

India's Higher Education System future-ready: Essay

Nelson Mandela, the greatest leader of modern times, has said "Education is the most powerful tool you can have to change the world". Truly, the importance of education in empowering mankind reflects through his statements.

India has been a hub of education, primarily higher education from ancient times. We are the pioneer of the "Gurukul" system of education which signifies the underlying importance of "Guru Shishya parampara".

Also, who can forget that the world's first higher education university, the famous Taxila University, was first established in Indian-Subcontinent in 700 BC? Also, the world-famous Nalanda University, where students from around the world came down to study has been the epitome of the golden era of the Indian higher education system.

Even before independence, leaders like Gandhiji, Gokhale, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, etc. have worked tirelessly for the education of all strata of Indian society, particularly girls and Dalit. Before independence, due importance was accorded to the higher education system with the establishment of many education commissions like 1948 under Dr. Radhakrishnan and 1968 under Dr. Kothari. Also "The Institute of National Importance" namely IITs and IIMs were established which till date are the shining pillars of the Indian education system.

But then, why do we hear to get headlines like

1. "No Indian institute in top 500 in the global rankings" Times of India.
2. IIT topper flies off to the USA to start his undergraduate in MIT"
3. Students suicides on the rise in premier institutions" The Hindu.
4. Gross enrollment ratio only at 25.8%

This clearly shows that the picture is not rosy as it seems and that there are serious lacunae in the current system which need to be put away with. So come let's discuss some of the issues which are holding the Indian higher education system by its neck and throat.

Issues Firstly the most prominent issue of "Commercialization of education" comes to my mind. Higher education is being treated as a "Job provider" and money minting business rather than focusing on the actual skill and value addition of students. I being a student from IIM Calcutta, has seen this life

with every on-campus only talking about jobs and packages. This creates a vicious circle in which the second problem of rote learning comes to the forefront.

Students are blindly mugging up facts and data points without understanding their actual relevance. It is thereby creating a culture where conformity precedes overpower creativity. A quite visible and famous example is from the movie "3 idiotS" which saw a student's suicide over such small things quite closely associated with this is the third issue of the high cost of education. Higher education is seen as a form of "Return on Investment" rather than an investment in the future of a student.

Next is the glaring issue of lack of infrastructure in college including teaching professionals. This is the most serious issue as a declining level of infrastructure has led to falling research and development which defeats the overall purpose of higher education.

I will give you an insight into the issue accordingly to a recent study India stand at number three in term of publication of research papers. But we stand at a below-par 10th position when it comes to patents that too around 80% of them being registered by foreigners. Also, the research papers face a lot of redactions and rebukes from the international community due to no clear insights and blind copying from other papers which have led to India being "termed as research paper factory"

The lack of teaching professionals combined with poor quality of teaching also has had a depressing effect on students' morale with PHDs accounting for only 0.4 % of India's higher education students, based on a study by AISHE.

Now comes the issue of curriculum and with that the serious one of lack of skills development. The examination coupled with less course choosing flexibility system of India is still at the forefront of deciding students future. Also, bases on a study from ILO India's " Not of reemployment, Education, and training (NEET) population accounts for 32.6 % of Indian youth.

But there is no skill development available for them. Then is the forthcoming issue of poor government regulation. Archaic laws like the UGC act of 1956 coupled with rampant corruption and treatment of education as a business has led to a decline in global rankings institutes of the institute along with brain drains.

Closely linked with the issue of skill development is the issue of entrepreneurship. Due to a lack of industry-academia collaborations, Indian youth find it tough to make it bi in this age of startups.

Also, the issue of lack of value education system in India's higher education system has led to apathy development in students and teachers. This is more often than not results in students suicides again for which there are no grievance redressal systems.

Finally, comes the issue of politicization of education as students these days believe in gaining power via students unions and waste taxpayers' money without having a ripe mind to opt for politics looks pretty bad right?? But trust me if handled properly, we already have the solutions to make India's higher education system future-ready.

Let's first have a look at some of the foremost achievements of our education system followed by the solution to the above problems.

Achievements:

I recently saw the trailer of the movie "Super 30" which is a biopic of the famous educationist Anand Kumar. He aptly says " Google who is the CEO of big companies like Master card and Microsoft? Also side by side google CEO of Google. They are all Indians". This filled my heart with pride and yes they are all results of our higher education system. Also, we have given the world several scientists including Dr. J. C. Bose, C.V. Raman, etc who have brought many laurels to India.

Also, many people like Amish Tripathi and Mdli Mastan Babu both from IIMC have made it big in a venture like a story writing and mountaineering. Now, let's have look at the solution of all these glaring menaces standing in our path.

Solutions

Firstly, the culture of education commercialization and rote learning has to be done away with. Students need to be taught relevant skills with a novel method of learning including e-learning. For this government schemes like DIKSHA e Paathshala, Operation Digital Board (One digital board every classroom by 2022) will help increase the interaction and learning level of students.

Next is the issue of infrastructure which can be solved with financing mechanisms like HEFA with a corpus of Rs 10000 crore. To make sure the availability of Research and Development facilities to students for producing world-class research. Then comes the issue of teacher training. For this, we can look forward to the new education policy. Which ensures conducting TET exams for recruitment of good quality teachers.

Also, online courses like MOOC, APRIT, and SWAYAM can go a long way in improvement of teaching levels. Now we have to resolve the issues of over and under regulations. The recently proposed HECI bill seeks to recommend a new body for the regulation of Institutes without caring for finances and approaches to higher bureaucratic levels. The policy of INIs introduction is also an innovative way of giving action.

Let's focus on some solutions to students' issues now. First is the need to introduce vocational courses in education. With the failing standards of ITI's and lack of skill and development opportunities schemes like PMKVY and skill India can introduce the right amount of skills needed to be upkeep and relevant to job standards.

Then is the need to liven the spirit of entrepreneurship in students with a plan to increase education spending to 6% by 2025 from the current 3.4% of GDP there is a dire need for investment in schemes like Atal Innovation Mission and PM Entrepreneurship Schemes. These can provide the necessary monetary and R& D benefits to students to excel. Lastly, there is a need to introduce a value education system and bring creativity to students. Schemes like SPARC and IMPRESS will help students have a think-over at current problems and will ultimately lead to more creativity and terming of India as the next education superpower.

Conclusion

India is in the phase of demographic dividend and our students have the potential to be the best in the world with correct guidance and proper policies and value socialization, I can surely say that soon our higher education system will be future-ready. I would like to end with this famous quote of Dr. Kalam which shows that we can on our way to greatness "Learning leads to creativity, to creativity to thinking, to knowledge and knowledge makes us great.