

# Policies and Interventions for Ensuring Quality in Elementary Education

Pranati Palai<sup>1</sup> and Soumen Nayak<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>DIET, Cuttack – 754032, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of CSE

ITER, S'O'A Deemed to be University, Bhubaneswar, India

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>pranatipalai@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>soumen.nayak@gmail.com

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**Abstract**—The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 (modified in 1992) envisaged universal access and enrolment, universal retention of children up to 14 years of age, and a substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning. In this regard, various schemes of education at national and state levels are proposed and launched. Operation Black-Board (OB), Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL), Programme of Mass Orientation of School Teachers (PMOST), Special Orientation of Primary Teachers (SOPT), and District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) are implemented in mission mode to accelerate universal access, retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps and improve the quality of education. Similarly Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 was implemented to achieve the objective of quality and compulsory education. In elementary education despite improvements in access and retention, the learning outcomes for a majority of children continue to be an area of serious concern.

**Keywords:** Elementary Education, Educational Policies and Schemes, Learning Outcomes, Quality Education.

## INTRODUCTION

India is a democratic country. Today adult franchise has been granted to every individual irrespective of the caste, creed, religion and sex. Unless the people of India grow in enlightened judgment and character, the democratic ideals cannot be made a living reality. India has been a land of learning throughout the ages, not in the sense that education has been universal but in the sense that learning has always been highly valued.

Elementary education is the first stage of compulsory education. In this regard it deserves the highest priority for arising the competence of the average worker and for increasing national productivity. Elementary education is crucial for spreading mass literacy, which is a basic requirement for economic development, modernization of social structure and the effective functioning of democratic institution. The constitution of independent India provides for

free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years. Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy lays down "The state shall endeavor to provide within ten years from the commencement of the constitution for free and compulsory education for all children until they attain the age of 14 years". Many efforts have been done to achieve the goal of Universal Elementary Education of a satisfactory degree.

Universalisation of elementary education basically evolves four important things:

- (1) Universal provision of school facilities.
- (2) Universal enrolment of pupils
- (3) Universal retention of pupils
- (4) Qualitative improvement of education

### (1) Universal Provision of School Facilities

Universal provision of school facilities means that school facilities should be provided to all children (6-14) within walking distance from the home of children.

### (2) Universal enrolment of Pupils:

Universal enrolment means all children between the age of 6-14 must be enrolled.

### (3) Universal retention of the pupils:

Universal retention reveals a child who joins primary school is he or she should remain there till he or she completes primary education.

### (4) Qualitative improvement of education

UNICEF strongly emphasis what might be called desirable dimensions of quality, as identified in the Darker Framework [2]. Its paper defining quality in Education recognizes five dimensions of quality:

Lerner's environment, content, processes and outcomes, founded on "the rights of the whole child and all children to survival, protection, development and participation.

The Indian Parliament enacted the Right to Education Act [2] in 2009, to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of six to fourteen years. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act came into force on April 1, 2010. The implementation of this Act is to address issues of school dropout, out of school children and quality of education.

Odisha was one of the first states to initiate the implementation of (RCFCR), Act, 2009 and notified the RCECE State Rules in 2010. The state has made tremendous strides in implementing its provisions across the states.

## 2. Policies and Interventions for the Universalization of Elementary Education

The policies and interventions for the universalisation of elementary education [3] is as follows:

### i. National Education Policy

The Education Commission (1964-1966) had recommended a Common School System of Public Education (CSS) as the basis of building up the national system of Education with a view to bring the different social classes and groups together [1]. The main objective of the policy was:

1. Fulfilling Compulsory education for all children between the age of 6-14.
2. Appointment of trained & qualified teachers
3. Focus on learning of regional language
4. Encouraging the teaching of the ancient Sanskrit language.

NPE (1968) was introduced with positive attitude but many of its recommendations could not be implemented due to lack of fund & adequate man power.

Therefore the goal of (UEE) could not be achieved.

The New Policy on education introduced in 1986 which called for "Special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity" especially for Indian Women Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Scheduled Caste (SC) Communities. The NPE ( 1986) called for a child centre approach in primary education & launched " Operation Blackboard" to improve primary schools nationwide. The 1986 National Policy on Education was modified in 1992 by the P.V. Narasimha Rao government.

Objectives of National Policy on Education ( 1986) with modification undertaken in (1992) Programme of Action (POA)are:

1. Universal access & enrolment.
2. Universal retention up to the age of 14.
3. Improvement in the quality of education and to achieve essential levels of learning.

### ii. Operation Black-Board

This scheme was launched in 1987 with the recommendation of NPE-1986, modified in 1992 ( PoA) [6]. It was a national sponsored programme. The purpose of this scheme was to provide minimum essential facilities to all primary schools in the country.

#### Objectives of the Programme:

1. At least three reasonable large all weather room along with separate toilet facilities for boys & girls.
2. At least three teachers (one female) should be appointed in the Primary School.
3. At least one class room for each class one office room, library should be constructed for the betterment of the students.
4. Essential teaching and learning materials including black board, maps, charts, etc., should be provided in Primary Schools.

### iii. District Primary Education Programme

The scheme of DPEP [6] was launched in 1994 as a major opening to regenerate the primary education system and to active the objective of universalization of primary education.

#### Objectives of the Programme:

1. To reduce the gap between enrollment, drop out & learning achievement to less than 5% irrespective of sender & social category.
2. To reduce overall drop out rate to less than 10%.
3. To increase average leaning achievement of students to 25% above the baseline assessment.
4. Provide Elementary education to all the children in a possible way ( formal or non-formal)
5. Provide reading, writing materials and free text books to all SC & ST Children & general girls.
6. An essential improvement in the quality of School facilities.

Thus the overall goal of the programme is the reconstruction of Primary education as a whole in the selected districts.

### iv. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [5] is the flagship programme of Govt. of India to fulfill the objective of universalization of elementary education. This programme was started in 2001.

This programme ensured Community Mobilisation and Decentralised Planning and Management of Education System.

#### **Objective of SSA:**

1. To provide elementary education to all children between the age group of 6-14.
2. To remove gender and social category gaps.
3. To provide value-based education and education for life to all children.

#### **v. Mid-day Meal Programme**

This programme is a unitary sponsored scheme, and was launched on 15<sup>th</sup> Aug 1995 [1]. The purpose of this scheme is to provide nutritional support to all children between the age group of 6-14 years.

#### **vi. Right to Education Act, 2009**

This Act was legislated in August 2009. This Act is a detailed and comprehensive piece of legislation which includes provision related to teachers duties and responsibilities of different stake holders, right of the children.

#### **Important Features of the Act are :**

1. A child from 6-14 years of age has the right to get free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till he completes elementary education of a satisfactory quality.
2. No child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment under this Act.
3. No child will be held back or expelled till completion of Elementary Education.
4. All Schools except Govt. Schools are required to be recognized by meeting specified Norms and Standards within 3 years to avoid closure.
5. Private Schools must take 25% of the total strength from weaker sections and dis-advantaged groups sponsored by the government.

#### **vii. Achieving Learning Outcome: Need of the hour**

Right to Education Act 2009 has given priority to quality Elementary Education. NCERT has also framed NCF (National Curriculum Framework) in which quality education is highly given importance [4].

#### **Main Features of NCF-2005:**

1. To shift learning from rote memorization
2. Construction of knowledge outside the classroom situation

3. Enriching Curriculum beyond Text Book
4. To make examination more flexible and relate to classroom learning

According to Global Monitoring Report (GMR)-2015, in many developing countries including India though Educational development has occurred, still quality aspect of education has not been developed so far. According to Annual Status of Education Report (ASER). There is a disparity in basic skills/ competencies between States of India which is clearly indicated in National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2014 [4].

Assessment is also an integral part to enhance the learning outcome of the children . The teachers should be observed children for assessment when they are engaged in activities, keeping in mind differentially able children as well . Therefore, unified Examination System in the form of National Achievement Survey (NAS) conducted throughout the country on 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 for Class –III, V & VIII in Govt. and Govt. aided schools having the following major objectives:

1. To know the health status of our Education System.
2. To know what our children are learning
3. To identify the learning gap.
4. To find out the gray area at district and state level
5. Planning for improvement of learning at different stages (Class, School, District, State)

#### **CONCLUSION**

The ultimate goal of education is to equip the next generation for a sustainable and productive life. India has achieved remarkable progress on track to achieve universal elementary education and gender equity. However, around the world the rapid growth of mass education system has severely tested and in many instances adversely affected learning outcomes: India, the country with the largest education system in the world, has not yet been immune to these challenges.

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