Short Communication

Is There Quality Education In India?

Raaz Maheshwari[1], O P Sharma[2] and [3]Vandana Joshi
1. Sh B R Mirdha Govt PG College, Nagaur, Rajasthan
2. Govt Banger College, Didwana, Nagaur, Rajasthan
3. Department of Political Science, SBRM Government PG College, Nagaur Rajasthan, India

"*Our university system is, in parts states of country, in a state of despair…In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low, almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality education parameters….I'm concerned that many states university appointments, including that of vice-chancellors, have been politicized and have become subject to caste and communal considerations; there are complain favoritism and corruption.*" These words were said by our hon'ble Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh in the year 2007, but the status of quality education in our country has changed in these five years. It has experienced increments as well as decrements.

Education in India has a history stretching back to the ancient urban centers of learning at Taxila and Nalanda. The Nalanda University was the oldest university-system of education in the world. Western education embedded deeply into Indian society with the establishment of the British Raj. Education in India falls under the control of both the Union Government and the states, with some responsibilities lying with the Union and the states. The various articles of the Indian Constitution provide for education as a fundamental right. Most universities in India are Union or State Governments controlled. India has made a huge progress in terms of increasing primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately two thirds of the population. India's improved education system is one of the main contributors to the economic rise of India. However, India continues to face challenges. Despite growing investment in education, 35 per cent of the population is illiterate and only 15 per cent of the students reach high school. The Indian government lays emphasis on primary education up to the age fourteen years (referred to as Elementary Education in India).

The Indian government has also banned child labour in order to ensure that the children do not enter unsafe working conditions. Education has also made free for children for six to 16 years of age or up to class X under the right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2003. The current scheme for universalization of education for all is Sarva Shiksh Abhiyan (SSA) which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. Enrolment has been enhanced, but the levels of quality remain low.

The focus of country switches on to the secondary education after primary education. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, has provided for environment awareness, science and technology education, and introduction of traditional elements such as Yoga into the Indian secondary school system. All the above are the main aspects of secondary education. According to the Census 2001, "every person above the age of 7 years who can read and write in any language is said to be literate." Government statics hold that the rate of increase in literacy is more in rural areas than the urban areas. Female literacy is 75.26 per cent. Within the Indian states, Kerala has shown the highest literacy rate of 90.02 per cent whereas Bihar averaged lower than 50 per cent literacy, the lowest in India. World Bank statics found that fewer than 40 per cent of adolescents in India attend secondary schools. The Economists reports showed at a basic level, over 60 per cent were unable to do division. And half dropped out by the age 14. Only one in 10 young people has access to tertiary education. People who have an access to higher education remain unemployed.

Following independence, India viewed education as an effective tool for bringing social change through community development and thus, the government laid its focus on rural education and its empowerment. The administrative control was effectively initiated in the 1950s, when in 1952, the government grouped villages under national programme which could control education in up to 100 villages. The community development programmes comprise agriculture, animal husbandry, etc. In each

of these areas of development there are several programmes, schemes and activities which cover the total community or target populations such as small farmers, artisans, women and in general people below the poverty line.

Despite some setbacks the rural education programme continued throughout the 1950s, with support from private institutions. Nursery schools, elementary schools, secondary schools and schools for adult education were setup. However, lack of financing, non-acceptability of low new ideas among India's poor and investments made by the governments yielded little results. Today, government rural schools remain funded and understaffed. Several foundations, such as the Rural Development Foundation, Hyderabad, actively build high quality rural schools, but the number of students is small. Thus, efforts of the government go in vain when the participation from the rural population is less. Sometimes, the participation and potential is immense, but the funds and investments lag behind.

The status of quality education in India has reached the extreme as it ranked sixth among the seven emerging economies of the world, in terms of education quality. The country has scored only 3.3 points in the study, in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary parameters, while Russia followed by Brazil topped the chart with 7.3 points. India was at the last position (2 points) in terms of quality of secondary education. The quality of tertiary education in India was lowest (0.1 points) among the other emerging nations. Moreover, in term of student enrollment for primary education, the country out stands as in India for every forty students, there is one teacher.

Serious attention needs to be paid to the education system. India may lose its competitive advantages against the other countries if corrective measures are not taken to strengthen the Indian education system quantitatively. India has to improve its quality education. Most of the students aren't taught in a practical manner in the school. The schools concentrate only on theory and marks rather than on practical knowledge. Most of the students in India lack practical knowledge after they come from secondary level of education as schools don't have adequate laboratories. When the students to teacher ratio is 40:1, it denotes that there is a shortage of teachers in India. India has to take precautions immediately to improve the quality education in India.

If the quality of education ha s to improve in India, it must be viewed in a business like comportment and not a 'welfare system' to keep maximum number of teachers employed. Each school can be a business unit and the government grants can be based on its success in doing its job in a competitive and effective manner. The measurement criteria should be based on the school's performance in 'educating' the child.

The government must continue to share the education responsibility with parents and industry, but it must shifts its focus from welfare from the teachers to society. If the government and the citizens join hands to work together and understand their responsibilities then the quality of education in India can be enhanced to a great level.