



Last Mile Road Connectivity: An Essential Prerequisite for Ensuring Quality Education to All (With Special Reference to PMGSY)

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ABSTRACT

Quality and spread of higher education in India has witnessed a massive improvement in the past few decades. This has been made possible by methodical planning and a parallel improvement in infrastructure facilities. However, a lot is yet to be done to ensure that quality education reaches the remotest parts of our country. One major factor that will contribute to the fulfilment of this cause is last mile road connectivity.

Keywords: Higher education in India, PMGSY, total inclusion, road connectivity.

I INTRODUCTION

India has the highest population of youth amongst all major developing and developed countries. However, with the advantage of having an extremely young population, comes the responsibility of imparting quality education and vocational training to them. Only then will they be able to contribute towards social and economic development on a national and global level. To realize this dream into reality, proper infrastructural support is required at all levels. All season motorable road access is one such parameter that goes a long way in promoting quality education in the remotest areas.

Objective

To explore the importance of all season last mile road connectivity for imparting quality education, especially higher education, is the objective of this research.

Research Hypothesis

Without proper infrastructural support, including road connectivity, it is not possible to impart quality education in the remotest areas of our country.



Research Methodology and Area

The research has been carried out by using statistical figures from reputed sources with proper citations.

Description

Higher education in India has seen tremendous improvements in the time since independence. After India was declared a free nation, the first focus of our leaders was to ensure that proper education, at least till the primary level, was imparted to all Indians. As the nation progressed and the level of primary education in the country was brought to a respectable level, the focus was then shifted to secondary and higher education. Large number of universities and colleges were set up across the country for ensuring maximum inclusion. This scheme, however, failed to work in two aspects. One, the spread of education was not significant in the remotest and tribal areas. And two, while focusing on numbers, the quality of higher education being imparted to a major portion of Indians, was compromised.

Both these shortcomings soon became evident to the leaders of our nation. In a survey conducted between top MNCs in India, it was revealed that a majority of business leaders were not satisfied with the kind of workforce they were getting from Indian colleges. Thus, employability became another important concept, and mere education was not enough. Simultaneously, census studies revealed that the outreach of higher education was pretty much limited to major urban centers, and remote areas were still devoid of such facilities. Even if people from these remote localities were willing to commute to their nearest higher education centers, lack of proper connectivity proved to be a major hinderance.

Till date, many children in remote areas have to walk miles through mountains, rivers and jungles, to reach to their colleges and schools. Their journey could be made much easier if only proper all-season road connectivity was ensured.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), the flagship scheme of the Indian government, has gone a long way in filling this void. Of 178,000 (1.7 lakh) habitations with a population of above 500 in the plains and above 250 in the hilly areas planned to be connected by all-weather roads, 82% were already connected by December 2017 and work-in-progress on the remaining 47,000 habitations was on-track for completion by March 2019. The changes brought about by this scheme have been widely appreciated. The Assam Tribune has reported that the scheme has started to change the lifestyle of many villagers as it has resulted in new roads and upgrade of certain inter-village routes in Manipur.

The importance of proper road connectivity is even more evident in case of higher education and vocational training, as a large amount of manpower and technical tools have to be transported from urban areas to centers of learning. Proper flow of information will also take place when connectivity is ensured, and this will help people from semi-urban and rural areas from falling prey to fraudulent universities and courses that are running without accreditation.



II PROBLEMS AND SUGGESTIONS

1. Last mile road connectivity has still not reached the remotest corners of our country. After completion of set target, the scope of PMGSY needs to be extended to include these areas as well.
2. Indian higher education has been successful in terms of quantity but not quality. Proper infrastructure should be mandatory for colleges so as to expose students to practical and vocational experience.
3. Vacancy of teaching positions across the nation is a matter of serious concern. These posts should be filled on priority so that students get access to quality and experienced faculty.

III CONCLUSION

Without an all season last mile network of roads, it is nearly impossible to achieve the dream of “Padhega India, Badhega India.” A major step has already been taken in this direction in the form of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, but more work is still to be done. It is imperative to state that quality higher education cannot exist without quality road connectivity.

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