

# Challenges as Goals for India's Education Sector

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## Abstract

Education is the means for acquiring enlightenment for humankind. While proceeding ahead to perform this role and discharge its duties to the society it must be guided by concrete goals in the absence of which it runs the risk of going astray from its path. An effort has been made to identify the goals of education in our country in the present day context against the backdrop of liberalization, privatization and globalization. In addition to the most important universal goal of preparing quality human resources for the society's future, education has to take cognizance of various other goals which emerge from time to time because of changing situation in the society. The identified goals of education also need to be discussed at a larger forum of academicians and people concerned to ensure concrete solutions for the future generations' benefit. The possibility of looking at challenges as goals for our benefit even as a temporary measure has also been explored.

**Keywords :** Enlightenment, Human Resources, Information Technology, Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization

## Introduction

Education in the true sense of the term is the set of skills and knowledge which are expected to convert a human being into a 'thinking intellectual human resource' with the added quality of being useful for the society in which he/she lives. This is to ensure that a larger section of the society may benefit from his or her works.

Education – at any level for that matter – has meaning and value only when there are human beings in the society and vice versa. In an ideal situation, education must dedicate itself to inculcate at least the very basic minimum of good ideals and sense among the people and thereby shape the destiny of the society as a whole. On the other hand the people must also keep a watch on the system of education so that it does not proceed in an undesirable way.

Education is a major and convenient means for achieving the ultimate goal of welfare of the people in the short and long run. Though the

primary goals of education have remained constant – continuously expanding human enlightenment in a world with challenges facing it every passing day, other goals of education may keep changing from time to time depending upon the situation.

The basic goal of education has hardly changed since the earliest days, that is the creation of the best possible human resource in the society capable of contributing positively to mankind as well as to the societal expectations at the same time. In other words, the development of a complete human being for whom the motto would be 'quality service before self'.

It is also important that the goals of education must comply with the existing as well as emerging values and culture of a society. If our education system cannot respond to such a changing scenario then it is obvious that education has stagnated at a certain point of time.

## Goals of Education in the Indian Context

While the basic goal has remained the same all throughout the centuries yet the perspectives and contexts have underwent a sea change today compared to earlier days. In the present day context the challenges of the entire teaching-learning process can be summarised as -

- Facilitate learning in an environment of a knowledge society in which we live
- Inculcate an optimum sense of Information and Knowledge literacy in an era of availability of multiple avenues for gathering knowledge
- Equity, access and quality
- Inculcate adaptability to changing situations
- Bridging the gap between research findings and field applicability of knowledge
- Preparing generations of good teachers

First of all, the teaching-learning process itself has undergone a major change in different aspects. Till about a few decades back, sources of knowledge – whether virtual (internet, new media) or physical (books, journals) were available in a very limited way.

The situation has taken a drastic turn with knowledge and information available at the click

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of a mouse anywhere anytime across the world, due to development in Information and Communication Technology and new media. It is true that one must take advantage of such technological developments there is an acute risk of becoming too dependent on these sources rather than making one's own efforts to strive for finding out the truth or acquiring knowledge.

Continuing from the above perspective in today's context, there is an urgent need to develop a strong sense of 'literacy' in the minds of the learners. This is necessary so that our future generations can develop the capability to search for the right kind of avenue for acquiring knowledge and thereby enrich one's own intellectual development. Adequate care needs to be taken to make them realize the dangers involved in becoming excessively dependent upon these new knowledge sources. They must be taught to make a judicious balance between these two ways of acquiring knowledge so that development of one's own skills for searching for knowledge does not get blunted over the years.

Information Technology has established itself as an overwhelming aspect of our lives over the years, more so in the recent years. Thus, an adequate amount of literacy in this regard should be considered as an important goal for achieving the ultimate goal of acquiring knowledge in an efficient manner by anyone interested. The skill lies in correctly identifying the right source out of so many available, a majority of them without the minimum established credentials.

Every society that values social justice and is anxious to improve the lot of the common men and cultivate all available talent, must ensure progressive equality of opportunity to all sections of the population. This is the only guarantee for building up an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak will be minimum.

A number of disparities are widely experienced across many aspects including geographical regions, gender, socio-economic, socio-religious groups among others (University News, 2013).

Our country also has the distinction of having a considerably high number of illiterates and people much below the poverty line. Under such circumstances, it is only natural that the question of education and other peripheral aspects would

only get a secondary priority rather than striving hard for meals on a day-to-day basis. Providing and at the same time maintaining access to education – whether at lower or higher levels - is also another very crucial issue to be discussed. This is because our population has been increasing at a far higher pace than the country's planners are being able to provide for. Thus, whatever resources are allocated for this provision, it always falls far short of the target leading to a mismatch in the entire planning process.

Further, maintaining quality of education and educational infrastructure under the above-mentioned circumstances is also a challenge faced by our education system over the years.

Besides, there is the goal of inculcating adaptability to newer situations and challenges by the human beings as one have to learn newer skills from time to time to survive in a world that is becoming increasingly competitive every passing day. Thus, one prime goal of our education should be to prepare ourselves to start our professional life with a new identity whenever the need may arise.

In other words the goal should be to inculcate some basic skills which would make us ready to face any situation in the world under any circumstances.

Another major goal of our education should be to minimize the gap between research into various aspects of life – whether basic or applied and their application in the real life situations. This is because a major portion of our research studies are confined to the laboratories for many factors. This includes lack of facilities to implement them and many a times their non feasibility to be applied to actual situations.

### **Preparing Quality Teachers**

In the present context, it is another major goal for the country's education system to create a pool of quality human resources for taking up faculty positions in various institutions of higher education. It arises from the fact that these institutions have been facing a perennial shortage of teachers at all levels (more so at senior positions) going up to about 35 – 40 percent of total necessary strength cutting across any discipline. The goal must not only be to create positions, but to motivate persons of high intellect and capacity to dedicate themselves for the teaching profession.



The depth of the problem can be gauged from the 2012 Report of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on India's higher education which indicates that while enrolment in higher education has grown six times in the last 30 years, faculty strength has grown only four times.

### **Issue of Globalization**

Another major goal for our education system at present since about the last decade has been to devise ways and means for taking up the challenges of globalization in this sector and thereby help surviving for the future. The globalization, a key reality in the 21st century, has already profoundly influenced higher education. An academic revolution has taken place in higher education in the past half century marked by transformations unprecedented in scope and diversity.

The process of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG) has already established itself in a firm manner in all other walks of life and had made its presence felt in the field of education also. Because of the onset of the process of LPG today our education system has been facing the major challenge of rising up to a globally-accepted standard in all aspects of the education business, more so at higher level. Our education system must thrive to live up to these challenges by improving itself.

While maintaining it along with the other two goals of equity and access even though initially it might seem a bit difficult, yet it is not an impossible feat to be achieved given our pool of qualified and intellectually-charged human resources in the education sector. Further, a strong motivational campaign also is the need of the hour in this regard.

### **Sustaining Quality on a Long Term Basis :**

Many of those involved in higher education may recall the NASSCOM-McKinsey Report (2005) which reported that not more than 15 percent of graduates of general education and 25-30 per cent of Technical Education are fit for employment. This is because the higher educational institutions suffer from large quality variation that is highly undesirable.

Though there exist autonomous bodies for assessment and monitoring quality standards in the

institutions of higher education they suffer from two major deficiencies. First, the quality norms of such councils are not comparable with international standards. Secondly, the enforcement process is not stringent. Further, political interference and corruption dilute the role and impact of these intuitions in ensuring the desired quality standards.

Thus it is needless to reiterate that maintenance of quality is a highly important goal that must be nurtured at any cost. It is the quality of human resources that we create, would matter, nothing else.

A dilemma emerges – whether we should go for the quantity at the cost of quality or the other way round. While there would definitely be many opinions, why don't we try our level best to prepare a comprehensive plan to combine these two parameters so that both can go together towards the path of development of the society in the long run.

### **Conclusion**

The discussions here point out to the fact that goals of education must always be in harmony with the society's needs and both of them must support each other at any given moment of time in the path of development. While there is no need to repeat the importance of education for any society in the world it is also equally necessary that the aspects of equity, access and quality are maintained under any circumstances despite all the challenges posed before us. Education must live up to the role and responsibility of maintaining quality at all levels – primary to higher, keeping provisions for adapting to the newer adverse situations which would keep emerging from time to time as challenges. The situation is more acute as according to the India Census 2011, more than half the population of the country is aged under 25 and over 65 percent of the population of India is aged under 35. It is anticipated that the median age of an Indian citizen will be 29 years in 2020. The challenge is far more enhanced by this fact as education has also to take it into consideration in the coming years while planning for improving our education for delivering the optimum possible knowledge dissemination and facilitating the teaching-learning process.