Primary Education and Economic Development

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Abstract

Education is the pillar of an economy. Education is the feature of economic development. Primary education is also dubbed as elementary education. In this paper primary education sometimes termed as an elementary education. Both the words primary and elementary mean something without which proper beginning cannot be made. And in this respect, primary education signifies the foremost and most basic education which lays the foundations for the subsequent levels of education, and at the same time which at least makes a person literate and endowed with some basic knowledge of the world without which may be viewed from various perspectives. Although primary education was not recognized as one of the Fundamental Rights in the constitution of India which was adopted in 1949, it found its place in the directive principles of the state policies signifying it as one of the major duties of the Indian state (as supplier of primary education) - though not obligatory as none of the Directive Principles bears any element of compulsion for the state as they were framed by the founding fathers of the Indian republic in the Constituent Assembly. Our feeling is that not only the quantity but also the quality of primary education need to be emphasised if the goal to create meaningful and capable human resources in this age of neo-liberal globalisation.

Purpose: Awareness for primary education and the problems of primary education.

Design/methodology/approach: comparative analysis of different districts of West Bengal regarding primary school.

Findings: Infrastructural problems are there in primary schools of West Bengal.

Research limitations/implications: primary data has been collected from West Bengal only.

Practical implications: There are many problems regarding physical infrastructure and problems related with teachers and problems faced by the students.

Paper type: Paper is related to economic development.
Introduction

Primary education is a socio economic need of a country. Primary education is the pillar of a country by which one country can develop. Primary education is also dubbed as elementary education. In this paper primary education sometimes termed as an elementary education. Both the words primary and elementary mean something without which proper beginning cannot be made. And in this respect, primary education signifies the foremost and most basic education which lays the foundations for the subsequent levels of education, and at the same time which at least makes a person literate and endowed with some basic knowledge of the world without which may be viewed from various perspectives.

One of the important qualitative components of development of a country is education. There exist a positive relationship between education and the development of a country. As the level of education improves the country will develop and vice-versa. So, improvement in human development, economic and social development depends upon the level of primary education (Kaushik, 2010, pp. 253-261). Primary education act as a vital factor of human resource development and for the sustained growth of the nation. Education in India, therefore, is the foundation on which the development of every citizen and the nation as a whole hinges.

Education is the principal instrument of developing human capabilities that provides the instruments for liberation from ignorance and oppression and an investment in human capital. Education is now widely valued not only for its intrinsic value but also for its functional value in the development of the human capital (Bhalotra and Zamora, 2006).

Importance of education:

Education is an important factor of an economy. To remove the poverty trap education is needed. Economies with low or high levels of education can escape the poverty trap, and inequality plays a key role in determining whether this occurs through a change in institution or an expansion of education (Steeten, 1984, pp. 973-978). Education is also needed to decrease the fertility rate which help to reduce the growing population of a country. The strong effect of overall primary levels of education, fertility declines and subsequent changes in age structure on improvements in the democracy indicator.

Even in most of the Third World republics which became liberated from the colonial rules, and adhered to democracy and welfare-stance as the basic characters of the newly
emerged states. India was no exception. Although primary education was not recognized as one of the Fundamental Rights in the constitution of India which was adopted in 1949, it found its place in the directive principles of the state policies signifying it as one of the major duties of the Indian state (as supplier of primary education) - though not obligatory as none of the Directive Principles bears any element of compulsion for the state as they were framed by the founding fathers of the Indian republic in the Constituent Assembly. Sixty-two years after India’s independence, many of children’s are still not getting schooling. Although a constitutional directive urges all states to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, India is still far from achieving it. (www.dw_world.de).

Problems of Primary Education:

The extent of primary education is quite low on India. The present scenario of primary education in India is quite unsatisfactory. Only 66% of the Indian people are literate (76% of men and 54% of women). It is very painful that many villages in India have no primary school. The poor performance of the basic schooling is that most of the primary schools are unattractive – physically and pedagogically. The official policy is that a primary school must have at the minimum two rooms, two teachers and a pupil teacher ratio of 40: 1. It must be located within a kilometres walking distance for a child (Ramachandran, Mehrotra, Jandhalaya, 2007).

To illustrate the problem of primary education some quantitative and some qualitative indicators are required. There are some quantitative and some qualitative indicators by which the quality of the primary education can be judged. Some of the indicators may be the cause or effect of the problem of primary education. The table of the cause indicators are shown below

Title: Cause Indicators

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There are some other indicators which are basically the effects of low quality of primary education:

- Drop-out ratio.
- Enrolment ratio.

**Quantitative Indicators:** The quantitative indicators are quantified and by quantifying it the effects of these indicators can be judged to assess the quality of primary education. Some infrastructural problems are regarding as quantitative indicators. There are two types of infrastructural problems:

- Physical infrastructural problem.
- Non-physical infrastructural problem

**Physical Infrastructure:** The main problem of primary education is related to physical infrastructure. Most of the primary schools are suffering by this problem. The space of the classrooms, teacher’s room, and office room is very short in primary schools. Due to inadequate space for classroom students are not properly accommodated by the schools. On the other hand the facility toilets male and female as well as teacher and student too are very poor in primary schools. The drinking water facilities as well as electricity facilities are not up to the mark. Half of India’s have a leaking roof or no water supply. 35% of the schools have no black board or furniture, and close to 90% have functioning toilets (Ramachandran, Mehrotra, Jandhyalay, 2007). There is no availability of playground for the student.

There are some other non-infrastructure problems which are related to student and teacher.

**Non –Physical Infrastructure:** This includes the problems related to students and the problems related to teachers.

**Problems faced by the students:** There is insufficient and low quality reading materials for students. As a result, the quality of education remains very low. Most of the students have no proper school uniform. The is no adequate play instruments for the students in many primary schools and also the students are not getting the facility of computer in primary schools. Due
to these problems related to the student infrastructure help to decrease the number of students in primary schools. The students are not getting the primary schooling. The another problem related to student infrastructure is the lack of adequate meal before attending to school what has usually been referred to as short-term hunger, an adverse impact on the child’s performance in school, her ability to concentrate as well as learn new concepts. (Ramachandran, Jandhalay, Saihjee, 2003 p .4994).

**Problems related to teachers:** Another main problem of primary education is teacher absenteeism, low quality teacher, inadequate number of teacher, and poor availability of teacher. Supply of education refers to both availability and the quality of school facilities materials and teachers. The lack of qualified special education teachers threatens the quality of education that students with disabilities receive. (Bonnie S. Billingsley, 2004, pp. 2-4). Due to the shortage of skilled teacher the quality of primary education does not improve. There are four major things related to supply factors. These are teacher’s characteristics and personal factors, teacher’s qualifications, work environment, and teacher’s effective reactions to work. The attitudes of teachers in urban areas remain a big issue. The social distance between teachers (who are middle class) and vast majority of children (who come from extremely poor families) reveals vast and abusive behaviour, derogatory language and punishment which in turn affect the self esteem and confidence of children. (Ramachandran, 2006, p.383). The teachers are not made accountable for learning outcomes of children, especially in the primary and middle schools where there is no board examination. (PROBE 1999, VimalaRamachandran 2002, Pratichi Education Report 2002, Jha and Jhingan 2002).

**Student Teacher Ratio:** In primary schools of India the teacher student ratio is very low. The Student teacher Ratio is defined by the ratio between student and teacher, i.e. the number of teachers in a school with respect to the number of students who attend the class. The student teacher ratio is 42:1 at the primary level, i.e. there is one teacher at every 42 students.

**Student Teacher ratio= Number of student enrol in school/number of school teachers.**

Rise in this ratio implies the number of students increase rather than increase in school teachers and vice-versa which is not desirable. So, to improve the quality of primary education the ratio should be reduced. Increase in teachers than increase in students is more required.
Gender disparity: Gender disparity is measured by the ratio between female participation in education to male participation in education. The gap between female participation in education and male participation in education is called gender disparity. High gender disparity implies the female participation in education is very low. Census figures projected during 1991–2001 (Selected Educational Statistics Primary Education 1999–2001 MHRD, Govt. of India) show male literacy to be 63.86% and 75.85% against female literacy of 39.42% and 54.16%. Out of 13,459,734 dropouts from Secondary schooling, 6.08% are males and 7.98% are females. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India. Effective literacy rate in 2011 were 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women. The low female literacy rate has had a dramatically negative impact on family planning and population stabilization effort in India (en. wikipedia.org/wiki/literacy –in-India).

Qualitative Indicators: These indicators are not quantified rather these are qualified to assess the quality of primary education.

Parental attitudes: Demand for education is created by the decisions that parents make largely on the opportunity cost schooling but also on the influence of cultural and religious factors. Children from poor households are not very regular. They tend to absent themselves for a range of reasons. Some parents said that they need their children at home for small chores especially during the heavy agricultural seasons, when a child is sick or when they have to migrate for work. (Ramachandran, Jhandhyala, Saihjee, 2003 p.4994).

For a long time, poor performance on the basic schooling front was attributed to a lack of schools and teachers on the supply side and poverty, parental attitudes, social barriers and prevalent social custom on the demand side. Significant progress has been on both fronts.

Teacher student relationship: The teacher student relationship is the most important factor to judge the quality of primary education. A good commitment between the teacher and the students help to improve the level of primary education. The distance between student and teacher should be reduced. The good behaviour of teacher and students also very important to hold the good relation between them.

Socio economic background of students: The belief that socio-economic status is a key determinant of student’s educational achievement and those individual teachers, schools and education system have a responsibility for ameliorating the disadvantage that may arise from low socio economic status. Socio economic disadvantage is generally associated with factors such as low-quality living environment, mobility, family, unemployment and
underemployment, lack of access to resources that stimulate learning such as books and preschool programmes, poor health and social discrimination. These circumstances equate with poor attendance, lower retention rates, less readiness for schooling and poorer average outcomes at school.

**Effects Indicators:** There are some indicators which show the effects of the above cause indicators. These are:

**Dropout Ratio:** Another problem of primary education is high dropout ratio. Recent research indicates that an important factor explaining both the high dropout ratio and also the persistence of out of school children in the stark fact that many of our schools are unattractive, physically and pedagogically. (Ramachandram, Mehrotra, Jandhyalay, 2007). 40% children in the age group of 6 to 14 years remained out of school s on March 2005, four years after the launch of the SarvaShiksaAviyan. Drop out ratio in 2002-2003 34.9% at the primary level.

**Enrolment Ratio:** Gross enrolment ratio: Total enrolment at an educational level irrespective of age as a percentage to the corresponding school age population. In India the enrolment ratio in education is very low. Many children are excluded from an education because of poverty, conflict, their special needs, their gender etc. Costs associated with education, e.g. school fees and school uniforms, personal text books, costs for teaching materials etc. Inadequate water and sanitation supply at the school need to work or help out at home, e.g. looking after ill family members help to reduce the enrolment ratio in education (Robert, 2011).

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Elementary education in India means eight years of schooling from the age of six. The 86th amendment to the Indian constitution made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6 to 14 years. (Chandrashekhar, Mukhopadhyay, 2006). The Govt. has made elementary education compulsory and free. But
the goal of universal elementary education in Indian has been very difficult to achieve till now. The union govt is preparing a free and compulsory Education Bill in order to make the 86th amendment to the constitution that has made elementary education a fundamental right, statutorily enforceable. State govt may follow enacting their own legislation. (Jhandhyala, Tilak, 2004 p.618). Until now elementary education in India is neither free nor compulsory. Free education is defined to refer to only tuition fee free education. The proposed bill goes a little bit forward, and state that free education should mean that no fees or charges of any kind are levied on students.

Most states with the poorest educational indicators have serious problems with the structure and sustainability of their pattern of public spending. The high achieving states have a relatively higher per capita expenditure on elementary education than the rest. The low per capita expenditure in the educationally backward states is the result of three factors: their low resources in general, relatively low fiscal priority attached to education by state govt. (Mehrotra, 2004 p. 987).

**There have been several efforts to enhance the quality of education made by the govt:**

**The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP):** This was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalize primary education in India by reforming and vitalizing the existing primary education system. Another programme

**DREP:** Another programme DREP had opened 160000 new schools including 84000 alternative education schools.

**SarvaShikhsaAbhiyan:** The current scheme for urbanization education for all is the SarvaShikhsaAbhiyan which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. In spite the govt's attempt to achieve this goal through the SarvaShikhsaAbhiyan, which has a special focus on girl children students belonging to disadvantaged families still do attend classes regularly. (Khasnabis, Chatterjee, 2007 pp. 2091 to 2098). SarvaShikhsaAbhiyan is funded entirely by domestic resources and provides the states with a strong initiatives backed by funding to tackle literacy among the young member of their population.

**Mid-day Meal Scheme:** The govt of India launched a new centrally sponsored scheme in mid – 1995 – The National Programme of Nutritional Support to primary education. Under this programme, cooked mid-day meals were to be introduced in all govt and govt aided primary schools within two years. In the intervening period, state govt were to allow
distributing monthly grain ration (known as ‘dry rations’) to school children, instead of cooked meals. Six years later, however, most state govt, were yet to make to the transition from dry rations to cooked meals. Mid-day meal can be seen as a form of economic support to the poorer sections of society. More importantly perhaps mid-day meals facilitate school participation among underprivileged children. This is likely to reduce future class inequalities, since each of education is a major source of economic disadvantage and social marginalization. In short, despite their innocent garb, mid-day meals are a significant challenge to the prevailing inequalities of caste, class and gender. The case for mid-day meals can be made from at least three crucial perspectives: educational advancement, child nutrition, and social equity. (Dreze, Goyal, 2003 p. 4673). One basic contribution of mid-dya meals to educational advancement is to boost school enrolment. Going beyond that, mid-day meals may be expected to enhance pupil attendance on a daily basis. A survey of primary education in selected areas of Dumka district in Jharkhand indicates that while incentives such as mid-day meal schemes are useful, the most effective input is community participation in the governance of the schooling system. (Rana, Das, 2004 p.1171). Earlier research on primary education in rural India suggests that mid-day meals enhance school participation, especially among girls. One recent study estimates that the provision of amid-day meal in the local school is associated with a 50% reduction in the proportion of girls who are out of school. (Dreze, Kigdon, 2001).

Another program related to primary education is the Integrated Child Development Scheme which is known as the ICDS program:

A major findings relates to the ineffectiveness of the preschool education component of the ICDS program in all (except one) centres observed in recent studies [NCAER, ICDS, Field study 1999]

Our discussion in the community raised the quantity of whether the ICDS program should indeed be the nodal points for preschool education. One proposal worth considering is de-linking the pre-school education component from ICDS and AWC, instead making it an integrated part of primary schools. Important spin-offs of this restructuring would be that children in the 3 to 5 age group could benefit from the universal mid – day meal programme, thereby improving1 their nutritional status. This is of particular importance for children from poor families. There are several such initiatives from across the country considering the importance of pre-school education in preparing children from primary schooling.
The socio economic condition affects the education. Low educational attainment implies under development of an economy where per capita income is very low. Adverse socio economic condition gives negative impact on education. Family, size, structure, income and employment pattern have all been implicated as bearing on educational achievement and personal adjustment. The attempt to identify the impact of parental involvement and family education on educational outcomes must proceed with the clear recognition that these processes will be influenced by a wide range of other factors and at the same time will work through a range of intervening processes (Desforges, Abouchaar, 2003, p. 14). Parents’ positive attitude towards child’s education is important in determining school attendance and academic achievement of the child. Favourable attitude towards schooling and education enhances parental involvement in children’s present and future studies.

Parental attitude is a measure or an index of parental involvement. A child, brought up with affection and care in the least restrictive environment would be able to cope up better with the sighted world. Therefore, the family shapes the social integration of the child more than a formal school. There are four basic parental roles- parents as educational decision makers; parents as parents; parents as teachers and parents as advocates (Tumbull, 1983). Since the parent's attitude is so important, it is essential that the home and school work closely together, especially for children with disabilities. The importance of parents is being partners in the education of their children. The role of parents should actively support and enrich the educational processes (Warnock Report, 1978). Parents should be recognised as the major teacher of their children and the professional should be considered consultants to parents (Korth, 1981). Parents’ psychological well-being and the ease or difficulties with which they decipher the cues that facilitate the socialisation process influence the personal and social development of the child. It is the parents who exert the major influence on the development of the child from birth to maturity. One of the most important attributes of parental attitude is consistency (Tait, 1972). As children mature into adolescence, family involvement in their learning remains important. Family involvement practices at home and at school have been found to influence secondary school students’ academic achievement, school attendance, and graduation and college matriculation rates (Dornbusch & Ritter, 1988). Despite its importance, however, families’ active involvement in their children’s education declines as they progress from elementary school to middle and high school.

Urbanization accompanied by sustained population growth due to large scale migration leads to mushrooming slum settlement. Thus, slums are a universal phenomenon
and exist practically in almost all cities across the world. Among various problems faced by the slum children of 6-14 years age group in achieving elementary education most significant are large family size, poor living condition, poor health, unfavourable home condition, and surrounding environment, migration, language problem, unstable occupation and economic condition, poor parental educational background and school environment. A large family size implies higher dependency ratio. In a family consisting of father, mother and three or four children of school going age where father is the only earning member, working in an unorganized sector with poor and unstable income and where all other family members are economically dependent on him then meeting the bare basic necessities becomes quite a tough job. In such situation the chance of providing quality education to their children or even helping them to continue their studies gets affected. The higher the birth order, the lower is the percentage of children not being enrolled or dropped out (Debi, 2001).

The national plan of action rightly acknowledges the principle of universalism and emphasizes assuring all children their due rights. This requires special initiatives that focus on equity and result in accelerated progress for disadvantaged children. Apart from children requiring special protection and care, there are also large segments of children who need to be supported and brought under the purview of effective policies. These include difficult to reach children of the urban areas who are regularly denied opportunities for leading healthy & creative lives. Strengthening the institutions and community action are extremely important for accelerating progress for children.

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