

# Challenges for Education in India

Education plays a key role in transforming society. Education in India should be a human right, should provide equal opportunities and should be affordable. The Right to Education Act (RTE) could be one of the first steps in this process, despite challenges in its implementation.

India, the world's largest democracy is also one of the fastest growing economies in the world. However, our nation continues to face overwhelming challenges of illiteracy, poverty, corruption and inadequate public healthcare. Education is the key to socioeconomic reform, particularly in the context of developing countries. If our education policies and practices are not transformative, we cannot free a majority of our population which is still caught in the trap of illiteracy and poverty. This causes suffering for generations together. The educational scenario of India needs to be considered seriously. Research studies by UNESCO and MHRD over last few years reveal a grim scenario.

□ Currently, India has a population of 1.22 billion people and has the world's second largest population. It is estimated that by the year 2020 over 50% of the world's illiterate population will live in India.

□ Currently, India has the largest population of illiterate people as compared to any

with about 220 million enrolled students, only 14% of all students enroll for higher education.

□ Approximately 40% of students, mostly girls, drop out by secondary school.

□ Salary and compensation for teaching staff particularly in schools is low, hence, only 4-5% of all graduating students in India take up teaching as a career.

□ Infrastructure and facilities particularly in local schools are limited. Many teachers are not adequately trained or qualified.

□ Many institutions offer outdated programmes with inflexible structures and educational content.

Education plays a key role in transforming society. Education in India should be a human right, should provide equal opportunities and should be affordable. The Right to Education Act (RTE) could be one of the first steps in this process, despite challenges in its implementation. Even today, education is a business oriented sphere where profit is one of the main objectives. Business leaders should reflect on the 'higher



purpose' of education. Currently, only privileged 'clientele' usually have access to 'quality' education in India. Education must have a social objective. The greatest discrimination any country has faced so far is the denial of equal opportunities. This gives rise to oppression, mass alienation, and armed revolution. Our intellectuals need to consciously strive to impact

the wellbeing of our larger community.

We need to ensure that education is holistic, integrated and subsidized for the poor; keeping in mind the impact mass illiteracy and poverty could have in the long run. In a developing country, what happens in one part of the country usually has a ripple effect, directly affecting the well-being of other parts of the country. Moreover, there is a huge gap between academic disciplines, learning and life, application of knowledge in real life situations, and qualifications and vocations.

Reforms in education are inevitable. Affordable, innovative and effective community based education models are necessary. English and information technology (IT) coupled with domain knowl-

edge of motivated teachers can help combat illiteracy. Although the situation has improved in our country over the years, much more needs to be done. Perhaps, government spending on education (%GDP) should be higher.

Knowledge is a social process and co-construction of knowledge is critical to sustain a national community. A connect and develop approach is a sustainable process for sharing knowledge or creating information networks. Today, knowledge obsolescence necessitates lifelong learning. Hence, we need to leverage on the wealth of information available in various forms externally by building on earlier innovations of academic or research institutes through collaborations or partnerships. This approach is dynamic and

can prove to be beneficial for reaching out to different sections of our society.

On a broader sense, the economic downturn is partly due to irresponsible self-indulgence of 'highly educated' individuals occupying decision making positions. These individuals are the result of a flawed educational system or upbringing that did not equip them with good values or foundational principles of leadership. Lack of good governance in public life, insensitivity and corruption gives rise to harrowing social inequity. In India, strategies to overcome illiteracy have to be deliberated at a much higher level. Transformative strategies need to be discussed and implemented to overcome the challenges of our education system.

Dr. Walter Christman (USA), Founding Director of the Global Challenges Forum's (GCF) visit to India in Mar 2012 paved the way for a strategic partnership with the ACTS group of Institutions, an NGO in Bangalore, managed by its Founder President, Dr. Ken Gnanakan. The ACTS Group of Institutions comprises of primary and secondary schools, colleges and a private university. ACTS has been committed to social welfare and reforms in India for over three decades organizing educational programmes, community welfare projects and facilitating strategic alliances for nation building. Keeping India's challenging scenario in mind, the Transformative Education Forum has been organized by the Global Challenges Forum and is being hosted by the ACTS group of institutions in Sep 2012, at Bangalore, in India.

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other nation in the world. More than 350 million people in India are illiterate; this is more than the consolidated population of the United States and Canada.

□ Uncontrolled population explosion and extreme poverty are the direct consequences of illiteracy.

□ Above 60% of our population lives in villages and the rest in urban agglomerations. This vast majority of our rural population remains illiterate and subsequently impoverished, with nearly 500 million people living below the poverty line.

□ Although, India is the third largest 'higher education system in the world after China and the United States,

## The Life Flow



BRAJ KISHOR GUPTA  
Motivation Guru

Change is the fast changing Reality. Everything in the universe is found in a state of flux. It begins to change soon after it comes into being. Change is the flow; it is the outcome of the flow. It is a

## LIVING WITH CHANGE

process of integration as also of disintegration. We would appreciate this phenomenon of change better once we see the beauty of the Shakespearean lines:

*Full fathom five thy father lies.*

*Of his bones are coral made  
Those are pearls that were  
his eyes;*

*Nothing of him that doth  
fade*

*But doth suffer a sea  
-change*

*Into something rich and  
strange*

Life is incessantly moving towards a new goal post. This movement is the essence of

living. Living has its own laws. The laws are dynamic in nature as they keep pace with change taking place in society across the globe. The pace at which change occurs varies from one society to another. That depends upon the innate capacity of a society to accept and accommodate all divergent views, new insights and perspectives along with emerging groups and communities. This is a process of acculturation of new kind. Change thus becomes the cardinal principle underlining all progress and advancements both mundane and spiritual.

We must learn to grow sen-

sitive to change. Being sensitive means coming out of the cocoon. This is everyone's comfort zone. Change comes as a blow to that position which is more static in nature. Change is therefore generally viewed as a traumatic process. But it needs to be seen as an opportunity to accept the truth that living is dynamic in nature. Expansion remains the law of Life. We keep moving all the while- forward or backward.

We have got to live with change. It needs a change in our mindset. It is always going to be tough to keep pace with the speed at which life is

transforming thanks to the technological avalanche that our society is facing. Human society is already grappling with the issue of the Cultural Lag. It is further alarming to find on the basis of research in science that the technology's avalanche will continue to accelerate. The need of the hour is to come out of our negative attitude towards change. Change needs to be managed creatively and effectively. The success of an individual as well as any organization the world over depends to a large extent on their contingency plans to manage change. We must learn to change and appreciate change in order to live with Change.

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