



Child worker and their education

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ABSTRACT

Education can become a powerful tool to train individuals and channelies their thought process in right direction with superb power of positive thinking. The Constitution (Article 21A) made it obligatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to all children till the age of 14 years. Article 45 also refers to the provision for free and compulsory education for children. The RTE ACT-2009 has made a historic moment for the children of India .But miles to go to make the UEE a reality. The target year of SSA to reach the goal is 2015 which would hardly be achieved. Still today one in five children leaves school before reaching grade 5 and almost one-third before reaching grade 8. The ILO has recently estimated that some 217.7 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 126.3 million are caught in the worst forms of child labour. In India if you take the children up to 14, according to Census-2010, the total number of children in the workforce is 1,26,26505 - almost the same as previous census of 2001. In spite of utmost efforts why we have failed to reach the disadvantaged section of the society with the formal primary education system? What are the main causes behind the severe problems of illiteracy together with the problem of child labour? Is there any way-out to solve the problem of illiteracy among the child labour? If the parents of the *out of school children* are convinced in such a manner that they can consider expenditure, even on primary education, in terms of time and money, as one kind of *investment*, then their attitude towards education may be changed to the positive direction. In such a situation they may send their wards for primary education instead of sending them for work. *separate arrangements for making them literate* may be attempted for the child labour beyond their normal work time .This may be termed as Need Based Non-Formal Education. It is the combination of preliminary *education and simple training side by side*.

INTRODUCTION

Education can become a powerful tool to train individuals and channelies their thought process in right direction with superb power of positive thinking. Concept of *Basic learning Needs* as defined in the “World Conference on Education for All” (1990) held in Jomtien, Thailand can be re-iterated here. These needs comprise both essential learning tools literacy, oral expression , numeracy and problem solving and the basic learning content knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity and to continue learning. Literacy is the basis for lifelong learning. It empowers individuals, communities and improves the quality of life.

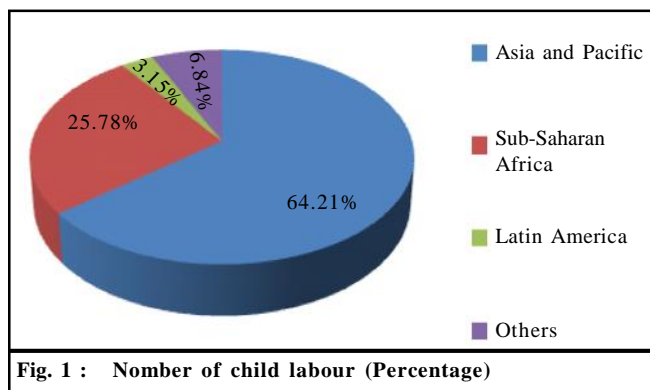
Literacy helps to reduce infant mortality, curb population growth, eradicate poverty, reduce gender disparity and ensure sustainable development, peace and harmony.

The constitution (Article 21A) made it obligatory for the government to provide free and compulsory education to all children till the age of 14 years. Article 45 also refers to the provision for free and compulsory education for children. This was to be achieved by 1960. Unfortunately, the target dates have had to be repeatedly extended. The modified education policy of 1992 further revised the target date by the end of the last century. The target year of SSA to reach the goal is 2015 which would hardly be achieved. The RTE ACT-2009 has made a historic moment for the children of India. But miles to go to make the UEE a reality. The goal continues to be elusive even

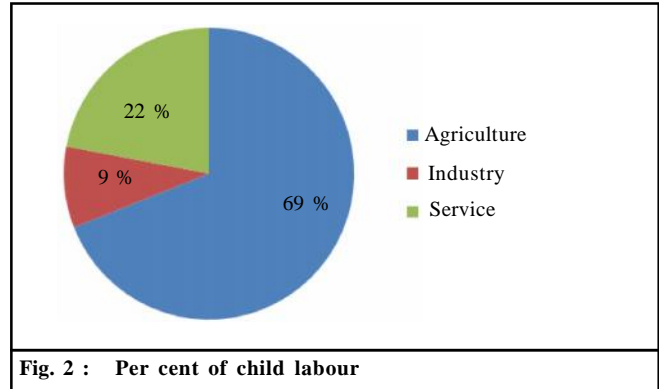
today. On the other hand though there is an improvement in enrolment, quality aspect of elementary education is still questionable. Even with some commendable efforts one in five children leaves school before reaching grade 5 and almost one-third before reaching grade 8. The 'Education For All' (EFA) Monitoring Report, released by UNESCO in 2013, cautioned that India is at risk of not achieving the Millennium Development Goal of "universalization of elementary education by 2015. According to this report Gross enrollment rate is still 50 in the world. In the low income countries it is only 17 whereas in East Asia and Pacific 62 and South and West Asia Gross enrollment ratio is not more than 50. In 2005, UNESCO ranked India, with 35 other countries, in the lowest category. Once again, the UN body said that it's doubtful that India together with 53 other countries will achieve the Education For All goal of 100 per cent enrolment in primary schools by 2015. In the year 2012 Annual Status of Education Report (Rural)-2012 states that still 3.5 per cent of the children between 6-14 years of age remain out of school in India. Unfortunately majority of those children appear to be child labour in near future.

The ILO has recently estimated that some 217.7 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 126.3 million are caught in the worst forms of child labour. Roughly 122.3 million children ages 5 to 14 are economically active in Asia and the Pacific, 49.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, 5.7 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13.4 million in other regions (Table 1 and Fig. 1).

Region	No. of child labour (million)
Asia and Pacific	122
Sub-Saharan Africa	49
Latin America	06
Others	13



Among working children ages 5 to 14 in the world, 69 per cent are employed in the agricultural sector, 9 per cent are employed in the industrial sector and the remaining 22 per cent are employed in the services sector (Fig. 2).



With 122.3 million economically active children ages 5 to 14, the Asia and the Pacific region has the highest number of working children worldwide. Many worst forms of child labour are a problem in the region, including child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, bonded child labour, child domestic work, hazardous child labour, and the recruitment and use of children for armed conflict or drug trafficking. A high tolerance for child labour in many countries and political volatility and conflict in certain others (e.g. Afghanistan, Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) exacerbate the problem and can hinder the implementation of action against it. In addition, a large number of children in areas affected by the tsunami in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India are vulnerable to entering child labour.

Present child labour scenario in India :

Present-day child labour scenario of India may also be reviewed from Tables 2, 3 and 4 where category-wise number and percentage of male, female and total number of child labour are given. Age specific distribution of the child labour in India is also available in the census report -2010 (Table 2).

All India main workers	Male	Female	Total
5-9 yrs	501890	308209	810099
10-14 yrs	3070300	1858116	4928416
15-19 yrs	15098122	5448644	20546766
Total India	18670312	7614969	26285281
% of child labour to total workforce	7.78%	10.47%	8.41%
Total workforce (all ages)	239923441	72708941	312632382

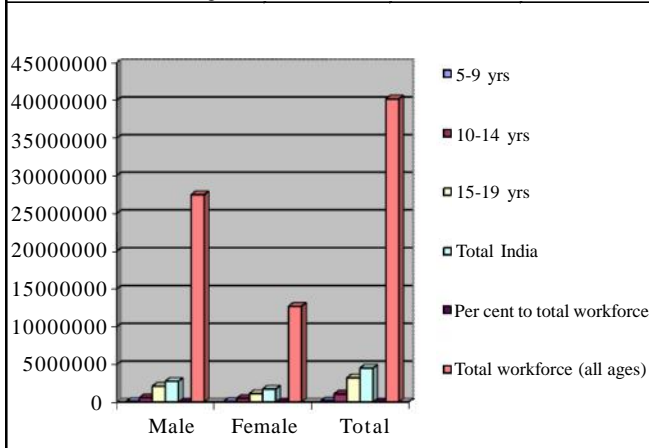
If you take the children up to 14, the total number of children in the workforce is 1,26,26,505 - almost the same as previous census of 2001. The real picture emerges when you start adding the child work force in the ages 15-19. One could argue that 19 year olds ought to be excluded from the calculation of child labours. However the Census does not, as

Table 3 : Population of children in marginal workers of India, census 2010

All India marginal workers	Male	Female	Total
5-9 yrs	495494	534927	1030421
10-14 yrs	2711397	3146172	5857569
15-19 yrs	5821090	5929351	11750441
Total India	9027981	9610450	18638431
% to total workforce	25.90%	17.67%	20.89%
Total workforce (all ages)	34859808	54374298	89234106

Table 4 : Both main and marginal workers (combined)

All India total workforce	Male	Female	Total
5-9 yrs	997384	843136	1840520
10-14 yrs	5781697	5004288	10785985
15-19 yrs	20919212	11377995	32297207
Total India	27698293	17225419	44923712
% to total workforce	10.08%	13.55%	11.18%
Total workforce (all ages)	274783249	127083239	401866488



yet provide that data. However, a detailed analysis of the same shows that vast bulk of 15-19 yr olds have not completed 10th. So, they have been in the workforce before they turned 18. For the sake of discussion we have to include this age group (15-19) in the workforce.

The shocking news is that 11 per cent of the workforce of India is child labour. One in every 10 workers in India is a child! If you allocate a tenth of India's GDP to this share you can see India's Child Labour has a stake in India's GDP. A detailed analysis of the various sectors presented in the census data for both main and marginal workers clearly shows that some sectors are more prone to child labour than others.

Probable causes of the child labour problem :

In spite of utmost efforts why we have failed to adequately deal with the problem of child labour? What are the

main causes behind the severe problems of illiteracy?

Keeping in view all other factors, it can be said that one of the main factors responsible for illiteracy is poverty. The children of the poor family are to work for maintaining their family from their childhood. Perhaps their parents consider it wastage of time and money to send their wards to school instead of sending them to work for earning whatever little amount it may be. Their attitudes towards education is negative. As a result those children remain out of school with or without enrolment.

Initiatives undertaken so far to tackle the problem :

The school system has expanded multifold at all levels during the last five- six decades. Yet it is difficult to conclude that the system has been able to meet the educational needs of all section of the society. Operation Blackboard, Literacy Movement formulation of new National Child Labour Policy, setting up of Task Force on child labour and some other programs taken so far have yielded some positive results which is not up to the mark. Although promoting education for all, the programme is not designed to provide 'equal' education for all. Much advertised programs such as the Education Guarantee Scheme, promote parallel systems of education in which less qualified, under paid, local para teachers are replacing trained professional teachers. Compulsory Education Bill- 2003 which follows the 86th amendment to the Constitution making right for all children in the 6-14 age group fundamental right. The Sarva Shiksha Abhijan (SSA) was designed as the government's flagship programme to achieve universalization of elementary education. But what does one do when the flagship itself is flawed? The national programs of nutritional support to primary education (popularly known as the Mid-Day Meal programme) was launched on 15th August, 1995. The UPA government introduced a cess of 3 per cent on all central taxes in order to finance the commitment to universal access to quality basic education. All those attempts resulted in improving the literacy rate but those did not yield the desired result so far as the UEE is concerned. *Ultimately we have the RTE- 2009, the effect of which is yet to be assessed.*

Steps may be taken further :

Child Labour is a 'harsh reality'. The 'harsh reality' of child labour arises out of the fact that many parents, on account of poverty, have to send their children to work in order to supplement their income which is essential to sustain the family.

If the parents of the *out of school children* are convinced in such a manner that they can consider expenditure, even on primary education, in terms of time and money, as one kind of *investment*, their attitude towards education may be changed to the positive direction. If the *out of school children* are given *primary education on the one hand and simple training for work (except the hazardous work) on the other hand there*

may be some change in the situation. The parents can expect higher wage for their wards or opportunity for self employment after completion of the course. The course will continue until the elementary level of education is completed. Reduced and simplified curriculum for them may be prepared which will be easier to the prevalent curriculum for elementary education. Or in other words, simple things are to be included in the instructional materials so that the children do not feel it to be burdensome. In that case parents may be interested even in primary education. And only when the poor parent's old thoughts and ideas about primary education be changed to positive direction they may send their wards for primary education instead of sending them for work. If the parents are not ready to forgo the scope of earning by their children separate arrangements may be made for those economically disadvantaged children beyond their normal work time. This may be termed as Need Based Non-Formal Education. It is the combination of primary education and simple training side by side. Training for that work actually in which they are engaged or they have got interested, will have to be organized. It is the Non-Formal Education organized on the basis of the NEEDS of the illiterate children who are presently at work instead of joining the formal school. Mainly, the training for agricultural based activities at the rural areas and industry and service based activities at the urban areas may be organized for the child labour. So they will be gathered not only for education but also for simple training at the same place. Local school buildings, local experts in relevant fields and all other resources available locally may be utilized. for this purposes.

Though Non-Formal Education (NFE) occupies a special place in the achievement of target of Education For All (EFA) as because the system offers the remedy for the weaknesses of the formal system of education. But the problem child labour coming from poor and marginal families may not be solved by the system as the parents do not afford the scope of present earnings by their wards. In this circumstances Non-Formal Education system with some modifications (Need Based Non-Formal Education) may contribute to make the child labour literate and thereby reach the goal of EFA.

Conclusion :

The huge number of children remains out of school mainly because their parents are not in a position to expect return from primary education. If it is possible to ensure that even primary education (Need Based Non-Formal Education) would pay them in future in terms of higher wage of or in terms

of SELF EMPLOYMENT then it may be possible to change the negative attitude of the poor parents and make their children literate. This will lead to formation of Human Capital in near future. So the whole attempt should be made to reach the goal of literacy for the economically disadvantaged children on the one hand and to create the scope of SELF EMPLOYMENT in future through simultaneous primary education and training for several years. Through this literacy attempt the newly literate child, now grown up and trained, can claim legitimate wage for his service in the same spot of work where they did not get wage at all before joining this NBNFE. For this purpose local school buildings, local experts in relevant fields and all other resources available locally may be utilized. for this purposes.

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