

What Ails Primary Education in India? A Critique of Public Policy

Dr Ghazala Aziz, Dr Mohd Saeed Khan

Department of Economics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, INDIA

Email: ghazl2313@gmail.com, msk2313@gmail.com

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Abstract

Human capital is as important as the physical capital for growth of the economy and therefore economies require spending not only on the acquisition of capital goods like machines, tools, buildings etc they also require necessary human skill to make use of these productive assets. The returns on investments that are offered by these components of capital greatly differ in terms of time element as the gestation period for the human capital is fairly longer. It is this characteristic of latter that calls for the government's intervention in sharing the expenditure on human capital formation, especially in low income and overpopulated economies. India certainly belongs to this category.

Imbalances of vast magnitude can be observed in India's educational system. These imbalances are in terms of primary versus higher education, private versus public provided education and even Centre versus State government funded educational institutions. The latter brings into debate certain issues of federal polity also which is barely touched in this paper. Currently the most focused issue in India is the state of primary education. The paper is a critique of the way it is currently promoted.

A lot of activities could be observed in recent years to improve primary education in the country. This includes the enactment of Right to Education Act in 2009, imposition of specific tax – education cess. Therefore in terms of resource allocation there has been a manifold increase especially for primary education. But the big question being asked is if these resources are being spent judiciously? In other words as Lant Prichet puts it that fragile States usually suffer from what he termed as 'capability trap' as the State implicitly assumes (erroneously) the creation of apparatus would necessarily result in the functional efficiency also. If the approach does not work it amounts to a huge waste. Unfortunately the Annual Status of Educational Report (ASER) – 2010 point to very poor outcome in terms of quality as far as the primary education is concerned.

Present paper seeks to find explanation as to what went wrong in this sector and what could possibly be the way out from this 'big stuck'. The data we analyzed point to the fact there has occurred gradual decline in the social monitoring of this sector, resulting in near disappearance of accountability of those who are entrusted with the task of manning the

system – educators and administrators. Inability of democratic institutions to stem the rot has also been observed.

The data we have used for the study are both primary – though a small but representative sample, and secondary obtained from government and non-government organization. Certain comparisons have also been done with the private schools that have mushroomed over the last ten to fifteen years.

Keywords: Primary Education, Critique, Public Policy.

Introduction

A committed Head of a primary school complains to District Inspector of School in the State of Uttar Pradesh about the degeneration in the school which he was unable to arrest, receives a casual reply from the officer as if it was all as expected and normal. “What will happen to the nation then, asked the perturbed headmaster? To serve the nation children of the affluent class are studying in good English schools, so there is nothing to worry about, replied the officer. The above narrated incident reflects, to a large extent, the state of affairs in the government run primary schools in India around mid 1970s.

Thing got only worse since. The renewed initiatives began to be undertaken in 1990s to resuscitate publicly provided primary education. Various programsⁱ aimed at improving the state of school education were started which were merged into an ambitious program known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (universal education campaign) in the beginning of the current century. The efforts eventually culminated in the passage by Right to Education Act (RTE) which came into effect in 2009 which guarantees free education from class I to VIII standard to every child in the age group 6 to 14. This would entail the allocation of more funds and better infrastructure at the government funded schools.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2010 is the motivating force behind this paper. The report brings out a shocking reality (discussed latter in the paper) that exposes a poor correspondence between the resources spent and the progress achieved. Pritchett and Weijer (2010), a background paper for World Development Report, questions the premise, seems to be guiding public policies in developing countries – including India that creation of form will bring about the capability latter.

Present paper attempts to evaluate public policy and its execution with regard to primary education which is currently getting fairly higher allocations from the government budgetⁱⁱ both at the central as well as the state levels. Initial results from the renewed vigor to attain the goal of universal primary education are quite disappointing and it remains to be seen if such efforts will ever succeed in realizing the goal. It identifies the impediments that are needed to be removed – a task which is quite challenging. The paper seeks identify the causes for the large section of population preferring not to send their children to schools, and assess if public policy appreciates them.

Methodological Details

Hypothesis framed for the study is “*public policy failed to identify the genesis of the crises in school education and peoples’ lack of faith in it*”. The study is based on the primary data obtained from the small surveys carried out amongst the people who are stakeholders as far

as policy is concerned. Government's official data and the information in ASER-2010 are also used. Two types of surveys have been conducted over a small sample in two villages each in Aligarh and Farrukhabad Districts of Uttar Pradesh as also from two urban/semi-urban localities of the former with fairly high incidence of illiterate population. Another survey was carried out amongst the teachers and the students of Aligarh Muslim University, a central government funded university with both students and teachers are drawn from different parts of the country (though overwhelming majority of both the sections are from Uttar Pradesh where the university is located).

The above referred surveys were conducted at six different localities with sample size ranging from 67 to 79 from a population size of three to four thousand to ascertain peoples' preferences about school education. Respondents were chosen on the basis that they have school going children. While another one conducted in university community was to track the changes in the schooling pattern of the educated and educationally motivated section of the society. It consisted of 56 teachers and 192 students from a prestigious university with the total students' strength of over 25000 thousand and the faculty strength a little over 1500. Although respondents were selected randomly they happened to be, barring a couple of exceptions, from the middle income segment of society.

Since information have been gathered about peoples' preferences from very small sample and that too from one state it may not be statistically correct to draw the inference about the whole economy. But given the facts contained in ASER-2010, some of the aggregates of which have been reproduced in the following pages, there could be no confusion about the outcome from public policy. Inference about declining importance of government school, drawn from the data (collected from teachers and students from single university) may not be out of place as the teachers and students were hailed from many states. Finally, the end objective of the study is not to prove the contention the study leads to but to provoke a comprehensive research to verify or otherwise the tentative conclusions of the paper and to motivate the introspection of the public policy on education, especially the school education.

Capability Question

Given the amount of efforts and financial resources being currently put into the primary education and the delivery system in place in this country one may be afraid if India suffers from 'capability trap' (Prichett and Weijer, 2010), a situation in which efforts end up with creating only forms of capable modern state while functionality, assumed to follow, remains elusive. The resources spent to create structure that delivers would confront the constraint of incapability and consequently the expenditure would realize the functionality beyond a point. Capability, that comes through evolutionary process, requires that the preferences are accurately (or nearly accurately) are aggregated and resources are efficiently allocated. Then if certain task is attempted resources are made available in commensurate measure and utilized in efficient manner. Thus a perfect coordination is required amongst economy, polity and administration.

India is vibrant economy as reflected from the impressive growth rate – over five percent annually – it has maintained during last three decades. It has steered itself through several difficult situations like the balance of payment crises in 1991 (a phenomenon that drove it to the path of economic reforms which included certain structural adjustments), South East

Asian market crash of 1998 or the recent global financial crises. India is a flourishing democracy also that should be expected to gauge and aggregate social preferences correctly.

Problem lies with administration which is efficient at the top but thoroughly incompetent or corrupt (or both) at the block or the sub-divisional level. There exists a wide gap in terms of efficiency between the officers belonging to Indian Civil Service cadre and those who belong to Provincial Civil Services. Sub-ordinate staff – entrusted with the task of implementing the policies framed through political and democratic decision making – is worst and neck deep in corruption. Such type of administrative organization is the result of disproportionate privileges enjoyed by the members of central services and the neglect of sub-ordinate staff.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2010 brings to question the entire exercise of massive education drive funded by huge amount of public resources. Only about a quarter of children in class V standard are able to read sentence in English. Worse still, more than 50 percent children of class IV standard are unable to read English language words. In mathematics situation is not very good either. More than 60 percent children of class V can't do division; more than 40 percent children of Class IV standard can't do subtraction; about 45 percent children of class II can't recognize numbers 11-99. Further, there exist large scale variations across states where the figure for certain states is bad enough to conclude the schools are virtually doing nothing (Annexure I). Success or failure of any program can be judged against the targets the program is expected to achieve. At any rate presently the situation is far from satisfactory.

Fragile Economy Inherited and Choices Exercised

The economy inherited by independent India in 1947 was one of very low per capita income, inadequate amount of physical and human capital stock, widespread poverty (though the estimates on poverty were not available then), very low level of literacy, awfully poor social and economic infrastructure etc. Thus the challenge before the country was to expand education sector from a very low benchmark with abysmally low level of financial and human resources. So the need was to keep the priorities right as the limited resources were to be allocated to the sector which had within it different competing levels.

Pressure on the economy's resources was on account of the increase in population also as it grown in excess of two percent annually in the first four decades since 1951. Increase in population put additional pressure on the economy's resources as the task was not only to cater to the needs of rapidly rising population but resource had also to be devoted to various programs meant to control its alarming growth.

Things were not bad since the beginning as far as the quality of school education is concerned. The education imparted in these schools was not of such poor quality. Students from these schools were as good in terms of knowledge as any student from English medium private school except in matter of English language. The only worrying factor was the coverage as these government schools were not drawing children at the scale required to reduce educational poverty. But in terms of the quality of education these government schools were not far behind the private schools (that were only few). This inference is supported by the observation based on the survey conducted amongst university teachers who were largely the product of the government's schools. Things began to change in 1970s as the schools

were allowed to degenerate to the level from where it was difficult, if not impossible, to recover.

Table -I

*Survey Results About Schooling Background Of University Community
(Sample Size 56)*

Period Of Schooling	Area		Type of School		Medium		Income		
	Rural	Urban	Government	Private	English	Hindi/Others	Low	Medium	High
Before 1970	32	8	10	30	3	37	1	37	2
After 1970	1	15	4	12	9	6	-	11	5

Information gathered from university teachers (few of them the retired one) reveal that of those who did matriculation up to 1970 an overwhelming 80 percent have studied in government schools with Hindi or the regional language as the medium of instruction with vast majority of them coming from rural areas with the family's income grossly insufficient to send their children to cities. Rural areas these respondents belong to did not have any private schools. The handful of those studied in private schools were the children of government employees posted in big cities or from the upper middle income strata who could have afforded to send their children to boarding schools. These facts suggest the government schools were doing reasonably better as their products succeeded in getting the highest educational degree (PhD) - except in medicine where people go in for supper specialization after masters' degree - and could compete to become university teachers in almost all streams including medicine (the highest degree in this discipline is Post-Graduation) and engineering the admissions and jobs in these branches are fairly competitive in India

The reverse is true of those who got their school education after 1980. Majority of the respondents in this category are students. With the exception of those came from West Bengal or Kerala overwhelming majority got school education from private schools in English medium from urban areas.

Where did the things then go wrong? The structure of school education created by the government served, despite poor infrastructure, much better till at least the end of 1970s before beginning to degenerate. Private schools till this time were those run by either missionaries or trusts and were confined to few big cities and the hill stations. Such schools were largely providing good quality education but were catering to a limited segment of population that was financially well-off. Admissions to the higher level courses including job oriented professional courses were being fed by the products of government school in good measure. Thus there was only limited amount of competition between those between those

studied in government schools and the private schools (serving largely the urban elite) as far as opportunities at higher education were concerned.

Two things emerge from above observation; one, government schools could be as good as any other private school in matters of imparting knowledge (difference could be in terms of personality grooming). Two, in some states like West Bengal and Kerala they are still doing relatively better. These are the states where the institutions of local governance (Panchayati Raj Institutions) are most effective. These are the states where the devolution of powers to third tier of government has been much better with former being the state with 100 percent literacy.

State of higher education was not very good either. Its rapid expansion was definitely the need of the hour but at the same time primary education was to be expanded to cater the need of rapidly growing population.

Table-II

Plan Expenditure on Education In India (Rs Crore)

Sector	First Plan 1951-56	Second Plan 1956- 61	Third Plan 1961- 66	Fourth Plan 1969- 74	Fifth Plan 1974-79	Sixth Plan 1980-85	Seventh Plan 1985- 90	Eighth Plan 1992- 97	Ninth Plan 1997- 2002	Tenth Plan 2002- 2007
Elementary Education	870 (58)	950 (35)	2010 (34)	3743 (50)	5913 (52)	8414 (32)	28494 (37)	103940 (48)	163696 (66)	287500 (65.6)
Secondary Education	83 (5)	510 (19)	1030 (18)			5344 (20)	18315 (24)	52311 (24)	26035 (10)	43250 (9.9)
Adult Education	--	--	--	126 (2)	248 (2)	1533 (6)	4696 (6)	11421 (5)	6304 (3)	12500 (2.9)
Higher Education	117 (8)	480 (18)	870 (15)	1883 (25)	3188 (28)	5604 (21)	12011 (16)	20944 (10)	25000 (10)	41765 (9.5)
Others	227 (15)	300 (10)	730 (21)	936 (13)	1071 (9)	2729 (11)	1980 (3)	7398 (3)	4314 (2)	6235 (1.4)
Technical Education	215 (14)	490 (18)	1250 (21)	786 (10)	1015 (9)	2563 (10)	10833 (14)	21987 (10)	23735 (9)	47000 (10.7)
Total	1512 (100)	2730 (100)	5890 (100)	7474 (100)	11435 (100)	26187 (100)	76329 (100)	218001 (100)	249084 (100)	438250 (100)

Source: Government Of India, Ministry Of Information And Broadcasting: India, 2005, P.200 And Ministry Of Human Development Resources.

1960s witnessed reckless expansion of higher education. A cursory glance at table-II reveals how the plan expenditure on elementary education kept on declining till 7th Plan reverse the trend which continues till today. Lack of direction is evident from the allocations in various plans for different levels of education till 7th Plan. In this pursuit quality was seriously compromised and primary education was seriously ignored in terms of resource allocations.

Thus from mid 1970s till early 1990s the expansion of primary education was led almost exclusively by the private sector. So one can observe three distinct phases in independent India as far as the government schools are concerned. First, period 1951-1980, in which a reasonably good (taking into account the constraints) school education structure was created

in the 1950s itself which worked reasonably well till the mid 1970s and began to degenerate thereafter. At least there was no obvious private public divide nor was the difference in the quality of education imparted in government schools in urban and rural India except that the rural areas did not have schools beyond class V or in some big villages and small towns up to class VIII and High School. This is the period characterized as low and stagnant rate of economic growth with government schools doing reasonably better as their product (students) could found their ways forward.

The results of such efforts were not that bad. Literacy rate in India between 1947 and 1981 has increased from 15 percent to over 40 percent. This increase realized over a period of three decade might look ordinary but if viewed against the phenomenal rise in population which has increased from 355 million to over 660 million (nearly doubled up) in the corresponding period. It was estimated that in 1978 over 100 million students out of 250 million children under the age of 14 years were enrolled in the schools as against 23 million in 1947.ⁱⁱⁱ The lapse on the part of the government has been that it failed to maintain and gradually upgrade the existing school education structure. But the momentum was lost. What actually happened was dire opposite of it.

Second phase is the period from the late 1970s to the early 1990s. During this period Government' schools were allowed to degenerate to the level from where the recovery was/is extremely difficult. Students' enrolment declined considerably with the actual attendance declining even more. Teachers' absenteeism was a common phenomenon. No students studied up to class V could have imagined to be admitted to any reasonably respectable school. Paradoxically this was the period of accelerated economic growth.

Third phase from the early 1990s till now could be characterized as the beginning of efforts to salvage governmental structure of school education. Various programs were initiated to draw more students, school attendance was incentivized by the provision of mid-day meal to be cooked and served in the school premises, and construction of toilets for girl students. Latter could perhaps be responsible for increase in girls' enrolment, though the empirical results are yet to emerge to establish such correlation. To mobilize financial resources central government began to levy surcharge over and above the personal income tax proceeds from which to be earmarked for education. Enactment of RTE in 2009 by the government further demonstrates its resolve to improve the state of school education in India.

Public Policy Stance

Independent India appears to be sensitive and pro active right from the very beginning as the committee appointed by it recommended the earmarking of central and state governments' revenue as well as that of local bodies to the tune of 10 percent 20 percent and 70 percent respectively. Whether or not this was sufficient or realistic is not the matter of scrutiny in this paper.

The information contained in (Annexure II) presents the brief summary of the policy interventions in education system. Kothari Commission's recommendations stimulated the expansion of higher education by setting up of more universities. This in a way marked the shift in focus away from the primary education. Kothari Commission recommended the expansion of higher education as well vocational education. That means more pressure on

the resources. This pressure has only increased as there were several other demands of the economy to finance its ambitious Five Year Plans (from second plan 1956-61) with the result that the goal of devoting 6 percent of GNP to education has remained elusive as yet.

National Education Policy (NEP) 1968 was the first comprehensive policy document recognized the need for bringing about some sense of uniformity between rich and poor as far as 10+2+3 levels of education is concerned besides other things. This was the important recommendation that has not been given the attention it deserved.

Education is not public goods and thus can well be provided through the mechanism of market. But if left to be provided through market on the price determined by it there will surely be the sub-optimum consumption of this good. This together with the positive externalities of higher magnitude makes it imperative for the government's intervention through budgetary allocations. Public policy on education in general and the primary education in particular can be evaluated against the goals sought to be achieved. From the economy's perspective it could be part of the long term manpower planning to maintain a desirable level of human capital stock. This will ensure the flow of human capital on the self sustainable basis. Besides, educated population will help realize various social and economic objectives. Success or failure of education policy depends a great deal on how individual members of society view it as also what objectives are sought to be realized. Individual's perception is greatly influenced by their socio-economic status.

If NEP 1968 sought to give a structure and direction to the education system in India that would essentially treat education to be merit good as only government could ensure the education of uniform quality up to certain level. The added advantage of such scenario would have strengthened school education without any class bias. NEP 1972 was perhaps the first policy initiative that encouraged the role of the private sector. Thus the path was paved for the government to virtually absolving itself of the responsibility of shouldering the rapidly increasing demand for more schools and creation of class divide in matter of schooling which was eventually translated into the quality divide.

Public policy on education and its execution appears to have suffered from priority dilemma resulting from attempting too many things at the same time rather than going step by step. The confusion is understandable if viewed against paucity of resources evident from the fact that a goal of spending 6 percent of GNP on education, envisaged as early as mid 1960s by Kothari Commission 1964-66 could not be realized as yet (Annexure III).

Stakeholders' Position

Survey carried out in the supposedly catchment areas for government schools reveal that people (largely in lower income group with monthly income ranging from Rs. 3000 to 5000,) have fine calculations about the cost of education and the possible returns from it. They are quite aware of the opportunity cost involved. They also realize that education up to less than a certain level will be insufficient to make their children more productive (they conscious about the indivisibilities involved) and enable them to earn more. Few of them are somehow managing to send their children to the private schools that target a segment of this class which is relatively more conscious and is willing to reprioritize its expenditure in favor of children's education. Those who are not sending the children to school for them weigh the income the child can earn more than the future income stream child will ensure after getting

education in these schools which will not enable their children to go for higher education because of the lack of necessary capability which these schools fail to inculcate. Some who are extremely poor send their children to school only for the sack of mid-day meal as it ensures at least one meal, so the quality of education does not matter to them.

The stark reality came out from this survey points to the fact that not a single person covered by survey is convinced about the usefulness of these schools. Further it can't be said that these poor people have this opinion because of their inability to judge the things in long term perspective. Their judgment is based on the following premises.

1. Education ensures monetary returns after a certain level. Less than that leads nowhere.
2. The quality of education in government schools (that are offering free education up to class VIII) is that it does not inculcate necessary skill required to pursue education further which will not be coming free.
3. In terms of skill formation they do not find distinction between a child who has studied up to class VIII and who has passed Class V so the primary education ensures only literacy and not skill to either earn or study further.
4. Loss of income on account of the child's staying away from work is weighed higher. So the free education and other incentives are simply outweighed. The same is not held against private schools of whatever quality they turnout latter.

These findings are suggestive of the facts the people are subconsciously aware of the rate of return analysis and the returns that are associated with different levels of education. The kind of education which is being currently promoted is the one that involves a conventional education up to class X (a high school certificate). Thereafter either to continue with the same stream up to class XII or to go for low skill vocalization. Various streams than become available which include engineering, medicine and other job oriented professional courses and off course the continuation into conventional stream that produces graduates, post graduates and Doctorates in Science, Commerce, Social Sciences and Humanities.

Incidentally in none of the abovementioned stream a child attains anything at the age below 19 and most of the programs attainments are accomplished in the age 23-25. Certain courses may take still longer. Thus at average net returns are negative up to the age 21 and increase continuously thereafter through the life span of an individual. Lifetime earnings are expected to decline after certain age, 60 and above. The amounts of life time earnings have positive correspondence with the level of education and professional expertise.

Public Policy and Primary Education

In view of the scenario discussed here questions that need answers is where does public policy on education stand in terms of addressing the real issue or even recognizing the crux of the problem? Evaluation of any policy can be done only on the basis of the objectives it seeks to realize. The explicit or implicit objectives could be following;

1. To create skilled man power for economy's future needs.
2. To enable poor population to earn more.
3. To raise the literacy level in the economy.
4. To discourage rural to urban migration.

Let the policy be evaluated on the above parameters one by one. As far as (1) above is concerned the policy does not seem to have correspondence with future need as no policy

document appears to have properly estimated the future man power requirement. Manpower demand projections should essentially be based on targets for GNP growth and its disaggregation into sectors, estimates of average labor output ratio drawn in these sectors and its future forecast, estimates of sectoral requirements and the population growth rate as well as its composition.

Given robust growth of the economy the requirement could be of the man power capable of handling various jobs. Vocalization at the level of school itself could have been the answer. One of the paradoxes of Indian economy has been the continued dependence of roughly 60 percent of population on agriculture while its share in GDP declined to close to 20 percent. The fact points to the buoyant growth in non-agricultural sector with low employment elasticity. Agriculture on the other hand has been suffering from stagnant or low growth rate but holding on to its labor absorbing position. Recent trends in labor employment also suggest the increasing non preference of rural labor for agricultural employment because of poor prospects for the growth of future earnings as the jobs offered by agriculture are largely those of unskilled labor on account of its slow progress for modernization.

Thus the education offered to rural population should have aimed at the creation of man power whose skill is utilized in either agriculture or it should have induced some other economic activities having strong linkages (both backward and forward) with agriculture. This would have helped agriculture modernize itself

Raising earning potentials of rural poor is not likely to be materialized as the observed lifetime earnings the education (provided in government schools) ensures, and the cost incurred on it are properly factored in. As discussed earlier the kind of education system in place there are largely negative returns up age of 22. Before this age though in few streams there could be positive net returns but lifetime earnings are substantially smaller. True policy of free education along with certain other incentives minimizes the direct cost to the families of the children but still they find it difficult to ignore the income forgone as these children earn (opportunity cost) in unorganized/informal sector. Expenditure on education is an investment in human capital with considerably longer gestation period as the cost and returns are not synchronized. Cost and returns (benefits) from expenditure on education can be explained through following equations. Earnings for a person (with certain qualification/skill) over a life time can be stated as under;

$$E_f = \frac{E_1}{(1+r)} + \frac{E_2}{(1+r)^2} + \frac{E_3}{(1+r)^3} + \dots + \frac{E_n}{(1+r)^n}$$

$$\text{or } E_f = \sum_{t=1}^n \frac{E_t}{(1+r)^t}$$

Where E_f is the expected life time earnings (from 1 to n) discounted at a rate (equal to the present rate of interest) to get the present value. Similarly the discounted value of cost (direct and indirect) can be written as;

$$C_f = \sum_{t=1}^n \frac{C_t}{(1+r)^t}$$

For the favorable disposition on the part of rational individual E_f should be greater than C_f . In this context governments policy of free education up to class VIII and its possible extension reduces the C_f and should help motivate people for education as they are believed, and rightly so, to be guided by net returns involved. The fact that has not been brought for consideration is that the value the targeted class attaches to the income forgone, its judgment about the affectivity of the education their children receive in government schools and their inability to afford the education after certain level which is not that subsidized.

The fact that returns begin to flowing in after huge amount of cost has already been incurred acts as deterring factor and gets reinforced by the quality of skill created as found in ASER 2009. Therefore rather than incentives it is peoples' perception about the quality of product (education) that would draw the children to the schools.

Achieving higher *literacy rate* could be a small objective considering the amount of resources that have been devoted to the program. For, the definition of literacy followed in India an education level of, say, class II would have been adequate.

Disincentivizing rural migration could be the major objective sought through providing school education in the rural areas themselves as one of the major factors for migration is the lack of education facility in rural areas. Migration is a serious challenge the country is facing today as it puts extra burden on the existing urban infrastructure which the cities are incapable to bear. Migration of relatively better-off section of rural population results in the village economy loosing potential aggregate demand together with the scope of the potential benefits that would have accrued to it from human capital. Thus certain imbalances (regional, economic, infrastructural) could be attributed to the quality of migration.

The primary education system being put in place does not address this problem. The quality of education on offer is nowhere near the one in pursuit of which a segment of rural population migrate. Nor does it offer hope to that segment which migrate for better livelihood opportunities, which might however be belied as jobs are not created (for the skill these people possess) at the rate warranted by the magnitude of migration.

Concluding Remarks and Policy Imperatives

The analysis bring us to conclusion that in the absence of honest and efficient delivery system at the lower level of administration entire effort in universalizing school education is not likely to be materialized. What can be created at the most is only the form but functionality may remain elusive. To make the policy effective uniformity in the quality of school education would have to be brought about so as not only to make it a meaningful skill formation exercise but also to convince the population about it. This first step would attract that segment population first that migrate to towns for the purpose. Since this segment is supposedly influential section of rural population its joining the system would put pressure on the delivery system by bringing the accountability into the system.

Simultaneously, introducing in the education curriculum some kind of training in the vocations that could be utilized in rural sector itself should serve the purpose in good measure. Some budgetary allocations would also be required along with certain initiatives by the government for creation of such opportunities in rural sector.

Notes and References

- ⁱ Significant amongst them was the scheme of mid-day meal to the students in the schools.
- ⁱⁱ Higher allocations because the benchmark was substantially low and not in international comparisons.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The World Bank. World Development Report 1981 cited by Gandhi, Prem P. Economics of Education and Manpower Planning. In Uppal, J S (Ed) India's Economic Problems. An Analytical Approach. Tata McGraw Hill (1984). p 312-329.

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Annexure-I

Performance of States of India (Rural) - ACER 2009 : (%age of Children who can Read, Read English & Do Arithmetic)

States	Percentage of Children who can Read English					Percentage of Children who can Read					Percentage of Children who can				
	Capital Letters or More	Capital Letters or More	Words or More	Words or More	Sentences	Letters or more	Words or more	Std. I level Text or More	Std. I Level Text or More	Std. II Level Text or More	Recognise Nos. 1-9 or do more	Recognise Nos. 11-99 or do more	Subtract or do more	Subtract or do more	Do Division
	STD I	STD II	STD III	STD IV	STD V	STD I	STD II	STD III	STD IV	STD V	STD I	STD II	STD III	STD IV	STD V
Andhra Pradesh	83.9	78.5	42.1	59.2	37.3	74.8	61.8	68.8	68.8	58.6	78.4	69.5	44.5	65.9	44.2
Arunachal Pradesh	93.5	97.3	84.8	94.2	73.8	96.3	80.6	55.5	82.0	59.2	97.5	93.6	80.3	93.4	65.1
Assam	36.0	59.1	30.0	44.9	25.6	67.2	53.5	43.3	61.4	40.8	70.3	54.0	34.2	55.0	23.7
Bihar	33.4	83.1	31.4	49.6	31.3	57.0	50.3	43.7	66.7	57.2	59.0	53.4	45.5	68.9	52.1
Chhattisgarh	49.4	75.3	19.5	36.8	19.0	85.1	59.6	52.5	76.8	64.9	85.3	59.2	42.8	70.2	52.0
Goa	81.2	97.6	84.0	96.1	87.0	96.0	94.4	93.8	98.5	83.8	97.5	93.1	86.1	95.3	80.2
Gujarat	25.3	38.0	10.4	16.5	7.9	83.1	47.7	37.9	80.0	44.4	64.8	38.9	23.4	41.9	24.6
Haryana	65.8	86.2	47.3	60.5	43.8	76.8	64.5	55.3	71.3	65.8	77.4	66.7	53.0	68.1	54.9
Himachal Pradesh	72.5	92.4	63.5	84.5	63.3	85.0	75.4	65.7	86.0	73.2	86.4	82.5	66.1	84.4	64.1
Jammu & Kashmir	69.5	88.6	54.8	67.9	41.8	75.0	47.7	30.5	47.1	26.9	76.7	52.4	32.0	43.4	23.6
Jharkhand	41.8	70.1	21.7	40.6	18.1	66.5	46.9	37.7	62.7	47.8	65.9	48.4	32.1	56.0	31.8
Karnataka	37.0	53.8	18.1	27.1	15.6	79.2	58.2	46.7	66.4	47.2	76.0	58.7	28.0	46.1	21.7
Kerala	84.6	91.6	65.9	78.5	54.5	96.1	85.5	73.6	84.9	71.3	94.4	87.9	62.7	77.2	45.4
Madhya Pradesh	60.9	81.1	33.1	51.8	29.6	92.5	74.1	75.6	90.4	77.3	90.8	70.8	67.9	84.5	66.5
Maharashtra	40.1	64.1	30.8	50.5	34.6	88.8	82.0	74.6	90.2	73.8	89.1	74.1	55.8	77.9	51.2
Manipur	94.0	98.4	82.4	90.2	66.6	96.4	84.4	64.1	80.2	53.9	96.8	87.9	69.8	84.4	51.0
Meghalaya	79.9	93.3	58.2	78.7	57.0	85.3	59.1	48.2	62.5	52.2	88.9	73.6	45.9	69.5	32.6
Mizoram	81.4	94.6	73.3	87.2	57.8	85.2	82.7	58.1	76.3	58.8	86.0	82.7	67.3	82.2	59.5
Nagaland	93.5	96.0	71.9	84.8	68.0	93.9	71.5	50.1	70.1	60.6	96.6	83.4	57.4	73.8	62.0
Orissa	34.5	55.6	28.0	46.4	25.3	84.3	64.1	52.5	71.7	56.4	81.6	60.5	48.5	65.9	44.3
Punjab	67.7	83.4	39.9	58.0	34.5	85.6	61.0	51.0	75.5	64.3	82.7	59.5	50.9	73.3	48.9
Rajasthan	34.6	62.1	20.9	36.1	17.8	57.1	40.1	34.4	57.2	45.0	57.2	39.4	27.1	48.2	31.5
sikkim	90.6	97.8	89.9	91.3	80.8	93.2	81.0	61.2	82.1	54.9	96.4	86.3	64.8	79.2	49.1
Tamil Nadu	43.3	71.7	28.3	45.1	19.0	44.7	46.2	28.9	55.1	35.3	55.3	57.7	19.2	39.3	13.9
Tripura	80.4	85.7	33.5	56.7	22.7	93.0	51.9	35.8	59.2	27.4	94.5	71.6	44.6	59.3	24.1
Uttarakhand	61.7	77.7	37.4	55.0	34.5	75.5	65.6	57.8	74.8	68.1	73.7	59.6	42.8	65.7	45.7
Uttar Pradesh	34.8	58.0	16.2	27.1	14.0	56.5	41.3	31.4	51.0	37.7	54.8	36.0	20.5	36.9	21.1
West Bengal	56.9	74.4	35.4	52.2	27.1	77.0	57.8	50.9	70.9	46.0	79.9	58.6	43.8	63.4	36.5
All India	43.8	66.2	28.6	44.1	25.7	68.8	55.2	46.6	67.4	52.8	69.3	54.6	39.0	58.8	38.0

Source : ASER Reports for 2009 : <http://asercentre.org>

Annexure-II

Education Policy / Committee	Year	Recommendations
Kher Committee	1948-49	A fixed percentage of Central (10 per cent) and Provincial (20 per cent) revenues should be earmarked for education and that around 70 per cent of the total expenditure on education should come from the local bodies and provinces
Kothari Commission	1964-66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public expenditure on education should reach the level of 6 per cent of GNP by 1986 Vocationalization of secondary education Strengthening of centres of advanced study and setting up of small number of major universities of international standard.
National Education Policy	1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment on education to be gradually increased to reach a level of six per cent of national income as early as possible. Focus on science & technology and agriculture Provision of food and effective education at primary level (on a free and compulsory basis) Equality in education for rich and poor: common 10+2+3 education structure throughout India and eventually free schooling till class 10.
Secondary Education Commission	1972	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to assume certain direct responsibility for reorganization of secondary education and give financial aid for the purpose. Encourage private contribution through tax exemptions (income tax, property tax and custom duties) Industrial education cess should be levied for furtherance of Technical and vocational education at secondary stage.
42 nd Constitutional amendment	1976	Education transferred from list to concurrent list (School education under jurisdiction of both, the Centre and the State).
National Education Policy	1986 (with revisions in 1992)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource support for implementing programmes of educational transformation, reducing disparities, universalisation of elementary education, adult literacy, scientific and technological research, etc. will be provided. For this actual requirements will be computed at regular intervals and outlay on education will be stepped up so that more than six per cent of national income is allocated from eighth plan onwards. While the role and responsibility of the States in regard to education will remain essentially unchanged, the Union Government would accept a larger responsibility to reinforce the national and integrative character of education, to maintain quality and standards (including those of the teaching profession at all levels) and to study and monitor the educational requirements of the country. Additional resources to be raised by mobilizing donations, asking beneficiary communities to maintain school buildings, raise fees at higher levels of education and effecting savings through efficient use of resources.
73 rd and 74 th constitutional amendment	1992	Statutory recognition of local governments, and inclusion of school education in the list of its responsibilities. Local bodies to play an important role in financing and implementing education programmes.
Saikia Committee	1996	Need for an expenditure of 6 per cent of GNP on education with 50 per cent of it earmarked for primary education. Recommended additional expenditure of Rs. 40000/ crores over next five years on elementary education.
Tapas Majumdar Committee	1999	Estimated additional fund requirements for UEE – it was in the range of 137000 crores over the following 10 years.
86 th Constitutional Amendment	2002	Provide free and compulsory education of children between age 6 to 14 years, and provision of early childhood care and education for children below six years.
National Common Minimum Programme of present UPA Government	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise public spending in education to at least 6 per cent of the GDP with at least half this amount being spent on primary and secondary sectors. This will be done in a phased manner. A Cess of two per cent on all central taxes to finance the commitment to universalize access to quality basic education. A national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme, funded mainly by the Central Government, will be introduced in primary and secondary school. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme will be universalized to provide a functional Anganwadi in every settlement and ensure full coverage for all children. all northeastern States will be given special assistance to upgrade and expand infrastructure.
CABE Committee	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The additional financial requirement for universalising secondary education as per cent of GDP works out to be around 0.18 per cent in 2003-04 and to 0.86 per cent 2019-20. With 6 per cent of GDP earmarked for education, the shares of elementary, secondary and higher secondary (as % of GDP) will be 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Source: From MHRD website; Relevant committee reports

Annexure-III

Share of Expenditure on Education in GDP

Year	Percentage of GDP
1951-52	0.64
1960-61	1.48
1970-71	2.11
1980-81	2.98
1990-91	3.84
2000-01	4.28
2001-02	3.81
2002-03	3.78
2003-04	3.51
2004-05	3.35
2005-06	3.45
2006-07	2.78
2007-08 RE	2.87
2008-09 BE	3.02
Source: Economic survey 2008-09	