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WAYS TO IMPROVE THE INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The number of institutions and enrollment in higher education continue their rapid growth, but the quality of this education remains uncertain. A small number of state subsidized institutions attract a thin top layer of talent from each year's cohort. High selectivity of admission to these elite institutions provides a screen valued by potential employers. Domestic and foreign demand for the services of these few thousand students has created an inflated reputation of the overall quality of India's higher education. The number of such graduates remains small relative to the population and the demands of India's economy for educated manpower. Reliable estimates of value-added by higher education, beyond the screening value of admission to elite institutions, are needed to assess colleges and universities, and to guide educational policy. Graduate education the seed farm of higher education and scholarship continues in an alarming state of disarray with respect to both quality and quantity. Pressed by budgetary constraints, the government appears to have decided on profit-oriented privatization of higher education as the solution. Political and business classes, with significant overlap between the two, see higher education as a source of lucrative private returns on investment. There is little theoretical or empirical evidence that supports the prospects of success of a for-profit model in building quality higher education. Some recent proposals hold promise of radical reform and renovation, including regulatory restructuring. It remains unclear whether the government has the wisdom, determination, financing, and power to push reforms past the resistance from entrenched faculty and from the political and business classes. It's absolutely true that the future and overall development of any country depends upon the fact that how educated its citizens are. Though, gaining a professional degree is not possible for everyone due to various reasons, but what actually matters is the basic education. That is, one should know how to read and how to write. India has shown significant improvement in education since 1947 until today. However, we believe that there is always some room for improvement in every field. So let us discuss 10 ways that can help us improve our education system. To strengthen the Indian Education System, an educational policy was adopted by the Indian Parliament in 1968. Education was made an important and integral part of the national development efforts. Our Government assumed full responsibility for the proper education of the children and adults. Hence, right to primary education or elementary education is now a fundamental right in India.

Keywords: India, economic growth, higher education, university, reforms, innovation, doctoral programs, financing, regulation, teacher scarcity, investment

Primary education system

At the time of our Independence, majority of the children were deprived of the benefits of primary education. Since then, India has made good progress in the field of primary education.

Statistics point to the fact that a large percentage of children in age group 6-11 years have been enrolled in school. At some places, the enrollment rate is 90 percent. However, it is proving difficult to bring the remaining into the ambit of universal primary education is because of reasons such as: some live in inaccessible areas, lack of parent's interest to send their children to school, there is a deep-rooted prejudice against educating girls, there are practical difficulties like distance and inaccessibility of schools. Other difficulties faced by the primary education system are: The syllabus of our primary students is quite heavy. A little child of primary school has to read a large number of books. Many books were written in a way that doesn't create interest in young minds. We have less teachers and professors that our needs. Moreover, the dropout rate is so high that universal elementary education (UEE) is quite an elusive goal. Also read the importance of Primary education and condition and status of Primary education in India.

Non-formal education

Since, education is important for the growth of developing nation like India, various steps have been devised to cut the percentage of dropouts. Non-formal education – to offer educational facilities for the drop-outs and to fulfill the desire for additional education in the grown-up-drop-outs is being given a new orientation to make it purposeful and to attract a broad spectrum of the drop-out population. In Indian Education system, adult education programmes covers the age group 1-35 and has been vigorously implemented by the government with the cooperation of many voluntary agencies. Even then much has to be done to realize the target which is 100% coverage adults. (Also read: Short article on Adult Education)

Secondary education system

Secondary education is the fulcrum or central point of a nation's education system. With regard to the pattern of secondary education experiments have been going on since Independence. The 10+2+3 system of education which was recommended by Kothari Commission of 1965 is now being implemented in almost all the States and Union Territories of India. This system (pattern) provides for two streams – the higher secondary schools; the academic streams paving the way for higher education and the vocational stream of terminal nature. However, very few schools have been able to offer this terminal education. As a result, schools with academic streams still

abound, thereby defeating the very purpose of reducing the acute competition for college education. In many States education is free up to the lower secondary level, and in a few states education is free up to the higher secondary stage.

Higher education system

Higher education system in India is imparted through about 180 universities and neatly 4500 colleges. In addition there are several institutions imparting specialized knowledge and technical skills. Since education is a State subject. The State Governments in India are free to open new university. Grants Commission is an authority which dispenses grants to the universities. However, its formal sanction is not necessary to open a university. Taking advantage of this provision many State governments in India have opened a large number of universities in recent years. The tremendous increase in the number of students and of educational institutions has given rise to the term 'education explosion'. No doubt, this has resulted in serious problems such as inadequacy of financial resources and infrastructure and dilution of personal attention to the education and character-formation of the students. Also, there is the unwanted side-effect of enormous increase in the number of educated unemployed. However, we cannot overlook the advantages of education explosion in India. Mere increase in the percentage of literate people does not indicate a qualitative change in the educational standards of the people and a real improvement in manpower resources of India. Unemployment problem in India cannot be blamed on the availability of large masses educational people in India.

Medium of education

Uncertainty and vacillation have marked the government's policy about the medium of education in India. Mahatma Gandhi wanted basic education to be imparted through the mother tongue. Our Constitution provides that facilities for primary education in mother tongue should be provided to all Indian citizens. For this purpose, the Central Government may issue directives to the State Governments. Thus, the requirements of linguistic minorities are attended properly. Even before Independence, most of the students in schools had their education through the regional language/mother tongue. The government policy in respect of the medium of education has not changed. However, a significant increase in the number of schools – primary and

secondary – imparting education through the English medium is a significant development. Thousands of nursery schools that have mushroomed since the last decade purport to impart education to infants through English.

We need to create a balance system of education. Education should be imparted through the Mother tongue and through English language as well. Studying in one's mother language is very important. It develops a feeling of love and respect for his mother language. Since, most of the cultural and epic books are written in mother language, a person would be devoid of his own cultural richness if he is unable to read book written in his mother language.

On the other hand, English language is a globally accepted language for communication. Even in India, people of different states often communicate in English. English language bridges the language gap between people. Hence, we cannot afford to ignore the importance of English language.

Regarding the medium of instruction in colleges and universities, some State Governments have already decided, in principle, to switch over to the regional language. However, the implementation in this respect has remained very slow. If regional languages are fully used in imparting college education, mobility from one region to another for the higher education in India will be seriously hampered. But continuing higher education through the English medium is disfavored by many politicians and some educationalists. The alternative of imparting college education through the Hindi medium throughout the country makes no sense. Thus, the dilemma in respect of medium of education still continues.

Improved curricula

There is a general feeling that the curricula adopted for different stages of education are substandard. This impression is not borne out by facts. The syllabus for irrelevant and valueless course in schools and colleges have been updated and upgraded. The NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) has set the right tone in this respect. Regarding reforms in the curricula in schools and colleges, a mention may be made of the introduction of physical education and services like National Social Service (NSS) and National Cadet Corps (NCC) as part of the curriculum and of the inculcating of emotional national integration through

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teaching of Indian National Movement. Constant review of the syllabus and methods of teaching in the light of the innovations and methods adopted in advanced countries has certainly resulted in improved standards. This is not to say that the average standard of teaching and average proficiency of the students has improved a lot. The general educational standard has been diluted by decrease in the commitment of teachers and by the general decline in morality and standards of life. In many colleges and schools examination has become a farce and real assessment of the intellectual and other capabilities of the students is not done.

Work-oriented education system

Work-oriented education system was advocated by Mahatma Gandhi and others. However, vocational education system in India has proved an up-hill task. The present pattern of 10+2+3 with a vocational stream has touched only the fringe of the problem. The fact is that people resent being taught crafts and traditional occupations in the school. However, the modern commercial education which imparts skills in typing, shorthand, reception and the like has met with better popular approval and demand. The core of the issue is whether education and employment should be de-linked. Such de-linking will have the great 'merit' of reducing attraction for college education. But de-linking or jobs from degrees and certificates is fraught with unforeseen dangers. In any case employment can be provided only on the basis of certain qualifications. If the qualifications are not to be determined by the universities and other conventional examining bodies, the same work will have to be done by the recruiting agency or somebody else. Besides, the scheme of not prescribing the bare minimum educational requirement for posts will pave the way for gradual erosion of standards necessary for different posts. As pointed out earlier, education is not to be blamed for the widespread unemployment in India.

1. Skill Based Learning – Schools should be allowed to provide skill based training. It can be done best by recognizing the areas of interest on any student. If someone is interested in repairing mobiles, there should be provision for mobile engineering course. If someone loves trying hands in handicraft items, the training should be provided for the same and so on. Skill based training will ensure one thing – Self-employment!

2. Focus on Rural Education – Mahatma Gandhi said, “The future of India lies in its villages. If the villages perish, India will perish too.” This alone explains the significance of focus on education in villages. We should have schemes and schools that provide good education to children in villages. Also, it should be assured that good and experienced teachers are there to provide education to children.

3. Free Basic Computer Skills Classes – The reason that we suggest this point is straightforward. It is the era of Information Technology and hence, education is incomplete without having basic computer training in it. Be it accounts, engineering, teaching just the simple back office jobs, computers are everywhere and so, our pupil should have basic knowledge about them.

4. Teachers Training – Our country has already got many training programs for teachers. The need of the hour is to design a curriculum for teachers in such a way that uniformity in teaching standards all over India. Moreover, teachers should be trained in such a way that they know their rights as well as duties.

5. Subsidies and Grants for Professional Courses – We are lucky to have different schemes existing in various schemes for the underprivileged as well as for the meritorious students. This can further improve in this area by having subsidies and grants in various professional courses. This way, aspiring students will not have to leave their studies in between due to their financial limitations.

6. Educate Parents – Educating parents is equally important so that they do not force their children for career which do not actually interest them. Also, necessary steps should be taken to augment and improve the communication between teachers and parents.

7. Health education – Another area that needs improvement and attention is the health of children. We should try to include Yoga or various other workouts in our education system so that children get to learn the value of good health and maintain the same.

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8. Smart Classes – Though many of the Indian schools and institutes are already following this concept, but we should take a step where all educational institutes can be connected with the concept of smart classes. With the help of different audio-video devices, multimedia concepts and other necessary IT elements, we can make our students learn and understand in a much better and modern way.

9. E-libraries – Introducing this concept in our education system will be of great help as anyone will be able to access the books and required study material from anywhere with ease. Moreover, the E-libraries can be updated quickly with new material and books.

10. Making Sports Compulsory – Last, but not the least, we should try to make sports compulsory in our education system. This will not only help students to embrace a bright career, but will also help our country in the long run! Moreover, this option will also generate employment for so many talented sports persons who, due to some reason, could not further pursue their career in sports.

Conclusion

India is facing a deep crisis in higher education, which is being masked by the success of narrow professional schools. The veneer of the few institutions of excellence masks the reality that the median higher education institutions in India have become incapable of producing students who have skills and knowledge. The process neither serves a screening or signaling function nor prepares students to be productive and responsible citizens. Consequently, students are forced to spend more years (and, increasingly, large resources) in acquiring some sort of post-graduate professional qualification as they desperately seek ways to signal their qualities to potential employers. It would not be an exaggeration to say that India's current system of higher education is centralized, politicized and militates against producing general intellectual virtues. The fact that the system nonetheless produces a noticeable number of high quality students has to do with the sheer number of students and the Darwinian struggle at the high school to get admission into the few good institutions.

The most acute weakness plaguing India's higher education is a crisis of governance. Its most visible manifestation is a crisis of faculty. The generation that was inspired by a broad

commitment to the public good has retired or will do so soon. There is little likelihood of sufficient replenishment, given entrenched mediocrity in institutions with life-time appointments, few competitive pressures and abysmal governance. The prevailing political ideological climate in which elite institutions are seen as being anti-democratic, finds its natural response in political control to influence admissions policies, internal organization, the structure of courses and funding. As quality deteriorates, students are less and less willing to pay the very resources without which quality cannot be improved. In India's case, the growth of private sector higher education institutions has been the answer and, increasingly, the consumption of education abroad. However, as our analysis suggests, private sector investment has been confined to professional streams, bypassing the majority of students. Furthermore, it is plagued by severe governance weaknesses, raising doubts as to its ability to address the huge latent demand for quality higher education in the country.

Remember, the education system of ancient India has always marked its impression all over the world. So why not achieve another milestone in education by making some more improvements? With little effort, planning, hard-work and a positive attitude, we can definitely take our education system to new heights!

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