

## Challenges for Improving Quality in Education at Primary and Secondary Schools in India and Sri Lanka

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### Abstract

In recent times, the world is experiencing enormous improvements in all walks of life due to the rapid development in education. It has achieved a state of “knowledge explosion” in the present world order and education has created a novel global society of intelligence. However, these developments are, in general, found in the almost developed western nations. The third world countries, though marked some substantial improvements in education, are faced with several still unsolved issues, particularly in relation to primary and secondary education. This paper attempts to compare and contrast the contemporary challenges involved in enhancing the quality of education at primary and secondary levels in two South Asian countries, Sri Lanka and India and to make suggestions to solve this issue. The first section of this paper deals with the challenges and hurdles in primary and secondary education in India and Sri Lanka and the second section gives potential suggestions to solve these issues in these two countries.

**Keywords:** Knowledge explosion; Substantial improvements; Contemporary challenges.

### Introduction

The world is experiencing enormous changes in all walks of life due to the rapid development in education. It has achieved a state of “knowledge explosion” and that the world economy too got shifted to “knowledge economy”, swapping the conventional systems of economy prevalent. The rapid development in global education led to the expansion of knowledge and inventions and created a novel global society of intelligence.

However, these developments are, in general found in the almost developed western nations. The third world countries, though marked some substantial improvements in education, are faced with several still unsolved issues, particularly in relation to primary and secondary education. The South Asian

countries, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan, and Bangladesh which are all the third world countries are faced with similar contemporary issues in education amid the series of educational reforms in the past in these countries.

These contemporary issues in education in relation to primary and secondary education are, in broader sense, namely democratization of education, marginalization and exclusion of education, gender issues in education, quality in education, globalization in education, national harmony and environmental issues. Apart from them, there are a number of various other issues which affect the education in these countries. The issues in education also differ from country to country and from grade to grade in schools. The issues in primary and secondary are different from tertiary level of education.

This paper attempts to compare and contrast the challenges encountered in primary and secondary education in two South Asian countries, Sri Lanka and India and to make constructive suggestions to mitigate the hurdles in improving the quality of education in primary and secondary schools in both countries. The first section of the article deals with the challenges and hurdles in improving primary and

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secondary education in India and Sri Lanka and the second section offers potential suggestions to mitigate these challenges in these countries.

### Challenges and Hurdles in Improving Quality in Education

The poor quality in education is yet another contemporary issue which Both Indian and Sri Lankan primary and secondary education is faced with. There are differences in quality of education given to the students. As far as Sri Lankan primary and secondary educations are concerned, there are high rate of failure observed even in the recent years. Most of the students fail in Grade five scholarship examination and GCE (O/L) examination. Most of the students fail in science, mathematics, and English in their secondary education and that they deprive of the opportunity to continue their higher studies or any tertiary education. The lower quality education the students get is not useful to them. They are in short is a waste of time and money of the government. The reasons for this state of affair are given below:

- *Poor Educational Planning*

The education is planned in Sri Lanka, in the top down method, without considering the various factors of the distant schools. The text books and syllabi are designed from Colombo which is not easily understandable to the village level students. There is a big culture gap between the urban students and rural students. In rural schools, the whole syllabus is not completed in time. The planning in school level is important which is in most of the Sri Lankan and Indian schools ignored and go awry.

- *Lack of Teachers*

Teachers are appointed, but they are academically sometimes not sound. In Sri Lanka, unlike in other countries, there is still a large number of teachers remain untrained. Political based recruitment of teachers to the schools without viable permanent policy, caused injury to the quality of education in schools. For instance, the Janasavia, Samurdi, Home Guard, Cadet, Contract Basis, Police, Voluntary, Political Victimised, teaching appointments are some of the worse appointment of teachers made by UNP and UPFA governments. Similarly, the poor quality of teacher education in colleges of education and teachers college too affect the students' education to a great extent. In teachers colleges, the trainee teachers have the custom of copying the exam by giving bribe

to the Zonal Director of Education and the officials of Department of Examinations.

Further, the acute shortage of teacher for the subjects like English, mathematics, Science, etc, too affect the quality of education.

- *Poor School Management*

The poor school management is also one of the factors for the poor quality of education. There is no system available in both Indian and Sri Lankan schools for quality assurance. In Sri Lanka several systems used for strengthening the school management like School Based Management. Still, the efficacy of the system did not ensure the quality of students.

In India, in response to the demand for quality basic and secondary education all over the country, an effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committee, Village and Urban Slum level Education Committees, Parents' Teachers' Associations, etc prevail in the management of schools. They consolidate the effective system of management of schools in India. However, the lack of efficiency in school management depends on activeness, the ability, academic and professional experience of the principals. In most of the schools, the appointment of principals are made with the influence of politics, and in such situation, it is too difficult expect an effective management in schools which have counter effective in the quality of education the school provides.

- *The Economic Difficulties*

The economic difficulties also affect the quality of education in schools, particularly the primary and secondary educations. The schools are given several facilities to have their own resource for earning money which could be used for the improvement of education in schools. There are provisions for getting enough money by renting out the resources of school, and by other means to solve the economic difficulties in schools. Then only, the schools can conduct various workshops important for students and get necessary equipment (Anderson, 1991).

The insufficiency of equipment affects the teaching and learning process in the schools. For example, lack of science laboratory and computer laboratory restrict the time and opportunity for the students to learn. This situation is prevailing mostly in the rural and remote schools of India and Sri Lanka.

### **Suggestions to Improve the Quality of Education**

Quality education is an important aspect in education field. But the qualities of education provided in the South Asian countries, particularly in India and Sri Lanka still remain poor in the primary and secondary education.

- *Need of National Policy in Education*

Lack of national policy is a major factor for the poor quality in education in the South Asian countries. The recruitment of teachers, their promotions, curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, and the like should be followed in terms of national level policy to reduce the frequent political interferences, and malpractices in education.

This will ensure the teachers' quality and the proper result based monitoring (Jazeel and Saravanakumar, 2016). Furthermore, the planning in school level should be important and the principals and the board of management should be given in-service training on planning in schools.

- *Promoting School Based Management and Implementation*

The failure in school management is another setback to the quality in management. The management system which is rarely followed in schools should be strengthened with the participation of community. In Sri Lanka, School Based Management system is instructed to follow, but not followed properly. Therefore, the implementation of this SBM and monitoring is important and that the schools will get proper management and better output.

- *Provisions of Resources*

The resources which are lacking in schools should be given additional resources to the schools. The computer and science laboratories and the like where needed should be provided by the government.

The resources are often not equally distributed and this situation must be changed. A system must be formed where in the case of equal distribution of resources for education must be followed and those who hinder this system must be prosecuted (Bergmann, 1996).

- *Corruption Free Education*

The education system itself is deeply corrupted and those with inferior quality run the system in the South Asian countries. From principal to secretary of minister of education gets bribe. For example, the newly appointed secretary of minister of education to North Eastern province was recently red handed while seeking bribes for voluntary teachers' appointment. These type corrupt officials in education spoil the quality of education and are only interested in filling their own pockets. A system needed to maintain education free from the hand of these corrupt education officials, who do anything at the expense of the quality of education, like leaking out and selling question papers.

### **Conclusion**

There are enormous changes taking place in the world in all walks of life due to the rapid development in education. These changes reached a state of "knowledge explosion". However, these developments are, in general, found in the almost developed western nations. The third world countries, though marked some substantial improvements in education, are faced with several still unsolved issues, particularly in relation to primary and secondary education.

The analysis of primary and secondary education in Sri Lanka and India provides a wealth of experience to the development of both primary and secondary education in both countries. Most of the issues are common and the reciprocal exchange of experience between two countries will help develop quality in education in both countries.

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