

# 12 Major Problems of Elementary Education with Its Solutions

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Brief outlines of the twelve major problems in the field of elementary education are discussed in this article. The twelve major problems are: 1. Wastage and Stagnation 2. Part-Time Education 3. Literacy 4. Finance 5. Administration and Supervision 6. Education of Girls 7. Enrichment of the Curricula and Improvement of Quality 8. Teachers 9. Provision of Schools 10. Accommodation 11. Equipments and Ancillary Services 12. Parental Education.

## (1) Wastage and Stagnation:

Of all the problems mentioned so far the greatest and the most menacing is the problem of wastage and stagnation. Vigorous efforts are needed towards reducing the rate of wastage and stagnation. The measures already taken in this regard should be intensified particularly to children from lower socio-economic groups.

The efforts for reducing wastage and stagnation should be concentrated on grade – I because wastage is the maximum at this stage. Before attaining functional literacy, i.e. completion of study up to Class V, premature withdrawal should be stopped at any cost. Wastage is appalling in case of girls. Hence greater attention is to be paid to the rate of wastage and stagnation among girls. After the age of 9 or 10, the child becomes an economic asset because he can work at home or earn something outside.

This is especially true of girls who have to assist the over-worked mothers at home. The grinding poverty of the parents compel them to use the labour of their children at home and outside. The child is, therefore, withdrawn from the school and thus becomes a “wastage case”. The long term solution to this problem of wastage can only come through general economic development. But the immediate solution to overcome this difficulty is to provide:

## (2) Part-Time Education:

Part-time education should be introduced so that children can work as well as learn. “To offset wastage is to provide part-time education to children who have completed the lower primary stage, and who desire to study further”. The content of part-time education should be elastic and should be determined according to the needs and aptitudes of the children receiving it.

Attendance to part-time classes should be voluntary. But compulsion may be introduced where it is possible. Enrolment in part-time classes may be 20% of the total enrolment during the 7<sup>th</sup> plan period. “Wastage and stagnation, like headache and fever, are not diseases in themselves; they are symptoms of other diseases in the educational system. The chief among them are the lack of proper articulation between education and life and the poor capacity of the schools to attract and hold students. To these added a third ailment, which falls outside the system. Urgent action is needed to remove the first two educational weaknesses; the effect of the third can be offset only as

the economy of the country improves. The goal of universal retention of pupils, therefore, is the most difficult of all and can be reached only over a period of time. Immediately an intensive programme may be organized for the reduction of wastage and to pursue it till the goal is reached”.

### (3) Literacy:

Literacy Classes may be introduced to prevent ever-increasing rate of non-literacy”. A number of children do not get enrolled in schools. To attain permanent functional literacy and to check the incidence of relapse into literacy all children in the age-group 11-14, who are not attending schools and who have not completed the primary stage of education and have become functionally literate, should be required to attend literacy classes for a period of one year at least”. “Such classes can be organized by teachers in primary schools outside the regular school hours, utilizing the buildings and equipment of the same schools. The timings of the classes would have to be elastic; they should be determined by local conditions and the needs of the children attending”.

For girls, sometime in the afternoon is always more convenient. The teachers should be adequately remunerated for the purpose. A few pilot projects may be tried in each district for a short time in order to gain experience before the scheme is launched on a nation-wide basis. Attendance at such classes should be made obligatory gradually and by stages.

### (4) Finance:

Finance is regarded as the question of all questions which deserves careful consideration. Paucity of funds or financial lag constitutes the greatest stumbling block in the way of introducing universal, free and compulsory education in the country. Because of financial difficulties compulsion could not be enforced strictly in the past to avoid huge wastage.

Hence the main obstacle is the financial and it is of paramount importance. Very meagre amount is spent for elementary education in our country. The imperialist Govt. Always tried to shift the onus of financial obligation on the teeming millions of our countrymen through the imposition of various taxes. Spread of mass education was not their aim. So they attached undue importance to secondary and higher education at the cost of elementary education. This is regrettable. Mass education, in their interpretation, was regarded as creation of rebellious commoners conscious of their rights and critical of obligations and duties of the foreign rulers.

Unfortunately the situation has not changed fundamentally even in free India. Truly speaking primary education should have the biggest claim on public finance. The Central Govt. Re-leases very meagre amounts for the purpose of elementary education. At present India spends only about 3% of her national income on education.

This meagre budgetary provision is not helpful for implementation of the Constitutional Directive effectively. On the same head USSR spends about 9% of her national income, Japan about 8% and England 7%. Though education is a state (under the 42 Amendment of the Constitution education is

in the concurrent list) subject the Central Govt. Cannot evade its responsibility. Hence it should make more liberal budgetary provision for spreading mass education.

The State Govt. Should also increase its amount of expenditure on elementary education. New taxes may be levied (taxes on big businesses, urban properties and higher income groups) for the purpose, reallocation of financial resources between the Centre and the State should also be considered. Rethinking is going on the subject. Ever-increasing population puts a heavy pressure on the financial resources, and as such population education is also needed.

The local bodies seldom exert themselves for proper assessment and collection of education cess and never take initiative to augment the resources by other means. Their budgetary grants are very meagre to meet the educational expenses. All these things require careful planning and suitable administrative measures.

#### (5) Administration and Supervision:

Administration and supervision is no less a hurdle in the way of universalisation of elementary education. From the administration point of view the progress of elementary education was retarded due to the mis-implementation of the policy of grant-in-aid to schools imparting elementary education.

Departmental checks and red-tapism are the order of the day Inspection is far from satisfactory. Number of inspectors is inadequate and they are more engaged in official work than visiting schools. Education in Indians a state subject (now it is in the concurrent list due to the 42 Amendment of the constitution).

But this does not mean that the Central Govt. Has no responsibility. One of its main duties should be to provide equalization of educational opportunity. The development of primary education shows considerable variation from state to state, from region to region, from children of poor families to children of rich families, from villages to cities from men to women and from socially advanced section to socially backward section of the community.

This sort of development is unhealthy and undemocratic A process of equalizing opportunities in primary education has to be attempted at various levels. There should be equitable growth of primary education and equalization of educational opportunities. One of the major responsibilities of the Central Govt. Will be to remove this inequality.

Spread of education among the scheduled castes and tribes, and among girls particularly in rural areas needs special attention. The main difficulty of providing education to the tribals is that of

getting teachers for the purpose. Better scales of pay and other facilities should be provided to teachers in tribal areas.

Special financial grant should be provided to assist the poorer and less developed states areas and sections of the society. A national policy should be punched in this regard. The Central Govt. Should provide suitable literature for teachers and children. Research is also needed in this respect.

The State cannot evade its responsibility in the matter. The State should initiate a developmental policy of its own. The State should have a Board of Elementary Education, consisting of educational experts both official and non-official. There should be strong and effective state machinery to enforce compulsion. .

The state should provide adequate funds for elementary education. Its duties also include the prescription of curriculum and courses of study, preparation and effective distribution of text books, training of teachers etc. It should also take steps to equalise educational opportunity.

An effective way to reduce the evils of wastage and stagnation is for the State department of Education to treat every school as an individual entity and for every school to give individual attention to every child. The role of the local bodies is no less important in respect of spreading universal elementary education.

Its main duties and responsibilities include the following:

- i) Provision, construction and maintenance of school buildings;
- ii) Provision of educational equipment's such as books, writing materials etc. To schools
- iii) Enforcement of compulsory education within the area; and
- iv) Developing a close relation between the school and the local community.

The Kothari Commission suggests the establishment of a District School Board in each district which should be in overall charge of elementary education including its planning and development.

#### 6) Education of Girls:

Education of girls needs special attention because wastage is heavy in his section of the community due to various reasons. The education of girls is far behind that of boys at the elementary stage

particularly in rural Le-as. The enrolment of boys is about 90% of the population in the corresponding age-group. But the enrolment of girls is much lower.

The number of girls enrolled for every 100 boys is only 50. At the higher primary stage, the gap between the education of boys and that of girls is wider still. The problem of fulfilling the Constitutional Directive is essentially the problem of educating girls.

The problem can effectively be tackled if the following measures are taken:

- i) Educating public opinion to overcome traditional prejudices against girls education opposition to sending grown-up girls to mixed schools or schools without women teachers; and to overcome the difficulty of early marriage.
- ii) Appointing women teachers;
- iii) Popularising mixed primary schools;
- iv) Opening separate schools for girls at the higher primary stage;
- v) Providing free books and writing materials
- vi) Providing part-time education for girls in the age-group 11 – 14.
- vii) Providing separate curricula for girls, and
- viii) Providing suitable amenities for girls in schools.

7) Enrichment of the Curricula and Improvement of Quality:

“Expansion of facilities at the primary stage and the universal enrolment of children and their retention in school till the end of the compulsory period is only one aspect of fulfilling the Constitutional Directive. An equally important aspect is qualitative improvement so that the instruction imparted becomes good education and helps children to grow into useful and responsible citizens. The entire curriculum has to be overhauled and improved, and modern methods of teaching and evaluation have to be adopted” (Kothari Com).

Work experience or SUPW should be introduced as an integral part of primary education. The teaching of science and mathematics has to be vitalized. The curriculum should be based on local needs and facilities in the schools.

#### 8) Teacher:

Teachers should be recruited from the same area, in which they would like to serve. Hence the recruitment policy should be changed as regards appointment of teachers.

To attract men of quality, lucrative and enhanced pay-scales should be given to teachers. An attempt should be made to reduce the number of pupils per teacher. It should be 25 = 1. For this purpose shift system may be introduced in primary schools. Payment should be made regularly.

There should be ample scope for promotion and for having retirement benefits (pension, provident fund and gratuity). Railway travel concessions should also be given to teachers. Housing facilities should be provided to teachers in primary schools. Improved and modern methods of teaching should be applied.

#### 9) Provision of Schools:

The existing school facilities should be extended so that every child can get the existence of a primary school within one km. From his abode. Universal enrolment depends on universal provision. To make provision universal shift system can be introduced. A large number of primary and upper primary schools should be set up in six lakhs villages in India. The task is heavy no doubt but no stone should be left unturned to achieve it.

#### 10) Accommodation:

The material conditions of most of the primary schools are unsatisfactory. About 50% school buildings are rented and unsuitable for school purposes. These are ill-ventilated and unhygienic. The school situation is dull and non-attractive. It should be changed materially because it has demoralizing effect on the pupils who are discouraged to stay in the school for a longer period. The dull character of most of the schools and their poor capacity to attract students and retain them lead to wastage.

#### 11) Equipment's and Ancillary Services:

Most of the primary schools are ill-equipped. Text books and other educational equipment's should be supplied free of cost in the beginning of the academic session. Delay defeats the purpose. A separate distribution cell should be set up. Research for the qualitative production of text books and other reading materials is highly needed.

The absence of ancillary services like school meal and school health encourages drop-out. One of the main causes of wastage in primary education is the poverty of the parents. This is especially true in the cases of the poorest and most backward classes.

Hence children of these classes should be provided with free mid-day meals and health facilities as incentive. Steps should be taken to provide adequate co-curricular activities in lower and upper primary schools.

#### 12) Parental Education:

The average parents in India are indifferent or apathetic to the education of their children. This is discouraging to the idea of universality of elementary education. Even today many parents nourish the traditional belief in the uselessness of education of girls. This conservative attitude should be changed through popular or parental education. It is needed to remove the age-long apathy and conservative outlook of the parents.