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OSLO SUMMIT AND PEDAGOGY FOR THE ILLITERATES

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ABSTRACT: *The Incheon Declaration (2015) underlined the need for "high quality primary and secondary education for all" to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by 2030. The just concluded Olso summit reiterates this commitment. In this backdrop, the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011, brings out several distressing contours of underdevelopment in asset ownership, illiteracy, employment of rural India which has 70% of India's population. The paper examines impact of Right To Education (RTE) Act 2009 in realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and short falls noticed in terms of infrastructure, income and employment. Based on Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) findings, the paper highlights the best global practices in terms of public investment in education and impact on GER & HDI. The paper strongly argues to* ***eschew a "market based" approach to education and suggests to*** *increase the scope of RTE to include secondary education it takes note of the advantages that private schooling offers, and the critical importance of quality primary education and lifelong learning for all.*

KEYWORDS: SDG, SECC, MDG, RTE, ASER

INTRODUCTION

As the global economy is increasingly becoming **'knowledge based', education and skills of a country's people** have become far more important than ever before in securing its future. Countries that fail to build **'inclusive education system' face the prospect of sluggish growth, rising inequality and lost opportunity in world trade**. The recently concluded Oslo Summit on 'Education for Development' underlined the declaration made at Incheon, (South Korea) to ensure "**inclusive and quality, primary and secondary education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**" **by 2030**. In this back drop the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 Report on Rural India, published this week cannot be more timely and grim. The **high incidence of casual labourers (51%)**, 56% of population having no land, 74% with income less than 5000, and more than one third with literacy is symptomatic of the **appalling sloth that manifests our policy space.** Right from the work of Adam Smith (1776) to Robert Solow (1956) to Hanushek (2002), the importance of learning in productive capital has been underscored. The **positive correlation between average years of education** and its GDP Growth was also highlighted by Barrow (1991).

This paper attempts to examine (a) India's report card w.r.t. the Incheon Declaration with special reference to RTE Act (2009) (b) The major findings of SECC & ASER reports on various aspects of **literacy, employment and income in rural areas** and (c) Policy issues that need to be grappled to usher in quality primary education in rural India.

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INCHEON DECLARATION (2015)

The Incheon Declaration is a takeoff on the Millennium Development Goals which had underlined the need to ensure "**universal primary education and eliminate gender decimation in primary and secondary education**". Several countries like India have a achieved the largest after introduction of RTE Act 2009. However, **quality, skill acquisition, and real learning have received a short shrift**; **thanks to the total obsession with access & equity**. The Incheon Declaration (2015) has underlined the need to ensure **'quality education for all'** as the primary objective by 2030 and has called upon all countries to commit at least 4-6% of their budget to education. The recently concluded Oslo summit 'Education on Development' brings out interesting contribution by Prof. Watson & Irina Bokova where they argue for (a) abandoning market based experiments on education (b) reduce education disparities on the basis of gender, wealth and rural-urban divide (c) Commit public funding for 12 years of schooling to foster skill and a value system which is equitable, resilient and inclusive.

RTE ACT (2009) AND ITS IMPACT

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act enacted in 2009 was rooted in the understanding that **"the value of equality, social justice and democracy and the creation of a just and humane society can be achieved only through provision of inclusive elementary education at all".** The Act effectively obligated the states to provide "Free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age group". The education profile as evidenced in a few states is summarized below.

Table-1: Education Profile

Parameter	All India	Odisha	Kerala	Gujarat
Illiterates	36	35	11	31
Below Primary Literates	14	14	8	13
Primary	18	20	17	28
Middle	14	15	20	9
Secondary	10	8	24	11
Higher Secondary	5	5	12	5
Graduate	3	3	8	3
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Dropout %	*27*	*7*	-	*25.7*

Source: Socio Economic & Caste Census, 2011

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It would be seen that Kerala has been the leading light both in terms of literacy, high % of educated in higher secondary and graduate levels compared to the other states. The dropout rates are almost nil. In contrast both Odisha and Gujarat show a low level of educational attainment and Gujarat in particular having a high dropout % at standard I-V level.

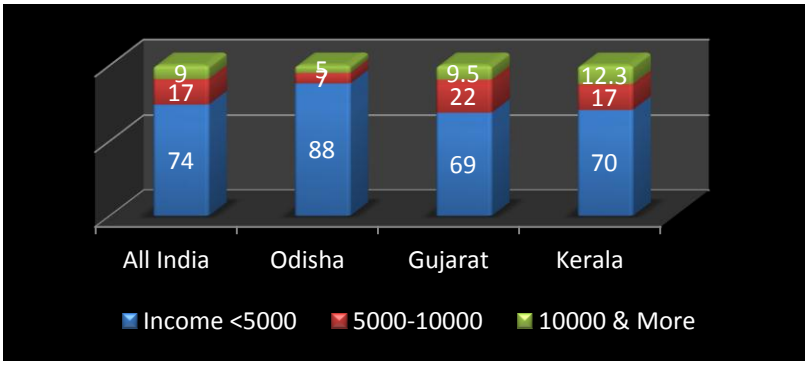
Its impact on employment and income is brought out in the following table.

Table-2: Employment & Income Profile (Rural)

All India/ States	Salaried Jobs	Private Sectors	Casual Labour	Income <5000	5000-10000	10000 & More
All India	9.7	3.6	51.0	74	17	9
Odisha	6.8	1.9	39.5	88	7	5
Gujarat	9.5	5	36.9	69	22	9.5
Kerala	14	6	40	70	17	12.3

Source: Socio Economic & Caste Census, 2011

Figure-1: Income Profile: All India and State



It would be seen for the above that Odisha has a unusual high % of rural population with income level <5000(88%) compared to Kerala and Gujarat high education has ensured that the % of people in high income bracket is higher in Kerala (12.3). with this back drop it would be useful to have an overview of ASER findings in terms of enrolment, physical infrastructure, attendance, and learning levels.

ASER FINDINGS ON IMPACT OF RTE

Table-3: ASER Findings: Trend

Parameter	2012	2013	2014
Total Enrollment (Primary)	96.5	96.8	97.97
Schools with Library	66.1	77.1	79.1
School Attendance %	**71.3**	**77.1**	**71.1**
Arithmetic Level	46.5	26.5	25.3
Basic Reading	47	47	48.1

Source: ASER Report 2014

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In terms of educational outcomes the findings of ASER 2014 are quite revealing as **only 58% of children enrolled in classes 3 to 5 can read a class-1 text, 47% are able to do a simple two-digit subtraction, 37% of children in class 4 or 5 can read fluently, less than half (45%) are able to divide 20 by 5 and reading and Mathematics skills of class 4 pupils in India's top schools are below the international average.**

RISING TREND IN ENROLMENT IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

An interesting trend has been the significant rise in enrolment of children in private schools. What is interesting to observe that the two states viz. Odisha, Gujarat do not show similar trends as the All India trend or Kerala, where private schooling is predominant norm.

Table-4: The Proportion of Children Enrolled in Private Schools Trends

Year	Odisha	Gujarat	Kerala	All India
2009	4.4	10.2	51.5	21.8
2011	5	10.8	60.8	25.6
2014	8.5	13.3	62.2	30.8

Source: ASER 2014

Tooley and Dixon (2005) in tests administered to students in Hyderabad found that students **in unrecognized private schools scored 22-23% higher than their counterparts in government schools in Maths and much higher in English**. Muralidharan and Kremer (2006) have brought out that private schools are characterized by lower teacher absence and teachers hold more college degrees that their counterparts.

On the other hand, Karopady (2014) based on a study of 1000 students in Andhra Pradesh who were shifted to private school has come up with the following findings.

Table-5 : Year-End Learning Achievement Test Results (English, Mean %)

Group	English		
	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Groups 1+2 (Children in Government Schools)	43.8	12.6	18.5
Group 3 (Children who shifted to Private Schools)	47.3	13.5	19.3
Group 4 (Children in Private Schools to begin with)	67.8	25.0	27.8

It would be seen that while in the initial year (Year 3) there was improvement when the children were shifted to private schools, in the subsequent years the impact was not significant. **However, the private schools score over government schools in English in a significant manner.**

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INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS

The ASER report flags the infrastructural concerns under various parameters.

Table-6: Infrastructure Facilities

Parameter	All India		Kerala		Gujarat		Odisha	
	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014	2010	2014
Play Ground	62.2	65.0	76.3	74.7	75.5	88.1	44.4	32.0
Library Books Available	62.6	78.1	83.1	94.7	83.8	92.3	65.3	88.0
Drinking Water	72.2	75.6	85.7	83.0	79.4	87.0	70.3	81.6
Girls Toilet	32.9	55.7	43.9	80.2	49.9	81.4	34.7	53.0
Computer Available	15.8	19.6	82.8	89.8	52.2	81.3	7.1	14.1

Source: ASER Report 2014

It would be seen from the above, that **availability of girls' toilet (except in Kerala) is a serious concerns area. Also, the promise of 'Digital India' does not match up with the computer availability both at all India level and in Odisha**. Gujarat and Kerla, however, fare much better.

POLICY ISSUES AND DEBATES

(a) Education as Merit Good

It was Prof. Musgrave (1957) who brought up the concept of **merit good in respect of such commodities which an individual should have based on need rather than on his ability to pay.** Adequate nutrition through food stamps, subsidy for reasonable housing, public expenditure for health, sanitation and education are such merit goods. Merit goods create '**positive externality'** where the benefit to the society is more than benefit to the private individual.

Prof. Shanta Devarajan has added a controversy to the issue by suggesting that **education should be viewed as a 'private good' where consumer choice would be paramount**. Prof. Arvind Panagariya, the present Vice Chairman, Niti Aayog is of the view, that in respect of children who are from BPL families, providing **education vouchers of Rs.2000/- per child to 252 million children below poverty line, would cost the exchequer only 0.4% (2009 basis).** Besides, it would be pro-poor, as the BPL families who are presently captive to the poor quality of government school, would have a choice of better quality private schools, if provided such education vouchers.

Prof. Amartya Sen, on the other hand, is strongly of the view that **private schooling would be unaffordable** for the poor and contends that private schooling system have become **"extractive money making machine with modest educational offering".** Prof. Muchkund Dubey (2013) argues that **school education should not be seen in fragments with one kind**

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of treatment at the elementary level and a different kind at secondary level. Quoting UN Convention On the Child Rights to which India is a signatory, it would be legally unjustified and ethically inadmissible to deprive children in the age group of 15-18 the Fundamental Right to education. School education for him should, therefore, be seen **as a seamless process starting from pre elementary level extending to the end of secondary level as against Article 21A which provides this fundamental right from the age of 6-14**.

(b) Budget Adequacy for Education

The following table brings out the allocation trend & over the last three years.

Table-7 : Allocation to Education (Rs. Crore)

Type of Education	2013-2014	2014-2015 (BE)	2014-2015 (RE)	% Change	2015-2016 (BE)	% Change
(a) Primary Education	36803	39665	41505	12.8	36829	-11.3
(b) Secondary Education	10053	5450	5300	-47.3	5390	1.7
(c) Higher Education	24465	27656	23700	-3.1	26855	13.3
Total	***71321***	***72771***	***70505***	***-1.1***	***69074***	***-2.0***

Source: India Budget: 2015-2016, MHRD

It would be seen that total spending on **Primary Education as % of GDP which was 1.7% (1993) went up to 2.1 (2002),** and has remained at that level even in this year's budget. The overall **allocation of around 3% is grossly less than a desirable minimum of 6%** which was recommended even by Kothari Commission way backing 1966. The Incheon Declaration (2015) has called upon the developing countries to earmark at least 15-20% of their central government expenditure. India's allocation to education is invariably less than 10% of CGE.

GLOBAL TRENDS

In this backdrop it would be useful to take note of the global trends in terms of Mean Years of Schooling, public expenditure on education and GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) at different levels.

Table-8 : HDI, MYS & Public investment & GER: Global Trend

Country	HDI	Mean Year of Schooling	Public Expenditure on Education at % of GDP	Gross Enrollment Ratio		
				Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
USA	0.914	12.6	5.6	99	94	95
Germany	0.91	12.9	5.1	100	100	57
Japan	0.89	11.3	5.6	100	100	60
China	0.79	7.5	3.7	100	87	24
India	0.586	4.4	3.3	97	69	23

Source: Human Development Report, 2014

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It would be interesting to observe that both in terms of GER in higher education and MYS, the record of both India and China is not edifying.

(c) Income and Educational Inequality

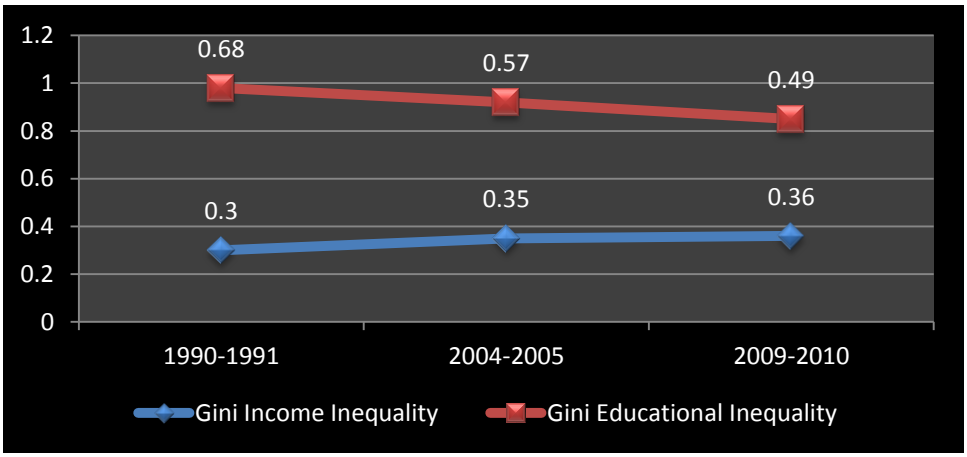
One of the uncomfortable outcomes of the liberalization process in India is the increase in income inequality, both in rural and urban areas. However, the **Gini inequality in terms of education** has come down because of increase in mean years of schooling. Vinod Thomas (2000) demonstrates how Education Gini is negatively associated with Mean Years of Schooling as the following table would show.

Table-9: In Gini Coefficient of Income and Education

Year	Gini Coefficient of Income Inequality	Mean Years of Schooling	Gini Coefficient of Education
1990-1991	0.30	3.0	0.68
2004-2005	0.35	3.6	0.57
2009-2010	0.36	4.4	0.49

Source:12th Plan Document and Ahluwalia

Figure-3: Gini Coefficient of Income and Education



South Korea, which is a global manufacturing hub, improved its Mean Years of Schooling from 7.3 (1980) to 11.8 (2013) by investing massively in education (around 30-40% of its budget; thereby reducing its Gini Coefficient of education from 0.57 (1950) to less than 0.2 now. This has an important policy implication for India.

(d)Learning Outcomes

Several studies have been done regarding the modality for improving quality of pedagogy and learning outcomes Prof. Murilidhran (2013) is of the view that improvement in school infrastructure has limited impact on learning outcomes. Quoting Lindn (2008) he suggests that blanket use of computers in schools may not be effective for fostering instruction. However,

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the **teacher based remedial programmes are more cost effective than computer assistance learning programmes. He supports performance linked pay programmes for teachers** and brings up how a programme in Andhra Pradesh where bonus payments were made to teacher based on improvement of student's test course. **Prof. Eric Hanushok who has done pioneering work on education has brought up how quality of teaching impacts economic growth significantly**. Paul Frier (1968) argued that the student is **not a vessel to be filled with knowledge but as a co-creator of knowledge with the teachers**. This important pedagogical innovation has been adopted by many western countries with astounding benefits.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Thomas Jefferson, 236 years ago, moved a bill that called for a "**system of instruction that embraces citizen from the richest to the poorest"**. It was the first step in the creation of the American system of public education –an institution that has helped propel the country's rise to global prominence. It's time we move beyond the flawed logic of **'market driven education**', **and refrain from looking at poor people as pariahs to be given education vouchers as 'doles'**. Rural India is in a seething cauldron of neglect and denial; with the goal of 'higher inclusivity' (12th Plan) proving to be a cruel irony for them. The goals of universal access needs to be **supplemented by quality as the Oslo summit has underlined.** Secondary education has to be a fundamental right as a logical continuum to primary education. The critical infrastructural deficits like toilets, drinking water and computes should be made good in a time bound manner. A pedagogy that puts a premium on **'remedial instruction' along with computer** aid, and a **system that values performance of teachers through incentives and quality training and politics that is 'inclusive'** and a value system that encourages **equitable, resilient and inclusive growth will be the piped pipers for rural India**. The politics of reservation should give way to the **economics of affirmative action** as in USA. **Education serves as a bridge from poverty to property, from exclusion to participation for all.** In the increasingly knowledge based and technology driven world that we live in the SECC (2011) hopefully will strike the right pedagogy in our moribund and muddled education policy.

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