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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF WEAKER SECTIONS GIRL CHILDREN OF DELHI GOVT. AIDED SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

India is at a unique moment when social movements and civil society initiatives have culminated in several progressive legislations. With a strong Right to Education (RTE) mandate on quality education and teacher norms, the schools today are hit with trio of potent reforms in student evaluation, teacher evaluations and the most required and discussed teacher education reforms. Each of these reforms challenges the status quo, demanding that schools and teacher education institutions systematically and continuously improve student and teacher performance, marking and measuring their progress at each and every step along the way. What they however fail to focus at is that learning is collective rather than an individual activity and teaching is a social practice than only a technical skill highlighting the closeness in the education and society relationship. This entails significant change in the way teachers and teacher educators are defined, understood and therefore nurtured. This is not just about providing professional development but about nurturing a genre of teachers who are passionately engaged in the pursuit of reflecting and learning and through their efforts create kind of environment in schools that develop responsible citizens, life-long learners, economically and socially industrious individuals, and compassionate human-beings.

Going by the term Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) it is used to refers to those citizen or household with income below a certain threshold level. Though may be other economic factors in deciding on the economic weakness of citizen/household, income is the dominant criterion. In public policy domain the term has to be appreciated in the context of the preamble to India's Constitution which seeks Justice, Social, Economic and Political.

Keywords: Crucial, Persistent, Stipulated, Universalizing, Learning Outcome

1. INTRODUCTION

The categorization of EWS is distinct from other categories like "disadvantaged section" which refer to those belonging to scheduled caste/the scheduled tribe/other socially backward communities who may be having a disadvantage owing to social, cultural, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factors. Under Section 2 (e) of Right to Education Act, Right of children to Free and compulsory education Act, 2009) a "child belonging to weaker section" means a child belonging to such parent or guardian whose annual income is lower than the minimum limit specified by the appropriate Government by limit specified by the appropriate Government, by notification, for instance, Delhi Government has specified the EWS child as a child resident in Delhi for the last three years with annual parental income of less than Rs. 1 Lakh. They are given 25% reservation in seat allotments on the other hand Andhra Pradesh has fixed the income ceiling at Rs. 60,000. Various definition of EWS adopted by various states for the purposes of implementing Right to Education may be seen here. The Central Govt. is implementing the Central Sector plan scheme titled "Scheme or interest subsidy on Educational Loans from Scheduled Banks for professional education of students from economically weaker section for providing full interest subsidy during the period of moratorium (i.e. duration of a recognized professional course plus one year) on educational loans availed by students belonging to economically weaker sections whose income is not more than Rs. 4.5 Lakh.

As per the certain provisions of Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, those of the private schools over Delhi Development Authority subsidized allotted land or at private land ownership has to reserved seats for Children belonging to the EWS/DG Category. There are various opportunities as well as challenges with every passing year which the children of these marginalized sections has to face. The problem initiated with the filling of ONLINE form with the format, which as per the Government of the day may bring the transparency in comparison to the last years as per EWS/DG Parents. But mostly parents of these groups are 1st Generation learners getting this filled through Electronic Environment via Cyber Café or other centre and keeping on to observe the result may not be less than nightmare. Moreover, this whole exercise for girl child of EWS/DG Section, I wish and pray to God that here no gender bias should take place. After getting into the private school environment having the protection of mandate of our Constitutional Rights coping with the challenges just start. Coping with the standard of contemporary students i.e. normal category learners; there is fear among EWS/DG category learner of getting stagnated or drop out particularly after withdrawal of CCE pattern or reintroduction of CBSE exam pattern at Class-10. Medium of instruction of subjects or studies from beginners class onward till elementary level particularly with respect to Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. Although there is provision of free supply of text books or academic study materials of medium of their choice but the pace, level or medium of study in respective classroom is certainly English.

"Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

(Nelson Mandela-2003)

"If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years, educate children."

(Kuan Chung-7th Century BC)

Education should equip students with the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, meaningful lives. Different countries define skills differently, but all share some core aspirations, embodied in their curriculums. Students everywhere must learn how to interpret many types of written passage-from medication labels to job offers, from bank statements to great literature. They have to understand how numbers work so that they can buy and sell in markets, set family budgets, interpret loan agreements, or write engineering software. They require the higher-order reasoning and creativity that builds on these foundational skills. And they need the socio-emotional skills-such as perseverance and the ability to work on teams-that help them acquire and apply the foundational and other skills. Many countries are not yet achieving these goals. First the learning that one would expect to happen in schools-whether expectations are based on formal curriculums, the needs of employers or just common sense-is often not occurring. Of even greater concern, many countries are failing to provide learning for all. Individuals already disadvantaged in society-whether because of poverty, location, ethnicity, gender, or disability-learn the least. Thus education systems can widen social gaps instead of narrowing them. What drives the learning shortfalls is becoming clearer thanks to new analyses spotlighting both the immediate cause-poor service delivery that amplifies the effects of poverty-and the deeper system-level problems, both technical and political, that allow poor-quality schooling to persist. The learning crisis amplifies inequality: it severely hobbles the disadvantaged youth who most need the boost that a good education can offer. By 2008 the average low-income country was enrolling students in primary school at nearly the same rate as the average hight-income country. But schooling is not the same as learning. Children learn very little in many education systems around the world: even after several years in school, millions of students lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. This slow start to learning means that even students who make it so the end of primary school do not master basic competencies.

Learning shortfalls during the school years eventually show up as weak skills in the workforce. Thus the job skills debate reflects the learning crisis. Work skill shortages are often discussed in a way that is disconnected from the debate on learning, but the two are parts of the same problem. Because education systems have not prepared workers adequately, many enter the labor force with inadequate skills. Measuring adult skills in the workplace is hard, but recent initiatives have assessed a range of skills in the adult populations of numerous countries. They found that even foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy are often low, let alone the more advanced skills. The problem isn't just a lack of trained workers; it is a lack of readily trainable workers. Accordingly, many workers end up in jobs that require minimal amounts of reading or arithmetic. Lack of skills reduces job quality, earnings, and labor mobility. The skills needed in labor markets are multidimensional, so system need to equip students with far more than just reading, writing, and math-but students cannot leapfrog these foundational skills. Whether as workers or members of society, people also need higher-order cognitive skills such as problem-solving. In addition, they need socio-emotional skills-sometimes called soft or non-cognitive skills-such as conscientiousness. Finally, they need technical skills to perform a specific job.

Tackling the learning crisis and skills gaps required diagnosing their causes-both their immediate causes at the school level and their deeper systemic drivers. Given all the investments countries have made in education, shortfalls in learning are discouraging. But one reason for them is that learning has not always received the attention it should have. As a result, stakeholders lack actionable information about what is going wrong in their schools and in the broader society, and so they cannot craft context-appropriate responses to improve learning. Acting effectively requires first understanding how schools are failing learners and how systems are failing schools. Struggling education systems lack one or more of four key school-level ingredients for learning: prepared learners, effective teaching, learning-focused inputs, and governance that pulls them all together. The next section looks at why these links break down; here the focus is on how they break down.

The educational system of any country is expected to meet the demands of contemporary society as well as to be a harbinger of change. The pace of technological advancements an increasingly digitalised global society and more developed communication modes have lead to a more globalised society. Communicative international links have brought in its wave new opportunities and challenges and no academic institution particularly school can afford to be out of tune with global forces. Upcoming industries and knowledge based economic demand new skills in educational institutions. An ever volatile global economy fast changing political, social systems and policies impact education systems to a large extent. Ever-increasing multiculturalism in the diverse classrooms demands increased pro-democracy practice in schools and other academic institutions. The escalating fiscal crisis of states imply that schools grapple with diminishing funding and rising education costs. Still countless children who ought be in schools (as per the provision of Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act) are out there on streets, slums etc trying to eke out a living as child labour and often are victims of malnutrition human brutality and violence. Therefore, at one end are children with over-doses of luxury, obesity with over-nutrition and its related other medical conditions, at one end schools with barest infrastructure and indifferent teachers and at the other, 3D printers and so-called innovative manner engaged in quest for quality education as the tool that can be a precursor to further technological and cutting edge scientific research, expansion of knowledge economy, sustainable development, as well as bring in social justice and harmony rather than oneness of human being.

There can be no doubt about the value of ICTs in the learning process. However it was felt that if technology has to effectively contribute to the ease of access of knowledge, then appropriateness of technology has to be considered. In a recent programme evaluation, it was seen that most first generation learners had easy access to mobile phones. The introduction of ICT in secondary level of education has profound implications for the education process especially in dealing with key issues of access, equity, management, efficiency, pedagogy and overall quality. The use of ICT has inspired a modernised literary idea, digital literacy, which has become a collective concept for traditional literacy's such as reading and writing as well as information and media literacy concepts. The three cardinal principle of the draft New National Education Policy (2016) viz., access, equity and quality could be served well by harnessing the huge potential of ICT. The present curricula for ICT in education is a step towards realizing the goals of both the National Policy, the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and the recommendations of Digital India Campaign. It has factored in the rapid evolution of technologies and the ground realities of Indian school systems. For the teacher, it is an initiation into exploring educational possibilities of technology, learning to make the right choices of hardware, software and ICT interactions and more importantly, growing to become a critical user of ICT. For the student, it is an initiation into creativity, problem solving and an introduction to the world of information and technologies which could also shape career pursuits. Based on the size of the school, the infrastructure available and other related issues like availability of electricity, students may have varying access to the ICT facilities and resources. The student's curriculum, therefore, is designed as a three year course spanning 90 weeks with three sessions per week. Schools may opt to begin the curricular programme as early as sixth grade (beginning of the upper primary stage), in any case completing the programme for all students in school. As such it is distinct from any optional subject at the plus two stage and distinct from any vocational education programme under the NSQF. The curricula are built around a set of guiding principles, enabling any school system to provide the right exposure to emerging technologies to build capabilities in teachers and students, not only to use technology comfortably, but also employ them judiciously to enhance their learning. The requirements of the curricula are not to be hardware or software specific. Undoing the general trend of limiting software to office applications, which are not only ill suited for educational purposes but also tend to narrow down the view of what computers and ICT can achieve, a wide range of software applications specifically designed for education are introduced.

ICT tools enable anytime, anywhere access to information and resources. Given the proliferation of interest connectivity, the curriculum recognizes the fact that being connected to the internet offers tremendous benefits to

teachers in terms of capabilities to access information and resources of various kinds and to utilize them in their teaching-learning. Not only will these add to the range of techniques that teachers use, but also make a difference to their students learning. The ability to critically review and use the resources will be an essential input to teachers professional development. Becoming aware of the range of materials the web offers for the teachers' own learning as well resources for their teaching; critical appraisal of the information and resources; safe, productive, ethical and legal use of these resources; and protecting oneself and others from the harmful effects of the virtual medium is fundamental to every teacher's learning. Therefore, the strand introduces teachers to the internet and its resources; using browsers and search engines; choosing appropriate sites; search and retrieval of information and resources; different kinds of websites and interactivity; navigating the web, bookmarks, subscriptions to services and products; downloading information and resource; awareness of formats and techniques; copyright and safety issues; uploading and sharing information; and transactions through internet. The ICT curriculum broadly attempts to equip students with an ability to negotiate a range of devices, tools, application, information and resources. The course is offered in chunks of three periods in a week, which include one teacher led session and two hands on sessions. The teacher led session aims to demonstrate techniques and processes and prevent a context to the learning. Following this students engage themselves with activities which are designed to provide adequate hands on experience. Therefore ratios in the availability of computer system to each learner of EWS/DG section will surely benefit the girl child belonging to the EWS groups.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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