

Education in schools

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ABSTRACT : Education is the most potent mechanism for the advancement of human beings. It enlarges, enriches and improves the individual's image of the future and leads to liberation from ignorance. Secondary education assumes importance as it serves as a bridge between elementary and higher secondary education. It is a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work. The paper highlights an overview of school education, girls education and school drop outs.

KEY WORDS : Girls education, School education, School drop outs

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INTRODUCTION

Education, in its broadest sense of development of youth, is the most crucial input for empowering youth with skills and knowledge to give 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. Hence, to study the status of school education deeply the paper is different under three categories :

- Status of school education
- Studies on girls' education
- Studies on drop outs
- Studies on quality of education.

Status of school education :

The present system of education is under bitter criticism. It lays too much stress on examinations. There is need for a pragmatic and realistic approach. The focus should be on creating stimulating environment and flexible teaching - learning process to develop students' interest in education and channelizing their attention to studies to promote educational

excellence (Mukherjee, 1991). A broad comparison with educational situation of sixties reveal that there has been a shift in the rank of the state at top and middle levels, but the states which were most backward in sixties have remained backward even in eighties (Upendranath, 1995). Education is a major tool for national development especially in democratic country like India where the process and pace of development are largely determined by suitably educated, properly trained and disciplined citizens. While the need for universal compulsory education has been duly accepted nationally and huge funds have been allocated for the purpose, the actual implementation targets still remain elusive (Ambasht, 1994).

The overall outcome of educational planning at central and regional levels varies from region to region. Some regions gained a lot while others lagged behind. In Punjab lack of basic facilities and acute shortage of funds and teaching aids, high teacher-pupil ratio, lack of dedicated staff, heavy load of non-teaching work on the teachers, lack of supporting staff, improper management and lack of educational culture in schools. An alternative model of a cluster system of education has been suggested by the investigators (Kaur *et al.*, 1996).

In our country, since independence, many attempts have been made through committees and commissions to reform the education system to make it an instrument of national reconstruction and development. However, despite all these efforts, a majority of our people remain deprived of education. The findings disclosed that school buildings were very old and in dilapidated conditions. During the rainy season many schools could not function because of seating problems for students in the limited number of available classrooms. Schools face shortage of funds and they are not in a position to maintain building. It also stated that the condition of most of the classrooms was not up to the mark. Many of the students study in open or under trees and get easily distracted by the surroundings as many students bring gunny bags from their own homes to sit on the floors/grass/muddy open spaces. Also, students face the problems of lack of toilet facilities, proper playgrounds, water facilities and electricity connection in schools. Payment of electricity bills is also a burden on the teachers. Lack of teachers, clerical staff, and other supporting staff too was a problem (Kaur *et al.*, 1998).

Saraswat (2007) found out that around 60 million children were out of school and 35 million out of these were girls. The population of 6-14 was approximately 192 million and 157 million children were enrolled in school and 35 million were out of schools and out of which 25 million were girls. Indian government introduced and implemented several schemes for the betterment of children *viz.*, Mid Day Meal, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education, District Primary Education Programme, Operation Blackboard, Janshala Programme but majority of people lack awareness about these. Kavitha and Anitha (2011) viewed that the failure of state schools to increase access and quality of education in schools is a serious hindrance to achieving the international goal of Education for All. The variation in the quality of education provided is a growing concern for which educational partnerships between the public and private sector have been regarded as a way out of this impasse with economic and political implications.

Studies related to girls' education :

Illiteracy in our country is more pronounced among women than among men. Out of every four women, three are illiterate as compared to less than one out of every two men. This under representation of girls in schools is not due to inequalities in opportunities but because of the biased attitudes of the society towards female education in general. Goa has more than 90 per cent of girls enrolled in VI-VIII standards, while Kerala, Daman and Div have more than 80 per cent gross enrolment ratio in these standards. The percentage of girls (5-14 years) attending school is higher for urban areas compared to that of rural areas except in case of the union territory of Lakshadweep. The rural-urban differences are more

pronounced in states and union territories where the percentage of girls (5-14 years) attending school is less than 25 per cent. Low admission rate in higher classes may be due to high dropout rate in different classes which are attributable to wastage and stagnation (Dhaneswar, 1992).

Education is a necessary condition for any economy to grow and special focus must be laid on improvement of girls' education especially in educationally backward areas. State wise enrolment shows a wide disparity across the state in enrolment where northern states have yet to achieve enrolment level comparable with southern states especially in case of girls (Upendranath, 1995). The mean years of schooling among rural females are barely 1.1 as against 5.1 for urban males. The majority of non-enrolled girls belonged to low socio-economic status groups. In urban slums, the situation is still worse. There are several colonies in Calcutta city where not a single girl of the school going age attends school (Nautiyal, 1995).

In rural areas, there is no demand for girl's education and where girls take to education they often dropout at the primary level to lend help to parents in domestic chores, care of siblings, doing remunerative work for early marriage. The reasons attributed to low demand for girl education included low economic standing of households, lack of women teachers, rigid school timings, tough curriculum and distant location of the schools. The suggested strategies for improvement included income generating schemes for improving economic status of low income households, strengthening transport facilities in rural areas, flexible school timings, removal of gender bias, practical nature of curriculum and appointment of female teachers. The suggested administrative measures included opening up of separate schools for girls, provision of basic physical facilities like drinking water, separate toilets for girls, recreational material, provision of library books, establishing separate Non formal education centres for girls (Srivastava, 1997). Educational lag in rural girls is linked to underdevelopment of rural areas in terms of development of infrastructure especially drinking water, sanitation and education infrastructure. Gender bias and rural poverty combine to add to the burden of the girl child as their direct and indirect earnings are needed by the families, whereas boys are seen as future bread winners of the families (Nayar, 2000).

The reasons of gender disparity were economic constraints, lack of value being placed on education, domestic responsibilities like taking care of younger siblings and societal apathy towards girls' education. The number of girls attending school also decreased with the increase in age. Amin (2001) observed that there is a strong gender bias in Indian society which idolize sons. Our customs, rituals and traditional practices all bear a testimony to this fact. Girls are denied optimal opportunities for growth and development and are treated as a lesser child. This attitude gets reflected in low literacy levels of women and higher dropout rates of girls.

The main reasons of dropping out amongst girls were found to be gender discrimination, domestic responsibilities such as firewood or fodder collection, fetching of water, early puberty of girls, fear for their safety, early marriage, coeducational schools, lack of female teachers, schools being located away from home, inappropriate school curriculum etc. Government launched many women oriented policies and schemes which were not implemented with the same spirit and consequently failed to achieve the desired results.

The three most important motives for sending boys to school, according to Srivastava and Yadav (2001) were economic development, capacity building and social upliftment. In case of girls, dominant reasons were promoting educational skills, improving marriage prospects and social upliftment. The reasons for not sending girls to school were their personal behaviour (35 %), involvement in domestic work (30 %) and school related problems (22 %).

Kumar (2001) also found the number of schools and colleges has grown but the benefits of this expansion have not been reaped fairly by all sections of the people. The dropout rate is very high and gap between the enrolment of boys and girls is still wide at all stages. Women from poorer social groups enjoy lesser benefit from expansion of educational facilities. Equality of educational opportunity to all sections of the population is the only guarantee for building up of an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak is minimal. Participation of private agencies is increasing in education sector. Privatisation of school education is taking place fast. The privatisation of education is a multi-dimensional issue. It can be debated from several points of view such as educational, economic, social, managerial, philosophical and moral. Privatisation of secondary education is necessary to overcome fiscal deficit, increasing efficiency and fulfil needs of the secondary school infrastructure, building up of national and human responsibilities and vocational development of students. The role of the state financing of school education should be because of equity and equality of opportunities (Maiyani and Ramanuj, 2001).

The historical noon meal programme of Tamil Nadu has paid dividends by improving enrolment and retention in elementary schools. It has also addressed the problem of malnutrition by providing low cost, nutritious meals to kids. Poverty is the root cause of all social evils including school drop outs (Thangaraj, 2002). The enrolment is on increase as compared to earlier years. The majority of parents have negative attitude towards education of their girl children. Even incentives like free books, uniforms, mid day meals etc. did not find much favour. Early marriage of girls and sharing of financial responsibilities with the family was observed to be the reason of discontinuance of studies and is responsible for huge chunks of wastage and stagnation in our country, especially in rural Punjab. Gender bias still prevails that

considers boys as potential breadwinners and therefore preferring their education. Lack of parental awareness about the importance of girl education was the reason of dropping out of girl children from school (Nanda and Jaswal, 2002).

Educational facilities have improved in many secondary level schools. Science and Home Science subjects are taught without laboratories, library facilities and guidance and counselling services. In Mizoram, there is no higher secondary school. All other states had almost the same share of girls' enrolment as that of the national average. The dropout rate increases with school stage. By the time students reach class X most of them drop out. The average dropout rate in India is 75 per cent and 64 per cent in Manipur and 82 per cent in Meghalaya. All other states have a low dropout rate. The dropout rate is more among girls than boys. By the time girls reach class VIII, 59 per cent of them drop out in India. The drop out among scheduled tribes is more over general and scheduled caste population and rural areas and the condition of rural schools is worst than urban. Counterparts, Majority of schools do not have separate urinals and lavatories for girls (Singh, 2003).

Education has been recognised as indispensable for the growth and development of women. Development of women means the opportunity and ability to assert their right and fight for justice. Development also means real improvement in the socio-economic conditions of women. Most of the women in our country are illiterate and in comparison to men are ignorant about the basic law. Lack of awareness, political participation, poverty, tradition, and traditional oppression and customs are responsible for disparity between the males and females in the educational level. The difference between the position of men and women would persist unless these anomalies are addressed. There are 300 million adults in India who cannot read and write and out of which 200 millions are women. The women's access to education in the country is inadequate and discriminating because they are expected to manage both educational and domestic responsibilities (Kalia *et al.*, 2006). Thus, women education is important not only in context to human rights but also to enhance their potential for contributing to social, economic and political development of the nation. Gender concerns in education must be addressed for any meaningful development to take place (Anand, 2007).

Studies on school drop outs :

A study highlighting the implication of education in equalising of income opportunities among rural and urban segments in Lucknow district observed that for every hundred pupils enrolled in a class, about 30 per cent reached the post secondary education. The highest level of drop-out rates were seen at the completion of secondary education (35 %) followed by after primary (17 %) and middle class (15 %) levels. Dropouts follow a similar pattern in both rural and urban areas, but the rates of dropouts differ significantly between them

(Mehta, 1996).

While compulsory education for children till the age of 14 is enshrined as a directive principle in Indian constitution, the reality is different. School dropout and prevailing gender divides the region; Poverty was the main reason for this condition (Yadappanavar, 2002). Madhusudan (2013) analysis strengthens the case for more suitable affirmative action's in order to achieve the set targets of universal education for positive human development outcomes. India still faces the challenge of achieving universal primary education as millions of children are out of school. Despite the fact that strong associations between non-school factors and low levels of educational attainment have long been recognized, the efforts of raising educational participation are currently more concerned with school level factors. Hence the paper concludes with an apprehension that more efforts are needed to overcome the poverty constraints at the household level for successful school participation of children.

Studies related to quality of education :

Information oriented education in India is increasing day by day leading to dishonesty, mass copying in exams. The primary objective of students is doing well in examinations and not learning. Growing discontentment among both teacher and the taught is leading to dishonesty at all levels in education system, professional courses like engineering, medicine, business administration and administrative services are attracting the brightest whereas courses like literature, classical music and languages have lost their sheen in today's society (Seth, 1993-94). A study by Rajput, 1996 revealed that the female principals devote more time to organizing educational improvement activities/ programmes as compared to men. They are more attuned to curricular issues, developing instructional leadership, teaching related concerns, parental and societal involvement, staff development and collaborative planning strategies etc.

Kaur *et al.* (1998) reported only 13.33 per cent schools faced inadequacy of blackboards however; many teachers had to buy chalks out of their own pocket. No other audio visual aid was reportedly used for teaching purposes. There were no educational toys and aids to motivate children and encourage creativity among them. There were no funds at the disposal of schools for the welfare of the students. At times the teachers spent money out of their own pocket to buy registers, chalks, brooms and some other stationery items or even paid the electricity bills. Majority of the students in government schools belong to poor section of the society. Families do not have a conducive atmosphere for studying. Their parents are unable to provide them uniform and necessary stationery items. Further, due to the illiteracy of the family they do not get any academic support, proper guidance or encouragement. Children are supposed to help the family in household chores, such as kitchen work, looking after younger siblings or taking

care of animals, etc. during the harvesting season, children skip their classes for supplementing the family income. Parents are too busy with their economic and domestic problems. The emotional atmosphere at home is very frustrating and hostile. Besides, there is rough handling, use of abusive language, alcoholism and above all the lack of love at a tender age which are harmful for the psychology of the young children. An alternative method of improving the quality of rural education is to replace the present set up with cluster system approach as due to financial constraints it is not feasible for the government to provide all the facilities in each school. Urgent steps must be taken to reform the educational set up in rural areas. The student assessment plays an important role in making a school a quality school. Self assessment and self evaluation should be practiced in every area of life. Besides, continuous and comprehensive evaluation helps to improve the quality of schools in a number of ways like using feedback of evaluation to improve the quality of learning and instructional material. The teacher - student relationship must be more informal and free from stress by laying less emphasis on formal tests and examinations (Agrawal, 2000).

NGOs could produce significant demonstration effects, influence public action and policies of the government and also of other NGOs. But the size of problems is large and number of NGOs is quite small. Making education a fundamental right in the constitution of India and making it compulsory on the part of parents and government to provide access to good quality education to all. The union and state government have to assume full responsibility for organising, managing, providing and financing free and compulsory elementary education of acceptable quality to all. The role of NGOs and local bodies is to bring children back into school, monitor the functioning of the school and to build social pressure on the government and the political leadership towards making constitution amendment of free and compulsory elementary education (Tilak, 2004).

School education is seen as a fundamental right of the child. But the quality schools are expensive the poor find these too costly. So, their children enrol in government schools where they hardly learn anything. On the contrary, the rich children have any number of options in the education market. The learning outside the school, which is equally if not more important is ignored in today's education. The focus on exam scores leads to increasing juvenile stress and high suicide rates. (Das, 2011).

Raju and Rao (2011) focused on the relationship between teacher efficacy and teaching competency which refers to the results on teacher and the amount of progress of the pupils towards certain learning objectives. Effectiveness of teacher is judged in terms of his/her success in bringing out desired learning outcomes. Thus, teacher efficacy can be defined as a product of the interaction between certain teacher characteristics and the teaching-learning situations. There were

significant differences between rural and urban and residential and non-residential teachers in their self efficacy. There were significant differences between rural and urban, below 20 yrs. and above 20 yrs. experienced teachers, below 35 years and above 35 years of age, married and un-married teachers and residential and non-residential teachers in their teaching competency. There is significant and positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teaching competency. Teaching - learning is the core process of every education system. Improvement in design and approach of this process is the key to develop skills and competencies of learners which results in enhancement of the quality of school education. The recent decades have witnessed increased interest to develop learner centred approaches. Role of teachers is central to changing of the ways the students are taught. Long term commitment from teachers in active learner-centred instructional practices provides academically challenging experiences for all students regardless of their ability, motivation and academic track. The initiatives which are undertaken at the school level to improve quality of teaching-learning in the schools would be achieved only when constraints on performance are better understood and addressed by the school managers and policy makers (Snehi, 2011).

From an educational effectiveness perspective, research based on international large scale assessments has been limited as it neglects to take contextual conditions of educational systems into account. Lenkeit (2012) investigates how effectively educational systems grow, *i.e.* change, in their performance by applying a methodological approach known from school effectiveness research that captures changes at the country level within repeated cross-sectional data designs. Effectiveness measures of achievement status in 2006 and of change from 2001 to 2006 are investigated and compared. Results suggest that there are systems which exceed their expected outcomes (status and change) as well as systems which stay below what could have been expected, changing the picture of “high” and “low” performing systems, when contextual conditions and prior performances are taken into account. Secondary education is a very crucial stage because it prepares children for higher education as well as for world of work. The need to connect education with life cannot be felt more at any other stage than at secondary stage. It is commonly asserted that there is a knowledge gap between the subject matter currently being taught at the secondary school stage and the knowledge and skills that are required if individuals and countries are to be competitive in the globalized world. In a traditional secondary school curriculum, academic subjects are based on complex conceptual reasoning, and thus may not be appropriate for all pupils. There is an urgent need to move away from the traditional disciplinary approach of curriculum design and development to skill centred approach. Skill centred approach helps in moving from content to processes and the development of generic

transferable skills.

The classroom communication plays an important role in students' life. Some people learn best in classroom while others understand better through self-experience. Communicating is essential part of any activity but students experience different levels of communication constantly. A constant comparison method was employed Musthafa and Noushad (2011) to analyze students' comments and six categories of antecedent conditions emerged; students stress, attitude of teacher, academic load and lack of academic motivation, classroom climate and nature of the subject matter taught which revealed that most of the factors associated with communication apprehension were academic. Teachers were directly responsible for communication apprehension. Classroom may promote a more learner centred environment and consequently assist in decreasing communication apprehension. As teachers or administrators working in schools today, we are confronted on a daily basis with a myriad of questions, issues, concerns, and problems dealing with children, parents, curriculum and resources. Teacher effectiveness is understood as teacher competence and capabilities of people who man the various educational services, are involved in developing knowledge, attitudes, values – skills among students, keep a democratic attitude and interest in students, possess required knowledge values, degrees, a hunch for innovation and more receptive in approach in teaching - learning.

Kalita (2012) tries to relate teacher effectiveness with qualification, sex, training, teaching experience, age etc. An effective teacher is creative and varies instructional approaches; maintains a warm and open classroom atmosphere; strives to meet individual student's needs; is self - confident, well organized, and flexible; has knowledge of the subject matter; involves students in planning; co-operates with parents, co-workers and administration. Training has a positive impact on teaching. Educational qualification is an important requirement for teaching effectiveness. Teaching experience is considered as one very important aspect of effectiveness as the teacher possesses better teaching experience. Female teachers were found to be more effective than their male counterparts.

Kumar and Singh (2013) reported during classroom teaching teachers from extreme motivational input to lowest motivational input which results in academic success of teachers. The teaching profession is charged with the immense task of creating conditions and developing processes for building the human skills and capacities that are considered to be indispensable for economic growth, prosperity, social well - being, and individual development. During the last two decades, the teacher education curricula have received severe criticism and their weaknesses have been well exposed. Some educationists and social activists call it insipid, irrelevant because they do not address the needs of contemporary Indian

schools and society and they do not prepare teachers who can impart quality education in schools. One often hears that there is little difference between the performance of trained and that of untrained teachers because of the outdated and defective curriculum. These charges may appear to be exaggerated but some of them compel us to rethink about the curricula and their transaction. Frequently criticized as being theoretical in its nature, the curriculum of teacher education is only partially theoretical. It is information loaded giving facts that are disconnected from each other. The curriculum framework of teacher education (1998) or more recent NCFTE (2009) one hardly talk about competency based teacher education programme or the process of making a competency based teacher. The experience based teacher education is the need of the hour especially at pre-service teacher education programme. Pre-service training needs to be improved and properly regulated both in public and private institutes. So that it is not handled by incompetent teacher educators.

This can be achieved if the curriculum being practiced is based on sound practical and skill oriented activities (Dutta *et al.*, 2013). With the implementation of certain flagship programmes for providing universal access to elementary education, there has been multifold increase of student enrolments and provision of schools. To cater to the growing demand of schooling there has been increase of teacher requirement at schools. States across India have instituted a wide range of initiatives to recruit new teachers in contract mode as a stop gap initiative. Many a times the teachers are paid less and without a teaching certificate to teach students. The shortfall of teachers is forcing the school systems to adopt flexible standards and recruit contractual staff as an immediate solution to the bigger problem. The contractual recruitment will not solve the teacher shortages that the schools face, but it has created inequality. Moreover, it is a bigger source of demoralization among teacher community. Different job profile for equal work has created multiple bottlenecks in quality outcome. However, providing a meagre salary and recruiting less qualified candidates are always under controversy. The political interference in teacher placement is also rampant. Even though the temporary nature of employment positively addresses the issue of teacher shortages, but it deteriorates teacher motivation and creates teacher inequality. Effective teachers are central in delivering quality education and good teaching thrives only in a favourable environment. Therefore, it is an education system which is crucial for teacher motivation. Management of whole education system affects teacher morale as most decisions that affect teachers are made outside the school, with minimal direct involvement of teachers. The quality of the teaching workforce is a major consideration in any nation's aspiration to achieve an educational system of high quality. To improve teachers' self-image and their importance as role models for students, it is time to build stronger links between schools

and the communities to enhance the status of teaching. To make teaching an attractive career choice, both financial and flexible working conditions need to be provided to expand the potential supply pool of teachers and attract people into teaching. Quality teacher training, infrastructure, teaching resources and effective teacher management mechanism must go hand in hand to get the desired result in schools. Inclusion of para teachers must be a well thought out process otherwise the immediate quick fixes of teacher supply will prove to be wrong (Patra, 2013).

This qualitative research makes an attempt to identify these key educational outsourcing activities together with the risk involved and issues that the institutions typically face in carrying out these activities and how it might manage the results. The findings are encouraging. There are number of processes in education which have the potential of being outsourced resulting in the improvement in quality and delivery of education through reduction in costs and thus enabling the institution to concentrate on its core competency, *i.e.* teaching (Chowdhury, 2013).

Conclusion :

The Government schools in Punjab portray a dismal scenario as they lack adequate infrastructure and staff. People don't trust the government education system only the children of poor and migrant labours take admission in these schools. Even such basic necessities as drinking water and toilets are conspicuous by their absence in a large number of schools. Although the purpose of education is to detect talent proactively and the purpose of school education is to guide the child's discovery of himself and identify and nurture his potential to the fullest. Teachers must perceive children as seeds to be nurtured and not as clay to be moulded. So, adequate attention must be given to quality education especially at primary and secondary levels so as to move are essential forward in establishing a knowledge society.

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