

PARTICIPATION OF NGO IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is a fundamental human right. In country like India it is very difficult to achieve education for all. Education scenario of India also reveals that in spite of a network of 6.5 lakh schools and colleges and employment of over 3 million teachers, we have not been able to achieve universal education for the children up to age of 14. The voluntary sector is perceived to be motivated by altruism, making it a suitable catalyst for promoting sustainable development of poor in rural areas. Since the government alone could not achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA), it was felt that the collaboration of voluntary organizations, the community and NGOs was necessary, especially in the area of access, retention and achievement. It viewed NGOs as vibrant partners in the process of moving towards the goals of education for all (EFA).

In the present time the whole world is moving towards modernization, industrialization and globalization. Many advanced countries have moved fast in this direction using education as a key tool in the process, whereas developing countries are still preparing to move on their lines. A large proportion of Indian populations live in conditions of poverty and illiteracy. Education, in any form needs to be provided to them for improving their quality of life.

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended education for life and education for all. The New Education Policy (1986) further emphasized on Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE), but the demands remain unfulfilled. The education scenario in India reveals that in spite of a network of 6.5 lakh schools and colleges and employment of over 3 million teachers, we have not been able to achieve universal education for the children up to age of 14.

The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (2000) reiterates that “Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization. Achieving EFA goals should be postponed no longer. The basic learning needs of all can and must be met as a matter of urgency.”

The need of the hour is that elementary education should be universalized, secondary education should be vocationalized and higher education should be expanded. Discussion on universalization of

elementary education had been a talk of policy makers even before independence. In this regard Mahatma Gandhi framed his policy of Basic Education in 1937 and drew a plan to educate all the children of age group of 6-14 years. This can be said to be the first proper scheme towards its universalisation. Through many plans had been made to implement this scheme, special concentrated efforts were made after independence only. According to our Constitution which was adopted in 1950, this activity was to be completed within a time period of ten years. The target kept on changing in every five-year plan. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) implemented in 2002 fixed the target of achieving this goal by 2010. Despite many policies focusing upon its achievement, still we are far behind the goal.

One of the main problems in failing the target achievement is financial handicap of the government. The expenditure on education India, according to the recommendation of Kothari Commission (1964-66), was to spend 6% of the GDP. But still after 60 years, we are moving around the figure of 4% only. The economic betterment of the poorer sections cannot be achieved without social transformation involving structural change, educational development, and growth in awareness and change in outlook, motivation and attitudes. The social framework should be such as to provide opportunities for the poorer sections to display initiative and to stand on their feet.

There are mainly three types of schools dealing with elementary education in India viz. Governmental, Private and NGO. As far as government is concern, they make schemes of Elementary Education but forget to give definite shape to it and are accused of inefficiency and non-responsive behavior. Private sector driven by profit, prices itself out of the reach of the poor. The voluntary sector is perceived to be motivated by altruism, making it a suitable catalyst for promoting sustainable development of poor in rural areas. So NGOs can help the government implement its policies and in achieving UEE.

NGO approach to development is based on the principle of people's participations. NGOs are increasingly gaining attention and are looked upon as alternative agencies in promoting awareness, change and development in society. They are extensively involved in alleviating the poverty and promoting sustainable and equitable development. They are in a position to provide social services to different sections of the society where as the state fails to provide such services.

In recent years, NGOs have emerged as key players in social development in the country by supplementing government efforts. Many a times, they have involved themselves as important stakeholders in various social development programmes. Having efficient and participatory service delivery systems, they have been instrumental in promoting and supporting education delivery, healthcare, literacy, poverty alleviation through sustainable development, rehabilitation, women and child care, human development, environmental protection, HIV/AIDs support programmes, agriculture extension services, etc.

A few examples will illustrate the contribution that the size and reach of NGOs can make to ensuring human security. In Bangladesh, which houses one of the world's largest NGO sectors, two local NGOs alone work with a client-base of roughly seven million people. The first, BRAC, has core programs in

rural and urban development, education and health in all 64 districts of the country, and reaches more than 50,000 villages. Over one million children attend its' schools and it provides paid employment to 60,000 people (BRAC Annual Report 1999).

The inherent strengths of some of the effective NGOs are – willingness to work in remote areas among the depressed classes, ability to set in motion participatory process in identification of the need, the design and implementation of programmes, the readiness to mobilize and use local resources, a non-hierarchical approach in working with people, cost effective service delivery, freedom from red tape and freedom to innovate. They have been instrumental in creating awareness and implementing development programmes in agriculture, watershed development women's empowerment, education health and family welfare. They are the representatives of the alternative modes of development.

With governments requiring additional support to fulfill their commitments to society, NGO participation enables them to reach out to the most vulnerable sections of the society. NGOs also prefer a role that is markedly different from that of the government. Most of them have focused on areas neglected by the latter. While most government initiatives have been on the supply side of education, several NGOs have made efforts to work with communities and improve the demand for education. However a majority of them see themselves in a supportive role for creating a facilitative environment for learning. Some of the thrust focus areas by NGOs in Education are:

- NFE (Non-formal Education) for working children who do not attend school
- Promoting literacy
- Creating teaching-learning resources
- Teacher training
- Empowerment of community
- Enrolment and reeducation of dropouts
- Improvement of pedagogic techniques
- Implementing midday meal scheme
- Improvement of school infrastructure

Despite the presence of many NGOs, a majority of the states do not have a declared or a clearly defined policy on their involvement in the education sector. This has naturally led to some of them trying to influence government policies. Transparency, accountability and regular social audit need to be considered as criteria for allowing them to work in sensitive social sectors like education.

Since the government alone could not achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA), it was felt that the collaboration of voluntary organizations, the community and NGOs was necessary, especially in the area of access, retention and achievement. The Government of India laid emphasis on implementation of non-formal education through local and national NGOs as well as other voluntary agencies. It viewed NGOs as

vibrant partners in the process of moving towards the goals of education for all (EFA). Hence as a policy, it proposed to promote their role at all levels in the social sectors with a view to not only achieving participatory development but also unburdening the unduly loaded government departments with the implementation of development programmes. It gave liberal grants to these agencies to support such activities.

Besides running non-formal education centers, some of these NGOs implemented innovative programmes for promoting elementary education. The state noticed their involvement in enlarging the network of agencies in the education field, which would bring greater flexibility and innovation into the government programmes.

The last two decades have seen several successful collaborative efforts between government agencies and NGOs on a large-scale, the prime movers amongst them being Pratham, Azim Premji Foundation, Prayas, Digantar, Maya, MV foundation, Action Aid India, Akshaya Patra Foundation, etc. Many of these organizations focus on socially and economically backward areas, marginalized sections of society and on education of girls. A number of them are providing health, nutrition and education to working children and those urban slums.

Many of these NGOs have worked in specific area in the field of pre-school and primary education, girls' education, in improving access, enrolment, retention, preparation of education materials, organization of bridge courses, supplementing governmental efforts in providing midday meal, testing of education attainments of children etc. So NGOs can be the prime players in achieving UEE and they can help the government to achieve the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education. Government alone cannot meet the goal of universal education for children of age group 6-14 years because of following reasons.

Out of School Children in India

In India 81 lakh children of school going age are still out of school. This is a matter of great concern. (The Hindu, 1st April 2011). According to Human Development Report 19% of the children in the age group of 6-17 are still out of school (Human Development Report 2011 by Institute of Applied Manpower Research, New Delhi). To provide the education to out of school children is great matter of concern for Government. It is also a bitter truth that government cannot handle the whole responsibilities of out of school children due to lack of finance.

Achieving UEE Still Dream

Education is a fundamental right according to Constitution of India. But Dropout rate before the completion of primary school is near about 50 per cent of all students in rural area (Pratham 2011). Even India has more than 688,000 primary schools and 110,000 secondary schools. Gender issue also play major role in dropout.

After the enrolment of 100 girls in class I only 40, 18 girls remain in class V and class VIII respectively. So the great matter of concern is dropout among girls. This can be effectively deal by the NGOs.

Enrolment in School Education

The ASER 2008 study indicated that 95.7 per cent of children in rural India in 6-14 years of age group were enrolled in school viz. 71.9 in government, 22.5 in private and 1.3 in others. So 4.3 per cent students are still out of school. There is worst condition in state Bihar with more than 7 per cent dropout.

Status of Quality of Elementary Education

As far as the provision of access and coverage is concerned, India today boasts of its educational system being the second largest in the world. It consists of nearly 610 thousand primary and 185 thousand upper primary schools, No doubt, the system can claim it to be one of the largest, but it cannot make similar claims for efficiency, quality and achievement of learners. According to Annual Status Report (Rural) of 2006 out of every 3 children in class V - unable to read and write.

Progress in School Education

- 98.5 % per cent of rural population served with a primary school with in 1 KM.
- 86 % of habitations have access to upper primary classes within vicinity of 3 KM.
- 84% of children in villages attend government schools. (Source: District Information System for Education 2010-11, NUEPA)
- A significant milestone reached in Census 2011 is that the total number of illiterates has come down from 304,146,862 in 2001 to 272,950,015 in 2011, showing a decline of 31,196,847 persons.

But it is still not sufficient to attain Universalization of Elementary Education, because there are many problems in the way of UEE. Government still not able to solve the problem like child labour, early marriages, poverty, lack of parental attitude toward the education of girl child, lack of infrastructure, and distance of school from home. NGOs can prove to be a prime mover to establish relationship between society and government. They can involve the community in their education.

Resource Crunch

- 6 % of GDP prescribed (Education Commission 1964-66), still we are moving about 4% even after 48 to 50 years.
- 78% of the education budget invested in teachers and management costs, with students receiving a mere 6% of the total investment (ASRE, 2011)

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