

Enhancement of Quality Education and Vocations in Rural India

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Abstract

Education in India witnessed tremendous innovations and expansion at the turn of the new millennium. Institutions of education are assets for human resource development, technological advancement and socio-economic empowerment. Today, as we look back, education in India, the achievements in all directions appear to be expansive and significant. More children are going to schools and colleges, the dropout rates at various levels have reduced, more number of colleges and universities have been established. Added this, there are number of state, national and international bodies working in the field of education. The value and social concern of the people have been drastically enhanced. It is true that the education system through traditional has accepted innovations in sectors and yield to introduce the most modern concept and practices in the field of education. But, at the same the educational institutions are also faced with challenges to meet the needs of productive employment, effective use of information technology and the demands of a knowledge society. This article attempts to focus on the enhancement of quality education and vocational opportunities in Rural India.

Introduction

India has the second largest massive educational system in the world which caters 72.2% rural population and nearly 6,38,000 villages (2011 census). According to the Article 45 of Indian Constitution the basic elementary education must be provided to all the children up to the age of fourteen years. Even after 6 decades of independence some states in India are still struggling to achieve Universal enrollment, retention and quality education. There are about 13,03,996 rural schools in India. Schools in rural areas are promoted to raise the level of education and literacy in rural India. Most of the village schools do not have proper infrastructure, qualified teachers and facilities for computer education, sports and extra- curricular activities. There are no proper transport and communication facilities.

Village schools are the basic units to change the outlook and attitude of the village community. Education should help to promote integrated development of personality. The seed for realizing dignity of labour has to be sown at the school age itself. Middle, high and higher secondary schools in the rural areas should teach the students different occupational trades during their period of study. Each student according to his or her own capacity must master at least one useful trade before completing the course in each stage. All the high school and higher secondary schools must be attached with fully equipped science and environmental laboratories. Higher education centers, universities and even industries in the surrounding areas may be asked to adopt the schools for this purpose. The present university education should be reformed in such a way so as to help the all round development of our villages. University students must be in a position to identify

and analyse the problems of the villages. They must have a clear cut idea about the rural economy and decentralized socio-political systems. Villages must be the laboratories to the university students. The universities must help the village planning committees and the Panchayats in formulating, implementing and monitoring development programmes. All these things must become part of the university curriculum. This will make the university education more meaningful and purposeful to rural development.

Rural Education – Quality Perspective

Rural education, from primary school to university should insist students to learn the great traditions of India. Rural education must evolve its own distinctive pattern and also should become instrument of social emancipation of masses. The advancement of rural India will call for wide range of skill and training. Rural secondary schools and community colleges should offer practical courses. Professional skill should be looked upon as equal in dignity and worth to purely intellectual knowledge. Like scholarship, it should be recognized with ascending grades of achievement and opportunity, so that a man who develops high ability has an open road to advancement. Therefore the rural secondary schools and higher education institutions should constantly explore the challenging needs and should make sure that their programmes are planned for the conditions of rural upliftment of the rural people.

The Government of India has taken up various initiatives to enhance the quality of education in rural areas. The rural schools and colleges compared to the urban counterparts lacks qualified and competent teachers well equipped laboratory, library, access to computer and internet facility. The education in rural areas can be strengthened through effective use of information and communication technologies and multimedia approaches. Alternative instructional delivery system such as radio, visual channels, and computer based delivery and management, mobile and web –based education can be made use for instructional purposes. Existing Infrastructure in schools needs to be improved for the successful and unhindered implementation of ICT. Without proper infrastructure facilities like power, connectivity and computer related materials and human support system the programme will not be successful for the schools. ICT for education programme can provide training and awareness. This kind of ICT related educational programme will provide employment opportunity to youths in rural areas. It will help to acquire wider knowledge about recent developments in world.

Vocational Education

Vocational training is broadly defined as training that prepares an individual for a specific occupation. Vocational education remains within the boarder school curriculum and involves provision of specific skills to increase the employability of the students. There are three categories of vocational education prevalent in India today; at the lower school stage, at the class 10+2 stage and at the specialized level. Secondary education must be closely related to the psychological needs of the adolescents for whom it is being designed. In order to equip the youth adequately for the needs of the existing socio-economic situation, it is necessary to give secondary education a vocational bias. Vocational training is meant for a particular trade or economic activity. It is conducted outside the schooling system. At present, this education is mainly academic and does not

provide sufficient scope for adolescents with varying aptitudes especially those with a marked practical bent of mind. One of the important links between education and development is provided by manpower development through vocationalisation of secondary education related to employment. Vocational education and training system needs to cover more trades. Skill development is critical for achieving faster, sustainable and inclusive growth on the one hand and for providing decent employment opportunities. Vocational training and skill development should also be initiated in rural schools and colleges. Vocational courses oriented to accounting and banking, agro technology, computers and web designing, beautician, screen printing, tailoring and embroidery, fashion designing, pottery and carpeting can be offered at different levels. These courses should be modeled taking the local requirements, need aspirations and talent cultivation to increase the employability of the students.

The skill development programme in schools and colleges should be attuned with the National Policy on Skill Development (2009) to meet the requirement of both the formal and non-formal sectors (90 percent of labour force) and all kinds of jobs linking to job opportunities and market realities of the rural sectors. Compiling with the furtherance of quality rural education and skill training programme, the lifelong learning should be integrated with career development to promote communication, learn work, self-motivation and professional commitment. This will enhance the employability of youth and also should ensure the quality of life among the rural population which are considered as the cherished goals of Mass education and Development. The setting up of rural universities to develop human resources and upliftment of rural people through relevant academic courses, training, skill up gradation and applied research should also be encouraged under the mass education as proposed by the National Knowledge Commission (2009). The rural universities and the community colleges should offer rural oriented vocational courses and career training. They should be committed to not only teaching and research but should foster to extension, service and outreach programme for promoting rural development through the creation and dissemination of knowledge.

NIOS in Gandhigram Rural Institute – Deemed University

The National Institute of open schooling (NIOS) was set up as National Open School in 1989 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India as an autonomous organization. It provides education opportunities to person who wishes to study further and qualify for a better tomorrow. The Mission of NIOS is to provide education to all with special concern for girls and women, rural youth, working men and women, SC/ST, differently able persons and other disadvantaged who because of one or other reason could not continue their education with the formal system. The department of lifelong learning and extension was accredited as a study centre the National Open School, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi from 2003 onwards. It provide secondary course equivalent to +2 level and Early Childhood Care Education. The beneficiaries of the programmed has been school dropout, rural youth, working men and women and scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. Every year we have conducted thirty five contact classes for the benefit of NIOS students. The pass out student from NIOS has been placed in various public and private sectors. NIOS is a central institute that cater the thirst of knowledge for school dropout, by providing secondary and senior secondary courses. In NIOS, students have opportunity to study and earn simultaneously.

In the state level centres in India, Tamilnadu has one regional centre and one sub centre for NIOS. The Gandhigram Rural Institute has the only sub centre in Tamilnadu offering NIOS programmed for the rural youth. Many of the rural dropouts in and around Dindigul, Madurai, Karur, Dharmapuri and Theni are enrolled in NIOS of GRI. This NIOS is playing a major role in enhancing the education of the people especially the rural youth.

Strategies for Quality Enhancement

The vocational education system must have certain predefined strategies to enhance the quality.

- Ensuring that the greater proportions of the target group complete basic education.
- Vocational education should be made as an instrument for economic development
- The learners should be motivated to deepen their involvement in the vocation based education.
- The vocational training programme must be more flexible and responsive.
- Building high-level technical skills needed for higher value added production.
- There should be well qualified instructors to give the training.

The knowledge is the basis for empowering and developing all sectors of society. Not only the knowledge workers contribute to the development, but even the application of knowledge is benefitted to all which leads to the vocational development. The challenge is to develop an education system that supports sustainable socioeconomic well-being without losing sight for future consequences. Higher education can impart knowledge, values and skills among the youth through its academic programmes, research and extension services. The higher education system can endorse the knowledge creating the means by which individuals can acquire the immediate skills, values and knowledge to maintain the quality improvement on the education as well as vocational education especially at the rural parts of India.

Conclusion

Rural development can be achieved only with scientific, social and educational advancement. The term denotes the overall progress of rural areas in order to improve the quality of life of rural people. It is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept which encompasses the development of agriculture and allied activities, villages and cottage industries, community and health services socio-culture and educational resources in rural areas. It is designed to improve the socio-economic conditions to advance social transportation but the real challenges of development are to improve the quality of life of the rural population.

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