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Quality Improvement in Secondary Education in Odisha

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Abstract: Quality in and of education has always been a priority area and a prominent agenda of various committees and commissions on education. Quality is an attribute of any object, structure or system that is relative in nature and can't be measured in isolation. In an operational way, the term 'quality education' centers around the cognitive, affective and psychomotor dimensions of children behavior. This article intends to highlight quality improvement in secondary education in Odisha. The paper mainly focuses on the status of secondary education in Odisha. The paper also highlights the major initiatives taken up by Government of Odisha for promotion of secondary education. The author suggests certain strategies which may be taken up by Government of Odisha for improving the quality of secondary education in Odisha.

Key Words: Quality, Secondary Education

Undoubtedly each stage of education has its own significance in the overall scheme of things but secondary education assumes great significance as it leads to higher education. It is expected that students completing this stage should have the requisite maturity to pursue higher education. Secondary education helps individuals to become useful members of a modern society. A good quality of secondary education is very essential to meet the needs of the country. National Policy on Education (1986) states: "Secondary education begins to expose students to the differentiated roles of science, the humanities and social science. This is also an appropriate stage to provide children with a sense of history and national perspective and give them opportunities to understand their constitutional duties and rights as citizens. Access to secondary education will be widened with emphasis on enrolment of girls, SCs, STs, particularly in science, commerce and vocational streams. Board of Secondary Education will be reorganized and vested with autonomy so that their ability to improve the quality of secondary education is enhanced. Effort will be made to provide computer literacy

is as many secondary level institutions as possible, so that children are equipped with necessary computer skill to be effective in the emerging technological world. A proper understanding of the work ethos and of the values of the human and composite culture will be brought about through appropriately formulated curricula. Vocationalisation through specialized institutes or through refashioning of secondary education will, at this stage, provides valuable man power for economic growth”.

Concept of Quality

Quality in and of education has always been a priority area and a prominent agenda of various committees and commissions in education. The term quality generally refers to high degree of goodness, worth or excellence in an object or system. In the social context, it represents rather an abstract idea, which needs to be exemplified through certain indicators. Quality is an attribute of any object, structure or system that is relative in nature and cannot be measured in isolation.

In an operational way, the term ‘Quality Education’ centres on the cognitive, affective and psycho-motor dimensions of children behaviour. Quality must ensure equity which means an education system should not make any discrimination against particular group in fulfilling its mission. These principles have been integrated into the targets of education set out in the Convention on the Rights of Child (1990) which underpins the current positions on quality held by UNESCO (1996) and UNICEF (2014).

The International Commission on Education, popularly known as Delor’s Commission (UNESCO, 1996) has recommended that each individual learner must be equipped to seize learning opportunities throughout life, both to broaden her or his knowledge, skills, attitudes, and to adapt to a changing, complex and inter dependent world. To translate this aim into action, the broad concept of quality education revolves around four fundamental pillars of learning, i.e. learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.

Seymour (1992) provided the following outline while enumerating the quality principles in higher education.

- Meeting or exceeding customer needs;
- Continuous improvement;
- Everyone’s job;
- Leadership;
- Human resource development in the system;
- Team work;
- Measurement;
- Systematic problem solving

Oakland (1988) identified five stages or attributes of quality assurance mechanism. These are:

- Dealing with quality planning;
- Providing quality advice and experience;

- Training of personnel;
- Providing inward goods; process and finished products appraisal methodology; and
- Analyzing customer's complaints, warranty claims and product liability cases.

Secondary Education in Odisha

By the end of 2012-13, there were 9, 350 high schools including 7, 612 Government and aided schools, 1, 660 private aided and unrecognized high schools and the balance of 78 are run by MHRD, Government of India, with 65063 teachers and 12 lakh enrolments including 5.97 girls in Odisha. Out of total of 9, 350 high schools in Odisha, 856 were Girl's High Schools. Computer literacy has been popularized at high school level (Govt. of Odisha, 2014).

The Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is a national flagship programme initiated in 2009-10 in Odisha to universalise Secondary Education by making quality education available, accessible and affordable to all children within the age group of 14 – 18 years with strong focus on the elements of gender, equity & justice. Government of Odisha has taken the following steps in 2011-12 for universalisation of Secondary Education.

- 1,982 private high schools have been notified to receive block grant.
- 9,614 qualified teachers have been engaged on contract basis to maintain pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools.
- During 2012-13, 3,513 teaching and 448 non-teaching posts have been created for appointment on contractual basis in upgraded high schools.
- During the year 2011-12, 111 new DEO offices have been opened in 11 districts and DEO Office, Jeypore has been renamed as DEO, Nabarangpur.
- Construction of 300 up-graded High Schools in high school less- Gram Panchayat have been taken up and steps have been taken up to set up 111 model high schools in educationally backward districts.

Inclusive Education for Disabled Children at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) scheme is being implemented in 91 blocks of 25 districts through 38 NGOS in 2012-13. During 2012-13, total 4, 032 disabled children of 1, 307 schools have been covered and 528 special teachers have been engaged under this scheme. The dropout rate at the high school level has declined to 18.72 per cent in 2012-13. The dropout rate for STs and SCs are still higher with 21.23 and 23.40 per cent respectively.

The Board of Secondary Education, Odisha regulates various types of examination. 6.35 lakh students had appeared in the HSC examination conducted by Board of Secondary Education, Odisha in 2013. Out of 6.35 lakh students appeared, 5.38 lakh passed the examination. The pass percentage is 84.7. The percentage of success among SC, ST and girls students stood at 62.9, 65.1 and 67.6 per cent respectively.

Major initiatives taken by Government of Odisha for promotion of Secondary Education during 2012-13 are given below:

- Steps were taken to include 226 high schools of Gram Panchayat under Block Grant total.
- 609 contract teachers who had completed 6 years of satisfactory service were regularized.
- 1, 702 contractual teachers were appointed for existing Government and Non-Government High Schools.
- 4.33 lakh students belonging to SC/ST/BPL/Girls were benefited under distribution of Bicycles to class 10 students at the cost of Rs.126.56 crores.

Quality Improvement in Secondary Education in Odisha

The following are some of the strategies for quality improvement in secondary education in Odisha.

Basic Infrastructural Facilities

There is a need to initiate comprehensive measures for equipping every secondary school with basic minimum facilities. The physical facilities, especially the school building, the library and the laboratory facilities are very important for successful implementation of any quality educational programme at the secondary level in Odisha. It is in this regard that institutional development is needed in secondary education.

Learning Environment

Proper learning environment is a pre-requisite for quality education.

- **Physical Aspect:** - It includes indicators like basic infrastructure- classrooms and teaching equipment, proper ventilation and sun light, seating and classroom setting.
- **Social Aspect-** It includes teacher-head teacher relationship, teacher-pupil relationship, pupil-pupil relationship and relation between home environment and school.
- **Educational Aspect-** It includes environments like providing educational facilities, trained and committed teachers and learning materials.
- **Aspect of Support Services-** It includes health checkup and incentives for effective learning environment.
- **Quality Teachers** – The quality of secondary education is greatly determined by the competency of the teacher. A teacher needs to be highly committed to his profession. He must develop the same commitment among the students.
- **Recruitment Procedure-** Teachers play a vital role in the human resource development. Proper attention must be given while recruiting teachers. Recruitment of the teachers should be done on the basis of merit.

- **Quality Curriculum** - The quality of secondary education depend upon the quality curriculum. The curriculum must be upgraded to meet the standards of excellence. Along with other subjects emphasis should be given to Work Experience, Adolescence Education, Value Education, Environmental Education etc.

Teaching- Learning Process

Teaching Learning Process is the central factor for the effectiveness of secondary education. It provides scope for interaction between the teacher and the students. To make teaching – learning process effective, teachers should be given need based and problem solving training in content and pedagogy. Teachers need to be trained and facilitated to handle learner centred pedagogy.

Quality Students

We need quality students for improving the quality of secondary education.

Integration of ICT in Education

The process of education should not ignore the social and psychological impacts of the technology that structures information and the possibilities that global information sharing opening up. Integration of ICT into schools has a strong pedagogical rationale and is a natural sequence in the evolution of the schooling process (Panda, 2003).

Professional Development of Teachers

Professional development is essential for the wholesome development of an individual's personality and his functioning at the optimum level. Some of the activities through which professional development of teachers is possible include extension lectures, staff meetings, debates, exhibitions, wall magazines, in-service education programmes etc.

Strengthening External Supervision

Strengthening external supervision is also a very significant mechanism contributing to the proper functioning of the institutions. It is desirable to strengthen the position of the head teachers and revitalize their role.

Education in Human Values

Education should foster universal and external values oriented towards the unity and integration of people. Teachers have to be made aware of the critical issues facing India and have to be consciously exposed to education in human values.

Strengthening Learner Evaluation Practices

Strengthening evaluation of learners for acquiring of competencies is an effective way to improve quality of education. The learner should be evaluated on a continuous basis through periodic tests.

Academic Leadership

Effective and excellence of an institution depend upon its academic leadership. It is only academic sound and professionally competent leader who can realize total quality in educational institution. It is only competent leadership, which generates an inspiring and academically productive environment. Academic supervision and monitoring of secondary schools should be strengthened.

Creating Institutional Culture

Organizational culture includes systems and structure, actions, roles, behaviours, norms and values. There is need of development of appropriate organizational culture for quality improvement in secondary education.

Conclusion

A major challenge before educational planners, educational administrators, educational researchers, teachers and managers of education, thus, is to devise and organise a system of secondary education which would both widen access to it and simultaneously ensure relevant and quality education. As a matter of fact, making quality education available to all students at the secondary stage is by far the only way to develop their full potential either for pursuing higher studies or seeking gainful employment (Anand, 1997).

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