
Access to Secondary Education through Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in Haryana: An Appraisal**Dr Rajbir Singh Dalal, Chairperson.,****Dept. of Pub. Admn., CDL University, Sirsa, Haryana)****ABSTRACT**

Under Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, education has been made free for 6-14 years of age group or up to class eight. While secondary education covers children between 14-18 years of age or from class 9th to 12th and it is not mandatory by constitution like that of primary education. Therefore, there is need of more concentrated strategies to retain children after elementary education. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) was launched by centre government in March, 2009 to improve the quality and access to secondary education with support of state governments. It has subsumed other centrally sponsored schemes of secondary education.

Keywords : District Primary Education Project, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Dropout, Enrollment.

When we enter into globalized and free market economy in 1991-1992, half of India's population was illiterate, with a literacy rate of 52.21%. According to 2011 census, the decade 2001-2011 witnessed 9.2% growth in literacy rate which was slower to 12.63% growth of previous decade (1991-2000). Considering 10% average literacy growth rate per decade, India may take another three decade to achieve universal literacy. There are 45 countries which have achieved 99% literacy and Cuba tops the list. Whereas 126 nations crossed the level of 84%. India ranks 137th leaving behind around 60 nations from underdeveloped Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia. The Latin American and Central American countries which are infamous for political instability and insecurity and other eight African countries rank above India in the literacy index! The large population is not an excuse because China, the largest populous state could achieve 95.9% literacy.¹ It indicates the real picture where India stands on such a vital issue, despite this fact that it has made stride in many fields including economic growth, Science and Technology etc. India is the second fastest growing economy of the world and as per latest report of the World Bank, it has attained the position of 3rd largest economy in the world in Dec., 2014. Similarly, the GOI made a world record in PMJDY launched on 15-08-2014 with target to open 7.5 crore Bank Accounts in the Country by 26-01-2015 whereas the achievement level is of 11.50 crore with total amount deposited Rs. 9188 crore under DBT Scheme. This scheme (PMJDY) is entered in The Guinness Book of World Records with opening

1.8 crore bank accounts within a week as part of the financial inclusion campaign. According to Arun Jaitly, the Finance Minister, "Most of India is today included in the banking system."² Thus India is a nation with far and wide potentialities, what required is sincere and honest attempt on the part of Government ?

Towards universalization of secondary education in 11th five year plan [2007-2012] Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan [RMSA] was launched in March, 2009 which is the extension of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [SSA] already in progress at primary level since 2000-2001 for a variety of interventions for universal access and retention, bridging of gender, social category gaps in elementary education and improving the quality of learning. The RMSA scheme is targeted to achieve an enrolment rate of 75%, which was 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage, by providing a secondary school in a reasonable distance and providing universal access to secondary level education by the end of 12th five year plan [2017] and achieving universal retention by 2020. The RMSA will subsume other centrally sponsored schemes of secondary education like Information and Communication Technology[ICT] in schools, Girl's Hostel, Inclusive Education for disabled at Secondary Stage[IEDSS] and Vocational Education from 2013-14 in their existing form under the umbrella of RMSA which would lead to financial savings.³

To accomplish this goal and to cap the misappropriation of resources and optimize the outputs, the ICT has been applied for. A website www.rmsaindia.org has been launched by Human Resource Ministry for Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan Integrated during National Conference held on 26th August, 2014 in which a Project Monitoring System [PMS] has been enabled for online submission of monthly progress reports.⁴

On the basis of data by National University of Educational Planning and Administration [NUEPA] Haryana ranks 4th in Education Development Index [EDI] among 21 major states in 2008-2009. This index reflects progress of different states on parameters of school accessibility, infrastructural availability, teacher facility and outcome in terms of retention, dropout rate and percentage of children with 60% or more marks at primary and upper primary level school examinations. On the basis of data as on 30th September 2013 Haryana ranks 14th in EDI of composite Primary and Upper Primary level- All School: All Managements⁵. Haryana which is one of the leading states in India Union, still lags in sex ratio and violence against females including female foeticide. Despite various attempts by the State Government in this regard, the result are not upto the mark. That's why, Sh. Narendra Modi, the PM launched a mega awareness campaign 'Beti Bachao- Beti Padhao' from Panipat in Haryana on 22.01.2015 with main objectives to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensure survival and protection of the girl child & improve their nutrition status as well as ensure their education.⁶ As education is the key indicator of

development and empowerment, hence due attention is required to be paid from the state apparatus. The State Government has adopted all the programmes and schemes under the DPEP, SSA and RMSA launched by the GOI at different intervals. As the topic is one of the debated one, hence a modest attempt has been made in the present paper to assess the impact of RMSA in Haryana. Besides, the historical profile, concept and its salient features have been discussed with main constraints and suitable remedies of this scheme.

HISTORICAL PROFILE : Initiatives in field of education were started in British time in India along with its modernization. After independence India received financial aid from other developed countries for development of its education system. During 1950-80 the educational institutions in India tripled. The primary schools, especially, experienced rapid growth because the states gave highest priority to the universalization of elementary education (UEE) in order to fulfill the constitutional directive of providing universal and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. Most, but not all children had a primary school within 1km of their homes. A large percentage of these schools, however, were understaffed and did not have adequate facilities. The government, when it revised the National Policy for Education in 1986, makes literacy a national mission and resolved that all children who attained the age of 19 years by 1990 would have five years of formal schooling or its equivalent. National Policy for Education was followed by Plan of Action [POA] in 1992.⁷ The Centrally sponsored scheme of District Primary Education Programme [DPEP] was launched in 1994 as a major initiative to revitalize and universalize the primary education system. Expenditure of the programme was shared by Central [85%] and State Government [15%]. The Central share was funded by a number of external agencies, including the World Bank, DFID and UNICEF.⁸

In 2000-01, Government of India's introduced the SSA for Universalization of Elementary Education [UEE] in a time bound manner, as mandated by 86th CAA making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group, a Fundamental Right in Article 21-A. Innovative educational policies paved way. SSA was launched in 2001 for elementary education and the RMSA in 2009 for secondary education with aim to achieve the enrolment rate of 75% which was 52.26% in 2005-06 at secondary stage by providing a secondary school in a reasonable distance i.e. 5 km for secondary and 7-10 km for higher secondary and providing universal access to secondary level education by the end of 12th five year plan [2017] and achieving universal retention by 2020. Classrooms, Laboratories, Libraries, Toilets, Drinking water provisions and Hostel facilities are provided under this scheme. From April 2013 the RMSA has subsumed the other related schemes active at secondary level i.e. Information and Communication Technology [ICT] School, Girls Hostel, Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage [IEDSS] and Vocational Education [VE].⁹

In Haryana, the Haryana School Shiksha Pariyojna Parishad a State Government Registered Society supervises the implementation of the SSA and the RMSA. Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan [RUSA] is an other holistic scheme of development for higher education in India initiated in 2013 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. The Centrally sponsored scheme aims at providing strategic funding to higher educational institutions throughout the country.¹⁰

CONCEPT AND FEATURES : Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan is new centrally sponsored scheme for universalization of education to and improvement of its quality at secondary stage (9-10th classes). It is setting up of new mission for secondary education, on the lines of SSA. Since education is a state subject and the state governments are policy and decision makers on it, The RMSA is a crucial step to prepare the state governments to take up the goal of Universalization of Secondary Education [USE] in the entire country. Unlike the UEE, Universalization of Secondary Education is not mandatory by the constitution but by morale and by need. Madhyamik Shiksha or secondary education is education provided typically between the ages of 11-14 and 16-18. Secondary school stage comprising classes 8-10/9-10. Abhiyan or campaign is any a of actions or events that are meant to achieve a particular result or goal. The RMSA aiming at expanding and improving the standard of secondary education was announced in 2007 and it is proposed to implement during 11th Plan [2007-2012]. In January 2009 the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved its implementation. Accordingly Rs.20120 crore were allocated for the scheme during the 11th plan and Rs.27466 during 12th plan. Thus RMSA is a flagship scheme of union government for secondary education. The following are the important features of RMSA :

- To provide physical facilities like classroom, laboratories, libraries, art and craft room, toilets, drinking water facilities, residential hostels for teachers in remote areas.
- Appointment of teachers to reduce Pupil Teacher Ratio [PRT] to 30:1 with focus on Science, Math and English education. To increase quality of education this scheme provides for science laboratories, reforms in teaching learning and arrangements of in-service training of teachers.
- The Information and Technology [IT] based education to make student learn through computer aided learning process.
- Its preferential areas for opening schools are with concentration of scheduled caste, scheduled tribe or minority.
- It also focuses in micro planning and entry of more female teachers and separate toilets for girls.¹¹

Challenges : No doubt, we are progressing in field of education at every level and after making elementary education mandatory by constitution, it got boost, yet there are several challenges to overcome. Growth of enrolment from 4.3% per year during 1990s to 6.27% in 2010s, has controlled the dropout rate at primary level yet a sharp dropout rate has been noticed after elementary level and the enrolment gap is increasing from elementary to higher secondary. The combined Gross Enrolment Ratio at secondary and senior secondary level is 49.3% which is 62.7% at secondary level and 35.9% at senior secondary level with lot of regional and interstate variations. Thus the achievements at elementary level have not yet impacted at all levels of school education. The condition of disadvantaged groups i.e. scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, is worse in terms of number of dropouts as compared to national average.¹²

With much money pumped through various government schemes to bring more children to schools, more pupils are going to private schools in rural India. The ASER shows fall in the learning curve in government schools despite a high enrolment rate. In other words, despite better qualified teachers who are paid good salaries and schemes in place to attract and retain more children/students like the mid-day meal scheme, a 20% age point. 182 Government schools out of 380 in Kaithal district (Haryana) lack of Head teacher for a fairly long period which adversely affect the teaching as the other teachers have to deal many non-teaching assignments like opening of Bank Accounts, preparation of Mid Day Meal, make new admissions etc. No promotion has made in this district as Head teacher since 2008. It indicated the reality prevailing in government schools in the state.¹³.

Role of state or central government is not clear at secondary level as at elementary level. Government's role should be to universalize opportunity to attend secondary school rather than to universalize access. Biggest concern at elementary level is the poor level of student's understanding and learning achievement. Many students of standard V are not able to read the text of standard II meaningfully. Further language of text-books is not the language of rural child communication. Dichotomy in language pose barrier in comprehension that impedes children's learning, especially for first generation learners who mostly belong to working class. Apart from that bookish knowledge is still given more importance in the schools. Academic subjects are more emphasized than co-curricular activities. In our country only five percent population between age group of 19-24 has acquired some sort of skills through Vocational Education while in other countries as the children complete their higher secondary education they become expert in one or another skill and start earning their livelihood along with their education. So it is critical for country to make secondary education much more job relevant through skills training within schools. For this, higher investment will need to be made to equip secondary schools with teacher/trainers who have technical skills and

equipment [such as workshops, machines, and computer] that can be used to impart technical and vocational skills. India stands 114th step out of 134 countries so far the gender discrimination is concerned. That's why it is essential for India to provide equal opportunities to both males and females. Women empowerment is a precondition for a strong and developed India.¹⁴ Education can play a vital role in rooting out gender discrimination and empowerment of women, 12 of 100 'gender critical districts in the country, are from Haryana in which Mahendergarh (775), Jhajjar (782), Rewari (787), Sonapat (798), Ambala (810), Kurukshetra (818), Rohtak (820), Karnal (824), Yamunanagar (826), Kaithal (828), Bhiwani (832) and Panipat (837/1000) are in ascending order of sex ratio. Accordingly to bridge the gap of sex ratio, Narendra Modi, PM has to launch a nationwide campaign "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" from Panipat on 22.01.2015. Thus Haryana has the highest number of district in the country with poorest sex ratio followed by Punjab (11 districts) then UP (10), Maharashtra (10) and Rajasthan (10). The main target of this scheme is to improve gender ratio by providing an environment of security and education to girls with better nutrition and to eliminate all types of discrimination against girl child. The state government also launched "Sukanya Yojana" on this occasion.¹⁵

If the gender ratio of 871 girls per 1000 boys has put the state to shame, over 40,000 out of school girls are a challenge to the School Education Department that has witnessed a constant dip in enrollment of girls at the primary and upper primary levels from 1.44% to 1.40% and 1.21% to 1.20% during 2012-13 to 2013-2014 respectively.¹⁶

The total girls enrollment in private and government schools in class I-V was 11.11 lakh and in class VI-VIII was 5.74 lakh in 2011-12 which become 11.61 lakh and 6.19 lakh respectively in 2012-13. However the position in 2013-14 is dismal for class I-V with a total enrolment of 11.49 lakh and comparatively low growth for class VI-VIII with 6.49 lakh. Thus the percentage of girls enrolment to total enrolment has gone up marginally from 45.77 % to 46% (primary level) and 44.79% to 45% (upper primary level) in 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively. However T.C.Gupta, Principal Secretary, School Education, Government of Haryana has expressed concern over it and hoped it can be caped with use of NSS units in ensuring session.¹⁷ The available recourses are not utilized properly and their level of maintenance is far from satisfactory. Work culture does not prevail in academic arena due to a host of factors.

Conclusion with Remedies: The promotion of ICT by the Government, through Digital India and use of internet will further add a feather in RMSA as 259.14 million people subscribed internet in June 2014 in the country of which 18.55 million were wired internet users and 240.6 million were wireless internet subscribers as per TRAI data. Whereas 68.83 million of them were Broadband subscribers

and 190.31 million narrowband in June, 2014. Thus around 20% of India's total population is internet users among which majority are the youths.¹⁸ Haryana is one of the fastest developing state of Indian Union having ample opportunity of use of ICT and Infrastructure facilities.

As per the latest data (2014) of Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), an NGO 48.1% of 5th standard and 75% of 8th standard students studying in Government schools can read 2nd standard books. No doubt, the number of students enrolled in government schools after enforcement of RTE Act have increased significantly but this rise is more in private schools comparatively. In 2013, 49 % students were studying in private schools & this percentage age has gone upto 51.7% in 2014. Simultaneously, this percentage age has risen/increased by 35-40% in states like UP, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Jharkhand. Thus on negligence of government machinery, private schools are thriving.¹⁹ Still 29% of the government schools in the country lack of drinking water facilities which exceeds upto 50% in states like J & K. Until the basic amenities are provided in government schools these cannot retain the students for education in real sense.²⁰

Elementary education is of course necessary for all, but it is not sufficient to enable people to lead a standard life free from poverty. There is huge gap in India in access to secondary education. Several schemes are launched by government to enhance the students participation at secondary level despite major thrust is received through RMSA, launched in 2009-10. From April, 2013, 4 other schemes of secondary level are covered under umbrella of RMSA. To tackle the challenge of dropouts and to increase the enrolment rate at secondary level realistic assessment of the problems of the most affected categories of children be made so that more concentrated efforts may be taken to overcome them. Measures must be taken to help schools to meet the problems related to trained and qualified teachers and infrastructural facilities as their shortage affect negatively on the retention of children. Improving management system of schools to make them responsible for overall development of children rather than providing bookish knowledge only. New schemes formulated must focus on improvement in teaching learning process as it must be child centric.

Renewal of curriculum is required and student must be the centre of all syllabi for overall development and physical education and games would be made integral part of curriculum. Child friendly assessment is needed, for this continuous and comprehensive evaluation should be done by the teachers who taught them. This is recently started by government. Target should be out of school children including children with special needs to put them in main stream. Examination system needs reformation and teaching at higher secondary level must be job oriented.

Government has launched a separate pilot programme on Vocational Education under National Vocational Education Qualification Framework [NVEQ] in Haryana in 40 pilot schools in eight districts²¹ and now it covers 240 schools in 19 districts including Jind, Fatehabad and Hissar.²² In this,

each school offers two vocational subjects started from class 9 and class 11. Model schools and Aarohi schools are being set up in educationally backward areas. Vacant posts need to be filled up with qualified teachers and induction training must be given to these newly joined teachers. So with a dramatic increase in the enrolments of students at elementary level, pressure is increasing on secondary schools to provide best facilities and quality education to attract and retain children after completion of their elementary education for which a work culture needs to be developed and the environment of school needs to be made humane.

Sh. T.C.Gupta, Principal Secretary Haryana School Education ordered that none of the Elementary Education Teacher be appointed on election (BLO) or other non-teaching duty. Even there is provision regarding it even in RTE Act, 2009 despite teachers are kept busy in non-teaching assignments which adversely affect the teaching of students in government schools. Keeping into consideration the interests of teaching fraternity and their social problems, the state government has given relaxation in its transfer policy for JBT cadre (out of district-through onetime measure) to benefits over 5000 teachers who are far away from their homes so that they can dedicate more towards education.²³ It is pertinent to mention here Plato, the great Greek philosopher who stated that the state should take care of education and it will take care of the rest. Similar was the perception of father of nation Mahatma Gandhi regarding education.

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