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“VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA : WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO SELF – FINANCING COURSES”

TOPIC : A BRIEF REVIEW

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Today , I propose to review briefly the main educational developments of the post independence period, to analyse the factors which have created the crisis in which we now find ourselves.

The Educational Situation in 1947:

We began our freedom on a fairly low level of attainment in education in almost all respects. We then had 17 universities and 636 colleges (with a total enrolment of 238000 students), 5,297 Secondary Schools, 12,843, Middle Schools with two million pupils (which means that only one child out of every eleven in the age group 11 – 14 was enrolled) and 1,72,661 primary schools with fourteen million pupils (which implied not only one child out of every three in the age group 6 – 11 was in school). Vocational and technical education was but poorly developed. Both at the school and university stages, and the supply of high level trained scientific man – power was very limited. Educational inequalities were very large, especially between one region and another, between urban and rural areas, between men and women and between advanced and intermediate castes on one hand and scheduled castes and tribes on the other. The standards of education were generally unsatisfactory, especially at the school stage, with too much of emphasis on English and too little stress on mathematics, science and Indian languages. The percentage of literacy was only about fourteen and the total educational expenditure was just about Rs.570 million or less than half a percent of the national income. It was this challenging situation which the nation was called upon to reform when it kept its first tryst with destiny in 1947

Overall Policy:

The national leadership had realized that what the educational situation needed was a revolutionary approach which would bring about radical changes in objectives, structures, processes and organization of education – a dream which the national education movement had cherished since 1905.

This hope was unfortunately never realized, we did not attack the educational problem in its totality, but in an adhoc and piece meal fashion. We never provided education with the large financial resources it must have. We never put into education all that immense human effort which it always needs. We never tried to mobilize the community as a whole to support the expansion and improvement of education.

Consequently our overall achievement in education have not been impressive, except in a few sectors, and many of the basic educational objectives of a socialist society have still remained unrealized.

The Present Crisis in Education:

We have made a large investment in educational development. But several of our major educational objectives have yet remained unrealized and stresses and strains within the educational system have simultaneously increased to an greater extent.

On the financial side, the overall picture is disheartening.

On the human efforts inputs side, the picture is even darker. At present discipline among teachers and students has weakened and discontent has greatly increased. In many class room situations, the educational process just does not take place. The students are not adequately motivated to learn and the teachers are often uninterested in or incapable of teaching. The revitalization of the basic educational process throughout the educational system by the deep involvement of teachers and students has thus become an extremely difficult task.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN EDUCATIONAL PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

From the point of view of teachers, it may be said that they have never been actively involved so far in the formulation and implementation of any of these plans. It may, therefore, be said that this non – involvement of teachers is one of the major weaknesses in our system and unless it is effectively remedied, it will not be possible to promote the development of education in a big way.

If the system of institutional planning is adopted as the foundation of the planning process and if the institutional machinery for consultation with teachers in planning and development of education is created at the District, State and National levels on the lines indicated in the preceding section, the teaching community as a whole will be effectively involved in the preparation and implementation of educational plans.

Marxist Manifesto: "Teachers of all categories! Unite!" How can we create a unified teaching community in India? This will essentially need two main programmes:

➤ Changing of Attitudes:

The first is to bring about a change in attitudes which are often coloured by the relics of the old colonial traditions or by the caste system as reflected in

education. It is obvious that in the India of tomorrow which aspires to create a new social order based on justice, liberty, equality and the dignity of the individual, there is no place for such traditional and obsolete attitudes. All teachers belong to one community and are essentially equal and this feeling of brotherhood will have to be deliberately cultivated by all.

➤ **Institutional Set – up :**

Changes in attitudes are difficult to be brought about or maintained over a period of time unless they are supported by the appropriate institutional structures. If teachers of all categories are to cultivate a feeling of brotherhood, opportunities will have to be provided to them, through institutional structures of the proper type, to work with one another in common tasks and thereby to come to know and respect each other.

The education commission has recommended that universities should be involved intensively in programmes of improving school education through research improvement of curricular, discovery of new methods of teaching and evaluation, training of teachers, discovery and development of talent and preparation of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. This programme will provide opportunities to university teachers to work in close collaboration with teachers at all other levels.

While this unity of the teaching profession is a valuable strength which the teachers should cultivate to enable them to provide leadership in educational planning and development, it is not enough to meet the challenges of the situation. The teachers will also have to cultivate two other values or skills, interest and competence in educational planning, if they are to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

1). Interest :

It is unfortunate that teachers have so far neglected this important subject and not much interest has been evinced by the teacher's organizations.

2) Competence:

The teachers, either individually or through their organizations, will also have to develop the necessary competence in educational planning. For instance, the subject of educational planning and problems of Indian education should find a place in the curricula of all training institutions at all levels.

Summing Up

I will now close a note of appeal . the participation of teachers in the formulation

and implementation of educational plans can yield rich dividends, especially in programmes of qualitative improvement. Several of these programmes such as improvement of textbooks, adoption of better methods of teaching and evaluation, intensive utilization of available facilities, maintaining contact with the community, individual guidance to students, inculcation of social and moral values, etc. do not need much investment in physical or monetary terms. But their success depends essentially upon the competence of the teachers, their sense of dedication and their identification with the interests of the students committed to their care. But unless we make every effort to cultivate these skills and values, we shall not be able to participate effectively in educational planning and to discharge our responsibilities to education and society.

Education in India is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels: central, state and local. The Nalanda University was the oldest university system of education in the world. Western education became ingrained into Indian Society with the establishment of the British Raj.

India has made progress in terms of increasing primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately two thirds of the population. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the economic rise of India. Much of the progress, especially in higher education and scientific research, has been credited to various public institutions. The private education market in India is merely 5% although in terms of value is estimated to be worth \$40 billion in 2008 and will increase to \$68 – 70 billion by 2012.

However, India continues to face stern challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 25% of its population is still illiterate, only 15% of Indian students reach high school, and just 7% graduate. The quality of education whether at primary or higher education is significantly poor as compared with major developing nations. As of 2008, India's post – secondary institutions offer only seats for 7% of India's college – age population, 25% of teaching positions nationwide are vacant, and 57% of college professors lack either a master's or Ph.D. degree.

As of 2011, there are 1522 degree – granting engineering colleges in India with an annual student intake of 5,82,000 plus 1,244 polytechnics with an annual intake of 2,65,000. However, these institutions face shortage of faculty and concerns have been raised over the quality of education.

The credit for fostering education to the masses following independence in 1947 chiefly goes to the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. India's first education minister Maulana Azad envisaged strong central government control over education throughout the country, with a uniform educational system. However, given the cultural and linguistic diversity of India. Only higher education, which dealt with science and technology, came under the jurisdiction of the central government. The

government also held powers to make national policies for educational development and could regulate selected aspects of education throughout India.

The central government of India formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 and in 1986 and also reinforced the Programme of Action (POA) in 1992 to 2008. The government initiated several measures the launching of DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) and SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, ssa.nic.in India's initiative for Education for all) and setting up of Navodaya Vidyalaya and other selective schools in every district, advances in female education , inter – disciplinary research and establishment of open universities. India's NPE also contains the National System of Education, which ensures some uniformity while taking into account regional education needs. The NPE also stresses on higher spending on education, envisaging a budget of more than 6% of the Gross Domestic Product. While the need for wider reform in the primary and secondary sectors is recognized as an issue, the emphasis is also on the development of science and technology education infrastructure.

Children lining up for school in Kochi (Picture)

India's education system is divided into different levels such as pre – primary level, primary level, elementary education, secondary education, undergraduate level and post graduate level. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the apex body for curriculum related matters for school education in India. The NCERT provides support and technical assistance to a number of schools in India and overseas many aspects of enforcement of education policies.

School children, Mumbai (Picture)

The Indian government has also banned child labour in order to ensure that the children do not enter unsafe working conditions. However, both free education and the ban on child labour are difficult to enforce due to economic disparity and social conditions. 80% of all recognized schools at the Elementary Stage are government run or supported, making it the largest provider of education in the country.

However, due to shortage of resources and lack of political will, this system suffers from massive gaps including high pupil to teacher ratios, shortage of infrastructure and poor levels of teacher training. Figures released by the Indian government in 2011 show that there were 5,816, 673 elementary school teachers in India. As of March 2012 there were 2,127,000 secondary school teachers in India. Education has also been made free for children for 6 to 14 years of age or up to class VIII under the Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009

There have been several efforts to enhance quality made by the government. The District Education Revitalization Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalize primary education in India by reforming and vitalizing the existing primary education system. 85% of the DERP was funded by the central government and the remaining 15 percent was funded by the states. The DERP, which had opened 160000 new schools including 84000 alternative education schools delivering alternative education to approximately 3.5 million children, was also supported by UNICEF and other international programmes.

The primary education scheme has also shown a high Gross Enrolment Ratio of 93 – 95% for the last three years in some states. Significant improvement in staffing and enrolment of girls has also been made as a part of this scheme. The current scheme for universalization of Education for all is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. Enrolment has been enhanced, but the levels of quality remain low.

Private Education

Dhirubhai Ambani School

According to current estimates, 80% of all schools are government schools making the government the major provider of education. However, because of poor quality of public education, 27% of Indian children are privately educated. With more than 50% children enrolling in private schools in urban areas, the balance has already tilted towards private schooling in cities; even in rural areas, near 20% of the children in 2004 – 05 were enrolled in private schools. According to some research, private schools often provide superior results at a multiple of the unit cost of government schools. However, others have suggested that private schools fail to provide education to the poorest families, a selective being only a fifth of the schools and have in the past ignored Court orders for their regulation.

In their favour, it has been pointed out that private schools cover the entire curriculum and offer extra curricular activities such as science fairs, general knowledge, sports, music and drama. The pupil teacher ratios are much better in private schools (1 : 31 to 1 : 37 for government schools and more teachers in private schools are female. There is some disagreement over which system has better educated teachers. According to the latest DISE survey, the percentage of untrained teachers (parateachers) is 54.91% in private, compared to 44.88% in government schools and only 2.32% teachers in unaided schools receive in service training compared to 43.44% for government schools. The competition in the school market is intense, yet most schools make profit. However the number of private schools in India is still low – the share of private institutions is 7% (with upper primary being 21% and secondary 32% - source : fortress team research)

Even the poorest often go to the private schools despite the fact that government schools are free. A study found that 65% of school children in Hyderabad's slums attend private schools. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 has provided for environment awareness, science and technology education, and introduction of traditional elements such as yoga into the Indian secondary school system. Secondary education covers children 14 – 18 which covers 88.5 million children according to the census, 2001. However, enrolment figures show that only 31 million of these children were attending schools in 2001 – 02, which means that two third of the population remained out of school.

A significant feature of India's secondary school system is the emphasis on inclusion of the disadvantaged sections of the society, professionals from established institutes are often called to support in vocational training.

A multilingual web portal on Primary Education is available with rich multimedia content for children and forums to discuss on the Educational issues, India Development Gateway is a nationwide initiative that seeks to facilitate rural empowerment through provision of responsive information, products and services in local languages.

Our university system is in many parts, in the state of disrepair. Almost two – third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters.

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States . The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (India), which enforces its standards, advises the government and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. In future, India will be one of the largest education hub.

As of 2009, India has 20 central universities, 215 state universities, 100 deemed universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 33 institutes which are of national importance. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions. The emphasis in the tertiary level of education lies on science and technology. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system.

Some institutions of India, such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), have been globally acclaimed for their standard of undergraduate education in engineering. The IITs enroll about 10000 students annually and the alumni have contributed to both the growth of the private sector and the public sectors of India. However the IITs have not had significant impact on fundamental scientific research and innovation. Several other institutes of fundamental research such as the Indian Association for the cultivation of

science (IACS), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), Harishchandra Research Institute (HRI), are acclaimed for their standard of research in basic science and mathematics. However, India has failed to produce world class universities both in the private sector or the public sector.

Besides top rated universities which provide highly competitive world class education to their pupils, India is also home to many universities which have been founded with the sole objective of making easy money.

Quality assurance mechanism has failed to stop misrepresentations and malpractices in higher education.

One of the approaches to make internationalization of Indian higher education effective is to develop a coherent and comprehensive policy which aims at infusing excellence, bringing institutional diversity and aids in capacity building.

Three Indian universities were listed in the Times Higher Education list of the world's top 200 universities – Indian Institutes of Technology, Indian Institutes of Management and Jawaharlal Nehru University in 2005 and 2006. Six Indian institutes of technology and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science – Pilani were listed among the top 20 science and technology schools in Asia by Asia week. The Indian School of Business situated in Hyderabad was ranked number 12 in global MBA rankings by the Financial Times of London in 2010, while the All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been recognized as a global leader in medical research and treatment.

The number of graduates coming out of technical colleges increased to over 700000 in 2011 from 550000 in FY 2010. However, 75% of technical graduates and more than 85% of general graduates are unemployable by India's high – growth global industries, including information technology.

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