

# MODERNIZATION OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH ASIA

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# **Modernization of Education in South Asia**

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## **Indian Council of Education**

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## **Preface**

Education was held in high esteem in South Asia ever since the beginning of time. South Asia, comprised of the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, is a region rich in culture with a glorious past.

Among these South Asian countries, India enjoyed a special status in the area of education as it was celebrated for its learning by early European travellers who bore witness to the great reverence with which learning and instruction was held in the country. Even during the early days of the British in India, the region was renowned for its natural wealth and state of development, and had a flourishing indigenous system of education. The colonization that followed greatly hampered the growth of most of the countries that constitute South Asia, leaving them struggling to sustain themselves. This led to the mass population being deprived of education, which was put on the back burner until the West stated its importance in the development of any democracy.

This book gives a detailed insight into the many challenges faced by each of the South Asian countries in achieving its educational goals and the factors that contribute to it.

These countries have come a long way in the past few decades despite the limitations they have had to face – some regions have had their efforts towards education threatened by terrorism; others have been quelled by natural disasters. Gender disparity and poverty have also greatly contributed to limiting education among many other factors. It is quite common for boys to be given priority over girls when the family is faced with limited resources. Practices of child marriage and child labour also remain a major challenge for

most of these countries. The government by making free and compulsory education a fundamental right has taken a major step in the right direction. Education in South Asian countries have also had to shift from its esoteric and religious nature to being more liberal and science-oriented, thus resulting in bridging the gap between the poor and the wealthy. Many other challenges like poor quality of education that focuses on learning by rote instead of promoting the creative ability of the child remain unaddressed.

Modern education can alone challenge the various attitudes that are so deeply ingrained in society, like the ones that promote gender disparity and casteism. Education is the foundation for economic and social development and is essential to providing individuals, society and the nation at large, with a chance of a better future.

# Chapter 1

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## Overview



## **RATIONALE**

South Asia constitutes to one-fourth of the world's population, a region that encompass seven adjoining countries- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The region is geographically interwoven and is homogenous in terms of socio-cultural, political, historical, economic, and educational factors. The people of this area are inheritors to a heritage of familiar culture and civilization precipitous in history. The region mostly shares similar geographical and climatic topography. The region showed cultural vibrancy over to subtle lifestyle of the Western world.

The ancient scriptures associated with the region placed education and knowledge on a high pedestal, regarding it as the most important treasure one could have. Even in the early twenty-first century, many in the region value education very highly. Some of these countries were once very rich, industrially advanced, and materially prosperous.<sup>1</sup>

The main reason for these regions was being colonized except Nepal and Bhutan for decades which hampered the growth of these nations. Independence did not come easy for these countries nor did the years post freedom till date many of these nations are struggling to achieve the goals set up the developed world. To meet the ends the South Asian countries need to work on development of the population which is one way dependent on the quality of the education.

The importance of education is increasingly realized by every nation in the region. The critical role of education in social, economic, and political development as a means of development as well as a measure of development is widely recognized. As the Western push for development focused in education countries in the South Asian region also experienced an explosion in the number of people attending school. Between 1950 and 1997, enrollments in schools in South Asia increased six fold, from 44 million to 262

million. The total teaching staff increased from 1.4 million to 7.2 million during this period. Enrollment ratios increased from 20 percent (net) in 1960 to 52 percent (gross) in 2000. (Gross enrollment ratios refer to the total enrollments as a proportion of the relevant age group population, while net enrollment ratio refers to enrollment.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the importance of education in development South Asian countries did take steps to ensure education facilities for the children in their nations but hurdles come along when population is marred by poverty. An estimated 179 million children of primary school age live in South Asia.

But according to school level enrolment data, 13.3 million are out of school as of 2010 (UIS database May 2012 release).<sup>3</sup> Poverty is inter-related to other problems of underdevelopment. In rural and urban communities, poverty can be very different affecting live differently.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative call for 100 per cent enrolment in primary schools and the completion of a full primary cycle of education.

Aside from millions of children still out of school, many children in South Asia who start the first grade of primary education do not reach the last grade of primary education. In Bangladesh for example, only 55 students for every 100 who start Grade 1 reach the last grade of primary education. The rate is higher in Sri Lanka (98 per cent) and Bhutan (90 per cent).<sup>4</sup>

These South Asian nations have population crisis and limitation of resources which makes education sustaining a difficult problem. Education in urban regions is quite better than that in rural areas. With major hurdles for education being large population and poverty other factors are also oiling up the hurdled success. Weak governance structures and feeble democratic institutions, increasing militarization, insurgency and self sustained

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sectarianism are some reasons that major causes for distraction in policies of governance.

The available education in these countries is imparted depending on gender of the pupils. Gender equality is something that is missing from these nations. Girls are not allowed to receive education beyond a certain age either minimal of literacy or prior till they hit puberty. More than half or 52 per cent of the world's adult illiterates live in South Asia, the highest among the world's sub-regions. Along with this these nations are cursed with racism and differentiated on caste, religion and ethnicity.

Education in South Asia has also continues to feel the impact of armed conflicts and disasters. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2011 massive earthquake that struck southwestern Pakistan, the recurrence of cyclones in Bangladesh and flooding in most parts of the sub-region have closed or destroyed schools, left teachers and students dead, and destroyed the stability essential to learning.

Fees and indirect costs for education are an obvious barrier to the poor. Access depends also on whether schools can be easily and safely reached by girls and disabled children, whether the timing of classes is appropriate for the lifestyle and working patterns of the community, and whether schools are acceptable to the community. The quality of education is also major issue in South Asia. National and international learning assessments often show poor results for countries in South Asia.

The world is moving with a pace that these South Asian nations need to cope up with international community has been pushing these developing nations to achieve what is seen a potential of these nations.

These nations realize and are working towards achieving the goal that democracy lies in constant educational ethos and education does not mean

## *Overview*

making the population literate enough to be accounted in the national census report but to make a difference in the life of oneself and the nation on a whole.

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# Chapter 2

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## Development of Education

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

South Asia constitutes a culturally close knit group of countries that shared similar development scope in previous years. These countries were once colonized or under rule or invasion which pushed these nations to slower educational development. South Asia is characterized by its large population, growing poverty, weak governance structures and feeble democratic institutions, increasing militarization and sectarianism. Most countries in the region experienced colonization before becoming independent sovereign states.

With years of struggle to sustain livelihood these nations could not take much interest in the field of education. Education was provided to elite class only and could not reach the mass population.

However within years of freedom and separate identities these nations followed up the universal suite to provide education for every individual of the country which was made a fundamental right. Education was given importance when the west stated and confirmed that development of any democracy was only possible through education of the mass population.

During 1950's education policies were formed which promised for education to the children in these nations. The region was once famed for its natural wealth and state of development, although the feudal patriarchal societies were deeply divided by inequalities of gender, caste and social status. Conditions worsened during the several centuries of colonial rule, which left the countries economically debilitated. In more recent times, a complex set of political, socio-cultural and economic circumstances has led to continuing ethnic strife in the region.

Until the eighteenth century, indigenous systems of education, based on religion, trade and craft, had been fairly widespread. The colonial system

which replaced them was restricted in scope and coverage. Aimed at training clerks and civil servants, this education placed its major emphasis on languages, especially English, and the humanities: science and technology were all but excluded. Further, the use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction reinforced rote memorization as an accepted method of learning.<sup>1</sup> With such policies enrollment in schools was

*“Education and literacy rate are two different things that these nations are trying to portray. As a result of a sustained effort over the last thirty years, adult literacy has increased substantially, from 32 per cent in 1970 to 55 per cent in 1999. Enrollment in the schools of these nations saw upsurge till 1999 and later due political and environmental crisis education was let back”*

seen growing every approaching academic year. Enrollment ratios increased from 20 percent (net) in 1960 to 52 percent (gross) in 2000.<sup>2</sup>

Education and literacy rate are two different things that these nations are trying to portray. As a result of a sustained effort over the last thirty years, adult literacy has increased substantially, from 32 per cent in 1970 to 55 per cent in 1999. Enrollment in the schools of these nations saw upsurge till 1999 and later due political and environmental crisis education was let back.

Moreover enrollment in school did not assure for complete education many children dropped out of school as soon as they could take the responsibility of working and earning. Except for Maldives and Sri Lanka and moderately for India other South Asian nations did had poor percentage in children who could complete education up to secondary level.

Population in these countries has been ever increasing which made it difficult for the policy makers to implement policies. Moreover considering the majority of population to lower income groups' education alone could make



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sure that the families spend resources on education of their children. Child labor and education need to be tackled simultaneously. Providing food in day schools was such an alternative that assured parental support for education.

These regions are more prone towards negligence towards educating girls, so more efforts are needed in creating a push in that specter. Making education compulsory and providing education as key source for employment and better lives can assure increase in enrollment.

With the number of enrollment educationist also need to concentrate on quality of education provided. Despite the increased enrollment, the systems of education in South Asia prove to be achieving below the standards.

Today these nations have scope of extensive and excellent education Sri Lanka and Maldives are nations that follow universal education system making literacy rate around 90% in the two states. India has one of the largest education systems in the world—its student population exceeds the total population of some of the countries of the world. Afghanistan has been combating too many problems since last decades making it difficult to sustain complete education amongst children.

Pakistan has been more volunteered in traditional education for maximum population of the nation. The countries traditional education has been scrutinized internationally. Nepal and Bangladesh are in economic backdrop that makes the countries invest in limited amounts on education.

There is no doubt that these countries have come a long way in a short period of time and development in education has had visible results on the global forum, accounting for intelligent and qualified people on international level, but still much needs to be discussed and implemented. The scope of education needs to widen and education needs to be provided in every

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household irrespective of limitation of finance or sex or age. These nations need more guidance from international community to eliminate the substantial limits put on education and make sure there be no difference between formal and education giving equal opportunities to every individual.

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# Chapter 3

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## Barriers to Education in South Asian Countries

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

South Asian nations are leading towards development in pace matching the other nations in the world. These nations have come a long way in understanding the importance of the various scopes of development and are working towards achieving them. Education being one such aspect that these countries are working on since their independence or resurrection. The western world had time and again emphasized the role of democracy in development which can only be enhanced through education of the masses thus emerging out from the traditional methods of education these nations are working globally acceptable standards of education.

Education has been prevalent these regions but the definition of education changed from past era to present. With each of these nations having limitation to their own resources education expansion has come a long way and still faces certain hurdles in these regions. These nations have fostered male dominant societies and are fighting the repercussions of the same. Talking about each South Asian country in detail would clear out much of the limitations these nations are facing in encompassing Education For All (EFA) policy.

The South Asian region comprises of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

#### **Afghanistan**

The long-standing war in Afghanistan prior to and during the Taliban regime stalled not only the education but also the entire process of development for many decades. The consequence of the war history looms large in present-day Afghanistan with the education sector facing massive challenges. During the war on the land between the Taliban and the US forces much of destruction was seen causing huge throw back on schools and education system. As a consequence of Taliban-US conflict the militants have time and again tried to pull down westernized education forum so as to uproot the influence of the

education on the children in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, schools, students, and educators are being targeted more and more frequently by Taliban insurgents. The insurgents are trying to regain control of the volatile Southern regions and spread their presence and influence all over the country, causing unpredicted difficulties to Western and Afghan troops. To that end, insurgents burn schools, kill teachers, and intimidate students and their families.

The main target is girls' schools, gender equality is unacceptable here. When the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, before 2001, girls were not allowed to attend public schools because Taliban policy maintained that education was not fit for women. Women were forced to live hidden lives at home. If they had to venture out in public, they had to be covered by burqas. It was a community made by men for men; women were allowed no part in it.<sup>1</sup>

The government under President Hamid Karzai has made significant progress in the field of education, building new schools and launching teacher-training initiatives. Naming this academic year the "Year of Education Capacity Building," the education ministry has set several ambitious goals, including the establishment of 1,750 new primary schools, as well as renovations for 962 primary and 475 secondary schools and the development of special education schools for disabled children. It also aims to improve the quality of Afghan education by employing around 1,500 school supervisors and establishing a network of school councils that will serve as a conduit for reforms, costing more than 15.2 million US.

Making education accessible to the average person in Afghanistan is about more than constructing buildings or installing computer facilities. The realities of poverty and strained family circumstances must be taken into account. The years of wars ridden nation is socially struggling to bounce back on its feet. The constant fear of Talibanis and youth getting dragged in such situation is hindering the future of the nation.

Moreover in present condition not much is in favor of the year of education and capacity building, due to constant invasions and strikes from regional and non regional threats education has become an quantitative policy. Teachers recruited are under qualified, recruited teachers opt out on instance with threatened by talibani militants, schools are strike down making the continuity of available education difficult.

With poverty being the main of illiteracy children are forced to work as labors instead of studying. Girls are devoid of the facility completely. Barrier to education remain many but availability of education facility and accessibility to the facility remains one major reason for children and parents to opt out of education easily.

### **Bangladesh**

Education is provided in the nation but the quality of remains a question. According to UNICEF, 40% of Bangladesh's population is children and statistics indicate that 600,000 are out of school. Poverty stricken nation is laying back in making education a universal right in the country. Similar problems of gender biased education are seen this nation too. Moreover education remains more of a luxury then right.

Lack of proper infrastructure has pushed many children out of the nation. Traditional concepts like early marriages of girls are keeping them away from education making them literate but keeping them uneducated. Skill development in the nation lacks, garment production being the main resource of employment other fields are conveniently neglected by the authorities. Government schools are concentrated mostly in urban centers, resulting in a lack of educational access to the majority of children in the country.

With available resource the quality of education remains poor, not much can expected from such standards of education. Homeless children comprise a

substantial population of children who are also restricted from public education. NGO run schools provide much better facilities but the government run schools attract much of the population. The education in the nation also relies on traditional systems of education like madrassa's. Education opportunities for children in urban slums and children from ethnic minorities who do not speak Bengali as a first language are seen to avoid the entire system of available education.

### **Bhutan**

Education is given priority in Bhutan and is seen to have successful implementation of the education policies. Basic education is a right of every citizen here, but what is observed is education stability amongst girls' decreases after gaining primary education. Technical and vocational education is not opt much by female students nor are there any such schemes that provoke females to undertake such skilled education.

Girls are more likely than boys to lose educational opportunities due to poverty. Destitute families often cannot afford to send all their children to school. If it means choosing between sons and daughters, girls usually lose out. Education depends on an infrastructure that supports quality education.

Requirements for accessible, gender-sensitive schooling go beyond the physical structure of a building or the classroom content. If schools are located far from communities or students must travel on unsafe or nonexistent roads, creative solutions to these problems must be found. Otherwise children, especially girls, simply stay away.

Quality education is lost as children are jammed into classrooms with insufficient textbooks and untrained teachers. The curriculum or the teaching methods are poor; schools neither engage children nor prepare



them for the job market.<sup>3</sup> The condition has'nt improved much since independence.

## **India**

Education has been given importance in India for years since education. Being of the leading nations to enlist among top Doctorates and Engineers the nation has made remarkable marks in the developed world. Nonetheless, education has remained divided within the huge population. Ever increasing population has made it difficult to assure resources reaching the grass root level. The country is divided in urban and rural population and so have the facilities to education. The excessive emphasis on meeting quantitative targets through free and compulsory primary education schemes is referred to as dichotomization of educational provision into 'access first' vs. 'quality later.

Gender disparity remains the main reason for education instability among the masses especially in rural population. A leading cause of the shortfall in higher education is the denial of post-secondary opportunities due to the very limited capacity of institutions offering high quality academic programs. As a result of the unstable and unequal provision of post-secondary education the quality of most graduates is poor which results in an uneducated workforce.

India's higher educational institutions and educational structure are not adequate to provide basic literacy skills to the population of India. As a result of this, the majority of India's population is uneducated and this contributes to the level of poverty. Families living in poverty typically expect every family member to work as soon as they are able. Children at the age of 7 are expected to work to earn money for their family. Many times education facilities are not attainable or affordable for families and with lack of anything for the children to do they are expected to help the family.

### **Maldives**

Maldives has achieved Universal primary education and attainment of universal adult literacy making it a proudly literate nation. The country provides skilled training, vocational training and technical education but the number of female students is considerably negligible. Girls and women are required to take up family gender roles that discourage them from participating in education beyond primary level.

Distance education still remains a question of safety for women in the island nation. The nation has provided and developed primary education but lacks opportunities for higher and skilled development. Lacks of infrastructures results in low quality of higher education are binding to limited resources.

### **Nepal**

The country's population mainly earns from tourism and agriculture, stricken by poverty this nation is trying hard to provide basic education to all. Lack of opportunities to the older generation has made the sources for qualitative education scarce. Girls are given traditional teachings and many of them opt out of education before reaching the secondary level.

The restricted geographical land makes it difficult for infrastructure development promising higher and skilled courses. Despite these vast improvements, there remain a number of social, cultural and structural barriers to education – including poverty, caste separation, lack of physical access to schools during the monsoon season, and woefully under-funded facilities – that deny access to thousands and thousands of children.

### **Pakistan**

Torn between Taliban insurgency and attack of drones Pakistan is trying its best to cope up the resources with educational facilities. The country is also

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divided in rural and urban set ups making facilities much available in the urban regions. Rural Pakistan still adorns traditional form of education and finds it unnecessary and unaffordable to access urban education standards.

Sectarian violence creates a distinction among the religious groups making it difficult to call unified education system. Tribal regions are torn between the militants and army fights pulling instability on the soil and targeting of schools in these regions. Poverty being evident children finds it necessary to earn for huge families than to educate. The barrier of resources and equality education deepens in private and government schools. Education for girls especially in rural area is limited to a certain age.

#### **Sri Lanka**

Almost all Sri Lankan children go to school, hence as many girls as boys attend primary education and beyond. Girls are still lacking the social push to involve much in social and political development of the nation. Cultural barriers are seen to be hurdles for making women independent in the nation. Primary and secondary education is a universal adoption in the country but the schemes for higher education are seen lacking in the island nation.

The general education content reinforces gender role stereotypes; hence blocks gender equality in the macro-environment. The education system, therefore, needs to pay heed to the girls' everyday life experiences in classrooms and surroundings. This requires a change in the system's approach to educational research and innovations.

Each of these South Asian countries has peculiar limitations that are pulling education away from the mainstream development. Poverty being one basic reason and other being gender disparity. The importance that South Asian countries have given to education is yet to be complemented by matching allocation of budget to the sector in most nations in the region. It is high time

that the budget- ary threshold for education proposed by UNESCO. Effective knowledge management having the potential to capture the deep-rooted problems of discrimination of girls against an equitable participation in education is an issue for all the countries in the region. Much needs to be done through policy initiatives, programs and special initiatives to address related issues, particularly compensating for the opportunity costs of sending children to school.<sup>4</sup>

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# Chapter 4

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## Need for Quality Education

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

Education is a priority that needs to be strengthened in order to further fortify a state, region, nation and the entire world, for it to assist it towards a global progressive existence. With most of the developed countries having done a great deal about it, the modernization of education in South Asia commenced after 1945, with the end of the Second World War and since then has been making remarkable advances in the field to make a mark for itself on a global level. However, the process is far from complete in both developed and developing nations but has definitely achieved a fair amount of significant success showing a great deal of promise in the future.

With new national plans for educational development, quantifiable and valued development in facilities and some striking achievements in the improvement of quality education have been a few pointers which have laid the road to a strengthened South Asian population in its very near future. It is modern education alone which lies at the core of economic and social

development, enriching the quality of life, society and nation at large.

*“With most of the developed countries having done a great deal about it, the modernization of education in South Asia commenced after 1945, with the end of the Second World War and since then has been making remarkable advances in the field to make a mark for itself on a global level. However, the process is far from complete in both developed and developing nations but has definitely achieved a fair amount of significant success showing a great deal of promise in the future”*

While progress is being made there are still a few loopholes which need to be managed for the smooth proceedings but with the continuing gloom and lack of faith among the citizens and loud criticism of certain politicians using it as a scapegoat for their means have dwarfed the solid achievements in the education

sector, which have been on a regular onward motion.

Traditionally the form of education in South Asian countries was primarily esoteric, more metaphysical and religious; being available to the upper classes alone with a hereditary and closed structure.

But with the advent of modernization education has shed off its garb of dogmas and restrictions delving with a more open mind towards the field. With its changed orientation and organization it has tailored a far more liberal, exoteric and modern education system with a fresh scientific world-view steeped in humanism, freedom, liberality and equality. South-Asian countries popularly known for its tradition and variety of culture have collectively adopted few basic principles in their respective nations to modernize and enhance the quality of education:

*“Modern education has also uniquely incorporated informal education and leisure time activities within formal education to enhance its overall productivity, in turn helping it to be a daily routine activity along with having fun and doing everyday chores”*

1. As education of each nation demands a particular framework based and set according to their life and surroundings attaching meaning to its contemporary needs and aspirations in the changing society. Keeping these in mind the existing classifications and arrangements have been transformed with more modern, relevant and meaningful programmes along with building of dynamic institutions capable of imparting the same.
2. Introduction of the concept of life-long education with the help of ground-breaking advancements in communication. This has made the life-long integrated education possible.



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3. Integrating different levels of education more closely, forming a linear progression beginning from schools, colleges, universities and institutions of higher education become a whole growing with each other for better and higher levels of outcome.
4. Compulsoriness of elementary education at all levels, making it free and accessible in most states with opening of more public schools.
5. Modern education has also uniquely incorporated informal education and leisure time activities within formal education to enhance its overall productivity, in turn helping it to be a daily routine activity along with having fun and doing everyday chores.
6. Its amalgamation of both value based and skill oriented education has elevated the very practice of education in these nations encouraging more to join hands to progress.
7. Also it has the modern education system planned in close-set to the overall social and economic development of its relevant national, geographical and surrounding quarters.
8. Its regular scientific planning of education and efficient implementation of plans by more effective management has definitely been one of the main details in modernizing the educational field in South-Asia.

This modernization of education in South Asia with its primary aim to enhance the quality of an individual's life and successively the society and the nation offers new hope and opportunity to the subcontinent as a whole. With brighter prospects and better means modern education (a potential candidate) sure looks forward to eventually bridging the already minimised gap between the affluent and the poor and the crooked mindsets that remain a source of threat

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to the nation. With this evolving and ingenious form of education South Asian countries can attain the contentment, concord and comprehension which even elude the developed nations.

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# Chapter 5

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## Skill Oriented Education

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

Education is not mere being fed information but in the changing world scenario it has a larger compass incorporating knowledge, skills and values. In recent years the 'skill-based' education has gained quite a momentum becoming an integral part of vocational education fortifying generations to gain their livelihood and employment.

Skills can be categorised into various sections and types, each separating one from another – basic and applied skills, hard and soft skills, marketable and non-marketable skills, unitary and composite skills and the list goes on.

South Asia has been growing rapidly in the education sector in the last six years with a heavily increased knack in skills oriented programming diversifying the education system within the Indian subcontinent. Recognising the need of skill training as the reason for employability of a youth has prioritized the focus on skill training in every South Asian country, with policies and plans set accordingly to enhance the employability of an individual in particular leading to countries' growth at large, highly relevant to the developing countries seeking better sustainable growth rate.

South Asia faces a demographic challenge of youth excrement in its age sex composition and job market unlike Europe's shrinking ratio and its these vocational training alone that pose a solution to the problem, hence the increased interest and has surprisingly pulled off noticeably good results.

The increasing vocational schools along with academic inclination in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bhutan and Maldives provides the mass to choose according to one's capabilities. The vocational programmes equip students with skills that not only hone their specific abilities allowing them to master their acquisitions with regular training but also make them capable to improve their prospects for a better chance to be

employed. The reason for such motivation have been with growing concerns related to students completing education without any occupational skills leading to a fifty percent less chance of being employed according to statistics.

In all South Asian countries life skills are considered quite important in secondary schools. However, the delivery mechanisms differ across the region. In some

countries there is a stand-alone life skills curriculum such as Sri Lanka's Life Competencies Programme, Afghanistan's Life Skills Curriculum, and the Maldives' Pilot Life Skills Project. While it is integrated into an existing curriculum as is the case of Nepal's health curriculum.

On the other hand it is also delivered through extracurricular activities like Pakistan's Empowerment of Adolescents Project and the Bhutan Scout's Life Skills Course. Finally, it is seen being imparted through a blended program like India's Adolescent Education Programme. Keeping in mind the skills required and valued by employers the nations have included the following in their vocational studies. Apart from these skill oriented education almost all the countries in South Asia stress the importance of science process skills in secondary school curriculum which are expected to guide and sharpen the thinking skills considered vital for employability.

Secondary school programmes in South Asian countries also stress English communication to provide their students a chance to fare well on a global

*"Finally, it is seen being imparted through a blended program like India's Adolescent Education Programme. Keeping in mind the skills required and valued by employers the nations have included the following in their vocational studies. Apart from these skill oriented education almost all the countries in South Asia stress the importance of science process skills in secondary school curriculum which are expected to guide and sharpen the thinking skills considered vital for employability"*

*“South Asia apart from its already executed plans still continues to expand the coverage of compulsory education in lower secondary education framework including advancement of skills development policies within a broader frame of lifelong learning”*

scale, also as English forms the basic bridge to communication and work without hindrances. Whereas, Mathematics syllabus stresses skills in numeracy and problem solving. However, junior secondary school curricula are expected to lead to personal skills and attributes and skills related to the community.

Meticulously researching and extracting loopholes has lead to the nations fixing problem areas for a better and progressive skill based education, which include:

- Providing a skill based education according to ones education, thus not risking a skill mismatch.
- Enhancing the quality of academic and skill oriented training with proper researched curriculums, well-trained and educated teaching staffs, accurately devised learning levels etc.
- Encouraging mass participation in such endeavours by making such education centres accessible to a larger group.
- Continuous checking of policies of the skill development programmes for its smooth processing.
- Clarity in institutional arrangement with coordinated execution of plans.

South Asia apart from its already executed plans still continues to expand the coverage of compulsory education in lower secondary education framework including advancement of skills development policies within a broader frame of lifelong learning. With such planning and designs South Asia is soon to

### *Skill Oriented Education*

bridge the gap between skills and value based education furthering a much better employability rate in the Indian-Subcontinent.



*Modernization of Education in South Asia*

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# Chapter 6

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## Disparity among Children in Schools

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

Asia is globally accepted as a success story when it comes to the education of children. For a continent that contained two-thirds of the world's out-of-school children in the 1970s, remarkable progress has been made.<sup>1</sup> Despite the progress achieved in the past 10 years, there is still a long way to go to realize the rights of all children.

Though various dimensions of disparity exist in national education systems it is often limited to gender. Girls tend to suffer severe setbacks and exclusion in education systems throughout their lives. 31 million girls of primary school age and 32 million girls of lower secondary school age were out of school in 2013 as estimated. The widest gender gap in out-of-school population is known to exist in South and West Asia.

80 per cent of its out-of-school girls are unlikely to ever start school in comparison to 16 per cent of its out-of-school boys who have more chances of receiving an education.<sup>2</sup> Providing girls with education is the fulfilment of their essential right as well as an instrument to achieving other development objectives. It helps break the cycle of poverty; educated women are less likely to be forced into marriages especially at an early age; less likely to die during childbirth and possess an increased probability of giving birth to healthy babies; and are more likely to ensure that their children receive an education in future.

Although the gender parity has improved over time there still remain obstacles relating to discrimination, especially at the secondary school level and among the most marginalized population. Adolescent girls face economic and social challenges ranging from household obligations and child labour to child marriage and gender-based violence. Other factors like cultural norms that favour the male child's education when a family is faced with limited resources, inadequate sanitation facilities in schools such as lack of separate and private latrines, and classroom environments in which girls may be

subjected to violence and exploitation also contribute towards disparity. Such barriers when combined with poverty, locations and disability can be almost insurmountable for a young girl. Beginning at the basic education level, the unequal access to education progressively becomes worse at the secondary level and above. Children who are unable to go to school tend to belong to disadvantaged populations even though they are from countries with high rates of enrolment.

188 million children were enrolled in primary education in South Asia in 2010, increasing from 155 million in 1999. However, many still lack basic literacy and numeracy skills due to poor quality education. In 2009, 13.54 million children dropped out of primary education. Children from the poorest households are more likely to be out of school. If they are in school, they are likely to drop out due to schooling costs and poverty. The ones living in rural areas tend to be more disadvantaged than those living in urban areas. Girls particularly from poor families living in remote rural areas are among the most disadvantaged in education.

Children from ethnic and religious minority groups, scheduled caste and tribes are also often marginalized in education and society in general. Girls are more excluded from education in Pakistan and India whereas Bangladesh faces the challenge of retaining older boys. Children involved in child labour are more likely to be out of school, with the highest disparity being in Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

Individuals with disabilities as well as refugees and migrants are further at disadvantage in receiving education especially in developing countries. Countries such as Afghanistan and Pakistan have witnessed gender motivated attacks on schools as a result of violating formal or written threats to close girls' schools or end classes for girls.<sup>4</sup> The special needs of girls in the social and cultural context of South Asia as well as the needs of all children in

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situations of conflict and emergency call for special measures. The report, *Beyond Gender: Measuring disparity in South Asia using an Education Parity Index*, by Friedrich Huebler was published by the UNICEF regional office for South Asia in its series of papers on girls' education. It describes education disparity in primary and secondary education by gender, area of residence and household wealth for countries in South Asia.<sup>5</sup>

The use of the EPI as a tool to assess education disparities is illustrated with household survey data from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan. In addition, national trends in education disparity from 1996 to 2006 are presented.

The report observed that in Afghanistan, disparity at the secondary level of education is much greater than at the primary level. On the other hand, there is hardly any gender disparity in the survival rate to the last grade. The report shows that the disparity by household wealth is consistently greater than disparity by gender or area of residence.

The biggest disparity existed among secondary school attendance of children from poor and rich households. The overall EPI shows that the education system in Afghanistan is far from equal. Disparity in Bangladesh is similar to that of Afghanistan- the disparity at the secondary level of education is greater than at the primary level. The overall disparity linked to household wealth is more important than disparity linked to gender or the area of residence.

In India there is a greater disparity at the secondary level of education than at the primary level. The biggest disparity across the three indicators and across the three categories of disaggregation is observed in secondary school attendance by household wealth. In Nepal, similar disparities as in India are observed. Again, there is greater disparity linked to the secondary net

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attendance rate and to household wealth than to other indicators and levels of disaggregation. In Pakistan, the report showed that the gender disparity is less significant than disparity by area of residence.

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# Chapter 7

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## Gender Discrimination in Education



### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

Education is one of the basic prerequisites in today's world to enjoy a good quality of life and better standard of living. Basic education is crucial for alleviation of poverty, reduction in inequalities and to achieve economic growth and stability.

The South Asia region comprises mainly of eight countries namely – India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

For most South Asian countries, the process of modernisation started shortly after the end of second world war in 1945, when they started declaring their independence from colonial rule (with the exception of Nepal that was under feudal rule).

The effects of colonialism had rendered these countries comparatively poor and resource-deprived. Therefore, the process of nation-building and modernisation had to start from ground zero.

During the early phase of modernisation, education sector remained a neglected area in terms of inadequate funding, investment and policies. Also, gender disparity and discrimination in provisions for education were a harsh reality.

According to the World Bank data on the status of education in South Asia, published in 2015, gender parity at the primary school level has been achieved by countries like Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India whereas Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal are yet to achieve it.

For the purpose of comparative analysis, let us take the case study of India and Pakistan.

For the year 2004, the proportion of population completing grade 5 in India was 81.9 percent males to 71.6 percent females whereas for Pakistan, between the year 2001-2002, a mere 46.7 percent females completed primary education

to a much larger proportion of 67.2 percent males. According to the 2004 census, the gross enrolment rate for India at the tertiary level was 11.8 percent as compared to a marginal 3.2 percent for Pakistan. Further, girls account for just 41 percent of total enrolment in Pakistan.

Increased female literacy and education is known to have had positive results on other socio-economic indicators like health, population and economic growth rate.

An educated woman is bound to take proper care of her health and well-being. She can be more assertive in matters like finance and marriage.

She would be more likely to use birth-control measures that would bring down chances of stillbirths or miscarriages. This would in turn lower maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate and fertility rate.

Moreover, a self-aware woman is the key to put a stop to sex-selected abortions, female infanticide and foeticide that results from preference for the male child.

In India, women constitute approximately 49 percent of the total population.

Narrowing the gender gap in education will ensure increased representation of women in skilled-labour, thereby leading to an increase in the size of the overall workforce. This will then have lasting results on the country's economic growth.

The loss incurred on a country's economy due to the persistent practice of differential treatment meted out to both the genders can be demonstrated by taking the example of Pakistan.

Pakistan's per capita income would have been higher than its actual value if it had a more gender-balanced model of development.

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The public spending on education for the year 2004 in Pakistan was 1.8 percent of the GDP\* which is alarmingly low. There is a need for the government to incentivise female education.

Promising stipends to girls who enrol in schools is a successful measure taken in this regard.

For India, regional disparities and inequities still pose a challenge. Kerala with the highest literacy rate of 93.9 percent offers a stark contrast to the state of Bihar with the lowest literacy rate of 63.82 percent.

To overcome such challenges, a couple of steps could be taken. There is a need to expand the base of the education pyramid by shifting focus to reduce school-dropouts, especially girls.

Inclusive growth and development in the education sector can be achieved through decentralisation of education, increased state expenditure on education, innovative schemes and policies to encourage children to remain motivated to study.

The Bihar government's initiative that promised bicycles to girls who continued to study and acquire higher education serves as a path-breaking example of how good incentives and schemes can work wonders in lowering the drop-out rates.

Another challenge that plagues India as well as Pakistan is the provision of quality education. A sample study in India found that children of grade 2-5 performed poorly when it came to testing their basic numeric skills and reading abilities.

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*\*GDP - Gross domestic product (GDP) is the monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.*

The focus needs to now shift to skill development and practical learning experiences instead of learning by rote which does not inculcate analytical thinking or creative abilities in a child.

Skewed sex-ratio and the problem of low participation of girls in schools can be looked into by encouraging more women to join politics. Sadly, India ranks 20th from the bottom when it comes to representation of women in politics.

Reservation of seats for women in Parliament can encourage more women to take up politics as a possible profession for themselves.

The 21st century is often known as the age of technological revolution. Introducing educational reforms that incorporate computer-training and promotion of IT sector can prove to be very advantageous for the South Asian countries.

The South Asian countries can follow the example of Japan and South East Asia for their road to development.

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# Chapter 8

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## United Nations perspective on Education in South Asia

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

South Asia has seen significant progress in the education system when it comes to taking more children to schools. Enrolment of children in primary schools has reached 90 per cent in 2011 for South Asian nations, compared to 75 per cent in 2000. This growth has been accompanied by a fairly large improvements in enrolling girls in schools, with net enrolment for the region indicating 88 per cent of the girls falling in the concerned age group attending primary school, compared to 68 per cent in 2000 (UIS Database accessed January 2014).

Across the region, National laws and strategies have been developed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goals. Education has also been identified as a major priority area in the Post 2015 development agenda discussions by the UN.

These are the facts and figures that seem to paint a rosy picture of South Asia. But the reality is starkly contrasting and unfortunate in a few South Asian nations and in particular the three countries: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. An astounding numbers of children, especially girls, remain out of school in these three most populous countries.

With terrorist groups still flourishing in Pakistan and Afghanistan, children are usually an easy target for those who run the rings of these terrorist groups. In Karachi, for example, small children are found in rags on the streets, begging for their survival. Of course, children are the ideal candidates to commit suicide attacks for terrorist groups for the simple fact that they are easy to manipulate in the prevailing conditions with the only way to regular meals being joining them. What we need to understand is that education forms beliefs in children and it is the only foundation upon which any nation can build development and social stability. When we look at Bangladesh, the alarming number of girls is denied education while boys continue to enjoy a

preference over their female counterparts. There could be various reasons for this, the most prominent one being child marriage. Three out of four girls in Bangladesh marry before 18, according to the Population Council, because of which very few of them go beyond elementary education. Another reason is that, girls seem to doubt getting safely to school given the rate of crime against women in some countries, resulting in an early dropout from school. At the current rate, 80 percent of girls will never enter formal education in the South Asian countries. The only way to curb this is changing the long-held cultural views that create disparity in males and females.

The Global Initiative on Out-of-School-Children (OOSCI) initiated by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) in 2010, aims to make a significant and sustained reduction in the number of children out of school around the world by:

- Developing comprehensive profiles of excluded children based on standardized and innovative statistical methods;
- Linking quantitative data with the socio-cultural barriers and bottlenecks that lead to exclusion;
- Identifying sound policies which address exclusion from education with a multi-sectorial perspective.

The South Asian countries show certain commitment to UN's vision to provide all the children with basic education. There has been an impressive improvement in elementary education figures in these countries over the past decade. However, secondary and tertiary schooling continue to be execrable in the region. It is evident that UN needs to take further actions and include some new and innovative strategies to overcome this pressing



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issue prevalent in South Asia, otherwise inequity in the field of education and eventually, opportunities in life will persist.

# Chapter 9

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## Modernization of South Asian Countries- Future of Education in India

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

South Asian countries geographically includes southern region of Asian continent and it comprises of all the SAARC countries, its territory currently includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan , Nepal, Maldives, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and deviating from the definition, it includes Mauritius as well as Tibet autonomous regions. Therefore it is a strong association of eight nations which is almost 11.51% of the Asian continent and 3.4% of the world's land surface. South Asia is a promising as well as the most profound part of the world as it bears a hefty population of more than 1.5 billion. The diverse cultural, ethnical and racial composition makes it even more unique and distinct from rest of the world.

There are more than 2000 ethnic entities and the population groups range from millions in some regions and smaller tribes in others. The majority of south Asian sub-continent comprises of Indian sub terrain thus making India an eye of the whole region.

Among the eight highly diverse economies, India has turned out to be fastest growing economy among all. It accounts for more than 82% of south Asian economy. Moreover India is the only economy to be a part of G-20<sup>1</sup> major economies and BRICS<sup>2</sup> from all the eight regions of south Asia. In the year 2014-15, India registered a growth of 7.3% in FY. Though the economies are not far behind India's developmental goals. Pakistan Bangladesh and Sri – Lanka follows respectively.

South Asian countries have attained independence after a great struggle and hefty losses to their economic as well as political fronts. Nepal being the youngest democratic nation out of all; since their developmental goals have emerged from attainment of independence to acquiring a well-established human resource which have helped south Asian countries to grow as a powerful and prominently visible face of Asiatic zone in the global front. India has always been at paramount when south Asian countries' unraveling

growth and achievements are being talked about at international forums. Since after independence, India has struggled its way out to perpetuate peace among the newly built juvenile population to free and strengthened nation. After that, it was no way looking back. India has always shown a momentous growth in all spheres of economic proliferation. All the developmental goals foreseen at the time of independence are now shaping into reality. It took great time and endless efforts by some of the great minds to uplift country's under developed tag to quasi-power (if not superpower yet).

### **Education in SAARC countries**

Every country grows from depth to zenith only if all the aspects of its nurture are being well taken care of. The education system of the country reflects the prosperity of the same. Education system organizes itself to the contextual needs. The world is witnessing liberalization, modernization and globalization and education is not far behind to change in accord with it.

An organization coined as SAARC ( the south Asian association for regional cooperation) was established at the first SAARC summit which took place in Dhaka on 7-8 December, 1985. Except Afghanistan all the seven other countries were a part of it till 2007, when in its 14th summit Afghanistan<sup>3</sup> was introduced as the eighth member of the association. The organization was made with an objective of promoting the welfare of south Asian population, spur economic growth and bring social equality and progress. The main aims laid down at that time were to accelerate the rate of educational growth, active collaboration in cultural, economic, cultural, technical and scientific fields. The common interest of the people were taken care of with respect to the international and regional organizations. SAARC has efficiently and diligently tried to refurbish the goals in order to achieve complete development. Various programs to alleviate the people and society were put forward and the need

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of educational reforms was seriously taken into account. SAARC has established technical committee on human resource development; SAARC chair fellowship, and various scholarship schemes are in operation to brighten up the educational future of south Asian countries. A SAARC consortium of open and distance learning is also created in order to promote education and to promote higher education a common university for eight SAARC countries has been alluded to.

### **India- hands on with futuristic education**

Education system in India has proven itself to be the most promising aspect of India's appraisal from developing to developed economy. These six decades have seen steadily increasing graph of educational growth. Literacy rate is gradually taking a hike and constant efforts from all the sections of society have been helpful in dropping down the constraints of educational uprising. India, since independence has shown great educational growth setting an example for other SAARC nations and the world to look upon.

From only around 30% literacy rate at the time of independence, we are now hoping to attain 100% literacy rate in coming future and a step forward has been taken by the government as well as non- governmental organizations to achieve the target. As a result of the efforts, we have been able to attain 65% literacy rate. Educational reforms for women have been introduced to completely eradicate the disparity against gender, by declaring free and compulsory education as a fundamental right, government has taken a successful foot forward towards the goal. The approach followed till now has been tremendously helpful in order to revolutionize education system. This is the world where rapid globalization and advances in information technology have given birth to critical issues that require innovative and creative thinking. The future of education doesn't only lie with the books and documents. The

country is moving ahead with technology and thus the generation next needs to be on the same grounds of attaining complete development. The government is taking steps to universalize the elementary education system. To bring about this revolution many non-government organizations have also been approached and rigorous activities to alleviate the education system are quite fruitful.

Scientific and technological development in the country has attracted many superpowers to invest their resources in this promising economy. India's educational future is exceptionally overwhelming; education has a dynamic role in shaping country's future. Focus has been shifted from conventional educational patterns to providing technical and professional education, barriers to integrated educations will be removed in order to allow the masses to impart and exchange knowledge and education within the global sphere.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)<sup>4</sup> states a phenomenal growth in educational sector in rural areas as 96.5% of all rural children between the ages of 6-14 were enrolled in schools<sup>5</sup>. A survey conducted in 2013 confirms a total enrollment of 22.9 crores in different accredited urban and rural schools of India, from class I to XII, thus marking a tremendous increase of 23 lakh students over 2002 total enrolment, women empowerment reforms have also proven to be effective in this sector as there is 19% increase in girl's enrolment<sup>6</sup>. India is continuously inching closer to universal education, few questions are posed on its government run educational institutes but the problem is taken care of by introducing teaching modules, smart class aids and its hands-on training for teachers.

Challenges are there which need to be taken into account in order to achieve the targeted future. Futuristic and holistic approach towards 100% education and literacy rate will require access and quality of education at all levels( primary, secondary and higher educational institutions), funding agencies

need to strategize their logistics and flow of money in private and public education sectors in order to enhance the level of knowledge being imparted to the generation, infrastructure needs to be refurbished in accordance with the changing needs and requirements, management needs to be proficient enough to deal with the technical as well as academic issues.

Vulnerable sections of society like orphans, child laborers, street children and victims of riots and natural disasters no not have access to proper schooling are often left deprived, these sections need urgent attention as majority of people from these sections are a part of the latter percentile with nil enrolment rate ever. Indian educational system including the higher secondary and undergraduate programs is praiseworthy and is quite rigorous and scrupulous about students' competitive spirit to match with international level of education.

Though there is still a halt in research, technology and vocational study courses but various schemes to orient research directional approach are setting up in future; various scholarships have been introduced and there is a phenomenal hike in number of technical research institutes in the past one decade. It is desirable to include e- learning as a part of daily curriculum as technology abides the future of this country. Development of Massive open Online Course (MOOC)<sup>7</sup> platform and free modules for student to benefit from above will add on to this novel approach.

Learning should be made a matter of choice instead of imposing it on the youth, as the future of learning is changing; with the help of technology, infrastructure, teachers and technical support access to education in nook and corners of India in not an impossible task. Youngsters are the trailblazers of the idea of literate and educated India. More than half the population is young enough to work and earn for their living thus increasing the gap between rich and poor. So this is a contingency period to engage the youth

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in educational reforms and make the most of their abilities to establish Indian economy in the world.



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# Chapter 10

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**Value based Education in South Asia-Its  
Growth and Support in Modernizing the  
Countries**

### *Modernization of Education in South Asia*

To keep pace with the globalized technology, South Asian countries have modified education system to ensure overall economic growth in countries. South Asian Countries accepted many World education reformation goals and acted accordingly to attain gender equality in education. UNESCO's "Education for All" is a global wide education program with the goals of eradication of illiteracy, early childhood care and primary education, free and compulsory primary education for all, prevent school drop-outs children, increase adult literacy and so forth. Literacy allows people to access information, increase their productivity, and achieve their full potential and at the national level, it allows countries to grow. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in association with United Nations (2000), has emphasized upon eradicating of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving Universal primary education, promoting gender equality, empowering women, reducing of child mortality, improving of maternal health etc.

The UNESCO office in Kathmandu, Nepal invested the strategy of Early Childhood Care and Education in order to improving comprehensive early childhood and education. Primary Education for all avoiding gender disparity is a holistic approach towards achieving Millennium Development Goals. Progress towards achieving Universal Primary Education has led to an increasing demand for secondary education. The UNESCO Office supports the government with the effective implementation of the School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015),<sup>1</sup> providing support in capacity development towards improving access and retention of students in secondary education. UNESCO stepped forward to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 3 that demands Trained and skilled teachers to actualize the ideas of education plan and UNESCO supports Government to enhance capacities of teachers and organize a teacher training program that prepare them to use inclusive education toolkit and advance method in classroom teaching. Afghanistan has accepted The Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), a UNESCO program that addresses literacy issues world- wide with the noble attempt to

enhance literacy skills, promote income-generating skill and ensure self-sustainability. Enhancement of Literacy in Afghanistan (ELA), in 2008, increased the literacy level of over 600,000 learners among them 60% are women and also trained over 200 central and provincial staffs for better monitoring financial data.<sup>2</sup> In Communication and Information sector Afghanistan adopted many means like Educational Radio Television (ERTV) Afghanistan that encourages women enrolment in teacher training center and helps to gather inclusive knowledge about society.

Located in South Asia, India is second most populous country in the world with over 1.2 billion people and the country has been suffering from casteism, poverty and female feticide. After undertaking the MDG and EFA plans, Indian Central government with the implementation of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) achieved much desired literacy rate in a few years. In 2011, literacy rate has been increased by 3% from 1980 to around 69% where female adult literacy rate 60%.<sup>3</sup> India is rapidly progressive towards attaining EFA goals; while only around 78 per cent of children in the 6–14 age group were in school in 1990, as of 2011, over 93 per cent were in school. There is a noticeable growth in enrolment in higher education and massive decrease in school drop-out students. Residential facilities for school going girls has been made under Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme (KGBV) and funds have been given towards educationally 'backward' areas – the 'Special Focus Districts' and 'Educationally Backward Blocks'.

Sri-Lanka, with the 20.9 million population, has the GDP per capita US\$ 6,247, which is most ahead of South Asian Countries. Sri Lanka took serious effort to achieve MDG goals swiftly and enjoyed a high rate of literacy and higher education. Sri Lanka has achieved near- Universal primary school enrolment with 97.5% and Dropout rates are around 1% and Retention rates were 98.7 % for boys and 99.4 %for girls in 2008. Sri Lanka has made significant progress in poverty reduction. The proportion of people living below the poverty line

declined sharply from 26.1% to 8.9 per cent in 2009/10. Sri Lanka has almost reached gender parity in primary education, with the ratio of girls to boys in primary education reaching 99% in 2006. In secondary and tertiary education, the ratio of girls to boys exceeds 100%. Sri Lanka achieved considerable success in reducing mortality rate and HIV epidemic rate. In 2012, the President of Sri Lanka launched the National Action Plan on Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (EPSD) to shape the future education agenda.

Bangladesh has reportedly made significant progress in education during the past decades. Noteworthy achievements include raising the net enrolment rate from 87.2% in 2005 to 93.9% in 2009 and achieving gender parity <sup>4</sup>. At the secondary level gross enrolment was increased to 59% in 2008. Early Child Care and Education (ECCE), Non Formal Education (NFE) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) all these schemes have been maintained by Ministry of Education. The Government of Bangladesh and the UN Country Team in Bangladesh have signed a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2012-2016, in June 2011, in which several measures have been proposed to encounter with socio-economic inequalities.

With the help of UNESCO, the Bhutan Ministry has achieved several MDGs goals and headed to achieve Universal Education for All. Where early Bhutan has only eleven schools, now it is increased into 433 schools with gross enrolment of 135,987 students. Gender disparity is low with girls having been enrolled in primary education around 49%. Primary Education in Bhutan is free, and the enrolment rate has increased to 84.3%.<sup>5</sup> Bhutan Ministry has been struggling to achieve quality in education and SDGs goals.

In 2012, Pakistan has 56.6% adult literacy rate with 43.3% female adult literacy. Higher Education Commission (HEC) and UNESCO's involvement brought about significant changes in education system. Pakistan's national development is governed by the Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF) 2005-10 in

which achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is second top priorities.<sup>6</sup>

As report says, Maldives has achieved near Universal Literacy rate with 98.6% of total population and thereby focusing on improving the English language and increasing technologies that can be helpful in daily day to day life. With financial aid from UNICEF, Integrated Early Childhood Development Centre (2002) focused on the play based learning and facilitating teachers training program and teaching methodologies. In 2008, the total enrolment in pre-primary level was 15,536 children with 7712 girls. Edhuruj is a home based educational service provided to respected members of community. Severe changes have been seen in primary and higher education where in primary the Net Enrolment Rate was 95.8% and in secondary it was 67.3%.<sup>7</sup>

Education in South Asian countries is mainly State funded. The major goal of South Asian countries is to provide a quality education for every child in school age. With the lasting help of UNESCO and Nation Ministry, South Asian countries saw a tremendous revolutionized education system in which not only education but also the livelihood in rural areas has been appraised. With the decreased rate of child mortality the another challenge in front of every Nation is to eradicate poverty and intensification of employment rate. South Asian countries head faster towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals plan three and emphasized upon value based powerful quality education to sustain over all economic growth and modernization of Nation.

**Endnotes:**

- 1 <http://en.unesco.org/countries/nepal>
- 2 [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National\\_Reports/ICE\\_2004/bhutan.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2004/bhutan.pdf)
- 3 <http://en.unesco.org/countries/india>
- 4 MDG REPORT 2008
- 5 <http://en.unesco.org/countries/bhutan>
- 6 <http://en.unesco.org/countries/pakistan>
- 7 [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/Countries/WDE/2006/ASIA\\_and\\_the\\_PACIFIC/Maldives/Maldives.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/Countries/WDE/2006/ASIA_and_the_PACIFIC/Maldives/Maldives.pdf)

**Reference-**

- i <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002349/234967e.pdf>
- ii <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/06/30/poor-quality-education-holding-back-south-asia>

# Chapter 11

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## Reforms and Challenges



Capitalistic marketplace is soaring high with shifting paradigms of technological changes and increasing global competitiveness and every continent tries to pursue American dream and wants to participate in the Great World Exhibition of super power. After recovering from colonial subjugation, in the azure renaissance of twenty first century, South Asian countries show resilience in the face of blustery international markets and remain the fastest-growing region in the world. South Asia encompasses India, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Maldives and Sri Lanka sharing a unity in diversity concept because of their homogenous sociocultural, historical, political, economic and education factors. For centuries the South Asian countries are regarded as the poor and illiterate regions where the population and human deprivation has a co-relation. The South Asian subcontinent presents the most serious crisis in education characterized by poor infrastructure, inefficient guide, insufficient equipments, inflammatory population, corruption in political level and declining public budgets.

After independence many measures have been taken for the development of education system, so first it is comprehensive to overview the goals and achievements and challenges from those agendas and then to map out another possible accomplishments. Education for All is a global movement approached by UNESCO in 1990 with the vision of eradication of illiteracy, early childhood care and primary education, free and compulsory primary education for all, prevent school drop-outs children, increase adult literacy and so forth. Literacy allows people to access information, increase their productivity, and achieve their full potential and at the national level, it allows countries to grow. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in association with United Nations (2000), has emphasized upon eradicating of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving Universal primary education, promoting gender equality, empowering women, reducing of child mortality, improving of maternal health etc.

Many South Asian Governments have spent heavy budget to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 which resulted the increase of net enrolment rate in primary schools from 75% to 89%. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has maintained curriculums that include improving living environment, primary education and child health issues. Indian government took a welfare programme Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) to provide food, free schooling upto age 6 and primary health care to children and their mothers. Despite progress, progress of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan remain low in terms of enrolment rates in primary education. As declared by a report in Education For All “The focus of basic education must therefore be on actual learning acquisition rather than exclusively upon enrolment”. In most of the countries in South Asia have inadequate trained teachers and they are not compatible with the curriculum led by Government and thereby implementations of progressive tools and techniques in schools remain in downwards. This quality related issues loom large with the backwardness of education.

In achieving Universal Primary Education agenda, Nepal ranked first and all other SAARC countries other than Pakistan and Afghanistan have achieved viable improvements in primary education. The number of school-dropout children declined by 37%, from 37.7 million to 9.8 million during 1990-2013<sup>1</sup>. Approximately one third of students enrolled in primary education have dropped out without completing the education in Bangladesh. Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan and Maldives faced same problem of dropout candidates, only Sri Lanka unitarily progress in achieving the Universal Education goals. Despite efforts took by countries, a substantial number of children lack access to education because of shortcomings such as poverty, gender, distant location and disability. The proposed curriculum is urbanized and country-side marginalized children specially the girls do not accessible to that education. The secondary education has been increasing only in recent years. As recorded data of SAARC said, the total enrolment during 2012-2014, reached 150.5

million. Special attention is given to girls' education. The lower and higher secondary schools concentrate primarily to psycho-socio development of a student, technical and vocational skills of students and mainly to the outcome of these implementations.

Illiteracy campaigns to promote reading, writing and thereby connecting to others have been run in full swing to attain Millennium Development Goals. As report says, Maldives has achieved near Universal Literacy rate with 98.6<sup>2</sup> percent of total population and thereby focusing on improving the English language and increasing technologies that can be helpful in daily day to day life. Sri Lanka<sup>3</sup> with the 93% Universal Literacy, has kept its eye on all employment. Gender disparity in education i.e. the gap between literacy level of gender has been in a depressing rate in Afghanistan (28%), Pakistan (24%), Nepal (23%), India (20%), Bhutan (18%), so the number of adult illiteracy remain high in these countries. Social discriminating attitude of male and female child and the notion that girls are only for house-hold works give negative impact upon girl's education. Serious endeavors are essential for promoting the need of education in social life and the benefits that one can get from being an educate person. Education is linked with socio-cultural and economical values of a country, so special concentrations have to be given toward schooling and proper skill for both boys and girls.

Another problem that is a hindrance to universal education is increasing mortality rate in South Asian countries. Severe poverty in some region and heavy work in industrial area cause malnutrition of both mother and child. Though initiatives have been made to promote free health checkup for pregnant women, distributing necessary medicines for both mother and children, the increasing rate of population becomes obstacle before attaining success. Few countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal are successful in reducing child mortality. Afghanistan has, however, the highest infant mortality rate with 63 per 1000 live births, while Sri Lanka has the

lowest, with 8 per 1000 live births. By the year 2015, countries have made a new agenda called Sustainable Development Growth (SDG)<sup>4</sup> at an UN Summit to fight against extreme poverty and unemployment problem and to become prosperous without impeding global phenomenon. This SDG plan has been taken after MDG's success all over the world, and aim to emphasize upon education for every individual by 2030, gender equality and women empowerment, water and sanitation, infrastructure and industrialization and so on. South Asian countries are also obtaining such methods to improve its countries GDP growth, per capita income growth and for climatic changes.

South Asian Countries should monitor its education system from as intrinsic manner, like proper age for admission into pre-primary school, progressing smoothly through and completing the education. Caste, religion and climate these three are the postulated impediments in the education system of South Asian countries. A lead education specialist of word bank said that, "Raising education quality in South Asia is an urgent priority that could transform the region's economic landscape". South Asian countries should endorse SDG agenda speedily with fulfilling the unfinished Education For All agenda to encounter the globalized power and knowledge based countries.

**Endnotes:**

- 1 UNESCO REPORT
- 2 *Education for All National Review Report for Maldives 2014*
- 3 *Education for All National Review Report for Sri Lanka 2015*
- 4 <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda>

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- i TILAK, JANDHYALA B. G. 1994. *Education for Development in Asia*. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.
- ii UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. 2001. *Human Development Report*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- iii <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002349/234967e.pdf>
- iv <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/06/30/poor-quality-education-holding-back-south-asia>