

Education-The Inclusive Growth Strategy for the economically and socially disadvantaged in the Society

Dr. Meera Lal *

Introduction

"There is in our time no well educated literate population that is poor; there is no illiterate population that is other than poor." (John Kenneth Galbraith)

This simple but forceful message reiterates that education alone can be the salvation for poverty, and up-liftment of the socially discriminated. In a populous country like India where even with education life is difficult, there can be little hope without it. Poor as well as middle-income group, rural as well as urban all are willing to send their children to school. There is solid evidence from all over the country for this increasing appetite for education across all social groups and across all income groups.

In recent years sustained and high levels of economic growth provide a unique opportunity and momentum for faster social sector development. Investing in education plays a key role in meeting the World Bank's social development objectives, which support inclusive growth, social cohesion, and accountability in development. Professor Amartya Sen recently emphasised education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. The policies have to focus on ***inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies***. Corporate India moving towards this sector is laudable, but it is clear that deficiency in education cannot be met by mere expansion of private schools in urban areas. "Public education is as indispensable as public health care, no matter what supplementary role private schools and private medical care can play"(Prof. Sen, 2008). Japan's Fundamental Code of Education of 1872 had resulted in total literacy by 1910 and by 1913 Japan was publishing books twice as much as U.S.

* Former Reader in Economics, University of Delhi. Presently, Senior Consultant, Indian Institute of Economics, Hyderabad.

Use of new technologies and scientific knowledge in the delivery of education services and promotion of scientific and technological interventions in this social sector is likely to have a significant impact not only on the quality of education services but also on its accessibility to the rural poor, in particular the disadvantaged sections. Access to quality basic education is imperative not only to reduce social and regional disparities, but also to achieve balanced growth and development. Availability of resources alone does not guarantee faster social sector development. Efficacy of the programmes will depend a lot on the manner in which States implement various social sector programmes, which are primarily in the domain of the States. States, which have given high priority to investment in education, have shown greater economic progress in recent years. An early concentration on building schools and providing equipment has given way to greater focus on quality and content, with an emphasis on primary education, to improve access for those previously excluded from education, particularly girls and child labour, the rural poor and weaker sections of society or other excluded minorities.

International History of the Right to Education

Education in the western world was considered primarily the responsibility of parents and the Church. Despite Education being regarded as a 'pre-existing and natural right', it did not find a specific mention in the classical civil liberties instruments such as the *English Bill of Rights (1689)* and *the American Declaration of Independence of 1776* or the *French Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789*.

The Versailles Treaty of 1919 was the "first instance of international recognition of right to education' to the Polish minorities. Later in 1924, *Declaration of Geneva* under the auspicious of League of Nations **implicitly** recognized children's right to education and later in 1959 formed the *Declaration of the Rights of Child*. By 1988, some fifty-two countries had made an **explicit** mention of Right to Education in their Constitution.

As early as in 1948, adopted by the United Nations, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in its Article 26 (1) had stated, "Everyone has a right to education, which

has to be free at least at elementary and fundamental stages”. UNESCO in the Convention against Discrimination in Education emphasized the equality issue in education on December 14, 1960.

The recent Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring report 2008, released by UNESCO marks the midway in the ambitious movement to expand learning opportunity to every child by 2015. The UNESCO defined six EFA goals:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met to equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programme;
4. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015;
5. Improving all aspects of quality of education and ensuring excellence so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and in essential life skills.

Quality in Education

Quality education has different connotation for various communities throughout the world. However it is generally agreed that priorities are common and can be stated as:

- *A vision for the school that sets the future direction;*
- *A more transparent system which provides the parents, the child and the community information about the school performance;*
- *Teachers to be effective more as facilitators of learning;*
- *A conducive school environment;*
- *A higher level of community participation that supports learning;*

- *An understanding of explicit (caste, religion, gender bias etc.) and implicit (access to transport facilities, cost of educational material, etc.) discriminatory practices that marginalise children and pre-empt education for all;*
- *Ability of the state education system to deliver appropriate skills to be effective in the context of the immediate community and the contemporary needs of the society at large.*

Quality Education would thus encompass all those processes that enable the community to define its vision of education; accountability then would assume a new meaning – a sense of ownership to realise this vision.

Right to Education in India

In India the right to free and compulsory education was retained in Article 45 of Part IV of the Constitution that incorporates The Directive Principles of the State Policy, thus making a distinction from the Fundamental Rights. The most relevant interpretation of Article 21 from education point of view was the Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgement (1993). The Court ruled that Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy must be read in harmonious conjunction with Article 21 since right to life and personal liberty loses its meaning if a child is **deprived of elementary education** (Unnikrishnan v.State of Andhra Pradesh, 1993, Supreme Court of India, 217).

However, though this Article 21A has provided renewed opportunity to reduce the increasing inequality in education at the elementary level and achieve the goals of justice –social, economic and political, it has yet to acquire the stature of other fundamental rights. The recent report of the CABE (Central Advisory Board of Education) Committee (2005) advocated Free and Compulsory Education Bill.

In Articles 45 and 46 there is provision of Early Childhood Care and Education to children below the age of six years. – The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years. **For promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled castes and Scheduled**

Tribes and other weaker sections, the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Regarding the expression “weaker sections of society” the Supreme Court has directed the Central Government to lay down appropriate guidelines.

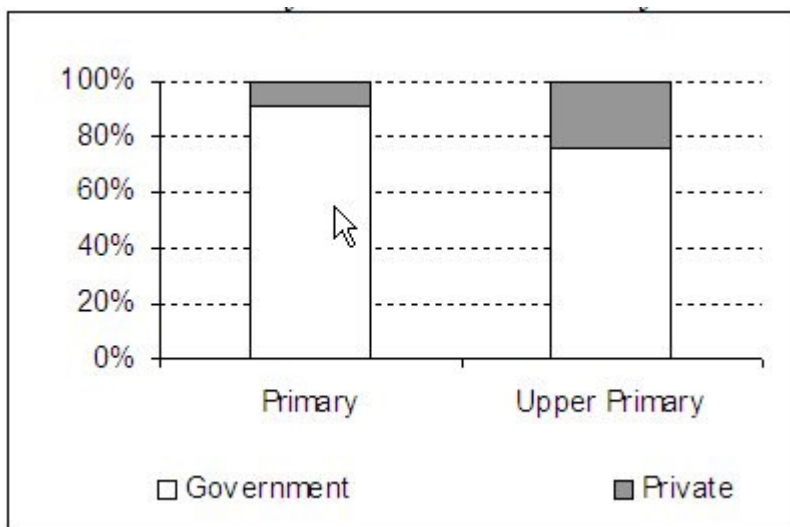
Recently, the 93rd Constitution Amendment Bill making education a fundamental right for children between six and 14 has secured the Parliament's nod. With the law backing the Centre's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Human Resource Minister, believed that all out-of-school children would now be able to attend school. The minister described this as the second revolutionary step after adult suffrage.

The Right to Education Bill

- State shall ensure a school in every child's neighbourhood. Every school shall conform to certain minimum standards defined in the Bill.
- Government schools shall provide free education to all admitted children. Private schools shall admit at least 25% of children from weaker sections; no fee shall be charged to these children. Screening tests at the time of admission and capitation fees are prohibited for all children.
- School Management Committees (SMC) mostly composed of parents will manage government schools. Teachers will be assigned to a particular school; there will be no transfers.
- The National Commission for Elementary Education shall be constituted to monitor all aspects of elementary education including quality.
- There is mixed evidence on the ability of SMCs in improving quality of schools and learning outcomes of children.
- This Bill will cost the exchequer between Rs 3,21,000 crore to Rs 4,36,000 crore over six years in addition to the current expenditure on education. This is estimated to be an increase of between 1.1% and 1.5% of GDP.

Table -1

Percentage of Government and Private Schools (2006-2007)



The Bill states that private schools have to provide 25% seats for weaker sections until Grade VIII. There is no obligation for continuation of education of such children in higher grades.

The Bill ignores the 0-6 age group — commonly referred to as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). While a child of this age obviously doesn't go to school, documented and research studies by Mina Swaminathan, Venita Kaul and others show that ECCE has a positive impact on emotional and intellectual growth. Most importantly, ECCE also addresses the needs of women and older siblings (especially girls) that have to leave work and school respectively to look after toddlers. This is tantamount to a selective withdrawal of rights available to children through the Unnikrishnan judgement of 1993, which declared education a fundamental right for all children up to 14 years.

Education Indicators in India

Right up to the mid-1990s a welfarist approach dominated the development and educational arena. The assumption was that the problem lies in the abject poverty of families and that providing relief or support could enable them to pull themselves or their

children out of a difficult situation. There was an unspoken belief that the problem is with the ‘people’ and not the existing ‘system’. The decade of the 1990’s saw renewed interest to improve access to primary and upper primary schools in India through the mobilisation of national and international resources. Though by 2003, 86.96 percent of habitations had a school within 1 km. and 78.11 percent had an upper primary school within 3 km radius, significant inter-state differences yet persist. This is evident from the table below:

Table-2

Percentage of Rural Habitations Having Primary and Upper Primary Schooling facilities (1993 and 2002)

Sl.No.	Name of the State	Primary				Upper primary			
		Within Hab. Up to 1 Km				Within Hab. Up to 3 Km.			
1	Andhra Pradesh	69.73	78.49	88.57	93.91	13.82	24.49	65.40	74.73
2.	Karnataka	60.36	67.44	83.75	88.41	24.71	30.66	85.32	88.26
3	Maharashtra	64.70	67.64	84.22	91.17	25.37	28.95	78.42	78.18
4	Orissa	48.96	51.54	82.42	82.93	13.47	19.77	77.24	73.55
5	Rajasthan	51.11	53.41	74.58	79.84	14.59	21.07	64.43	78.26
	INDIA	49.79	53.04	83.36	86.96	13.87	18.45	76.15	78.11

Source: 6th and 7th Educational survey (2005). NCERT, Government of India, New Delhi.

Also, while expansion of schooling led to tremendous increase in enrolment across the country, it did not address the needs of all children of the school-going age. Even though the total number of girls and SC children who enrolled in schools rose substantially, several girls and children from deprived communities (working children, residents of far

flung habitations, SCs/STs and nomadic groups) never enrolled. Severe social barriers to meaningful participation of children from some communities continue to exist.

When India signed the UN sponsored Child Rights Convention in 1991, there was a conscious introduction of a rights-based framework to educational access and children's participation in education. From mid 1990s, many International Non-government Organisations in collaboration with domestic NGOs turned their attention to schools and adopted a holistic approach. They focused on improvement in infrastructure, facilities, teachers and supplies coupled with individual incentives like uniforms and books to children- addressing both schools as well as children's issues. However, there was nevertheless the realisation that significant section of the population continued to live in abject poverty and struggled to feed and clothe, let alone educate their children.

The turn of the Century saw a marked shift from the *child-centred approach* to *community development programmes* to make a dent in the education scenario. The donors realised that well administered individual incentives worked up to a point, but had little impact on the overall environment of the children. There was also a realisation that in the absence of livelihood security and a caring/supportive environment, the gains of individual sponsorship remain limited. Nevertheless, experiences with an integrated approach has shown new concerns and it is being felt that the individual child cannot be ignored, since in many instances the poorest continued to be left out of the beneficiary frame. Once again the new approach is a return to the child-centred approach to ensure a child's right to education.

Though the literacy rates across the country increased impressively from 52.21 per cent in 1991 to 65.38 per cent in 2001, the country still has more than 296 million illiterates of age 7 & above and male/female differential in literacy is also high at 22 percentage points. The literacy of Dalit women in Rajasthan is 1/5th of the national average.

Prima-facie, it seems that the Census data do not present the true picture of the literacy status of the population. There may be measurement errors in enumeration also, which may be because of a variety of reasons:

- First, those who are treated as literates, many of them may be illiterates. Their ability to read and write with understanding is questionable. This can be checked on sample basis. The external evaluations conducted in the past also support this argument (NLM, 1994).
- Second, many a time when children in households are reported to be in schools, the enumerator unconsciously treated them as literates, which may not always be true. In all practical purposes, a child of Grade I was treated as literate in 2001 Census so as the Child of Grade II. A child aged 9 or 10, if reported enrolled in school, may also not necessarily be literate because of the lateral entry. Many of them may still be in Grade I or II. The grossness in primary enrolment is in the tune of about 20 per cent (NCERT, 1998a), majority of them are over-aged children. This supports the argument that the number of literates and also the literacy rates reported in the Census are over estimated.
- Lastly, the majority of enumerators in Census 2001 were the local school-teachers. This may also perhaps be one of the factors that might have influenced number of literates.

Education is universally recognized as a central component of human capital. The role of education as a contributor to economic growth and its impact on population control, life expectancy, infant mortality, improving nutritional status and strengthening civil institutions is well recognized. Moreover, the social rates of return on investments in all levels of education much exceed the long-term opportunity cost of capital. *In normal course educated parents would send their children to schools. But where parents are not educated they may send their children to schools if there are enough incentives to attract and retain the children in schools. However it has been seen that as the child grows, the opportunity cost of sending the child to schools increases and incentives become less important. It has also been observed that socio-economic factors often come in the way of educating girls beyond a certain class. On the supply side the reasons observed for children not being in school extend from non-availability of schools, poor quality of education, including irregular opening of schools, poor learning environment etc.*

The total expenditure on education in India is currently 3.8 per cent of GDP (1998). Plan expenditure on education has also increased rapidly since the First Five Year Plan. A high priority was accorded to this sector in the Ninth Five Year Plan, with an allocation of Rs. 24,908 crore against an expenditure of Rs. 8,522 crore in the Eighth Plan, representing a three fold increase in funds available to this sector. The total Central Plan allocation for education has also been enhanced from Rs. 5,450 crore in 2000-01 (BE) to Rs. 5,920 crore in 2001-02 (BE). Out of this, elementary education has received the highest priority, increasing from Rs. 3609 crore in 2000-01 to Rs. 3800 crore in 2001-02 (BE).

The 11th Plan proposes 19.9% share for education. Roughly Rs. 2.85 lakh crore is proposed to be set aside for Elementary, Adult, Secondary and Higher Education. Top Planning Commission sources have said that in terms of percentage, this is almost 2.7 times the allocation in the last plan. For elementary education, Rs. 1,25 lakh crore is being earmarked, which is a major hike from the Rs. 30,000 crore allocated in the last Plan. Likewise the share of adult and secondary education is being increased to Rs. 6,000 crore and Rs. 53,000 crore, respectively. **The major increase in the budget for education is an attempt to achieve ‘Inclusive Growth’. Apart from increased financial allocations, the 11th Plan also envisages major reforms in education like introducing credit and semester systems along with exam reforms. There are proposals for reforms in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as well, in particular improving quality of learning, teachers’ recruitment and performance.**

Thus the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and its Programme of Action (POA), as reviewed in 1992, envisage improvement and expansion of education in all sectors, elimination of disparities in access, a stress on improvement in quality and relevance of education at all levels, along with technical and professional education.

Access to primary/upper primary education has improved further since 1993. The total enrolment at the primary and upper primary school levels in India has witnessed a steady increase. Total enrolment at the primary stage (grades I-V) increased by 5.91

times, from 19.2 million in 1950-51 to about 113.61 million in 1999-2000. Out of this, the relative share of girls' enrolment increased from 28.1 per cent in 1950-51 to 43.6 per cent in 1999-2000. Total enrolment at the Upper Primary levels (grades VI-VIII) increased by 13 times from 3.1 million in 1950-51 to 42.06 million in 1999- 2000.

Whereas the rising enrolment in elementary schools is a source of satisfaction, there is concern about the percentage of students actually attending school and those dropping out of the education system altogether. *Though dropout rates at the elementary education stage have declined over the years, they are still relatively high especially in the case of girl students for whom the rates are 42 per cent and 58 per cent at the Primary and Upper Primary stages respectively.* Within the education sector, elementary education has been given the highest priority in terms of sub-sectoral allocations. Several schemes have been launched by the Central government to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged and for strengthening the social infrastructure for education viz Operation Blackboard (OB), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS&AIE), Mahila Samakhya, Teacher Education (TE), Mid day Meals Scheme, Lok Jumbish, Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), Janashala etc. In 2001-02 significant steps have been taken towards achievement of the goals of UEE through a time bound integrated approach, in partnership with the States through launching of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. (SSA). The planning in SSA has been decentralized and highest priority is accorded to community ownership and monitoring. This programme will subsume all existing programmes including externally aided programmes in due course within its overall framework with district as the unit of programme implementation.

Thus, one of the measures for achieving the goal of Education for All (EFA) was the Ninety Third Amendment of the Constitution passed in the Lok Sabha on November 28, 2001, to make the right to free and compulsory education for children for 6-14 years of age a Fundamental Right and also, to make it a Fundamental Duty of the parents/guardian to provide opportunities

The Existing Scenario in Education for the weaker sections

The paramount need for making rapid strides in living standards, health, education, gender justice, welfare and development of SCs/STcs and other backward classes continues, due to India's HDI ranking. The SCs number 166.64 million (16.2 per cent) and minorities 189.4 million (18.42 per cent) according to the 2001 Census. According to the Mandal Commission the OBCs constitute 52 per cent of the country's total population and large majority belong to the weaker section of the society. The Approach Paper to the Eleventh Plan categorically states that the plan will seek to reduce poverty, disparities across regions and communities by ensuring access to basic physical infrastructure as well as health and education for all and recognize gender as cross-cutting theme across all sectors. While the approach paper provides the assurance, some major initiatives consistent with the broad outlines of social sector development agenda laid down by the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) have already been taken in 2006-2007.

From the Census 2001 the population figures stand at 1029 million with a projected increase to 1400 million by 2026. The well known "demographic dividend" will manifest in the proportion of population in the working age group of 15-64 years increasing steadily from 62.9% in 2006 to 68.4% in 2026. The actual tapping of this demographic dividend will however depend a lot on ensuring proper education. India is one of the least literate societies in the world. Literacy rates in the States of Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh were below 37 % according to 2001 census. For SC/ST students the figures are even below 24%. Andhra Pradesh ranks 22nd for literacy among 27 States in the country and stands last among all the Southern States. There are also considerable rural-urban differentials in the Gross Primary School Enrolment Ratio (GPER) particularly among girls.

The following table provides a macro analysis of drop-out rates among SC and ST boys and Girls in some States in India.

Table-3
Drop-out Rates Among SC and ST Boys and Girls (2006)
(Percentage)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>AP</i>	<i>Karnataka</i>	<i>Maharashtra</i>	<i>Orissa</i>	<i>Rajasthan</i>
Dropout SC Boys I-V	44.09	6.12	17.02	44.99	53.07
Dropout SC Girls I-V	44.12	14.03	18.21	42.36	36.29
Dropout SC Boys VI-VIII	63.41	27.19	30.03	63.73	69.65
Dropout SC Girls VI-VIII	68.87	51.61	38.22	67.17	80.07
Dropout ST Boys I-V	63.29	4.88	34.42	59.58	52.19
Dropout ST Girls I-V	68.47	4.96	42.82	63.19	38.31
Dropout ST Boys VI-VIII	76.80	53.81	59.12	76.49	70.42
Dropout ST Girls VI-VIII	82.49	56.80	65.14	76.56	79.63

Source: Select Education Statistics (2006), Government of India, New Delhi.

From the above it is clear that Andhra Pradesh ranks highest in drop out rates in all categories of SC/ST children, with girls being greater victims in all classes. In most of the cases the axe falls on the girl child. *With meager income, many parents with four or five school-going children on an average find it difficult to spend equally for the schooling needs of all children. So the variations of choices emerge, namely educate one child, withdraw the girl child, push the better performing child to another level or let the girls continue in government schools and move the boys to hostels. These are the extra costs among all the factors that deter the poorest from accessing schools even if they are in the same village.*

As per 2001 Census, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis declared as Minority by Government notification 1993, constitute 18.42 per cent of total population. The main factor responsible for socio-economic backwardness of the minority communities, particularly the Muslim community, is the lack of access to the common school system. This is particularly true in the case of Muslim girls. In 2006-07 financial year, the corpus of the Maulana Azad Education Foundation which provides financial assistance to implement educational schemes for the benefit of the educationally

backward minorities has been enhanced to Rs,200 crore from Rs. 100crore. The High Level Sachar Committee in 2005 made some important recommendations relating to measures to be undertaken for “high quality education”, good quality government schools specifically for Muslim girls. Further health facilities, drinking water sanitation at village level will serve the overall interests of all communities. *Quality Education is thus an important tool to uplift the weaker sections to enable them to join the main stream for inclusive growth.*

Target group and primary beneficiaries

The GOI and the UN system recognize that certain sections of the population remain marginalized. Therefore it is the goal of the Joint GOI-UN System Education Programme to target girls and the marginalized population of children in selected areas and to improve their attendance and performance in primary education. Children who are marginalized by the formal education system are usually scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, and working children, those belonging to minorities, disabled children, and children in remote areas. Girls from these groups are severely marginalized.

(a) Education of tribal children

The Indian Constitution assigns special status to the Scheduled Tribes (STs). Traditionally referred to as adivasis, vanbasis, tribes, or tribals, STs constitute about 8% of the Indian population. There are 573 Scheduled Tribes living in different parts of the country, having their own languages, which are different from the one mostly spoken in the State where they live. There are more than 270 such languages in India. According to the 2001 census, the tribal population in India is 74.6 million. The largest number of tribes is in undivided Madhya Pradesh (16.40 million), followed by Orissa (7 million) and Jharkhand (6.6 million).

There were 16 million ST children (10.87 million of 6-11 years and 5.12 million of 11-14 years) as of March 2001, out of the total child population in India of about 193 million in

the age group of 6 to 14 years (*Selected Educational Statistics – 2000-01, Government of India*). Education of ST children is considered important, not only because of the Constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities.

An important development in the policy towards education of tribals is the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, which specified, among other things, the following:

- Priority will be accorded to opening primary schools in tribal areas;
- There is need to develop curricula and devise instructional material in tribal languages at the initial stages with arrangements for switchover to regional languages;
- ST youths will be encouraged to take up teaching in tribal areas;
- *Ashram* schools / residential schools will be established on a large scale in tribal areas;
- Incentive schemes will be formulated for the STs, keeping in view their special needs and lifestyle.

The NPE, 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA), 1992, recognized the heterogeneity and diversity of the tribal areas while underlining the importance of instruction through the mother tongue and the need for preparing teaching/learning materials in the tribal languages. A working group on Elementary and Adult Education for the Xth Five Year Plan (2002-07) emphasized the need to improve the quality of education of tribal children and to ensure equity as well as further improving access.

The interventions being promoted in States under Janshala include:

- Schools, education guarantee centres and alternative schools in tribal habitations for non-enrolled and drop-out children;
- Textbooks in the mother tongue for children at the beginning of the primary education cycle, when they do not understand the regional language. Suitably adapted curriculum and the availability of locally relevant teaching and learning

material for tribal children. Special training for non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas, including knowledge of tribal dialect;

- Special support to teachers as per need;
- Deploying community teachers;
- Bridge Language Inventory for use of teachers;
- School calendars in tribal areas appropriate to local requirements and festivals.
- Anganwadis and Balwadis or crèches in each school in tribal areas so that the girls are relieved from sibling care responsibilities;
- Special plan for nomadic and migrant workers;
- Engagement of community organizers from ST communities with a focus on schooling needs of children from specific households;
- Ensuring sense of ownership of school committees by ST communities through increasing representatives of STs in VECs / PTAs etc. Involving community leaders in school management;
- Monitoring attendance and retention of children;
- Providing context specific intervention e.g. Ashram school, hostel, incentives etc

(b) Universalizing access

One of the challenges in providing education to tribal children relates to setting up school facilities in small, scattered and remote tribal habitations. The majority of the Scheduled Tribes live in sparsely populated habitations in the interior and in inaccessible hilly and forest areas of the country. Nearly 22 per cent of the tribal habitations have populations of less than 100 while more than 40% have population of 100 to 300. The rest have population of 300 to 500.

(c) Relaxed Norm for Setting up Schools

One of the reasons for poor access to schooling in tribal areas before the 1980s was the high norm on population, number of children and distance for opening new schools. Most of the states have relaxed these norms to enable setting up school even in small tribal

hamlets. This, along with other measures has improved access in tribal areas. *For instance, Andhra Pradesh has relaxed norms to set up schools in habitations even with 20 school-age children.* Some states have lowered the population size norm, especially for tribal areas. EGS centers can now be established even with 15 children. In remote tribal habitations in hilly areas of North Eastern states and Jammu & Kashmir, EGS schools can be opened with only 10 children.

The *Sixth All India Educational Survey (1993)* showed that 78 per cent of the tribal population and 56 per cent of tribal habitations have been provided primary schools within the habitation. In addition, 11 per cent of the tribal population and 20 per cent of tribal habitations have schools within less than 1 km radius. About 65 per cent of rural habitations covering 86 per cent of the total rural population have primary schools within the habitation or within a distance of half a kilometer, as against 56 per cent of tribal habitations with 79 per cent of tribal population. Mizoram and Gujarat have the highest percentage of population and habitations covered by primary schools within the habitations. Up to 95 per cent of the tribal population and 85 to 90 per cent of the tribal habitations in the states are provided with schooling facilities within the habitation.

(d) Quality improvement

Most of the states recognize the need to address issues related to teachers' attitudes, medium of instruction, textbooks and materials, curriculum and pedagogy and teaching-learning process in tribal areas.

An increasing number of researchers strongly advocate the use of the mother tongue or home language as medium of instruction in early stages of education. This assumes greater significance in the context of education of tribal children because their mother tongue is often quite distinct from the prominent languages in the state or regional languages. ST children face problems wherever teachers do not speak their dialect at all. From the perspective of language, it is desirable to have a local teacher from the same tribal community.

Although research evidence has demonstrated the positive consequences of bilingual or multilingual schooling on cognitive development and social interaction processes, tribal children would require special programs to be able to cope. The Constitution of India allows the use of tribal dialect (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction if the population of the tribe is more than 100,000.

Many states, in particular, Andhra Pradesh has developed bilingual dictionaries. Teacher training has been organised in Warangal and Vizianagarem districts. Research studies have also been undertaken on the issue of language and maths learning by tribal children. It has been decided to use the multi-level kits developed for tribal areas in Vishakapatnam district and also in other tribal areas.

Sponsored Schemes for Education

To achieve all the above objectives, the Centrally Sponsored Schemes for elementary education were streamlined and rationalised, through a Zero-based budgeting exercise and all the schemes were converged under five major schemes: District Primary Education programme (DPEP), and the subsequent Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001; National programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meals Scheme); Teachers Education Programme; Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV); and Mahila Samakhya- most of these activities under the National Literacy Mission as well as special programmes for promotion of Early Childhood Care and Education, inclusive Education etc. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme was universalised at the primary level, with the Central Government providing conversion costs, enhanced transport subsidy in addition to supplying food grains free of costs to States. A 2 per cent Education Cess has been levied on income tax, excise duty, custom duty and service tax since 2004 for financing basic quality education. A Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh, a non-lapsable fund for funding SSA and the Mid Day Meal is being established with the proceeds of the Education Cess.

The enrolment drive of the Tenth Plan has given fruit, which has resulted in a reduction in the number of out-of-school children from 42 million at the beginning of the Plan to 8.1 million in September 2004. Nine states are in the high literacy rate category and 13 states have shown a higher rate of increase than the national average (12.63 per cent) during 1991-2001. Regional, social and gender variations in literacy and in elementary education however continue to remain serious areas of concern. The literacy rates of SCs (54.69 per cent) and STs (47.10 per cent) are far below the national average.

We are still not out of the clutches and conundrum of Macaulay's education system and a more rational approach is required from all fronts. It is yet to be seen how the introduction of the Right to Education Bill of the Government will benefit the poorer sections of the society and how it will hasten in the right direction the convergence of education and health for the rural poor. Among the obstacles to equity and access that may come to light are;

- Forms of marginalization and discrimination, in particular SC/ST families;
- The burden that poor or marginalised households may face from informal payments and school maintenance costs;
- Problems in obtaining textbooks, school supplies, school clothing (social discrimination if there is no uniform dress supplied by schools);
- The link between school attendance and how beneficiaries perceive educational quality and relevance;
- *'Difficult to teach a child on an empty stomach'*- Problems of malnutrition, lack of proper vision and timely check-ups, personal hygiene, lack of basic amenities (water, sanitation etc.);
- Lack of proper curriculum integrating education and health. Lack of awareness campaign with regards general health, hygiene and preventive measures with regards to common ailments both among students and parents.
- Lack of a participatory approach from Gram Panchayats, NGOs, parents and children towards a more practical delivery of convergence between Education and Health.

Conclusions

From the above it is clear that statistics are very telling. Among all school dropouts, Adivasis and Dalits form the biggest group. Further, the largest group amongst them are girls. Moreover, at times, abusive behaviour in schools serve to reinforce caste divisions, for example in Orissa, in one particular school, as part of midday meal scheme, children were segregated on caste lines and served on that basis. In another school in Rajasthan, a particular group could be identified as belonging to a different section based on the gunny-sacks where they were made to sit.

Education, thus for the weaker sections of the society needs to become the panacea and an inclusive growth strategy for their economic and social up-liftment.

- Education has special significance for the SCs and STs who are facing a new situation in the development process to admit themselves properly in the changing circumstances.
- Education not only helps them to promote their economic development but also helps to build their self-confidence and inner strength to face new challenges.
- The SCs and STs have been the targets of economic exploitation, harassment, atrocities, injustice, etc due to their illiteracy linked to their poverty.
- To eliminate these social problems, Government of India has made special provisions in the Constitution through its Articles 29(1), 46,15(4),350-A to promote education among SCs and STs.

India has to fulfil its commitment of UN Child Rights Charter signed 38 years earlier. Some states are moving towards this but for a significant scale it would require drastic changes:

- a) To look at children of weaker sections as citizens with rights rather than objects of charity.
- b) Their interests must become the centre-piece and touchstone of policy.
- c) These policies must seek to address the root causes of children's problems, not just their superficial manifestations.

- d) Emphasis has to be on decentralization, public-private participation, community involvement and a radical change in the mindset of the people.
- e) Finally concerted efforts from all must overcome apathy, cynicism, and sheer inertia and reconfigure priorities to put children ahead of everything else.

From the above one can conclude that some concerted efforts is all that is required in particular in rural areas where the problem is at large to improve the quality of education for the weaker sections. *Community elders with their positive participation and involvement* can help solve many existing problems both financial and physical. Thus what is required is a *systematic, accountable and transparent approach* without piecemeal inputs. This would help to meet the challenges of universal access to quality education and betterment of our downtrodden still existing in our society.

References:

Books and Reports-

- Amartya Sen: (2007): *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, London.
- Annual Report 2006-07, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India.
- Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition. BWHC at a Glance. Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Bihar Education Project (SITAMARHI)
- Child Labour (Prohibition, Rescue and Restoration of Childhood) Act, 2007
- *Common School Education System* : 2007 Report by Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Prof. Muchkund Dubey on schools in Bihar.
- District Elementary Education Report Card: 2005-06, *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*, Government of India.
- Economic Survey, 2005-06, Government of India.
- Indira Kranthi Patham : *Unleashing the Power of the Poor from the Grassroots*, Department of Rural Development Govt. of A.P.

- Mehta Kapur Aasha & Andrew Shepard (2006) Ed. *Chronic Poverty & Development Policy in India*, Sage Publications, Delhi.
- Mehta Arun C. (2005): *Elementary Education in India-Where do we stand?* State Report Cards. NIEPA, New Delhi.
- *Successful Governance Initiatives and Best Practices: Experiences from Indian States*, Planning Commission, and Government of India.
- The Probe Team (PROBE, 1999): *Public Report on Basic Education in India*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- UNESCO World Education Report 1995, Paris, 1995.
- Working Group Report of the *Development of Education of SC/ST/Minorities/Girls and other Disadvantaged Groups for 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-2012)*, Government of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Articles:

1. Hanumantha rao V. (2226): *Growth of Elementary Education: Fifty Years of Andhra Pradesh 1956-2006*.
 2. Radhakrishnan R. & K. Hanumantha Rao and B.Samby Reddy (2006): *Extreme and Chronic Poverty and Malnutrition in India: Incidence and determinants* in Edited Book Mehta and Shepard.
 3. Ramchandran Vimala , Rishi Mehrotra and Kamaeshwari Jandhyala (2007): *Incentives in Elementary Education. Do they make a difference?* Journal of Education Planning and Administration Vol. XXI Number 2, April, 2007.
 4. Thomas P.V.: *Chronic Poverty in Rural Areas: the Role of Government Policy*, in Edited Book Mehta and Shepard.
-

Abstract

Education- The Inclusive Growth Strategy for the economically and socially disadvantaged in the Society.

Dr. Meera Lal

Investing in education plays a key role in meeting the World Bank's social development objectives, which support inclusive growth, social cohesion, and accountability in development. Professor Amartya Sen recently emphasised education as an important parameter for any inclusive growth in an economy. The policies have to focus on *inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies*.

For promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections, the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Regarding the expression "weaker sections of society" the Supreme Court has directed the Central Government to lay down appropriate guidelines.

Even though the total number of girls and SC children who enrolled in schools rose substantially, several girls and children from deprived communities (working children, residents of far flung habitations, SCs/STs and nomadic groups) never enrolled. Severe social barriers to meaningful participation of children from some communities continue to exist. The literacy of Dalit women in Rajasthan is 1/5th of the national average.

Statistics are very telling. Among all school dropouts, Adivasis and Dalits form the biggest group. Further, the largest group amongst them are girls. Moreover, at times, abusive behaviour in schools serve to reinforce caste divisions, for example in Orissa, in one particular school, as part of midday meal scheme, children were segregated on caste lines and served on that basis. In another school in Rajasthan, a particular group could be

identified as belonging to a different section based on the gunny-sacks where they were made to sit.

In order to achieve inclusive growth, the Centrally Sponsored Schemes for elementary education have been streamlined and rationalised, through a Zero-based budgeting exercise and all the schemes have been converged under five major schemes: District Primary Education programme (DPEP), and the subsequent Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) launched in 2001; National programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (Mid-Day Meals Scheme); Teachers Education Programme; Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV); and Mahila Samakhya- most of these activities under the National Literacy Mission as well as special programmes for promotion of Early Childhood Care and Education, Inclusive Education etc.

From the above one can conclude that some concerted efforts is all that is required in particular in rural areas where the problem is at large to improve the quality of education for the weaker sections. *Community elders with their positive participation and involvement* can help solve many existing problems both financial and physical. Thus what is required is a *systematic, accountable and transparent approach* without piecemeal inputs. This would help to meet the challenges of universal access to quality education and betterment of our downtrodden still existing in our society.
