

Secondary Education Management Information System (SEMIS)

Mass basic education has been given a priority in the country right from the time of independence. However, mass education may not be complete without democratizing access to and ensuring quality of secondary education. The developmental effects of education generally take effect fully at the secondary level. Active participation in the global knowledge economy, therefore, requires that a significant proportion of the labor force in India be educated at least up to the secondary level. Not only that secondary education acts as a highway to tertiary education but also opens up the windows to the world of work. Its impact on reducing the incidences of HIV/AIDS is found to be significant. Secondary education is critical for the development of the young people during their adolescence, the most rapid phase of their physical, mental and emotional growth. At the secondary level, values and attitudes formed at elementary education are more firmly ingrained alongside the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

While the recent growth performance of India has generated much optimism, the accompanying indicators of educational achievement do not seem to be very encouraging. Although, India has been witnessing tremendous progress in elementary education since the early 1990s, and has also emerged as an important player in the worldwide information technology, its secondary and higher secondary education continue to remain underdeveloped and neglected. The States generally decide on their own secondary education system and the related policies within a national framework. The reform initiatives of the States largely shape the development pattern of secondary and higher secondary education in the country. While there is substantial variation across States, the country's public spending on secondary education is about 1.2% of the GDP. Given the limited public resources, the private sector has largely influenced the pace of growth of secondary education during the last two decades.

Participation rate in secondary education is far below that of elementary education sub-sector partly because of the low efficiency of the later and inadequate access and low quality of secondary schooling provisions. While the number of secondary and higher

secondary schools in the country increased from 7,416 in 1950-51 to 1, 52,049 in 2004-05 and the total enrolment has gone up from 1.5 million in 1950-51 to 37 million in 2004-05, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), which shows total enrolment in secondary stage (IX-XII) as a percentage of the total population in the relevant age-group was only 39.91% in 2004-05. The GER for Classes IX-X (14-15 years) was 51.55%, and for Classes XI-XII (16-17 years), it was 27.82% as on 30th September 2004 (MHRD, 2007). In fact, according to the Seventh All India Educational Survey (NCERT, 2002), there were only one-fifth as many secondary schools (those with grade 10 classes) as the number of primary schools. It is likely that secondary school enrolment is low partly because of lack of supply of schooling provisions, including inadequate provisions in the existing schools. Besides, low participation rates, gender, regional and social divides are most prominent at secondary level. The basic enabling conditions to make effective teaching and learning happen are absent in most of the government and aided secondary and higher secondary schools leading to serious concerns for raising and maintaining standards.

Despite supply constraints, the demand for secondary school places is likely to rise substantially in the coming years due to the increase in the turnover of graduates at the elementary level as a consequence of implementation of several basic education development programmes, including the SSA, and also partly because of the increasing private returns to secondary education. The implementation of the externally funded reform programmes in the primary education sector in the 1990s, and subsequently, the '*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)* have led to a high transition rate of about 85% from class VIII to IX, i.e. from elementary to secondary level, and it is expected that it would further increase in the coming years.

It is heartening to note that recently, there has been a shift in the policy of the Government of India with regard to development of school education, whereby, compared to the previous years, secondary education has been accorded relatively higher priority in the development agenda. The vision is to move towards universalization of school education. At the same time, it is also acknowledged that it may not be possible to fully universalize secondary education as the dropout rates at primary and upper primary

levels hover around 28.49% from Classes I-V and 50.39% from Classes I-VIII. To improve access, the target, however, is to provide a secondary school within 5-7 kilometers of any habitation during the Eleventh Plan period. It is envisaged to raise the GER at the secondary level to 65% by the end of the 11th Plan period. The CABE Committee on Universalization of Secondary Education (2005) has suggested that secondary education should be made universal but not compulsory. Not only universal enrolment, but universal retention and satisfactory quality of learning should also be given priority at the secondary level. Accordingly, the MHRD, Government of India keeping in view the need to make quality secondary education available, accessible and affordable to all young persons has initiated dialogue with the State Governments and UTs requesting them to take certain preparatory steps for universalization of access to and improvement of quality of secondary education. All the State Governments and Union Territories have been requested to constitute a high level Task Force to work out comprehensive policies, plans and programmes for secondary education.

But the matter of the fact is that, even after recognizing secondary education as a critical stage of school education, planned efforts in the country for its expansion and quality improvement have largely been confined to discrete Centrally/State sponsored schemes. From the 1990s onwards, with the increased policy emphasis on 'education for all', secondary education has been left wayside. In fact, lack of focus has also affected the development approach adopted by most of the States for expansion and quality improvement of secondary education. Decentralized sectoral planning of secondary and higher secondary education is almost absent in the States. Unfortunately, when planning is very much necessary to make the best use of limited resources available for development of education, the same has not been attempted in a professional manner. Unlike the elementary education sector, the basic enabling conditions such as creating the necessary database and institutional arrangements for planning and monitoring of secondary education have not been created in most of the States. Increasing presence of the private sector in the secondary and higher secondary education has also made it all the more important to make planned efforts for democratizing access and making public institutions competitive.

Although efforts are being made by the States for expansion and quality improvement of secondary education, there is little information available on the current status and development concerns. It is, therefore, necessary to undertake diagnostic exercises for assessing the current status and to identify priority areas for planned intervention to improve access, participation and quality of learning. In addition, the need is to create sustainable competencies and institutional arrangements at the sub-national levels required for planning and implementation of development initiatives in the secondary education sector. It may be reiterated that the States are yet to adopt a sector-wide approach for planning for expansion and quality improvement of secondary education. Given the strategy of decentralization, the development of district level secondary education plan is essential for identifying and addressing issues and problems of expansion and quality improvement. It hardly needs any mention that the parameters and methodology of developing district level secondary education plans will be different from that of the district elementary education plans. It is high time now the States initiate the process of creating the enabling conditions including a comprehensive database for developing secondary education plans at the district level. It may be a long and tedious process as the capacity building in the states is yet to reach even a minimum threshold level.

Until now, the role of the Central Government in the development of secondary education has been relatively limited. It was financing the national level bodies like NCERT, NIOS, KVS, NVS, etc. and assisting States through select centrally-sponsored schemes. On an average, the Central Government was spending around 12% of the total expenditure on secondary education. Now, in order to address the emerging challenges, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India is envisaging playing a larger role in the development and universalization of secondary education in the country. It has proposed to introduce a centrally-assisted programme called the **“Scheme for Universal Access and Quality at the Secondary Stage (SUCCESS)”** during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan period.

States are expected to undertake certain basic reforms/activities for receiving financial assistance from the Central Government under the Scheme. One of the important reforms envisaged is that States should undertake detailed school mapping and streamline the secondary education database besides creating necessary institutional arrangements at the State and district levels for planning and management of such development programmes. Creating necessary database at the district level and generating state level baseline status reports of secondary and higher secondary education are, in fact, the necessary condition for effective design of SUCCESS and planning and implementation of the proposed reform initiatives.

In the above context and on the request of the MHRD, Government of India to initiate the process of mapping provisions across secondary and higher secondary schools in a meaningful way for the purpose of institutionalizing both creation and maintenance of a comprehensive database at the district, state and national levels, the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) organized five **Regional Workshops on Mapping Provisions in Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools** in the five regions of the country namely North-Eastern, Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western region.

The basic objectives of the regional workshops were to orient the State Resource Teams of the participating States about the mapping exercise and related tools and techniques. Besides, the workshops also aimed at collectively reflecting on the modalities for operationalising the mapping exercise for preparing **State-wise Status Reports of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education**. The regional workshops were expected to provide important inputs for designing the mapping exercise and defining concretely the role of the participating States/UTs, the Centre and the NUEPA in creating and sustaining a decentralized **Secondary Education Management Information System (SEMIS)** in the country.

In order to develop SEMIS, the Data Capture Formats (DCF) developed, finalized and printed by NUEPA have been sent to all the states and union territories of the country. Using these DCFs the States and UTs are collecting data and information

from all the recognized secondary and higher secondary schools. A web-based software has already been developed by NUEPA which will be used by all states and UTs for developing computerized Secondary Education Management Information System (SEMIS). The tabulation, analysis and interpretation of data thus collected will be used for preparing the status report of secondary education which will, for all practical purposes, be a diagnostic study in order to plan for secondary education in coming years.