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Education and Learning Deficiency

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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on a perpetual problem of learning deficiency among the learners. It examines the causes and the consequence of this deficiency. It highlights the failure of the system as the cause and the carry over effects as the consequences. The Education Commission (1964-66) had long back shown its serious concern about the declining reading and learning abilities but the continuous decline in the learning outcomes shows as if the Commission's concern has not been taken into account seriously. The poverty of reading and learning would certainly affect adversely the image and the social fabrics of the nation. If the poverty continues and every learner is unable to become knowledge-rich, the nation would ultimately suffer. The nation cannot become stronger and prosperous if the young citizens remain knowledge-deficient. It is in this context, this paper has been developed with only secondary literature and personal observation.

Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP, 2019) has given greater importance to foundational literacy and numeracy because of its carry over effects on every stage of learning. The present trend of learning at the very foundation of learning gives us a pessimistic impression, whether we will be able to achieve qualitative improvements below and beyond the grade five stage of learning. The rich foundational learning is indispensable for future learning because it lays the basic foundation for building a stronger future of learning. The studies

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have shown that the crisis in the basic skills of learning continues, resulting into declining learning outcomes. We find a constant increase into the enrolment of learners desirous for learning but unfortunately there is a constant decrease in their learning outcomes. All over the Indian states, the deficiency in the learning outcomes has increased, leading to about 15% decline in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. The *Education Commission* (1964-66) had long back shown its serious concern for declining interest in reading and learning. The World Bank report (*Ending Learning Poverty*, 2018) has also drawn our attention towards the problem of learning crisis. The report says that all over the world, about 48% learners suffer from learning deficiency. They are unable to read properly even the texts of knowledge prescribed below their stage of learning. As a result, the learners are bound to suffer during the rest of their life because of the after effect of this deficiency. In India more than 50% learners suffer from learning poverty. This shows that the structure of higher learning built on the weak foundation of learning is going to suffer. In spite of the phenomenal rise in enrolment and literacy level, more than half of the learners suffer from deficient literacy and numeracy. This has the carry over effect on the learners at the higher stages of learning. The learners at the higher learning stages may be found to be unable to comprehend well the basic theoretical, methodological and conceptual structures of knowledge of their disciplines. The lack basic understanding among them exists because of declining leaning habits, quality of learning and the learning outcomes among them. The World Bank observes that about 60% development is made up of skilled and efficient human capital but in the less developed world, it is the human capital which is poorly equipped. It is not the quantity but the quality of the work force that matters more for development. As rightly pointed out by the NEP, 2019 that 'the problem of reading and learning deficiency unfortunately is a 'black hole' in which many capable learners find themselves. This black hole is becoming vicious to affect the future prospects of learners. The time has come to take up this problem seriously as a national mission, so that, the basic quality learning can be accomplished among all the learners' (NEP, 2019). The declining standard of reading and learning is giving rise to learning crisis, growth of deficient human capital, problem of employability among the learners, school dropout, educational malpractices, lack of faith in the institutions of learning and mushrooming of private schools and private tuition classes. In fact the learning crisis is a reflection on the institutional failure in tackling the crisis. The enrolment in the institutions of learning is rising with the hope to receive quality education and rich learning outcomes but the institutions of learning seem to be least prepared to take up the problem of learning crisis seriously. In this backdrop, this paper has been written with the focus on learning deficiency, its causes, consequences and remedies.

Rise in Enrolment for Learning

The NEP, 2019 gives greater emphasis on the quality of education, higher enrolment, literacy level and on corresponding rise in the quality of learning and learning outcomes but the evidences show the contrary results with respect to the quality of learning and its outcomes. The rise in enrolment and the literacy level is phenomenal at all the levels of education all over the country which shows the growing interest of knowledge seekers. The *Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022)* shows that the enrolment at the foundational level of learning is phenomenal in almost every state but this is not the case with the quality literacy (skills of reading, writing, speaking, learning and comprehension) and with the quality numeracy (calculative skills) among the learners. The report shows that the enrolment of learners in the age-group 6-14 years crosses 98%. The overall enrolment in this age group increased from 97.2% in 2018 to 98.4% in 2022. The enrolment in the government schools shows an upward trend with an increase from 65.6% in 2018 to 72.9% in 2022, although this increase is not uniform in all the states. For example, it increased from 48.0% in 2018 to 64.5% in 2022 in Kerala (16.5% point increase), from 44.3% in 2018 to 59.6% in U.P. (15.3% point increase), from 57.4% in 2018 to 70.1% in 2022 in Telangana (12.7% point increase), from 46.7% in 2018 to 58.8% in 2022 in Punjab (12.1% point increase) and from 42.6% in 2018 to 51.9% in 2022 in Haryana (9.3% point increase). These are the major states where the enrolment has increased significantly. The West Bengal maintains the highest enrolment of 81.5-92.2% during the years 2018-2022. There are states which have also shown increase in the enrolment but very slow increase in enrolment, as well as, in the learning skills. Although, the enrolment in such states remains high. For example, the enrolment increased from 85.2% in 2018 to 86.1% in 2022 in Tripura, from 69.6% in 2018 to 70.0% in 2022 in Madhya Pradesh and from 71.7% in 2018 to 71.9% in 2022 in Assam but there are states like J& K and Mizoram where the enrolment has declined by about 2.8% to 7.7%. The decline in enrolment has also been observed in the private schools after decades of consistent increase. In rural areas, the enrolment declined from 30.9% in 2018 to 25.1% in 2022 but there is increase in the private school enrolment in the states of J & K, M.P., Assam, Mizoram and Manipur where 66.1% students are enrolled in private schools but in U.P. the enrolment drops from 49.7% to 36.4% in the private schools. However, the deplorable condition of schooling in the public funded schools has given rise, not only in learning crisis but also in private schooling and paid tuition classes. The tuition classes are like parallel private schooling. Such classes are growing in 22 states since 2018. There are five states where more than half of the students take paid tuition classes. In West Bengal, 73.9% students take private tuition classes. However, as reported by the ASER, 2022, the enrolment of students all over the country has increased

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by 7.3 percent points from 65.6% in 2018 to 72.9% in 2022. The overall enrolment in the specific age-group 6-14 has also increased. The government schools have shown relatively more upward trend in school enrolment and same is true in terms of enrolment in higher stages of learning.

Decline in Learning Outcomes

The positive relationship is expected between the rise in the enrolment of learners and the rise in the quality of learning among them but the enrolment is up and the learning is down. It needs to be explored as to why the relationship is negative as learning has consistently declined along with consistent rise in the enrolment, as if the interest among the parents has increased for enrolling their kids in the school for quality learning but they might feel disappointed to find that the learning outcomes among their kids has consistently declined due to the kind of learning imparted by the institutions of learning where their kids are enrolled. In getting their kids enrolled for learning is a positive sign of attitudinal change among the parents but the declining learning outcomes is a negative sign of institutional failure. Since, the learning suffers, the private paid coaching becomes phenomenal. The learning outcomes consist of four basic skills: reading, writing, speaking and arithmetic skills. The evidences support that the present day systems of schooling (both government and private) is unable to promote these skills well among the learners. As a result, they suffer from literacy, as well as, numeracy skills. The ASER report, 2022 states that at the different levels of learning, the proficiency in learning of these skills has declined in most of the states. The maximum decline in the skills or abilities other than numeracy has been reported in Himachal Pradesh(-24.4% decline), Maharashtra (-18.1% decline), Haryana (-12.3% decline), Tamil Nadu (-20.3% decline) and Gujarat (-20.4% decline) Similarly, there is maximum decline in the numerical skills in the states of Mizoram (-22.1% decline), Punjab (-16.8% decline), Tamil Nadu (-14.3% decline), Himachal (-13.4% decline) and Kerala (-11.6% decline). In short, there is declining trend in various learning skills among the learners along with the rise in their enrolment in the institution of learning. The World Bank in its report on *Poverty of Learning*, 2018 says that in most country, particularly in the developing countries including India, the culture of learning suffers a lot. Such countries remain underdeveloped because the infrastructural facilities for effective learning and the learning outcomes remain deficient. Even the management of existing facilities is ineffective. Such countries will greatly suffer till there is no drastic improvements in those facilities, in their effective utilization and in the learning culture. The rise in enrolment and the level of literacy are coupled with the decline in the quality of learning and its outcomes. All over the world, about 48% school learners are unable to read

and comprehend well the text of knowledge below their standard. Their foundational literacy and numeracy competencies show declining trend. It is more than 10 percent points. For example, in Kerala, the decline is from 52.1% in 2018 to 38.7% in 2022, in Himachal Pradesh from 47.7% to 31.5% and in Haryana from 46.4% to 28.4%. The drop in their competencies is very high in Andhra Pradesh (from 22.6% to 10.3%) and Telangana (from 18.1% to 5.2%) as per the findings of the ASER report, 2022. In general, more than 50% learners in India suffer from learning deficiency at their foundational learning which would certainly have the carry over effects on their future prospect and on their higher stages of learning.

The proportion of learners who are learning-poor varies by income levels. It is relatively higher in the less developed states in India and in low and the middle income societies of the globe (*The Times of India*, 15 Nov.2019, P. 1). India is one of the low and middle income countries where the foundation of learning is shaky. A solid learning foundation needs to be created in the classroom in order to improve the future prospects of the learners. If the learners continue to suffer from the learning deficiency, it would adversely affect the process of accumulation of knowledge and information which would ultimately reduce the knowledge level, weaken the knowledge base structure of the society and the process of knowledge-based development. The poor literacy, numeracy and the learning outcomes would also adversely affect the employability and the work performance of the learners. The knowledge deficiency and the attitude to work may be strong reasons of the employment crisis among the youth. As a result, the work participation rate among both the educated men and the women job-seekers is lower than the illiterate and barely literate job-seekers (*The Times of India*, Jan. 21, 2020, P.1). The employability and the attitudinal problems of the youth have greatly affected their future prospects and the speed of development. The report of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2020) says that at the state level in India, the proportion of learners who have failed in the assessment of their learning outcomes in their own mother tongue is very high. It is as high as 76% in U.P., 63% in Rajasthan, 53% in Karnataka, 39% in Odisha, 30% in Uttarakhand, 23% in Chhattisgarh and 4% in Maharashtra (USAID Report, 2020). The report has pointed out that there is serious learning crisis in Indian states because of the deficiency in foundational literacy (basic reading, writing, speaking and comprehension) skills and numeracy (basic mathematical operation, fractions and algebra) skills. The problem of foundational learning is supported by the World Bank and the ASER reports. The surprising fact is that in spite of the universalization of education, the learning outcomes remains dismal and around 18 million learners continue to suffer from learning poverty because the very foundation of learning is poor across the Indian states, as if,

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more kids are going to the schools, not for learning but for fun (*The Times of India*, Jan. 16, 2019, P.1 and Feb. 23, 2020, P.15). Surprisingly, the learning deficiency gets worse in the higher classes of learning. The Education Commission Report, (1964-66) had long back shown its serious concern for declining reading habits and motivation in reading, writing, learning and acquisition of knowledge and information but this concern has not been taken into account seriously, resulting into the persistence of the problem of learning deficiency. The NEP, 2019 has very clearly stated that 'a solid foundation needs to be created for learning, reading, writing, speaking, counting, arithmetic, mathematical and logical problem-solving and creative abilities' in order to make the learners learning-rich, sociable and employable. They are the nation's future. By imparting shoddy education to them we cannot make the nation stronger and vibrant.

Carry Over Effect of Learning Deficiency

Firstly, the learning deficiency may have the effect on the dropout rate among the enrolled learners and among those who want to get enrolled to learn. As we have seen that during the years 2018-2022, the decline in literacy (reading ability) ranged from -12.2% to -24.4% up to 8th standard in the states of Tamil Nadu, Andhra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh. Similarly, the decline in numeracy (arithmetic ability of subtraction and division) ranged from -8.6% to -22.1% up to 8th standard in the states of Manipur, Punjab, Mizoram and Himachal Pradesh (ASER findings reported in *The Times of India*, Jan. 20, 2023, P.1). This shows a very high range of decline in literacy and numeracy abilities among the learners. The proficiency in these abilities has declined in most states. The basic reading ability of the learners has declined to the pre-2012 levels and the basic maths skills have gone back to 2018 levels (ASER, 2022). This decline has several carry over effects. One of them is the increase in the dropout rate among the enrolled learners and the increase in discouragement among who want to get enrolled to invest their time and energy in learning. The decline in the learning outcomes gives the impression to the learners and to their parents that the schooling is ineffective in producing quality skills among their kids. The all India dropout rate is 12.6% at the secondary stage of schooling but the dropout rate is over 15% in the states of Punjab (17.2%) Gujarat (17.9%) and Andhra Pradesh (16.3%) where both the literacy and numeracy have declined in 2022 as compared to the year 2018. At the primary level, there is high dropout in Manipur (13.3%) where the math skill has declined from 62% in 2018 to 53.7% in 2022 with the decline of -8.6%. Similarly, there is the highest dropout of 10.6% at the upper primary level and 21.7% at the secondary level in Meghalaya. The states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh have

more than 15% points deficit in the learning outcomes, and it is in these states the dropout rate is higher than 15% points. What we are focusing here is that there is the link between the learning deficiency and the dropout rate, although the dropout rate may be affected by other factors also.

Secondly, the learning deficiency may have the effect on numerous malpractices in the area of education. When the learning habit and the investment of personal resources (time, energy, efforts and motivation) in education decline, other ways are discovered to get the certification of knowledge at the earliest. Such a situation gives rise to malpractices, such as, encouraging the learners to take privately paid exploitative tuition and coaching classes to cover up learning deficiency. The learning crisis tends to be a created crisis by those engaged in the process of teaching and learning, resulting into a phenomenal rise in private coaching informal institutions, functioning in close collaboration with the formal processes of learning. The formal and informal processes of learning overlap also in the sense that the same teachers may function at both the places with the same courses and the teaching methodology. In one context, the teaching-learning process is formalised and the payment to the teacher is made by the institution in the form of salary. In the other context, the teaching-learning process is informalised and the payment is made to the teacher privately by the family which hires the teacher for providing tuition classes or private coaching to their kids. In the informal system of private tuition classes, the teacher is the double gainer financially from the institution where he/she is teaching and from the family where private coaching is rendered but the family is double loser for making double payment in the form of fees to the institution of enrolment of their kids for learning and to the teacher hired for private tuition classes for their kids. Yet, their kids turn to be learning deficient. Thus, the parents are loser and exploited most due to learning deficiency. It seems there is vested interest in learning deficiency. It tends to be created and misused. The learning deficiency and the institutional failure serve certain vested interests. This puts a greater financial burden, particularly on the poor parents and learners to compensate their learning losses to compete with others in the competitive job market.

Thirdly, the deficiency in learning may also give rise to other malpractices like the misuse of technology, cheating and copying in the examination, selective reading, use of cheap note books for mugging-up selectively for somehow clearing the examination, impersonation and subversion in the examination, reproduction of knowledge with the help of computer and the growing demand for promotion rather than selection through oral and written examinations. Such carry over effects originate when the reading and learning

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habits decline and the learner is no longer interested in making investment of his/her time, energy and efforts in learning. The copying and cheating in examination are common devices used by many learning deficient learners to clear the examinations with necessary ends in mind. Recently, it has been reported that impersonation, cheating and subversion have taken place in examination meant for the recruitment of officials. The persons other than the candidate himself/herself was deputed to clear the examination by illegal means. Someone cleared the examination because someone impersonated him at the examination centre. 'The impersonation took place in the examination when the original candidate entered the examination centre and left his seat after ten minutes, and later on, a fake candidate with similar features and looks like the original candidate appeared on the seat and took the online examination' (*Times of India*, July 20, 2023, P.5). It was also reported that the original candidate had paid Rs 9 lakh to the fake candidate to appear in his place to clear the examination in order to get recruited for the post desired. This shows that the examination qualification is facilitated through impersonation and payment and not through efforts to read, learn and prepare for the examination. This makes the difference between the learning-rich and the learning-poor candidates. The fake candidate is learning-rich who cleared the examination but the original candidate is learning-poor who discovered the unfair means to impersonate himself to get the examination cleared because of his knowledge deficiency due to his lack of interest to invest his time and energy in reading, learning and preparing for the examination. The use of unfair means in earning so much money by the original learning-deficient person to pay the bribe to the fake candidate cannot be ruled out. The learning deficiency is originating the use of double unfair means or double malpractices: firstly, in getting so much money to pay the bribe and secondly, in getting himself impersonated by the fake candidate to clear the examination. It is all because of learning deficiency and the lack of interest to invest time and energy in reading, learning and preparing for the examination. Similarly, these days, the promotion to faculty position through managing the API (Academic Point Index) scores has become a popular means. This is very closely related to a declining trend in reading and learning abilities but an increase trend in managerial ability of how to get promoted. These days, promotion requires, not much reading and learning abilities and competence but the managerial ability of how to get promotion managed. The new technology is helpful, not only in such malpractices but also in reducing reading, learning and thinking abilities because of the availability of most learning materials online. The online materials are available for reading and learning **less** than reproducing them **more**. This has given rise to plagiarism and reproducing online materials without investing much of time and energy in reading and learning them.

Only some computer skill is needed. Not only this, the use of high-tech methodology accelerates the use of unfair means in examination and in reproducing and scoring higher marks to claim for knowledge certification, promotion, appointment, etc. The use of malpractices is rising along with declining reading and learning habits and rising virtual modes of learning.

Fourthly, the problem of learning deficiency at the foundational level may also have an effect on the higher levels of learning because the same learning deficient undergraduates proceed to higher levels of learning, giving rise in their enrolment to the higher institutions but it is very often said that the most graduates are not only deficient in reading and learning outcomes but also deficient in productive skills, values and attitude to work, and therefore, they are not employable. These are the main reasons of rising unemployment among them. The lack of job opportunities is only partly responsible. The lack of knowledge is a function of reading and learning deficiency, lack of interest to invest personal resources of time, energy and efforts in education and in the career-building opportunities. After certification of knowledge, the interest in further reading, learning and upgradation of knowledge stops. It may be seen that the graduates coming out of the institution of higher learning, particularly private institutions come out invariably with very high marks in their knowledge acquired as it manifests in their marks obtained, considered to be an index of high achievement but their actual performance in selection and at the work places tends to be poor as if the high marks acquired is inflated and fake. The gap exists between the marks obtained and the actual performance demonstrated or between the role-achieved and the role-enacted because, according to Evan Illich (1974) false legitimacy to inflated grades as an index of competence is officially granted. Beneath such illusionary achievement, subjectivity resides, resulting into large scale recruitment/promotion of unemployable graduates, post-graduates and Ph.D. holders who achieved certificate with good marks but their learning outcomes remains deficient. The official legitimacy to fake achievement is the main reason for the phenomenal decline in standard of teaching, learning and research. This type of fake legitimacy to merit should never be granted either at the foundational or at the higher levels of learning. Invariably, the teachers with very high marks in both the theory and practice are recruited in schools with the view to fight against learning poverty but in the same schools where they are recruited, leaning deficiency among the learners is rampant. Therefore, one very often raises the finger against the competence of the teachers working at any levels of learning.

A study conducted on 300 trained teacher aspirants (Haq, 2020) comes out with the fact of glaring inconsistency between the scores achieved by the

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teachers in the tests related to four competencies (*Secondary Education Commission and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education*, NCERT) and the scores achieved in the actual demonstration of those competencies. Almost all the aspirants secured more than 65% marks in the written tests of competencies but more than 65% of them are poor and deficient in the actual demonstration of the competencies. For example, a trained graduate teacher who is an aspirant to become a school teacher, when asked to spell and write 'formative-assessment', he writes it as 'formulative-assessment'. Similarly, another candidate was asked to spell and write 'lieutenant' he writes it as 'leftinent'. This shows language deficiency but the candidate wanted to become English language teacher. If appointed how such trained teachers can overcome the deficiency of language skill among the learners. The CBSE result shows that the subject-wise the total average in the problem solving-assessment of the learners declined from 28.5% in 1913 to 25.5% in 1914 for class IX and it declined from 40.1% in 1913 to 24.4% in 1914 for class XI. This was considered as a worrying trend and the CBSE raised finger against the quality of teaching and teaching method competency of the teachers. It was said that this is due to 'lack of competency in the methodologies of teaching applied in the classroom' (*The Times of India*, May 21, 2014, P. 4). There is almost total violation of academic morality on the part of the teachers who do not make concerted efforts to improve their own standard of learning and pedagogical proficiency and the standard of learning of their students. The regular reading and learning habits has almost disappeared at all the levels of learning. The learning deficiency at one learning level reinforces the learning deficiency of the other and vice-versa. This nexus needs to be totally removed. The teacher is the centrality of the teaching-learning process but the teacher alone cannot be blamed for the learning crisis. The totality of the system of learning is responsible. The teacher is just an integral part of the totality.

Countering Learning Deficiency

The problem of learning deficiency is deplorable, deep-rooted and fundamental. The young learners are the future of the nation and by imparting shoddy education to them, we are in fact playing with the nation's future progress. The enrolment crossing about 98% in the age-group 6-14 years is coupled with sharp dropping of the learning outcomes among the learners. This is perpetual problem, showing a total pedagogic mess and system's failure. Considering the problem of poor training of the teachers is one of the reasons of poor teaching and learning. The horrifying pupil-teacher ratio and the poor management of schooling are the major bottlenecks. In Bihar, for example, there is only one teacher for every 60 primary school learners, one teacher for every 55 secondary school learners and one teacher for every 63 higher

secondary school learners. This ratio is horrifying as to how a teacher can manage such a big size of the learners in the classroom. The system of schooling is unable to cope with the rising enrolment. In India there are nearly 1.2 lakh schools with just one teacher each. The most populous and the poorest states are worst affected by the pupil-teacher ratio. In Madhya Pradesh alone, there are more than 16,000 one-teacher schools, although the student-teacher ratio (34) of the state is under the Right to Education Act. There is a serious shortage of better equipped teachers and despite push to digitalise education to improve learning outcomes, most schools do not have access to internet facilities. In 29 states and UTs, less than half of the schools have internet access (*The Times of India*, Jan.15, Jan.19 and Feb. 21, 2023).

Secondly, along with the problem of ratio, shortage of better trained teachers and access to digital facilities, the problem of declining reading habit among the teachers is another big problem. The World Bank in its report on poverty of learning has very clearly pointed out that this decline is injurious, not only in the process of improving the learning outcomes among the learners but also to the process of upgradation of learning among the teachers. Even if better equipped and trained teachers are appointed, how to change their attitude to learning and make them invest their personal resources of time, energy and effort in further education and learning to enrich and upgrade their knowledge to come out of the pedagogic mess to improve the learning outcomes are the vicious problems. The problem of getting better equipped teacher is as important as their attitudinal problem which, as pointed out by the Education Commission, is an obstacle to educational improvement. For this, regular and strict monitoring of their performance is needed along with advantages associated with the outcomes of their interest shown by them in reading, writing, publication and the use of new and dynamic pedagogical tools of effective learning in the classroom.

Thirdly, in order to invite intelligent educated persons to join teaching profession, it will be important to recognise and integrate well the teacher-training programmes and the field of education into the mainstream of academic life of the university. Education deals with important branches of knowledge, professional training of teachers of different levels, problems of educational institutions and the methods of teaching, learning and research but this field is not treated at par with other disciplines. The schooling (both primary and secondary) itself is a separate field of inquiry to be treated at par the institutions of higher learning. Adequate recognition to education in general and schooling in particular would make a lot of difference to reorienting these areas towards the professional work effectively. At present, there is a feeling of isolation among various branches of schooling as if they do not form as an

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integrated and interlinked areas even if they are within the intellectual life of university campus. In order to encourage scholars to take up teaching & research as a profession, it would be better to establish the school of education with the view to reorient pedagogical interest among the scholar towards effective teaching at different levels of schooling by imparting rigorous training for effective school teaching, in-service programme, extension services, internship and research in courses of school education in collaboration with other disciplines. In this way, talented persons would be attracted towards education to pursue teaching profession as their first choice. However, our immediate objective is to improve the competencies of the teachers to overcome the problems of pedagogic mess and declining teaching and learning habits and learning outcomes.

Fourthly, the school is not the only agency responsible for deterioration in the learning outcomes. There are other agencies also, like the, family, the neighbourhood, the media, the political parties and the leadership. They also have the role to play in educating the young learners. If any one of these agencies is dysfunctional, the role of other agency would automatically become dysfunctional because all of them are organically interlinked to each other. Among all the agencies, the family plays the most important role. It is from the family, children go to the school for learning and again come back to the family. Ultimately they spent most of their time in the family with the family member. They often go out and interact with their peer-groups in the neighbourhood. They are also exposed to a variety of news including political news, views and pictures when they view media including the virtual media. All these agencies have relatively much greater impact on the learners. The school (the teacher, offline & online modes of learning, the media and the school management) plays important role but as pointed out by Emile Durkheim(1956), school is only a small agency of the larger society to which the learners are exposed. The school performs only the subservient role to the society. Its role in educating the learners is structured by the larger society including the political society of which the school is an integral part. Its role is largely externally constrained, although this point is contested by Karl Mannheim (1962) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977) but Durkheimian view remains important because the social character of the society greatly determines the social character of schooling. A class-based society reproduces class-based structure of learning which in turn produces hierarchy of small section of advantaged, learning-rich and efficient learners on the one hand and a larger section of disadvantaged, learning- poor and deficient learners on the other hand (Haq, 1989). The advantaged learners come, not only from the better families but also attend a small group of better managed , high fee charging, invariably English medium, efficient and standard schools, but on the other

hand, a much larger section of disadvantaged learners come, not only from relatively poor families but also attend a larger group of poorly managed, low fee charging, mostly Hindi medium, deficient and substandard schools. The two groups of learners, advantaged and disadvantaged by learning outcomes, coupled with success and failure, are the products of hierarchically arranged schooling created and supported by the society. The social class character of learning is another problem. Even if the role of various agencies is controlled and pedagogic mess is eliminated to improve the learning deficiency, then how the social hierarchy manifesting into the learning outcomes can be eliminated, is a serious issue, challenging the process of countering the problem of learning deficiency. The social class based learning-efficiency and learning-deficiency among the learners, making them learning-rich and the learning-poor citizens has to be eliminated to counteract the vicious problem of learning-deficiency among the learners.

However, among the agencies, the role of the family and the school is relatively more important. The role of the family is crucial because most learning deficiency is taking place at the early stages of pre-primary and the primary levels learning. The informal learning (familial) is very close to this. The family can play equally an important role in countering the deficiency in learning. The ASER, 2022 has pointed out that the children who have just come out of the family and entered into the school in just class-I are greatly deficient in learning. About 40% of them cannot even read a letter and only 12% can read a complete word. Around 37.6% of them cannot read numbers 1 to 9. Similarly, the children of class-III of both the government and private schools can somehow read class-II level text of knowledge. Such learning deficiency has gone down further from 27.3% in 2018 to 20.5% in 2022. The point which is being focused here is that the family has to share and also counteract the problem of learning deficiency among their kids because, as pointed out by the NEP, 2019 'the large proportion of children fall behind during their elementary school years. In fact, they have already fallen behind in their learning outcomes before they started schooling from class-I'. The children enter the school in class-1 with very weak pre-numeracy level literacy. Therefore, along with the school-preparedness to counteract the problem of learning deficiency, the family-preparedness is also needed. The necessary literacy and numeracy levels among the parents and the family members are important to guide their kids at the pre-primary level and thereafter. The initiatives by the family and the local community in this regard are important. In addition to this, enhancing the capacity of teachers and giving greater emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy in the school curriculum are also needed. A kind of mission-mode-dedication is required to counteract the learning crisis in order to make the nation stronger and prosperous.

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