

Primary Education: Foundation of Future India

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he author of this article, Mandeep Kaur Tuli, comes from a family which is involved in catering education from primary to the professional level. She thus has got the opportunity to observe the scenario from very close. Now she has jumped in to the field of education directly by becoming a Board member of management of Edify Public School, in Nagpur. She has something original to offer to the cause and development of primary education. For her, primary education is a base and rest of the education system of the nation is a superstructure. The base, the foundation that is primary education must be strong to support the superstructure.

The articles on this domain shall be laid by Mandeep on Arthsaar. We invite the contribution from serious academicians and practitioners in the field of education. Because the education has an individual and the social cost, it must yield the desired results. These results need to be evaluated with the specific economic research tools to assess the pecuniary and the non-pecuniary benefits of the cost involved. It also helps in the policy analysis and the practical issues faces by both the parties to education sector, in short, the supply side and the demand side of education sector.

Mandeep's article is a first step on Arthsaar to open up the debate expecting some constructive suggestions to combat the basic problem of societal development.

Indian Perspective:

The India is the second largest education system in the world in terms of the output. According to the last census of 2001 the India has 0.664 Primary schools and the Upper primary schools are 0.219 in number. These schools are supposed to cater to the need of primary education of approximately 193 million of the population of the age group of age 6 to 14.

This briefs you about the exact the supply-demand situation in the primary education sector. The purpose of opening this issue for the public investigation is to explore the economics of supply side of primary education, that is investment/ expenditure by the society to facilitate and on the other the demand side that is the purchasing power of the end user of this facility. This leads to assess the gaps between what is desired or expected and the real existing situation. The rigorous economic research shall provide the solution to bridge the gap.

The provision of primary education do exists in India from the time unknown. It originates in the Gurukul System of ancient days, where the disciple would go the place of his Guru, the teacher on attaining a particular age and stay with him till completion of his schooling. Probably the roots of modern day public school lie in this system.

Over this period of time a lot of changes have taken place in imparting education to the children of society. And at every stage of transition the system was subject to scrutiny of the experts in the society. This current period is no exception to that.

What matters for the ideal educational system is:

1. Appropriate and adequate infra-structure to facilitate the teaching- learning process
2. Quality forward looking instruction in the form of relevant syllabus
3. Diligent and devoted army of instructors, the teachers who can deliver the goods

The first three research components have the economic dimension of the study where as the last one has the sociological and cultural perspective.

Where do we stand today?

If we take a quick dip in to the Indian education system, since independence the primary education was a state subject. And the entire responsibility rests on the state governments with financial and policy support from the union government. It legitimately gave birth to various agencies to regulate to regulate and govern the whole set-up.

As in other sectors of the economy, therefore, the system of education had a very little or poor delivery system. Some feels the whole system is on the verge of collapse and partially the menace gets reflected in the statistics published by the government departments and the private agencies, which are dedicated to the cause of primary education in the country.

Time and again the efforts were certainly made by the authority for the progress of the educational system as a whole and the primary education in particular. Different commissions were deployed for the study of the system and recommend the valuable suggestions to ameliorate the condition. The education reforms were introduced by the governments at various stages by reformulating the education policies to meet the challenges which emerged in the process.

The rhetoric study of various commissions and policies under the plan period of the country is not central to this article, as it aims to find out the broad economic parameters of primary education. The latest effort initiated by the government in this field is vividly expressed in it's " the right of children to free and primary education bill 2009" tabled by the Honorable Human Resource Ministry; Declaring it compulsory for the children between the ages of 6 to 14 years to be in the school.

Many have considered this as progressive step and few like Anil Sadgopal, the well known educationist, considered this the most regressive one. For him it neither ensures the free education nor the compulsory education. It only regulates the present multilayered inferior quality school education system where discrimination shall continue. Thus, depriving more than 170 million children from education.

Economics of Education

The chairman Mr. Al Hashmi of the largest NGO in the world, Dubai Cares which aims to provide children access to primary education in developing countries says ' limited accessibility to quality education among the children in developing countries is significant to the child's right to education and foundation of sustained economic growth'.

Daniel Checchi offers in his book, an economic perspective on the demand and supply of education. The likes of these people and many more have already established the direct nexus between the quality education and economic development of the society. This invites for the in-depth study of the economic issues relating to education.

Economics of education provides the analytical tools necessary to understand the complex relationship between current income inequality and access to education. One needs to research why the so much of investment on education in the past has not resulted in reducing the social inequalities? Whether the resources spent in education are effective in achieving the economic and social goals stated in the education reforms announced and debated from time to time?

If the answer is big NO! Then the option is that the state as an agency to provide education should immediately find a partner in sharing the responsibility & if the state has deficiency in its investment constraints then it must call for the alternative potential sourcing for human capital formation. Let us honestly analyze the alternative ways of financing our education.

Here I suggest less of regularization and more of autonomy for the private-public partnership in the education sector to generate the global citizenry out of our education system achieving the transition of child in to a man; men and women of honor, discipline and courage. Let the system fulfill the promise to our society and raise such men and women who have the courage to face the highly competitive world out there.