

Chapter 4

Transforming and Facilitating Quality Education in Developing Knowledge Economy: The Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In 2015, world leaders gathered at the United Nations (UN) to adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals to achieve several extraordinary things by 2030. Among these 17 goals of sustainable development, 'Quality Education' has been recognized as the fourth most important thing in order to transform our world. Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. India, which is now one of the fastest growing economies of the world, is continuously thriving to transform and facilitate quality education for all, irrespective of the gender, caste, and socio-economic status to leverage country's demographic dividend. Such initiatives have been helpful in creating and sustaining a knowledge society and economy where people learn and build their capabilities to add value through knowledge development, improvement, and innovation. The efforts taken by India to improve the creation, storage, and dissemination of knowledge have helped her to build human capital and face the challenges of dynamic and ambiguous environment. This chapter discusses critical activities contributing to the desired change, highlights prevailing structural and socio-economic issues, and in the course of the analysis identifies some critical areas for improvement.

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INTRODUCTION

“Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.” — Albert Einstein

“The Highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.” — Rabindranath Tagore

“If your plan is for one year, plant rice. If your plan is for ten years, plant trees. If your plan is for one hundred years, educate children.” — Kuan chung (7th century B.C.)

In 2015, world leaders gathered at the United Nations (UN) to adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals to achieve several extraordinary things by 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals, n.d.). Governments, businesses and civil society together with the United Nations are mobilizing efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030. Among these 17 goals of sustainable development, ‘Quality Education’ has been recognized as the fourth most important thing in order to transform our world. Obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people’s lives and sustainable development (United Nations, n.d.).

A society and economy driven by quality education and eventually by knowledge stands strong in the changing economic and social landscape and is capable enough to cater human welfare. When delivered and absorbed well, education cures a host of societal ills. For individuals, it promotes employment, earnings, health, and poverty reduction. For societies, it spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. When we talk of education there are two major stakeholders – ‘Students’ and ‘Teachers’. It’s important to focus on both to make the process of learning smooth and fruitful. It is to be noted that Each additional year of education increases wages by an average of 10% and an extra year of school raises a country’s GDP on average by 0.5% annually (Desai, 2014).

Today we talk of knowledge economies, which are helpful in creating an environment where people learn and build their capabilities to add value through knowledge development, improvement, and innovation (Drucker, 1993). Knowledge is the driving force in the rapidly changing globalized economy and society (Gupta and Gupta, 2012). But like every other country, in India also education is influenced by the existing culture and framework of the society. For example, women in India are supposed to play family-centric roles and take care of the family and household chores. This scenario exists in almost every segment of the society but is a little more practiced and believed in rural parts of the nation. Inclination towards government jobs is another social bias that exists in India. This mindset inhibits the culture of

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