On-page Blogs

School Attendance Doesn't Necessarily Equate To High Or Quality Learning

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The latest Survey report by **Annual Status of Education Report (Aser)** Center, released on 16 January 2018 was done on of more than 30,000 youth, in the age group of 14-18, conducted in 1,641 villages of 24 states in India.

The dismal picture of Indian elementary and school education which was troubled with dropouts, low attendance, gender bias, caste issue has improved much as per the report.

Two generations ago, people in remote villages were mostly unlettered: there were hardly any schools in remote areas.

- In 2001, only a little over 25% of all rural 18-year-olds were attending schools, the rest having dropped out earlier.

- By 2016, the share of 18-year-olds in schools and colleges had gone up to 70% the report finds.

Increased number of children in this age group willing to remain in the educational system is encouraging.

There are other optimistic findings.

- Girls have closed the gap with boys in rural areas: at age 14, 94% of girls and 95% of boys are enrolled in school;

- By the age 18, 68% of girls and 72% of boys are still in school

Rural India now sees a rapidly rising trend of education

All very good and welcome!

But...

We need to remember, our modern economic growth has little room for people with rudimentary skills and low education levels.

Newer developments, technologies, machinery with complex processes need a better trained workforce.

And that's where things don't look so good.

On an average, the QUALITY of education in rural schools is pretty dismal.

Here are some sad examples.

Among 14 to18-year-olds surveyed by the Aser team...

- **Only 43% could solve a class IV mathematics problem.**
- **Only 40% of 18-year-olds could calculate '10% of a given number'.**
- **40% could not locate their state on a map of India.**
- **27% of 14-year-olds, and 21% of 18-year-olds could not read a class II textbook in the regional language**
- **More than 40% could not read a simple sentence in English (such as "What is the time?")**

This shows that school attendance doesn't necessarily equate to high or quality learning.

Here's some more...

The Legatum Prosperity Index reveals that in the education sector, our country ranks 92 out of total 145 countries... way behind the ranks of other developing countries such as Philippines (76), Malaysia (51), Sri Lanka (59) and many more.

When it comes to looking for employment, what our youth, trained in this shabby and unscientific way, are going to find?

How are they going to cover the learning deficits that have accumulated from years of attending low-quality rural schools?

Also,

We must not forget the drop-outs. These are still happening (as per 2016 report)

- **Still around 3.5% of children between the ages of 11 and 14 years were dropping out**
- **13.5% between the ages of 15 and 16 years were dropouts (earlier it was 14.1%)**

Reasons Behind Dropouts are plenty. Some of them...

- **Terrible Pupil-teacher ratios (1:75 or even more)**

Current teacher resources in rural India are way behind the official goal of universal elementary education. This is often due to uneven distribution of teachers between different schools and villages.

- **Reduced Effective teaching time-** due to lack of teachers and engagement of teacher in non-teaching duties like census- and election-related assignments, for collection and distribution of incentives such as food rations, mid-day meal, free textbooks and other amenities etc.

- **Unscientific and Obsolete Teaching Methods**- rote learning, copying, mugging up before an exam without any practicals, observations or real-life experiential learning.

- **Lack of trained teacher-**Even if a teacher is trained, in the real-life situation, there is hardly any scope of implementing them in remote villages due to lack of infrastructure.

- **Lack of proper school building, class and teaching-learning amenities.**

Access to education in India is sharply skewed at the primary level.

At one end are the resource-rich, mainly private schools that cater to a privileged few.

While at the other, there are a large number of ill-equipped and badly-managed government schools, which are supposed to educate the majority of children.

The contrast between these two schooling systems is so stark that they are virtually different worlds altogether.

The dropouts have consequences:

It results in loss of productivity of the education system. Because, a high dropout rate increases per unit cost of school education, and reduces human resource development.

With low quality of education and dropouts as well, if we want to see "Skill India" and "Make in India" programmes to be a success, we MUST address these two issues related to school education.

Govt teachers in India earn four times Chinese teachers' salaries but don't perform as well

Despite being paid at least four times the salaries of teachers in China, the performance of Indian teachers judged in terms of their students' learning levels, has been poor.

Up to 80% of India's public expenditure on education is spent on teachers–salaries, training and learning material.

The Budget Has Pegged An Outlay Of Rs 79,685.95 Crore (US$ 11.952 Billion) For The Education Sector For Financial Year 2017-18, Up From Rs 72,394 Crore.

Will increase in spending help? Unlikely.

Increased government spending in education is not enough to improve educational outcomes. More needs to be done.

Apart from education- infrastructure and amenities, India's education policy must be thoroughly revised to put in place better accountability and monitoring mechanisms to exploit the gains increased expenditure.

A well designed different kind Public, Private Partnership (PPP) model could be a solution.

We must study different designs and their relevance/applicability/adaptability of the models.

We must also pilot-test the chosen models to understand the effectiveness, shunt out the loopholes and then scale up gradually.

Not only in rural areas, but we can also experiment with municipal corporation level-say Nashik Municipal Corporation as well.

A suggested PPP model could be a government aided private school system.

This will involve the setting up of a school by a private, non-profit seeking organisation — a trust or voluntary organisation, managed by the private sector.

In some cases a business entity with its own funds can set up and run a school for a minimum number of years before, it becomes eligible for government aid for recurring expenditure.

In India, the different areas of education which have a PPP model are improving the study environment, enhancing the quality of education, creating and enabling innovative processes.

Government brings in advantages like large geographic access, regulatory power and a wide pool of resources (funds, people and technical).

On the other hand, the private entity brings technical expertise, efficient operational style and a result oriented methodology.

PPP definitely can be an important part of the overall strategy to achieve quality and scale.

The effectiveness of PPP will, of course, depend on some key factors; like recognition of a mutual need for partnership, respect between partners, evaluation and research of the programme's impact, self sustainability of the programmes and advocacy at an organisational level.

We also need to address the implementation challenges which include the financial disbursement bottlenecks and the scarcity of the quality human resource.

An efficiently designed PPP, with equally effective monitoring and tracking system, can help removing the bottlenecks and challenges of institutional and bureaucratic delays.

It will be a win-win proposition for all - the government, implementers and donors.

The government can use PPP model to provide quality education to children belonging to the economically marginalised section.

However, for a successful public, private partnership, the government should develop clear policies and guidelines to encourage private sector involvement in education.

PPP also helps the government to improve the quality of the public system of education and appreciation from the public.

The entire process of partnership building should be transparent from the beginning. Right from the method of the selection, operational and programmatic framework, clear financial terms to the expected outputs.

This way, both the government and the providers have a common goal of improving the quality of education in India.

The need of the hour is to align each other's vision and approach, feel the need of partnering together to improve the public education system in India.

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On-page Blog

99% of MBAs, 80% Of Engineering Graduates In India Are Unemployable! Says Ernst and Young (EY) & FICCI

As per the Higher Education report by FICCI (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry) and Ernst and Young (EY) 99% of MBAs and 80% of engineering graduates in India are unemployable. Due to the lack of connection between what they are taught in colleges, and the industry requirements.

Equally grim is the IT sector scenario.

Out of more than 6 lakh engineers pumped into our economy each year, only a handful (18.43%) are ready to be deployed as Software Engineers in the IT service industry. And the number drops to as low as 3.21% for IT product roles.

Nearly 27% of the engineers fail even to pass an interview.

Shocking figures.

These numbers are a reflection of the present state of employability in the country.

And the credit for this goes to all the local institutes which have mushroomed in every nook and corner of India, certifying students as MBAs and engineers.

Companies rely more on their own training given to the newly hired graduates rather than what the new employees learn in college. Because there is no alternative.

The un-employability is equal among both the genders. At least on this aspect, there is no gender-bias.

All India Council for Technical Education has asked over 300 private engineering colleges to stop operations from the 2018-19 academic session, and not to start any fresh batch.

Because they had less than 30% enrolment for five consecutive years. The admissions dropped as these schools were not performing well. Another 500 such colleges are under scanner.

India's best universities are nowhere in the Top 100 in the world.

The best performance India could manage as of now is, The Indian Institute of Science (IISC) in Bengaluru is at 152, and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Delhi is at 185 in the QS World University Rankings.

Why does this wide gap exist between the number of engineers produced and the number that can be readily deployed to jobs? Where does this supply chain break?

We as a nation we have done a great job in terms of creating capacity - the sheer quantity of educational institutions.

But the increased quantity of institutions seems to adversely affect even the average quality of education that we are giving to our youth.

The outdated curriculum, inadequate infrastructure, poor quality of faculty, combined with old delivery platforms, make it difficult to equip our students with relevant skills.

For employability, it matters not so much what degree people have, but what matters is they have to be 'employable' and future trainable.

Thousands of youngsters are being trained. But they do not possess necessary skills. While the syllabus of other countries is real-life oriented, our engineers are jobless due to lack of this.

The curriculum for engineering education does not favour high profile jobs in construction and building sector. Because the academic syllabus fails to fulfill real-world applications.

Our curriculum is behind times. Our outdated teaching and rote-learning based exam culture is something that is still continuing.

Our engineers are not even aware of the international standards that are exercised in high-profile construction projects like the Makkah Tower or the Hyderabad Metro Rail project.

Sadly, our students get to realise that they are unemployable only in the final year of college.

Only when they gear up to look into the job space outside, they realize what skills they lack; skills that are a must for getting a job.

And by the time they sit to brush and polish their employability, unemployment settles in the system.

The campus recruitment numbers have been declining. Industry recruiters say most campus graduates do not possess higher thinking skills. Nor do they meet the demands of an increasingly technology-driven industry ecosystem.

In fact, recruiters have difficulty in finding people with the latest skill sets in emerging technologies.

For India to become the world's manufacturing hub, we need to lead from the front. The science of manufacturing has moved way ahead. But we continue to teach outdated concepts to students.

Imagine this...

A first-year biology student in college is using a 3D virtual reality equipment to enter into the human digestive system. There, he watches food getting digested.

Simultaneously, his classmate simulates a different situation to watch close-up, how a drug from a capsule gets absorbed and heals an injury.

Meanwhile, others in the class are using simulation and gaming to see how atoms turn into alloys, or how electrons in a liquid get agitated by thermal radiation.

A computer in the class simulates all these visuals.

It also delivers instant tests, collects feedback.

It offers assessment scores, compares each student's performance against the set median score for the class.

The computer also offers each student new learning pathways to help him or her meet the learning objectives faster.

It rewards better performers with ranks and badges, while suggesting remedies for those who are lagging behind.

This is what higher education is going to look like by 2025 or 2030 going by today's rate of emerging technologies and AIs.

We already have the first humanoid robot Sophia developed by Hong Kong-based company Hanson Robotics who recently came to India. Considering this, the education scenario 20 to 25 years ahead that we visualised just now is not something far-fetched.

In fact, universities and higher education institutions, as we know them today, are all set for a radical change. Because technologies continue to impact drastically, the way we learn, the way we teach and the way we use the curriculum.

Clearly, the higher education systems of the advanced world foresee these changes; are all set to lead in the academic race.

Are we prepared for this? How much?

Our basic attitude toward higher education needs to change from degree-motivator to life-centric and lifelong-learning motivator; from mediocrity to good, and from good to great. A continuous journey.

Does this mean universities and even the higher education institutions need to invest more in building the capabilities of students?

Even if they do, will they see enough return on their investment, regarding number and quality?
How do private higher education institutions in a regulated system find adequate resources?

We need to ponder over these questions.

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