

## Importance of Primary Education Infrastructure in India

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### Abstract

India continues to face challenges in attainment of quality of primary education. This paper analyses the importance of primary education which has been widely recognized by everyone in society. Primary Education is the backbone for achieving sound higher education system. In this respect related infrastructure in terms of schools buildings, classrooms, library facilities, playgrounds, computer rooms etc is a pre-requisite. This paper analyses the Report of the PROBE Team (Public Report on Basic Education, 1999), on basic education facilities in India, as far as qualitative and quantitative availability of primary education infrastructure is concerned. Primary education creates solid foundation for higher education which leads to sustainable development in the long run. So present paper makes an attempt to reveal current status of primary education and the necessity of required infrastructure.

**KEYWORDS:** Primary Education, Infrastructure

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### INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental to enhancing the quality of human life and ensuring social and economic progress. (U.N. Report on the world social situations, 1997).

Education is one of the important indicator of Human Development Index as it reflects the quality of Human life. There exists a positive correlation between literacy level and economic development of country. Today, forces of globalization and liberalization has made our society, as one which is driven by knowledge. So education lie at heart of development.

It is rightly pointed out by Mahatma Gandhiji, “Education for life” and by Rabindranath Tagore as, “Education for self-development”.

Since independence there has been a greater policy emphasis on the objective of attainment of increasing the level of literacy. Self-sustaining growth is demand of today’s society, which is possible only by enhancing literacy level. It helps the society to escape from the vicious circle of poverty. It is an effective instrument of social change. It helps the society to realize its unexplored potentials and abilities.

The progress of the nation in the world of today is more than ever dependent upon the quantity and quality of education received by people. Primary Education is fundamental need of life. We cannot under any circumstances ignore elementary education of the children or education of the masses upto the primary level. Elementary education is the foundation of the entire superstructure of a nation. Which we intend to

build. In the education ladder primary education plays pivotal role for mass literacy and provides a solid foundation for higher education ( Baglari Neeta)

### **IMPORTANCE OF PRIMARY EDUCATION**

Objective of the present paper is to highlight the importance of primary education and to emphasis the need of developing related infrastructure at the primary education level.

In an era of globalization, we are stressing the need for higher education, in terms of creating more of IIT's, IIM's, Medical and Engineering colleges. All these institutions are highly equipped with Information and Communication Technology. Today, still the need is felt to focus on the importance primary education after 60 years of planned development. This is kind of Education Paradox in our country.

“The importance of primary education has been neglected in India knowingly or unknowingly and the government of India is now realized and willing to improve wise primary education by legislation and planning to cover all the sections of age group of 6 to 14 years and ensuring for deserved free education”. (Prasad Kanagiri, 2010)

The Roll of Primary Education is pivotal, in fact, it is more important than higher education as it creates strong base and foundation for effective higher education. As Primary Education is the very initial stage of formal learning, here pupils learn to respect differences in traditions and culture. It helps to develop value system to build better India. It fulfils special need of pupils as well as enhances cognitive, emotional intellectual and moral development.

As it is rightly pointed out by Robin Alexander, “Primary Education should not just be preparing children for secondary school, While Primary schools must and do insist on the importance of literacy and numeracy, they should also lay foundation in other areas - in spoken language, science, the arts, the humanities and in physical , emotional and moral development and lived experiences”.

Today, so many private schools are focusing on customized education and training programs. This programs are specially designed to discover pupil's talents and interests as per their area of choice. The objective here is to expose child to variety of activities for all round personality development.

In simple analysis, the quality of primary education determines the quality life of nation, strengthens democratic institutions, ensures economic development and modernization of social institutions. Therefore, it becomes an obligatory duty and bounded responsibility of the government of welfare states to make education available to every child (Baglari Neeta).

Education has to cater the needs and requirements of all classes of the society. Primary Education is a pre-requisite as the lessons of basic formal education and shaping of pupils basic understanding takes place here. It leads to equality of opportunities for all human beings and sustainable development in the long run.

Considering and realizing the importance of primary education for sustainable development, “the right of children to free and compulsory education act, was passed by the parliament on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2009, describes the modalities of provision of free and compulsory education for children between age group of 6 and 14 in India under article 21A of the Indian constitution, India became one of the 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child when the act came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2010”.( Prasad Kanagiri,2010 )

The reform and restructuring of the education system was accepted as an important area of State intervention (Baglari Neeta).

Primary Education is inevitable not only to proceed growth and development but to achieve inclusive growth too. Millennium Development Goals too emphasized on universalisation of primary education.

However, India continues to face challenges with respect to attainment of quantitative as well as qualitative level of primary education.

On this ground, there is need to discuss the issue of primary education infrastructure in India.

### **Importance of Primary Education Infrastructure**

Provision for sustainable primary education depends on all round effective and quality level of infrastructure. This part of the discussion highlights the need of developing infrastructure for sustainable improvements in primary education. At the same time there is need to focus on current status of primary education infrastructure in India- In terms of school buildings, classrooms with blackboards, laboratory, playground, computer rooms, safe drinking water, toilets, separate toilets for girls students, electric connectivity, good quality of teachers and so on.

To cater the diverse needs of the pupils, adequate and effective infrastructure at primary education level is basic necessity. It helps to enhance and enrich the quality of student which in turn provides a solid foundation for higher education.

Primary education is necessity for all classes in the society irrespective of their income. Middle class and upper class can afford to send their child to private school but the poor have no other option and choice. Poor class has to send their child in government school which are very in bad and miserable condition specially in rural areas. So the children’s who don’t afford private school fees, qualitative primary education is out of orbit for them.

Hence, this is a system where there are schools for all but education for a few privileged people. ( Parth Amol)

According to 2012-2013 data of planning commission, “only 40% primary schools in the country have an electricity connection. 15 states/ Union territories are below the national estimate. Bihar has the lowest percentage of primary schools having electricity connection at 2.5%. 7.32% government schools in India don’t receive text

books from the government. 6% of primary schools in the country don't have drinking water facility. 25% schools don't have girls toilet. Only 22% and 57% of the schools have computer learning facilities and play grounds respectively.”

Inspite of increasing in percentage of enrollment at primary level, higher level of dropouts is a major problem in our country. Lack of adequate infrastructure at primary level of education is an important factor responsible for higher dropouts.

As per the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2012, 96.5% of all rural children between the ages of 6 to 14 are enroll in schools. This is the Fourth Annual Survey, to report enrollment above 96%. Another report of 2013 stated that there were 229 million students enroll in different accredited urban and rural schools of India, from class I to XII, representing an increase of 2.3 million students over 2002 total enrollment and 19% increase in girls enrollment.

Above analysis shows that, while quantitatively India is inching closer to universal education, the quality of its education has been questioned particularly in its government runs schools. (S. Jeevan and J.Townsend, 2013)

PROBE survey 1998 (Public Report on Basic Education) stated that, in out of 162 government primary schools in the PROBE surveyed villages has shown following conditions :

1. Six schools do not have any building and classes are held in open spaces .
2. Several schools do not have a building of their own. Instate they occupy rented rooms, panchayat ghars, dharamshalas and similar premises.
3. Only 58% school had atleast two pucca rooms.
4. 60% have a leaking roof. This creates a major problem during rainy days.
5. 31% of schools had no pucca class rooms, 11% had one pucca class rooms, 37% had two, 21% had more than two pucca room.
6. 56% schools had no safe drinking water facilities and 70% had no toilets.
7. It is not unusual to find that, even in a relatively new school buildings, the flooring or roof are full of holes. Among all school building constructed after 1986, 56% need floor repair, 44% need roof repair and 72% need major repair of some kind.

The goal of operation blackboard launched in 1987-88 was to ensure that all primary schools in the country have atleast two pucca classrooms, two teachers and essential teaching learning materials such as blackboard, maps, charts, library etc. Few of the PROBE schools meet this benchmark, but in most cases shortfall is serious. For instanc, only 58% of the primary schools in the sample villages had pucca classrooms, and 12% had a single teacher. Only a minority had a library (23%), maps and charts (40%) or any other usable teaching kit (33%) (PROBE India Report on Basic Education in India, 1998).

Following table reveals the information regarding actual status of infrastructural facilities at primary level of education.

**Table 1: District Information System for Education (DISE) – Key Indicators of Progress Towards UEE: 2003-04 To 2005-06**

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Number of districts covered	539	581	604	609	624
Number of schools covered	931,471	1,037,814	1,124,033	1,196,663	1,250,775
Percentage of schools without building	3.8	4.0	4.1		
Percentage of school with pucca building	69.3	70.0	70.6	70.6	
Percentage of single – classroom schools	10.9	10.4	9.5	9.71	
Average number of classrooms in primary schools	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.8	3
Percentage of schools without classrooms	8.8	10.9	10.5		
Percentage of single-teacher schools	12.9	13.4	12.2	11.76	10.13
Pupil teacher ratio	39.0	38.0	36.0	34	
Percentage of primary schools having pupil –teacher ratio > 100	8.4	8.3	5.9	5.21	4.11
Percentage of schools with boundary walls	50.6	51.4	50.7	49.26	50.22
Percentage of schools with drinking water facility in school	77.9	80.6	83.1	84.89	86.75
Percentage of schools having common toilet in school	41.8	46.8	52.4	58.13	62.67
Percentage of schools having girls toilet in school	28.2	32.8	37.4	42.58	50.55
Percentage of schools without blackboard	9.5	7.9	8.0		

Source: National University of Educational Planning and Administration, ‘Elementary Education

in India: Progress towards UEE’ New Delhi, (2007)

The information given in the table shows that physical infrastructure is inadequate to sustain the quality of primary education even after post-liberalization period in India.

The study facilitated by Pratham – a Non- Government Organization highlights the poor state of affairs of primary education in India.

**Table 2: Levels of Learning Among Children**

Sr. No.		Standard V Children	
		% cannot read level 2	% cannot solve division and subtraction
1	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65	81
2	Karnataka	49	76
3	Orissa	44	70
4	Tamil Nadu	50	69
5	Uttar Pradesh	51	68
6	Daman & Diu	63	65
7	Madhya Pradesh	49	63
8	Maharashtra	34	61
9	Assam	46	59
10	Delhi	50	58
11	<b>India</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>57</b>
12	Goa	32	55
13	Rajasthan	41	54
14	Jharkhand	35	54
15	Punjab	40	54
16	Himachal Pradesh	53	53
17	Andhra Pradesh	40	52
18	Nagaland	21	49
19	Manipur	27	45
20	Kerala	19	44
21	Tripura	16	44
22	Chhattisgarh	25	42
23	Arunachal Pradesh	32	42
24	Uttaranchal	21	41
25	Bihar	29	39
26	Gujarat	30	37
27	West Bengal	26	27
28	Meghalaya	9	27
29	Haryana	11	25

Note : Figures are rounded  
 Source : Annual Status of Education Report 2006 Rural 2005 facilitated by Pratham New Delhi

States aims to achieve the target of 100% enrollment at primary level. In this process quality of education is compromised to a great extent. The result is substandard education.

In Maharashtra, community based survey of 28 cities and 8 rural district found that only 30% of the boys and girls in the age group of 6 to 14 could read basic text fluently or do simple arithmetic. (Bajpai Nirupam and Others)

NCERT (2002) Report shows that nearly 160 million children of 6 to 14 age group do not enrolled in school at all. So large number of population is deprived of primary education in India.

All the above stated discussion reveals the urgency on the part of the Government to focus on primary education. No doubt, since the time of independence government has done its best to implement the objective of universalisation of primary education. Government has launched several programs under the various five year plans such as Education Commission (1964-66), the National policy on Education (1986), Operation Blackboard (1987-88), Lok Jumbish Project with assistance from Swedish International Development Agency (1992), District Primary Education Program (1994), Nutrition Support for Primary Education (mid day meal scheme, 1995), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (one of the ambitious program launched in 2001) and so many others.

A closer look at the status of primary education infrastructure is very disappointing. Apart from tremendous efforts on the part of the Government to implement the vision of education to build better India is not satisfactory at all.

World Bank Study (2002) finds that the poor parents not only recognize the value of educating their children but also are willing to invest meagre resources in children education. But a complex set of factor conspire against them. The key concern is no longer enrollment: attendance, transition, completion and learning outcomes are emerging as bigger issues.

To sum up, the Government of India has taken enormous efforts for massive expansion of primary level of education. Government has funded massive programs for the creation of infrastructure in post independent era, in both rural and urban areas. No doubt this has contributed lot to increase in enrollment rate but quality of infrastructure with respect to, quality of teachers, and basic facilities like water, electricity, classrooms, toilets, needs desired attention. Due to financial problem sanctioned post of teachers are remained unfulfilled for years leading to the serious scarcity of teachers and so adverse teacher-pupil ration in so many primary schools.

In this respect India's 12<sup>th</sup> Plan Document (2012), states that "Improve learning outcomes that are measured, monitored and reported independently at all levels of school education with a special focus on ensuring that all children master basic reading and numeracy skills by class 2 and skills of critical thinking, expression and problem solving by class 5."

Some of the worth suggestions matters lot to improve primary education infrastructure in India.

At the first instance, there is necessity not only to increase public expenditure on primary education but its proper utilization and management in a coordinated way.

Secondly, effective implementation of existing government policies and programs is a pre-requisite to enhance the quality of primary education. In this direction, consolidated and extensive efforts on the part of government machineries is necessary.

Last, but most important private-public participation should encourage in building and running schools at primary level. The Governments needs to take a policy stance to positively encourage private participation to expand the scale of operation of primary education.

While concluding, I would like to mention that there is no escape from primary education so importance should be given to related primary education infrastructure.

To achieve the mission of universalisation of elementary education, importance to effective and adequate infrastructure should be given proper weightage. This is attainable only when, government realizes that education is one of the productive investment for sustainable development in near future.

**Schools are supposed to be the temples of learning and so there is need to maintain its auspicious and holy environment.**

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