



EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH SOCIAL INCLUSION

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Abstract:

The educational policy in India since liberalization shows a marked predilection towards market fundamentalism coupled with universal access through Right to Education Act (RTEA) and Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan (SSA). This has ensured both unfettered access and equity in primary education with proliferation of private universities increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the tertiary sector. The Annual Survey of Educational Research (ASER) Report however reflects the scant concerns for basic infrastructural provisions for schools, apathetic attitude of teachers and high degree of student dropout. The higher education segment also does not reflect a commitment towards research, innovation leading to poor turnout in terms of patents and quality research papers. The paper brings out these trends as also the allocation apathy for educational sector. In this backdrop, the unique experiment of Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Odisha, a private sector initiative without governmental support, reflects a unique template of funding and quality which will be worthy of replication on a national scale. The Make in India initiative should factor in the quality concern from the primary stage of education in order to reap the rich demographic dividend that beckons India's aspirational youth cutting across caste, class, gender and religion.

Keywords: GER, RTE, SSA, ASER, Make in India, demographic dividend

Introduction

The new liberal wave took firm roots globally with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and disintegration of USSR. The Washington Consensus (1988) and Francis Fukuyama's

“End of History” celebrated the victory of liberal democracy. The ideological underpinning of neo liberalism was articulated by Friedrich Hayek who called for “freedom from constraints of the state, promotion of competition, extensive privatization and disinvestment”. Milton Freidman called for competitive capitalism and looked upon the state as an enabling institution with a sound regulatory framework. The neo liberal economists thus took Smith’s free market dictum as the private pursuit of self-interest leading by an invisible hand to the wellbeing of all several yards forward.

India started its neo liberal policy in a halfhearted manner in the 1990s. However, in the last decade it has eschewed hesitancy of the past and has dismantled of the Planning Commission as it was emblematic of a socialistic legacy. Under the neo liberal regime the growth indicators show significant improvement, while the human development parameters seem to be grossly unsatisfactory despite a number of affirmative action’s like Right to Education, Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan, Right to Food, Mid-Day Meal, MGNREGA, CSR etc.

This paper attempts to analyze

1. Policy Initiatives in Education
2. Significant Social Inclusion Initiatives in KISS, Odisha
3. Lessons Learnt and Way Forward

1. Policy Initiatives in Education

The 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17) inked a definitive strategic framework in higher education by highlighting the tripod of Equity, Access and Quality. The strategy framework is underlined below.

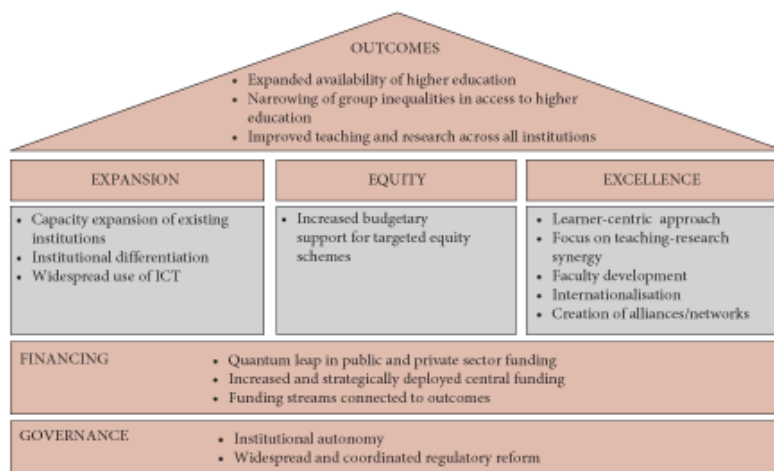


Figure 1: Strategy Framework of 12th Plan

Source: 12th Five Year Plan 2012-2017, Social Sectors Volume-III, Planning Commission, Government of India, Page 91

The 12th plan approach was a shift towards learner centric and learning outcome with an emphasis on quality of teaching and research. It also emphasized on availability, retention and recruitment of qualified faculties to meet the growing need of faculties and upgrade the skills of existing faculties and you built bridge between teaching and research with a linkage towards practical use in economy.

1.1 Recommendations of Commissions after Economic Liberalization

a. Ambani Birla Report (2000)

Ambani-Birla envisioned the creation of a knowledge based economic and society, induce competitiveness yet foster cooperation. The report championed the principle of use pay policy supported by loan schemes and financial grants for economically backward section. Government should support and partially fund centres of higher learning, provide financial guarantee to student loan, ensure uniformity in content and quality and education development planning.

b. Sam Pitroda Knowledge Commission (2009)

The commission recommends expansion of the number of universities to 1500 in the country. The assumption is based on the fact that there are about 350 universities with enrolment of 10 million students so four times increase in enrolment will need four times increase in number of universities. The commission also recommends the establishment of 50 national universities by government or by private sponsoring bodies to be set up by society or trust or section 25 companies. The commission preference seems to be of private universities. The commission also strongly put forward reduced role of the UGC and recommended the establishment of an independent regulatory authority for higher education as independent regulatory authority for higher education (IRAHE).

c. Narayan Murthy Report (2012)

The areas identified by the Narayan Murthy report are quality deficiency, quantity mismatch and funding gaps. The NMR argues that many challenges faced by the government remain unsolved because of the scarcity of resources which is the biggest factor for alluring corporate sector to invest in higher education through direct ownership, collaboration through research, faculty development, infrastructure creation, student scholarship and governance. In 2011-2012, the planning commission draft notes that it has spent 1.22% of its GDP in higher education and it's interesting to note here that in recent year's house hold investment by the private sector is more than the government spending on higher education.

1.2 Allocation Apathy in Education

The following table brings out the trends both in school and higher education.

Parameter	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	% increase
School Education	45722	42186	43554	+3
Higher Education	23152	25399	28840	+14
Total	68874	67585	72394	+7

Table 1: Trends in Central Spending on Education (Rs. Cr.)

Source: India's Budget Document 2016-2017

It would be seen that the overall allocation is **around 3% of GDP** and shows no real increase in the present year's budget. This is much lower than both public allocation by developed and EMEs as the table below will indicate.

Country	GNI at PPP (\$)	HDI	Public Expenditure as % of GDP
USA	52947	0.915	5.2
Japan	41187	0.891	3.8
Russia	22352	0.798	4.1
Korea	33890	0.898	4.9
China	12547	0.777	3.7
India	5997	0.609	3.1

Table 2: HDI, GII & Public Expenditure % on Education

Source: Human Development Report -2015

It would be seen from the above that the countries who have become the major manufacturing hubs in the world, cutting across ideology invest significant amount in education. This reflects in their high Human Development Index compared to India which has a ranking 137 of 167 countries as per HDR 2015. All commissions including the Kothari Commission and Prof. Amartya Sen have strongly argued for increasing our allocational commitment to at least 6% of our budget.

1.3 Quality Concerns in Education

The Annual Survey of Educational Research (ASER) Report 2014 flags the myriad concerns that afflict the primary schools run by the government in different states and all India. Tables below bring out both the infrastructural and academic deficit that bedevils this critical sector.

Parameter	All India	
	2010	2014
Play Ground	62.2	65.0
Library Books Available	62.6	78.1
Drinking Water	72.2	75.6
Girls Toilet	32.9	55.7
Computer Available	15.8	19.6

Table 3: Infrastructure Facilities: Trends

Source: ASER Report 2014

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 58% of children enrolled in classes 3 to 5 can read a class-1 text • Less than half (47%) are able to do a simple two-digit subtraction • Only 37% of children enrolled in class 4 or 5 can read fluently • Less than half (45%) are able to divide 20 by 5 • Reading and Math skills of class 4 pupils in India’s top schools are below the international average

Table 4: Academic Progress in Primary School: 2014

Source: ASER Report 2014

It would thus be seen that public initiatives like Digital India, Smart Cities and Skill India are not being realized through the statutory act of RTE 2009. Besides, almost 30% of the students now gravitating towards private schooling, which offer better teaching in terms of English and other facilities.

1.4 Impact of Quality in Higher Education

Despite the significant numerical increase in college enrolment through private sector interventions since 2001, the quality of research, patents granted and highly cited articles remain very poor compared to the global standards as the following tables will bring out.

Country	Quality of Research Institutions	Industry Collaboration	PCT Patents Granted/ (Million)	Highly Cited Articles
USA	5.8	5.6	137.9	3137
China	4.2	4.4	6.5	980
India	4.4	3.8	1.2	191

Table 5: Quality of Research Institution, Industry Collaboration & Patents

Source: YuXie Chunni Zhang et al at National Academy of Sciences, 2014

The allocation to R&D in India remains **less than 1% compared around 3% allocation by most of the developed countries and EMEs like Israel and South Korea.**

Country	% of GDP
USA	2.8
Germany	2.9
Japan	3.4
Israel	3.9
South Korea	4.0
India	0.8

Table 6: Research & Development Expenditure: Global Trends

Source: HDR: 2015

This reflects in patents granted, industry-academia collaboration and the vibrant research quality in countries like USA, Germany and Japan

2. Significant Social Inclusion Initiatives in KISS, Odisha

2.1 Quality Education with a Special Focus on Girl Child Education

KISS has been able to address many of the social and health issues like child marriage, infant mortality and maternal mortality etc. Girls in the indigenous communities are generally married off at an early age. They have little or no knowledge about their bodies and healthy sexual and reproductive practices, leading to high maternal mortality and infant mortality in these communities. Since the girls pursue education at KISS they free from the societal pressure of marrying at an early age. The girls are also provided counseling and education on their sexual reproductive health and rights which enables the girls to have a better understanding of their own bodies and healthy sexual and reproductive practices. This in turn has led to **reduction of maternal mortality and infant mortality among them, which is very high on an all India basis as brought out at Table 4 above.**

2.2 Life Skills Education

KISS has been implementing 'Life Skills Education' institution with the support of United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA). The objective behind it is to build the capacity of the tribal adolescents so that they can deal with different issues in their lives effectively. KISS has also been implementing this programme in all the 30 districts of the state reaching out directly to 80,000 children in the age group of 10-14 years.

2.3 Hunger & Health Alleviation

The greatest achievement has been the ability to provide three nutritious meals each day to all students. Indigenous communities also have lower levels of awareness on health issues which is a major reason why children are subjected to many serious diseases and illnesses such as Kwashiorkor, Marasmus, Tuberculosis, hookworm and ringworm infestation. Malnutrition and under nutrition is highly prevalent among the children in these communities. Conditions like Kwashiorkor and Marasmus arise due to vitamin and protein deficiencies in the body. KISS ensures that the diet provided is enriched with vitamins, proteins, minerals and carbohydrates.

2.4 Unemployment Mitigation

KISS has, to a certain extent, been able to address the issue of unemployment. The students at KISS have been able to find a source of livelihood after completion of their education. Many students have been placed in the public and private sector jobs and those students who have acquired degrees in medicine, engineering etc are now at par with the general population. The students are also provided with vocational trainings in different trades; the most popular being food preservation, fish cultivation, mushroom cultivation and agricultural practices. KISS in collaboration with the British Council has taken up a unique Self Employment Programme with focus on young girls, imparting them prerequisite skill-sets to establish social enterprises (food preservation) in their villages.

2.5 Unique Model of Funding

Prof. Debroy, Member NITI Aayog after visiting KISS has brought out how the self-funding mechanism in KISS through cross subsidization from employees of KIIT sustains a unique experiment; instead of depending on government subsidy. In an article in Financial Express, dated 27th August, he has brought out how 5% of KIIT's turnover is mandatorily donated to KISS, like CSR. "Profits" from KIIT are ploughed into KISS. Every employee of KIIT contributes 3% of gross salary towards KISS. Any vendor or contractor who supplies to KIIT has to mandatorily contribute 2-3% of profits to KISS. Vocational products produced in KISS, as outcome of vocational training, fetch some money. (Students retain 50% of profits from sale of such products). Finally, there is the channel of pure charitable donations. These multiple methods are enough to sustain KISS and it works far better than public subsidies, through financing, or even direct public provisioning (think of government schools, colleges and universities). **Prof. Debroy strongly suggests that such innovation method should be replicated throughout India.**

3. Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward

In the neoliberal times that India is traversing through, the momentum for GDP growth, Digital India, Smart Cities are not matched by the development initiatives like adequate concern for quality teaching, basic infrastructure at the primary level in public schools. This has cascading impact on higher education, which is presently driven predominantly by the greed and avarice of the private sector. **Allocation to research and development is quite clearly a low priority in both public and private universities.** Public policy is presently geared towards bolstering elite institutions like the IITs & IIMs, neglecting 95% of government universities which are inadequately funded and have scant concern for research and academics. In the absence of a new educational policy, the CSR initiatives are limited to a few philanthropists like Azim Premji Foundation. This is in sharp contrast to the corporate sector support in countries like USA which has seen the emergence of quality education hubs like MIT, Harvard Business School and Yale. Given this backdrop of public apathy, the initiative in KISS, Odisha where the social outcasts like the tribals find a credible crucible of empowerment is indeed heartening. **As Victor Hugo wrote, “Nobody can stop an idea whose time has come”.** KISS Odisha is indeed a tectonic idea that needs replication on an all India scale.

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