

UNIT 6

Universalisation of Elementary Education in India

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION AND LITERACY

The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress is well recognized. It opens up opportunities leading to both individual and group entitlements. Education, in its broadest sense of development of youth, is the most crucial input for empowering people with skills and knowledge and giving them access to productive employment in future. Improvements in education are not only expected to enhance efficiency but also augment the overall quality of life. The Eleventh Plan places the highest priority on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth. It presents a comprehensive strategy for strengthening the education sector covering all segments of the education pyramid.

Elementary education, that is, classes I—VIII consisting of primary (I-V) and upper primary (VI—VIII) is the foundation of the pyramid in the education system and has received a major push in the Tenth Plan through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

In view of the demands of rapidly changing technology and the growth of knowledge economy, a mere eight years of elementary education would be grossly inadequate for our young children to acquire necessary skills to compete in the job market. Therefore, a Mission for Secondary Education is essential to consolidate the gains of SSA and to move forward in establishing a knowledge society.

The Eleventh Plan must also pay attention to the problems in the higher education sector, where there is a need to expand the system and also to improve quality.

The Twelfth Plan will also have to address major

challenges including bridging regional, social, and gender gaps at all levels of education.

UNIVERSALISATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Universalisation of primary or elementary education has got the following three steps:

1. Universalisation of Provision.
2. Universalisation of Enrolment.
3. Universalisation of Retention.

Let us examine these three phases one by one:

1. **Universalisation of Provision:** It means that school facilities be provided to all the children between the age group 6-14 in the country and that the school should be within the walking distance from the home of a child. This is possible only when we open more schools for the children. To a fairly large extent we have succeeded in this direction.

2. **Universalisation of Enrolment:** Next to the provision of school facilities comes this universalisation of enrolment which means that all children between the age group 6-14 be enrolled by the primary schools.

Let us talk a little more about universalisation of enrolment. Firstly, try to find out why children do not enrol in the schools. The causes for non-enrolment are:

- (a) Ignorance of parents.
- (b) Indifferent attitude of educational authorities towards people.
- (c) Importance of education not known to parents and isolation of school and community.
- (d) Financial problem.

How can we promote enrolment?

- (a) Let us educate the parents-adult education.
- (b) There should be intensive survey of the area and pre-registration should be started.

- (c) Enrolment drives should be launched and teachers who enrol the maximum should be given some prizes—there should be a scheme of incentives for teachers.

3. **Universalisation of Retention:** By this is meant that once a child joins the school, he should remain there till the completion of his primary school course. If a child leaves the primary school without completion of his course, the ideal of universalisation of primary education stands defeated. Not only admitting a child in a school is important, but his retention in the school is of supreme importance.

Problems of Primary Education or Problems of Universalisation of Primary Education

Despite legislation and obvious advantages of the elementary education, it has not yet been possible despite nearly 50 years of effort in this direction to see to it that every citizen gets elementary education. On the other hand, illiteracy continues to increase. It is more so as far as women are concerned. It is because of the various problems because of which the universalisation of primary education has not been a success. These problems can be grouped under various heads such as Physical, Social, Economic, Culture & Financial. We shall examine some of these problems (without resorting to classification) in details:

1. **Apathy of parents:** A majority of parents in India do not bother about the education of their children. Their pleas are many. They think that modern education is useless since no body bothered about their education, why should they bother about the education of their children? It will be taken care of during the course of time. No body can argue with them. It is more true in case of partially literate parents and businessmen.

2. **Lack of purpose in education:** This may be the universal argument at all levels of Indian education today. This lack of purpose is more felt at the elementary level. It is better to go illiterate than to learn useless things or things which are of no use later in life when one grows up. Simply speaking it is of no use to be educated.

3. **Large birth rate:** All efforts to make primary education compulsory and free, so as to bring every one under the roof of the school upto elementary level are being frustrated by the tremendous increase

in population. The government is practically helpless in this case or direction.

4. **Hold of religion and tradition:** It can be exemplified resistance to the education of girls is another reason because of which the efforts to provide cent per cent mass elementary education have failed. Some parents in far flung rural areas simply do not want their daughters to be educated.

5. **Lack of finance:** There goes the well known adage 'Money makes the mare go'. We must realise that the school will be run only when the required resources to run it are available.

In a country of the size of India, no government will be able to raise so much money to support this huge programme. We may look to private enterprise for help in this direction, *i.e.*, in the sphere of primary education. They certainly can help but they do not come forward as the venture at this level in education is not profitable. The author has not the last intention to offend them but it is true.

The most of the finances are mis-spent by the government in curbing useless or imaginary agitations and so on. Very few funds are rightly channelised in education.

6. **Existence of backward groups:** We have large number of tribes who are backward. They never bother about the education of their offsprings. They have different values of life and earn much more by taking to other professions. Then there are tribes like Sansis who keep on migrating and it is very difficult to catch them, to stabilise them and to provide for their education. Migration is in their blood.

7. **Poverty of parents:** One of the major causes because of which we have not been able to fulfil the constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory education to all children in the required age group is the poverty of parents. It has frustrated our entire efforts. The moment a child attains the age of five or six, he can help a lot in earning money for the family. He can certainly supplement the family income. He is a great help in looking after the animals or in carrying food to the parents working in the fields in the villages. Why should then the parents send their child to a school to make a 'babu' of their child? Many poverty stricken parents do send their children for primary education but then they repent later on. They cannot afford to meet the day to day expenses of the child incurred by him at school in connection with his education.

He is then withdrawn from the classes and made to earn either at home or outside may be employed as a domestic servant and thus primary education suffers a set back.

The worst plight is the plight of the children of a young widow. No body is there to look after this or such like families. The children have no option but to work-hell with primary education!

8. Small and scattered habitations: Many children cannot be brought under the roof of a school simply because they are very few in number and they cannot be grouped either as distance between on habitation and another is much more than can be covered comfortably on foot by the young ones. Then there are dense forests and inaccessible areas which prevent the start of such schools and authorities cannot contact the habitants. It is given out that even today in India, there are about 2,50,000 habitations of less than 100 people each. It is just impossible to start primary schools there.

9. Administrative difficulties: There are numerous administrative difficulties in running the show. We lack right type of teachers who may like to teach in far flung areas in the name of charity and humanity. It is teaching in the remote areas that matters and not teaching in the cities (where for one vacancy of a teacher, you can get as many as 500 applications). Similarly desirable type of supervisory staff is equally missing. In short, we can say that we lack suitable machinery to enforce compulsory attendance.

10. Vested Interest/Internal Politics: It is also true that sometimes vested interests, internal politics and prejudices of the villages towards one another prevent the opening of primary schools. There are claims and counter claims on the part of villagers and the government think it best not to open a primary school in either. Then a villager will not like to send his child to the school if it is located in another village towards the inhabitants of which he is inimical or who are hostile towards that individual.

11. Lack of teachers-especially women teachers: Primary school service is no good—even in these days of unemployment. It has no charm and no future—I mean the one who is employed in it has not a very bright future awaiting him. So suitable teachers are not forthcoming to work in the primary schools. And when we get some men for this job,

they rarely attend to primary education. They study during school hours, they improve their qualifications so that they may go to a high school. They also attend to their own domestic chores, *i.e.*, if a primary teacher is posted in his own village school, during school hours you are likely to see him in his fields, watering them or ploughing them. Women knit during school hours. Both play truant sometimes.

Then there is the difficulty in obtaining women teachers because many amongst us do not like that their daughters should go to male teachers for even their elementary education. In fact, the problems of elementary education can be better stated as the problem of women's education. Thus, because of lack of women teachers, many girls between the age-group 6-11 remain uneducated. Not that we are short of women teachers—but we are certainly short of those women teachers who like to serve in villages—away from cities.

12. Failure to check wastage: We have failed to check wastage at this level. Many children drop out after 3rd class or the primary school. Only 40% of all those who took admission in 1st class reach the fifth primary level. This leaves many illiterates on our hands.

13. Problem of expansion: Our own ambition is troubling us. We cannot concentrate on the scheme. Quality of education stands neglected. That is the cost which we pay for expansion.

It may be added that problems of method and curriculum do not exist in that serious mood at this level. Those do exist at the pre-school and secondary school levels.

VOCATIONALISATION AT SECONDARY LEVEL IN INDIA

In the year 1947, India was one of the backward countries industrially but these days it is one of the most advanced countries in the world as far as industry is concerned. To run the industry, we need workers at our back and these workers who are trained professionally have to come from our schools and colleges. It is here that we think of vocationalisation of our education. People simply with general education at their back will not be of any help in the industrialisation of the country.

Concept of Vocationalisation. What do we understand by vocationalisation? Does it mean vocational training of a high order? In one sense, yes. It does. It means training is a particular vocation

at the school (high or higher secondary) and this vocational training may be of the terminal type so that a student after passing higher secondary stage can directly enter life—he can start a trade or with the training thus received at the school stage enter life. In the second sense, vocationalisation means training in some vocation at the higher secondary level along with general education. This is the most acceptable meaning of vocationalisation. The former meaning is a narrow meaning and, thus, is discarded. In this connection, Indian Education Commission has observed, "We visualise the future trend of school education to be towards a fruitful mingling of general and vocational education—general education containing some elements of pre-vocational and technical education and vocational education, in turn, having an element of general education. In the kind of society in which we will be living increasingly in the coming years, a complete separation between the two will not only be undesirable but impossible."

Vocationalisation means to provide strong vocational bias to secondary education. In other words, vocational courses should be introduced in the secondary schools along with general subjects of duration from 1 to 3 years. It means that vocational and general courses should be galvanized.

Views of UNESCO : Vocational education has been defined by UNESCO as a "comprehensive term embracing those aspects of the educational process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and acquisition of practical skills, attitudes and understandings and knowledge relating to occupation in the various sectors of economic and social life, Such an education would be an integral part of general education and a means for preparing for an occupational field and an aspect of continuing education."

Vocational education is not technical training. It is education in broad sense of the term.

Vocationalisation means learning of a skill or a range of skills through study of technologies, related sciences or other practical work.

Vocationalisation of education means the

provision of a strong vocational bias to secondary education.

Vocational Electives Suggested by I.E.C.

1. Agriculture and Related Vocations.
2. Business and office Management.
3. Para-Medical.
4. Education Sciences.
5. Local body and other Sciences.
6. Journalism.
7. Home Science and Related vocation.
8. Other concerned sciences as Commercial Art, Photography, Printing Ceramics etc.

Advantages of Vocationalisation

Let us examine some of the advantages of vocationalisation. These further highlight the need and importance of vocationalisation.

1. **Reduces unemployment :** The chief advantage of vocationalisation is that it will reduce unemployment amongst youth. A technical man best fits into the society. The argument is clear that we need trained people to man our jobs. We have no value of untrained masses.

2. **Financial benefits :** Closely related to the above is the vocationalisations is associated with many economic benefits. It means increased productivity which further means economic prosperity of the country and the people,

3. **Suits individual aptitudes :** An aptitude is defined as internal ability which is symptomatic of success in a particular field—some training may be 'required to develop that aptitude. Many of us are misfits because we do not know our own aptitudes. Perhaps the general education does not provide for any scope for the testing and development of aptitude.

4. **Attainment of Social Efficiency :** A person who earns is adjusted and happy. This contentment leads to social efficiency. The person works at his maximum efficiency. This has come naturally as a result of vocation based education.

5. **Development of Moral values :** When an individual is free or is unemployed or has an empty mind, then the devil starts his workshop. He will go to any length to earn a living. He becomes immoral. Vocational education is a sort of insurance against his becoming immoral.

6. **Mad rush to colleges checked :** This is perhaps the greatest advantage of vocationalisation. It puts an end to mad rush for entrance into colleges