

Early Childhood Education Under the NEP2020 Framework

A. D. Bansod

Kokrajhar Govt. College
bansod@gmail.com

Abstract: *The early childhood education (ECE) is very important in shaping up the future of a child in later part of his education. The quality of education be imparted to every child will be similar if adequate importance and care be given at the nascent stage. Each toddler has the same right and privileges in getting the ensured quality education from their beginning of study. In India, though previous education policies gave some emphasis on preschool education, but it was not that systematic until a child attains the formal schooling from standard one which entry level varies from 5 years to 7 years state to state. The NEP2020 has in its policy document tried to unify the various preschool initiatives to a single umbrella. It has recommended that the formal schools will start their preschool activities for the child from three plus ages. The different kindergarten, Montessori's, aganwadis will function as per the formal schooling. One of the premier education board CBSE already implemented the scheme in tune with NEP2020, by opening balvatika. The entry age at standard one for all the child from the current academic session 2014 - 2015 is at least 6 years uniformly in all the states irrespective of their education boards. In my paper, why the maximum stress must be given at the formative stage of education has been discussed.*

Keywords: ECE, Quality education, age of entry, NEP2020

1. Introduction

The purpose of early childhood education is to equip children the methods or strategies that will eventually helpful in developing emotional, social and cognitive skills essential for their lifelong learning. The introduction of ECE actually starts from 0 age to 8 years of age. In these years a child is biologically in a receptive stage to learn newer things with ultimate ease. Hence it is all the more important that the every child from every nook and corner of our vast country irrespective of their caste, community and religion, language be exposed the same quality and standard of pre schooling experiences from 3 plus ages. If some of them are not given the same opportunity owing to various reasons, their growth in terms of understanding and learning will be bound to hamper at later stages as compared to the others of similar age group. The ECE is also about care of children in the mother's womb, the requisite nutrition and other vaccination in time to time and proper health care will ensure the health of newborn. It is also seen that the students who are coming from rural background at many times unable to compete with their counter parts from the cities,. This is in my view may be due to ignorance and apathy of guardians as well as lack of awareness to send their kids in preschool at the age of 3 and so on. The concept of kindergarten in private schools in India is by and large very popular but the same cannot be true in case of the rural kids. This is primarily because of unorganised pre schooling system in villages and rural areas. Therefore, it is quite but natural to give more emphasis and importance of quality education throughout the length and breadth of India from the nascent stage of education by the government. It will also ensure the enhancement of gross enrolment ratio. To systematise the pre schooling and make it at par with some educationally advanced nations, the NEP 2020 made recommendations that pre schooling will be brought under the ambit of main schooling that is a child will be able to get admitted in nursery section by attaining the age 3 and plus, the same child will be able to take admission in standard 1 at the

completion of 6. years of age. It has further pointed out that first five years i. e., up to standard 2 would be the formative stage of education. To be precise, the module of school education as per NEP is 5+3+3+4 ie., up to 18 years of school education as compared to 14 years of compulsory free education as per the RTE (Right to Education).

Early childhood education in developing countries:

The Global Partnership of Education (GPE) data reveals that the world is in a learning crisis and as of 2022, 70% of children in low and middle income countries could not read and understand a basic text by age 10. Globally 175 million pre - primary and aged children are not enrolled in pre - primary education. It is estimated that the poorest children are 7 times less likely than the children from the wealthiest families to attend pre - primary school. As per the data available for 40% of countries which allocate only less than 2% of their education budgets in ECE. Only 1% of aid to education is only invested in pre - primary education. From the above mentioned data it is quite understandable that lack of sincerity and casual approach in early childhood education in developing countries seriously harm their human resources build up. It is to be mentioned that the high mortality rate, lack of education, lack of proper child care in combination with complete apathy towards formative stages of education lead to less growth and quality of life in those countries. On the contrary, the developed nations show the reverse, their unified structure from pre - primary stages to primary level of education and more. With adequate funding and expenditure from the state, ensuring lucrative salaries to well trained teachers, building the basic infrastructure, and fulfilling the special requirements in health care and hygiene, the education system becomes a source which ensures the quality of education. That system is capable of producing well skilled and proper human resources those in future will credit back the initial investments by the state to its exchequer expanded for their foundational stage of education.

The present overall school education scenario in India:**2. Results and Analysis**

In India, we can see the same initiative by the successive governments regarding care of children. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) has been increased by one of the flagship programme of The Govt. Of India i. e., cooked Midday Meal which has been served in the school itself. In the recent past the initiatives have been taken to ensure proper nutrition in midday meal by the POSHAN scheme by the government of India. These types of policies and their successful implementation throughout the country is a very

commendable steps to change the school education scenario in public sector in India. It has also ensured the drop out ratio amongst the poorest section and caste disadvantaged groups of pupil. Though these initiatives bring the children in the schools but actually what about the quality of their education? Regarding the quality of education the author is very sceptical. The reason of the fact is there is a very sharp contrast of quality and literacy rates amongst the states of India. Though as compared to the last census (2011), the literacy rate in India has increased by 5% in the year 2023 to 77.7%. But as per the report of UNESCO. India will achieve universal literacy in the year 2060.

Table 1

The top 10 most educated states in India are as follows as per the 2023 data:

Sl. No	State	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)	Average (%)	Remarks if any
1	Kerala	97.4	95.2	96.2	
2	Mizoram	93.72	89.4	91.58	
3	Delhi	93.7	82.4	88.7	
4	Tripura	92.18	83.15	87.75	
5	Uttarakhand	94.3	80.7	87.6	
6	Goa	92.81	81.84	87.4	
7	Himachal Pradesh	92.9	80.5	86.6	
8	Assam	90.1	81.2	85.9	
9	Maharashtra	90.7	78.4	84.8	
10	Punjab	88.5	78.5	83.7	

The bottom 10 most educated states in India are as follows as per the 2023 data:

Table 2

Sl. No	State	Male Literacy (%)	Female Literacy (%)	Average (%)	Remarks if any
1	Andhra Pradesh	73.4	59.5	66.4	
2	Rajasthan	80.8	57.6	69.7	
3	Bihar	79.7	60.5	70.9	
4	Telangana	80.5	65.1	72.8	
5	Uttar Pradesh	81.8	63.4	73.0	
6	Madhya Pradesh	81.2	65.5	73.7	
7	Jharkhand	83	64.7	74.3	
8	Karnataka	83.4	70.5	77.2	
9	Chhattisgarh	85.4	64.7	77.3	
10	Jammu & Kashmir	85.7	70.5	77.3	

In figure 1 from the plot it is clear that whether it is educationally forward or backward states in India, the female literacy rate is always lower than male literacy rate. If we analyse the urban area is 87.7% versus rural India 73.5% there is also a sharp contrast in percentage of male literacy with respect to female literacy in India irrespective of educationally advanced or backward states. If we analyse

further about the possible reasons for the above findings, these may be attributed to various reasons such as poverty, caste divide, regional disparity, unequal distribution of wealth, human population explosion, lack of health care initiatives, inadequate allocation of state funding, first generation school goers, lack of awareness about female education, the female feticide.

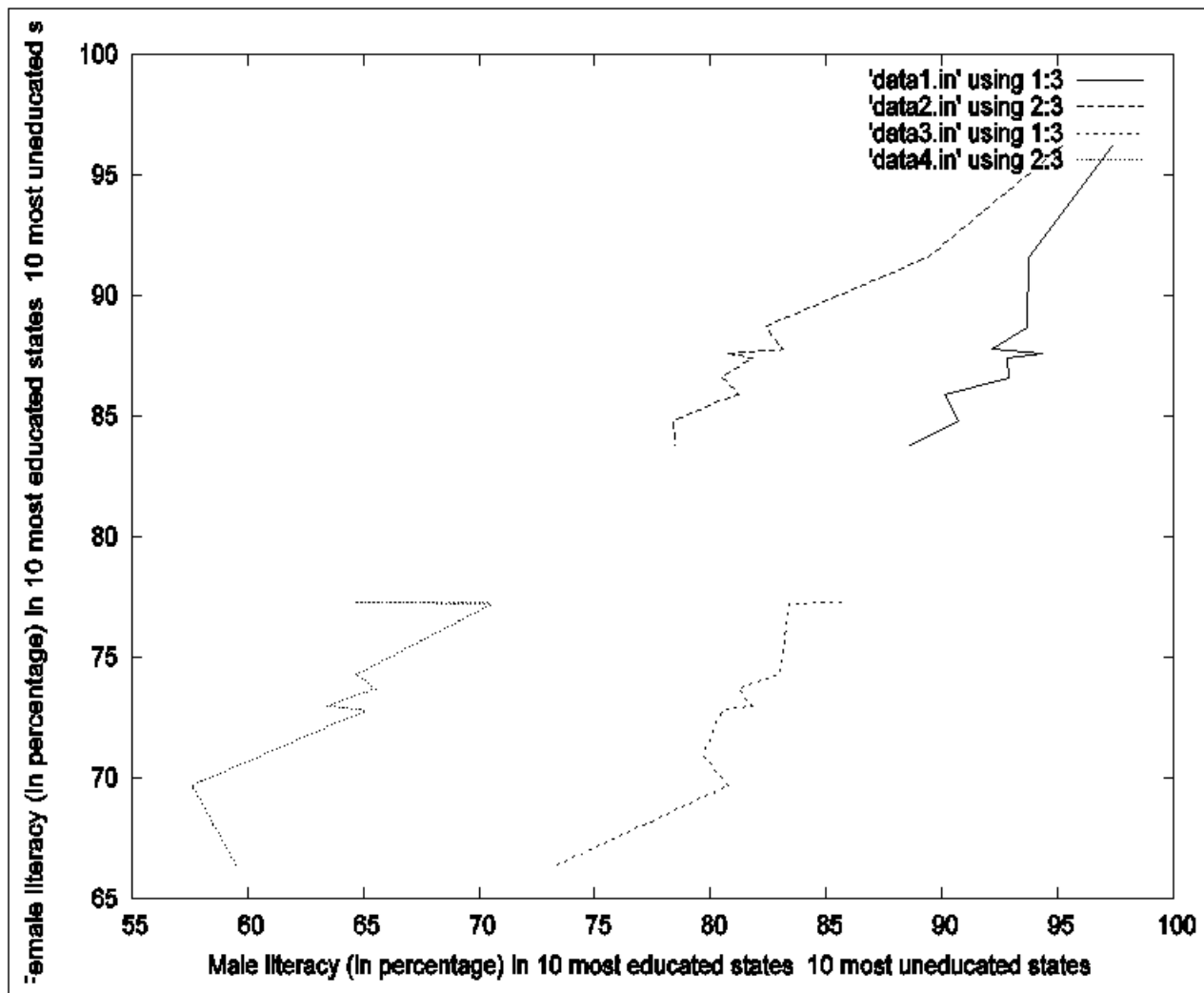


Figure 1: Shows the variation of literacy percentage in 10 educationally forward and 10 educationally backward states as well as difference of percentage literacy in male and female in both the cases.

To overcome this situation. Government has taken lot of initiatives like as passing the Right to Education bill in 2009 which mandates compulsory education from age group of 6 to 14 years of age. Midday meal, Sarva Siksha Aviyan, Digital India Initiatives, The National Literacy Mission, pradhan mantri Kushal Vikash Yojana, Skill development programmes, Beti Bacho Beti parao scheme with some newer edition as time progresses. Even though we see that almost 25% of our population is illiterate. Moreover, it is also come out in the public domain that the quality of education imparted in preprimary and primary stages are not up to the mark. One possible reason may be there is no pass and fail upto class 8. As with a right intension it was conceived that as per the provision of RTE 2009, there should not be any drop out because of the probability of fear of failing in any class by a student up to class 8. But the time has now come to review that decision as drop out is still continuing despite all the facilities provided by the government. To ensure quality as per the global mandate the government is holding different types of assessment of the students under SSA, but unfortunately the quality has not come up to the mark in all the states so far.

In few years back government of India Introduced NEP 2020, where the great emphasis has been given in foundation of education system in India. As our country is very young

and Indian have a collective dreams of making our country a developed nation by the year 2047, which will be incidentally the 100th years of our independence from colonial rules. It is further important to invest substantial amount of money in primary education, and iron out the errors from the system. The implementation of national education policy in later and sprit from early childhood education will be proved to a mile stone in Indian success story to achieve 100 percentage literacy by the year 2047. To achieve that goal the educators, must be given adequate training in learning new skills, and be entrusted them to solely in teaching, learning and evaluating the pupils performance. It is quite clear that if foundation is week then building cannot stand, the same is true for the toddlers also. The motor skills, the cognitive skills grow from 0 age to 8 years of age the most. So that must be capitalised by all the stake holders earnestly.

3. Conclusion

If government can spend and implement the the budgetary allocation of 6% of GDP in education sector as was prescribed in NEP2020, we hope that India will surely be able to achieve her goal before 2047 of 100 percentage of average literacy. That will be the solution of many social injustices still prevailing in the society. Education is the

sharpest weapon for social changes and it is most essential that the thrust must be given at the formative level in every children that are in between the ages of 3 to 8.

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