INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMPUTER APPLICATION & MANAGEMENT

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5.   **KEYWORDS**: Abstract must be followed by a list of keywords, subject to the maximum of five. These should be arranged in alphabetic order separated by commas and full stops at the end.

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INTRODUCTION

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

OBJECTIVES

HYPOTHESES

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSIONS

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

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10.   **FIGURES &TABLES**: These should be simple, centered, separately numbered & self explained, and **titles must be above the table/figure**. **Sources of data should be mentioned below the table/figure**. It should be ensured that the tables/figures are referred to from the main text.

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- All works cited in the text (including sources for tables and figures) should be listed alphabetically.
- Use (**ed.**) for one editor, and (**ed.s**) for multiple editors.
- When listing two or more works by one author, use --- (20xx), such as after Kohl (1997), use --- (2001), etc, in chronologically ascending order.
- Indicate (opening and closing) page numbers for articles in journals and for chapters in books.
- The title of books and journals should be in italics. Double quotation marks are used for titles of journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, reports, working papers, unpublished material, etc.
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BOOKS

- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
- Hunker, H.L. and A.J. Wright (1963), "Factors of Industrial Location in Ohio" Ohio State University, Nigeria.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

JOURNAL AND OTHER ARTICLES

- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19–22 June.

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

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RIGHT TO EDUCATION: EFFECTIVE USE OF ICT FOR REACHING OUT TO SOCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY WEAKER SECTIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Most of the enrolment growth in the coming several decades will be in developing countries and India will contribute a significant proportion of that expansion. India by enacting "Right to Education Act, 2009" has set out on an ambitious path to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group. As a result the number of students enrolled in elementary schools in far flung villages would definitely see a quantum jump. Challenges of funding, availability of qualified teachers, and building a sustainable academic culture and school infrastructure are significant and real. Providing access to the free education for the children of downtrodden peoples like tribals, lower castes, and dalits is a complex issue in India wherein the fragmentation in the society along religious, ethnic and linguistic lines is deep rooted. In addition, rampant poverty which is the root cause of child labour leaves no time for the affected children to undertake formal schooling. In this paper we review various facets of and challenges in providing access to universal elementary education for the children from socially weaker sections in India. The paper delves into various aspects of this ambitious aim and suggest measures for mitigating the risks and pitfall in India's march towards achievement of 100% literacy of over 1 billion people. We also explore the ways in which the strengths of ICT can be leveraged in achievement of the goal.

KEYWORDS

Right to Education, Use of ICT in Education, Compulsory Education, State Policy.

INTRODUCTION

1. .   **Khan (2001)** reported that learning plays central role in sustainable development and it contributes immensely to poverty reduction and income generation, empowerment and consolidation of democracy, disease prevention and sustainable health and to the protection of the environment is by now well known. The close relationship of education, social status and choice of occupation has been underlined by **Balasubramanyam & Balasubramanyam (2010).** The critical link of education to poverty reduction and human development is depicted in the following figure:

FIG 1: PATHWAYS OF EDUCATION TO POVERTY REDUCTION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
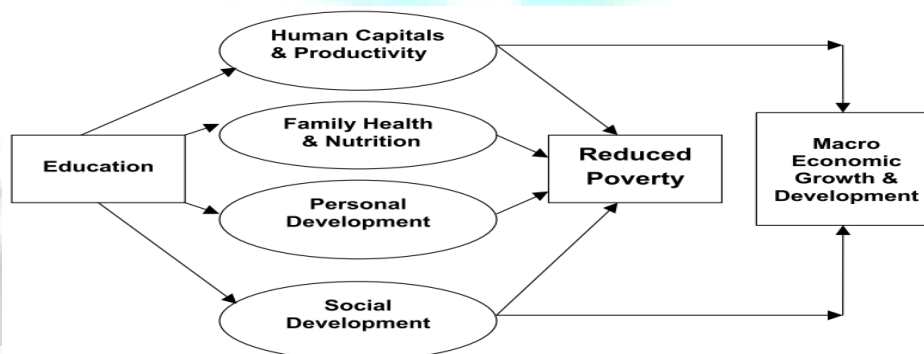
Source: Khan, 2001

2.   The importance of education on affirmative action and upliftment of masses is not lost on Indian policy makers. In fact **Altbach (2009)** reported that China and India, which together make up one-third of the world's population and are two of the most rapidly growing economies, are awakening to the significance of education for technological development and for the global knowledge economy. The economic realities of China and India's rapid growth are affecting the world, from increased demand for natural resources to their roles as exporters of products of all kinds, a pattern that will continue regardless of the current economic slowdown. A growing impact of these countries is in higher education; their higher education systems are already among the world's largest, and they are major exporters of students to other countries.

CHALLENGES FOR UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN INDIA

3.   The challenges for India in educating its large population have been reported by **Datta & Mitra (2010)** in their study. They report that about 35% of world's illiterate population is Indian. Despite seemingly optimistic Gross Enrollment Ratios (GER) being recorded and proactive literacy schemes (Sarva Shiksha Abhyan, National Literacy Mission and Mid-day Meal Scheme) being introduced, there is a disparity between these positive indicators and actuality. A high dropout rate of 41.2% is seen at the elementary level. The national literacy rate of girls over seven years is 54% against 75% for boys. In the Northern Hindi-

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speaking states of India, girls' literacy rates are particularly low, ranging between 33 – 50%. Quality of instruction and learning is poor. Students' understanding and application of written and verbal expression, logic and reasoning, numeric and quantitative knowledge is inadequate. Geographical remoteness and access challenges, regional/ gender/ socio-economic inequity, poor infrastructure, amenities and non-conducive learning environments, academically inclined (often in contrast to practical applicability), corporal punishment, apathetic and untrained teachers and theoretical pedagogy, are key causative factors for poor accomplishments in the education sector.

4.   The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in 2001 -02 to attain universal elementary education in India for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. To ensure that all children attend school, several measures were taken under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan such as mobilization of the community, providing schools within easy reach, and organizing bridge courses for out-of-school children. In order to assess how far these measures have succeeded, a nation-wide independent sample survey of households was conducted in all the States and Union Territories of India in 2009 to provide estimates of the number and percentage of out-of-school children in the age group 6-13 years (**http://ssa.nic.in/**).

5.   The survey was conducted by **Social & Rural Research Institute -IMRB International (SRI-IMRB)**. The findings of the survey indicated that the country had about 19.1 crores children in the age group 6-13 (i.e. below 14 years), of whom 4.3% children were out of school, in 2005 this figure was 6.9% . Amongst the out of school children, 3.2% children had never attended school and 1.1% were dropouts. Among boys 3.9% children were out of school and among girls 4.6 % children were out of school. The key statistics for the out of school children (as reported by the study) are appended in Table 1:

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN 2005 VS 2009

Out of School Children (%)		2005	2009
All (6-13 years)		6.9	4.3
Dropouts		2.2	1.1
Never attended		4.7	3.2
Age group	6-10 years	6.1	3.7
	11-13 years	8.6	5.2
By area	Rural	7.8	4.5
	Urban	4.6	3.2
by Gender	Male	6.2	3.9
	Female	7.9	4.7
By Social groups	SC	8.2	6.0
	ST	9.5	5.6
	Muslim	10.0	7.7
	OBC+ others	5.6	2.7
Percentage of disabled children amongst Out of school children (6-13 years)		38.1	34.8

Source: http://ssa.nic.in/

DIAGRAM 1: PERCENTAGE OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS BY LOCATION

Source: http://ssa.nic.in/
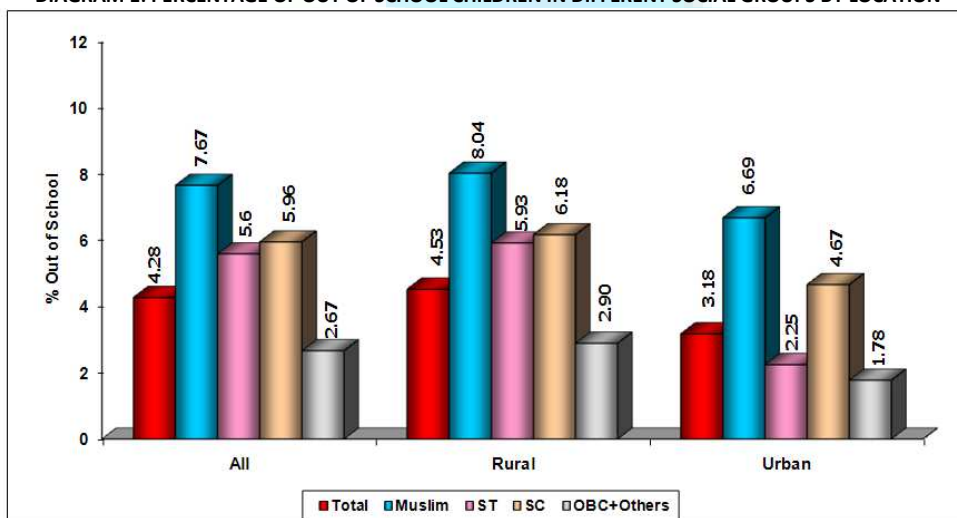
6.   The survey brought out that the children belonging to underprivileged and socially backward groups are more likely to drop out of elementary schooling due to one or more of the following reasons acting as a trigger:

(a)   Poverty / Economic reasons.
(b)   Child too young to attend school.
(c)   Child suffers from some disability or poor health.
(d)   Child is not interested in studies.
(e)   Child to supplement household income.
(f)   Needed to help in domestic work.
(g)   Education not considered necessary by parents or head of the household.
(h)   School location not suitable.
(j)   Needed to take care of siblings.

7.   The analysis of the results of the study brought out that flagship educational programmes launched by Govt of India have not been able to make significant inroads in the underprivileged sections of the society. These programmes have not achieved the desired results for the children from weaker sections of the society and children living in remote areas. Under the circumstances it would not be out of place to have a look at the efficacy of affirmative action in India.

EFFICACY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS IN INDIA

8.   While positive discrimination has been a policy of the Indian government for decades, a considerable debate is still under way about both the justification for and the effectiveness of the policy. Positive discrimination has been claimed as largely ineffective in raising the status of the downtrodden groups it is intended to help and a mistaken social policy in a meritocratic society (**Mahajan, 2007**). The studies on affirmative action in India primarily focus on the reservation policy for the scheduled castes/scheduled tribes (SCs/STs), mandated by the Constitution from its inception. Since OBC reservation is

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comparatively a new issue, few studies have concentrated solely on OBCs. Partly because reservation policy had primarily focused on SC/ST candidates till 1990, separate estimates for these categories were available from government sources. All other castes were put in the "others" category. But inclusion of OBCs for affirmative action since 1999 has resulted in the availability of some data separately for this category as well. Hence, the category of others now includes all upper castes as well as some lower castes close to SCs, and also other lower castes which are not recognised as SCs, STs or OBCs. **Gill (2006)** reported that the same situation prevails in respect of tribals in India and their relative situation (viz-a-viz general population) has not changed much over the years. **Sujatha (1999)** in her study brought out that the level of educational development among tribes differs vastly across the provinces. The national average literacy rate among them is 29 per cent. Among the eight provinces, the highest literacy rate among the tribes is 36 per cent, in Gujarat, against 17 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, which is the lowest in the country. Compared to all the provinces, the tribals in Andhra Pradesh stand at the lowest level.

9.   **Basant & Sen (2010)** reported the educational achievements of upper caste Hindus and other upper castes with that of dalits, adivasis and Muslims during 1983 and 2000. Although the primary school enrolment at all income levels are higher for Hindus and other upper castes over this period, the study shows that there is a narrowing trend in the gap between Hindus and other marginalised groups at the higher income levels. It implies that affirmative action in employment may have contributed to higher primary school enrolment over the years (i.e., more people participating in school education in anticipation of getting jobs through reservation). At the same time, improvement in economic condition has increased the effectiveness of the programme. Households with better economic conditions benefited more from the job reservation as it resulted in higher school enrolment.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND ACT THEREOF

10.   In order to achieve universalisation of education in India, the parliament passed Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act 2002 to incorporate right to education as fundamental rights affecting Article 21A, 45 and 51A of the constitution. Further, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 (35 of 2009) received the assent of the President on the 26 August 2009 and was published in the Gazette of India Extraordinary No. 39 on 27 August 2009. On 16 February 2010, Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred by section 1(3) of the Act, stipulated 01 April 2010 as the date on which the provisions of the said Act shall come into force (**Gazette notification S.O. 428(E)**). In addition, Central Govt in exercise of the powers conferred by section 38 of the Act, notified Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules 2010 (vide **G.S.R. 301(E) dated 08 April 2010**).

11.   The salient provisions of the Act and the rules made there under are (**http://education.nic.in/**):

(a)   The Act makes it mandatory for every child between the ages of 6-14 to be provided free education by the State. This means that such child does not have to pay a single penny as regards books, uniforms etc.

(b)   Any time of the academic year, a child can go to a school and demand that this right be respected.

(c)   Section 12(1)(c) of the Act provides that private education institutions and specified category schools shall admit (starting 2011) at least 25% of the strength of class I, children belonging to weaker section and children belonging to disadvantaged group from the neighbourhood and provide them free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education.

(d)   Strict criteria for the qualification of teachers. There is a requirement of a teacher student ratio of 1:30 at each of these schools that ought to be met within a given time frame.

(e)   The schools need to have certain minimum facilities like adequate teachers, playground and infrastructure. The government will evolve specific mechanisms to help marginalised schools comply with the provisions of the Act.

(f)   There is a new concept of 'neighbourhood schools' that has been devised. This is similar to the model in the United States. This would imply that the state government and local authorities will establish primary schools within walking distance of one km of the neighbourhood. In case of children for Class VI to VIII, the school should be within a walking distance of three km of the neighbourhood.

(g)   Unaided and private schools shall ensure that children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups shall not be segregated from the other children in the classrooms nor shall their classes be held at places and timings different from the classes held for the other children. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010

12.   The important government orders / gazette notifications with regards to implementation of the Act / Rules are appended in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2: IMPORTANT GOVT ORDERS PERTAINING TO RTE ACT

	Notification/G.O. No.	Details
(a)	**S.O. 749(E) dated 31 Mar 2010**	National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was authorised to lay down the curriculum & evaluation, procedure for elementary education and to develop a framework of national curriculum under clause (a) of sub-section (6) of Section 7 of the Act
(b)	**S.O. 750(E) dated 31 Mar 2010**	National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was authorized to lay down the minimum qualifications for a person to be eligible for appointment as a teacher.
(c)	**F.No.1-13/2009-EE-4 dated 31 May 2010**	National Curriculum Framework 2005 was notified to be the framework for education under the Act till such time as the Central Government decides to develop a new framework.
(d)	**F.No.1-4/2010 -EE4 dated 22 Jun 2010**	In consideration of the representations received from State Governments (regarding inability to complete recruitment process to achieve Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) specified in the Schedule to the Act), the following directions were issued:- (i) Rationalise the deployment of existing teachers to address the problems of urban-rural and other spatial imbalances In teacher placements; and (ii) Initiate the process of recruitment of new teachers to fill vacant posts" as per the PTR stipulated in the Schedule.
(e)	**S.O 1631(E) dated 08 July 2010**	National Advisory Council was constituted (with HRD Minister as chairperson, five Ex-officio Members and nine nominated members) to advice the Central Government on implementation of the provisions of the RTE Act in an effective manner.
(f)	**F.No.61-03/20/2010/ NCTE (N&S) dated 23 Aug 2010**	NCTE (in pursuance of gazette notification No. S.O. 750 (E) dated 31 Mar 2010) laid down the minimum qualifications for a person to be eligible for appointment as a teacher in class I to VIII in a school referred to Section 2(n) of the RTE Act.
(g)	**F.No.1-15/2010-EE-4 dated 23 Nov 2010**	Schools were directed to follow a system of random selection out of the applications received from children belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker sections for filling the pre-determined number of seats in that class, which should be not less than 25% of the strength of the class. For admission to the remaining 75% of the seats, the schools were directed to formulate a policy under which admissions are to take place. This policy should include criteria for categorization of applicants in terms of the objectives of the school on a rational, reasonable and just basis. Profiling of students, testing and interviews for any child/parent falling within or outside the categories was prohibited. Selection would be on a random basis.
(h)	**F.No.1-1S/2010-EE-4 dated 23 Nov 2010**	Directions were issued to state governments for ensuring that the rights of Minority Institutions, guaranteed under Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution, are protected while implementing the provisions of the RTE Act.
(j)	**No.76-4/2010/NCTE/ Acad dated 11 Feb 2011**	Guidelines for conducting Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) under RTE Act 2009 notified.
(k)	**S.O. 623(E) dated 23 Mar 2011**	Relaxation was granted to the State of Orissa in respect-of the minimum teacher qualification norms notified by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) for a period of one year.

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PROBLEMS AREAS OF RTE ACT

13.　　**Jha and Parvati (2010)** in their study reported following problem areas concerning the Right to Education Act:

(a)　　Though the act expresses interest in taking necessary steps in providing free pre-school education for children above three years of age, leaving out this critical segment of the child population from the definition is worrisome. Not only does the act fail to cover all children, it does not provide definite timelines for many provisions.

(b)　　The Act fails to tackle the problem of quality of teachers and infrastructure required for undertaking the task involved.

(c)　　Quality monitoring is attainable only in a culture of accountability. The act does not effectively address issues with regard to quality and disciplinary proceedings against the erring schools. In addition, the unaided schools have been left out of the purview of accountability with regard to the provisions contained in Section 21.1 of the act.

(d)　　There is no clarity on who will take lead in financing the Act. Ideally, the central government ought to should do this due to poor fiscal situation in most states. Acknowledging this reality, the Act notes that the states may seek a predetermined percentage of expenditure as grants-in-aid from the central government, based on the recommendations of the finance commission on assessment of additional resource requirements for any state.

USE OF ICT IN EDUCATION

14.　　**Cecchini & Scott (2003)** underline that the use of ICT applications can enhance poor people's opportunities by improving their access to markets, health, and education. Furthermore, ICT can empower the poor by expanding the use of government services, and reduce risks by widening access to microfinance. Realizing the poverty-reducing potential of ICT is not guaranteed. It requires attentive public policy formulation and careful project design. Insufficient information and communication infrastructure, high access costs, and illiteracy have bestowed the benefits of ICT on the better off, urban segments of the population to the detriment of the poor and rural areas.

15.　　The specific impact of technology on learning has been reported by **Sharples, Taylor & Vavoula (2005**) in their study. They brought out that learning is mediated by knowledge and technology as instruments for productive enquiry, in a mutually supportive and dynamically changing relationship. The mediation can be analysed from a technological perspective of human-computer interaction, physical context and digital communication, and from a human perspective of social conventions, community, conversation and division of labour. These two perspectives interact to promote a co-evolution of learning and technology. It describes a cybernetic process of learning through continual exploration of the world and negotiation of meaning, mediated by technology. This can be seen as a challenge to formal schooling, to the autonomy of the classroom and to the curriculum as the means to impart the knowledge and skills needed for adulthood. But it can also be an opportunity to bridge the gulf between formal and experiential learning, opening new possibilities for personal fulfillment and lifelong learning.

16.　　The effectiveness of ICT for reaching out to rural masses and delivery of relevant content including education has been recognized by India long back. In fact, India was amongst the first few countries to explore the use of Satcom for carrying education and development- oriented information and services to the rural masses. The applications started with satellite TV broadcasting to schools and rural communities in the mid-seventies. Under the Edusat utilization programme two types of satellite-based VSAT networks i.e., interactive networks consisting of Satellite Interactive Terminals (SITs) and receive-only networks using Receive-Only-Terminals – are being set up in various states across the country for promoting universal education. Generally, interactive networks are set up for imparting teacher's training and curriculum-based teaching to students of the arts and science colleges, polytechnics, and management and professional institutes. Similarly, the receive-only networks are being used for imparting curriculum-based education to primary and secondary schools students. To provide these space-based services directly to the rural areas, ISRO has initiated a programme to set up Village Resource Centres (VRCs) in association with NGOs and trusts and state and central agencies concerned. VRCs are envisaged as single window delivery mechanism for a variety of space based products and services, such as tele-education; telemedicine; information on natural resources for planning and development at local level; interactive advisories on agriculture, fisheries, land and water resources management, livestock management, etc.; interactive vocational training towards alternative livelihood; e-governance; weather information; etc. VRCs also address a variety of social aspects locally, and can act as help lines **(Bhaskaranarayana, Bhatia, Bandyopadhyay & Jain, 2007)**.

17.　　In addition, the Common Services Centers (CSC) is a strategic cornerstone of the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), as part of its commitment in the National Common Minimum Programme to introduce e-governance on a massive scale. The CSCs would provide high quality and cost-effective video, voice and data content and services, in the areas of e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment as well as other private services. A highlight of the CSCs is that it will offer web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates, and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills. The Scheme creates a conducive environment for the private sector and NGOs to play an active role in implementation of the CSC Scheme, thereby becoming a partner of the government in the development of rural India. The PPP model of the CSC scheme envisages a 3-tier structure consisting of the CSC operator (called Village Level Entrepreneur or VLE) the Service Centre Agency (SCA), that will be responsible for a division of 500-1000 CSCs and a State Designated Agency (SDA) identified by the State Government responsible for managing the implementation over the entire State. The CSC Scheme has been approved by Government in September 2006 with an outlay of Rs. 5742 Crores over a period of 4 years. It is expected that 100% CSCs would be rolled by March 2011 (**http://mit.gov.in/**). Though there have been delays in rolling out of CSC in some states.

18.　　The formal inclusion of ICT in education commenced in centrally sponsored Scheme "Information and Communication Technology in School" which was launched in December 2004. The Scheme was meant to be a major catalyst to bridge the digital divide amongst students of various socio economic and other geographical barriers. The financial assistance (under the scheme), is given to States and other institutions on the basis of the approvals accorded by Project Monitoring and Evaluation Group (PM&EG) headed by Secretary of the Department of School Education and Literacy. The broad objectives of the scheme are (**http://www.indg.in/**):

(a)　　To ensure the availability of quality content on-line and through access devices.

(b)　　Enrichment of existing curriculum and pedagogy by employing ICT tools for teaching and learning.

(c)　　To enable students to acquire skills needed for the Digital world for higher studies and gainful employment.

(d)　　To provide an effective learning environment for children with special needs through ICT tools.

(e)　　Promote critical thinking and analytical skills by developing self-learning. This shall transform the classroom environment from teacher-centric to student-centric learning.

(f)　　To promote the use of ICT tools in distance education including the employment of audio-visual medium and satellite-based devices.

19.　　**Datta & Mitra (2010)** studied the utilization of technology in education. They reported that national education, especially at the primary and secondary levels, has also failed to adapt the benefits of diverse technologies that are available today for the cause of education.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

20.　　Analysis of sources of secondary data from OECD, World Bank, UN and various government portals underline following facts (with a bearing on use of ICT in successful implementation of RTE):

(a)　　The government of India charges Access Deficit charge from the various telecom operators to ensure roll out of telecom services in rural and remote areas which are not profitable. This provides funding for the state owned telecom companies to provide services in rural areas which otherwise is financially not viable.

(b)　　The call charges (both local and STD) are one of the lowest in the world which makes mobile calls affordable for the rural populace.

(c)　　The telecommunication sector in India has been witnessing highest growth rates in the world and the trend continues (refer diagram 2 below). The growth in the subscriber base is being caused particularly by the unprecedented growth in mobile telephony. The penetration of mobile phones has been aided

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by the sharp decline in the cost of mobile instrument with many handset available in the market with longer battery life costing below Rs.1000/-. In fact many mobile handsets have facility for solar charging which augers well for remote areas where electricity supply is erratic.

DIAGRAM 2: GROWTH OF SUBSCRIBER BASE (IN MILLION) FROM 2000 TO 2010
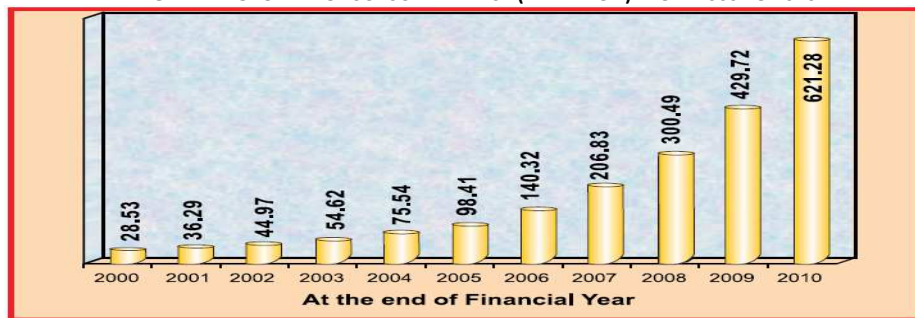
Source: Annual Report 09-10, TRAI

(d)   The Government of India has launched many toll free numbers for providing on demand information to the masses through help centres.
(e)   The National e-Government Plan encompasses installation of Citizen Service Centres connecting government to the citizens spread across the length and breadth of the country.
(f)   The literacy rate has been increasing over a period of time with corresponding reduction in the poverty levels. The year on year comparison of literacy rates since independence is depicted in Diagram 3 below:
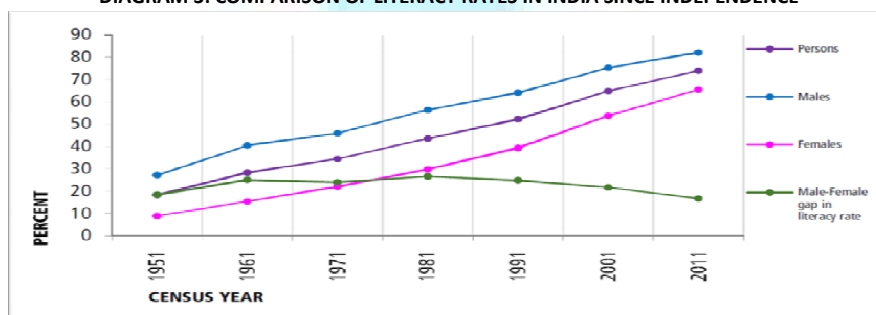
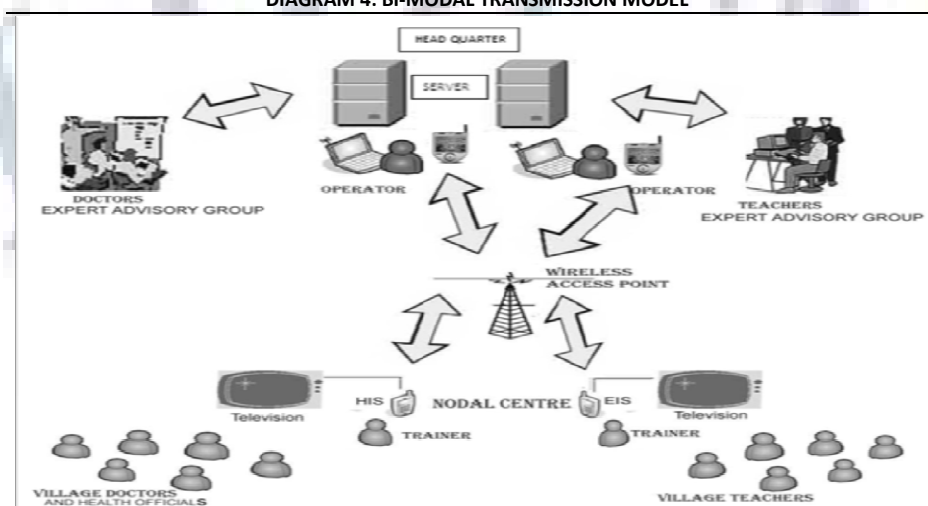**DIAGRAM 3: COMPARISON OF LITERACY RATES IN INDIA SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

Source: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/

 (g)   For a country to achieve rapid socioeconomic advancement, a 20 to 25 percent participation rate of the relevant age group in higher education is a prerequisite. Therefore, India must expand its system of higher education further so as to accommodate at least 20 percent of eligible 18- to 24-year-olds. Future policies must capitalize on the ODL system and develop a network of open universities. The ODL system should account for at least 50 percent of total enrollment in higher education and provide a good quality education **(Chauhan, 2008)**.

21.   However, a lot remains to be accomplished in order to achieve the mission of 100% literacy envisaged under RTE Act. We need to increase enrollment of children in the schools, motivate them to complete the schooling, creating an enabling environment for the children from the socially / economically weaker sections to study and at the same time contribute in securing bread and butter for their home. We need to implement a system whereby education is available on demand and at the convenience of the leaner and not as per the fixed timings o the schooling. This scheme of "education on demand" and "learn while you earn" would enable these children to reap in the benefit accruable through RTE Act and the ICT. Towards this, we could take cue from the bi-modal transmission framework proposed by **Basu & Modak (2010).** Diagram 4 depicts their conceptual framework to establish a communication channel between the remote rural areas with inadequate education and health care facility and an expert advisory group consisting of a panel of teachers and doctors respectively, interlinked by a group of operators in order to provide service to rural unprivileged through the servers located in the headquarter. The new mobile technology establishes a new-fangled mobile connectivity layer that allows transportation of all relevant data and information from the service information layer represented by the instructors or group of experts towards the application layer as rural remote schools and health care centers. The communication device being mobile phones, successful information exchange demands a mobile based information processing system as an Education Information System (EIS) and a Healthcare Information System (HIS) to deliver and receive relevant information back and forth.

DIAGRAM 4: BI-MODAL TRANSMISSION MODEL

Source: Basu & Modak, 2010

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RECOMMENDATIONS

22.   In the backdrop of the discussions in preceding paragraphs, we recommend the following measures for ensuring achievement of universal elementary education by effective use of ICT:

(a)   **Integration of "formal education" and "education on demand"**. The importance Open and Distance Learning environments for developing countries have been underlined by **Dele & Osiki (2008)** in their study. We need to integrate the formal and informal education systems so that a student can switch between them seamlessly at any time, if necessitated due to his/her social/economic compulsions. For this both the systems would need to share the EIS which would also be economically prudent. The bi-modal transmission model may be used for the purpose (refer Para 21 above). The teachers appointed under the RTE Act could form the pool of resources at remote locations for providing education on demand using ICT tools. The framework suggested by **Venkatagiri (2007)** for self-paced learning in networked environments could be used in conjunction with bi-modal telecommunication system for flexibility and content richness in education-on-demand system.

(b)   **Open Schooling for Higher Education**. **Bloom & Rosovsky (2001)** underlined that higher education is one of the most powerful mechanisms societies have for upward mobility. It has enormous potential to promote prosperity among people with talent and motivation, irrespective of their social origins. Therefore, once a student completes his elementary education, he should be encouraged to study further. This could be achieved by providing him with the opportunity through open/distance learning environments. The institute similar to National Institute of Open Schooling should be opened in each state/UT. The education could be imparted through EIS utilizing VSC/CSC. For higher education, IGNOU already has infrastructure (in the form of Gyandarshan TV channel) and is also actively involved in imparting distance education. In addition, some of the states have opened up state open universities. We need to strengthen these institutions of open/distance learning and improve the quality of education imparted through them.

(c)   **Adult Literacy Campaign**. The need for education of the parents needs no emphasis. Imparting lessons on basic education and financial management to the people of weaker sections (through adult literacy centres in the form of evening classes/EIS) would go a long way in their upliftment. **Cohen & Sebstad (2003)** brought out that financial education can play an important role in contributing to poverty reduction in developing countries by building people's knowledge and skills to optimize the use of resources and take advantage of opportunities. Financial literacy can enhance the ability of people in not so well off households to interface more effectively with the financial system – not only microfinance institutions, but other formal and informal institutions as well. The attendant awareness from the adult literacy would definitely aid GER.

(d)   **Involvement of Gram Panchayats and NGOs**. **Comings & Smith (1995)** advocated involvement of NGOs in various literacy programmes due to their direct connection to the communities they serve. In fact, Gram Panchayats and NGOs can be used for influencing people in enhancing GER and in reducing drop-out rates. In addition, we could enlist support of industry. Recently Ministry of Corporate Affairs, GoI has made it mandatory for the companies to report (to their shareholders) about the expenditure incurred by them on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). We could encourage the corporate houses to adopt divisions/villages for overall upliftment including achievement of 100% literacy. The expenditure incurred towards the welfare could be reported towards CSR. Similarly, leading and reputed private schools could be encouraged to patronize the EIS of a district/village.

(e)   **PPP in Education**. The development of infrastructure of EIS could be undertaken as Public-private partnership project. The investment in this sector could be promoted by giving exemptions on such investments or by allowing tax rebates. In this context, **Prakash (2008)** underlined that with the expected diversification of higher education in the coming years, planners would be more concerned about quality assurance and appropriate institutional planning models for ensuring enough autonomy and an effective accountability framework.

(f)   **Dealing with Shortage of teachers in Rural/Remote Areas**. The shortage of qualified teachers is a major constraint in remote areas. The problem could be solved by two pronged approach. Firstly, services of retired teachers can be taken to ride over the immediate crisis. Secondly, rural stint may be made mandatory for government teachers. The teachers could be encouraged to take up postings in rural / remote areas by improving their working conditions and suitably compensating them.

(g)   **Emphasize Empiricism**. **Boswell, Rozelle, Zhang, & Liu (2011)** from their study in China emphasize that quantitative, experimental design is the best means to reliably measure success and effectively channel ideas and investments that target the world's most pressing problems. It should be made mandatory for the District Education Officer to carry out survey of population in his / her jurisdiction about the effectiveness of various educational programmes and report the results to state education department and National Literacy Mission. The help of Gram Panchayats should be enlisted for the smooth conduct of survey. These surveys could form the basis for fine-tuning of the education delivery system.

(h)   **Reduce the Digital Divide**. The reduction of digital divide and diffusion of ICT technology to the downtrodden and remote masses is precursor to universalisation of the education. **Mistry (2005)**, underlined the both indirect as well as direct role of the government in bridging the digital divide.

DIAGRAM 5: ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE
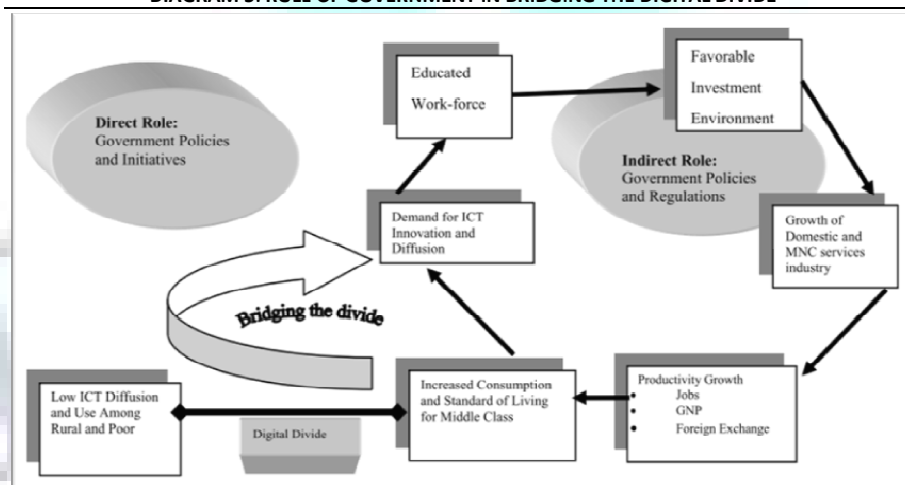
Source: Mistry, 2005

The government needs to take proactive measures and subsidize technology products to bring them within the reach of poor. A right step in this direction is the development of Sakshat (Sanskrit: "Embodiment") tablet PC for bridging the digital divide between the rich and the poor. The Rs.1,500/- ($30) Tablet PC is currently not available for sale in the market as government has decided to launch it for students in 2011. The device has been developed as part of the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology that aims to link 25,000 colleges and 504 universities on the subcontinent in an e-learning program via an existing Sakshat portal (**http://sakshattablet.org/**).

CONCLUSION

We conclude by underlining the fact that India is a large developing country. It has many issues to address along its journey to all inclusive growth. We need ensure that the benefit of RTE reaches the poorest of the poor living in remote areas by breaking the boundaries of cast, religion and access. We need to address

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the issue of poverty and stark digital divide before the benefits of ICT could be reaped for dissemination of knowledge. We should direct our efforts towards bringing education and schools at the doorstep of the needy children rather pushing them to schools. Ensuring of 100% literacy of over one billion population is though difficult but not impossible to achieve. All we need is sincerity, commitment and right policy measures.

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