INTRODUCTION

This paper is a review of a study entitled ‘Growth and Financing of Elementary Education in Uttar Pradesh: A Province in India’. The study was conducted by P. Geetha Rani from the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration in New Delhi, India. Uttar Pradesh is no different from some of the communities in Jamaica, especially in areas that are deemed as remote areas. These kind of communities experience insufficient financing from State and Central government for the education of their residents. This constitutes part of the long standing discussion of financing education and the role of government in public expenditure on education. The people of Uttar Pradesh are poor, which means in part that education is not a priority—which makes education quite elusive for many of the residents. Within the context of the value of education that goes beyond the individual to the general society, Rani argued that this is a rationale for wider coverage of education among the residents and more public expenditure on education by State and Central government.

Even though the lack of financial assistance retards the possibilities or opportunities for poor families to educate their children, the expectation of poor students remains the same as those for properly aided students. In Uttar Pradesh there are many factors that results in this poor support which are examined extensively in this article. However, it is mentioned in the article that the economic growth rate in this part of India, is a contributing factor. How different is this from the Jamaican system? Or is this community a replica of the Jamaican system? An analysis of educational development in the state reveals that the goal of universalizing elementary education in a resource-poor state seems to be elusive in the near future. Neither the financing pattern of education per se nor elementary education in particular is conducive to achieving the target of universal elementary education. The article was insightful and informative and the use of statistics concretizes the perspective of the author.

SUMMARY

The present article examines major issues on financing elementary education in Uttar Pradesh in the recent two decades, from 1980-81 to 1999-2000. The idea of the study is as follows: First, a brief account of the socio economic development and a review of educational development in the state is presented. Then the discussion brings out the importance of education in the overall state plan and non-plan resources. The next section is devoted to the analysis on financing elementary education, the role of central government, and external aid to financing elementary education.
The last section provides the concluding remarks. This study reaffirms that the goal of universal elementary education could become a reality only if there is a joint commitment between the federal and state polities. According to Ahluwelia (2000), the space in the middle between the rest of India and Uttar Pradesh has widened substantially in the 1990s as annual growth in per-capita income slowed down to 1.2 percent in Uttar Pradesh. The two chronic problems of the state are poverty and unemployment. In India, Uttar Pradesh is one of the most educationally backward states with 43 per cent of the population non-literate according to the 2001 census. The snail’s pace in literacy progress has been a cry in Uttar Pradesh for three decades from 1961 to 1981 as can be seen in the findings of this article. Also based on the findings, children enrolled in elementary schools were 30.8 lakhs (a “lakh” is 100,000) in 1950-51 and increased to 166 lakhs in 1999-2000, a fivefold increase.

KEY ISSUES

Financing elementary education in Uttar Pradesh can be analysed by examining the relative importance given to elementary education in state’s income, government budget expenditure and in the total education expenditure covering a period of about two decades from 1980-81 to 1999-00. It can be observed from Table 14 (see appendix) that around 1.2 to 2.4 percent of the State domestic product is allocated for elementary education over a period of 20 years. The relative importance of elementary education in the state budget ranges from 8 to 13 percent. However, there is fluctuation among various years specifically in the period of the 1990s, which could be attributable to its slow growth of income and fiscal crisis and to some extent the impact of structural adjustment program and economic reforms. As far as the share of elementary education expenditure in the total expenditure on education is concerned, it ranges from 39 to 64 percent in the state. In many years, it is between 40 to 50 percent. In the 1990s, when there was greater mobilization of resources and various movements towards achieving the goals of education for all, the norm in many states with regard to intra-sectoral allocation for elementary education was 60 percent. In Uttar Pradesh, the share of elementary education was only 49 percent even in 1998-99. These figures confirm that the resource poor state is spending much less on elementary education than the national average. It indicates the need for a larger presence of the central government in resource sharing especially in a poor state like Uttar Pradesh, which is not able to generate sufficient resources to meet the challenges of universalizing elementary education.

The National mid-day meal scheme, a centrally sponsored scheme, provides ration to the enrolled children in Uttar Pradesh as against the provision of cooked meals in other states. Further, it is noted that the scheme failed to set any target for enrollment and attendance from 1995 to 1999. Poor governance, increased corruption, declining performance, and lack of concern for the poor contributed to the very ineffective public programs and delivery in the state are manifest (Hasan, 2001). But, the scenario in other states is much different (see Table 17 in appendix).

The role of the State assumes paramount significance in reaching the goal of providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14. The amount of resources required for accomplishing the unfinished agenda remains high. This section highlights the major issues relating to financing education in Uttar Pradesh, viz., the relative importance of education in the overall economic development of the state in terms of planned and non-planned expenditures; the relative share of education expenditure in planned and non-planned accounts, and education and other departments’ contribution to education focusing the period from 1980-81 to 1999-2000.
LESSON LEARNT/ APPLIED TO THE LOCAL EDUCATION SCENARIO

The two projects are good examples of flexibility in project design, scaling up and increasing the capacity of a successful pilot program, and sustainability of the program over the long-term. These projects also offer a model for country centered ownership. The project has helped to establish monitoring and evaluation systems that have been adopted by the state governments. External grant funding to the tune of 30 percent of the total funds served to augment additional central assistance from state’s resources. The problem with District Primary Education Project (DPEP) in general is that, though external finance is growing, domestic resources either stagnate or decline, resulting in what is referred to as “borrowed growth.” Sustainability of borrowed growth is questionable. The planned resources in some states grew slowly or stagnated and declined in real terms. It therefore suggests that there needs to be a concomitant increase in state level resources as well. In this sense, DPEP has not promoted significant additional resources for education from the state. With regard to Uttar Pradesh, the available information reported in Table 18 do not seem to suggest the financial impact of DPEP. It is to be noted that external financing of education could not be significant for a large state like Uttar Pradesh where both the size of the education budget and the magnitude of the problem are huge.

Regarding Uttar Pradesh, it suggests the state’s inability to absorb the center’s assistance through planned transfers under the various schemes. Pressures of non-plan expenditures (basically salary component) have forced a reduction in planned expenditures thus the growth of the system is stymied. Government investment in incentives for education will serve as greater motivation for the children from low income families to enroll in schools. Nonetheless, it can be seen in Table 16 (see appendix) that hardly any expenditure is incurred for student incentives such as scholarships and textbooks.

ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

It is a well written review article with cogent points supported by statistical facts, and past literature. Although the article offered a comprehensive issue as a matter of importance, it is dated and question why the editor(s) had not asked that this be updated. The article was published in 2004, making that the base year, of which 52.1% of the references were less than or equal to five years (ie. 5 years old). This means that 47.9% of the references were old which proved to be a serious limitation of the study. A critical strength of this article was the use of statistics which the author was able to substantiate arguments and uses them to forward perspective. While the use of statistics was a strength for the paper, the author could have made more use of it by way of further analyses such as bivariate and multivariate analyses. If the author had done so, this would have increased depth of the analysis instead of merely regurgitating the data.

CONCLUSION

The issue of the public expenditure on education goes back to the 1950s (Friedman, 1955). According to Friedman (1955),

"... the gain from the education of a child accrues not only to the child or to his parents but to other members of the society; the education of my child contributes to other people’s welfare by promoting a stable and democratic society...”

Clearly, from examining Rani’s article, it can be assumed that the author was influenced by possibly the perspective of Friedman and accordingly was able to justify the need for educating people, making education accessible to all, and central government playing a pivotal role.
in the process of education. Rani’s work supports the longstanding argument for public expenditure on education. It is a well written article that offered rationale and justifications for public expenditure, especially equity and coverage, among poor people in a province in India.

REFERENCE
