

## Quality education should get priority in India

23/09/2014 by Beas Dev Ralhan, CEO, Next Education



One thing that could be closest to magic in the world is education. The way it can transform the life of a person, nothing else can as it gives confidence and the gift of voice and opinion. Above and beyond the obvious benefits, education contributes to a better society at large; it makes people aware of their rights and duties.

Investing into education is one of the most important and critical components that will enable the inclusive growth agenda of the Government of India. There have been lots of studies conducted in the past, pertaining to education and the long-term economic growth.. Therefore it makes investments in education essential for aggregate economic growth as well for enabling citizens to participate in the growth process through improved wages and employment.

Simultaneously there are evidences that suggest that, at both macro and micro levels, what matters for growth and employability are not the years put in education but the quality of education that enhances the skills and talents of the individuals. It has also been observed over the years that perceptive skills and the power of reasoning are strongly related to economic growth as compared to the number of years of schooling. Besides, it is also perceived that the basic literates and the highly educated performers have independent and significant impacts on the growth of a nation and these types of human capital compliments each other.

Education has been the primary driving force behind the productivity and growth of a country, but besides this it also determines the extent to which citizens can participate in the growth process. Most the employers in India are of the opinion that majority of the college graduates are not 'employable' due to lack of skills which are not proportionate to their paper qualification. This is a weak connection between education and actual knowledge which is even more prominent at the primary schooling level. Therefore, although India has made substantial improvements in the primary education, the progress on learning and

skill development has been minimal when compared to the quality of school inputs. It is therefore an urgent priority for primary education policy in India, to improve the quality of education measured not just in terms of inputs and student enrollment or retention, but also in terms of learning outcomes.

Bearing the urgency of quality education and skill development the government of India has taken certain initiatives like the National Council on skill development, under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister. This initiative intends to empower all individuals to gain access to decent employment and ensure India's competitiveness in the global market through improved skills, knowledge, nationally and internationally recognized qualifications.

The aim of this skill development in the country is to support achieving rapid growth through enhancing individual's employability and ability to adapt to changing technologies and labour market demands. It also aims at improving the productivity and the living standards of the people alongside strengthening the competitiveness of the country and attracting investment in skill development. The present capacity of skill development in India is around 3.1 million persons per year and with this initiative they envision an increase in the capacity by 15 million annually. Their goal is to create 500 million skilled workers by 2022.

Another initiative by the Government of India was teacher's education which has evolved tremendously based on the recommendations by various commissions and committees on Education. The central Government has created a statutory body called the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) that is responsible for planning and coordinating for the development of teacher education in the country. It is NCTE that lays down the norms and standards for various teachers' education courses, minimum qualifications for teacher's educators, course and content and duration and minimum qualification for the entry of student-teachers for the various courses. The government also owns a large network of Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) which provides in-service training to teachers.

The government this year has also allocated Rs. 100 Crore for the development of virtual classrooms to provide quality education to schools and colleges in villages and small towns. This is just the initial funding for the project and intends to take it further with massive online open courses and virtual classrooms. It is also to make it convenient for the working class and house wives to further their knowledge and qualification. Considering this the educators also need to enhance their skills in technology for education. It enhances the face-to-face classroom experience and also ensures that the students are interacting with the assigned material. Going digital would also mean a wealth of data, of about what are the students learning.

Therefore we can conclude by saying that most of the investments made in the past in improving school quality as measured by inputs were either not correlated with improved learning outcomes or were weak. However the authorities have now realized the dire need of quality education and focusing on it to bring in substantial improvement in learning outcomes.



Author is the CEO of Next Education India Pvt. Ltd

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