

Universalization of elementary education under different schemes

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Abstract

Education is one of the fundamental necessities of man. Education is helpful in meeting our needs. Elementary education is the first stage of compulsory education. It is preceded by nursery education and followed by secondary education. Elementary Education is a stage where children learn many skills that will help to succeed in future life. It is directed in Article 45 of the Indian Constitution to Universalize, free and compulsory education to all the children up to 14 years age and this is also a fundamental right to education. But due to some reasons the goal of universal elementary education is yet not completed. Many schemes have been started to achieve the goal of universal elementary education. The present paper is to focus the status of Universalisation of Elementary Education under various schemes like:- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Operation Blackboard (OB), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Mid-Day Meals Scheme, Education for All (EFA), National Education Policy (NEP), and Non-Formal Education etc.

Keywords: elementary education, universalisation of elementary education, various schemes

Introduction

Education is a lifelong process. Education is helpful in developing a power of thinking and also improves the power of rationality towards life. Education makes peoples educated and introduced them with needful skills. Education enhances our knowledge, learning skills, developing attitude and values etc. Education can also bring desirable changes in the behavior of the learner. Education is being provided to the learner at different levels or stages like primary stage, secondary stage and higher stage. Primary education is the stage where education touches at every point. At this level the child curiosity, creativity and activity should not be confined by a rigid and unattractive methods of teaching and learning. The Constitution had resolved in Article 45 under the Directive Principles of State Policy that the 'State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the Commencement of this Constitution for free and compulsory education for all the children until they complete the age of fourteen.' The government of India has made education a fundamental right and it has been a birth right for every one living in the country. Since independence, the central and the state governments have been expanding the provision of primary formal and non-formal education to achieve the goal of Universalisation of elementary education (UEE). The achievement of target of free and compulsory education is the great challenge and many efforts have been done to achieve this goal.

Universalisation of elementary education basically evolves three important things: - universalisation of provision, universalisation of enrollment and universalisation of retention. Universalisation of Provision means that school facilities should be provided to all the children between the age of 6 to 14. Universalisation of Enrollment means that all the children between the age of 6 to 14 must be enrolled. Universalisation of Retention reveals a child who joins primary school; he or she should remain there till he or she completes all their primary education. After the 86th

Amendment, Act 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen as a Fundamental Right. The Right of free and compulsory education (RTE) Act, 2009 which represents the legislation under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfied certain essential norms and standards. Thus education had become a birth right for each and every person of the country. In our country the Right to Education Act came into the effect from 1st April 2010. Now every citizen has an equal opportunity to get education.

Efforts done for the Universalisation of Elementary Education are followed:-

i) District Primary Education Programme, DPEP

The Scheme of District Primary Education Programme DPEP was launched in 1994 as a major opening to regenerate the Primary Education system and to achieve the objective of Universalisation of Primary Education. The objectives of the programme are:-

- Provide Elementary education to all the children in a possible way (formal or in non formal way).
- Provide reading writing materials and free textbooks to all SC and ST children and general girls.
- Providing access to Primary Education for all children.
- Increasing learning achievement of Primary school students by 25 percent.
- An essential improvement in the quality of school facilities.

Thus the overall goal of the programme is the reconstruction of primary education as a whole in the districts instead of stepwise implementation of the various schemes.

ii) National Education Policy

The Education Commission (1964 - 66) had recommended a

common School system of Public Education (CSS) as the basis of building up the national System of Education with a view to bring the different social classes and groups together. The National Policy of Education 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in post-independence India. NPE (1968) was introduced with positive attitude but many of its recommendation could not be implemented due to lack of fund and adequate manpower. Therefore the goal of universalisation of elementary education could not be achieved. The New Education Policy 1986 was formulated with a view to preparing students for the 21st century to face the challenges related with global developments, rising technologies and cross-cultural complexities. The NPE (1986) repeated the issues of equality of educational opportunity and free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years. The Policy of 1986 was modified in 1992 and was tabled in the parliament on 7th May 1992. National Programme of Action was also the results of these efforts and modifications.

Objectives of National Policy of Education and POA

- Universal access and enrollment
- Universal retention of children up to 14 years of age
- A continue improvement in the quality education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.

iii) Operation Black-Board

With the help of National Policy of Education a Scheme of Operation Blackboard was launched in 1987. The purpose of this scheme was to provide minimum essential facilities to all primary schools in the country. It is aimed at bringing substantial improvement in the facilities of primary schools run by Government, Local bodies and Panchayati Raj and recognized aided institutions.

Main Objectives of this scheme are

- At least two reasonable large all weather room along with separate toilet facilities for boys and girls
- At least two teachers (one male and one female) should be provided in primary schools.
- Essential teaching and learning materials including blackboard, maps, charts etc should be provided in primary schools.

iv) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. It is also a great demand for quality education all over the country. This programme is also an effective step to improve human capabilities and provide an equal opportunity of education to all. This programme is included in 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education to children of ages 6 to 14.

Aims of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

- To provide elementary education to the children in the age group of 6 to 14 by 2010.
- To remove the gaps based on gender, social and regional basis.
- To provide value- based education to all the children.
- To realize the importance of early children care and education and looks at the 0 -14 age as a continuum.

v) National Programme of Mid-Day Meals

Mid-Day Meal Scheme was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15 August 1995. The purpose of this scheme was to be served a prepared Mid-Day Meal with a minimum content of 300 calories of energy and 8-12 gram protein per day for a minimum of 200 days. It also aimed to provide improve the health of the children.

vi) Non-formal Education System (NFE)

Non- formal Education has become an effective source of education for those who cannot attend full time schools due to socio - economic reasons. To accomplish the aim of universalisation of elementary education India has been running a programme of NFE for children in the age group of 6-14, since 1979-80. This programme is beneficial for working children who have been drop out from formal schools, children who have to remain at home to do domestic task, and girls who are unable to attend formal schools for a variety of reasons. Today the programme is being implemented in 20 states and union territories through the state governments and voluntary agencies.

vii) Right to Education Act, 2009

“The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009” (popularly called Right to Education Act or RTE Act) was legislated in August 2009, which obtains into effect on April 1, 2010. This act is a detailed and comprehensive piece of legislation which includes provision related to school teachers and specific divisions of duties and responsibilities of different stakeholders.

Important features of the Act are

- A child from 6 to 14 years of age has right to free compulsory education in a neighborhood school till completion of elementary education.
- Private schools must take in quarter in their class, strength from weaker section and disadvantaged groups sponsored by the government.
- No child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment.
- No child will be held back or expelled till completion of elementary education.
- All schools except government schools are required to be recognized by meeting specified norms standards within three years to avoid closure.

So, in order to make elementary education a fundamental right in real sense these missing parts need to be addressed seriously.

Conclusion

It is clear that education is a fundamental right of every person and is a basic need of our life. Without education no progress is possible. To universalize elementary education the government of India took significant steps in this field. Time to time different education commission and committees gave their recommendations to realize the goal of universalizing the education. But despite all these policy initiatives and government efforts the goal of universalisation of basic education remained unidentifiable. Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) is the provision of education to make education for all children to complete elementary education. So, there is need to draw serious attention and

action to achieve the goal of universal elementary education (UEE) in the state within short period.

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