Another problem of mid-day meal scheme is wastage of precious time of a teacher in overseeing the preparation of the mid-day meals in rural schools. To deal with it effectively, SHGs can be entrusted to manage and oversee the mid-day meal scheme in rural schools.

Similarly, SHGs can play important role in dealing with the rampant problem of teachers' absenteeism in rural school. Teachers should be accountable to the school management committee managed by a SHG. Also SHGs should have some say in teachers' transfers and postings.

To sum up, it is important to note that India cannot ignore the issue of quality of education in its rural areas. The time has come to involve local bodies and SHGs creatively and purposefully in revitalizing the rural education.

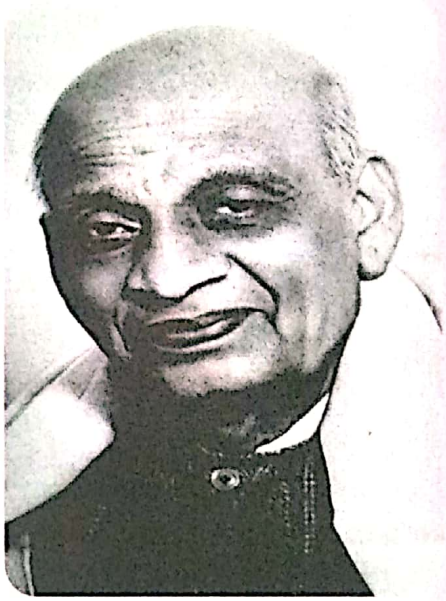
(The author is Professor at Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi.
Email: apradhan28@gmail.com)

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

Sardar Patel National Unity Award

For Notable and Inspiring Contribution to the Unity and Integrity of India

Government of India has instituted the highest civilian award in the field of contribution to the unity and integrity of India, in the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. A notification instituting the Sardar Patel National Unity Award was issued by Ministry of Home Affairs on 20th September, 2019.



The Award seeks to recognise notable and inspiring contributions to promote the cause of national unity and integrity and to reinforce the value of a strong and united India. The award will be announced on the occasion of the National Unity Day, i.e. the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel on 31st October.

The Award shall be conferred by the President by a Sanad under his hand and seal and presented by him in a presentation ceremony along with the Padma award presentation ceremony held in Rashtrapati Bhawan.

An Award Committee includes the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary to the President, Home Secretary as Members and three-four eminent persons selected by the Prime Minister.

Obverse Reverse

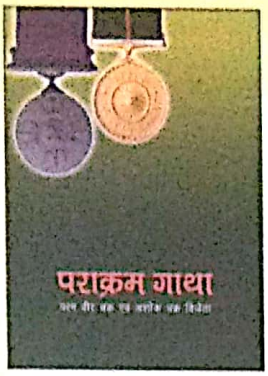
The Award would consist of a medal and a citation. No monetary grant or cash award would be attached to this Award. Not more than three Awards would be given in a year. It would not be conferred posthumously except in very rare and highly deserving cases.

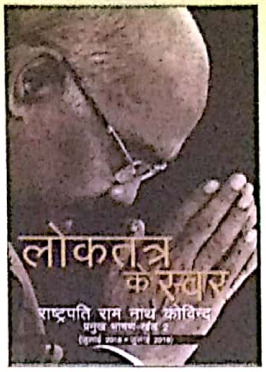
The nominations would be invited every year. The applications would need to be filed online on the website www.nationalunityawards.mha.gov.in specifically designed by Ministry of Home Affairs. All citizens, without distinction of religion, race caste, gender, place of birth, age or occupation, and any institution/organisation would be eligible for the Award.

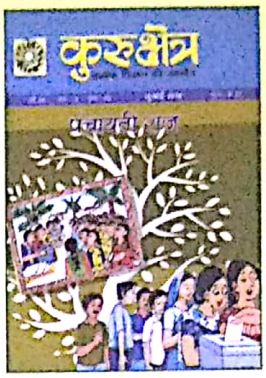
Any Indian national or institution or organisation based in India would be able to nominate an individual for consideration for this Award. Individuals may also nominate themselves. State Governments, UT Administrations and Ministries of Government of India may also send nominations.

(Source: PIB)

About Our Books







Publications Division wins 9 awards in various categories of Book Publishing

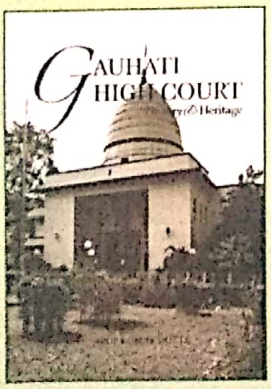
Publications Division has bagged nine awards in different categories, related to books and journals on 28 September 2019. These awards were announced by the Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP), the leading body of Indian publishers. In previous years too, DPD had bagged awards in various categories – 8 awards in 2018 and 11 awards in 2017 respectively.

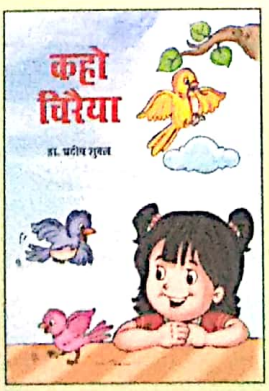
This year, Publications Division won four 1st prizes in the categories of General paperback books (for *Parakram Gatha*), Cover jackets (for *Loktantra Ke Swar* - compilation of Hon'ble President's speeches), Hindi Art Book/Coffee Table Books (for *Mahatma Gandhi: Chitramay Jeewan Gatha*), and Journals and House Magazines (for *Kurukshetra*- Hindi- July 2018).

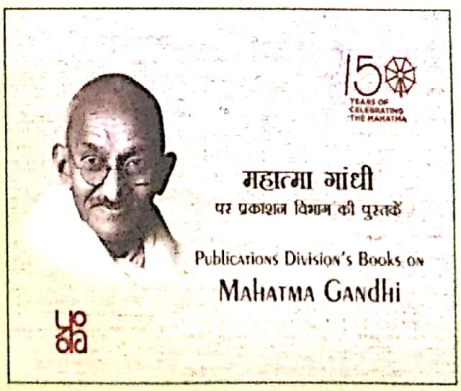
Besides, Publications Division received four 2nd prizes in the categories of Art/Coffee Table Books (for *Gauhati High Court- History and Heritage*), Children's literature in two age-group categories (for *Kaho Chiraiya* and *Saral Panchtantra,* Part 1) and Catalogues & Brochures (for *Catalogue on the books on Mahatma Gandhi*). Publications Division also bagged Certificate of Merit for its book, *Women in Satyagraha*, for adolescent readers.

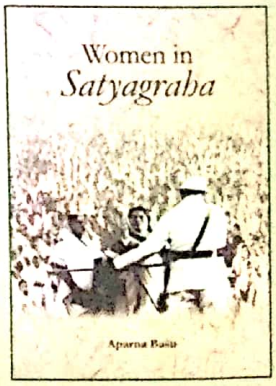
Earlier, Publications Division also bagged first prize for display of Hindi books in the 25th Delhi Book Fair organised by FIP. The Fair was held during 11-15 September 2019, where Publications Division has displayed over thousand books on sale.

Publications Division is continuously upgrading its publications with enriched content and innovative designing to catch readers' attention in competitive market, with various private and public sector publishers. ❑









TEACHER'S EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND REFORMS

Satish Kumar Yadav

The Government of India has set up many committees and commissions to improve the quality of teachers and for their professional development. Teacher education is a process for preparing professional teachers by inculcating necessary knowledge, competence, skills among them for teaching at various stages of school education. In our country, programmes are being conducted in the teacher training institutes and departments of education in the universities for preparing professional teachers.

Teacher education is a process for preparing professional teachers by inculcating necessary knowledge, competence, skills among them for teaching at various stages of school education. In our country, programmes are being conducted in the teacher training institutes and departments of education in the universities for preparing professional teachers. During 1947–48, only 235 institutions existed both at elementary (184) and secondary (51) stages whereas numbers of these institutions have increased by about 19000, the growth of these institutions has become more than eighty times. Large numbers of these institutions are in rural areas. More than ninety lakh teachers and teacher educators are working in schools and teacher education institutions in the country.

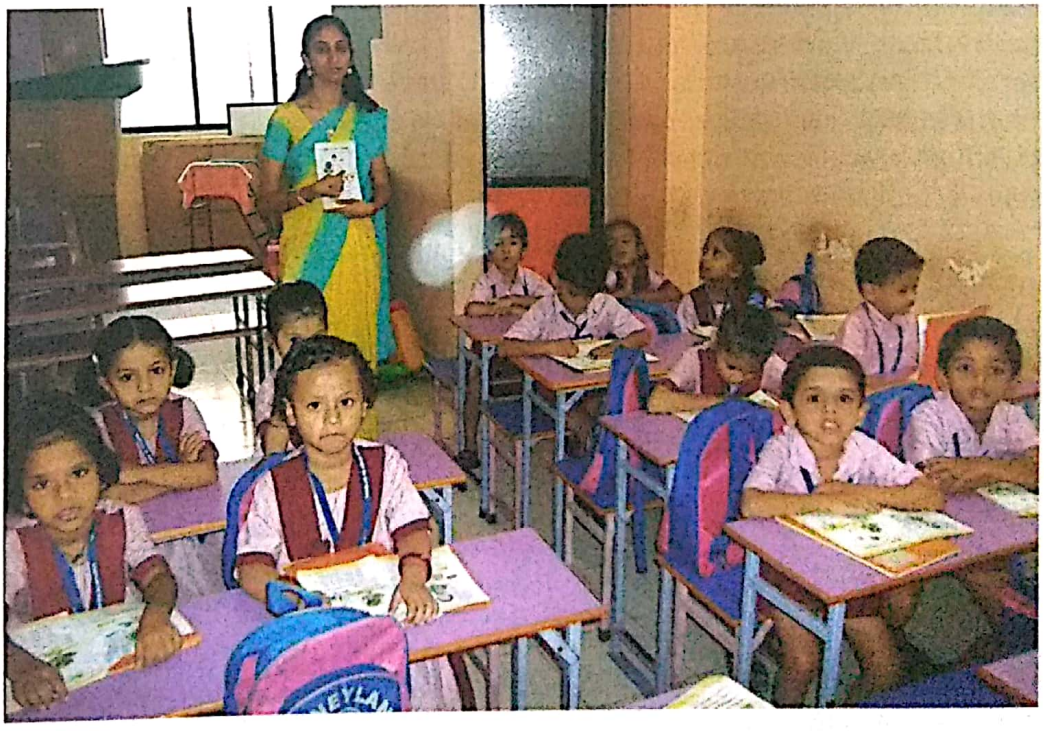
Policy Perspective

The Government of India set up many committees and commissions to improve the quality of teachers and for their professional development. Some of the recommendations are as follows.

The University Education Commission (1948) recommended that theory and practice of pre-service teacher education must support each other. The theory courses must be flexible and adaptable to local circumstances. The teachers should also be kept active and fresh through in-service education. To consider the recommendations of University Education Commission, the first conference of All India Association of Principals of Training Colleges was organised on 'Teacher Education' in 1950 at Baroda. In the light of the recommendations of this conference, many universities revised their courses. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) recommended the adoption of new techniques of evaluation and suggested that more capable and intelligent persons should be attracted to the teaching profession. There should be two types of training institutions (i) two years training for those who have taken the school leaving certificate and (ii) one year training for the graduates.

Education Commission (1966) recommended that quality of training institutions and teacher education programme should be improved. A substantial allocation of funds should be made available to UGC for improvement of teacher education in the universities.

One significant event during sixties was the formation of National Council of Educational



Research and Training (NCERT) by amalgamation of various central and national institutions. Soon after the Department of Teacher Education was set up within NCERT, four Regional Colleges of Education of NCERT were established at Ajmer, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Mysore aimed at preparing teachers for the multipurpose schools with a focus on science, technology, arts, language and commerce and improving the quality of secondary teachers by adopting the pattern of four-year integrated courses of general and professional education after higher secondary education.

Another important landmark was setting up of the State Institute of Education (SIE) in 1964 for providing greater coverage and regional specificity in the programmes of in-service education and training of teachers and other education-related personal concerned with primary education.

The National Policy on Education (NPE) and Programme of Action (POA), 1986, 1992 (revised) calls for overhauling the teacher education system. NPE (1986) made three recommendations i.e. (i) teacher education as a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components inseparable (ii) the need for new programmes of teacher education to meet the thrusts envisaged in policy and (ii) the need for creating new structures and strengthening institutions to concretise the vision of NPE. In the light of the recommendations of NPE (1986), a centrally sponsored scheme of restructuring and reorganisation of teacher education was taken in 1987, to create a viable institutional infrastructure, academic and technical resource base for continuous upgrade of knowledge, competence and pedagogical skills in school teachers by organizing orientation and training programmes.

In 1990, the Acharya Ramamurti Committee suggested that the training programme should be competency-based and there should be integration of theory and practice. The first degree in teacher education should not be given through correspondence education. The recommendation visualised for in-service and refresher courses to be specific and related to the specific needs of the teachers.

The Yashpal Committee Report (1993) on Learning Without Burden noted "The content of the programme should be restructured to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of school education. The emphasis of these programmes should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self-learning and independent thinking." The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was established as a statutory body in 1993 by an Act of Parliament for maintaining norms and standards in the country. In 1998, NCTE brought out the Curriculum Framework for Quality Teacher Education, which provides guidelines for the organisation of curriculum for different stages of teacher education. The curriculum reflects the realities of the national life, strives to realise the interdisciplinary goal of education, attempts to establish a viable integration of theory and practice of education and provides varied educational experiences needed by a teacher in his work place. It has also suggested two years as the duration for all levels of teacher education courses. It has emphasized on in-service education to upgrade professional competencies of teachers, prepare teachers for new roles, and provide knowledge and skills to emerging curriculum changes. University Grants Commission (UGC) initiated revision of Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education in 1990 at secondary stage. Again in 2001, UGC developed model curriculum. The NCERT has also brought out draft teacher education curriculum during 2004. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) has also reiterated that the in-service education should be provided to teachers for continuously updating their knowledge and skills. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) and Position Paper on teacher education for Curriculum renewal (2005) recommended that teacher education programme to be recast to reflect professionalism in the process of training and teaching. It must become more sensitive to the emerging demands from the school system. From this, it must prepare the teacher for the roles of being an:

- Encouraging, supportive and human facilitator in teaching-learning situations to enable learners (students) to discover their talents, realise their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, and to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens; and
- Active member of a group of persons who makes a conscious effort for curricular renewal so that it

is relevant to the changing societal needs and the personal needs of learners.

National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education of NCFTE (2009) suggested to improve the design and impact greater rigour and professionalism to the teacher education programmes. Justice Verma Commission in 2012 also made many recommendations for improving the professionalism among teachers. The duration of teacher education programmes were increased. NCTE revised the norms and standards of fifteen programmes of teacher education during 2014 for improving quality and standard of teacher education programme in turn to improve the quality of teachers and professional development.

Recently, the Government of India launched Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on teachers and teaching during 2014–15 which addressed comprehensively all issues related to teachers, teaching, teacher preparation and professional development. The focus is to deal with the whole sector of education without fragmenting the programmes based on levels and sectors as school, higher, technical etc. The new institutional structure is being set up. New teacher education courses are being designed to meet the professional development needs of teachers and faculty so as to infuse innovation in pedagogy leading to better learning outcomes.

Recent Initiatives

The Government of India had taken many initiatives for formulating schemes and programmes from time to time for improvement the quality of teacher education. Some of the initiatives are given below.

- Right to Education Act (2009) was implemented from 1st April, 2010 in which it has been made mandatory to appoint trained teachers in schools. At that time there were about 14 lakh untrained teachers working in different schools in the country. In the Act, the provision was made to complete their teacher training up to 2015 and later on extended up to 2019. The Government has also provided facilities in different teacher education institutions, universities, National Institute of Open Schooling to complete their training. In future, no untrained teachers will be appointed for teaching in schools.

- NCERT has developed learning outcome for elementary teachers in different subjects. Forty lakh teachers were trained so that their teaching can be improved in a better and effective way. The learning outcome for secondary stage is under process.
- National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISTHA) programme was initiated in August, 2019 for providing training to 42 lakh teachers and school heads by NCERT and NIEPA, New Delhi. It has many unique features such as integration of subjects and pedagogies, social concerns, leadership quality, value education, evaluation techniques, etc.
- NCTE revised the rules and regulations, norms and standard of 15 teacher education programme during 2014 in the light of recommendations of J.S. Verma Commission. These courses are being run in different institutions and universities. NCTE again revised and notified on 29 August, 2019 the norms and standard of four year integrated teacher education programme for preparing art and science teachers from pre-primary to secondary stages. The draft National Education Policy, 2019 also recommended these courses for preparing quality teachers.
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Scheme on National Mission of Teacher and Teaching, an umbrella Scheme, was initiated during 2014 by MHRD for improving the quality of teachers, teaching, professionalism and preparation of teachers.

Challenges and Problems

Though many reforms are brought in teacher education particularly after independence yet there

are many more emerging issues and challenges that need urgent attention for improving the quality and professional development of teachers. Some of these are as follows:

- There are about 19000 teacher education institutions in the country, of which 92 per cent are privately-owned and are largely in rural areas. Various studies including J.S. Verma Commission shows that large proportion of teacher education colleges are not providing quality education. If we see the result of Central Teacher Eligibility Test conducted during 2011 for students who wanted to become primary and upper primary teachers after acquiring the teacher education degree, it was less than 1 per cent in the country. The situation has not improved much now as the pass percentage of students is still less than 18% in the country.
- Most of the independent teacher education institutions are in rural areas and running different courses in teacher education. In these institutions, large numbers of posts are also lying vacant as quality teachers are not prepared. There is also a general observation and complain about these institutions that malpractices like fake attendance of students, non-attending teachers, etc., is prevalent in these institutions.
- NCTE (2014,2019) revised notifications have increased the duration of teacher education programmes like B.Ed and M.Ed. running in different institutions and universities for preparing quality professional teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, educational policy analysts, educational planners, administrators, supervisors and researchers and school principals. There is resentment at few places among stakeholders facing the problem of admission of students, equipments, physical facilities and qualified faculty etc.
- During transaction of curriculum of different courses of teacher education programmes, it is observed that theory and practice, and content and pedagogy of these programmes are not integrated. It has not resolved so far and proves to be a great hurdle in preparing quality teachers and teacher educators.
- In our existing system, the teachers with general degree of B.Ed. have been teaching from elementary to senior secondary stages. Even at some places, they are teaching subjects which they have not studied at graduation and post graduation levels. It resulted into many complicated problems like drop out, absenteeism and low achievement among the children.
- The centrally sponsored scheme of restructuring and reorganisation of teacher education launched in nineties in the light of NPE, 1986 by Government of India could not realize the objectives. The Programme on Mass Orientation for School Teachers (PMOST) could not reach to the field in its real spirit. The institutions like DIETs, CTEs, IASEs, SCERTs are not functioning according to its role and functions.
- In case of higher education, there is no provision for pre-service education. Teachers are working without professional degrees in teacher education colleges and universities.
- Both teacher education and school education are working in isolation and does not have any relationship between the two in curriculum and its translation. The pre-service teacher education curriculum does not reflect much the needs and demands of students and school teachers.
- There is no mechanism of Management Information System (MIS) on Teacher Education. The data relating percentage of untrained teachers, unemployed trained teachers, number of teacher educators and their specialisation, curriculum and syllabus at different levels, frequency of curriculum revision, innovative programmes,

etc., in teacher education are not available at one place.

- There is no permanent policy and mechanism for the in-service education programme for about 90 lakh teachers and teacher educators who are working in schools and teacher education institutions in the country for their continuous growth and development. The training programmes are being organised in ad hoc manner under the Government of India schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education. Now these are merged into Samagra Shiksha. Most of such programmes are not organised according to the actual needs of the teachers. Generally lecture method is used in such programmes. Opportunity for trainees to actively participate is very less. Cascade mode is used for organisation of training programmes. There is a lot of transaction loss in the cascade mode.
- Long term training courses in a distance-cum-contact mode have not been conceptualized for the in-service teachers. Training so far remains largely conventional. Use of ICT for in-service training teachers has not been explored widely.
- Lot of training material is available both with the national and state level institutions. But there is no mechanism to make it available to teachers and teacher educators at the field level.
- The professional development course for college and university teachers is not organised systematically and scientifically at Human Resource Development Centres, Faculty Development Centres, and Teaching Learning Centres established in different universities.
- Policy research, innovations and experimentation are largely not encouraged in teacher education programme.

Suggested Reforms in Teacher Education

There is an urgent need to implement the following suggestions for bringing reforms in the teacher education programmes which will certainly be beneficial for rural areas.

- There is need to completely overhaul the structure of teacher education, recruitment policy, service conditions, and career management in order to restore high status of teaching profession. Professional degree in higher education like M.Ed with specialisation as recommended by NCTE (2014) regulations needs to be implemented. The Government should fill up the vacant posts of faculty immediately.
- NCTE has notified to introduce four year integrated Bachelor of Education Programme in arts and science from pre-primary to secondary stages. The draft of National Educational Policy, 2019 also endorsed the above notification. It will help and benefit interaction with higher areas of education and move to multidisciplinary colleges and universities. The admission in these courses should be based on entrance examination at national level to be conducted by National Testing Agency. Merit based scholarships particularly in rural areas should be instituted across country for studies in four year integrated Bachelor of Education Programme. Large numbers of independent teacher education institutions are established in rural areas. There is an urgent requirement to convert these into multidisciplinary institutions.
- The curriculum of teacher education programme needs to be revised and redesigned keeping in view the new thrust areas of the National Curriculum Framework for School (2005), NCTE (2009) and NCTE Regulations (2014, 2019). Therefore, curriculum and pedagogy in teacher education must provide for rigorous theoretical understanding of educational perspectives, subjects and pedagogy along with strong theory-practice connect. These pertinent issues and concerns are to be resolved on the basis of researches and experiments.
- INSET (In-Service Education of Teachers) requires systematic and comprehensive policy by strengthening and coordinating the national level institutions such as University Grants Commission, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administrators (NIEPA), National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) and state level institutions like State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), university departments, College of Teacher Education, etc.

- The traditional face-to-face training modality fails to provide regular training to teachers. Alternative mode of distance education needs to be used. It will not only minimise the transmission loss but also solve the problems of non-availability of Resource Persons at smaller places. ICT to be integrated in teacher education programmes, and use of interactive television will be effective mode for coverage and recurrent training for the professional development of teachers. Online course like SWAYAM, MOOCS to be used for training programmes.
- The training methodology should focus on local specific activity-based training approaches and IT/ET integration to training transactions. The transactions of training should also focus on audio/video demonstration of skills, competencies, interventions and strategies followed by group discussion, group reflection, panel discussion, brain storming sessions, etc. There is need for social sensitivity to socio-cultural, economic and political issues confronting the emerging Indian society.
- The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education launched by Government of India needs revision, reformulation and updating so that institutions like DIETs, CTEs, IASEs, SCERTs can function according to their role and functions. It requires to be strengthened in terms of manpower and other resources.
- Policy research, innovations and experimentation are largely not encouraged in teacher education programme. These should be promoted for improving the quality of teacher education programme. It will also help in streamlining the practical problems like entry qualifications, admission policy, recruitment and transfer policy, etc. Inter-departmental research studies should be undertaken.
- The draft of National Educational Policy, 2019 recommended shutting down the sub-standard institutions. The existing genuine teacher education institutions should become multidisciplinary higher educational institutions by 2030. This should be implemented immediately.
- A strong mechanism for monitoring, evaluation and follow-up should be developed and to be made an integral part of teacher education programme, both including pre- and in-service training programme, to know the strength, weaknesses and outcomes of the programme with corrective measures for optimising the effectiveness of the programme.

In the end, it is concluded that many reforms have taken place in the area of teacher education from time to time in the light of recommendations made by different commissions and committees set up by Government of India for the professional development of teachers and teacher educators. But the issues and concerns raised above still need deep thinking and action on the part of both policy planning and implementation at micro and macro level. All the universities and affiliating universities should follow and implement recommendations made in revised regulations of NCTE notifications (2014, 2019). Besides this, Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Scheme on National Mission of Teacher and Teaching should be implemented as envisaged. It will certainly bring great change and improve the quality of teachers and teacher educators in the country.

References:

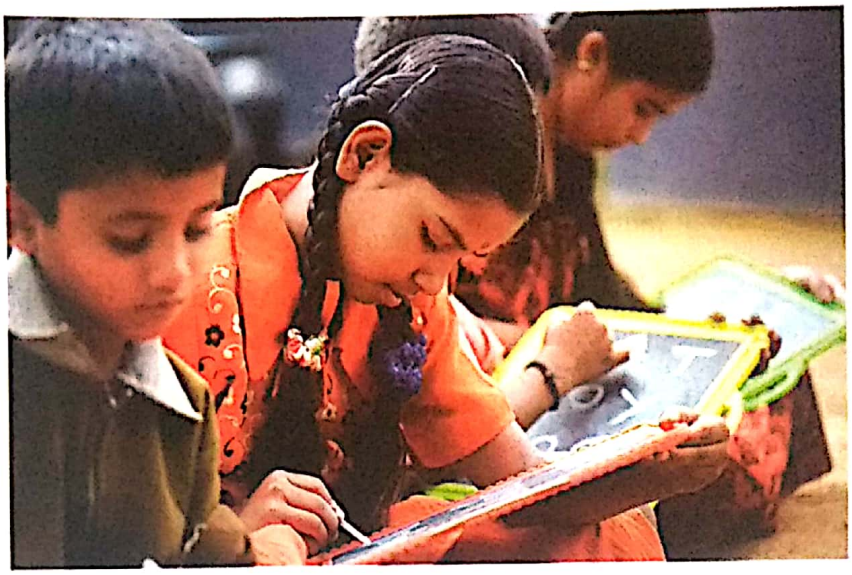
1. Ministry of Education(1948) Report of the University Education Commission, New Delhi, Govt. of India.
2. Ministry of Education(1959) National Survey of Elementary Teacher Education in India , New Delhi, Govt. of India.
3. Ministry of Education(1952), Report of the Secondary Education Commission, New Delhi. Govt. of India.
4. Ministry of Education(1964), Education and National Development, Report of the Commission(1964-66), New Delhi., Govt. of India.
5. Ministry of Human Resource Development(1983). The Teacher and Society, National Commission on Teachers-I(1983-85), New Delhi.
6. Ministry of Human Resource Development (1986), National Policy on Education, New Delhi, Govt. of India.

(The author is Former Head, Department of Teacher Education, NCERT, New Delhi. Email: writetosatish51@gmail.com)

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

Alka Mishra

During last two decades, a major emphasis has been given on improving school environment by different educational programmes like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Samagra Siksha, in order to enhance regular participation of students and finally resulting in improvement in their learning levels.



Education is one of the most important instrument for social, economic and political transformation in any society across the world. A well-educated and skilled population equipped with knowledge not only drives socio-economic development but also ensures personal growth. In India, under RTE Act 2009, there is a constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 06-14 years.

During last two decades, a major emphasis has been given on improving school environment by different educational programmes like Operation Blackboard, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Samagra Siksha, in order to enhance regular participation of students and finally resulting in improvement in their learning levels.

An attempt has also been made to provide adequate physical facilities as per the needs of schools, as recommended by the National Policy on Education, NPE 1986. The policy has recognized that, 'unattractive school environment, unsatisfactory condition of buildings and insufficiency of instructional materials' function as de-motivating factors for children and their parents. The Policy, therefore, calls for a drive for a substantial improvement of primary schools and provision of support services'.

Further, RTE Act 2009, has recommended that each school should be equipped with 'All weather building consisting of at least one classroom for every teacher; barrier-free access; separate toilets for boys and girls; safe drinking water facility to all children; playground; securing the school building by boundary wall or fencing'.

When we talk about education in India, we can't just talk about how education is in urban cities of India, without going deep into rural education that constitutes almost 84 per cent of the schools being located in rural areas. As per the UDISE 2016-17, of the total 15.35 lakh schools in India, 12.97 lakh(84 per cent) schools are located in rural area compared to 2.38 lakh(16 per cent) in Urban area. The distribution of schools by management shows that the school education is predominantly handled by the government in rural area.

The main aim of two major centrally sponsored schemes for school education SSA and RMSAworks to ensure, that all children in the country have access to elementary and secondary schools with adequate infrastructure, in partnership with States/UTs. Some of the important infrastructure facilities provided during SSA and RMSA are discussed below.

Table 1 Schools in rural area by different Management

Management	Number	Percentage
Government	10,17,129	78.4
Aided	57,781	4.5
Private	1,87,654	14.5
Other	34,519	2.6
Total	12,97,083	100.00

Source: UDISE 2016-17

Increase in number of schools: SSA & RMSA during its decade long programme have sanctioned more than 3.64 lakhs elementary and secondary schools, which has resulted in significant increase in the number of schools in rural area. The figures of the 8th All India Education Survey reveal that (96.01 per cent) rural population have access to primary stage education facilities within a walking distance of 1 km; and 92.81 rural population have access to upper primary stage education facilities within a distance of 3 kms. SSA has a provision of residential facilities in sparsely populated or hilly and densely forested areas with difficult geographical terrains.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) are residential upper primary schools set up in educationally backward blocks for girls from SC,ST, OBC and Minority communities. 3609 KGBVs have been sanctioned by Government of India. *(Source Annual Report 2016-17 MHRD)*

Girls' hostel for students of secondary and higher secondary schools: This is also a Centrally Sponsored Scheme that has been implemented since 2009–10 to set up a 100-bed girls' hostel in each of the 3,479 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs) of the country in an effort to ensure that girls are retained at the secondary level of education.

2,483 Girls' Hostel are sanctioned in rural area to improve access and retain the girls in Secondary and Higher Secondary classes (X-XII) so that the girls get the opportunity to continue with their studies irrespective of distance to schools and other socio-economic factors.

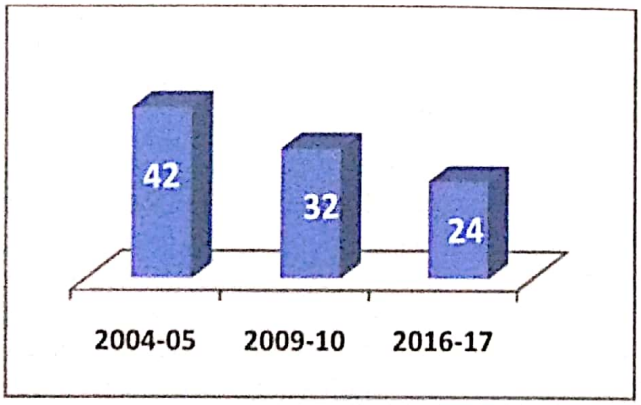
School Building and classrooms: There are 98 per cent schools in rural areas, having their buildings. Since the inception of the erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Scheme, SSA and RMSA 18.40 lakh classrooms has been constructed as a result the student classroom ratio (SCR) reduced drastically.

Drinking Water: Investment for enhancement in facilities was not limited to opening of new schools alone. The school infrastructure (physical facilities in the school) has also augmented substantially with financial and technical support provided from SSA & RMSA.

As per UDISE 2016-17, there are 97 per cent schools in rural areas equipped with drinking water facility. Many states have already achieved universal availability of drinking water facility with 100 per cent in schools.

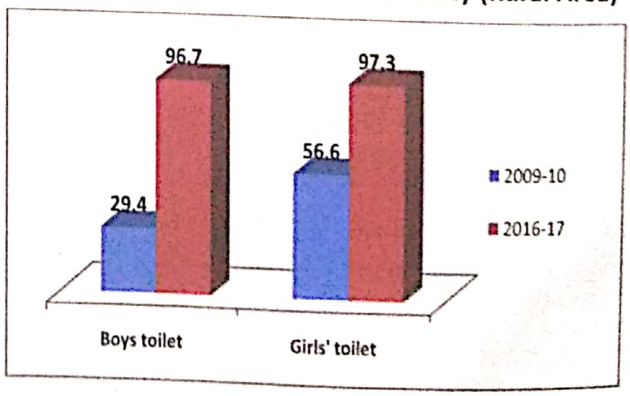
Separate Toilet for Boys and Girls: Department of School Education & Literacy had launched Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative with an objective to provide separate toilets for girls and boys in all government schools within the timeline of 15th August, 2015. Under this

Chart 1: Student Classroom Ratio (Rural Area)



Source: UDISE

Chart 2: Improvement in toilet facility (Rural Area)



Source: UDISE

initiative 4,17,796 (2.26 lakh boys' and 1.91 lakh girls' toilets) toilet blocks were constructed or made functional in 2,61,400 schools within the given timeline. This included schools in the most difficult to remote areas in the country or areas facing Left Wing Extremism (LWE). The Initiative was made successful in partnership with all State Governments, 64 Central Public Sector Undertakings, and 11 Private Corporates. With this, about 13.77 crore children in 11.21 lakh government schools all over the country now have access to toilet facilities.

Ramp & CWSN Toilet: One of the major objectives of all education programmes that have been implemented at present is to develop an inclusive education system by providing access to children with disabilities.

Provisioning of ramp and CWSN toilet facility are two major interventions in this regard. It has been found in DISE 2016-17 that around 64 per cent schools are having ramp and 23 per cent schools having CWSN toilet facility. The proportion of schools without ramp facility is much higher in case of secondary and higher secondary level though there has been considerable decline of such schools during last two years of all levels.

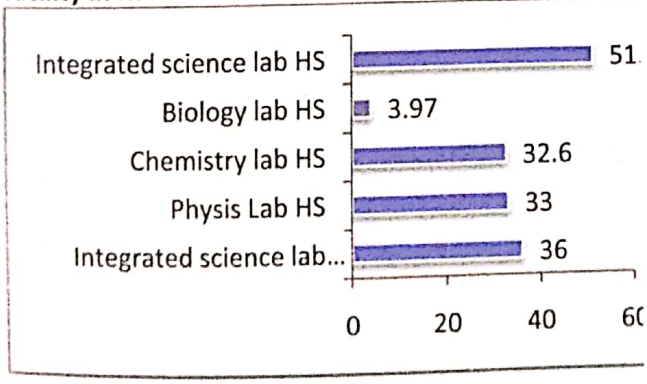
Library:The RTE Act and RMSA specifies that the Library will be an essential component of the school, providing not only resource for learning, but also for strengthening the idea of reading for pleasure, among the students. The UDISE 2016-17 data indicates that there has been an increase in the facilities from 2010 after the implementation of RTE Act and RMSA. In rural areas the percentage of schools with library has been increased from 55 per cent in 2009-10 to 82 per cent in 2016-17 (Source UDISE)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is being used in classrooms to improve learning outcomes worldwide. ICT@ schools was a scheme launched in 2004 by MHRD and revised in 2010 to provide opportunities to secondary and senior secondary students to mainly build their capacity on ICT skills and make them learn through computer aided learning process.

Financial assistance is provided for procurement of computers, software, development of e-contents and Internet connectivity. Under this scheme, 87,033 (Source Annual Report 2016-17, MHRD) government and government aided secondary and higher secondary schools have been approved and ICT labs has been setup in the schools.

The use of ICT in rural area schools has additional application in the teaching and learning process. It provides teachers with a range of new tools to facilitate traditional pedagogies; it also and perhaps more importantly, presents the teacher with the potential to develop new teaching methods. For many students who are first generation learners, ICT provides new, and more exciting and relevant, learning opportunities.

Chart 3: Percentage of Sec/HS schools with Lab facility in Rural Area



Source: UDISE 2016-17

i. Annual grant Upto 20,000/- per school for strengthening of Libraries.
ii. Sport grant upto 25,000 per school
iii. Composite school grant upto one lakh per school based on enrolment
iv. Upgradation of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) upto class 12
v. Enhanced use of digital technology in education through smart classrooms, digital boards

Computer Aided Learning (CAL): Under SSA the CAL is primarily introduced in rural government upper primary schools covering the classes VI to VIII to attract and retain children and also in the process, enhance the quality of learning. The main objective of the CAL programme is to attract the rural children, retain them in the schools and to improve the quality of the education through animated multimedia based educational content.

Since the inception of the programme, approximately 1.06 lakh upper primary schools have been benefited from the intervention.

This program improves the IT literacy in the rural areas particularly and will go a long way in removing the digital divide in India.

Electricity: Electricity is a lasting need for education. Particularly in rural areas within a few years, students will be using digital devices to access information needed for studies, instead of using traditional textbooks.

Computers and smart classrooms in rural areas have changed the need for electricity in schools. Although more than80 per cent of secondary and higher secondary schools in the rural areas are equipped with electricity facility, large number of primary schools are still devoid of electricity, despite having electricity in villages.

Playground: RTE Act 2009 gives emphasis on playground in schools as playing puts enormous positive impact on children in their learning and overall physical development.

The situation regarding availability of playground in schools is far from satisfactory even in rural areas.

There are 59 per cent schools having playground within it. Lack of availability of playground hampers engagement of children in different games and physical activities making schooling monotonous and unattractive. The situation is slightly better in case of upper primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

Boundary Wall: It is also noteworthy that although most of the schools are running in a building but many of these schools are found without any boundary wall. The analysis of U-DISE data indicates that a 47 per cent of schools in rural area do not have boundary wall which is very important for safety of children.

Science Laboratory for Secondary & Higher Secondary schools: Science is different from any other subject. It is believed that laboratory teaching and experiments that are being conducted help encourage deep understanding in children. Children are able to retain the knowledge for longer when they see the experiments being performed in front of them. Under RMSA, integrated science labs has been sanctioned to the Secondary Schools. The chart below shows the availability of the labs in rural area.

Way Forward:

To improve the quality of the programme, Government of India, in 2018-19, has decided to treat school education holistically without segmentation from Pre-Primary to Class 12. Samagra Shiksha - an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12. It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

With the introduction of Samagra Siksha, the focus is on improving quality and learning outcomes in school education, also to improve retention in schools.

The main emphasis of the programme is on improving the education infrastructure and to provide quality education. Major features of the ongoing programme are :

Conclusion:

A good school infrastructure with good spaces makes conducive place for the children to study. Both SSA and RMSA have improved access to elementary and secondary education in the country. In rural areas, the augmented school infrastructure has enhanced enrolment of children in schools especially girls and other disadvantaged groups. It makes the learning more interesting and gets the children motivated to attained school, this in turn improves the attendance and interest of students in learning.

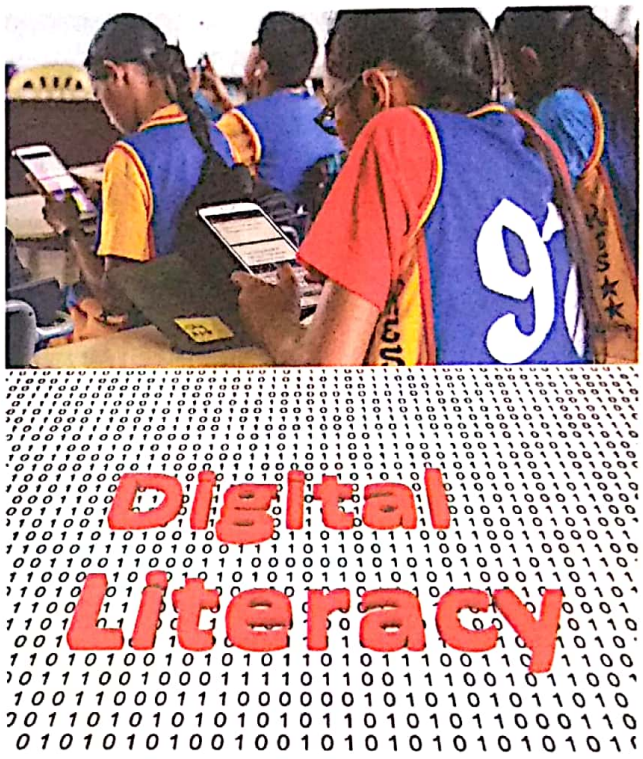
(The author is Chief Consultant with Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi. Email : contactalka@gmail.com)

TOWARDS DIGITAL AND FINANCIAL LITERACY

Tasneem Q Khan

Digital literacy brings within its ambit, an array of new technological advancements to be used for effective and safe communication. On the other hand, financial literacy is the ability to understand different areas and concepts of finance like financial planning, budgeting, investment, savings and much more.

Digital literacy is the understanding and navigation of several digital platforms and analysing their potential as a medium of communication. Digital literacy brings within its ambit, an array of new technological advancements to be used for effective and safe communication. On the other hand, financial literacy is the ability to understand different areas and concepts of finance like financial planning, budgeting, investment, savings and much more. If one does not possess financial literacy then one is susceptible to making wrong financial choices that can negatively impact one's financial stability. For a fast growing and promising economy like India, it is very important that initiatives be taken by the government in order to achieve last-mile reach in terms of financial education so that the citizens can make informed choices and contribute to the larger economic growth. The first ten years in the twenty-first century have witnessed global acknowledgment of the fact that it is necessary for the development of any country to spread financial literacy amongst its people. Combining the digital platform and financial facility, the digital-financial interface is the new medium that has revolutionised the experience of financial connectivity and interaction the world over. Introducing Universal Payments Interface (UPI) in India has been a remarkable endeavour in this direction. This interface is regulated by the Reserve Bank of India and functions by immediate, real-time transference of funds among two bank accounts on a mobile platform. The ease of transaction, time efficient transfer and all at the comfort of an individual's location of choice make UPI an important tool in the achievement of an efficient and smooth financial network.



Financial Literacy in India

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) financial education means "the process by which financial consumers/investors improve their understanding of financial products, concepts and risks and, through information, instruction and/or objective advice, develop the skills and confidence to become more aware of financial risks and opportunities, to make informed choices, to know where to go for help, and to take other effective actions to improve their financial well-being". In simple language, financial literacy means awareness about the schemes, policies and all the other services that the banks and financial stakeholders offer. India is rapidly progressing economy where financial inclusion plays a major role. Similarly, financial inclusion means ensuring the inclusion of the vulnerable groups of the society, who are in need of state financial assistance, by ensuring their access to pertinent financial products and services. To achieve this, financial education assumes a critical position as it will enable the

dissemination of information and establishing of understanding regarding the suitable products and services made available by banks and other financial institutions.

Importance of Financial Literacy

The importance of financial literacy is:

a) **Inclusive Growth and Financial Inclusion**: Financial education assumes a crucial role in making the consumers respond to the initiatives of the supply or the service provider side. It has always been the prime concern of the government to achieve social inclusion, of which financial inclusion forms the greatest part. Financial literacy, and education, plays a critical role in making available the services and benefits that the weaker groups need so as to achieve the agenda of inclusive growth and sustainable prosperity.

b) **Familiarity and Ability**: There are a vast amount of products and services available in the market. It has made it difficult for the layman to discern what option would best suit them. Hence, to make an informed choice, it is necessary to have financial literacy. Knowing about the schemes and options develops confidence, familiarity and skills to administer.

c) **Freedom from exploitation**: Financial literacy will assist in safeguarding individuals and the general public against manipulative financial schemes and inflated interest rate charged by moneylenders.

d) **Prevention of over indebtedness**: Financial education will help to avoid over-indebtedness, improve quality of services and make wise financial decisions.

e) **Promotion of entrepreneurship**: The educated entrepreneurs who have small scale businesses can benefit a great deal if a systematic national plan to impart specific financial knowledge is properly implanted. This is owing to the fact that making them aware of the new financial ventures and products will guide them in understanding the workings of market mechanism and improve their business dealings.

f) **Positive Spill-over effects:** when individual and group are made to have proper of financial education, it can lead to multiplier effects in the economy. A household with a substantial amount

of financial education would make regular savings and invest in correct channels to generate income. The financial well being of persons will in turn augment the societal welfare.

g) **Making the Pension Responsibility an individual or personal affair and not that of the State / Corporations**: An individual who is financially literate would be in a superior situation to evaluate his/her own necessities and make savings in suitable schemes. This leads to a reduced strain on social programs and pension plans, and promote an economy that is tougher.

h) **Behavioral Change**: The outburst of many financial products has made their usage grow quite rapidly without any refrain from the larger financial implications. There can be brought about certain degree of behavioral change by means of financial education. The latest global financial crisis has raised the question of whether the individuals' lack of financial knowledge can result in making debt traps that a country cannot survive for long.

i) **More and better input in Financial Markets**: In India, the need of the hour is to 'convert savers into investors'. It is mentioned in the National Strategy for Financial Education that more participation from the of domestic retail investors in securities market will increase the strength and depth is needed of the same and "will give dividends by Increasing depth of securities market, reducing reliance on foreign investors and domestic savers reaping benefits of Corporate Growth and reducing strain on Government Treasury for investment in National Infrastructure."[1]

Government Endeavours To Strengthen Financial Literacy in India

There have been numerous initiatives taken by the government to spread financial literacy in the country:

National Strategy for Financial Education (NSFE):

The ultimate goal is to develop India as a financially aware and empowered nation so as to seek progress and smooth co-ordination between the people and the government in developing the economy of the nation. National Strategy for Financial Education has been prepared in 2012 to bring about a massive financial education campaign that would create awareness and would educate the consumers on how to gain access to financial services, what are the products available and how a change in the attitude of people can be brought about so as to "translate knowledge into behavior".

As per the National Strategy for Financial Education, the key elements of financial literacy module should be as follows:

a) To understand the main financial products that one might need in the course of one's life like the "bank accounts, insurance, retirement savings plans and securities market investments like stocks, bonds and mutual funds."

b) Getting to learn about the fundamental financial concepts like investment return, compound interest, annuity, diversification, present and future value of money, so on and so forth.

c) Being more aware of financial risks and prospects and developing skills and self-reliance to gain profit from them.

d) Making well informed financial choices about "saving, spending, insurance, investing and managing debt throughout one's life."

Project Financial Literacy

This is a central bank (RBI) endeavor that aims to disseminate information regarding its basic banking concepts to schools, colleges, economically weaker sections residing in the rural and urban areas, senior citizens, defense personals, and many more in the specific target group. Under this initiative, RBI organizes trips of school and college students to the RBI headquarters and also conducts banking and insurance related quizzes in schools (for classes VII to XIV) to create awareness about general economy and bring about financial literacy. It also creates modules on General Indian Economics for the same purpose. There is also a Financial Literacy Week that is observed by RBI to create awareness and understanding on key topics every year "through a focused campaign."

Digital Literacy in India

The modern day technical advancement and lerge scale consumption of mobile phones as the consumer market, India is a country where awareness and literacy regarding the digital aspect of communication is utmost necessary. Computers, internet and mobile phones have become a seminal part of our existence. Thus, the degree of familiarity with the technological and digital platform decides how effectively can the communication of content, ideas, information and entertainment takes place in this generation take place.

Importance of Digital Literacy

It is imperative to develop an effective and competent framework of digital organisation, since the world is only a click away and information has been digitised and compressed. To get ready for the surge of digital transformation, India needs to build its digital skills, beginning from digital awareness and education of its citizens. To stay well-connected with the world and be in effective communicating developmental ideas and translating the vision of rapid growth into reality, digital literacy is a must in today's world.

Government Endeavours To Strengthen Digital Literacy in India

Under the Digital India campaign, the government has taken numerous initiatives to bring about digital literacy in the country. Some of the endeavours are:

Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (DISHA)

National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) Scheme has been initiated by the government in order to impart IT training to citizens who are not literate in the IT sphere. This scheme aims at making target groups like the Angawadis, ASHA workers, sanctioned ration dealers, etc IT literate and enable them to effectively and actively participate in the national developmental course of action, by augmenting their livelihoods through digital literacy.

Digitize India Platform (DIP)

This is an initiative of the Union Government under the Digital India Programme. DIP is an interface that provides digitisation services for

scanned images of documents or physical copies for any organisation. This scheme aims at creating a digital repository of all existing content, which includes the certificates and degrees of people, in various formats and media in a digitised pattern.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

DBT was brought underway with the objective to identify beneficiaries and accurately target them by directly transferring funds into their account, doing away with any sort of middlemen in the process. It is an initiative to reform the delivery system of the government and ensure efficient, effective, non-duplicable, faster and simpler transfer of information/ funds in order to achieve the goal of "Maximum Governance, Minimum Government". DBT promotes greater transparency and lesser frauds so as to make the government accountable and inspire more confidence of the people in governance.

AADHAR and AADHAAR Enabled Payment System

AADHAR platform is one of the main pillars of the Digital India Platform. AADHAR number or the unique identity number is generated by using a person's biometric specifications. This platform has the largest biometrics based recognition system, and is "a strategic policy tool for social and financial inclusion, public sector delivery reforms," to "promote hassle-free people-centric governance."[3] Similarly, the AADHAR enabled payment system lets the customer use his/her AADHAR card as the identity proof and link the bank to AADHAR to carry digital payment activities. This model brings into force "financial inclusion=".

Saugamya Bharat Abhiyan

It is a pan-India flagship campaign that is also known as the Accessible India Campaign. This campaign aims at achieving "universal accessibility" for people with diabilties in ordre for them to have an access to equal opportunity, independent living and inclusive socio-economic development.

AGRIMARKET App

This app has been created to enable the farmers to stay updated with the crop prices in order to ensure best market for the sale of their crop and assess the market conditions beforehand. This app automatically traces the location of the farmer through GPS and fetched the market prices of the crops within a range of 50km. the app has been helpful in preventing the farmers from carrying out "distress sale."

Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM)

This app makes the bank transactions simple, swift and uncomplicated. It enables bank to bank direct transfer, which is done using a mobile phone.

Cyber Swachhta Kendra

Under this initiative of the government, the main task of the centre is to quarantine and safeguard the cyber space by spotting botnet infections and subsequently notify the end-users to prevent further damage. This falls within the purview of 'National Cyber Security Policy' that aims to ensure clean cyber ecosystem iindo8.

Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan (VISAKA)

Launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, VISIKA is said to be "biggest digital transformation of country after Independence"[4]. The principle of the `Vittiya Saksharta Abhiyan' is to energetically connect the Higher Education Institutions and their students and encourage all payers and payees to use a "digitally enabled cashless economic system"[5] for their fund transfer.

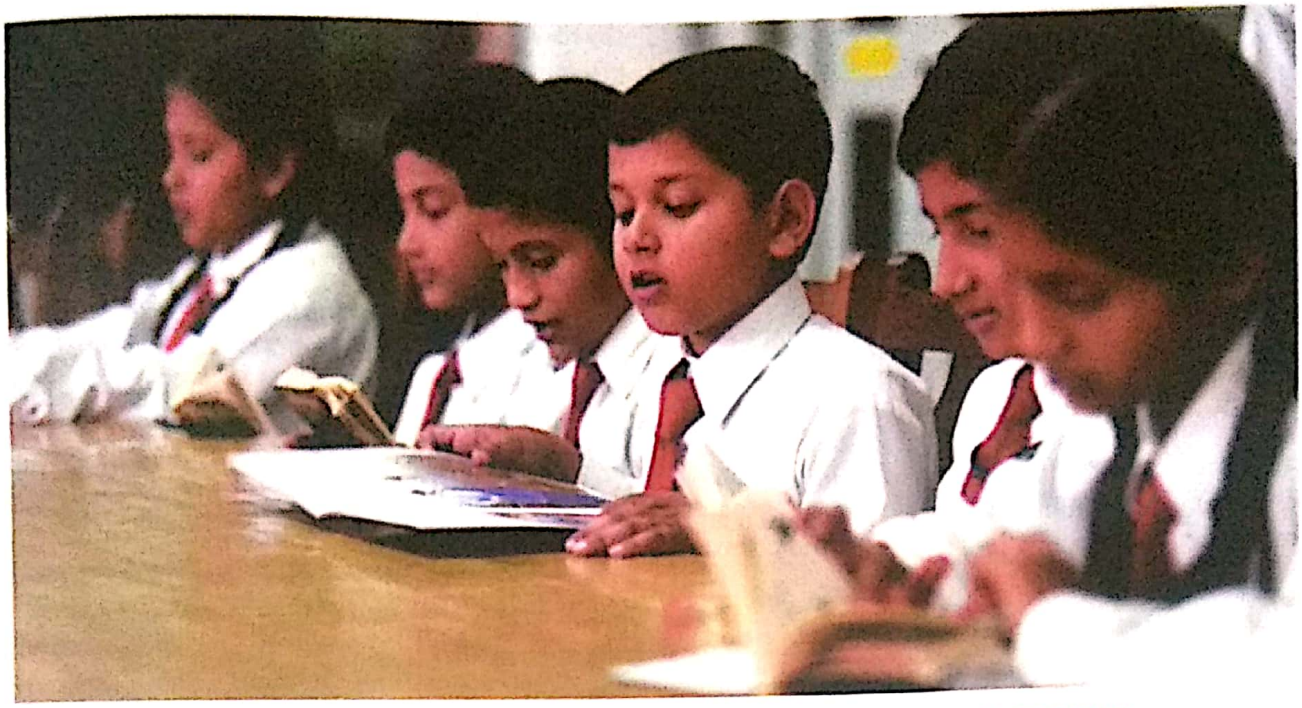
Conclusion

To keep abreast of the evolutionary shifts that the modern age technical innovations bring with itself, it is necessary that individuals are provided with apt resources and information that would create awareness and make practical use effective and easy. Educating people about various facets of socio-economic and developmental concepts is a step taken towards efficient and productive governance. The concept of financial and digital literacy is important in the present day scenario and India has already started moving towards realising the value the digital and financial transformation and taping into the benefits form them.

Footnote

1 http://cashlessindia.gov.in/vittiya-saksharta-abhiyan-visaka.html

(The author is Assistant Professor at Lloyd Law College.
Email: tasneemkhan2204@gmail.com)



EDUCATION SCENARIO IN THE NORTH EAST

Dr. David Nongrum and Dany Lyngdoh

It is important to recognise that with the expansion of schooling, a large number of students are now drawn from unprivileged backgrounds with higher ability group variation in the classrooms than ever before. In this context, teachers and schools should assist students in achieving the pathways for developing critical and higher order thinking and the ability to communicate effectively.

The education sector in Meghalaya is being pushed to deliver high quality with greater transparency and focus is shifting to outcome measures related to quality. The Government of Meghalaya along with the Government of India has taken multiple steps to address gaps in the education system. There is also an increased realisation to focus on quality of education and need to view education as a continuum right from early education to higher education, integrated with vocational programmes as opposed to the disconnected silos.

Meghalaya, with more than 14,282 schools, about 900,000 students, about 51,000 teachers and sparsely populated areas, has achieved significant progress in the education sector in recent past. The State has made significant strides in education in the recent years and is committed to greater equity and social justice through bringing requisite reforms in education sector. While the State has made notable progress on multiple fronts including improving access, better infrastructure and focus on learning outcomes, there are still several areas that warrant a long road to improvement ahead.

Status of School Education in Meghalaya

It is important to recognise that with the expansion of schooling, a large number of students are now drawn from unprivileged backgrounds with higher ability group variation in the classrooms than ever before. In this context, teachers and schools should assist students in achieving the pathways for developing critical and higher order thinking and the ability to communicate effectively. To put it in different words, strategies for expansion of capability should be such that it leads to reduction in inequality in learning outcomes between different groups and enhancement of other forms of capabilities. Achievement of the idea of sustainable development from the perspective of capability approach, teaching learning practices must move from formation of basic competencies to formation of ability to think and reason and be informed of

world around them. School Education for sustainable development must be an education that is the basis for abilities needed to establish agency and attitudes supporting behaviour that leads to equal and just society

Drop-Out Rate

High drop-out rate in the State has been a major cause of concern to the State Government, such factors tend to supplement each other and reinforce their adverse impact. However, it is well recognised that poverty, large size of families, distance between residence and school, a non-conducive school environment and untrained teachers are, to a large extent are responsible.

Untrained Teachers

As per U-DISE September 2015-16 there are more than 15,000 untrained teachers. The policy of the Government will be to address the problem at source and in future to appoint only trained teachers. Simultaneously, the backlog of untrained teachers will be cleared by adopting appropriate strategies. The teachers will be trained through Open Distance Learning within a stipulated time through IGNOU & NIOS.

Access and Quality issues in School Education

The problem of access to Elementary Education has been largely addressed through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). However, although ASER 2012 has rated the State between 3rd and 6th position in the country in terms of learning levels for Primary School students, quality will remain an important concern and will continue to be a priority as it has a direct bearing on the quality of the subsequent stages of Education. The intermediate goal is to provide at least two teachers for each Primary School. However, the ultimate aim is to have one teacher per class in each school.

School Improvement Initiatives in Meghalaya

A more comprehensive approach would be equalisation of learning opportunities through strategies for expansion of capability of students. Teaching learning strategies needs to take into account the inter-relatedness of capability expansion as means of equalisation of learning opportunities and learning outcomes as basis for long term sustainable development. Through strategies of capability expansion, teachers and schools should promote equalisation of learning opportunities

Set against this backdrop, the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) at Thadlaskein, Jaintia Hills conceptualised and rolled out a school self-evaluation project in pilot mode in Khliehri at Block in the year 2008. The first school evaluation tool was developed over three workshops and further refined with the support of a few faculty from the Department of Education, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU). Block and Cluster resource persons were also provided training on external evaluation and of ways to support schools through the efforts of the District Mission Coordinator, SSA Jaintia Hills. The experiences from this intervention led to the development of modules for the capacity building of heads for the first time in Meghalaya aimed at school improvement. These covered (i) Team building, (ii) Institutional Planning, (iii) Planning for School Improvement, (iv) Managing change, (v) and Educational Leadership.

During 2011-13, building on the work done by DIET Thadlaskein, a training module on School Development Plans as well as reading materials, reference books, and other resources was developed by the Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT) in collaboration with the seven DIETs over three phases. This work covered eight areas, namely (i) Aims of Elementary Education; (ii) RTE Act: Role and Responsibilities of Schools and Teachers, (iii) The SMC: Composition, Roles and Functions, (iv) Norms and Standards for a School; (v) Gaps in the present Elementary Schooling System; (vi) Purpose, Scope and formulation of the SDP.

During the year 2013, as part of the MHRD, USAID partnership-India Support for Teacher Education Program (In-STEP)–the author participated in a three-month residency program at the Arizona State University (ASU) along with fifty-two other teacher educators from India. It was there that the Meghalaya School Improvement Programme (MSIP) was conceived.

The Meghalaya School Improvement Programme

The MSIP was piloted in ten schools during the year 2014,through the collaborative efforts of the DERT, the Directorate of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), RMSA Meghalaya and the DIETs.

The programme focussed on three key areas: (i) establishing school teams/communities of learning (ii)undertaking school quality assessment and (iii) outcome-based progress tracking.

The programme also had the following guiding principles to guide all school-based activities: (i) reduce isolation through collaborations and effective communication, (ii) Increase staff capacity through continuous professional development, (iii) create a supportive school environment and (iv) to strive for continuous improvement.

Though the task team faced innumerable challenges which included dearth of funds, school personnel not reporting for training, absence of educational personnel offering school-site support, poor connectivity in parts Garo Hills, Jaintia Hills &Khasi Hills and poor monitoring of action plans at school level, they also saw the potential of communities of learning.

Central findings of Pilot schools

The experiences from the 10 pilot schools have shown that schools need a lot of handholding during the entire process of preparation and implementing their school improvement plans. With limited funds and time, capacity building is often limited to initial orientation workshops where schools are taught regarding the concept of school improvement plans, identifying their own priorities and areas of focus, school rating as per Shaala Shiddhi domains, constituting teams and preparation of the school improvement plans. However, in order for a school to really maximise the benefits of this intervention more handholding is required especially on one to one consultations. It is seen that most schools could not even start the process of preparation of School improvement plan, and some of the main reasons were 1) Non-cooperation from other teachers/school authorities 2) Not able to prioritise the importance of this program 3) Not able to identify and constitute the teams 4) Work hygiene (responsibilities, meetings, recordings etc) 5) Inability to identify correct priorities, set realistic targets, and class room level actions 6) Inability to use data to sort priorities 6) Inability to review performance, take course corrections and so on Hence, it is obvious that any long term program that engages with schools at their level, must have more elaborate, focussed and continuous capacity so that schools may attain the desired level of self-improvement.

Conclusion

Quality of learning continues to remain a big challenge for the Meghalaya's education system. The National Achievement Survey (NAS) grade X results show over 35 per cent of the students scored less than the average scores of 250 on math, social science and science assessment. NAS scores across subjects also show percentage of correct responses in Grade V. At grade 5, not more than 43 per cent percent of students could answer correctly most of the question pertaining to "grasp and interpret" in reading comprehension. In Mathematics only about 29 per cent of students could identify "difference between numbers" correctly.

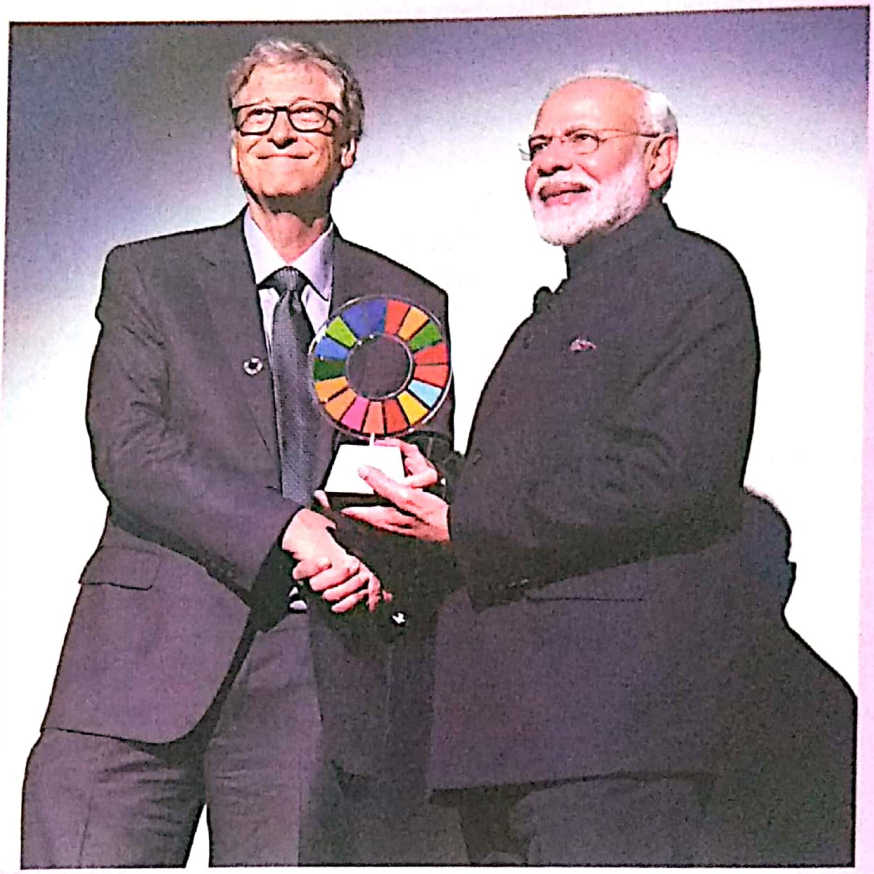
Other private sector surveys such as ASER conducted on an annual basis also show a similar picture of poor learning outcomes in primary with only 58 per cent of Grade 5 students can read Grade 2 text and 29 per cent of Grade 5 students can subtract. Percentage of Grade 5 students who could do division was less than 15 per cent. It will remain the case that in some situations small schools are unavoidable. In such cases new models are needed for staffing and pedagogy which are affordable and which do not compromise quality. Mega schools are likely to be unwieldy institutions which may suffer diseconomies of scale and difficulties in ensuring no children are left behind.

Rationalisation of resourcing through the merging of small schools and creating composite schools can release resources which can then be utilised for financing schemes needed to improve education system efficiency and quality. Mega schools need to be examined to establish whether they are justified by lower costs and higher levels of achievement. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can provide detailed insight into current patterns of school location in relation to habitations. This can lead to the development of plans to increase locational efficiency that are both technically effective and educationally and politically feasible.

(Dr. David Nongrum is Senior Lecturer, Directorate of Educational Research & Training Email:dmnongrum@gmail.com and Dany Lyngdoh is Principal Consultant, Project Management Unit, Directorate of School Education & Literacy Email:dany_lyndoh@hotmail.com)

PM Receives 'Global Goal Keeper Award' for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi received the 'Global Goalkeeper' Award by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, on 24 September 2019. The award ceremony took place on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session in New York.



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi receiving the Goalkeepers Global Goals Award 2019 conferred by Gates Foundation, in New York, USA on September 24, 2019.

Prime Minister dedicated the award to those Indians who transformed the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan into a mass movement and made it a part of their daily lives.

"The success of the Swachh Bharat Mission is due to the people of India. They made this their own movement and ensured the desired results were attained.", Prime Minister said after receiving the award.

Terming it as a significant moment personally to receive the award on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Prime Minister said Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is proof that when 130 crore Indians take a pledge, any challenge can be overcome. He added that India is making remarkable progress in fulfilling Mahatma Gandhi's dream of a Swachh Bharat.

Speaking about improving global sanitation coverage, Prime Minister said that India is ready to share its expertise and experiences with other nations, so that there can be collective effort towards increasing sanitation coverage.

Prime Minister also mentioned about India's efforts towards preventive healthcare through mission mode movements like Fit India Movement and Jal Jeevan Mission.

Source : PIB