

Challenges in Universalization of Elementary Education: A Study of Chandauli District

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Education is a lifelong process, which precedes a person from "I" to "We". Our Epics, establishes education as an instrument which enlightens the soul of a person by empowering him with knowledge and truth. Modern philosophy somewhat broadens the area of education and establishes its relationship with life. Education not only lifts the veil of "Maya", it also helps a person to live in harmony with his surroundings. It awakens the spiritual powers of person as well as makes him a good social human being. Education prepares a child for the future and produces a cultured man. (Mathur, 2000). It is not only concerned with the transmission of culture but it also builds new cultural patterns. "Mahatma Gandhi" aptly remarked that area of education and life should be same; means education should be directly related to life and should enable a person to tackle the problems of his day to day life, rationally and skillfully. As far as primary Education is concerned, it is a stepping stone for child. This is the reason why UNESCO advocates "Primary Education must be inclusive and accessible to all, in law, as well as in fact." The sub-aims of elementary education can vary from society to society but its supreme goal will always be making a strong foundation of knowledge so that children can pursue higher goals. It can be said that the value and role of knowledge is different in every culture but good basic education is essential in every culture and at all levels. (www.teachersfirst.nl). Today most of the countries are putting so much effort to raise enrolment and retention rates in their school system. India is also one of them. The allocation for elementary Education in the first five year plan was Rs. 893 crores which jumped to Rs. 2,875 crores by the tenth plan. The share of elementary Education in total Educational budget is 51 percent. (drafts of five year plans). These results have shown positive results in the form of soared enrolments and improved retention rates. Literacy rate has shown remarkable improvement from 16.67 percent in 1951 to 74.04 in 2011. (Census of India). The data is quite encouraging but there persists certain flaws in the system. Elementary Education system in India is facing a lot of problems. Many social, economical, cultural and psychological stigmas are prevalent in India. There is an urgent need to remove these bottlenecks to provide a better future to the new generation.

Introduction of Chandauli-

Chandauli is a newly born baby of the state Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh, itself is suffering from lot of problems, in the field of education. Drop out rate and repetition rates are quite high in the state. Large number of out of school children is another challenge which the state is facing. Chandauli is an eastern district of Uttar Pradesh, formed in 1997. Total population of the district is 19, 52,713. There are 9 blocks and

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one municipality. Total literacy rate is 73.86 % with female literacy of 63.07 %.(
www.census2011.co.in). There were 920 primary schools in 2010. (www.upefa.com).

Objective

The objective of the study is:

To understand challenges in universalization of elementary education experienced by school teachers in Chandauli district.

Method

Present study is a case study as it examines a social unit (primary education in Chandauli), as a whole.

Population and sample

There are 920 primary schools in the district. 92 schools were selected randomly through lottery method. Ten percent schools were selected from each block and municipality to get a representative sample.

Tool A self made interview schedule was used to collect the data.

Collection of Data

Researcher visited the above mentioned schools on a working day. Rapport was established with the teachers. Afterwards schedule was distributed among the teachers and clear instructions were given. The schedule was collected after the teachers completed the same.

Analysis of Data

Primary school teachers expressed their thinking and feeling on the schedules. They arranged the items according to their preference.

Table-1 Main Hindrances in Universalization of Primary Education in Chandauli District as perceived by teachers.

Sl.No.	Hindrances	I st Preference	II nd Preference	III rd Preference
1.	Dearth of teachers	104 (40)	39 (15)	31 (12)
2.	Lack of awareness among parents.	31 (12)	91 (35)	26 (10)
3.	Poverty	39 (15)	78 (30)	52 (20)
4.	Lack of Responsibility among teachers	13 (05)	26 (10)	47 (18)
5.	Uninteresting Curriculum	11 (04)	13 (05)	—
6.	Regional Conditions	—	08 (03)	21 (08)
7.	Lack of Schools	08 (03)	—	13 (05)
8.	Teachers' absenteeism	—	—	26 (10)
9.	Lack of infrastructure	47 (18)	—	31 (12)
10.	Excess work load on teachers	08 (03)	05 (02)	13 (05)
11.	Lack of Finance	—	—	—

Note: - Figures in parentheses represent percentage of teachers.

Table 1 depicts the opinion and preference of the teachers pertaining to the problems of primary education in the district. It is clear from the table that most of the teachers were of the view that dearth of teachers is the biggest hurdle in the path of universal primary education. After the implementation of "Right to Education Act" 2010, the situation has grown worse. The problem placed on second position, was lack of infrastructure in the schools. 18 % teachers put this at the first position of preference. Lack of drinking water, toilets, library, play-ground etc. discourages parents and children to attend school. It also hampers the over all quality of education and certainly works as an obstacle in UEE.

About 15 % teachers preferred poverty as biggest hindrance in UEE. Chandauli is a rural district where 90 % population lives in villages. The main family occupation of people is agriculture. People consider children as a working member of the family which stops them from attending schools.

12 % teachers expressed that lack of awareness among the parents is the major challenge. People are not aware of long term benefits of educating their child. They take education as a unfruitful task and like to engage their children in household works rather than sending them to schools.

Other problems placed from fifth to eighth position depict lack of responsibility among teachers, unattractive curriculum, lack of schools and excess work load on teachers. Teachers reported that some of the teachers do not perform their work responsibly but they also added that excess work load reduces the work efficiency of teachers which leads to poor quality of teaching.

Another remarkable result was found that only a few teachers believed on teachers' absenteeism as a problem. As teachers were the response givers the reason of this result is quite obvious. No teacher expressed lack of fund as a problem. It signifies proper availability of funds but also suggests that flaws lie in utilization of resources.

Conclusion & Discussion

It is clear from the above discussion that Chandauli is facing, more or less, same problems, experienced by the whole country. This is the high time to overcome these difficulties. Chandauli has made significant progress in some areas of primary education. For example, literacy rate has improved fairly, more children are in school today than was a case of decade ago and the gap between boys and girls has narrowed down, but still there exist some challenges which hamper the progress of primary education. These bottlenecks are both qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative problems include lack of schools, dearth of teachers and inadequate finance while qualitative problems envelop lack of responsibility among teachers, uninteresting curriculum, excess work load on teachers and lack of awareness among parents.

Universalization of elementary education can only be achieved when these problems would be sorted out rationally.

Former Indian President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam once said, "The synergy between education and learning has to be well perceived and operationalized. Education is essentially an aid to generate worthwhile learning." These lines give stress on the relationship between education and learning. Education is a process which leads to fruitful learning. But it depends upon the quality of education, being imparted to children. Today elementary education is the most favourite child of nation. Policy-makers and administrators pay a huge attention to remove the problems of elementary education so that a strong foundation for higher education can be built. Chandauli is not an exception of this situation. There is an urgent need to deal with inherent problems of elementary education. Appointment of qualified teachers should be fastened to remove dearth of teachers. This will not only decrease PTR but also curtail work load on teachers which overall lead to better classroom teaching. Curriculum of primary grades should be changed according to the regional needs of Chandauli. School timing and session- leaves should be arranged according to the harvesting season so that students' attendance can be increased. Poor parents can be benefited with educational vouchers instead of direct financial support. These vouchers will give them a chance to rate the school and change the school as per their choice. This step will not only remove economic constraint but also develop a sense of responsibility among teachers and school administrators by generating a fair competition among schools. Above all, there is a need to develop sense of responsibility among parents towards the benefits of educating their children, dedication and devotion in teachers towards their duties and accountability in administrators towards society, then only the golden goal of UEE can be achieved.

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