

Preface

Education is the catalyst factor which leads to Human Resource Development (HRD) comprising better health, nutrition, improved socio-economic opportunities and more congenial and beneficial natural environment for all. Years back the Directive Principles of the constitution enjoined upon the government to provide education to all children upto the age 14 by the year 1960. However, it is a sad commentary on the progress of primary education in rural India that even after a lapse of 50 years of Independence there does not seem to be any hope of fulfilling of this Constitutional Directive. The UNICEF in its report on 'State of World Children 1999' stated that India would be most illiterate country in the world by 2000 AD, a disgraceful distinction. Every third illiterate in the world is an Indian. Half of the primary school going children in the age group of 5 to 11 years in our country are out of schools.

Over the last five decades the country has taken long strides in the development and spread of educational facilities especially during the plan periods. As a result during 1961 only 13 per cent of our people could read and write with understanding. During 1991 it rose to 52 per cent. In a heterogeneous country like India it is no mean achievement. However, we in India are still not able to provide all our children in the age group of 6-14 years free and compulsory education. The literacy rate among women is 39.4 per cent.

The literacy level is not uniform all over the country. Among the major states each with the population of one crore and above, Kerala tops the list with the literacy rate of 90 per cent. Compared to other states Kerala claims the highest female literacy rate of 86 per cent (male 94 per cent). On the other hand Bihar with the literacy rate of 39 per cent is at the bottom, where 61 per cent females are illiterate. The states below the All India Average Literacy Level include Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, where half of India's population resides. It may be emphasized that wherever female education has

improved, the over all literacy level has also shown improvement. The condition of primary schools in our country especially in rural areas is reported to be quite dismal. About one third of primary schools have only one teacher. Often many schools have no facilities to meet some of the basic needs such as safe drinking water, latrines, urinals and playgrounds. As a result one fifth of the children in the age group of 5-10 years remain out of schools.

Literacy for girls has very far reaching implications both for society as well as the recipient girl. Literacy for girls is a crucial input for developing/preserving human resource development, which in the ultimate analysis is a national asset. As far the individual recipient girl, literacy/education equips her to enjoy the fruits of social justice, social culture and of social, political and economic rights.

Here then, lies the crux of the problem related to girls' literacy. In one State, reckoned as 'Educationally Forward State', elementary education for girls has succeeded in achieving its qualitative and quantitative targets while in the neighbouring State such targets are not achieved and hence it is recognized as an 'Educationally Backward State'. Why so ? Even when various schemes related to elementary education for girls' have been implemented in both the States without any element of discrimination in terms of inputs, resources etc., why one State or its any region, lags behind while the other one moves forward and attains its determined targets? This is the fundamental question that requires empirical investigation/research. For the present study Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are taken as educationally forward and backward states respectively.

The report is divided in 6 part. Part I presents Introduction and methodology of the study. Part II provides the details of education system, status of education and other relevant information based on the secondary sources appertaining to Madhya Pradesh. Part III covers the details of education system, status of education and other relevant information based on secondary sources about Maharashtra. Part IV gives the analysis of primary data of Madhya Pradesh. Part V interprets the primary data of Maharashtra. Part VI concludes the study and also makes suitable suggestions.

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Finally, I must confess that I am alone responsible for the observations made and conclusions drawn in this study.

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