



SECONDARY EDUCATION STATUS IN INDIA AND ITS IMPORTANCE

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ABSTRACT: Secondary education begins in grade 9 and lasts until grade 12. The secondary stage is broken into two, two year cycles, generally referred to as General/Lower Secondary School, or 'Standard X', and Upper/Senior Secondary School, or 'Standard XII'. Education continues to be free at government schools, although private education is more common at the secondary level. Public examinations are held at the end of both cycles and grant access to grade 11 and university level study respectively. General curriculum for lower secondary school in India consists of three languages (including the regional language, an elective, and English language), Mathematics, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Work/Pre-Vocational Education, Art, and Physical Education. Secondary schools are affiliated with Central or State boards which administer the Secondary School Certificate at the end of grade 10. Based upon performance in the first two years of secondary school, and upon the SSC results, students may enter Senior/Upper Secondary School. Upper Secondary School offers the students a chance to select a 'stream' or concentration of study, offering science, commerce, and arts/humanities. Education is administered both in schools or two-year junior colleges which are often affiliated with degree granting universities or colleges. Curriculum for the Higher Secondary Certificate Examination is determined by the boards of secondary education of which there are 31. Although the HSCE is the most common Standard XII examination, the All India Senior School Certificate (CBSE), Indian School Certificate, Certificate of Vocational Education (CISCE), Senior Secondary Certification (NIOS), Intermediate Certificate and the Pre-University Certificate are also offered.

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INTRODUCTION:

Ever since the Constitution was adopted in 1950, the focus of educational programmes was concentrated on elementary education. Since the constitutional commitment is free and compulsory education to all children up to the age fourteen, all efforts were focused on achieving the goal of universal elementary education. But despite significant progress in every sphere of elementary education, the goal to achieve universal elementary enrolment is still a far distant dream. Within the elementary education, primary education remained in the focus all through since the independence. Even, the coverage of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) is also limited to the primary level only. However, it is the upper primary education, which is now getting attention of the planners and policy makers. The DPEP is now being extended to the upper primary level initially in the phase one 52 districts. Sporadic attempts have been made in the past to consider both the primary and upper primary education as one component. The Bihar Education Project and the World Bank Uttar Pradesh Basic Education Project considered the entire elementary education

as one unit. The new initiative, namely the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) also envisages the entire elementary education as one component. Secondary education had never been in the focus and all the activities were concentrated on elementary education. The Government recently constituted a task force on secondary education. Even there is now mention of Universalisation of Secondary Education. It is in this context, the present article takes an overall view of the entire secondary level. Like other levels of school education, a significant progress is made in all the spheres of secondary education. More than 84 per cent habitations had secondary school/section within a distance of 8 km as compared to 70 per cent within 5 km. The number of unserved habitations declined from 21 per cent in 1986-87 to 15 per cent in 1993-94. During 1950-51 to 1999-2000, the number of secondary and higher secondary schools increased from 7 thousand to 117 thousand. The increase (16 times) is much more rapid than the corresponding increase in the primary (3 times) and upper primary (14 times) schools. In the latest decade (1990 to 99), more than 37 thousand secondary and higher secondary schools were opened. The ratio of upper

primary to secondary schools also improved from 1.83 in 1950-51 to 1.69 in 1999-2000. The number of secondary/higher secondary teachers increased from 127 thousand in 1950-51 to 1,720 thousand in 1999-2000. Despite the increase in number of teachers, the pupil-teacher ratio increased from 21:1 in 1950-51 to 32:1 in 1999-2000; thus indicating significant increase in enrolment at this level. From a low 1.5 million in 1950-51, it has now been increased by more than 19 times to 28.2 million in 1999-2000. The percentage of girls enrolment increased from 13 per cent in 1950-51 to about 38 per cent in 1999-2000. Enrolment in secondary/higher secondary level increased by almost doubles the rate than the increase in the primary enrolment. The GER, though low but improved from 19.3 per cent in 1990-91 to 30.0 per cent in 1993-94 and further to 41.2 per cent in 1998-99. Almost 50 per cent children of age group 14-17 year were attending schools in 1995-96. The retention rate (I to IX) is also improved but still it is low at 27 per cent. The transition rate from upper primary to secondary level is as high as 85 per cent.

Over time facilities in secondary schools have improved impressively. The majority of secondary schools have got school buildings (69 per cent). The average number of instructional rooms in a secondary school is as high as 8. More schools have now got drinking water (41 per cent), urinal (77 per cent) and lavatory (57 per cent) facilities in schools than in 1986-87. More than 63 per cent schools have furniture for teachers and almost the same percentage of schools science laboratories. The plan allocation on secondary education increased from Rs. 20 crore during the first plan to more than Rs. 2600 crore in the ninth plan. However, expenditure on secondary education always remained below one per cent of the GDP.

Impressive progress has also been made at the primary and upper primary levels of education. But despite all these significant achievements, the goal to achieve universal elementary enrolment still remains far out of the sight. The goal of universal secondary education cannot be achieved unless the goal of universal elementary enrolment is achieved.

THE PRESENT ARTICLE

To review quantitative expansion of secondary education, information on a variety of indicators over time needs to be analyzed. Availability of schooling facilities, unserved habitations, schools according to type & management, physical and teaching/learning facilities, average number of instructional rooms, ratio of upper primary to secondary schools, pupil-teacher ratio, average number of teachers in a school, trained & female teachers, subject specialization & qualifications of teachers, student enrolment, retention rate etc. are some of the important indicators that have been critically analyzed in the present article. The analysis will help to understand the status of

secondary education vis--vis elementary education. Needless to mention that secondary education cannot be expanded unless the upper primary education system is efficient enough to send the adequate number of elementary graduates to the secondary level. Once the students complete elementary education, they are expected to transit to secondary classes in the subsequent years. Therefore, an attempt has been made in the present article to see how students transact between the secondary classes. For this purpose, transition rate from upper primary to secondary level and between secondary grades have also been computed and critically analyzed.

THE DATA

The analysis is confined to the all-India level. By and large the article is focused on the quantitative analysis but qualitative variables have also been analyzed. Though secondary level is in the focus of the article, wherever necessary, information pertaining to other lower levels, such as, upper primary and primary levels have also been presented and analyzed. The analysis presented is confined to the secondary sources of information. The MHRD is the main agency responsible for the collection and dissemination of educational statistics on a regular basis on all aspects of school education. However, compared to elementary level, secondary level does not have the rich data set. Therefore, other sources of information, such as, NCERT have also been explored. Since, the NCERT data set is latest (Sixth Survey) available for the year 1993-94, the analysis in the present article is also confined to that year only. The MHRD data is disseminated through two of its annual publications, namely, the Selected Educational Statistics and Education in India. Information disseminated through the Education in India is comprehensive and final while those published in the Selected Educational Statistics is provisional in the nature. Education in India is latest available for 1993-94 and Selected Educational Statistics for 1999-2000. Both of these publications have been extensively utilized in the present article. In addition, data generated by the NSSO have also been analyzed.

ACCESS

Provision of schooling facilities to all children is the constitutional commitment. Opening of a school is linked to the population size of the habitation and also the distance from the residence to school. A habitation is entitled to have a primary (population 300 & more), upper primary (500 & more) and secondary school, if it does not have the same within a walking distance of 1, 3 and 5 km. The distribution of habitations according to availability of secondary schools/sections reveals that 54 thousand of the total 1,061 thousand habitations had a secondary school/section within the habitation itself; which is just 5.04 per cent of the total habitations. (Table 1). About 69.73 per cent

habitations had the schooling facilities with in a walking distance of 5 km. compared to 84.82 per cent within a distance of 8 km. In as many as 161 thousand habitations (15.18 per cent), schooling facilities were not available even beyond 8 km. However, if compared with the Fifth Survey, the number of unserved habitations declined from 21.08 per cent in 1986-87 to 15.18 per cent in 1993-94. This improvement is termed significant because

of the increase in total number of habitations from 992 thousand in 1986-87 to 1,061 thousand in 1993-94. On the other hand more than 77 and 90 per cent population in the rural areas had access to secondary schools/sections within a distance of 5 and 8 km. The analysis further reveals that availability of secondary schools increases with the increase in population size of the habitation. Below the growth in number of schools/sections is presented.

Table 1 Facilities in Secondary Schools: 1993-94

Population Slab	Number of Habitations ('000)	Population of Habitations (in Million)	% of Habitations Served by Secondary Sections		% of Population Served by Secondary Sections	
			Within Habitation	Up to 8 Km.	Within Habitation Up to 8 km	Up to 8 Km.
Below 500	662	52	1.21	81.93	1.58	83.62
500-999	213	150	4.05	87.77	4.25	87.90
1000-1999	125	171	11.22	90.30	11.96	90.47
2000-4999	53	149	33.83	94.30	36.62	94.66
5000 & Above	7	138	68.96	98.61	71.01	98.72
Total	1061	660	5.04	84.82	18.29	90.00

GROWTH IN NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

There has been substantial expansion of primary, upper primary and high and higher secondary schools in the country. Growth of upper primary schools is influenced by the expansion of primary education and high and higher secondary schools by the growth of upper primary education in India. The number of primary schools increased from 210 thousand in 1950-51 to 642 thousand in 1999-2000; thus showing an average annual growth of 2.37 per cent per annum (Table 2). During the same period, upper primary schools increased from 14 thousand to 198 thousand, a growth of 5.62 per cent per annum. On the other hand, high and higher secondary schools increased from 7 thousand in 1950-51 to 117 thousand in 1999-2000; thus showing a growth of 5.92 per cent per annum. The primary schools registered an increase of almost three-fold while the upper primary schools increased by 15 times and high and higher secondary schools by more than 16 times during the period 1950-51 to 1999-2000. Although the progress look impressive compared to the primary and upper primary schools, it needs to be noted that the base of the high and higher secondary schools was too narrow in 1950-51 compared to primary and upper primary level (Table 2). During 1990-91 to 1999-2000, about 81 thousand primary schools were opened against 47 thousand upper primary and 37 thousand high and higher secondary schools. A clearer picture about the availability of schools will emerge when the ratio of primary to upper primary and upper primary to

high and higher secondary schools is analyzed, which is presented below. The ratio is treated an indicator of access conditions or the spread of facilities for upper primary and high and higher secondary education.

RATIO OF UPPER PRIMARY TO HIGH/HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Table 42 reveals that the ratio of primary to upper primary schools has considerably improved from 1:15.4 in 1950-51 to 1:6.7 in 1960-61 and further to 3.2 in 1999-2000. Similarly, the ratio of upper primary to high and higher secondary schools has also improved from 1.83 in 1950-51 to 1.69 in 1999-2000. The improvement in ratio indicates that more schooling facilities are now available. The Programme of Action (1992) also envisaged an upper primary school for every two primary schools. However, it is silent on the ratio of upper primary to high and higher secondary schools. The trend shows that the expansion of primary and upper primary education has exerted considerable pressure on upper primary and high and higher secondary education system to expand. The government has responded positively by providing larger number of schools and school places for children who are completing primary and upper primary level of education. As of now, the country has almost a high and higher secondary school for every two upper primary schools it has. The demand for the secondary schools is expected to increase once the goal of universal elementary education is achieved.

Table 2 Number of Institutions: 1950-51 to 1999-2000

Year	Primary	Upper Primary	Ratio of Primary to Upper Primary	High & Higher Secondary	Ratio of Upper Primary to High & Higher Secondary
1950-51	209671	13596	15.42	7416	1.83
1960-61	330399	49663	6.65	17329	2.87
1970-71	408378	90621	4.51	37051	2.45
1980-81	494503	118555	4.17	51573	2.30
1990-91	560935	151456	3.70	79796	1.90
1998-99	626737	190166	3.30	112438	1.69
1999-2000	641695	198004	3.24	116820	1.69
Growth Rate: 1990-91 to 1999-2000	1.51	3.02	-	4.33	-

Why Secondary Education is Important in India?

Secondary education is an important part of the Indian education system. It is the bridge that connects primary education with higher education. It is at this juncture a student decides what professional he did like to pursue as a career.

The importance of Secondary Education in India aims for the all-around development of the student along with an understanding of the various vital branches of knowledge.

It trains the student to become a good citizen and uplifts the democratic principle of the country.

It inculcates the feeling of unity in diversity among the student and informs them how important they are for the social and economic development of the country.

Secondary education is important because it promotes rational development in the students through which they gain practical skills.

It also strives to increase the practical efficiency of the students. It is worth noting that the aims and objectives of primary, secondary, and higher education vary.

This is so because students in all the groups are of different ages and bear different emotional and mental growth.

Secondary education prepares young people for the labour market and is especially certain among those who leave for a job just after secondary education.

With a large number of young people passing through secondary education, a country's economic growth rate shifts from labor-intensive to knowledge-centric.

Another vital reason for the importance of secondary education is that young women passing through this education system become better equipped in decision-making.

They will have a better understanding of when to marry, bear children, or child health and education. Besides, the additional time spent in studies also helps in reducing maternal mortality.

What Is Secondary Education in India?

Secondary level education in India comes after the primary education stage. It is the intermediate stage of education where the basic concepts taught in the primary section are explained in more detail to prepare the students for higher education or the job market.

The duration of secondary education in India is 2-3 years of academic study. This includes the 8th, 9th, and 10th standards for students from 13-16 years of age.

However, the system can vary slightly between states where some consider 8th to 10th as part of secondary education while others limit it to only the 9th and the 10th standards.

To someone asking what is secondary education in India? Simply put, it is the stage in a student's life where they decide on what professional career they want to pursue and which stream will make it a reality.

It is the stage where they gain a greater understanding of streams like arts, commerce, and science and the differences in the specific professions.

Secondary Education Benefits

In India, education is divided into primary and secondary. During the primary education phase, students learn the basic types of government, structure, and functioning of a civilized society. They also learn the affairs of society and history in a nutshell.

Meanwhile, a student in secondary education will continue to learn in greater detail what he finished learning in the primary stage.

The students will learn more challenging concepts that will come in handy to get employed as well. Besides, young people become aware of the different fields available via the streams of science, commerce, and arts.

There are numerous benefits of secondary education. Other than making young people ready for a professional life if they chose so, it also prepares the students for higher education.

It opens a window of understanding their abilities as well as in which field they can use it best. To understand the concept better, here are 7 Secondary education benefits

1. Preparation for The Professional World

During secondary education, students develop practical skills and knowledge that will help them to enter the world of jobs.

Well, if not immediately, the students will at least realize what career path suits them. It opens doors, gives them options and an informed decision-making ability to choose a specific degree.

Besides, by the time secondary education is over, the student will have also reached the end of adolescence.

They will have also acquired knowledge and skills that shall remain with them throughout their lives as a responsible member of society.

2. Improved Academic Knowledge

Secondary education improves the knowledge a student earned during the primary education stage. Thus it also helps them in becoming successful in the academic world.

At this stage, students learn more new concepts with greater details and also develop an inclination or interest towards a particular subject.

Hence they will realize what subjects they like better and therefore, what professional career or education stream to pursue.

3. Communication Skills Develop

People passing through secondary education find it easier to get accustomed to change, they also develop the ability to quickly understand and manage new information.

Also, they can listen effectively, present their views clearly, make plans, and rationally discuss issues or **problems**.

4. Window to Career Options

There are too many new things happening in the modern world. New ideas, new technologies, and new options. Too many options create the dread of choice.

However, through secondary education, students can explore and gain a clearer understanding of the variety of career options.

As students learn new concepts during their secondary education, they also uncover new abilities and develop new skills. This becomes a big advantage in deciding which career to choose.

5. Develop Life Skills

Students develop necessary life skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and problem solving through secondary education....

This will help them through the rest of their lives, be it as a student or a professional. Meanwhile, their rationale will help in the overall growth of a society, and thereby the country.

6. Broadens Horizon

If a strong foundation is set during the students' secondary education, it will also provide success to them as adults.

During this phase of education, students begin to identify themselves as an individual. They see their potential while growing physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Secondary education shows the students a balanced perspective of the world. It tries to drum up a sense of reality in them. Besides, a leadership quality or a team player quality is developed in them through different activities.

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