



PROGRESS OF UPPER PRIMARY (MIDDLE) EDUCATION IN INDIA

Dr. D. Pulla Rao

Professor of Economics

Andhra University

Visakhapatnam, A.P.

1. Introduction

One of the important characteristic features of democracy is that it presupposes an educated and enlightened society. Democracy, both as a form of the government and as a way of life, cannot function when the society is uneducated and ignorant. Education and modernization are the two wheels of the same cart. Both, when combined together, lead to a rapid socio-economic development of a nation.

Economists have been arguing with sufficient empirical evidence that education contributes positively to development. A number of studies have been undertaken by researchers to establish the relationship between literacy and socio-economic development. It is, however, necessary to remember that primary education is pivotal for achieving literacy.

Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) is a constitution provision and a national commitment in India. Universalisation implies education all children up to the age of 14 which is equivalent to completion of upper primary level of education. Over of years, efforts by the government towards achieving the goal of UEE were focussed more on the primary stage then on the upper primary level of education. With the expansion of enrollment at the primary level of education, the pressure for expansion of the upper primary level of education has increased. The present study was an effort to analyze implication for provision of upper primary education facilities to ensure that this level of education is provided to all eligible children. This implies creation of easy geographical access conditions to enroll all the eligible children in upper primary schools, provision reasonable level of physical and infrastructural facilities in upper primary schools and teaching learning materials in the classrooms to facilitate meaningful curriculum transaction.

Universalisation of upper primary education in India is normally discussed in terms of enrolling and retaining all children belonging to the group 11 to 14. This seems more to be a desirable goal to be achieved in the long run than a realisable target at the present level of development of primary education. Enrollment is a function of the relevant the group at the primary level of education. However, enrolment in upper primary schools is more a function of primary education completion rates than a function of the relevant the group (11 to 14) cannot be enrolled in upper primary classes unless they complete primary level of education. In other words, all relevant the group children can be provided upper primary education only when all children of the primary school going age group are enrolled, retained and successfully complete the primary stage of education. Since primary education is not yet universalized, this implies that



universalisation of upper primary education means providing upper primary education for all children who have successfully completed primary level of upper primary education in India. However, once universalisation of primary education is attained, then there cannot be any difference between providing upper primary level education to all the group children and those who complete primary stage of education. The effort at present needs to be to improve the inter-stage transition ratios from primary to upper primary level of education.

2. Present structure of school education in India

India, being a union of states, has accepted a uniform structure of school and college education popularly known as 10+2+3 pattern of school and college education. This pattern visualized 10 years of general education including 8 years of elementary followed by 2 years of secondary education; 2 years of senior secondary followed by 3 years of college education leading to the award of the first degree. Until recently there existed several different patterns such as 8+3+3, 10+1+3, or 10+2+2. But, in pursuance of the recommendations of the Education Commission (1964-66) and the proposals of the National Policy on Education, 1968, most of the States have adopted 10+2+3 pattern. The National Policy on Education (NPE)-1986 also reiterated the need for adopting a common pattern, namely, the 10+2+3 in the whole country. The NPE-1986 also proposed adopt of a common structure of elementary education consisting of 8 years of schooling – 5 years of primary and 3 years of upper primary education. Therefore, the present structure of school education can be represented as $\{(5+3)+2+2\}$. A child is admitted to class I, normally, at the age of 6 years and is supposed to complete primary education up to Class V at the age of 11 years, and elementary education up to Class VIII, at the age of 14 years. Up to this stage the state is constitutionally obliged to provide for free and compulsory education to all children under Article 45 of the Constitution of India. Elementary education is followed by 2 years of secondary education popularly known as 'High School'.

3. Objectives

1. To examine the growth of enrollment of students in upper primary schools by sex and the corresponding growth in the number of schools.
2. To estimate the trends in the student-teacher ratio in upper primary education.

4. The Data

The secondary data relating to the number of recognized schools, enrollment by sex and number of teachers appointed by sex in upper primary schools for selected years of more than five decades period from 1950-1951 to 2004-05 are obtained from annual reports for various years, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India and from Selected Educational Statistics for various years, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. In as much as the terminal year of our study is 2004-05, it cannot adequately reflect upon the phenomenal changes



that have taken place in the upper primary educational set up in the more recent past. This is a limitation of the study.

The progress of UEE in India may be analysed in terms of three identifiable periods in history after independence.

1. Before Education Commission (1966)
2. Between Education Commission and the National Policy on Education - 1986, and
3. After National Policy on Education – 1986.

On the basis of the above identifiable periods, our study period (1950-51 to 2004-05) has been divided into 3 phases for estimation of annual compound growth rate of schools, enrollment and teachers by sex. The phases are

Phase-I 1950-1951 to 1965-1966.

Phase-II 1970-1971 to 1985-1986.

Phase-III 1990-1991 to 2004-05.

5. Development of Upper Primary Education

From Table-1 it may be observed that there were only 13,596 upper primary schools in the country in 1950-1951 and this number continuously increased to 2,74,731 in 2004-05. The index of upper primary schools recorded a much higher increase than that of index of primary schools.

The annual compound growth rate of upper primary schools was 5.62 per cent for the entire period of study. The rate is much higher in phase one (12.14%) than in phase two (2.68%) and in phase three (4.05%).

There were 3.1 million children enrolled in upper primary schools in 1950-1951, of which 0.5 million were girls. They constituted only 16.13 per cent of total enrollment. Later the total enrollment rose to 10.5 million in 1965-1966. The enrollment of girls was 2.8 million, or 26.67 per cent of the total enrollment. The total enrollment in these schools had increased to 27.3 million in 1985-1986 in which they were 17.7 million boys and 9.6 million girls. The enrollment in upper primary schools ultimately reached to 51.2 million in 2004-05, of which 22.7 million were girls or 44.33 per cent of the total enrollment. An interesting trend which can easily be observed is that enrollment of girls has grown at a higher rate than boys during the period of study in upper primary education. It is emphasized that the index of girls' enrollment in upper primary education is much higher than that of index of girls' enrollment in primary education. It is a positive sign and shows the improvement of upper primary education in the country during the study period.

The annual compound growth rate of enrollment of total children in phase one was 8.47 per cent and it is much higher than that of the growth rate in phase two (4.91%) and phase three (2.77%). It is interesting that the growth rate of enrollment in the case of girls is more than that of boys over the period.



Table - 1: Enrollment and number of recognized Upper primary schools in India: 1950-1951 to 2004-05

Year	Upper Primary Schools	Index	% growth rate over previous period	No. of Boys enrolled (11-14 years) (in millions)	Index	% growth rate over previous period	No. of Girls enrolled (11-14 years) (in millions)	Index	% growth rate over previous period	Total enrollment (in millions)	Index	% growth rate over previous period	No. of children per school
1950-51	13596	100		2.6	100		0.5	100		3.1	100		228
1955-56	21730	160	59.83	3.8	146	46.15	1	200	100.00	4.8	155	54.84	221
1960-61	49663	365	128.54	5.1	196	34.21	1.6	320	60.00	6.7	216	39.58	135
1965-66	75798	557	52.62	7.7	296	50.98	2.8	560	75.00	10.5	339	56.72	138
1970-71	90621	666	19.55	9.4	361	22.08	3.9	780	39.28	13.3	429	26.67	147
1975-76	106571	784	17.60	11	423	17.02	5	1000	28.20	16	516	20.30	150
1980-81	118571	872	11.26	13.9	535	26.36	6.8	1360	36.00	20.7	668	29.37	174
1985-86	134846	992	13.72	17.7	681	27.34	9.6	1920	41.18	27.3	881	31.88	202
1990-91	151456	1114	12.32	21.5	827	21.47	12.5	2500	30.21	34	1097	24.54	224
1995-96	171216	1259	13.05	25	961	16.28	16	3200	28.00	41	1322	20.59	239
1999-2000	198004	1456	15.64	25.1	965	0.40	17	3400	6.25	42.1	1358	2.68	212
2004-05	274731	2021	38.75	28.5	1096	13.54	22.7	4540	33.53	51.2	1652	21.61	186
Annual Compound Growth Rate													
1 st phase	12.14			7.51			12.17			8.47			
2 nd phase	2.68			4.31			6.19			4.91			
3 rd phase	4.05			1.90			4.06			2.77			
Total period	5.62			4.45			7.18			5.23			

Sources: 1. Annual reports of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India
2. Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.



6. Student-Teacher Ratio in Upper Primary Schools

As noted earlier, the student-teacher ratio shows the quality of education. Here, we examine the growth in the number of teachers employed in the upper primary schools in the country during the period under study. The data are presented in Table-2. It is observed that there were 86,000 teachers employed in upper primary schools in 1950-1951, of which 13,000 were women, or 15.12 per cent of the total. By 2004-05 the total number of teachers in upper primary schools increased to 15, 89, 000.

The number of women teachers reached on all time high in 2004-05 (5, 97,000) and they constituted 37.57 per cent of the total teachers, indicating that women teaching community has been on the increase all through. One should consider this to be a healthy sign for the reasons (1) that it contributes to gender equality and (2) that women teachers exhibit care and patience, their general traits, in teaching children. The number of both in male and female teachers in upper primary schools shows an increasing trend over the period of our study. The index of female teachers recorded a much higher increase than that of the male teachers. This may be due to implementation of reservation policies in some states in the country in favour of women.

The annual compound growth rate of total teachers was 12.86 per cent in first phase. It is higher than the growth rate of second phase (2.82%) and third phase (2.65%). It is interesting that the recorded growth rate of female teachers at 17.11 per cent was higher than that of the male teachers at 11.80 per cent in phase one. The growth rates gradually decreased in phase two and phase three among both male and female teachers, but the growth rates of female teachers have been higher than that of male teachers in all the phases.

During the period under study, the increase in the number of teachers was 15, 03,000 (15, 89,000 - 86,000). As the enrollment in upper primary schools showed an increasing trend, it resulted in a favourable change in student-teacher ratio. It is observed that the ratio was 36:1 in 1950-1951 and it decreased to 19:1 in 1960-1961. Later the ratio gradually increased to 35:1 in 1995-1996. By 2004-05 the ratio decreased and stood at 32:1. Anyhow this figure is less than the student-teacher ratio of 40 recommended by the government for aided schools.



Table – 2: Number of Teachers employed by sex in Upper Primary Schools in India: 1950-1951 To 2004-05

Year	Male	Index	% growth rate over previous period	Female	Index	% growth rate over previous period	Total	Index	% growth rate over previous period	Student-teacher ratio
1950-51	73	100		13	100		86	100		36
1955-56	132	181	80.82	19	146	46.15	151	175	75.58	32
1960-61	262	359	98.48	83	638	336.84	345	401	128.48	19
1965-66	389	533	48.47	139	1069	67.47	528	614	53.04	20
1970-71	463	634	19.02	175	1346	25.90	638	742	20.83	21
1975-76	554	759	19.65	224	1723	28.00	778	905	21.94	21
1980-81	598	819	7.94	253	1946	12.95	851	989	9.38	24
1985-86	663	908	10.87	305	2346	20.55	968	1125	13.75	28
1990-91	717	982	8.14	356	2738	16.72	1073	1248	10.85	32
1995-96	756	1036	5.44	409	3146	14.89	1165	1355	8.57	35
1999-2000	829	1136	9.66	469	3608	14.67	1298	1509	11.42	32
2004-05	992	1359	19.66	597	4592	27.29	1589	1848	22.42	32
Annual Compounded Growth Rate										
1 st phase	11.80			17.11			12.86			
2 nd phase	2.42			3.77			2.82			
3 rd phase	2.19			3.51			2.65			
Total period	4.86			7.20			5.44			

Sources: 1. Annual reports of Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India
2. Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.



7. Conclusions

It is a common knowledge that India achieved freedom from the British imperialism on 15th August, 1947. Many decades have elapsed since. Yet in matters of education in general and primary education in particular the country is enviably placed. Economic backwardness of the country may have to do with mass illiteracy and ignorance of the people. But economic backwardness alone cannot explain educational backwardness. Kerala, though not particularly a rich state in the country, has achieved the objective of universalisation of primary education. The population explosion in the country could not have been unrelated to the illiteracy of its people.

We have examined here the effect of the initiatives of the government in the field of primary education. More specifically, we examined the trends in upper primary education in particular since 1950-1951. The focus is on (1) enrollment of children by sex (2) size of the teaching staff by sex, and (3) student-teacher ratio at the upper primary stage.

Our data on the trends in the enrollment of children at the upper primary level showed that it was not commensurate with the growth of population in the relevant age group, notwithstanding the fact that universalization of elementary education has been the avowed objective of the government. The quantitative growth of enrollment has been faster in the case of girls than in the case of boys throughout the study period in upper primary education. Besides, the enrollment of students has increased at a higher rate than the number of schools and teachers.

To reflect upon the quality of education we arrived at student-teacher ratios. Let it be told that the significance of women teachers has been increasing over time and this should contribute positively to the growth and development of children. The student-teacher ratio at the upper primary level stood at in 2004-05 was 32:1 and this compares highly unfavourably with the accepted norm of 40:1 ratio.

This no doubt augurs well for upper primary education. There is, however a further need to effect improvements in upper primary education. As the child goes into the upper primary set up from primary set up there will be greater demands on the quality of teachers, of school buildings, of other infrastructure including toilets. These need to be strengthened. Mere increase in the number of teachers does not satisfy the demands of the pupils. This aspect has to be borne in mind if we want to ensure that the upper primary set up expands fast.

The expansion of upper primary education had been the highest during the 1st phase than 2nd and 3rd phases in enrollment, teachers and schools. One important reason of the downfall in the quality and standard of school education during the



recent decades may be the uneven growth of enrollment, number of teachers and number of schools, the enrollment growing faster than the other two.

As a conservative estimate, the population of children in the age group 6-14 years, at present, may be about 200 million of which about 160 million might be attending elementary schools. This leads to the conclusion that about 40 million children are still out of school, which constitute about 20 per cent of the relevant age group. It is reported that 22 per cent of the total out of school children of the world are in India.

According to our study, we have not been able to achieve the goal of the UEE as guaranteed in article 45 of our constitution. Though, there has been a massive expansion of schooling facilities during the last 55 years, the goal has moved farther with the number of out of schools children increasing. Moreover, there are glaring disparities in what has been achieved, which are based on caste, sex, religion, and rural-urban areas. There are good reasons to believe that India will not be able to achieve this goal of UEE even by 2030 unless some effective and efficient alternative strategies are planned and implemented.

References

1. Chalam, K.S. (1985): Educational Development of the Scheduled Castes in the Districts of Andhra Pradesh, (Mimeo), School of Economics, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam.
2. Chalam, K.S. (1988): Education and Weaker Sections, Inter India Publication, New Delhi.
3. Chauhan, B.R. and others (1975): Scheduled Castes and Education, Anu Publications, Meerut.
4. Gopinathan Nair, P.R (1981): Primary Education, Population Growth and Socio-Economic Change, Allied Publishers, New Delhi.
5. Government of India (1986) National Policy on Education 1986: Programme of Action, New Delhi.
6. Government of India (1994): 'Development of Education in India (1993-94)', MHRD, New Delhi.
7. Govinda, R. (2002): "India education report: A profile of basic education", NIEPA, Oxford, New Delhi.



8. Govinda, R. and Varghese (1992): "Quality of primary education: an empirical study", **Journal of Educational Planning and Administration**, Vol.6, No.1, January, New Delhi.
9. Kabra, G.D. (1984): Development of Weaker Sections, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi.
10. Naik, J.P (1975): Elementary Education in India – a Promise to Keep, Allied Publishers, Bombay.
11. Rajaiah, B (1987): Economics of Education, Mittal Publication, New Delhi'.
12. Rajput, J.S. (1994): "Elementary Education – Alternative Strategies", The Hindustan Times, June 10, New Delhi.
13. Saini, S.K. (1980): "Development of Education in India", Cosmo Publications, New Delhi.

