

## Understanding the Quality Education: A Policy Perspective



### Education

**KEYWORDS :** Quality, Learners, Education, Assessment, Challenges

**Sandeep Paul**

Assistant Professor in Education, Guru Dronacharya College of Education, Bhuna (Fatehabad)

### ABSTRACT

*Policy changes may affect the speed of replacement—both slowing and speeding up the rate of turnover. Explicit changes to allow more institutional decision making also have an obvious impact on turnover. Moreover, the ability to improve the quality will depend on the people who can be understanding quality concern. Policymakers should focus on improving the overall quality of the education. But the research evidence suggests that many of the policies that have been pursued worldwide have not been very productive. Quality in education is directly linked to individual earning power and productivity are quite pervasive. The strength of improved quality can be readily seen by calculating the economic impact that can be expected from quality improvements.*

### I. Introduction

In all aspects of the school and its surrounding education community, the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation are at the centre. This means that the focus is on learning which strengthens the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skills and appropriate attitudes; and which creates for children, and helps them create for themselves and others, places of safety, security and healthy interaction. (Bernard, 1999)

What does quality mean in the context of education? Many definitions of quality in education exist, testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. The terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity and quality have often been used synonymously (Adams, 1993). Considerable consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today, however. Quality education includes:

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;
- Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition,
- Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;
- Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.
- The goal of achieving universal primary education (UPE) has been on the international agenda since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed, in 1948, that elementary education was to be made freely and compulsorily available for all children in all nations. This objective was restated subsequently on many occasions, by international treaties and in United Nations conference declarations. Most of these declarations and commitments are silent about the quality of education to be provided.

In 1990, the World Declaration on Education for All noted that the generally poor quality of education needed to be improved and recommended that education be made both universally available and more relevant. The Declaration also identified quality as a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity. While the notion of quality was not fully developed, it was recognized that expanding access alone would be insufficient for education to contribute fully to the development of the individual and society. Emphasis was accordingly placed on assuring an increase in children's cognitive development by improving the quality of their education. A decade later, the Dakar Framework for Action declared that access to quality education

was the right of every child. It affirmed that quality was 'at the heart of education' – a fundamental determinant of enrolment, retention and achievement. Its expanded definition of quality set out the desirable characteristics of learners (healthy, motivated students), processes (competent teachers using active pedagogies), content (relevant curricula) and systems (good governance and equitable resource allocation). Although this established an agenda for achieving good education quality, it did not ascribe any relative weighting to the various dimensions identified.

More than two decades later came Learning: The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by another French statesman, Jacques Delors. This commission saw education throughout life as based upon four pillars:

Learning to know acknowledges that learners build their own knowledge daily, combining indigenous and 'external' elements.

Learning to do focuses on the practical application of what is learned.

Learning to live together addresses the critical skills for a life free from discrimination, where all have equal opportunity to develop themselves, their families and their communities.

Learning to be emphasizes the skills needed for individuals to develop their full potential.

### II. A framework for understanding, monitoring and improving education quality

Given the diversity of understanding and interpretation of quality evident in the different traditions discussed above, defining quality and developing approaches to monitoring and improving it requires dialogue designed to achieve:

broad agreement about the aims and objectives of education; a framework for the analysis of quality that enables its various dimensions to be specified; an approach to measurement that enables the important variables to be identified and assessed; a framework for improvement that comprehensively covers the interrelated components of the education system and allows opportunities for change and reform to be identified. As earlier sections of this chapter have indicated, cognitive development and the accumulation of particular values, attitudes and skills are important objectives of education systems in most societies. Their content may differ but their broad structure is similar throughout the world. This may suggest that in one sense the key to improving the quality of education – to helping education systems better achieve these objectives – could be equally universal. Considerable research has been directed towards this question in recent years.

**Gandhi and Nyerere** both incorporated the teaching of simple vocational skills in formal curricula. Nyerere (1968) set out a

vision of 'Education for Self Reliance' for the United Republic of Tanzania. His vision rested on several key educational aims: preserving and transmitting traditional values, promoting national and local selfreliance, fostering cooperation and promoting equality. In southern Africa, the notion of *ubuntu*, with its connotations of community, informs an alternative vision of education as embracing the social nature of being, rather than individual advancement

#### The following principles are implied: Relevance Curriculum Design

Assuring relevance implies local design of curriculum content, pedagogies and assessment. All learners have rich sources of prior knowledge, accumulated through a variety of experiences, which educators should draw out and nourish. Learners should play a role in defining their own curriculum. Learning should move beyond the boundaries of the classroom/school through non-formal and lifelong learning activities. Standardized, prescribed, externally defined or controlled curricula are rejected. They are seen as undermining the possibilities for learners to construct their own meanings and for educational programmes to remain responsive to individual learners' circumstances and needs.

#### Assessment

The role of assessment is to give learners information and feedback about the quality of their individual learning. It is integral to the learning process. Self-assessment and peer assessment are welcomed as ways of developing deeper awareness of learning. The teacher's role is more that of facilitator than instructor. Social constructivism, while accepting these tenets, emphasizes learning as a process of social practice rather than the result of individual intervention.

#### Learner characteristics

How people learn – and how quickly – is strongly influenced by their capacities and experience. Assessments of the quality of education outputs that ignore initial differences among learners are likely to be misleading. Important determining characteristics can include socio-economic background, health, place of residence, cultural and religious background and the amount and nature of prior learning. It is therefore important that potential inequalities among students, deriving from gender, disability, race and ethnicity are recognized. These differences in learner characteristics often require special responses if quality is to be improved.

#### Society Interaction

Links between education and society are strong, and each influences the other. Education can help change society by improving and strengthening skills, values, communications, mobility (link with personal opportunity and prosperity), personal prosperity and freedom. In the short term, however, education usually reflects society rather strongly: the values and attitudes that inform it are those of society at large. Equally important is whether education takes place in the context of an affluent society or one where poverty is widespread. In the latter case, opportunities to increase resources for education are likely to be constrained

#### Quality Learning Environments

Learning can occur anywhere, but the positive learning out-

comes generally sought by educational systems happen in quality learning environments. Learning environments are made up of physical, psychosocial and service delivery elements, Physical elements.

#### Do larger class sizes hurt the quality of education? Educators and researchers from diverse

philosophical perspectives have debated the relationship between class size and student learning at length. Although many studies have found a relationship (e.g., Willms, 2000), class size has not consistently been linked to student achievement (Rutter, 1979, cited in Pennycook, 1993). This may be due to the fact that many schools and classrooms have not yet adopted the more demanding but higher quality student-centred learning practices discussed in this paper in section four (IV.) of this paper. Moreover, quantitative relationships between class sizes and academic achievement rarely take other key quality factors into account, such as teachers' perceptions of working conditions and their sense of efficacy.

#### Challenges in reaching large numbers of children with quality content.

Educators who seek to maintain and expand programmes that successfully address important curricular content such as life skills and peace education may face challenges. Some evidence suggests that expansion beyond pilot programmes often falters even when pilot programmes are successful and educational agencies provide adequate resources for the development and implementation of curriculum that responds to emerging issues. Several reasons for this exist (Obanya, 1995), including:

- Teachers often find curricular integration and interdisciplinarity difficult, especially when the teacher does not have a role in curriculum design;
- Subjects that do not appear on important examinations are not always taken seriously;
- Social attitudes towards the subject may not be favorable, and cultural patterns are difficult to change;
- Ideas conceived in other regions of the world may not be adequately adapted to the local context;
- Political and economic instability can lead to discontinuity in policies and programmes, as well as teacher and administrator turnover. These obstacles pose serious but not insurmountable challenges to educational programming. The value of quality content, however, makes finding solutions to such challenges critical.

In Summary, Quality of education is seen as encompassing access, teaching and learning processes and outcomes in ways that are influenced both by context and by the range and quality of inputs available. It should be remembered that agreement about the objectives and aims of education will frame any discussion of quality and that such agreement embodies moral, political and epistemological issues the determinants of education quality are analysed according to the extent to which variables from different dimensions result in improved human development and change.

## REFERENCE

- Benoliel, S., O'Gara, C., and Miske, S. (1999). Promoting primary education for girls in | Pakistan. Arlington, Virginia: USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse. | Available at [http://www.dec.org/usaaid\\_eval](http://www.dec.org/usaaid_eval). | Bergmann, H. (1996). Quality of education and the demand for education: Evidence | from developing countries. *International Review of Education*, 42(6): 581-604. Muskin, J.A. (1999). Including local priorities to assess school quality: The case of Save | the Children Community schools in Mali. *Comparative Education Review*, 43(1), 36-63. | Pennycook, D. (1993). School effectiveness in developing countries: A summary of the | research evidence. Serial no. 1. London: Department for International Development | Education Division. | Perera, W. (1997). Changing schools from within: A management intervention for | improving school functioning in Sri Lanka. Paris: International Institute for Educational | Planning. | Pigozzi, M. J. (2000). Issues paper: Strategy session I.2 on girls education. World | Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal. April, 2000 UNICEF. (1998). Early childhood care for survival, growth, and development | (programming for young children 0-8). Draft summary paper. New York, NY: Author. |