Education in India: Issue and Challenges

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Abstract

Indian education system is strongly influenced by the religious systems and few have their own indigenous approach which serve as a foundation for secondary and higher education. The current paper attempts to comprehend how these institutions have played a role in formalisation of education at secondary school system through an overview ancient, medieval, colonial and post independent periods. The present paper aims to bring out common thread as well as differences in approach towards secondary and higher education and how over a period, formalisation of education have subjected to changes in responses to merits and demerits, respectively.

Keywords: Primary and secondary education, Status, India

Introduction:

Educated mass of any country act as backbone of development. Education is considered as one of the most powerful instruments for reducing poverty and inequality. Education provides platform to enhance a country's competitiveness in the global economy. Thereby, ensuring access to quality education for all, in particular to the underprivileged population, is key to the economic and social development. The world today has more knowledge than ever before, but not everyone can benefit from it. Globally, countries have made major strides in increasing access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools, and basic literacy skills have improved tremendously. Since 2000, there has been enormous progress in achieving the target of universal primary education. The total enrolment rate in developing regions reached 91 percent in 2015, and the worldwide number of children out of school has dropped by almost half. There has also been a dramatic increase in literacy rates, and many more girls are in school than ever before. Among youth aged 15-24, the literacy rate improved globally between 1990 and 2016, increasing from 83.2% to 91.4%. Completion rates in primary school were 89.6% by 2016, and has witnessed a decline in recent years dipping from 90.7% in 2012. Few countries have achieved gender equality at all levels of education. Despite, all remarkable successes, currently one in five children, adolescents, and youth are out of school, including 64 million children of primary school age, 61 million of lower secondary school age and 138 million of upper secondary age. Progress has also faced tough challenges in developing regions due to high levels of poverty, armed conflicts and other emergencies. In Western Asia and North Africa, ongoing armed conflict has seen an increase in the proportion of children out of school. This is a worrying trend. About half of all out-of-school children of primary school age live in conflictaffected areas. Children from the poorest households are four times more likely to be out of school than those of the richest households. Disparities between rural and urban areas also remain high. While sub-Saharan Africa made the greatest progress in primary school enrolment among all developing regions – from 52 percent in 1990, up to 78 percent in 2012 – large disparities still remain. As among the primary-aged children who remain out of school, more than half of them are from sub-Saharan Africa. 103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60 percent of them are women. In developing countries, one in four girls is not in school

Another issue is the quality of education. 6 out of 10 children and adolescents are not achieving a minimum level of proficiency in reading and math. Therefore, achieving inclusive and quality education for all reaffirms the belief that education is one of the most powerful and proven vehicles for sustainable development. A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a policy intervention, education is a force multiplier which enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills, and improves people's lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods. Quality education is one of 17 Global Goals that make up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An integrated approach is crucial for progress across the multiple goals. The Sustainable Development targets for 2030 call for ensuring the completion of primary and secondary education by all boys and girls, and guaranteeing equal

access to opportunities for access to quality technical and vocational education for everyone. Policy interventions will require improving access and improving quality, as well addressing relevant obstacles which include gender inequalities, food insecurity, and armed conflict. It also aims to eliminate gender and wealth disparities with the aim of achieving universal access to a quality higher education.

Education in India

Primary and Secondary Education

Under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, government has made education free for children of 6-14 years of age. One would expect that with this promise of free education, there would be an equal number of girls enrolling in primary education. However, in reality the picture looks much different. According to a 2008 government report, educational statistics indicate that the number of girls per 100 boys is around 80% for classes upto the VIII and a little over 70% for secondary higher education that covers classes upto XII. Secondary education generally covers children in the age group of 14- 18 years, which is roughly 88.5 million people according to the 2001 Census. However, enrolment figures show that only 31 million of these are attending school (Census, 2001). Of those attending, it appears that attracting and retaining girl children for secondary education is more difficult compared with primary education as well as attracting and retaining boys at the same level of education. The possible reasons for the same are discussed later in the article.

Higher Education

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. As of 2009, India has 20 central universities, 217 state universities, 106 deemed universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and various institutes which are of national importance, such as the IITs, IIMs and universities such as JNU. Other institutions include 16000 colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under various universities and institutions (Government Report, 2009). Despite these exceptional numbers and acknowledged quality of many institutions, it is surprising that women record a lower presence across most institutions of higher education

Vocational and Technical Education

Vocational education is a separate stream of higher education aimed at providing opportunities to students to choose programmes of study towards gainful employment. The total enrolment in over 8000 institutions spread across the country catering to technical vocational skill building such as the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and the Arts and Crafts schools is of the order of 1.4 million, of which women constitute less than 28% (UNESCO report, 1991). Of the 950 or so ITIs including both government and private, 104 were set up exclusively for women giving training in areas such as receptionists, electronics, book binding and the like. Even considering technical education imparted through polytechnics, 35 of the 450 recognised ones have been exclusively set up for women, providing training in areas such as pharmacy, food technology, textile design, commercial art etc. Although the rate of participation is gradually increasing, women constitute, on an average, only about 10 percent of total enrolment in technical and vocational education at post secondary level, and about 28 percent at secondary and post secondary levels, taken together.

Table 1
Literacy Rate Trend in India 1951-2011

Census Year	Persons	Decadal Increase	Males	Females	Gender gap
1951	18.33		27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.3	9.97	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	6.15	45.96	21.97	23.99
1981	43.57	9.12	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	8.64	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.83	12.62	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	9.21	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census Of India

Current Status of Education in India: Data from Census 2011

- Literacy rate in India as per Census 2011: 74%.
- Literacy rate: Male: 82.1%; Female: 65.5%
- Kerala tops the rankings, followed by Delhi, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.
- Bihar is the lowest among states, followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, etc., however, they are improving their position.
- Bihar has a literacy rate of 63.8%, and that of women is 53.3%.
- Literacy rates for both adults as well as youths have increased, still, the absolute number of illiterates in India is as much as India's population was at the time of independence.
- The gender gap in terms of literacy began to narrow first in 1991 and the pace has accelerated, however still lags far behind the global female literacy rate of 7% (UNESCO 2015).
- There are large state variations in the gender gap.
- However, during 2001 – 2011, the male literacy rate increased by 6 percentage points but female literacy increased by nearly 12 percentage points. Achievement in female literacy in Bihar is noteworthy: from 33% in 2001 to 53% in 2011.
- Be that as it may, India is still lagging behind the world literacy rate of 86.3%(UNESCO 2015). A major group of states lies in the average rank i.e. just above the national level of 64.8 percent.

Issues and Challenges

The learning outcomes are very poor mainly because of lack of qualified teachers; there is no monitor tool on teacher knowledge once he/she became a teacher. Lack of IT and vocational courses in secondary level, Lack of connection between higher education and secondary education and it is not preparing students for higher education with respective to skills, because of it there is huge number of coaching institutes for entrance exams exploiting students.

Class Size: Large class sizes are widespread in the pre-primary school education system. With classrooms filled with students and teachers insufficient to provide enough individual attention, the student learning experience is scarce. Primary school teachers try to manage classes for 50 to 60 students in some school regions across the country.

Quality of student intake: Another important factor affecting the quality of education is the level of students admitted to universities. Undergraduate students in India are students who have graduated from upper secondary school (for children from 16 to 18 years old). Central or state governments have made no serious attempt to open any new schools in the upper secondary level over the past few decades. The only new such schools opened by central government are Navodaya Vidyalaya and Kendriya Vidyalaya (both of which are central schools). According to a recent British Council report on Indian school education, the number of central government-run secondary schools is 42,119 and higher secondary schools are 24,808. These schools provide education to deserving students for nominal fees.

Accreditation: As per the data provided by the NAAC, as of June 2010, "not even 25% of the total higher education institutions in the country were accredited and among those accredited; only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level". [9]. Number of Institutions by national Assessment & Accreditation Council Grade" (Data Source NAAC 2017)

Faculties: The lack of teachers and the inability of the government educational system to attract and retain well-qualified teachers have been challenging the quality of education for many years. Large numbers of PhD / NET candidates are unemployed even if there are a lot of vacancies in higher education, and then these eligible candidates apply in other departments that represent the biggest shock to the higher education system.

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. 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 [10].

Quality of teaching and research: If we only look at the academic reputation and ratio of faculty to students, we can see where most of the universities are located in India. The academic reputation as shown in the QS classification is based on teaching and research. Teaching and research at any university depends on the quality of the faculty as well as the quality of students. The quality of teaching depends on the quality of the teachers. For teachers to transfer knowledge to students, they must have extensive knowledge of their subject matter, curricula and educational standards, as well as enthusiasm and desire to learn throughout their careers. There are a large number of universities in India, but 20 to 30 universities with a high level teaching staff are rarely considered.

No Project Based Learning: Higher education lacks a learning-based project. Young graduates need to learn new skills, especially vocational skills that can provide them with a job. So we don't focus on project-based learning at all. The theory is just not enough, and we also need practical knowledge as well.

Gap between education provided and industry required education: The industry is having trouble finding a suitable employee because the education provided is not appropriate to work directly in the industry, so before that a company is required to spend large amount on providing training for employee.

Lack of Available Resources: The quality of education depends directly on the learning process. There is a less availability of learning resources in Indian colleges. Most of the colleges have poor quality of library building. This leads to poor service to the library. The number of books is much smaller, there is no magazine, and there is no magazine that raises the level of new knowledge. There are also poor internet facilities for accessing online database and resources.

Examination Ridden Curriculum: In India most universities have more than one curriculum loaded with theoretical knowledge. This curriculum is only concerned with passing the exam not only that, the curriculum does not rise to the level of market demand. Old and out-dated curriculums are still followed by most universities as the demand for quality and skill changes every day due to globalization [11].

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 [13]. **Curriculum issues:** There are many different curriculum systems that confuse students who want to achieve the same goal as engineering, medicine, and business administration. At the higher education level, there is no uniformity in the curricula taught for the same program. The curriculum is frequently reviewed without regard to the contemporary requirements of industries. There is a lack of subjects that one can take in colleges [12].

Research and Innovation: There are very distinguished scholars in our country whose Western writers cite the book. There is not enough focus on research in institutions of higher education. There are not enough resources and facilities, as well as a limited number of quality faculties to advice students. Most research scholars do not have fellowships or do not receive their fellowships on time, which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian higher education institutions are not affiliated with the research centres. So, this is another challenging area of higher education in India [15].

Conclusion

We know the importance of quality education. It directly affects the all aspects of growth of a country and helps the country to stand high in the overall platform. In India during the eras of seventy years, the higher education has developed a lot in terms of quantity. However, we are still missing of quality education as expected. To improve the quality of education the concerned experts have to think on the parameters (such as enough infrastructure, updated curriculum, skilled faculties, learning resources, financial help, and well planned guidelines)

of quality education. The Reduce class strengths so that teachers can give proper attendance to each and every kid.

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