

UID and Education

Section 3(1) of the recently passed Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act makes it clear that every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till the completion of elementary education. The compliance of this provision would necessitate an exhaustive survey of all children of this age group. Providing UIDs to these children will help subsequently to find out the children who are out of the education system.

Once UID is given at the childhood stage, it can be used for his entire lifetime including the period he is in the education age. His education can be tracked throughout his educational career. Monitoring of dropouts, which constitutes a significant problem in the elementary education stage, would become easier.

Currently the Primary Education System in our country faces a serious problem of inflated enrolment at the school level. This results into significant leakages and serious implementation problems. Leakages include mid-day meals, books, scholarships, provision of uniforms and bicycles etc. More importantly, it gives a distorted picture of the achievements of various programs like SSA. The inflated enrolments take place through enrolment of one child into multiple schools and non-existent children being shown on the rolls. If UIDs are given to children, it will remove the problems of multiple enrolments and ghosts. It will also help implementing a uniform teacher-student ratio which is currently distorted due to inflated enrolments (especially when this inflation is not uniform!). Of course the HRD Ministry will have to put in systems in place to have the database of children at one place to eliminate these problems.

Provision of UIDs will ensure that there are no problems due to migration of students anywhere within the country as one does not have to establish the identity at the new location. It will effectively address the issue of education of children of migrant labor as their children can be admitted at new place without any other verification. The present strategy of targeting such children at source can be used simultaneously with strategy of targeting them at destination also.

Provision of UIDs at birth will also help the planners of elementary education system in terms of planning for the schools, teachers and other logistics.