



A REVIEW OF THE SUGGESTIONS FOR THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE PRESENT ERA

YATAN KUMAR,

Lecturer, Shyam Lal Saraswati Mahavidyalaya, Shikarpur

ABSTRACT

Education is the birth right of every child in India. Although India has made significant progress in various fields, we have been facing multiple problems of children viz., child labour, malnutrition, child abuse, etc. which can be solved with the light of knowledge. The Central Government and State Governments have formulated various schemes to ensure that no child remains uneducated. However, there are various problems faced in our education system. Although there has been a significant increase in the number of school-going children, they face a number of problems. The suggestions for Secondary school education are dealt with in this review paper. And also in this review paper, the researcher has tried to suggest for the universalization of secondary education in the present era. We must make consistent and concerted efforts to remove the obstacles and find solutions to the problems.

KEYWORD: Suggestions, Universalization, Secondary Education

INTRODUCTION

The universalization of secondary education is emerging as one of the important policy imperatives across nations. It is generally observed that the emerging global economy put a premium on higher-level knowledge and skills that go beyond the basic literacy and numeracy provided by elementary education. It is rightly asserted that only people with higher educational qualifications and nations with a large proportion of educated people are better positioned to take advantage of the increasing opportunities of the global economy.

Consequently, the universal provision of education is being redefined to include more years of schooling, particularly secondary education. Echoing the same the Planning Commission in its approach paper for the XI Five Year Plan (2007-12) states that 'universalization of elementary education alone will not suffice in the knowledge economy and "a person with mere 8 years of schooling" is 'as disadvantaged as an

illiterate person' (p. 59). Accordingly, XI Plan aims at a 'progressively rising minimum level of education to high school or grade 10 level'.

The growing aspirations of people for upward mobility, equity considerations, and, of course, the concerted efforts at UEE that have led to higher completion rates also exert pressures to massively expand secondary education. It is also being recognized that the linear increase in the number of years of universal schooling, though necessary, is not sufficient to address the challenges of the global economy. The equity, quality, relevance, etc. of such expansion also play a critical role. This has far-reaching implications for the organization and provision of secondary education.

Though India's success in taking advantage of the emerging knowledge economy is widely acknowledged and attributed to its early investments in higher, professional, and technical education but the limited expansion of secondary education may prove to be a stumbling block. The critical role of secondary education in fostering social change and economic development was well recognized long ago by several committees and policy pronouncements.

For example, the resolution adopted by the Government of India on National Education Policy in 1968 affirms that 'educational opportunity at the secondary (and higher) level is a major instrument of social change and transformation' (NCERT, 1970: xix). However, the commitment to universal elementary education, the need to supply highly educated manpower to ensure faster growth and industrialization, and increasing demand from vocal middle classes for more places in higher education to corner the expanding opportunities have relegated secondary education to the margins of public policy.

As a result, secondary education has had only a halting growth and limited expansion with large inequalities between social and economic groups and mediocre quality.

CURRENT STATUS OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

The growth of secondary education was somewhat slow but has accelerated since 2000. The secondary education in India consists of 53,619 higher secondary and 1,06,084 high schools. in which 38.5 million children enrolled (25.0 million at high school and 13.4 million at higher secondary) in 2005-06. This represents an increase of nearly 10 million over the enrolment in 2000-01 which is 28.8 million in 5 years compared to about 8 million increase from 20.9 million to 28.8 million between 1990- 91 and 2000-01 the whole decade of 1990s.

Correspondingly, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has increased to a little over 40 per cent in 2005-06 from 33 per cent in 2001-02 and 11 per cent in 1961-62. At high school (classes IX-X) and higher secondary (classes XI-XII) levels the GER is a little over 52 and 28 per cent respectively in 2005-06. However, large gender, social and spatial disparities could be observed.

The GER for boys and girls is 45 and 36 per cent respectively for secondary education as a whole. In respect of underprivileged groups like Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) the figures are

still lower at 37 per cent and 29 per cent respectively in the same year. The provinces display wide variation with 64 per cent GER in Kerala and Tamil Nadu compared to 16 per cent in Bihar and Jharkhand. The available data for rural areas refers to 2002-03 and indicates much lower GER at 26.2 per cent (22 in case of rural girls).

Secondary education in India consists of high school education and higher secondary (or intermediate or junior college) education covering classes VIII/IX to X and XI –XII respectively catering 15-18 old children. In several provinces the secondary education begins with class VIII.

A significant proportion of population does not have access to secondary schools in rural areas. According to the Seventh All India Educational Survey (2002-03) nearly 20 per cent of the population at high school and 30 per cent of the population at higher secondary school do not have access within a distance of five and eight kilometres respectively. The limited access to secondary education is more pronounced in respect of habitations located in far flung areas and predominant vulnerable groups particularly, STs.

The efficiency and quality of secondary education is a potential area of concern. The dropout rates in classes between I-VIII and IX-X are reported to be 49 and 62 per cent respectively in 2005-06 suggesting 13 per cent of children are dropping out either in transition to or during the course of secondary education. With the increasing completion and transition from elementary education, the dropout phenomenon may likely to become more severe at secondary education unless corrective steps are taken.

Further, the success rates at public examinations in classes X and XII are improving in the recent past, yet it is found to be about 70 per cent in 2005-06. The absence of common standardized achievement tests at secondary/higher secondary stage at national level precludes objective assessment of quality and inter-state comparisons as each state sets its own curricula and examinations.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE UNIVERSALIZATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE PRESENT ERA

The secondary education hitherto confined to the elite and middle class has to be transformed into mass education. For a few, it may continue to be prepared for higher education but for the vast majority, it is the terminal stage of education. This transformation presents several challenges. On the one hand, access to and intake capacity of secondary education may have to be increased massively with a focus on un-served and other difficult areas.

At the same time, the barriers to transition and completion of secondary education by various sections of people need to be addressed. The private costs, the direct costs like fees and other payments to school, expenses on books, stationery, etc., and indirect costs i.e. income foregone pose serious barriers to transition and completion of secondary education. The poor quality of secondary education not only discourages children to continue school but also increases private costs by forcing them to take expensive private tuition.

The demand for secondary education is likely to be constrained by low efficiency and high dropouts in elementary education. The transition rate from class VIII to class IX is already fairly high (88 per cent in 2004-05; measured as the ratio of enrolment of class IX in the enrolment of class VIII of the previous year). This suggests that nearly all those who could reach class VIII are proceeding to secondary education. This also implies that further demand for secondary education can only be generated by reducing the dropout rates and improving the efficiency of elementary education.

The quality and relevance of the secondary education curriculum have to address the needs of both those who choose to go to higher education and those who enter the labor market. The curriculum is expected to equip the students with adequate cognitive skills to deal with complex situations in daily routine and also in the world of work. Diversification and updating of curriculum assume critical importance. The major concerns for improving the science and mathematics curriculum have remained a challenge as a large number of students at the secondary level do not perform well in the examination. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) while reflecting on these issues suggests a mechanism to overcome the marginalization of scientific experimentation and experiential learning by introducing improved laboratories and computer-interfaced experiments. Teaching methods and the transaction of the curriculum in the classroom ought to focus on learning to learn than on familiarizing with and memorizing facts.

Attuning the professional preparation, and motivational and attitudinal makeup of teachers to the needs of an increasingly diversifying student community, particularly the first-generation learners, presents the greatest challenge. Mobilizing adequate financial resources for equitable expansion and qualitative improvement of secondary education is confronted with several difficult dilemmas.

Various commissions pointed out the defects in secondary education from time to time. It has been generally felt that secondary education in India emphasizes academics and fails to enable students to handle the problems of day-to-day life efficiently; it does not adequately prepare them for pursuing higher education.

Many of the students tend to fail in the first year of their degree course, in the examination conducted by the university. The students don't find themselves confident and suitable to enter life confidently. The training and education available there don't equip the students competently so as to get a good and respectable job helpful in leading a good life.

- ❖ **Fear free and healthy school environment for students:** Most of the secondary education schools nowadays are concerned about giving good results. Instead of stressing on an all-round development of the students, the schools emphasize on the results of the students. Students are forced into cut-throat competition with the aim of scoring very high marks. Values seem to have been relegated to the background in most of the schools. There is an atmosphere of fear, tension and pressure--by the teachers, parents and well-wishers—to obtain very high marks. Unable to bear this

much burden, many teenagers get depressed; some even resort to extreme steps like committing suicide.

- ❖ **Promote should be Teachers' Status in Society:** The teaching profession is not getting due respect and recognition in society because of which many brilliant and intelligent youth prefer to pursue other professions which give them high status and hefty salaries. In fact, teachers shape the future of students as a potter shapes his pots. Teachers play an important role in providing education. Like a gardener, they instil inspiration and zeal in students' lives. In fact, their progress and development depend upon how they are taught by the teachers. Indian culture has held the teachers in a very high and exalted place—'Guru' which is considered equal to God. As Children are the hope of tomorrow, it can be said with certainty that the quality and effectiveness of any educational system ultimately depends upon the dedication, effectiveness, and competency of the teachers.
- ❖ **Promote should be trained and dedicated teachers with embodiments of values:** Earlier there used to be a shortage of teachers recruited in the state. With the passage of time now there is an adequate number of teachers. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching has gone down considerably. There are various reasons for this downfall; some attribute it to corruption due to which deserving candidates are not recruited. There is a lack of proper training on methodologies of teaching. Many teachers lack dedication and consider this profession only a source of income. For building a better society, teachers must be embodiments of values and their life should be a living examples for the students.
- ❖ **Promote should be an emphasis on practical training:** Practical training is considered a waste of time in many secondary education schools. Students are not provided the right environment to develop their practical knowledge and skills. There is a lack of proper laboratories, instruments or staff. Students get only theoretical knowledge which results in the students coming out of school without the knowledge of technology and its practical use. As a result, they are not able to get suitable employment.
- ❖ **Promote should establish a reading mission:** If we can ensure that 80% of our children can read and write well in any one language by the time they are nine years old, we would have solved 80% of our educational problems. Reading has to become a focus area of both action and measurement and a movement that involves all. A national-level centre for reading research is more important for India than any Indian Institute of Technology and is not so difficult to create. Specialized training programs need to be created for teachers on reading skill development and measurement. Reading tests need to be made available on computers, tablets, and mobile phones so that parents can determine the reading levels of their children.
- ❖ **Promote facilities to improve students' personality:** The students who go for higher studies out of the state face many problems and suffer from inferiority complex. Most of them lack good communication skills. Though they are good in their subjects, they do not have all-around personality development. Communication skills take a back seat in most schools where the emphasis is only on

rote learning. If opportunities are not provided to students for the development of all their skills, their overall personality doesn't develop.

- ❖ **Promote should be in Invest in technology for education:** Hand-in-hand with educational research inherent in all the initiatives above, there is a need to research and develop ways to use technology to drive the change we desire. The focus should not be on installing hardware but on creating new, high-quality content such as intelligent teaching systems and tools that will help students to hone basic skills like reading and mathematics, and developing content in multiple Indian languages. ICT-based remediation programs should be encouraged, in which the service provider is reimbursed based on the measured student improvement. ICT should also be used to track teacher attendance. Free high-speed internet connections can be provided to all schools through a simple scheme by which the government reimburses internet service providers directly.
- ❖ **Promote should be participation by all stakeholders in Education:** When all stakeholders are involved in the schemes and policies meant for their betterment, success is guaranteed. But such participation doesn't always happen in most educational processes. Because of a lack of mutual cooperation between the students, teachers, and parents, government schools are lagging behind and many students are shifting to privately run schools. It is a dangerous trend that should be checked immediately. It is necessary to impress upon the government school students that they have talent and they can achieve anything with hard work, dedication, and sincerity.
- ❖ **Promote should be regular supervision of schools by the higher authorities:** The higher authorities remain busy with their office work and do not supervise secondary education schools on a regular basis. This gives freedom to the secondary education school administration to bend the rules with regard to the collection of fees, amenities provided, etc. With no proper control, they act according to their will, which harms the quality of education and proves detrimental to the welfare of the students. There should be proper guidelines that should be followed strictly, for improving secondary school education.
- ❖ **Control and maintained adequate infrastructure:** Most schools, particularly government secondary education schools, do not have adequate infrastructure. There are no proper classrooms, furniture, laboratories, libraries, playgrounds, urinals, safe drinking water, other related amenities, etc. There is a lack of playgrounds, and libraries, which causes them to face a lot of inconveniences. Girl students particularly face the problem of safe and hygienic urinals, and it may be one of the causes of low female student enrolment. This deprives the students of the actual benefit of learning. Due to the lack of proper facilities, students' physical and mental growth is hampered. Government schools can be easily noted for their mess. Students are provided unhealthy food which adversely affects their health. In most cases, corrupt practices defeat the basic purpose of the beneficial mid-day meal scheme.
- ❖ **Promote should be an emphasis on extracurricular activities:** In most secondary education schools, students are confined only to the knowledge of the subjects. There is no motivating factor to encourage them to take part in extracurricular activities. Some schools consider extracurricular

activities a waste of time and money and don't include them in their curriculum. Due to this the students can not reveal their hidden talent and their talents go unutilized and unnoticed.

- ❖ **Career guidance in the proper manner for students:** Parents of most of the secondary education students do not ask them about their own choice of career or interest; instead, they force them to opt for a particular career of their choice. Thus the students remain under constant pressure. Due to a lack of career counselling, many students lose better opportunities. This deprivation results in the students taking up a profession in which they are either not interested or for which they do not have flair. This, in turn, causes depression in them and also results in low or decreased productivity.
- ❖ **Promote should be Sports Facilities and Motivation for students:** Most secondary education schools do not have proper playgrounds. Physical education teachers are also not available. Students are not motivated to take part in physical activities or to take up any sport. Sports play an important role in the overall development of students. Without facilities for and motivation to take up sports, the overall physical and personality aspects of the development of the child suffer. If we are really concerned about the future generation, steps have to be taken to solve the above issues and ensure a happy, stress-free, and quality education for the young students. The youngsters if guided properly are capable of achieving great heights and doing India proud.
- ❖ **Promote should be parents become aware of their responsibility and pay proper attention to their children and their education:** Mother is said to be the first teacher of the child and the home is considered to be the first school where parents' time, attention, supervision, and involvement play a dominant role in a child's all-round development. Parents these days provide a child with all the materialistic needs and even admit him/her to a good school and feel that their duty ends there. Most parents do not give children proper time and attention to attend to their emotional, moral, and educational needs. As a result of this neglect, the children sometimes get addicted to bad company and are distracted from studying. Some of them fall easy prey to obscenity and vulgarity and violence being shown on the internet and TV, fail to perform well in studies, and don't fulfil the expectations of their parents. Such neglect of children drives them towards unsocial and unethical activities such as terrorism, eve-teasing, and various other types of crimes. However, if parents become aware of their responsibility and pay proper attention to their children and their education, it will prove very beneficial for the students.
- ❖ **Promotes Equality and Diversity of the Society:** Secondary school is when children learn to understand society and its many nuances, therefore this gives them a sense of empowerment and a feeling of unity in their endeavour's. A diverse environment like a secondary school can expose children to different cultures and enable them to make better decisions keeping in mind their roles and responsibilities as individuals of a society.
- ❖ **Reduces Crime Rate:** Secondary education teaches teenagers the difference between what is right and wrong and how their decisions may drastically affect their lives forever. Education of young citizens decreases overall arrests by 11% for every extra year a student educates himself.

- ❖ **Reduces Violence Based on Genders;** Gender equality is one of the best aspects that is imparted with the help of secondary and higher secondary education. Domestic violence and gender-based abuses reduce to a large extent in societies that encourage and value education for their youngsters.
- ❖ **Promote should be for better health outcomes:** There are many studies across the world that state how children who attend secondary school benefit from health outcomes. Each additional year of education decreases the average fatal rate by 8.4%, especially in lower and middle-income countries across the world. According to one of the studies undertaken to understand the impact of education on health, it was noted that every extra year of secondary education was associated with a 24.5% and 43.1% reduction in young citizens being infected by the deadly HIV.

CONCLUSIONS

India has embarked on an ambitious program to achieve 75 and 50 percent GER in classes IX-X and XI-XII, respectively, to ultimately universalize secondary education by the end of the next Five Year Plan i.e. 2017. The base from which this transition is to take place is very narrow making the task much tougher. The low quality, large inequalities between various social and economic groups, and declining share of national income allocated to secondary education add to the complexity of the task. The XI Plan rightly recognizes the enormity of the task and accords the highest priority to universal secondary education in the allocation of Plan resources. The Plan also proposes to mobilize public and private resources. The success of these efforts in universalizing secondary education critically depends on removing bottlenecks like improving the efficiency of elementary education, recruiting teachers in adequate numbers and training them appropriately, curricular diversification and up gradation, quality assurance and sustaining and utilizing higher allocations, and evolving transparent regulatory framework for private sector participation

REFERENCES

1. Asadullah, M., & Chaudhury, N. (2013). Peaceful Coexistence? The Role of Religious Schools and NGOs in the Growth of Female Secondary Schooling in Bangladesh. *Journal of Development Studies*, 49, No. 2, 223-237.
2. Biswal, K. (2011, April). Secondary Education in India: Development Policies, Programmes and Challenges. CREATE Research Monograph 63.
3. Harris, D. N. (2007). Class Size and School Size: Taking the Trade-offs seriously. *Brookings Papers on Educational Policy*, 137-161.
4. http://planningcommission.nic.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp11/wg11_secvoc.pdf
5. Kothari Commission, (1970). Report of Education Commission, 1964-66. Reprinted by National Council of Educational Research and Training.
6. Lewin, K.M. (2005). Planning post-primary education: Taking targets to task. *International Journal of Educational Development*, (25), 405-422.
7. Little, A. W. (2008). Size Matters for EFA. Brighton: CREATE.

8. Lloyd, C. B., Mete, C., & Sathar, Z. A. (2005). The effect of gender differences in primary school access, type, and quality on the decision to enroll in rural Pakistan. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 53(3), 685-710.
9. Mehta, A.C. (2003). Universalization of Secondary Education-Can it be Achieved in the Near Future? *Journal of educational planning and Administration*, 17(4), 507-528
10. MHRD. (2005). The Report of the Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education on "Universalisation of Secondary Education." The Government of India: New Delhi.
11. MHRD. (2009). Framework for Implementation of the RashtriyaMadhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. Department of School Education and Literacy. The Government of India: New Delhi.
12. NCERT. (1967). Second All-India School Education Survey. NCERT. Available at <http://aises.nic.in/2ndsurveyreports>
13. NCERT. (1979). Third All-India School Education Survey. NCERT. Available at <http://aises.nic.in/3rdsurveyreports>
14. NCERT. (1990). Fifth All-India School Education Survey. NCERT. Available at <http://aises.nic.in/5thsurveyreports>
15. NCERT. (2006). Seventh All-India School Education Survey. NCERT. Available at <http://aises.nic.in/7thsurveyreports>
16. Newman, M., Garrett, Z., Elbourne, D., Bradley, S., Noden, P., Taylor, J., et al. (2006). Does Secondary School Size Make Difference? A Systematic Review. *Educational Research Review*, 41-61.
17. Planning Commission, Eleventh Five Year plan, Social Sector, Volume - II, 2007-2012. New Delhi: The Planning Commission, Government of India.
18. Pratiche Institute. (2013). Secondary Education in West Bengal: Prospects and Challenges. Pratiche Institute in association with UNICEF, Kolkata.
19. Ready, D., & Lee, V. (2007). Optimal Context Size in Elementary Schools: Disentangling the effects of class size and school size. *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, 99-135.
20. Reddy, Anugula N. (2007). Financing of secondary education in India: Trends and Prospects. *Man and Development*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, pp. 39-66
21. World Bank (2005) Expanding Opportunities and Building Competencies for Young People: A New Agenda for Secondary Education, Washington D.C., the World Bank.