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Indian Education Sector in 2019

Education is looked upon as the panacea for addressing the critical issues pertaining to social, economic and cultural development of a country. It develops generations of leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, professionals and skilled workforce that create a sustainable knowledge economy. Moreover, education plays an instrumental role in inculcating critical thinking among the students and the scholars and nurtures future thought leaders.

While the education system in India is still grappling with the challenge of striking a balance between excellence and accessibility in the provisioning of education, there are some concrete policy efforts taken in improving the quality of education. Education system in India particularly the higher education sector, is now standing at the cusp of transformation. While the country still awaits the New Education Policy, which is expected to play a catalytic role in reviving and rejuvenating the school education system, the higher education sector is already witnessing some big push from the government. With two separate Gazette notifications, Graded Autonomy Regulations (GARs) 2018; and Autonomous Colleges Regulations (ACRs) 2018, coming out in 2018, India is set on the path of higher education reforms. While some of the State Governments are already undertaking exemplary work in school education, with the setting up of Institutions of Eminence, Central Government has paved the way for world-class university education in India. The future of these policy initiatives depends upon how schemes are implemented and efforts are sustained, nonetheless, future holds immense possibilities in the sector.

However, quality of education cannot be improved, unless the core issues of poor teaching and learning, outdated curriculum, archaic pedagogy and the lack of inculcation of critical thinking, are addressed. In the post-human era where the machines are overtaking human skill-set, it would become imperative to equip students with tools, skills and knowledge to not only ensure that they work well with the technology, but also to develop and promote a culture of creativity and innovation. There needs to be a conscious de-emphasis on rote learning and passive absorption of knowledge. A constant curriculum upgradation would be necessitated with special emphasis on inclusion of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in the courses offered. The students should be taught to view and analyse thoughts, theories and philosophies from different disciplinary lenses. The inclusion of social sciences and humanities subjects in technological
years of education, should be introduced to the tenets of research. As a part of their school curriculum, the subject, projects and activities that directs them to think about and address a social question. At higher education level, it is important that students and researchers are engaged in socially relevant and implementable research. Research acumen should be encouraged not only by furthering certain tools and methodologies to the students but as a disposition for life-long learning.

An interesting trend that can be seen in students and is expected to continue, is increasing preference for professional courses like law, business, charted accountancy, banking among others. This trend is highlighted by the fact that more and more students are opting for private law universities, specialized management programmes, than opting for undergraduate degrees in humanities and social sciences offered by central and state universities. One of the main reasons behind this is better job prospects after the completion of the degree. Hence, it would be prudent if the government provides a conducive but well-regulated environment for such professional institutes to grow and flourish. These institutes will help to satisfy the professional underpinnings of the students and cater to the growing demand of the industry.

The endeavor of education should be to provide the students with an overall holistic environment that aids students to view education as an experience that will add value to their life goals. It can be envisioned as a tool that will guide them with their passion and what they want to achieve in their lives. This could be done by exposing students to the opportunities through internships, study abroad programmes, exchange programmes, community engagement and capacity building programmes.

Our traditional methods of teaching, learning and imparting of skills are increasingly becoming redundant especially in the face of technological advancements and innovation. The future of education system, therefore, would largely rest on creativity, critical thinking and innovation. It is heartening to note that policy efforts are taken in the positive direction, however, all stakeholders in the education system should make these core issues as their top priority.