

EDUCATION

Primary education

10.29 The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 led to insertion of a new Article 21-A in Part III of the Constitution that made Free and Compulsory Education to all children of 6 to 14 years of age a Fundamental Right. However, a suitable follow-up legislation is necessary to give effect to the 86th Constitutional Amendment.

10.30 The progress made in some of the important primary education schemes is given below :

- *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*: SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Governments to address the needs of children in age group of 6-14 years. The achievements of SSA till December 2008 are opening of 2,76,903 new schools, construction of 2,25,383 school buildings, construction of 9,18,981 additional classrooms, 1,82,019 drinking water facilities, construction of 2,51,023 toilets, supply of free textbooks to 8.40 crore children, appointment of 9.66 lakh teachers and in-service training for 23.82 lakh teachers. There has been a significant reduction in the number of out-of-school children on account of SSA interventions.
- *National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Education*: NPEGEL is being implemented in educationally backward blocks (EBBs) where the level of rural female literacy is less than the national average and the gender gap is more than the national average and blocks having at least 5 per cent SC/ST population with SC/ST female literacy below 10 per cent. It is also being implemented in select urban slums. About 3,286 educationally backward blocks are covered under the scheme in 25 states. Under NPEGEL, 39,852 model schools have been opened in addition to supporting 11,261 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres. Besides, 27,282 additional classrooms have been constructed, and 2,11,215 teachers have been given training on gender sensitization. Remedial teaching has also been provided to 11,44,370 girls apart from holding bridge courses covering 89,462 girls and additional incentives like uniforms etc. to about 1,60,73,048 girls (up to January 31, 2009).
- *National Programme of Mid-Day Meals in Schools*: The programme provides a mid-day meal of 450 calories and 12 grams of protein to children at the primary stage. For children at the upper primary stage, the nutritional value is fixed at 700 calories and 20 grams of protein. Adequate quantities of micro-nutrients like iron, folic acid and vitamin-A are also recommended under the programme. Since April 1, 2008, it covers all children studying in government, local body and government-aided primary and upper primary schools and the Education Guarantee Scheme/Alternative & Innovative Education centres of all areas across the country. During 2008-09, 11.74 crore children (8.24 crore of primary stage, i.e. Class I-V and 3.50 crore of upper primary stage i.e. Class VI-VIII) were to be benefitted under the scheme. The scheme was provided an outlay of Rs. 8,000 crore in the interim budget for 2009-10 compared to the same level of allocation in 2008-09.

- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya:** KGBV: scheme was launched in July 2004 for setting up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging predominantly to SC, ST, OBC and minority communities. The KGBV scheme was merged with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) as of April 1, 2007. 2,573 KGBVs were sanctioned by Government of India up to March 31, 2009. As on March 31, 2009, 2,460 KGBVs are reported to be functional (i.e. 95.61 per cent) in the states and 2,15,269 girls enrolled in them – 53,503 SC girls (24.85 per cent); 74,487 ST girls (34.60 per cent); 54,201 OBC girls (25.18 per cent); 18,647 BPL girls (8.66 per cent), and 14,431 minority girls (6.7 per cent).
- The Government of India has launched a Centrally-sponsored scheme called “Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education” in June 2008. According to the scheme, a sum of Rs. 3,000 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 enrol in Class IX in Government, Government-aided and local body schools.

Secondary education

10.31 Secondary education serves as a bridge between primary and higher education and prepares young persons between the age group of 14-18 years for entry into higher education and work. The number of secondary and higher secondary schools has increased from 7,416 in 1950-51 to 1,68,900 in 2006-07. Total enrolment in secondary and higher secondary stage has increased correspondingly from 1.5 million in 1950-51 to 39.44 million in 2006-07. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which shows total enrolment in secondary stage (9th-12th) as a percentage of total population in the relevant age-group has also increased steadily from 19.3 in 1990-91 to 40.62 in 2006-07. GER for Class IX-X (14-16 years) was 52.26 and for Class XI-XII (16-18 years) was 28.54 in 2006-07. Important Government initiatives for providing enhanced access to secondary education during the year were:

- A comprehensive Centrally-sponsored scheme called Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in 2008-09 with the objective to universalize access to and to improve quality of secondary education.
- Government of India has launched a Centrally-sponsored scheme called the National Meanscum-Merit Scholarship Scheme to award 1,00,000 scholarships each year, under which each student will be given Rs. 6,000 per annum (Rs. 500 per month) for study in Class IX to XII. To fund this scheme, a corpus of Rs. 750 crore has already been created with the State Bank of India in 2008-09 and a like amount would be added to this corpus fund every year over the next three years.
- First phase of a new Centrally-sponsored scheme to establish one high quality model school in each block of the country to serve as schools of excellence has been launched from 2008-09.

- A new Centrally-sponsored scheme to set up girls' hostels in about 3,500 educationally backward blocks has been launched in 2008-09. Under this scheme, priority will be given to girls belonging to SC/ST/OBC/minority communities.
- Setting up of 20 Navodaya Vidyalayas which are residential schools meant primarily for meritorious rural children in districts having a large concentration of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has been sanctioned. Ten schools will be set up in districts having a large concentration of Scheduled Castes and the remaining 10 in districts having large concentration of Scheduled Tribes.

Higher & technical education

10.32 There has been a significant growth in higher education during the academic year 2006-07. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), enrolment in various courses at all levels in universities/colleges and other institutions of higher education in 2006-07 was 11.61 million as compared to 11.34 million in the previous year. Out of this, the number of women students were 4.70 million constituting 40.55 per cent. There has also been a significant expansion of Central institutions of higher education in recent years. Recent expansion of higher educational institutions includes the following:

- An ordinance has been promulgated under Article 123 of the Constitution for establishment of 15 Central Universities including the conversion of three State Universities into Central Universities – one in each such state which does not have a Central University, except Goa, which has not been included at the request of the State Government.
- Six new Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), one each in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Gujarat and Punjab have been set up during 2008-09. Classes have also been started from the academic session 2008-09.

- One new Indian Institute of Management (IIM) namely the Rajiv Gandhi Indian Institute of Management (RGIIM) at Shillong in Meghalaya has started functioning from the academic session 2008-09.
- Two new Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research (IISERs) have been set up at Bhopal and Thiruvananthapuram which have started functioning with the academic session 2008-09.
- Two new Schools of Planning & Architecture (SPAs) have been set up in Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh and Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh. Classes have been started from the academic session 2008-09 in temporary premises.
- One new Central university, namely Indira Gandhi National Tribal University at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh has started functioning.
- A new Scholarship Scheme has been started to cover top 2 per cent of the student population of Class XII (equally divided between boys and girls on the basis of Class XII results) by providing them with scholarship of Rs. 1,000 per month for 10 months in a year for the first three years of undergraduate level studies and Rs. 2,000 per month for 10 months in a year for subsequent 2 years.
- A "Submission on Polytechnics" has been launched, wherein it is proposed to (i) assist the establishment of 1,000 new polytechnics by the State Governments throughout the country, (ii) provide assistance to 500 existing polytechnics to augment the facilities, (iii) provide assistance for construction of women's hostels in 500 polytechnics and (iv) start a renewed Community Polytechnic Scheme in 1,000 polytechnics in order to promote community development by providing short-term skill and vocational training to rural community and unorganized sectors.
- Central Institute of Classical Tamil has been set up and it has started functioning during 2008-09.
- To encourage research, the amount of fellowships under Junior Research Fellowships has been enhanced by about 50 per cent. The GATE qualified M.Tech Fellowship has also been enhanced from Rs. 5,000 per month to Rs. 8,000 per month.
- AICTE has permitted evening shifts in the engineering college and polytechnics, subject to court directions in a few states.

Reforms in education

10.33 Government policies have been focusing on providing quality education and upgrading skills. However, further reforms are needed in the education sector where both the Central and State Governments are involved (Box.10.2).

Box 10.2 : Educational reforms: Some issues

Education in India comes under the concurrent list and thus both the Central and State Governments are involved leading to multiple controls and regulations by the governments and statutory bodies. There is an urgent need for replacement of bureaucratic controls in education by professional regulators along with private-public partnership to ensure universal primary education. Competition in tertiary and secondary education is also equally essential. Rating the quality of educational institutions and all education service providers (private and public) may be helpful. Entry of registered societies (non-profit) and publicly listed (education) companies in all fields of education, subject to the regulatory framework which ensures quality and reasonable pricing may be encouraged. Government's higher education funds should be focused on promoting scientific and technical education and encouraging R&D in all subjects. Education societies acquiring land at concessional rates or other assistance from the government should pass on the benefits to the students. There is a mad rush for higher education at prestigious institutions like IITs and IIMs. A large number of private coaching institutions are thriving on this phenomenon. Parents are incurring huge expenditure on their children to get coaching from the tutorial colleges to compete for engineering or management entrance examination. At the same time, there is heavy pressure on children which may adversely affect their physical and mental development. There is a need to streamline the admission procedure to such institutions while at the same time ensuring that quality of student intake does not suffer. Intake should be based on entrance examination which tests the aptitude to grasp knowledge and not the knowledge itself. Besides, the number of institutions could be increased through entry of private players while ensuring that they are professionally regulated so that their curriculums/ degrees are internationally accepted.