
STATUS OF INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GLOBALISATION

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Right from the well-planned and sound guru-shishya tradition (when a student while living in his teacher's house as Brahmachari with simple living and high thinking education) the education system has never remained free from problems. The status of education and its system has been changing. Today we live in an intensely interdependent world in which all the earth's peoples with their immense differences of culture and historical experience are compressed together in instant communication. The new phenomenon of globalization has, no doubt, made education more accessible, but the biggest challenge in education is to make globalization, work for the poor and integrate the nation's ethos without losing one's own identity (Tamang 2012: 43). Even the educational structures established in independent India are at stake and losing their content and spirit. As globalization progresses, we will continue to see many changes in Indian educational system.

Keywords: *education, independence, schemes, globalization prospect.*

Historical Sketch

Different systems and structures remained in regular practice to impart education in ancient, medieval and modern India. It was not meant for personal welfare or individual exhalation of a chosen few but for the welfare of all, the whole world rather the whole universe and it provided educational bias for all aspects of life. It laid emphasis on firm philosophical, cultural and sociological traditions of the country which was wedded to the Indian concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. Famous subjects taught in Vedic and later Vedic periods included grammar, mathematics, mineralogy, logic, morality-ethics, sciences in general and Brahmagyda along with knowledge of Atman and self-realization in particular. In the times of Mauryan Empire and Gupta the world-famous universities were established which attracted the students from all over the world for learning various subjects of their interest. Further in the medieval period, under the Muslim rule in particular, emphasis on urban education could categorically be observed. In this phase along with promotion in urban education and establishment of several libraries and literacy organisations, foundation of primary schools for learning, reading, writing, particularly religious prayers and secondary schools for teaching advanced language skills, exegesis, prophetic traditions, law (religious) and related subjects could be seen (Kumar 2012: 40–41). Thus, the Indian system of education as prevailed in ancient and medieval periods was, apart from prescribed subjects, meant for moral and spiritual uplifting of people.

In colonial India, under the British rule, education got another dimension. Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced English education in India through his famous minute of February 1835. The main purpose of this was to prepare a particular class of elite to

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strengthen the Rule. Later in 1844 through a Declaration the knowledge of English was made compulsory for Government employee. It made English medium schools very popular. Lord Macaulay quite clearly stated

we must at present do our best to form a class, who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

At large the new education system had served a double purpose for the British rulers – they got the credit for the amelioration of the Indian society. But at the same time, through it, they devised a unique method of distribution of power, kept balance of power and prolonged their rule in India. Modern education did produce much needed man power for lower levels of administration; it however, also generated groups of visionary national leaders, intellectuals and reformers during the second half of the twentieth century like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dadabhai Naoroji, Ferojshah Mehta, Gandhi, Jinnah, Ambedkar, Nehru and a host of others. The new intelligentsia class of India emphasized on education and science. They took upon themselves the responsibility to build a modern, open, plural, culturally rich, prosperous and powerful India out of a fragmented, poverty stricken, superstitious, weak, indifferent, backward and inward looking society (Kumar 2012: 40–41). Apart from all these the modern education system planned and implemented by the British had divided the whole of Indian society into many uncompromising groups. They adopted racial discrimination and many repressive policies in order to disintegrate Indian society.

Education in Independent India

With minor changes here and there, the education system basically remained the same after India's independence in 1947. Viewing the situation Karl Marx remarked that British, 'had a double mission in India, one destructive, the other regenerating; the annihilation of the old Asiatic Society and laying the material foundation of Western Society in Asia' (Dutt 1955: 476). The British rulers made English language the medium of learning and official language. The modernization in economic sphere led to political unification of the country and laid foundations for many democratic institutions. At the time the leaders of the national freedom movement were the products of formal educational institutions, usually of the Western variety. However, they made great and unprecedented efforts to make education process the basis of self-reliance in prevailing regional-national circumstances. As a result, many panels were formed to analyze the prevailing situation and requirements as per demand of time. Institutions were established for imparting education accordingly at primary, secondary and higher levels. Along with self-sufficiency of a man, the stress was laid on making high moral values, humanity and universal unity the part of the process. Education acquired importance in the development process not only because it has been an important criteria for political elite recruitment and is regarded as the prime mover in economic growth but also because it is believed that without expansion in education India cannot enter the necessary technological stage (Braj Kishor Jha 1983: 83–84). And through this an all-round development of personality was expected.

In this context it is necessary to note that only a sound education process can pave the way. For this a fourfold education process, which accords equal opportunity to one and all to acquire knowledge on the one hand and makes them adept of bringing coordi-

nation at all levels – from individual life to universal level – on the other can be capable to achieve the purpose. The fourfold education process comprises:

1. General education that is imparted at different levels according to prescribed syllabi and which ends with the earning of a degree – graduate, postgraduate, a doctoral or postdoctoral;

2. Physical education includes exercises to make the body and mind healthy and to fill them with agility, dynamism and constructiveness;

3. Moral education – to lead one to the righteousness and develop the sense of duty and responsibility on the one hand, and to safeguard those values on the other, which ascertain the identity of a human being and are also essential for the proper conduction of the system – from individual life to the universal; and

4. Technical or practical education is to make one self-sufficient while being imparted along with the general education, which can, in fact, play a vital role in making education process meaningful and to lead one to achieve the real objective according to its meaning and also the spirit at its root (Kumar 2012: 42).

However, the educational system, implemented in India, following its independence failed to achieve the desired results. It developed a complex in the minds of many educated Indians about the primitiveness of Indian society and about efficiency of its value systems. Apathy towards their value systems had made a large number of intelligentsia alien in their own country. It had disassociated them from their own way of living, classical roots and traditional knowledge. In addition, it also erected a wide gulf between common man and educated people. Quality of education, especially in government or government-aided educational institutions has also deteriorated to a great extent. The costly nature of quality education especially in private institutions has further alienated uneducated masses from the educated ones. Meanwhile, education is supposed to develop a positive thinking in learners, so that they could channelize their efforts, make their thinking-base broader and flexible, increase openness to information and enhance spirit to work hard and sincerely in a responsible manner in order to attain desired goals. The education system introduced in the post-1947 period miserably failed to inculcate these qualities in youth. In the circumstances based on the report and recommendations of Education Commission (1964–1966), the government under Indira Gandhi announced the first National Policy on Education in 1968 which called for a ‘radical restructuring’ and equalization of educational opportunities in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development (National... 38–45).

In line the government of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1986 introduced a new National Policy on Education and in the same year it was adopted by the Parliament. After the declaration of the new policy the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, announced the program of Action for its implementation. It laid emphasis on vocationalisation of education as well as adult education (Shant Bala 2005: 540). The new policy called for special emphasis on the removal of disparities and equalization of educational opportunities, especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled caste communities. It called for a ‘child-centred approach’ in primary education, and launched ‘Operation Blackboard’ to improve primary schools nationwide. The central advisory board of education committee or Janardhana Reddy Committee reported in 1992, ‘Every effort should be made to ensure that the constitutional obligation for providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years becomes a reality before we enter the twenty-first century’ (Extract... 1992: 398). By the

time with the coming of globalization the education system of India has undergone constant changes. The phenomenon of globalization is considered as the most widespread trend our country has ever witnessed. A globalized world is the one in which political, economic, cultural, social and educational events become more and more multidirectional but yet interconnected.

Literacy: An Essential Ingredient

In a country like India literacy is the key for socio-economic progress. It is defined as an ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. The earliest system of gurukul declined gradually and in British India a large number of English primary schools grew and correspondingly the literacy rate in India increased from 3.2 per cent in 1881 to 12.2 per cent in 1947. In independent India the provision of universal and compulsory education for all children in the age group from 6 to 14 years old was cherished as a priority in the Directive Policy in Article 45 of the Constitution. In a major breakthrough the Parliament passed 86th Amendment Act, 2002 to make elementary education a Fundamental Right for children. In order to provide more funds for education the Education Cess of 2 per cent was imposed on all direct and indirect central taxes through the Finance Act, 2004. Despite government programmes and efforts slow increase in literacy rate and wider gender disparity in the literacy rate continued to be an unhealthy sign for literacy prospect in the country.

In order to remove illiteracy a number of significant programmes have been taken up since Independence to eradicate illiteracy. Every issue that our society faces is like a link of chain which is connected to another, either directly or indirectly. In the Indian society the strongest link of that chain is illiteracy. Illiteracy is the mother of many issues since it gives birth to many other problems like poverty, unemployment, child labour, female foeticide, population burst and many more. India has been developing but at a very slow rate, this is not the fault of a corrupt government; it is only the matter of illiteracy. Literacy enables a person to think rationally, to be understanding and more responsible and to make his/her own decisions. A literate person is aware of all his fundamental rights and duties. Literacy is the ultimate solution to fight problems like communalism, terrorism and under development. Our government is of the people, for the people and by the people, but what is the use if people cannot even make the right choice? Illiteracy can bring down even the most powerful nations, so if we want to become a developed nation, the government should first eliminate illiteracy via introduction of effective programs with proper implementation and budget.

Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns of the Indian government since Independence. The need for a literate population and universal education for all children in the age group from 6 to 14 years old was recognized as a crucial input for nation building and was given due consideration in the Constitution as well as in the successive five year plans. Some of the important programs have included:

1. Social Education: The main elements were literacy, extension, general education, leadership training and social consciousness. The program was implemented in the First Five-Year Plan (1951–56).

2. Gram Shikshan Mohim: The movement for literacy in rural areas started in 1959 in Satara district of Maharashtra, and was later extended to other parts of the state. The program aimed at imparting basic literacy skills within a period of about four

months and by 1963, it spread to all the districts of the state. The program, however, suffered from a lack of systematic follow up and consequently, the relapse to illiteracy was massive.

3. Farmer's Functional Literacy Project started between 1967 and 1968 as an inter-ministerial project for farmers' training and functional literacy, the project aimed at popularisation of high yielding varieties of seeds through the process of adult education. The program was confined to 144 districts of the country where nearly 8,640 classes were organised for about 260,000 adults.

4. Non-formal Education: In the beginning of the Fifth Plan, a program of non-formal education for the 15–25 age group was launched. Although the scope, content and objective of the non-formal education were clearly spelt out, the understanding in the field was very limited and the programs were actually indistinguishable from the conventional literacy programs.

5. Polyvalent Adult Education Centres: Workers' Social Education Institutes and Polyvalent Adult Education Centres were reviewed by a group in 1977, which recommended adoption of Polyvalent Education Centres in the adult education programme for workers in urban areas. In pursuance of this decision, Shramik Vidyapeeths were set up in states.

Literacy is an instrument of social change. It empowers individuals and communities, generates an awareness of one's own potentialities and inner strengths equipping people to combat oppression, exclusion and discrimination. Since independence literacy has been given due recognition for social and economic development. It is observed that during 1951–2011, female literacy rate has been increased by 6.3 times whereas in case of male, it is just 2 times. The improvement of the literacy rate among both male and female was quite considerable up to 1961 but this pace could not be maintained during 1961–1971. Still the female literacy rate is 65.46 per cent as against the male literacy rate of 82.14 and we can notice that the female literacy rate is 16.68 per cent less than that of male.

In line the National Literacy Mission was set up in 1978 to boost literacy among females and in backward areas. The Mission launched the literacy program in all parts of the country during the 1980s. Hence results of the 1991 census showed the efforts of the Mission in terms of improvement to marginal extent. The gender gap in literacy was narrowed down in 1971; it increased in 1981 then narrowed down to 24.84 points in 1991, to 21.59 points in 2001 and to 16.68 points in 2011. Decadal difference in female literacy was constantly increasing up to 2001 followed by slight decline in 2011.

Table 1

Literacy Rate in India by Gender and Location

Year	Rural and Urban			Rural			Urban		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	12.10	19.02	4.87	34.59	45.06	22.33
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	22.50	34.30	10.10	54.40	66.00	40.50
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	27.90	48.60	15.50	60.20	69.80	48.80
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	36.00	49.60	21.70	67.20	76.70	56.30
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	44.69	57.87	30.62	73.10	81.09	64.05
2001	64.84	75.26	53.67	58.74	70.70	46.13	79.92	86.27	72.86
2011	72.99	80.89	64.64	67.77	77.15	57.93	84.11	88.76	79.11

Source: Census of India.

Even for the current Five Year Plan (2012–2017) the Planning Commission has constituted a working group on Elementary Education and Literacy, under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development. In terms of reference the working group will review the existing programs under Elementary Education and Literacy in spheres of access, enrolment, retention, dropouts and with particular emphasis on outcomes on quality of education by gender, social and regional classifications (Planning... 2011: 6). The group was entrusted to suggest improvements in delivery mechanism for effective implementation of various schemes/programs in the light of Right to Education (RTE) Act, passed earlier. It would also undertake an in-depth review of the implementation of MDMS, in terms of adequacy and effectiveness of the delivery systems and infrastructure and the impact of programs on school attendance and on improvement in the nutritional status of children (*Ibid.*). Among other things the terms of reference included that the working group would suggest measures for faster reduction in illiteracy in the country with emphasis on gender, regional and social dimensions and also incentivising states with higher literacy rates to achieve 100 per cent literacy during the 12th plan period.

Globalization and Indian Educational System

The term 'globalization' means an integration of economies and societies through cross country flows of information, ideas, technologies, goods, services, capital, finance and people. Cross-border integration can have several dimensions, namely, cultural, social, political and economic ones. In other words, the total education system of the world came under one roof. This requires a unification of teaching curriculum and methodology and upgrading of knowledge for the system to remain efficient and effective for the transformation of knowledge in justified manner to attain the goods of life. Globalization in historical context has a longer origin than most people are ready to acknowledge. Two trends in the 1980s and 1990s influenced educational policies all over the world. In education the changes brought by globalization have been manifested through various channels and mechanisms as reforms of structure, modes of financial administration and curriculum. In several countries, they were expressed in the adoption of neo-liberal policies that led to attempts of cutting public expenditure and maximizing the economic benefits of educational spending by increasing its efficiency and directing its goals to economic rather than social or cultural ends. A positive step in this direction, perhaps, is the study of the use of innovative assessment procedures. The primary goals of authentic assessment which appear with the educational needs of contemporary globalized era are:

1. To develop the learner's cognitive strategies for self-monitoring of progress.
2. To foster the learner's ability for higher-order thinking skills.
3. To measure the progress against learner's own development, not the norm; and
4. To provide more accurate evidence of a learner's abilities than traditional tests.

To the People of India in general and educated Indians in particular, globalization seems to be rather mild and well meaning, more like an imperceptible breeze, which blows in silently, fills up the psychological atmosphere, creates a mental mood, inspires an intellectual attitude and finally settles down as a cultural climate-pervasive protein and ubiquitous (Tamang 2012: 44). Since its coming, globalization exercises a profound influence on education and two significant developments may clearly be cited: the first is the advent of education as a business and profitable activity and secondly, the techno-

logical revolution has provided a new mode of delivering education. Especially the higher education system is increasingly becoming market-driven. Higher education has been a learning process and it enables us to become a good citizen of a civil society but this foundation of education is being seriously eroded by globalization and the market demand is influencing what is taught and researched in universities (The Times... 2002). As a result of privatization the system of education has widely proliferated and become profit-oriented that is sharpening the gap between the rich and the poor in terms of access to quality education in our society. In India, students and their abilities are marred due to various situations like unavailability of multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary institutes, lack of research-based tutoring and high fee structure. The well-off strata choose amongst the top notch options while the middle level group is left with fewer institutes, which are screened on different criteria.

In response to the globalization process the Government of India has viewed decentralization as a way to increase efficiency by giving more responsibility to local level functionaries, which in turn, is expected to increase motivation and accountability. And as a part of liberalization policy, it has been suggested that education should be progressively privatized and that access to it should be made subject to payment of appropriate prices. The Government, therefore, encourages the establishment of a larger number of private institutions and even private universities are also encouraged. Simultaneously, the mechanism to cater to the needs of those who cannot afford payment of high fees is also being evolved. But despite this there is no end of the fear that the process of globalization may apparently shape the perspective of educational reforms in favour of those who have already benefitted from the system as they are in a position to influence policy is haunting those who are not in a position to influence policy.

In the sphere of higher education India is the third-largest higher education system, only behind the US and China producing almost 2.5 million graduates every year. Hence there are enormous opportunities for professionals trained in Indian universities to pursue their career in teaching and research, in addition to opportunities available in industries and business. At present there are 425 universities and university-level institutions in India along with about 20,000 colleges including 1,800 women colleges. The total enrolment of students in universities and colleges is approximately 12 million while the number of teachers is 450,000 thousand (Didwania and Sharma 2010: 40–41). Despite the large educational infrastructure, the efforts to privatize higher education in India by encouraging private agencies to set up institutions of higher learning have enjoyed limited success in general education. Also, the quality of higher education in India is poor and faces enormous challenges in today's global world.

There is no doubt in the fact that globalization has created unprecedented new opportunities for sustainable development and poverty reduction; simultaneously it has posed great threats to employment and livelihoods, to the environment and to human society in general. In particular, there is an increasing possibility of erosion of national values by imbibing alien culture. In India, during this period of globalization, much of the contemporary thought has gone into the issues of programmed learning, multi-media teaching, macro-micro teaching, distance learning and other problems related to curriculum. No subject has been so much neglected as the development of humanistic values, creativity, cultural, moral, emotional and spiritual dimensions of teaching-learning process. There emerges a threat of erosion of rich and old culture of human

values. So, globalization has transformed education and will continue to do so, leaving us with a future that is more unpredictable than ever.

In the era of globalization to achieve peace and happiness, the interests of both the individual and the society should be taken into account. One cannot conceive of a society without individuals and the individual has no value without society. A truly composite cultural education will have to address simultaneously the requirements of global and national integration and the specific needs of particular culturally distinct communities, both in rural and urban settings. Globalization and spirituality together can bring peace and integrity to our life.

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