



Mains Practice Question

Q. Progress from Millennium Development to Sustainable Development entails a shift in the focus from universalizing access to education towards the delivery of quality education. Explain. (250 words)

11 Feb, 2020 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Highlight goals of MDG and SDG related to education and India's achievement in that.
- Highlight current issues plaguing the education sector along with need for quality education.
- Some steps towards achieving SDG 4.
- Quote reports, recommendations in the conclusion.

Introduction

Quest to fulfill MDG target of universal access to education, India has improved its gross enrolment ratio at all levels: primary schooling (over 100%), secondary (74%) and nearly 24% in higher education. SDG 4 expands the goals and target towards ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Body

Issues in present education system and need for quality education

- Gender Gap in enrolment, especially at higher education levels.
- According to NSSO 71st round (2014), drop-out rates are very high for boys at the secondary school level. Reasons for the same are economic activities, lack of interest in education and financial constraints.
- The transition rate from secondary school to senior secondary and further to higher education is very low.
- Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reflects this deteriorating quality. The report opines that deficits in foundational reading and arithmetic skills are cumulative, which leaves students grossly handicapped for further education.
 - From 1952-2012, education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure increased from 7.92 to 11.7 and as a percentage of GDP increased from 0.64 to 3.31. But it is still not reached 6% of GDP, as was recommended by the Kothari Commission way back in 1964.
 - Expenditure by the government on elementary education is more than tertiary level, but expenditure per student is more in tertiary. So, there is a need to increase expenditure in all segments.
- Inequitable education system: rich-poor divide, especially in private institutions, low representation of depressed communities.
- Lack of new age employable skills, issues related to Teachers like lack of training, skewed teacher-student ratio, corruption in appointment.

Steps towards fulfilling SDG 4 goal

- Padhe Bharat Bade Bharat – targeting early reading and writing. Twin track approach of comprehension and math is the main focus.
- Need to expand RTE Act to 14-18 age groups.
- The National Research Foundation, to fund, coordinate, and promote research at the college-level, is proposed by Kasturirangan report.
- Government has launched Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, (BBBP), a campaign to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India.
- National Teacher Platform or Diksha in 2017 as a one-stop solution to address teacher competency gaps.
 - Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP) of MHRD.

Way Forward

Thus, shifting focus from just accessibility to quality of education will require initiatives at multiple levels as highlighted in Kasturirangan Committee and in new education policy along with need to expand expenditure on public education.

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