

Contemporary Issues And Challenges In The Indian Education System

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Abstract: Education is the backbone of every country. A country will not be able to survive in the competitive world, if its education system is not capable of contributing for its development. Indian education system is widely criticized in multi-dimensions for its failure to create required employability in its students according to the industry requirements and its inability to contribute to inclusive growth in the nation as a whole. This paper attempts to highlight the issues and provide some solutions to resolve them. The study uses secondary data from various available sources. The researcher presumes that the issues in the present education system that are daunting the growth of this country can be tackled effectively if constructive and committed actions are taken by the Government to resolve them.

Keywords: Education system, Government, Issues, Quality, Solution

I. Introduction

It is generally hyped that India has a strong educational structure with premier education. The different yardsticks such as new courses, changing curriculum, dynamic methodologies and teacher training facilitate in delivery of quality content. E-learning, student-friendly learning, increased adoption of extra and co-curricular activities, etc. in India attract students from other countries such as China, Canada, South Africa, Germany, Canada, USA, UK and Australia. However, if one sees the employability of the output, the status of unemployment and underemployment, the results are not encouraging. It is grieved that there is lack of quality education for the poor, and only a small fraction of students, around one tenth from schools, go for higher studies. It is criticized widely that many students study through memorization, and every programme is planned exam-oriented and not learning-oriented. Hence, India's education system is a stumbling block in achieving its objectives of economic development. This study intends to understand and evaluate the issues and challenges in the Indian educational system and to provide solutions.

Objectives of the Study

- a) To understand the status of Indian Education System
- b) To evaluate the issues and challenges to Indian Education System
- c) To ascertain the possible solutions to resolve the issues
- d) To provide suggestions for improvement

Research methodology

This research output is the outcome of an overview of studies conducted on the problems of Indian Education System. This is basically a qualitative research and follows the experiential approach. It uses secondary data for its analysis. Discussions with experts form part of the research work.

Scope of the study

The study exhibits the different structures existing in the Education Sector and their drawbacks. It attempts to narrate the problems in them and the challenges ahead. The study is concluded with recommendations for effective implementation considering the democratic nature of India.

Research limitations

Though the study has a vivid outlook on the issues of Indian Education System and provide feasible solutions, they should be taken in to consideration keeping in mind the following:

- The study covers a wider view of the Indian Education System. It does not cover the intrinsic issues of every state of India.
- The analysis is done based on secondary data available at various sources. It lacks primary data.
- The researcher has not intended to compare Indian Education System with that of other countries.
- The solutions are derived largely based on the public view and conclusions of other researchers.

II. Indian Educational System – A Review

India is known for its educational excellence. Indian Education has recently gained global recognition with its distinguished diversity character. Different curriculum bodies govern the school education system in India. They are:

1. The National Council of Educational Research and Training
2. The State government Boards
3. Central Board of Secondary Education
4. The Council of Indian School Certificate Examination
5. The National Institute of Open Schooling
6. Islamic Madrasah School Boards
7. Autonomous schools like Woodstock School, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Auroville, Patha Bhavan and Ananda Marga Gurukula.
8. International schools, under the International Baccalaureate, or the Cambridge

There are 34 boards of secondary and senior secondary education in India (Studylib, 2017). More than 95% of the schools in India are affiliated to State Boards.

Private and Government schools

There are schools owned by Government as well as private parties (aided and self-financed). In 2006, 19% of Indian children were privately educated. This figure jumped to 38% in 2014 (MHRD., 2016). Private schooling has been growing continuously and found desirable by the people, irrespective of their socio-economic status.

International schools

In January 2015, the International Schools Consultancy listed India as having 410 international schools. More than 95% of the international schools offer a dual curriculum (international and a national curriculum like CBSE, ICSE or State board).

Higher education

India has about 152 central universities, 316 state universities and 191 private universities. Other institutions include 33,623 colleges, including 1,800 exclusive women's colleges, and 12,748 institutions offering Diploma Courses (Indrail, 2015). The University Grants Commission coordinates, determines and maintains the standards of higher education at various levels. The bodies responsible for the different professional programmes are: All India Council for Technical Education, Indian Council for Agriculture Research, Distance Education Council, National Council for Teacher Education, Bar Council of India, Medical Council of India, Indian Nursing Council, Central Council of Homeopathy, Pharmacy Council of India, Central Council of Indian Medicine and Dentist Council of India.

Open and distance learning

At the school level, National Institute of Open Schooling provides opportunities for continuing education to those who missed completing school education. 14 lakh students are enrolled at the secondary and higher secondary level through open and distance learning. In 2012, various state governments also introduced State Open School to provide distance education.

At higher education level, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) co-ordinates distance learning. It has a cumulative enrolment of 15 lakh, serviced through 53 regional centres. The Distance Education Council an authority of IGNOU is co-coordinating 13 State Open Universities and 119 institutions of correspondence courses in conventional universities.

Vocational education

All India Council of Technical Education reported in 2013 that there were more than 4,599 vocational institutions that offer degrees, diploma and post-diploma in architecture, engineering, hotel management, infrastructure, pharmacy, technology, town services and others. Total annual intake capacity for technical diplomas and degrees exceeded 34 lakhs.

In 2016, 10 public and 10 private educational institutions were made world-class. Rs 1,000 crore budget was provided for higher education. Rs 1,700 crore was provided for 1500 multi-skill development centres. 62 new navodaya vidyalaya were created to provide quality education. A digital literacy scheme was launched for covering six crore additional rural households. The National Skill Development Mission was initiated to impart training to 76 lakh youth (India Today, 2017). Entrepreneurship training was provided across schools and colleges along with massive online courses. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was introduced to increase focus on quality of education.

III. Issues And Challenges – An Analysis

India has been a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-linguistic society. Every State has a different and distinct identity. Dealing with various aspirations of such people in a democratic country is indeed a challenge to the Govt of India. The various issues are outlined here:

Lack of quality education

In the top 100 universities list by 'Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings', none of the Indian universities could be found in the list. In the 2017 rankings by the HRD ministry, only 2,995 institutions (6%) participated from around 51,000-strong higher educational institutions in India. There is severe regional imbalance too. In the overall rankings, of the 100 best institutions, 67 are from just eight states. Among the best 100 universities, 40 are in three states. Among the best 100 colleges, 77 are from just five states (Nanda, Prashant K. 2017).

Corruption in education

Corruption in Indian education system has been eroding the quality of education. It is one of the major contributors to domestic black money. Payment to Management at dark rooms and seeking admissions is increasing. 'Get full salary in the account, pay back part to Management by blank signed cheques' is also a practice in some private schools.

No proper value education

Value education is not offered in the schools and colleges. If offered, religion and hatred are spread in the name of value education. Many of the doctors, lawyers, CAs, politicians and Govt servants who are supposed to be the saviours of the society, suffer from serious charges of corruption. Old-age homes are increasing. Suicides are increasing. The meaning of love is eventually changing. The education-led technology, inventions and innovations are being misused.

Poor Women's education

Women have a much lower literacy rate than men. Conservative cultural attitudes prevent girls from attending schools. Despite Govt's attempts to provide incentives viz. midday meals, free books and uniforms, girls' attendance is poor. Though the minimum age for marriage is eighteen, many girls get married much earlier. Therefore, at the secondary level, female drop-out rate is high.

Lack of Facilities

As per 2016 Annual Survey of Education Report, 3.5% schools in India had no toilet facility while only 68.7% schools had useable toilet facility. 75.5% of the schools surveyed had library in 2016, a decrease from 78.1% in 2014. Percentage of schools with separate girls' toilet has increased from 32.9% in 2010 to 61.9% in 2016. 74.1% schools had drinking water facility and 64.5% of the schools had playground.

Curriculum issues

There are many different curriculum systems that confuse the students who wish to achieve the same objective such as Engineering, Medical and Business Administration. At the higher education level, there is no uniformity in the syllabuses taught for the same programme. Syllabus revision is done quite often without considering the contemporary requirements of industries. There is lack of diversity in the subjects one can take in colleges. Flexibility to cross over streams is also lacking.

Public school workforce absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism in India is exorbitant. World Bank estimates show the cost in salaries paid to absent teachers is US \$2 billion every year. In a study by Kremer, etc, they found 25% of private sector teachers and 40% of public sector medical workers were absent during the survey. Absence rates among them ranged from 14.6% in Maharashtra to 41.9% in Jharkhand.

Wrong societal outlook

For Governments, more scoring is success. English is becoming the measure of intellect. Hence, parents of today take least interest in vernacular medium of education. Due to the perceived notion of inferior quality, Govt schools are becoming the last choice for many. Education-seeking migration has become a matter of pride for many families. Most of the school students spend majority of their learning time in preparing for competitive exams. Coaching classes too flourish due to this unwarranted competition, leading to a class-divide.

IV. Solutions: A Way Forward

Give more significance to primary and secondary education

Primary education is the backbone of education system of a country. If the teachers at primary and secondary level are unskilled, not qualified and less-paid, all further studies will be in stake. Hence, more attention is required on primary education rather than higher education. Presently, higher education institutions compete to get quality students. The weaker and less reputed colleges end-up with poor students. This affects consecutively the employability of youth, and creates a class-divide.

Give importance to technology in education

India has to embrace computer and high speed internet technology. Our educational delivery mechanisms should take the wealth of human capital to the masses. The models of brick and mortar schools, colleges and universities will have to be integrated and interlinked with ICT. The Governments should invest more in technological infrastructure that will ease the knowledge accessibility.

Encourage innovation and creativity

The system should reward those who deserves highest academic honor. The crammers should not be rewarded. Our testing and marking systems need to be built to recognize original contributions, creativity, problem solving and innovation. Ranks should be awarded accordingly.

Personalize the education

Indian education system is built on the assumption that if a thing is good for one child, it is good for all. But, one massive education system cannot be suitable to all. Some people are visual learners, others are auditory learners. Some kids learn faster, some do slow. The syllabus should be designed in such a way that every learner's latent ability is identified and motivated. Hasty and fast learning should be discouraged.

Train the trainers continuously

A teacher is an entrepreneur and creator. The performance of a teacher should not be restricted to classroom. It needs to be opened up for the world to see with internet. There has to be leaders in teaching positions, not salaried people holding their mantle. Hence, regular training is a necessity.

Change the aptitude to teach

Teaching jobs are widely regarded as safe, well-paid and risk-free jobs. Most of the teachers do not want to change. As they become experienced, they get septic, and not even think of the nature and need of the students. Understanding the present generation is the necessity. Guidelines should be made in this direction.

Provide quality education with character

Education without character is abortion and will create divisions in the society. A country that lowers the quality of education and allows score competition in exams will collapse. The mystified doctors, less skilled engineers, cowardly judges, money minded accountants, greedy businessmen, inhuman preachers and ignorant teachers cannot serve for the economy's growth. They will soon and surely doom the society with their unethical practices which no one can resist.

Deal with corruption strictly

Corrupt politicians supported by corrupt followers and corrupt police force are increasing. Frauds, burglaries, rape and sexual harassment cases are rising. Govt recruited bank managers work against the Govt's development policies. Printing of fake notes, introduction of plastic rice, egg, cabbage, etc are becoming uncontrollable. Adulteration is everywhere and in everything. Fruits become ripe with chemicals. Even the small kids' products are adulterated. The Govt should deal with such unscrupulous people severely.

Make education affordable to all

If we have to see our country as a knowledge economy, we need to offer quality education to all and not rationing of education. Admissions in educational institutions should not be on caste or religion basis. Financial support to students based on caste and religion should be immediately stopped. It is seen that people earning good amount of income enjoy Govt incentives and they become inactive comparatively due to the caste/religion benefits. Baseless reservations create a societal division, and lead to brain drain. Reservation will vanish if the scarcity in education is avoided.

Nationalise education sector

Education in India has been regulated on a not-for profit basis. This encourages corrupt people, money launderers and politicians to use education institutions to hide their black money, and earn heavy income from education business through clever structuring. Govt cannot regulate them. Hence, it is high time to nationalize private educational institutions in tune with federal structure and compensate the investors sufficiently. Education up to tenth should be made free of cost.

V. Conclusion

Education is a country's lifeline, and it has to be given more importance than defence in any country. There is a dire need for revolutionary changes in the India's education system, not only in the syllabus and pedagogy, but also in the attitude towards the test and marks system. India can use its vast human resources productively if the learning system is made effective. As a child is born, it is painted with religion and caste by the cowardly society and is bombarded with all biased thoughts and unruly philosophies. Every child has unlimited potential and it should be allowed to be free from our ill thoughts. It should be taught to reduce the inequality. We can do a lot. But we are not working with required seriousness.

If the Govt schools are failing, it is primarily because of non-availability or absence of teachers, no headmasters for governance, lack of initiatives by teachers, lack of guidance to students, lack of infrastructure, increased involvement of politicians and more bureaucratic control. Indifferent parents including Govt school teachers, MPs, MLAs and ministers send their wards to pvt schools. It is a shameful situation. The government will have to work on it seriously.

The schools Kendriya vidyalaya and Navodaya vidyalaya are far better than public schools. The way of teaching is superb. The qualifications of teachers are unmatched. These schools are doing wonders, providing not only quality education but also opportunity to excel. No private school can match their infrastructure; both are Govt schools with very low fee. Why can't we adopt the same philosophy in all Govt schools? Governments do a lot in education, but not fetching the results, since the attempts are neither completely organized nor consistent.

The system of education should be learner-centric rather than mark-centric. Children must be allowed to choose subjects according to their interests. They should be encouraged to research on their own from library books and the Internet and share them in the class. This will help them to develop self-confidence, self-dependence and openness to criticism.

Employability is a serious problem today. Somehow people get degrees and become unemployed or underemployed. The quality of education is directly linked to the resources available and it is important for the Govt to improve resource allocation to bring about qualitative changes in the field of education.

Though the number of students and programmes increases every year, India has failed to produce world class universities both in the private sector or the public sector. The scarcity of quality education should be avoided. The central Govt should allocate enough money to open new schools, colleges and universities, overhaul the entire system and invest in technology and innovation related to the education system. Every child born in this country should have equal opportunity to learn, grow and excel in life with quality education blended with character. A vibrant nation is created by the energetic youth and active media. The youth and media can be positive only if the politicians are honest and responsible.

VI. Recommendations

- Indian Govt needs to invest heavily in infrastructure and teachers' training. At least 8-10% of India's GDP must be invested in the education sector.
- Malnutrition affects the children's ability to learn. Poverty and nutrition deficiency should be taken care of, which is the bounden duty of the Govt.
- Teachers should encourage creativity in students. The latter should be exposed to economic, environmental and societal problems.
- The strength of a class should not be more than 25 at school and 50 at higher education. A child cannot get the required attention of a teacher if the strength is unreasonable.
- Exams should be tuned to assess the student's understanding of the subject.
- Syllabuses learnt by students should be the same when the same exam is to be appeared.
- Extracurricular activities, sports activity, NSS, NCC, etc should be started compulsorily at school level. Education oriented excursions/tours should be made a part of the curriculum.
- The contents such as ethics in life, value building, understanding of society, patriotism, greatness of leaders and sacrifices of parents need to be covered compulsorily in a subject in schools at every level.
- Teaching religions should be blocked at schools.
- Quality seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized to train the trainers to cope up with the changing culture and the changing needs of the students and the society.

- Skill development which the Government is doing now need to be strengthened.
- Proper measures should be taken by Govt to provide quality education to all at affordable prices.
- Reservation system and Management quota system be abolished. Ownership of educational units by politicians and religious groups should be discouraged.
- Unwanted competitions among educational institutions should be avoided.
- Media should become more responsible. Every news agency should publicise everyday at least one incident on the need of quality education and the change required in people for a healthy nation.
- Teaching should be the highest paid service in the country. Uniform salaries should be paid to all teachers.

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