Education for all in India
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1.1 Context

Provision of free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of fourteen, is a Directive Principle of State Policy incorporated in the Constitution. While adopting the Constitution in 1950, the goal was to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen, within the next ten years. Keeping in view the educational facilities available at that time in the country, the goal was too ambitious to be achieved within a short period of ten years. Hence, time and again the target date to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) had had to be revised. Over a period of time, the focus was diverted from mere quantitative expansion of educational facilities to universal enrolment and retention of children up to fourteen years of age with a substantial improvement in the quality of education. During the period 1960-65, no official pronouncements were made regarding Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). However, in the year 1965-66, the target date was revised to 1975-76. The Working Group set up by the Planning Commission then revised the target to achieve UEE by the end of the Sixth Plan (1984). The Kothari Commission (1966) had suggested that it be achieved latest by 1986. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) envisaged that all children who would attain the age of about eleven years by 1990 would have had five years of schooling, or its equivalent through the non-formal stream and by 1995 all children will be provided free and compulsory education up to fourteen years of age.

Also, the 'World Conference on Education for All', held at Jomtien, Thailand (March 1990), called upon all the countries and agencies of the world to take effective steps for achieving 'Education For All (EFA) by the turn of the present century. The forty third meeting of the National Development Council (1991), while identifying the objectives for the Eighth Plan, also envisaged early realisation of universal elementary education and complete eradication of illiteracy among the people in the age-group of 15 to 35 years. The revised Programme of Action (MHRD, 1992,2) further envisaged that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality should be provided to all children up to fourteen years of age before the commencement of the twenty-first century by launching a national mission. More recently, Summit of Nine High Population Countries (1993), in its Delhi Declaration suggested priorities and strategies to achieve goal of EFA by the 2000 AD. Recently, in its judgement, the Supreme Court of India (1993) further ensured free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen as a fundamental right.

Since 1950, determined efforts have been made to achieve the goal of UPE/UEE/EFA, but despite spectacular quantitative expansion (Chapter 2) of the educational facilities in the country in the last fifty years, the goal still remains elusive and far out of sight. Do the quantitative expansion of educational facilities and recent official pronouncements imply that the target of universal enrolment will be achieved by the turn of the present century? Or, will these targets be further revised? To examine this, future information on both, aggregate and grade-wise enrolment at Primary and Upper primary levels of education is required at micro and macro levels i.e. all-India, state and district level. Also, if the date for achieving universal schooling is to be accelerated, school places will need to expand at a faster rate than in the past, which in turn implies a higher rate of growth of educational expenditure which may also require a higher share of overall government expenditure on education in general and elementary education in particular, all of which depend on future enrolment.

1.2 **Objectives**

In the light of the above, the present study has been undertaken with the following objectives :

(a) to modify the Standing Committee estimates of age-specific and single-age population in the light of the 1991 Census;

(b) to project enrolment (i) on the basis of past trends and (ii) with improvements in entry, drop-out and repetition rates by considering the age-specific and single-age population separately at Primary and Upper primary levels of education; and

(c) to compute growth rates in enrolment which would be necessary, if universal schooling is to be achieved.

In addition, the present position of entry and transition rates has been critically analysed and out-of-school children in age-groups 6-10 and 11-13 years at the all-India level have also been computed. Based on the available estimates of overage and underage children, the likely year of achievement of the goal of UPE/UEE has been projected at the all-India and state levels.

1.3 Coverage

Enrolment has been projected for the country as a whole and for its fourteen major states, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

1.4 Data

Secondary data on enrolment from the official sources and age-specific population from the 'Standing Committee of Experts on Population Projections' have been used in the present study (Chapter 3).

1.5 Period of Projections

The period of projections in the case of trend analysis is 1993-94 to 2008-09 and 1991-92 to 2008-09 in the case of student cohort method.

1.6 Computer Software

Computer software for analysis and projection of education data (EDSTAT) developed by UNESCO, Paris and spreadsheet softwares have been extensively used in the present study to carry out projections/ predictions.

1.7 Chapterisation

The present study is divided into six chapters. Educational development in India is presented in Chapter 2 which is followed by a chapter on methodology. In Chapter 4, projections based on trend analysis have been presented whereas grade-wise enrolment predictions are presented in Chapter 5. The conclusions of the study are summarised in Chapter 6, which is followed by a list of references used in the study.

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