Provisions for Girls, SCs, STs and OBCs in Rastriya Madyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)

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Abstract

Improving the quality of education in schools with a special focus on capacity building of teachers, infrastructural improvement and greater ownership of community are some of the domains where the various educational schemes aim to bring about a change. For furthering holistic development of children with special focus on girls, SCs, STs, OBCs and deprived categories, there are schemes run by the center and state governments which aim to provide school education, improve the nutritional intake in school going children, and provide regular health check-ups and health education. Believing that a healthy child is able to learn better, these schemes aim to promote education as well as improve the overall well-being of the student. Effective implementation of all these schemes like as SSA, RMSA will ensure that all the children are enrolled in schools and that the learning outcomes are at par with the cognitive abilities of children at each grade. This paper is going to spread the informations about the provisions for girls, SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities in Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.

Key Words: EFA, SSA, RMSA, Girls Education, SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities, Secondary Education

Introduction

Education is an essential component to facilitate the holistic development of an individual. Recognizing the importance of education, the Government of India has taken several initiatives to ensure that each individual is able to access educational facilities thereby contributing to economic growth of India. The ‘Education for All’ Campaign is one such step which ensures free elementary education for all. Launched in 2001 by the Government of India, the initiative has been a pedestal for many to access the basic right to education. Furthering the objective of the ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’, schemes such as ICDS, MDM, SHP have been launched to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutritive and health status, acquire pre literacy skills such that education comes at the right age and is regular. Working towards the overarching goal of providing right education at the right age, these schemes share commonalities which, if brought together can help achieve the desired objective.
Similarly, Secondary Education is a crucial stage in the educational hierarchy as it prepares the students for higher education and also for the world of work. Classes IX and X constitute the secondary stage, whereas classes XI and XII are designated as the higher secondary stage. The normal age group of the children in secondary classes is 14-16 whereas it is 16-18 for higher secondary classes. The rigor of the secondary and higher secondary stage, enables Indian students to compete successfully for education and for jobs globally. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to strengthen this stage by providing greater access and also by improving quality in a significant way. The population of the age group 14-18 was 8.55 crore in 2001 as per census data. The estimated population of this age group as on 1.3.2005 was 9.48 crore, which is likely to increase to 9.69 crore as on 1.3.2007 i.e., at the beginning of the 11th Five Year Plan. This is likely to stabilize at around 9.70 crore in 2011. The Gross Enrolment Ratio for classes IX-XII in 2005-06 was 40.49%. The figure for classes IX and X was 52.26% whereas that for classes XI and XII was 28.54%.

With the liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy, the rapid changes witnessed in scientific and technological world and the general need to improve the quality of life and to reduce poverty, it is essential that school leavers acquire a higher level of knowledge and skills than what they are provided in the 8 years of elementary education, particularly when the average earning of a secondary school certificate holder is significantly higher than that of a person who has studied only up to class VIII.

It is also necessary that besides general education up to secondary level, opportunities for improvement of vocational knowledge and skill should be provided at the higher secondary level to enable some students to be employable.

Since universalisation of elementary education has become a Constitutional mandate, it is absolutely essential to push this vision forward to move towards Universalisation of secondary education, which has already been achieved in a large number of developed countries and several developing countries. Para 5.13 – 5.15 of the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 (as modified in 1992) deal with Secondary Education. Para 5.13 of the NPE, inter-alia, stated that “Access to Secondary Education will be widened with emphasis on enrolment of girls, SCs and STs, particularly in science, commerce and vocational streams……Vocationalization through specialized institutions or through the re-fashioning of secondary education will, at this stage, provide valuable manpower for economic growth”.

**Speech of Hon’ble Prime Minister Dr.Man Mohan Singh Ji on Secondary Education**

Hon’ble Prime Minister in his Independence Day Speech, 2007 has inter-alia stated that, “We are setting out a goal of universalizing secondary education. This is clearly the next step after universalizing elementary education. While the goal is laudable much work needs to be done before we are in a position to launch the Scheme for Universalisation of Access for Secondary Education (SUCCESS). Its details need to be quickly spelt out and discussed with States so that we are fully ready to launch it from 2008-09. We must not underestimate the complexity of this task as the principles for universalizing elementary education cannot be easily transferred to secondary education. The physical, financial, pedagogical and human resource needs are quite different. We also need to recognize the role currently being played by the private sector and policy design must factor this in. Detailed strategies and plans would need to be worked out rapidly for each state. Special attention would need to be paid to Districts with SC/ST/OBC/Minority concentration. The recommendations of the Sachar Committee need to be seriously
considered while planning for this programme”.

Statement of Planning Commission on Secondary Education

The Tenth Plan Mid-Term Appraisal (MTA) document of the Planning Commission has also, inter alia, recommended as follows:

“In order to plan for a major expansion of secondary education in the event of achievement of full or near full retention under SSA, setting up of a new Mission for Secondary Education, on the lines of SSA, should be considered.”

Opinion of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) on Secondary Education

Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) is the highest deliberative and advisory forum on Education in the country with Education Ministers of all States and eminent educationists as its Members. It was re-constituted and activated in mid-2004 after a gap of several years. After deliberations in the first meeting of the re-constituted CABE, held in August, 2005, seven Committees of CABE were constituted in September, 2005, two of which were particularly relevant for Secondary Education.

Besides the Committee on Universalisation of Secondary Education, CABE had also, at the same time, set up another Committee on “Girls’ Education & Common School System” under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister, Assam.

Report of this Committee was also presented in June, 2005. The Committee has recommended, inter alia, that:

“….. making good quality education available to all students in all schools at affordable fees is a primary commitment of the Common School System”.

State should invest in public schools system with standards, norms, building, etc., with the same standards as that of Kendriya Vidyalayas.

Reports of both the above CABE Committees were discussed and generally endorsed in the meeting of CABE held on July 14-15, 2005.

It is well recognized that eight years of education are insufficient to equip a child for the world of work as also to be a competent adult and citizen. The pressure on Secondary Education is already being felt due to the success of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Therefore, while secondary education is not constitutionally compulsory, it is necessary and desirable that access to secondary education is universalized leading to enhanced participation and its quality is improved for all. At the same time, it may not be possible to fully universalize education at the secondary stage during the Eleventh Five Year Plan as the drop-out rates are as high as 28.49% from classes I-V and 50.39% from classes I-VIII. However, with rising expectation from improved access to secondary education, retention in classes I-VIII will further improve.

Goal of RMSA

A centrally sponsored scheme called as Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was launched in March, 2009 by the Government of India to make secondary education of good quality available, accessible and affordable to all young persons. The objective of the scheme is to enhance access to and improve quality of education at secondary stage, while ensuring equity. The scheme envisages inter-alia, providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of every habitation, improving quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removal of gender, socio-economic and disability barriers.

**Improvement in quality** through, (i) Appointment of additional teachers to reduce PTR to 30:1, (ii) In-service training of teachers, (iii) ICT enabled education, (iv) Curriculum reforms and (v) Teaching learning reforms.

**Equity aspects** addressed through, (i) Special focus in micro planning, (ii) Preference to Ashram schools in up-gradation, (iii) Preference to areas with concentration of SC/ST/Minority for opening of schools, (iv) Special enrolment drive for the weaker section, (v) More female teachers in schools and (vi) Separate toilet blocks for girls.

**Coverage of Special Focus Groups**

**Education for Girls**

Education of girls is the primary focus in Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. Efforts will be made to mainstream gender concerns under RMSA framework. The state governments should undertake community mobilization at the habitation/village/urban slum level especially among SC/ST and Educationally Backward Minorities. The participation of Women in the affairs of the school will be ensured through constitution of School Management Committee.

The distribution of uniforms, scholarships, educational provisions like textbooks and stationery, will all take into account the gender focus. Every activity under the programme will be judged in terms of its gender component.

Besides, The School Management and Development Committee through school level cultural activities and or with the help of Parent Teachers Association and the Core Group at the District level with the help of PRIs/ ULBs, Local Community leaders, NGOs, retired officers of the locality, women activists of Self Help Group etc. should undertake extensive community mobilization to overcome cultural barriers in girls education at secondary and higher secondary stage. The programme should be given wider publicity in the areas where cultural barriers are very strong and where the parents are not inclined to send their adolescent girls due to various socio-economic and cultural reasons. The District Programme Coordinators of high population of SC/ST/ Educationally Backward Minorities and BPL families will be allowed to spent Community Mobilization & Innovative interventions Grant up to Rs. 1.00 lakh per annum out of 6% Management and Monitoring Cost on such activities at School level, habitation, urban settlements, slums, Block and District level. This should be indicated in the District Plan.

Taking note of the fact that there is a gross shortage of secondary schools the dropout of girls is extremely high mainly in northern states. The incentives for girls’ education need to be revisited. The measures taken need to be of such nature, force and magnitude that they are able to overcome the obstacles such as poverty, domestic/sibling responsibilities, girl child labor, low preference to girls education, preference to marriage over education, etc. Many State Governments have already started various incentive schemes like Provision of Bicycle, scholarship schemes, cash incentive schemes etc.

At the national level, to encourage greater participation of girls in the secondary and Higher secondary stage, a “National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education” has been launched in June, 2008. According to the scheme, a sum of Rs.3000/- will be deposited in the name of eligible girl as fixed deposit and she would be entitled to withdraw it along with interest thereon on reaching 18 years of age. The scheme will cover
(i) all eligible girls belonging to SC/ST Communities, who pass class VIII and (ii) All girls who pass class VIII examination from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (irrespective of whether they belong to SC/ST) and enroll in class IX in Government, Government-aided and local body schools in the academic year 2008-09.

In order to avoid covering distance through walking the State Governments should also provide Transport Facilities to the girls. These facilities could be provided in the form of followings, a girl child admitted in IX class in rural areas be given a ladies bicycle/wheelchair (for disabled student). She may use it while studying in subsequent classes also. The Government of Jharkhand is already providing this incentive to the Girls. State transport/pass facility may be made available to the girls for going to nearby secondary/ secondary schools in rural areas. Ensuring safety and security of girl child while commuting to the school.

Absence of lady teachers in the Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools is one of the major reasons for dropout among girls. Their absence also affects the access & participation of girls to the schools. In view of the fact that the girls at this stage are in the adolescent age, posting and attendance of Lady Teachers in the schools are must. It has been experienced that due to long commuting hours to the schools situated in Blocks or village, the lady teacher’s absenteeism is very high. This leaves the schools practically without any lady teacher. Hence, there is need for Residence Scheme for Women Teachers working in Rural Areas.

RMSA envisages construction of residential quarters for teachers in remote/hilly areas/in areas with difficult terrain. Quarters will be built as residential clusters with accommodation for teachers of all schools within a particular area. Preference will be given to female teachers.

RMSA also recognises the need for a rural posting allowance for woman teachers to attract them to rural postings. Rural Allowance in low women literacy districts @ Rs. 300/- per teacher per month is therefore suggested. This Scheme may be operationalized first in the high gender disparity areas (Blocks, Districts). Posting details of women teachers and their absenteeism will be reflected in the District Plan. The amount of Rural Allowance will be released subject to the availability of resources and based on the past experience of attendance of women teachers as reflected in the District Plan proposals. This will be reviewed at the end of XI Plan.

**Hostel facilities for girls:**

A programme called ‘Scheme for Strengthening of Boarding and Hostel facilities for Girl Students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools’ was operational during the Tenth Plan, which envisages recurring grant of Rs.10,000/- per annum per girl boarder and non-recurring grant per girl boarder @ Rs.3,000/- to the Societies and NGOs providing boarding and hostel facilities for girls pursuing education at Secondary and Higher Secondary stages in rural, desert and hilly areas, particularly those predominantly habited by scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and educationally backward minorities.

The Government of India has recently replaced the earlier scheme with wider and a more comprehensive Girls’ Hostel Scheme under which one Girls’ Hostel of capacity 100 would be set up in each of the about 3500 educationally backward blocks in the country. The location would preferably be within the campus of Kasturba Gndhi Balika Vidyalaya, and if that is not possible, within a Government Secondary School campus. The main objectives of the scheme are to retain girl child in secondary school and also to ensure that the girl students are not denied the opportunity to continue their study due to distance, parents’ affordability and other connected societal factors. The girl students in the age group 14-18 studying in classes IX to XII and belonging to SC, ST, OBC, Minority
communities and BPL families will form the target group of the scheme. At least 50% of the girls admitted to the hostels should belong to SC, ST, OBC, Minority communities.

Education of children belonging to SC/ST/OBC/Educationally Backward Minorities

The educational development of children belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Educationally Backward Minorities is a special focus in the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. Every activity under the programme must identify the benefit that will accrue to children from these communities. The participation of SCs/STs/OBC and Minorities in the affairs of the school will be ensured through representation in School Management Committee. To raise the achievement of students, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)–2005 has suggested contextualization of pedagogic processes and creation of ethos which enable all children to succeed irrespective of their social backwardness and gender. This requires a flexible system of education, which responds to local needs, and makes children from different backgrounds feel comfortable in schools. It also required greater use of child’s home language and more flexible strategies of evaluation. Contextualization of education is important in case of children belonging to ethnic minorities and minority groups. To address this issue and also to utilize child’s experience, SCERTs, DIETs, IASE and CTEs have to take up the task of development of local specific supplementary materials for bridging the gap in understanding due to cultural differences. There is also a need to evolve group specific teaching pedagogy and constructivist teaching learning strategy for teaching these children. Therefore teachers are required to be trained in developing such strategies. Encouraged by the significant role played by DIETs in the success of SSA, their role will have to be upscaled to work for the Universalisation of Secondary Education also.

The interventions for children belonging to SC/ST communities have to be based on the intensive micro-planning addressing the needs of every child. Such micro-plans should be approved by respective Block Panchayat or appropriate committee of the BP. The RMSA provides flexibility to local units to develop a context specific intervention. Some interventions could be as follows:

- Preference will be given to Ashram schools while upgrading upper primary schools.
- Engagement of community organizers from SC/ST communities with a focus on schooling needs of children from specific households.
- Special teaching support as per need.
- Ensuring sense of ownership of School Management Committees by SC/ST communities.
- Training programmes for motivation for schooling.
- Using community teachers.
- Monitoring regularly.
- Providing context specific intervention in the form of a hostel, an incentive or special facility as required.
- Provision of one additional language teacher (tribal languages) at least TGT level (per school).
- There is a need to strengthen teachers training component of Ashram Schools looked after by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MTA). Whenever a training programme is organized, it should be obligatory to include teachers working in these schools.
- Provision for hostel facilities.
- Provision for scholarships.

Prime Minister’s 15 Point-programme for the Welfare of Minorities inter alia
provides, “Improving areas to school education under SSA, KGBV and other similar schemes, it will be ensured that a certain percentage of all such schools are location in villages/localities having a substantial population of minority communities”.

One of the recommendations of the Sachar Committee relating to secondary education was as follows: “In pursuance of the goal of universalizing secondary education, priority will be given to opening of secondary/senior secondary schools in areas of Muslim concentration, wherever there is need for such schools”.

The interventions for children belonging to Educationally Backward Minorities will have to be based on intensive micro planning. Special interventions need to be designed to address learning needs of children from these communities and relating education to their life. The State Governments are expected to design specific interventions and campaign programmes to bring them in the Educational Process. Block and Village Panchayats would play a proactive role in this. Some interventions could be as follows,

Access and Enrolment

• An area intensive approach ensuring convergences of educational and developmental activities, resource inputs by various agencies and government departments. Community participation in educational endeavours.
• Reduction of educational inequities by giving priority to educationally backward areas and population sectors.
• High Quality Government Schools should be set up in all areas of Educationally Backward Minorities concentration.
• Exclusive Secondary and Higher Secondary schools for Girls should be set up. This would facilitate higher participation of girls from minority community in school education.
• State Governments are expected to ensure that a certain percentage of schools/upgraded upper primary schools are set up in areas of Minority concentration. The percentage may be decided by the State Governments based on State specific requirements.
• In co-education schools more women teachers need to be appointed.
• Extensive Publicity about availability of educational provision in the identified pockets.
• Regular enrolment drives.
• Conduct special camps and bridge courses for them.
• Open and Distance learning.
• Providing formal Secondary schooling facilities in centres of religious instruction viz Maktabs and Madarsas.
• Intensive mobilization efforts among the resistant groups.
• Working in close collaboration with the community in mobilizing parents in identified pockets.
• Using Local Community Leaders in community mobilization
• Providing hostel facilities.

Retention

• Monitoring attendance in pockets identified for intensive activities.
• Provision of some token awards, grades or incentives, if possible for better attendance.
• Publicly facilitation of children with good academic/ attendance records.
• Community involvement in mobilizing parents for regular attendance of their children.
Organization of on regular intervals retention drives to put regular pressure on parents and the schools system to ensure retention of girls. These are not one time drives but are organized at regular intervals to sustain the pressure and take up corrective measures as may be necessary.

Providing scholarships.

Achievement

- Special coaching classes/remedial classes especially for Educationally Backward Minority girls and the children who are not doing academically well.
- Creation of a congenial learning environment in the classroom where they are given the opportunity to learn.
- Urdu as a medium of instruction may be facilitated in schools having adequate demand for the same.
- Teacher sensitization programmes.
- Deployment of Urdu teachers.

The School Management and Development Committee through school level cultural activities and or with the help of Parent Teachers Association and the District Programme Coordinator and his/her Core Group at the District level with the help of PRIs/ULBs, Local Community leaders, NGOs, retired officers of the locality, women activists of Self Help Group etc. should undertake extensive community mobilization to overcome barriers in education of children belonging to SC/ST/OBC/Educationally Backward Minorities at secondary and higher secondary stage. The programme should be given wider publicity in the areas where socio-economic and cultural barriers are very strong and where the parents are not inclined to continue their children’s education.

The District Programme Coordinators of high population of SC/ST/Educationally Backward Minorities and BPL families will be allowed to spent Community Mobilization & innovative interventions Grant up to Rs. 1.00 lakh per annum out of 2.2% Management and Monitoring Cost on such activities at School level, habitation, urban settlements, slums, Block and District level. This should be indicated in the District Plan.

Conclusion

RMSA is a centrally sponsored scheme to provide the education at secondary level and fulfil the goal of universalization of Secondary education. This mission has done many provisions for girls, SCs, OBCs, STs, minorities and other deprived group. These special categories should take benefit from this Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan so that the goal of universalisation can be completed within the time period.

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