

RMSA for universal education in India

RASTRIYA MADHYAMIC SIKSHA ABHIYAN

WHAT? WHY: HOW?

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Abstract

Rastriya Madhyamic Siksha Mission (RMSM), a mission exclusively for secondary education. The mission is functioning under Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of India. The mission was formulated on the basis of comprehensive reports of CABE, and the successful accomplishment of SSA. The mission has definite structure at national, state, district, block and at school levels. Mission proclaimed to provide good quality education barrier free to all students. The guiding principles of RMSA are Universal Access, Equality and Social Justice, Relevance and Development and, Curricular and Structural Aspects. The objectives of the mission can be summarized as providing, Access, Quality and Equity in education. There are four centrally sponsored schemes and four focus groups planned under the scheme. Girls' education and empowerment is given very high place in the mission.

Introduction

Rastriya Madhyamic Siksha Mission (RMSM), a mission exclusively for secondary education, was formulated on realization that secondary education is not a mere continuation of elementary education, but a force to empower students capable of competing in the global market for a successful life by the age of eighteen years. The prime minister of India, in the independence speech 2007, mentioned on such a scheme namely Scheme for Universalisation of Access for Secondary Education (SUCCESS).

Background

- The National Policy on Education 1986, and Programme of Action (POA) 1992, stressed the need of expanding facilities for secondary education in India. The documents also insisted to give special emphasis to Girl children, children belong to scheduled casts (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) in the expansion process; and subjects such as science, commerce, and vocational subjects should be given priority. The objective of vocationalisation was to divert atleast 25 % of students to vocational courses, was not realized but restricted to 5% only (MHRD annual report 2003). The exact reasons for such drop in rate should be researched in depth and the existing vocational

courses in secondary and higher education level need to be enriched by incorporating more vocational skills is the need of the hour. The main reason for growing unemployment in the country is due to lack of vocational skill training through education.

- The constitutional mandate for elementary education and the successful accomplishment of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan(SSA), prompted the new scheme
- Committee report of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), on Universalisation of Secondary Education (USE), provided solid basis for the scheme
- Midterm appraisal report of Xth five year plan insisted a new mission for improving secondary education
- Report of CABE committee on girls' education and common school system.
- Parliamentary standing committee report demanding financial assistance from MHRD (No.206)

The RMSM was constituted in the light of the aforesaid in-depth and comprehensive studies and suggestions.

Mission Structure

Governing council headed by MHRD minister of India is the apex body of the mission, including seventeen members came into force on 26th of June 2009(No.F 1- 1/ 2009 – sch.1 Govt.of India, MHRD. Dept. of School Education & Literacy. New Delhi dt 26.6.09). Fifteen members executive committee headed by the Secretary secondary education – literacy functions according to the instructions and directions issued by the governing council. State level mission should be constituted under the chairmanship of chief minister and executive committee under the chairmanship of secondary education secretary, Technical Support Group (TSG), and appointing State mission director are the initial steps that have to be taken at state level.

Secondary Level Education Management Information System (SEMIS) under the supervision of National University of Educational Planning and

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Administration (NUEPA) should be constituted. SEMIS is aimed to create secondary education database at national level and to monitor the functioning of RMSA.

The mission document insisted to do the following activities at district level as preliminary step.

- Micro mapping should be done to identify availability and facilities of existing institutions and courses, which should include number of institutions, infrastructural facilities, and facilities for instruction of science subjects such as physics, chemistry, biology, and computer science.
- List of schools that should be upgraded as secondary / higher secondary schools on the basis of the base line studies.
- Appointing district programme coordinators
- Empowerment of D.E.O. office and block level offices.
- Organizing public awareness programmes.
- Preparation of Perspective plan and Annual plan. In annual planning GER(Gross Enrolment Rate) for one year should estimated, by specifying separate GER for girls, SC/ ST students, and rural and urban students.
- Comprehensive plan for teacher appointments. The CABE committee proposed the teacher pupil ratio of 1: 30 (CABE – USE report)
- Time bound in-service training for all teachers. (Revision of pre-service teacher training should also be considered at this time).
- Formation of School Management and Development Committee (SMDC) in each school, which should be the most significant body in the development of a school under RMSA.

The proposed structure of SMDC is as follows.

Principal, Chairman of the Committee

- _ Vice Principal, Member
- _ One teacher related to Social Science, Member
- _ One teacher related to Science, Member
- _ One teacher related to Mathematics, Member
- _ One gentleman from parents, Member
- _ One lady from parents, Member
- _ Two members from Panchayat or Urban Local Body
- _ One member from SC/ ST community
- _ One member from Educationally Backward Minority Community
- _ One member from women groups
- _ One member from Education Development Committee of each village (to which the school concerned caters)
- _ Three experts as members, each from Science, Humanities and Art/ Craft/ Culture background to be nominated by the District Programme Coordinator through due process.
- _ One officer from Education Department to be nominated by the District Education Officer as Member
- _ One member from Audit and Accounts Department

Two sub committees proposed to assist the activities of SMDC are:

A school building committee under the chairmanship of the principal and; Academic committee, in which vice principal as chairman, one parent one education expert and one student as members. Thirty three percent of fund is allocated for civil works. All construction works should be done by school building committee. The mission provides specific guidelines for construction.

- Earthquake resistant techniques should followed in all constructions
- Buildings should be constructed in such a way to prevent fire, and also fitted with fire safety measures.
- Construction should satisfy the needs of differentially abled children.
- Provisions for Rain water harvesting facilities.

Existing buildings also can be made disable friendly and rain water harvesting facilities.

Mission Approach

The approach was prepared on the basis of population projection studies that the number of students in the age group of 14 – 18 will be 9.70 crores by the year 2011. The GER of students in the age of 14 – 18 in 2005 – 06 at secondary level is only 41.49%. The successful accomplishment of SSA (100% enrolment at elementary level) in 2010 impelled considerable enhancement of GER at secondary level.

The vision of RMSA is “to make good quality education available and accessible and affordable to all young persons in age group of 14 – 18 barriers free”. The following activities are proposed to realize the vision.

- _ To provide a secondary school within a reasonable distance of any habitation, which should be 5 kilometer for secondary schools and 7 -10 kilometers for higher secondary schools.
- _ Ensure universal access of secondary education by 2017 (GER of 100%), and
- _ Universal retention by 2020,
- _ Providing access to secondary education with special references to economically weaker sections of the society, the educationally backward, the girls and the disabled children residing in rural areas and other marginalized categories like SC, ST, OBC and Educationally Backward Minorities (EBM)

Four guiding principles are formulated to achieve the vision of universalisation of secondary education. The guiding principles in this regard are;

- Universal Access,
- Equality and Social Justice,
- Relevance and Development and
- Curricular and Structural Aspects.

Objectives of RMSA

- i) To ensure that all secondary schools have physical facilities, staffs and, supplies at least according to the prescribed standards through financial support.
- ii) To improve access to secondary schooling to all young persons’ according to norms – through proximate location (say, Secondary Schools within 5 kms, and Higher Secondary Schools within 7-10 kms) / efficient and safe transport

arrangements/residential facilities, depending on local circumstances including open schooling. Preferably residential schools may be set up in hilly areas.

iii) To ensure that no child is deprived of secondary education of satisfactory quality due to gender, socio-economic, disability and other barriers.

iv) To improve quality of secondary education resulting in enhanced intellectual, social and cultural learning.

v) To ensure that all students pursuing secondary education receive education of good quality

vi) Achievement of the above objectives would also, inter-alia, signify substantial progress in the direction of the Common School System.

Common school system signifies uniform nature of education to students of all sections of the society in all types of institutions including government, aided and unaided schools.

The aim of education is identified as the development of the following five domains (CABE- USE report 2005).

1) Building up citizenship for a country that is striving to become a democratic, egalitarian and secular society;

2) interdisciplinary approach to knowledge, concept formation (not just piling up information) and its application in daily life and attributes such as critical thought and creativity;

3) Evolving values in a plural society that is, at the same time, stratified and hierarchical;

4) Generic competencies that cut across various domains of knowledge as well as skills; and

5) Skill formation in the context of rapidly changing technology which demands formation of multiple skills, transfer of learning and ability to continue to unlearn and learn.

The domains mentioned above gave emphasis to knowledge, process skills, society, as well as context, hence 'Competency based education', need to be evolved. There must be comprehensive changes in aspects such as curriculum, selection of learning materials, learning strategies, and evaluation.

Mission – Approach and Strategy

Major milestones of RMSA are Access, Quality, and Equity, Empowering resource institutions, Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), significant role of Panchayat, SMDC and PTA.

Access

Ensuring institutional access to all is the primary step of universalisation. The following activities are planned to increase access.

_ Expansion of existing Secondary Schools & Higher Secondary Schools.

- _ Up gradation of Upper Primary / secondary Schools based on micro planning exercise with all necessary infrastructure facilities and teachers.
- _ Opening of new Secondary Schools/ Higher Secondary Schools based on the school mapping exercise. All these buildings will have mandatory rain water harvesting system and will be disabled friendly.
- _ Rain harvesting systems will be installed in existing school buildings also, and made disabled friendly.
- _ New schools will also be set up in PPP mode. Public Private Partnership is proposed to enhance quality of education and to expand facilities available for education. Establishing new schools, enhancing infrastructural and instructional facilities also are expected.

While examining access of institutions, it is essential to examine access to infrastructural facilities. The details of building in terms of number of rooms and its dimension are given in the mission document which should be examined in respect to conditions of each state.

- Classrooms with Natural light and proper aeration
- Adequate seating facilities and facilities to store school bag and other amenities
- Safe and permanent roof without asbestos sheet
- Facilities to store learning materials
- Dining facilities with Drinking water and hand washing facilities proportionate to number of students
- Adequate number of toilets, especially girl friendly toilets proportional to number of pupils with mechanism for regular cleaning and hygiene.
- Adequate mechanism for waste disposal and management.
- Safe compound with playground and green plants and trees.
- Collision safe and fire safety measures in buildings with wide corridors and staircases
- Safe and adequate travelling facilities

Quality

Following essential aspects are mentioned in the mission for ensuring quality in schools.

- Providing blackboard, furniture, library, laboratories for science, mathematics and computer, toilet clusters, etc.
- Appointment of permanent teachers in all vacant posts and in-service training of teachers.
- Conduct of bridge course for enhancing learning abilities for all students passing out of elementary education.

- Curriculum revision in accordance with National Curriculum Framework (NCF2005).
- Residential accommodation for teachers in rural and difficult areas, preference will be given for female teachers.

Though Kerala has achieved advancements in infrastructural and institutional facilities to a greater extent when compared to other states, quality of education in the state is a real concern. Labs and library facilities should be enhanced to a greater extent.

Lessons and learning experiences should be designed in such a way to develop the aforesaid domains of education. Building of healthy society is the aim of quality education. Personal, surrounding, social, and cultural cleanliness are the different dimensions of health. Secondary education should be enhanced to such a level to increase standard of living by attaining life skills to avoid spreading of contagious diseases, food and water security, environmental conservation, and conservation of culture.

Quality of teaching mainly depends on quality of teacher training. Existing teacher training programmes provide training only in one or two methods, usually because of the structuring of the curriculum. Teacher trained in such way are unable to compete for global opportunities hence, secondary teacher training should be restructured by incorporating skills necessary for the changing context. Necessity of a common curriculum is relevant in the case of teacher training courses at various levels also. The planning commission of India estimated a requirement of almost double the number of teachers by the next decade demands for quality teacher training programmes as the need of the hour.

The teacher empowerment programmes meant for in-service training of teachers should be improved and made 'transmission loss free' at various levels. Ensure in-service education of required quality available and accessible to all teachers is essential to enhance quality of education in the nation. Technology should be utilized for the better management of in-service programmes. All schools can be linked through EDUSAT (Educational satellite of the country), and training can be given to teachers in their own institution by utilizing experts in education in each state will be a boost towards quality (Fund allocation for EDUSAT linkage is made in RMSA). This decentralized in-service education will be helpful to enhance quality as well as to reduce teacher absenteeism in schools when they engaged in-service training at various levels.

The latest curriculum revisions proclaimed ensuring child favorable and participatory education and following various steps to reduce stress and mental tension of children. Even in such a context, lack of a policy for education of

children below five/six years (Completion of six years for entry in school according to Right to Education Bill) is a major concern. Improper education in childhood may influence the learning styles of children throughout their life and sometimes practicing styles in pre-primary level may be diametrically opposite to what is being practiced in elementary and secondary levels. Defining competencies that should be acquired at pre-primary, elementary and secondary stages is essential to enhance quality of education. Children should be taught the methodology of learning and memorization in place of rote learning. Enable children to acquire competencies to apply knowledge as situations demand.

Evaluation also has a significant role in enhancing quality of education. The comprehensive evaluation procedure should be made more comprehensive and in-depth. The proportion of external and internal evaluation should be enhanced upto 50 – 50 from the current 80-20, and such tools to measure practical skills should be utilized and teachers should be trained in using those also is necessary. Learners should be given the freedom to decide the desirable outcomes on the basis of their background knowledge and their requirement. Direction and depth at which one should reach is the real knowledge that children should develop through evaluation. It is suitable to conduct evaluation at three levels such as evaluation by self, evaluation by peers, and evaluation by teacher to make evaluation meaningful and precise.

Equity

‘Unity in diversity’, is the landmark of Indian community, where RMSA visualized to provide equity in education through the following

- Free lodging/ boarding facilities for students belonging to SC,ST,OBC and minority communities
- Hostels/ residential schools, cash incentive, uniform, books, separate Toilets for girls
- Providing scholarships to meritorious/ needy students at secondary level
- Efforts will be made to provide all necessary facilities for the differently abled children in all the schools.
- Expansion of Open and Distance Learning needs to be undertaken, especially for those who cannot pursue full time secondary education, and for supplementation / enrichment of face-to-face instruction.

Equitable distribution of learning materials is a highly significant task in education. Text books are the only learning materials available to majority of pupils in the nation. Hence, enhancing comprehensiveness of textbooks will enforce social equity in learning resources. Such comprehensive textbooks will be

a strong support for children from socially and educationally backward families, families with no learnt adults to help children in studies, and economically weaker pupils who could not afford private tuition and guide books. Providing comprehensive textbooks should be continued until enough reference materials are made available to all children in school libraries.

Interlinking of resource Institutions

Empowerment and interlinking of resource institutions at state and national levels is identified as highly significant in the mission document

At national level National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) including Regional Institutes of Education (RIE), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)

At state levels State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), State Open School, State institute of Educational Management and Training (SIEMAT), University departments of Education, Reputed institutions in Science, Humanities, and Social science, Colleges of Teacher Educations (CTE), and Institute of Advanced Study in Education (IASE).

Apart from NCERT & SCERT all other institutions have very limited interventions in school education, but they are very significant also. For eg: hundreds of research studies were carried out and are being conducted in university departments of education, but the implications of most of the studies are dormant in shelves. CTEs are upgraded to that status from training colleges for experimenting on adequate changes in various aspects of secondary education, but the contribution in that direction is very limited. It is fortunate that RMSA identified two viable institutions, university departments and CTEs influential in secondary education, the former should provide theoretical support for renovation in secondary education and the latter practice those changes in the field for perfection. A comprehensive policy including university departments, SCERT for theoretical inputs and CTEs as laboratories to experiment innovations is very essential. Publication of results of research studies undertaken by different agencies by creating a website is also very important. District Institute of Education for Teachers (DIETs), and SCERT studied various aspects in the conduct of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), that outcomes will be helpful in the successful conduct of RMSA.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)

The highlight of RMSA is the four CSS explained in the mission document.

- 1 ICT @ School – Scheme to provide financial assistance to state government for computer education and computer assisted instruction. Computer education is restricted to secondary level (standard viii - x), even in the state of Kerala, a state pioneered educational reforms in India. Computer education should be extended to higher secondary level also. And there are miles to go for computer assisted instruction, because necessary infrastructural facilities should be made in all institutions on the basis of a comprehensive action plan.
- 2 Integrated Education for Differentially abled Children (IEDC) – Scheme to provide financial assistance to state governments and selected voluntary agencies for the education of children with physical and mental special care and assistance.
- 3 Girls' Education – Scheme meant for enhancing food and hostel facilities for girls children especially in rural areas.
- 4 Quality Improvement Programme – Scheme meant for practice of yoga, improve facilities for science education, for environmental education, for population education, and supporting international science Olympiads.

In addition to the four schemes, the need for establishing vocational training centres in district and block levels to enable students from economically weaker sections also mentioned in the mission document. Number and facilities of Kendriya Vidyalayas, and Jawhar Navodaya Vidyalayas are said to increase as pace setting institutions of secondary education.

Special Focus Groups

RMSA identified girl children; children belong to SCs and STs, children from educationally backward minority communities, children with physical and mental disabilities as special focus groups. Among these provisions for girls education and empowerment is appreciable in the document.

Financial Assistance

Total financial allocation for RMSA for rupees 90485.11 cores spreads in XI th and XIIth five year plans (2007 - 2017). The centre and state share in expenditure during xi th plan will be 75 : 25 , and during xii th plan should be 50 : 50 , except north east states , where the share will be 90 : 10 in both the plans. The mission instructed to create separate system for financial management.

Conclusion

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The aim universalisation of secondary education definitely demands for universalisation of higher education in the near future, hence it is time for preparatory activities of the same. Establishing institutions of higher education with adequate quality and attract students from India and abroad can be done, which will be a new identity to our nation as a quality higher education centre of the world, so as to reestablish the great Indian tradition at the age of Nalanda and Takshila.

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