

Challenges and Opportunities in Indian Education Sector – Quality Education

Er (Dr) Labh Singh¹ ITS (Retd) Ph.D, B.E, FIE, MBA

Abstract : Poor quality education is leading to poor learning outcomes in India, ultimately pushing children out of the education system and leaving them vulnerable to child labour, abuse and violence.(1) The growing concern about the deterioration in the education industry has been a matter of discussion and deliberations in international conferences, seminars and other fora. There is a set of seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals under UN resolution 2015 and these Global goals are to be achieved by 2030. Incidentally SDG No.4 pertains to Quality education. In fact this article is partly dedicated to UN Mission-2030.

A. Introduction

The point being made here is that the present day teaching does not fulfill the expectations, aspirations and demands of the students. These demands may be in terms of quality of education, employability of candidates or its applicability in the corporate world. I will call this a teaching –crisis and can summarize it in three E's i.e.

- Education quality
- Employability
- Enterprisability

B. Need for study and research

In India the student's performance is not used in analyzing the understanding level achieved by students and to improve their grey areas before finalizing the result.(2) industry is in a very bad shape, poor health and unattractive these days. The factors responsible are given as under:-

1. Absence of long term planning and policy making in view of future needs of economy and world trends.
2. Uncertain future of students due to poor job market.
3. Short term compulsion for underemployment option and job hopping due to low job satisfaction.
4. Non-availability of long term capital funds or loans at easy terms and conditions for students and institutions.
5. Low compensation to and poor motivation of teaching

faculty.

6. Mushrooming of educational institutions with poor learning infrastructure.

7. Brain-drain resulting in exodus to Universities abroad.

C. Discussion and Analysis

In line with the urgent need for quality education I have analyzed and identified five major challenges being faced by the stakeholders ie Govt, industry, students, entrepreneurs, investors, teaching community and society at large.

These five A's are listed as under:-

1. Availability
2. Affordability
3. Accessibility
4. Applicability
5. Accountability

Alternatively we can say that the need to achieve this global goal (SDG4) for Quality Education arises because of following deficient factors:-

1. There is a gap between demand and supply of education.
2. Presently education is not affordable at large.
3. Education is not accessible equally to all.
4. Education does not meet the market requirements and hence lacks employability.
5. There is a crisis of creating capacity, capability and infrastructure which is the domain of stakeholder who are also answerable for this.

Let us discuss in brief each of these factors.

a. Availability

As you will agree the distribution of education facilities is mostly skewed. There is a concentration of schools, colleges and universities in cities whereas it is inadequate in rural areas as well as in remote areas.

So in cities education supply is more than demand whereas it is totally reversed in remote and rural areas.

b. Affordability

Secondary education covers children aged 12 to 18, providing secondary education to children in a government school for 6 years now costs approx Rs 30600 whereas the same education in a private school cost approx Rs.4 lac. If the Kid is studying in a boarding, then the parents spend approx Rs 18 Lac for the next 6 years.169% has been the rise in inflation in primary and secondary education from 2005 to 2011, according to a survey by Assocham. (3)

- Due to the inequality of income distribution within the countries and across the continents there is a large population with low per capita income which cannot afford to acquire education. These people are deprived of quality education despite the fact that their contribution to GDP is significant and they deserve best education equally well.

c. Accessibility

- Getting a cue from point (a) above, there is a supply-demand gap in cities and villages for education which results in the problem of accessibility e.g. students from rural areas (demand) will have to travel or migrate all the way to cities (supply) for education which in turn will be expensive and hence unaffordable.

For the RTE (Right To Education) Act and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be realised, it is essential that children receive quality, early childhood education to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. Data indicates that slightly over 70% of children between the ages of 3 and 6 are attending pre-primary education.(4)

- This inaccessibility has resulted into education-scarcity due to supply-demand gaps.

d. Applicability

Employers are demanding skills from graduates which are outside the subject area of study in Higher Education. Indeed, some employers have placed less importance on graduates' actual degree discipline in favor of the more generic skills which they have acquired.(5)

- As a consequence of inaccessibility and non-affordability the education distribution is not only inadequate but also does not meet the industry and govt standards leaving behind much desirable.

- One reason for this unemployability is absence of research on quality education and/or lack of interface with industry so as to know the market requirements of skill level and introduction in curriculum.

e. Accountability

There is no/very little accountability of various stakeholders in the education ecosystem. I mean that there is no method designed to hold any group or individual responsible for failure to meet the expectations, aspirations and demand of the students to become self reliant and contribute significantly for nation building. Some issues are list below:-

- Poor infrastructure in the institutions ranging from basic amenities, transport facility /roads/connectivity to research laboratories and incubation centers.
- Non-availability of competent teaching staff and visiting faculty.
- Absence of hands-on-skill development and innovation-rich projects.

Another important reason for skewed, uneven and inequality-like wide-education-gap conditions is not only the funds availability but poor fund management. There are priority crises in the institutions and funds might get more weightage to non priority areas e.g. unnecessary huge big buildings or marketing expenses (big cultural events) and avoidable cosmetic expenses. Whereas priority should be given to the items and function relating to enhancement of core competencies of every educational institution.

D. Conclusion

The whole Diaspora in our education system realizes the low level of ranking on international level. Because of the deficiency described in above paragraphs our students try to escape to other countries either for higher education or for employment. This is very unfortunate for our country because there is loss of manpower due to brain drain. So it is of utmost importance that we should improve the quality of education by resorting to all revamping techniques and methods of teaching and skill development. In fact National Education Policy (NEP-2020) (6) can hopefully come to our rescue subsequent to its full throttle implementation by innovative policies under following highlights:-

- Shift From Rote Learning to Practical Learning. ...
- Skill Based Learning in School. ...

- Organized Pre-school Education. ...
- Flexibility in Selection of Subjects. ...
- More Focus on Tech-Based Learning. ...
(Virtual and hybrid IT cloud model)
- Focus on Teacher's Training. ...
- Internships and Work experience.

E. Recommendations

- Education should be provided on principles of equity on inclusive basis e.g. equality of gender , resources, location and technology . (**Annexure-I**)
- Industry must be a major interactive and proactive stakeholder (profit/non-profit making both) in achieving the global goal of quality education. (**Annexure-II**)
- At every stage of education level there should be a guarantee for candidates to get **suitable employment**. In a way the learning skills acquired during primary, middle and secondary school level should be based on iterative learning and if any student drops the school he should at least get a suitable job as per skills acquired and should not be un/under employed.
- **Vocational training** should be provided free of cost by the private sector. Each business unit should have a mandate to train the students in their field of interest at least without charging any fee (this is a trend these days) if not paying them any stipend. They should be trained in real time business activities under close and strict supervision as future-ready employees.
- The **performance appraisal system** of educationists must include the placement success as a criteria. While giving approval or annual review of Accreditation to various institutes and universities there should be at least 25% weightage given to the success in placement of candidates. This will improve the teaching and learning methods and techniques of institutions to **make the candidates industry-ready**.
- The lower classes e.g. 5th class onwards should have a curriculum for commercial accounting and finance as a subject to encourage entrepreneurship.

Why Entrepreneurship education? Because it equips students to seek out problem-solving opportunities, empathize with others, think creatively, take risks, accept failure as part of the growth process, and appreciate the correlation between hard work and success.

References

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5. <https://www.qs.com/employability-important-higher-education/>
6. <https://www.eatmy.news> > Skill Development 02-Aug-2020

Annexure-I Principles of Equity in Education

- Each student must be provided powerful curricula through adequate instructional and support systems to give him or her the opportunity to learn and the expectation to learn to the highest content and performance standards established for other students in his or her school, district and state.
- Each family and community within a local education agency's jurisdiction must have access to the information, health and social services, and the participatory opportunity ties necessary to assure their children's well being and contribute to their school success.
- Each school must have financial, material and programmatic resources adequate to provide each student an opportunity to learn to the highest standards established for the district, the state or the nation. Measures of resource adequacy must take into account student characteristics, the cost of relevant effective practices and geo-economic factors.
- Teachers and other educational professionals must have the commitment, knowledge and skills to provide all students with an opportunity to learn to the highest established standards. This must include male and female students of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and those who are gifted, talented or have disabilities.
- Assessment and testing instruments and practices must be fair and unbiased, aligned with curricular content and learning opportunities, and used to inform instruction. They must not be used to foreclose students' opportunity to learn to the highest standards.

Source: Educate America, Summarized by Barbara A. Bitters

Annexure-II**Ways of Achieving Industry-Institute Interface:**

For achieving a mutually beneficial relationship, there is a need for change in the approach of both the university and industry.

To promote **university-industry interaction** following steps can be undertaken:

- Establishment of university-industry partnership/interaction cell.
- Organising workshops, conferences & symposia with joint participation.
- Participation of experts from industry in curriculum development.
- Professional consultancy by the faculty to industries.
- Visits of industry executives to the university and deliver lectures on industrial practices, trends and experiences.
- Joint research programmes R&D laboratories sponsored by industries at the university.
- Scholarships/fellowships instituted by industries for students.
- Practical training of students in industries.

In order to revamp the engineering curriculum and to impart the requisite skill set to the students to enhance the employability of engineering students, AICTE has approved an action plan with the following objectives:

- i) Induction Training.
- ii) Revision of Curriculum.
- iii) Mandatory Internships.
- iv) Industry Readiness.
- v) Mandatory Accreditation.

Further, AICTE is implementing schemes namely National Employment Enhancement Mission (NEEM) and Employability Enhancement Training Program (EETP) to enhance the employability of the students. In addition, AICTE has also partnered with the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Govt of India, Internshala, NETiit and LinkedIn to provide internship opportunities and industry exposure to students for aligning their technical knowhow with industry requirements.

Source:- 19 MAR 2018 7:03PM by PIB Delhi

“Government has taken several measures to increase employability among fresh graduates”

¹About the Author

The author is an experienced telecom professional with 37 years of top level administrative experience. He is a Technologist and a management scholar and now devotes his post-retirement life for consulting, mentoring, skill development and for creating awareness for Sustainability Goals set by the UN with a prime focus on **Quality Education. (SDG-4)**.

He is Founder CEO of NEXTGEN FOSSCOM FOUNDATION - a skill development SP (Regd)