

## Higher Education in Rural Areas

Dr. Mona Tawar\*

Radheshyam Acholiya\*\*

\*Director, Pioneer Institute of Professional Studies, Indore

\*\*Assistant Professor, Pioneer Institute of Professional Studies, Indore

### Abstract

*It was once rightly said by the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi that 'India lives in its villages'. People residing in villages represent the true image of 'real India'. However, due to lack of literacy and education, the rural India witnesses many drawbacks.*

*Majority of India still lives in villages and so the topic of rural education in India is of utmost importance. A survey named called the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), shows that even though the number of rural students attending schools is rising, but more than half of the students in fifth grade are unable to read a second grade text book and are not able to solve simple mathematical problems. Not only this, the level of mathematics and reading is further declining. Though efforts are being made, they are not in the right direction. The reason cited for this problem in surveys is the increasing number of single classroom to educate students from more than one grade. In some states attendance of teachers and students is also declining. These are a few reasons why schools have failed to educate rural India.*

**Introduction:** The foundation to turn India into a strong nation has to be laid down at primary and rural levels and so the quality of education right from the beginning should be excellent. Education and text books should be made interesting. For rural students textbooks related to their culture, their traditions and values should also be there so as to create their interest in studies. The reasons behind so many drop-outs in spite of free education should be found out as this is a hurdle on the road to progress. Improvement in the condition of government schools, education quality, committed teachers and more salaries to these teachers should be part of development.

**Need for Rural Education:** Education enables an individual to look at society and its aspects with a wider perspective. Without education, people are unable to develop the basic sense required. Around three fourth of the country's population belong to the rural area. With literate and educated rural Indians, our country might emerge as a developed nation.

**Present Scenario of Rural Education:** Considering India's earlier state, rural education condition has been still improving. However, the rural schools have been suffering a lot. The schools in rural regions are very few at different far off places and children residing in one village don't prefer travelling, considering it as a waste of their time and money. The problem of commuting becomes a main drawback for these schools. The condition of schools is such that they don't provide the students with clean drinking water.

The education quality is also not up to the mark. Because the teachers there are paid lesser, they tend to get reluctant towards their teaching or prefer remaining absent for the day. Most of the times, the teachers selected to teach are also not very well qualified to educate the rural children. Method of teaching also lacks in all aspect. Most of these schools have a very poor or mediocre

infrastructure. Hence, the students are deprived of the essential facilities like sports educations, extracurricular activities and basic computer training classes. One of the most serious problems is that the number of school dropouts is increasing in these areas.

### **Recent Scenario of Indian Education Sector:**

- 96.5% of children in the 6 to 14 age group in rural India are enrolled in school.
- 71.1% of these children are enrolled in government schools, 24.3 % are enrolled in private schools.
- The proportion of girls (age 11-14) who are still out of school has declined from 6.8% in 2009 to 5.9 in 2010; in states like Rajasthan (12.1%) and Uttar Pradesh (9.7%), this percentage remains high and shows little change since 2009.
- Enrollment in private schools in rural India increased from 21.8% in 2009 to 24.3% in 2010.
- Nationally, the percentage of five year olds enrolled in schools increased from 54.6% in 2009 to 62.8% in 2010. The biggest increase was visible in Karnataka where the proportion of five year olds enrolled in school increased from 17.1% in 2009 to 67.6 in 2010.
- Nationally there is not much change in reading levels as compared to last year. Only 53.4% children in Standard V can read a Standard II level text. This suggests that even after five years in school, close to half of all children are not even at the level expected of them after two years in school.
- On average, there has been a decrease in children's ability to do simple mathematics. The proportion of Standard I children who could recognize numbers from 1-9 declined from 69.3% in 2009 to 65.8% in 2010. Similarly, the proportion of children in Standard III who could solve two digit subtraction problems decreased from 39% to 36.5% in the same period. Children in Standard V who could do simple division problems also dropped from 38% in 2009 to 35.9% in 2010.

### **Quality Issues: - Education in Rural Area:**

- Quality and access to education is the major concern in rural schools as there are fewer committed teachers, lack of proper text books and learning material in the schools. Though Government schools exist, but when compared to private schools then quality is a major issue. Majority of people living in villages have understood the importance of education and know that it is the only way to get rid of poverty. But due to lack of money they are not able to send their children to private schools and hence depend upon government schools for education. Above that, in some of the government schools there is only one teacher for the entire school and if they don't show up at work, then it is a holiday. If the quality along with number of teachers and, that too committed teacher can be improved in these schools, then aspiring rural children and India can fulfill their dreams of doing something great.
- Some government schools in rural India are overly packed with students, leading to a distorted teacher- student ratio. In one such remote village there are more than 300 students in class X which makes nearly 100 students in each classroom. In such a

situation it is impossible for teachers to pay full attention towards each and every student, even if they are willing to help.

- Every village is not provided with school which means that students have to go to another village to get education. Owing to this parents usually do not send their daughters to school, leading to a failure in achieving rural education in India.
- Poverty is another setback. Government schools are not as good and private schools are expensive. This results in a very low number of students actually clearing their secondary education and taking admission in colleges for further studies. So the drop-out-rate at the secondary level is extremely high in villages. Only parents who can afford college education send their kids to secondary schools. If parents are not able to send their wards for higher education then all their previous efforts get wasted as completing just secondary education means a low paying job and the person is again struck in the same never ending cycle of money, life and poverty.
- Most textbooks are in English and since people in rural areas either speak their native language or Hindi, but not English that defeats the purpose. This results in lack of their interest in studies. Though some of the students from villages are really brilliant, as they have a wealth of practical knowledge and know how to survive even in very harsh conditions of life, difficulty in understanding their textbooks, lack of facilities and their poverty is a hurdle in their education.
- Quality related issues are far powerful than poverty. Students are not at all encouraged to think but they are asked to memorize pre-defined questions for exams. So for many students clearing examination at the end of the session, passing their exam becomes more important than gaining knowledge. Also as per the new CBSE rule, every student is supposed to be promoted to the next class irrespective of marks in their examination. Hence majority of students do not bother to study, which means a decline in their education level. Neither students nor teachers take any interest in studies which is why the level of education is declining in India despite many efforts.
- There is a difference between city and village student not in terms of brain or development but their initial environment, skills, learning ability, availability of infrastructure, and access to different facilities. All of these must be considered while making the curricula which should not be different but how it is going to be taught would make the difference. Encourage the genuine rural students who are interested in education and make them competent. There are many examples of success in rural education in India like the Barefoot College, 8 Day Academy and Gurukul School in Bihar. These are innovative and successful examples of schools running in rural India. It is the time to replicate such efforts as our country and its rural population is very vast which means one of two stories of these kinds won't make any difference. Instead of this large number of such schools are required in rural India. It is also absolutely mandatory to evaluate the success of the schools and students at each and every level. Timely assessment will throw light on present problems and achievements. Let us try to build a solution around these problems which will resolve the overall issues of rural education in India.

**The Challenge of Educating Rural India:** The role of education in facilitating social and economic progress is well accepted. Access to education is critical to access emerging opportunities that accompany economic growth. Keeping in view of this accepted fact there has

been a major thrust on education since independence; but as far as ensuring quality education in rural India is concerned it has always been one of the biggest challenges for the government. India viewed education as the best way of bringing social change. Soon after gaining independence in 1947, making education available to all had become a priority for the government. The education sector has received considerable attention in the recent Budget (for the year 2011– 2012) too - which has announced a significant increase of 24 per cent in the total allocation for education sector. The existing operational norms of the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* have also been revised to implement the right of children to free and compulsory education, which has come into effect from 1 April 2010. Allocations to achieve the objectives of the Right to Education (RTE), which has been aligned with the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, were hiked from Rs 15,000 crore to Rs 21,000 crore. While this is targeted at strengthening elementary education, the Centre is now focusing on “vocationalisation” of secondary education, which will enable students to pursue job-oriented courses at the plus two-level. Initiatives have also been taken to increase retention of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students in Class IX and X by introducing a pre-matriculation scholarship. The human resource development (HRD) ministry’s allocations have gone up to Rs 52,057 crore from last year’s Rs 43,836 crore. Though the recent budget seems to be providing a major impetus towards the country’s overall educational growth but due to various socio-economic factors, India’s education program continues to be denigrated. Of the biggest victims of the educational system are those living in rural areas? Though for encouraging the growth of rural education, from making policies to introducing laws - our government has lined up the education system up to the mark but implementing the process into an effective way has been the lacunae of the entire system. Still issues of quality and access remain areas of concern particularly in the sphere of rural education in India. Children in rural areas continue to be deprived of quality education owing to factors like lack of competent and committed teachers, lack of textbooks or teaching-learning materials, and so on. A large number of teachers refuse to teach in rural areas and those that do, are usually under-qualified. The much publicized mid day meal scheme meant to reduce drop-out rates in schools, seems to be not yielding the desired results due to alleged misappropriation of funds meant for the scheme, mismanagement, lack of seriousness among the implementing authorities, diversion of funds, lack of awareness among the parents of poor children, etc. The food served under mid-day meal scheme in rural schools is also of inferior quality. Besides that, the recent Public *Report* on Basic Education [PROBE] report reflects that physical infrastructure of rural schools is far behind the satisfactory-level, with 82 percent of the schools is in need of renovation. Books are often unavailable, and teacher absenteeism tends to be high. But these emerging issues which are jeopardizing the progress of rural education are being addressed and there are positive signs that the emphasis in major government programmes such as the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* is shifting focus from universal enrolment to universal retention and quality. Attention is also being given to the governance of schools with the formation and functioning of Village Education Committees (VEC) and more transparent processes for managing school resources. In recent years, it has also been noticed that the *Panchayati Raj* or village council has been playing an increasingly significant role in the progress of education in rural areas across the country. On the other hand, in last few years, the number of qualified teachers in rural schools has increased because of the augmented efforts by the government and private groups towards improving the country’s overall educational status as well as towards upgrading and ensuring professional training of school teachers. The next most pressing challenge is to boost the access in rural areas to secondary education, particularly for girls, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities

as well as to ensure availability of technical and vocational education and skills. At this level of the education system the private sector is growing rapidly and playing an imperative role of service provider.

**Rural Education Helps Indian Economy:** According to 2011 census, India's population is around 121 crore. Three fourth of this population can become the nation's strength, helping the economy to grow. More the rural India learns and sharpens its skills, the better it would help the economy. Mahatma Gandhi had also said that India cannot progress unless the villages progress which is very much applicable. Rural education will prepare India for a better tomorrow.

**Initiatives by Government for Rural Education:** The rural population accounts for a little more than 70% of India's enormous population. Hence, it is extremely essential that the government takes appropriate initiative for the welfare and betterment of rural India.

Mahila Samakhyas are one such scheme which mainly focuses on the women's literacy from rural areas. Under this scheme, the rural women are asked to attend meetings and seminars for better awareness.

Presently, the National Bal Bhavan has 10 and 68 affiliated Bal Kendras and Bhavans respectively. This scheme includes social as well as educational activities. This scheme also helps in recognizing the children's talent for specific educational stream.

Another flagship scheme 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' is in process of being implemented for education in every district of India. This scheme primarily focuses on providing appropriate elementary education to all the children within the age group of 6-14 years by 2010. This programme will mainly cover educational needs for girls, and scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. Due to this programme, many new schools will open in places that did not have facilities and proper infrastructure.

**Conclusion:** India has the second largest education system in the world after China. The scale of operation involved to ensure quality of Education for All in the country is unique and challenging. At the same time, the nature of problems affecting the education system are so diverse and often deep rooted that the solution cannot lie in the alteration of any one single factor – it is not about just shortage of money or just shortage of trained teachers or lack of political will; all these undeniably contribute to the problems, affecting the country's existing education system. However, there is a need to look at the entire set of problems and deal with the issue holistically taking into consideration the specific context of different sections of the society. It will also require a constant and strong central support for policy, strategy, technical assistance, and monitoring and evaluation combined with increased decentralization within government, stronger public-private partnerships, and improved accountability relationships between the service providers, policy makers, and the target population.

## References:

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