

Education Today and Tomorrow

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Where we are

We have covered a *long* distance in the last 30 years, when less than 40% children were in school. Today, close to 100% are enrolled. We have gone from some 5 lakh schools to 14 lakh schools, from 27 lakh teachers to 60 lakh+. Major infrastructural gains; phenomenal increase in availability of learning materials; VECs, SMCs, SMDCs...

And numerous large-scale innovative programmes and projects in India and Maharashtra.

Unfortunately, disparity in educational provisioning has increased – good schools for the rich, and poor schools for the poor. *And*, we are struggling to ensure age- and grade-appropriate learning levels. Though it is called the ‘learning crisis’ it is actually a ‘teaching crisis’ and a system management crisis. Blaming people is not helpful – we need to look at what has prevented us from attaining success.

Here are some pointers:

- Quality = relationships + processes + higher order learning outcomes
- Learning levels = ToT / Engaged Time / Academic Learning Time
- Engaged time for each child as single most important indicator of quality
- Equity = Quality ; to each according to their need rather than the same to all – as that will perpetuate disadvantage

Key issues:

1. **Educational Design**: the profile of students changed, but our approach, pedagogy, assumptions, curriculum and other components did not. Addressing diversity and equity is more important than homogenizing *We need to re-examine our educational design and related components if we want to succeed. Responsive, contextual and active learning needed, using students’ fund of knowledge.*
2. Not understanding and planning for the **transitions** required: guru → facilitator; privilege → right; pre-determined → responsive; fixed inputs and variable outcomes → fixed outcomes and flexible inputs. *We need to understand how transition takes place, the sequence and stages by which it does, and how to convert this into a programme. E.g. how it happens for teachers – value them, help them succeed, plan around indicators, in phases.*
3. The **ecology** of educational quality: Discrete components lead to change not taking place. *An organic approach is required where the sequence and interlinkages are ensured*
4. Systemic inability to ‘see’ **ground realities**: E.g. 60% teachers are teaching MG classes; ToT is drastically reduced; time-tables and grades as barriers. *Better use of data for policy, planning, resource allocation; competence + enabling conditions = performance + supportive conditions = effectiveness*
5. Absence of strategy to develop **management capacities**: large vacancies, teacher management systems, limited number of system managers and limited capabilities; SMCs underutilized; leadership changes as leading to losses. *Incentivise states on process indicators rather than learning outcomes alone*
6. **Power relations** are a real barrier; and because it is the children of the poor who are affected most there is little outcry (teachers often say they are ‘unteachable’). *Restore pride in government schools!*

We now need to take a *considered, coherent, long term view...*

Starting from where we are, we need to look at what the future holds and prepare our population to not just to deal with it but to flourish in it.

A look at the future....

Key issues in the unfolding 21st century:

- Pervasive presence of technology; in education, vendor driven and not entirely helpful unless some conditions are met
- Pace of change is extremely rapid.
- Difficult to predict what professions will be needed; frequent job changes, re-skilling and re-tooling likely to be needed; AI increasingly present; jobs requiring 'human touch' and compassion will remain crucial.
- Easier access to academic knowledge increases emphasis needed on intellectual abilities; much of the content students learn may be obsolete by the time they graduate, though not necessarily the skills they acquire – so assessments will change; hence, more stringent certification, especially in newer areas, yet less emphasis on educational qualifications overall – demonstrable capabilities will count more
- Greater exposure to diversity – living and working with 'others', teaming with them...
- Homogenizing global culture will threaten local culture and diversity
- Increasing effort to control our minds – fake news, people as data points for marketing – are already visible
- Climate change, gene manipulation,

What we could work towards:

- Autonomous learner – what kind of decisions and responsibilities can we get students to take for themselves, individually and in groups? Thinking for oneself, not just following the herd. 'What do you think?' - A different kind of school day, designed around decisions taken by students
- Learning to learn; to adapt; assessment to focus more on knowledge acquisition abilities and knowledge construction abilities rather than the knowledge acquired
- Critical thinking but also specific thinking skills needed; not who/what/which/when/where but why/how/if..... open-ended situations; focus on filtering and processing information rather than locating it
- Understanding diversity, equity, preservation of valuable cultural diversity
- Collaboration abilities (this is in sync with our collectivist culture)
- Learning to be compassionate, and not just to fellow humans
- Conservation as a way of life

Worth remembering that:

Universal quality secondary education is the single biggest factor in making a transition from a middle-income country to a developed nation.

This needs:

A de-centralized system built around a common vision, shared principles and agreed upon goals, yet implemented in a localized, contextual manner.

As a result, what will our learner be like?

Our learner would be an autonomous learner – that is, one who is not afraid to ask questions, plan how she wants to understand or engage, use her own mind and thought for herself, take her own decisions, analyze, be her own critic, set benchmarks for herself and take pride in her own efforts while also being collaborative on basis of a mutual (rather than imposed) understanding.