

# Education

Education plays a fundamental role in the development of an individual. Since independence, India has focused on improving access to education for students from all walks of life. Based on the available data, it is evident that we have by and large succeeded in providing access to primary education. While continuing these efforts, our country has reached a point where imparting inclusive, equitable, and skill-based education is needed to accelerate India's ascent at the global stage.

The scientific and technological advances are also pushing the need for skill-based training in cutting-edge multidisciplinary domains. Along with delivering content, the teaching-learning process must evolve to help the learner think critically and apply the knowledge gained to solve real-world problems. In addition, designing holistic education that nurtures well-rounded citizens with social and civic responsibility is critical. In this document, we have summarized the current status and how to achieve these goals by 2047.

## **Improving infrastructure**

According to Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) 2019-20, more than 15% of the schools still do not have electricity. Less than 40% of the schools have computers, and under 23% have Internet access. Although these are concerning, it is important to note that these numbers have significantly improved since 2012-13. We need to continually improve the infrastructure to ensure all students have access to the best facilities. This will greatly help in narrowing the gap between students from various backgrounds. Every school must have basic amenities like water, toilets, electricity, and infrastructure for children with special needs.

In addition to these facilities, schools should also have a strong digital and technology infrastructure. Strengthening the digital infrastructure is essential for accessing the learning resources, interacting with peers across the world, and updating knowledge and skills. Every student should have access to tinkering labs where they can learn by doing. These science labs and technology centers in schools will train the students on advanced technologies and enthruse them to innovate. Mushrooming of these initiatives by the government will ensure we grow into an innovation-driven economy.

## **Inclusive and accessible education**

As per UDISE+ 2019-20, the gross enrollment ratio (GER) drops from 78% at the secondary level to 51.4% at the higher secondary level, clearly showing that a significant fraction of students exits the system at this stage. This dropout is even more prominent among tribal students (42.9%). According to the GER data from the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20, there is another significant dropout at the higher education level (27%), which again is much more exacerbated among SC (23%) and ST (18%) students. It is obvious that improving inclusivity and accessibility in education is a critical factor for our nation's growth.

Improving accessibility requires designing systems that will optimize access for everyone. The system needs to carefully weed out any impediments that make it harder for a group of students to participate in the learning process. This could include establishing schools, improving access to existing schools, improving infrastructure, adopting assistive technologies, etc. It is also essential to create an inclusive learning environment through innovative curriculum development and sensitization of the stakeholders. Inclusion, with appropriate mentorship and handholding wherever necessary, will empower the students. The classroom activities need to be planned appropriately to facilitate each student to reach their full

potential. The curriculum needs to include locally relevant themes and contributions from marginalized groups. We can groom the future generation to be socially aware and empathetic citizens through these initiatives.

### **Equity in education**

Although equity and equality are used interchangeably on many occasions, it is vital to understand the differences to achieve substantive equality. The education system needs to understand a student's circumstances and provide the necessary support and resources to address their specific needs. Equity in education ensures that everyone has an opportunity to succeed, irrespective of their original circumstances. Providing equitable education does not just help students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Studies have shown that equity strengthens the academic performance of all students. Equity also builds a better community by strengthening the students' social-emotional well-being.

### **Skill-based and employment-oriented training**

Students at the higher education level should have the flexibility to choose their educational path. They should be provided with a support system that they can rely on for mentoring and guidance when needed. However, the curricula of higher education programs need to nurture multidisciplinary learning opportunities. The existing programs need to adapt to today's world and adopt a more flexible curriculum. In addition to flexibility, the students should be encouraged to pursue self-directed and experiential learning. This will boost critical thinking and provide a more holistic learning opportunity.

The data from AISHE 2019-20 shows that more than 70% of the students in higher education are BA, BSc, or BCom. Hence, it is important to carefully review the curricula of these programs and revamp them as necessary. Data-driven curriculum design is essential for the success of these programs. In addition to providing subject knowledge in their chosen domains, students should also be provided training and support to improve soft skills and employability.