

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF SCHOOL EDUCATION: AN INDIAN SCENARIO

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Abstract: *The direction and status of education determines the future of a country. Quality education has emerged as an essential requirement of the present world. The main objective of this article was to conduct a comparative study of the basic infrastructure in government and private schools in India. This article is based on the Indian scenario of school education, an attempt has been made to bring out some of the shortcomings of the school education system and some suggestions have been presented at the end which can be helpful in disseminating quality education. The results of the present research shows that still the situation regarding computer and internet facility in both government and Private schools is very poor. Thus, it is understandable that a long way has to be covered to make computer aided learning a reality to deal with the problem of digital divide in India.*

Key word: School Education, Quality Education, Indian Scenario, Classroom Teaching

Introduction

Education plays an important role in the development of nations. According to the famous educationist John Dewey, education is not a preparation for life, it is a life in itself (Dewey, 1897). In fact, education is the only medium through which human beings achieve new horizons of progress by developing their brain all around, that's why it is the key to the mind (Chauhan, 2016). Physical facilities like school buildings, neat and clean toilets, play grounds, the supply of pure water, class rooms, libraries, laboratories, furniture and other instructional materials play a fundamental role in improving academic achievement in the schools. According to Haertel(1981),the quality of school infrastructure plays a significant role in providing quality education. Gurukul education system was prevalent in ancient India and the aims of education were also different. With the passage of time, there have been many changes in the nature and objectives of education. Today the only aim of education is to get a government job. More emphasis is being given on science and technical education than moral education. Education is being commercialized and privatized. Online teaching is increasing in popularity rather than classroom teaching. But are we going in the right direction? Physical infrastructure is essential for providing quality education. Generally, it is assumed that private schools are providing better quality education as compared to government schools. This study was conducted to compare physical infrastructure at government and private schools in India.

Objectives

- To compare the basic infrastructure of both government and private schools.
- To highlight some of the shortcomings of school education system.

Data and Methodology

The present research is based on secondary data. The data has been compiled from various government reports. Descriptive statistics (percentage) have been used to analyze the data. Tables are used for effective presentation of data.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Online Teaching vs Classroom Teaching

At present, more importance is being given to online teaching than classroom teaching. But can online teaching be a replacement for classroom teaching? Education does not mean only by imparting knowledge or information, but it refers to the physical, mental, social and moral development of children, which is not possible through online teaching. According to Gandhi ji, personality development of children is more important than knowledge of various subjects, he laid more emphasis on skill training in his educational philosophy (Tondon, N.D.). Can effective skill training be given through online teaching? In school, students not only acquire knowledge, but learn and develop their personality by imitating their guru. On the other hand, in a country like India, where there are factors like rural-urban divide, economic inequality, digital illiteracy, geographical barriers like mountains, dense forest etc, which hinder the universal access to the internet and tools required for online learning.

For modern education, especially online teaching, it is necessary to have electricity, computer and internet facility. According to UDISE+ 2019-20 report,77.34% government schools are equipped with electricity facilities. However, much higher proportion of govt. aided and pvt. unaided schools have received the electricity connection. The situation regarding availability of internet in the schools is far from satisfactory particularly in government schools(Table 01).It is to be noted that only 11.58% government schools have internet facility. The situation little better in government aided and private unaided schools. According to this report only 37.13% schools have functional computer within it whereas 28.55% government, 61.84% government aided and 58.48% private unaided schools are

equipped with functional computer facility. Thus, it is understandable that a long way has to be covered to make computer aided learning a reality to deal with the problem of digital divide in India.

Table 01: Management Wise Percentage of Schools With Internet, Electricity and Computer Facility (2019-20)

Facility	All Management	Govt.	Govt. Aided	Pvt. Unaided	Other
Functional Computer	37.13	28.85	61.84	58.48	28.88
Internet Available	22.28	11.58	42.18	50.16	21.42
Electricity Connection	80.16	77.34	84.23	89.23	71.04

Source: UDISE 2019-20

Government School vs Private School

It has been almost 12 years since the Right to Education Act 2009 came into force, but even today there is a lack of basic infrastructure in government schools. In many schools, the building is in a dilapidated condition and there is no provision of sports ground. Whereas maximum private schools have basic infrastructure. On the other hand, there is a popular belief among people today that there is lesser quality education imparting in government schools than in private schools. At present, not only the wealthy but also the middle-class families are giving more priority to admission in private schools, as a result of which many government schools have come to a standstill due to lesser enrollment of children.

Table 02: Management Wise Percentage of Schools With Library, Toilet and Drinking Water Facility (2019-20)

Facility	All Management	Govt.	Govt. Aided	Pvt. Unaided	Other
Library Facility	84.08	88.05	85.19	77.09	49.76
Functional Toilet	94.93	95.05	92.12	96.73	85.70
CWSN Friendly Toilet	20.66	19.79	20.02	24.52	13.81
Drinking Water Facility	93.77	93.88	94.29	94.15	88.42

Source: UDISE 2019-20

It has been found in UDISE+2019-20(Table 02) that very high proportion of schools are equipped with library and functional toilet facilities but only 20.60% schools have children with special needs(CWSN) friendly toilet. It is also noteworthy that although most of the schools have drinking water facility but 42980 schools are still devoid of drinking water facility within school premises(UDISE+2019-20). Under the Mid - Day - Meal scheme, nutritious food is provided to the children in government schools. The Mid - Day - Meal scheme is an important and commendable scheme of the government, but teachers complain that it wastes time. Children waste more time than necessary in drinking milk, eating food and washing dishes.

Government Teacher vs Private Teacher

Besides of teaching and academic work government teachers play an important role in works assigned by the government like elections duties, exam duties and collecting census data. In terms of qualification, training and skill, government teachers are superior to teachers working in private schools, yet there has been a negative mentality towards them in the public that they do not work hard whereas private teaches work more because they need to stay in the job. But depending on the hard work and results, there is no such compulsion for government teachers. Therefore, today there is a need for government teachers to work hard and prove this negative mindset wrong.

Conclusions and Suggestions

The National Curriculum Framework (2005) talks about child - centered education, which is not possible with online teaching. Online teaching being a one - sided process, can never replace classroom teaching. It can be used only in adverse conditions like Covid-19 and only

as an alternative tool. Education, like family, marriage, religion, Law and politics, is an important social institution that plays an important role in the development of the social system (Tondon, 2016). According to former South African President Nelson Mandela as cited in (Nasongo et al., 2017), education is the most powerful weapon that can change the world. But what should be the direction of education to change the country and the world? Education has a paramount place in the building of any society, but when the same education becomes directionless then it becomes the reason for downfall of the society. So today there is a need to take education in the right direction. For this the following efforts should be made:

- Education of science and technology is necessary in the modern era but moral education cannot be ignored. Therefore, along with science and technical education, there is a need to give more emphasis on moral education.
- The primary purpose of education should be to develop the qualities of non violence, truth, unity and love, brotherhood and honesty.
- Government should apply proper check and balance mechanism to improve the performance of Govt. schools.
- Physical facilities like neat and clean toilets, CWSN friendly toilet, electricity, internet, play grounds, science and computer lab and library should be enhanced.
- Emphasis should be on practical learning instead of routine memorization and the examination system should be developed in such a way that it could measures cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities.
- Proper implementation of RTE Act, 2009 should be ensured in both government and private schools.
- Holistic development of children cannot be achieved by online teaching, hence it cannot be a replacement for classroom teaching, so it should be used only in critical situations like Covid-19 and only as a helpful tool.
- Commercialization and privatization of education should be stopped. Government should not allow private sector to open schools just for business purpose.
- There is a waste of time due to Mid-Day-Meal scheme. Therefore, a plan should be made for its effective implementation, for this the school time can be increased by one hour.
- The extra burden of census and election related work on the teachers should be reduced.
- Government teachers should work harder so that the prevailing negative thinking towards them and government schools can be proved wrong.

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