



Quality Education, Oslo Mandate and Unique Story of KISS

KEYWORDS

MDG, SDG, GER, KISS, GII

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ABSTRACT

The Oslo Summit (2015) has taken off from the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by inking the importance of quality education and lifelong learning underscoring the importance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). India's tryst with education had its pinnacle with the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009. It has ensured near universal access in primary education. Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in higher education also shows a significant upward trajectory; thanks to the private sector initiative during the last decade. This paper brings out India's score card in achieving the MDG goals and brings out the trends like increasing inclination for private schooling, challenges confronting learning outcomes, poor public investment in education & the need for higher allocation to R&D & innovation in higher education. It highlights the unique experiment in Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) Odisha in bringing synergy between inclusivity and quality through its impact in reduction of Gender Inequality Index (GII), improvement in life skilling, mitigation of hunger and better employability. The paper strongly argues for treating education as a 'merit good' with strong state handholding; abdication of the sweeping tendency to decry private sector initiative as crass commercialization and replicating the self sustaining funding model of KISS as the way forward to achieve the Oslo mandate.

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (2005) of UNESCO posited "Education For All" & "elimination of gender discrimination" as its grand vision by 2015. With universal access to education, more people would develop, learn & to be equal and just. More mothers would be healthier & more people would think of the future and would work together. The "Education For All" global report 2013-2014 mirrored the revolutionizing dynamism of changing lives through education of girl child and women, the overwhelming power of education to eradicate poverty, alleviate illiteracy, improving health and fuelling growth into the economy. Close on heels of conclusion of MDG, the World Education Forum was held in Incheon, South Korea to buttress the significance of education and arrived at a unanimous consensus for **Inclusive, Equitable, Quality Education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**. It also set the footprints for "Sustainable Development Goals" which is a more ambitious and comprehensive goal than mere education for all in Millennium Development Goals. On June 7th the Norwegian Government convened the Oslo Summit on education for development. This was timely after the Incheon World Summit on education. The main objective of **Oslo forum was how to work better together and partnering for increased financing to education**. The summit focused to reverse the negative trend of international funding to education and focused on how humanitarian, development architect and funding mechanisms work on getting the most unfortunate children into education, importance of quality teaching and learning.

This paper attempts to examine (a) **India's achievement with reference to the Millennium Development Goals** (b) **Challenges before India to achieve SDG** (c) **Unique experiment in KISS & its scope for replication**.

INDIA'S ACHIEVEMENT WITH REFERENCE TO THE MDG

Our Constitution mandates equality before law (Article 14) & equality of opportunity for education and employment for all (Articles 15 & 16). However, the Right to Education came through the 86th amendment (2002) as Article 21A. It

has become a watershed moment for Indians guaranteeing free and compulsory education for all children from age of 6 to 14. The founding fathers were observant of the historical injustice to backward communities like SC and ST in terms of economic deprivation, provided reservation in appointments and posts for SC and ST (Art 16(4)). Article 335 further reflects affirmative action towards the SC/ST by relaxing in qualifying marks in examinations. The Directive Principles of State Policy vide Article 46 also enjoins upon the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker section of the society. Thanks to the RTE Act 96% enrollment in elementary schools has been achieved across the country. According to ASER Report (2014). But as we go up the ladder, the attrition rate is high (30%) and the poor quality of education is a perennial lament.

Inter-State Disparity

While states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh have been the leading heights in terms of literacy, high % of educated in higher secondary and graduate levels with dropout rates almost nil, states like Odisha and Gujarat show a low level of educational attainment.

Table-1: Literacy Profile-All India & Selected States

State	% Illiterate	% Primary	Mid- dle	Sec- ondary	% Higher Sec- ondary	% Gradu- & Above
All India	35.7	18	13.5	9.57	5.1	3.5
Himachal Pradesh	22	17.5	15.2	17.7	11.4	5.2
Bihar	44	19.7	8.8	6.3	3.6	2.2
Odisha	35	19.6	15.7	9	3.6	2.8
Gujarat	31	28	9	10.6	4.8	2.7
Kerala	11.3	17	19.7	23	11.3	7.7
Tamil Nadu	26	18.8	16.9	14	7.1	6.6
Maha- rashtra	29.6	18.8	14	15	8.5	4.3

Source: SECC Report 2011

Further the recently released Socio Economic & Caste

Census (SECC) Report (2011) shows that nearly 36% are illiterate in our rural areas which account of nearly 70% of India's population.

What's, however, most disconcerting is the educational outcomes. The ASER findings in terms of educational outcomes are quite revealing as only **58% of children enrolled in classes 3 to 5 can read a class-1 text, 47% are able to do a simple two digit subtraction, 39.7% of these students can perform basic arithmetic functions.** These trends in learning outcomes are established and restated by also Program for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Some of the other findings in terms of infrastructure deficit are indicated in the table below.

Table-2: Trend of School Infrastructure & Facilities-Selected States (2014)

State	Play Ground	Library books Available	Drinking Water	Girls Toilet	Availability of Computers
Kerala	74.7	94.7	83.0	80.2	89.8
Gujarat	88.1	92.3	87.0	81.4	81.3
Odisha	32.0	88.0	81.6	53.0	14.1
Punjab	70.6	88.7	81.0	71.6	8.7
All India	65.0	78.1	75.6	55.7	19.6

ASER Report 2014

It quite clearly shows that in terms of availability of computers barring two states, the all India average shows a very disturbing trend. Besides, the position on usable girl's toilet is an area of serious concern.

Trends in Private Schooling

Private organizations have always been seen with suspicion when it comes to contributing to the social sector. It is always assumed that private sector is profit driven; market oriented and caters to the elite and the middle class. Research survey conducted by Tooley and Dixon, however, bring out how private schools play an important role in reaching out to the poor and satisfying their educational needs. Their research carried out in Hyderabad's old city slums shows that are **37% unrecognized private schools, in low income areas** show high student teacher ratio, higher teacher commitment and sometimes better facilities than government schools. What is most redeeming is the student achievement compared to the government schools. **The mean scores in mathematics were about 22% points and 23% higher in private unrecognized schools.** Besides the teacher salary is less than in government schools. It confirms the premise that quality of learning is more important than equitable access through legislative process.

Alternate Approaches to Quality Education

Given the fact that a quality in education is not keeping pace with universal access there is a serious need to put learning outcomes as the corner stone of education policy. Prof. Amartya Sen, who studied at Trinity College, Cambridge, does not believe that a focus on building infrastructure, providing power and easing regulations, will solve India's problems. He believes the "development of human capability" is fundamental to economic growth, that good quality healthcare should be available to all Indian citizens and there should be a focus by the government on achieving 100% literacy among the population. Prof. Sen, who currently teaches philosophy, mathematics

and economics at Harvard University, said he was more impressed with the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh. "Once among the poor Indian states, these three states which have focused on education and healthcare, are now among the top five Indian states in terms of per capita income, in addition to being among the top states in life expectancy, low mortality, low fertility and so on that's the line in which I think Indian policy has to be reshaped and I hope that's what the present government will do".

The concept of a **merit good** introduced in **economics** by **Richard Musgrave** (1957, 1959) is very pertinent in the context of public commitment to education. According to Musgrave education as a merit good, has huge positive externality. Its benefit to the society is more than its benefit to the individual. On the other hand, with the present thrust in market economics, Prof. Arvind Panagariya the Vice Chairman of Niti ayog is of the view providing education vouchers per child of Rs.2000/- to 252 million children below poverty line will cost the government only .4%. It would be pro poor and the poor families will have the choice to avail quality education from private schools.

According to Prof. Eric Hanushek the learning levels of a country are directly linked to the economic development and research that there is a causal relationship between educational outcomes and GDP growth. Increasing access does not accrue learning, as there are higher drop-out rates in primary, upper primary and secondary because the educational system is not meeting the learning needs. Through right to education and SSA the focus has shifted to access and quality and learning has been given a short shrift. Quality learning can be strengthened by directing the leaning objectives and goals towards a learning outcome which besides honing literacy, writing and numeracy should also concentrate on physical wellbeing, culture arts, social and emotional skill, cognitive development, science and technology.

Initiatives Needed

Investment in education

It is known that the total spending on primary education as % to GDP was 1.7% in 1993, went up to 2.1 in 2002, and has remained dormant till the present budget. The overall allocation to education is 3% which is a pittance compared to the developed countries who spend around 5-6% of their GDP on education. The Kothari commission way back in 1996 had also proposed similar level of allocation. The Incheon declaration (2015) has called upon the developing countries to earmark at least 15 to 20% of their central government expenditure. India's allocation is invariably less than 10% of the central government expenditure.

Cover education from 6 to 18 years

According to the United Nations Convention, of which India is a party, the definition of a child is a person upto the age of 18. And UNESCO further stated that such education should be free and compulsory without discrimination. Prof. Muchkund Dubey argues that school education should not be seen in fragments with one kind of treatment at the elementary level and a different kind at secondary level. It would be legally unjustified and ethically inadmissible to deprive children in the age group of 15-18 as their fundamental right to education. School education for a child should be seen as a seamless process starting from pre elementary level extending to the end of secondary level as against article 21A which provides this fundamental right from the age of 6 to 14.

Investment in R&D and Innovation

One of the key factors contributing to the North-South divide is the high allocation to R&D and innovation in US, Europe and Japan. It was Schumpeter who underscore the importance of innovation and creative destruction. The following table will bring out how India's R&D allocation is abysmally low compared to the developed countries and manufacturing hubs of the world.

Table-3: Global R&D Spending 2013

Country	As % of GDP
Israel	4.21
South Korea	4.15
Japan	3.49
Germany	2.94
US	2.81
France	2.23
China	2.02
India	0.9

Source: OECD Report 2013

Our poor tally of patents and highly cited articles reflects our inadequate attention to research in both public and private sector.

UNIQUE EXPERIMENT TO ACHIEVE INCLUSIVE GROWTH & EXCELLENCE

22% of Odishas populations live in the remotest parts of Odisha facing acute deprivation, suffering, poverty and multi dimensional social exclusions. Odisha scores very low in the HDI parameters compared to states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh. In this backdrop KISS Odisha was founded in the year 1993 with 125 students with a view to empowering the alienated tribal youths with education and opportunity for employment and empowerment in the society. Today KISS is the only organization providing free education to 22500 students from kindergarten to post graduation with almost 50:50 participation of boys and girls. Some of the defining features of this unique organization are as under.

Quality Education with a Special Focus on Girl Child Education



KISS has been able to address many of the social and health issues like child marriage, infant mortality and maternal mortality etc. Girls in the indigenous communities are generally married off at an early age. They have little or no knowledge about their bodies and healthy sexual and reproductive practices, leading to high maternal mortality and infant mortality in these communities. Since the

girls pursue education at KISS they free from the societal pressure of marrying at an early age. Secondly the girls are provided counseling and education on their sexual reproductive health and rights at KISS which enables the girls to have a better understanding of their own bodies and healthy sexual and reproductive practices.

Life Skills Education



KISS has been implementing 'Life Skills Education' institution with the support of United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA). The objective behind it is to build the capacity of the tribal adolescents so that they could deal with different issues in their lives effectively. KISS has also been implementing this programme in all the 30 districts of the state reaching out directly to 80,000 children in the age group of 10-14 years. Indirectly KISS has been reaching out to a population of 4 lakhs all over the state.

Hunger & Health Alleviation

The greatest achievement has been the ability to provide three nutritious meals each day to all 20,000 students. Indigenous communities also have lower levels of awareness on health issues which is a major reason why children are subjected to many serious diseases and illnesses such as Kwashiorkor, Marasmus, Tuberculosis, hookworm and ringworm infestation to name a few. Malnutrition and under nutrition is highly prevalent among the children in these communities. Conditions like Kwashiorkor and Marasmus arise due to vitamin and protein deficiencies in the body. KISS ensures that the diet provided is enriched with vitamins, proteins, minerals and carbohydrates.

Unemployment Mitigation

KISS has, to a certain extent, been able to address the issue of unemployment. The students at KISS have been able to find a source of livelihood after completion of their education. Many students have been placed in the public and private sector jobs and those students who have acquired degrees in medicine, engineering etc are now at par with the general population. The students are also provided with vocational trainings in different trades; the most popular being food preservation, fish cultivation, mushroom cultivation and agricultural practices. KISS in collaboration with the British Council has taken up a unique Self Employment Programme with focus on young girls, imparting them prerequisite skill-sets to establish social enterprises (food preservation) in their villages.

Unique Model of Funding

Prof. Debroy, Member NITI Aayog after visiting KISS recently has brought out how the self funding mechanism in KISS through cross subsidization from employees of KIIT sustains a unique experiment; instead of depending

on government subsidy. In an article in Financial Express, dated 27th August, he has brought out how 5% of KIIT's turnover is mandatorily donated to KISS, like CSR. "Profits" from KIIT are ploughed into KISS. Every employee of KIIT contributes 3% of gross salary towards KISS. Any vendor or contractor who supplies to KIIT has to mandatorily contribute 2-3% of profits to KISS. Vocational products produced in KISS, as outcome of vocational training, fetch some money. (Students retain 50% of profits from sale of such products). Finally, there is the channel of pure charitable donations. These multiple methods are enough to sustain KISS and it works far better than public subsidies, through financing, or even direct public provisioning (think of government schools, colleges and universities). **Prof. Debroy strongly suggests that such innovation method should be replicated through out India.**

Quality of Academics

It would be interesting to observe that the students from KISS invariably perform better than their counterparts in the state board schools as the following table would show.

Table-4: Academic Achievement-KISS Vs. State School

	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	State School
HSE	90%	100%	90%	90%	60-70%
CGSE	84%	100%	97%	95%	60-70%

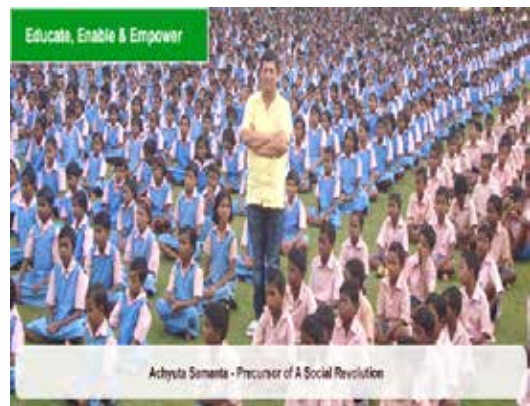
Further the overall educational performance of students in three streams Arts, Commerce and Science (10+2) over the last three years show a remarkable story of constituent achievement, excellence and hope from the following table.

Table-5: Educational Performance of KISS Students

	11-12	%	12-13	%	13-14	%
+2 Arts						
(a) No Passed & %	111	59.0	272	59.7	284	64.8
(b) 2 nd Division (No)	18	9.5	54	11.8	60	13.6
(C)1 st Division (No)	59	31.3	129	28.3	94	21.4
	188	99.8	455	99.8	438	99.8
+2 Commerce						
(a) No Passed & %	93	56.7	112	62.8	115	63.1
(b) 2 nd Division (No)	36	21.9	17	9.8	33	18.1
(C)1 st Division (No)	35	21.2	49	27.2	34	18.6
	164	99.8	178	99.8	182	99.8
+2 Science						
(a) No Passed & %	148	60.9	199	60.0	206	61.8
(b) 2 nd Division (No)	17	6.9	38	11.4	16	5.0
(C)1 st Division (No)	78	32.0	94	28.4	111	33.0
	243	99.8	331	99.8	333	99.8

It would be seen that around 60% students clear their examination with passed marks while **around 1/3rd of the students achieve 1st Division in all the streams which is very commendable.**

THE ROAD TO OSLO MANDATE



India ranks 135 out of 187 countries in terms of human development index with a score of 0.582. Mean years of schooling is 4.4 as against 11 to 12 years for most of the developed countries. The private sector has been the pioneer in providing technical and management education in the universities. Yet there is a sweeping criticism regarding venality of the private sector. As Prof. Tooley brings out in his study, the unaided private schools in the slums of Hyderabad are the unsung piped pipers of India's future. The studies by Pratham also clearly show how enrolment in private schools have zoomed in the last decade from around 15% to 29%. Quite clearly even the marginalized sections want their kids to partake a slice of the global pie. In this competitive **knowledge world, a reasonable English education, wearing smart uniform that skirts class differentiation and having the benefit of committed teachers will provide these children a window to harvest the demographic dividend.** While we talk of Make-In-India and reducing Digital Divide, the budget allocation for education is stuck in a time warp. A new education policy is inordinately long in waiting since 1986. In this depressing scenario, the unaided private sector initiative by Dr. Samanta for empowerment of disadvantaged tribal children is like a gust of fresh air. **It was Robert Frost who wrote**

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference"

The novel experiment in KISS is that less travelled path by a unique visionary and a true template of the Oslo mandate deserving replication.

The author is the Chairperson of KIIT International School and closely associated with student from KISS for their quality uplift.

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