Trends and Equality in Education

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Abstract:

India has witnessed tremendous development in educating and training its vast human resource of over one billion through sustained effort of conventional and distance mode of education. In pursuit of making Right to Education a reality, the Government has been initiating efforts for developing the educational infrastructure and training human capital. Consequently, the Country with a literacy rate of 64.84%, at higher education level, 13578 colleges and 407 universities along with 106 distance education institutions address needs of 11.7 million students. These institutions of learning, in true sense have been instrumental in educating the vast human resource of over one billion but democratization of education i.e. access and equity to education is still a dream to be realized. Trends in education are always appearing, such as iPads and online testing (and remember virtual reality classrooms?), but with recent developments in national standards and a new federal emphasis on equity, the 2013-14 annual academic year will have a set of trends all its own. Important strategies is necessary to achieve our nation's education goals if we are serious about preparing all students for citizenship, work, and life in our increasingly global world: Building a 21st Century Infrastructure —Building the 21 st century education environment for equity, innovation , and improvement requires a technology infrastructure that includes access to devices and sufficient broadband ; data systems, and interoperability standards; as well as content standards and high -quality assessments. Supporting Educator Effectiveness — Regardless of how the training is obtained or delivered –online or in person, peer-to-peer, or through technology specialists –high-quality professional development on how to use and incorporate technology into the curriculum is necessary in order to transform pedagogical practice . Education resource repositories, professional learning communities and communities of practice, technology coaches/mentors, and other methods of ongoing professional development support educator effectiveness. Developing and Scaling Innovative Learning Models — Developing and scaling innovative learning models helps address education priorities by employing novel approaches to meeting student learning needs. Innovative learning models include online and blended learning; high - access, technology - rich learning environments; and personalized learning models. Preparing All Students for College and 21st Century Careers — Students need higher order thinking skills to succeed in the 21st century global environment, whether they plan to attend college or start a career. Career and college readiness, initiatives, science technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) project-based collaborative learning, digital and open content, and dropout prevention programs support efforts to prepare students for life in the 21st century. From issues surrounding Common Core State Standards implementation to the number of tools available to create customized, affordable eBooks, educators and administrators this year will certainly have their hands full with adapting to these national education trends.

1. Introduction:

Education has been the main instrument of human development and its importance has been emphasized through fundamental rights, principles, statutes / acts in a number of countries. At the international level, attempts have been made at various congregations to focus on aspects of education as a part of fundamental human right. According to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948):

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all

3. Nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

4. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. Similarly, at World Education Forum Dakar, Senegal, April 2000, the framework for action was developed according to which goals for international communities were defined and these are:

   a) expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;

   b) ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;

   c) ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;

   d) achieve a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;

   e) eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieve gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality; and

   f) improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The Dakar Framework identified education as a human right and affirmed that no country seriously committed to Education for All would be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources. The Framework's goals and objectives have been adopted by countries and donor institutions around the world. They also played an important role in the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) passed by the UN General Assembly in a special session in the fall of 2000, further strengthening international commitments towards Education for All (EFA).

2. Equality of Education in India:

In India, education has been accorded prime importance and thus it has found place in Fundamental Rights (Part III) and Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV) of the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India has given certain rights to the citizens of India which are better known as the Fundamental Rights (Article 12 to 35). According to Article 21A "Right to Education" in Right to Freedom (Article 19 to 22), the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine. Along with the Fundamental Rights there are also the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 36 to 51) which are fundamental governing principles of the country and it is the duty of the State to apply these Directive Principles for making the laws. These Directive Principles cannot be enforced by the court of law in case of violation as is in the case of Fundamental Rights and these are directed towards social and economic freedom by appropriate action of the State.

According to Article 45 of the Constitution of India, the State has to make provision for free and compulsory education for children within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. However, a particular Act to this effect did not exist so the Government of India took initiative of framing Right to Education Act. The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002, enacted in December 2002 seeks to make free and compulsory education a Fundamental Right for all children in the age-group 6-14 years by inserting a new Article 21-A in Part III ("Fundamental Right") of the Constitution. The new Article 21A reads as follows:

"21A. Right to Education: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."

At present, a complete version of the draft legislation has been prepared and sent to Chief Secretaries of all States/UTs and placed on the website for comments from the public at large. Based on further consultations on the matter, it has been proposed that instead of Central Legislation, a Model Right to Education Bill should be formulated and circulated as a framework to States. Accordingly, a Model Bill on

Right to Education has been drafted and sent to the states for their comments. Although the legislative process of making "Right to Education", a Fundamental Right is at present in progress, however since its independence, the Government of India has been trying to work towards achieving the objective of Democratization of Education i.e. Access and Equity to Education for All.

3. Trends and Technology in Education:

Technology in college is taking a lesson from the enterprise model long practiced in business. The education space is abuzz with three major technology trends that are changing the landscape. Traditional publishers will need to re-think their offering, as printed educational materials may soon be a thing of the past. Early childhood education through online & mobile learning: There's no arguing that children love tablets. Adoption is very high by school boards and parents have been using them with their children at home as well. This truly makes learning fun for students and increases overall engagement. Exciting examples include niche products like LocoMotive Labs, for children with special needs, and Motion Math, for learning math through fun games. Innovative online education services such as ABCmouse.com offer early childhood education available online focusing on reading, math, science, music, art and more. The platform and curriculum allows for customized and independent learning and continues to gain traction in colleges and homes.

Free and open education: Services like CK-1, Coursera, Khan Academy, Udemy and the Massive Open Online Courses feature rich content and free, open education for all. CK-12 is one of the most disruptive companies highlighted at Launch. The company is a non-profit and provides completely free resources for educators, parents, and students. Users can create their own high-quality 'textbooks' called FlexBooks. The content is rich, interactive, customizable and very high quality. CK-12 is hardly alone as this trend is growing – Coursera is another big player in combining education with technology. During a fireside chat with Jason Calacanis, founder of LAUNCH, Coursera's co-founder Daphne Koller highlighted how Coursera uses data and analytics to track everything on the Coursera platform to continue to improve the experience and understand how humans learn. Koller discussed overall adoption, clarified some misconceptions about completion rates, and provided insights into the university partnerships and the overall growth of Coursera. She also highlighted how 40% of the students on Coursera are from the developing world, demonstrating how Coursera is

meeting the needs for higher learning at home and abroad. Coursera partners with international universities to offer more courses in multiple languages, indicating that the demand is global and that Coursera plans to be a global learning platform.

Workbooks are now Tablets: Complementing the first two trends is the rise in tablet-based education inside and outside the classroom. According to this Google infographic, 70% of college students planned to purchase an e-textbook in 2013. Complementing that trend, Open Colleges produced research showing that 80% of teachers think tablets can improve classroom learning. With this type of demand from both sides of the desk, there's good reason for companies like Amplify to believe that the classroom of the future will be tablet-based. Amplify has developed an innovative tablet-based solution for K–12 education. Tablet-based learning drives engagement, allows for quicker feedback and real-time monitoring of students' progress. Not only are textbooks being replaced by more accessible alternatives – now, education will start earlier than ever, and will be more widely available.
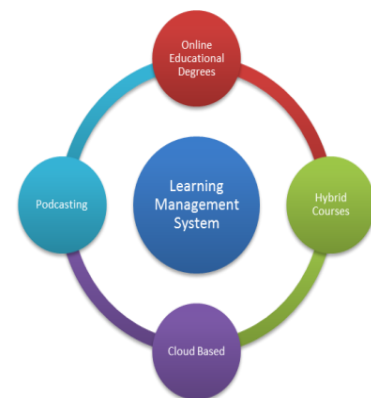
4. Emerging trends in Online Education:

Figure 1. Trends in Online Education

The rise of online education has been meteoric in recent years, spurred on by advances in Internet services, software, and public perceptions toward collaborative learning. Here are ten trends in online education that are currently materializing in the field that we can expect to continue onward into the near future:

1. A shift to open source—Learning Management Systems (LMS) have traditionally been paid services. Newer open source systems like Open Class

are free and open source and have received a warm welcome from both students and educators.

2. Being considered more valuable by employers—Online educational degrees have up until now been largely regarded as not as valuable on the job market as traditional degrees. As the number online students reaches critical mass this perception will change.

3. Hybrid courses are surfacing—Blended classes that feature some online education and some face to face teacher interaction have become popular at some colleges in Miami and in other spots in the nation as well. These types of schools give students more options.

4. Enrollment growing exponentially compared to brick-mortar-schools—online education enrollment as a 21% growth rate compared to the paltry 2% growth rate in overall higher education. This trend can be expected to continue as the technological services become easier to distribute.

5. Shared data, collaborative functionality—what will facilitate the easier distribution will be shared texts and the ability to collaborate on projects remotely. In-person learning will no longer be seen as superior to distance learning

6. Shift from books and closed texts to digital content distribution—Textbooks are slowly being phased out in deference to digital content distribution systems that allow people to access texts and learning materials online through variety of mobile devices.

7. Social learning systems to be cloud-based—these digital content distribution systems will be social and cloud-based. Open Class, for instance, allows enrolled students to share data and collaborate remotely through cloud services that do not have extensive hardware requirements.

8. Podcasting is on the rise—nearly half of US teens and adults have listened to a podcast and this number will grow. Podcasting will continue to be adopted more as an educational tool.

9. Better technology is emerging—there was a time when online education consisted of reading textbooks online. These days students have a wide variety of tools at their disposal, including text chat, immersive multimedia, virtual classrooms, and digital whiteboards. These tools will be further streamlined by better cloud services.

10. Social media is becoming educational—social media, which has long been viewed as the opiate of the masses, is more and more being utilized to facilitate social learning tools and Learning Management Systems. Expect entire educational social media networks to build off of sites like Facebook. Many of these trends are already surfacing in big ways in the educational industry, others are still embryonic. The rise of online education is expected to continue and many of these issues will play big roles in how perceptions of e-learning change in society.

5. Reason behind disparity in students' outcome:

Understanding why students' outcomes vary so dramatically along race and class lines in America is central to formulating effective education policy interventions. Disagreements about how to improve schooling outcomes for poor students stem in part from different beliefs about the problems that underlie the unsatisfactory outcomes in many of our nation's public College. Broadly speaking, critics tend to invoke, at least implicitly, one of the following explanations for why students in high-poverty College are not performing as well as we would like:

1. Colleges serving poor and minority students have fewer resources than they need. In this case, a potential solution would be to provide more money to disadvantaged College.

2. High-poverty College lacks the capacity to substantially improve student learning, independent of financial resources. Potential solutions to this problem would involve helping College improve the quality of their standard operating practices, or increasing the instructional capacity of staff in these Colleges through professional development or more selective hiring.

3. High-poverty College does not have sufficient incentives or flexibility to improve instruction. Proponents of this perspective argue that without clarifying key objectives and holding key actors accountable, additional spending will be squandered.

4. College matter only so much. The real problem rests with the social context in

which College operates namely, the family, neighborhood, and peer environments that under this perspective make it difficult for low-income students to take advantage of educational opportunities. Adopting accountability or market oriented reforms without changing social policy more broadly will punish educators for factors beyond their control, and potentially drive the most able teachers toward College serving less-disadvantaged students.

For some reason, current education policy debates often seem to be argued as if the problems listed above are mutually exclusive. In contrast, we believe that there is likely some truth to each of these major explanations; College confronts no single problem that can be addressed with just one solution. Identifying the optimal policy response to the mix of problems that plagues our public College is complicated by the possibility that these problems might interact with each other. For example, it may be the case that certain curriculum reforms are effective only if they are accompanied by an increase in resources such as student support services, or by an increase in teacher quality generated by reforms to hiring and tenure policies. Social science theory and common sense are likely to carry us only so far in identifying the most effective—and cost-effective—mix of education policy changes. For almost every education intervention that some theory suggests might be effective, another plausible theory suggests that the intervention is likely to be ineffective or even harmful. Education policy also needs to be guided by rigorous evaluation evidence about what actually works in practice.

Research over the past four decades has unfortunately fostered the impression that "nothing works" to improve College for poor students. One of the first studies to contribute to this sense of pessimism was the landmark 1966 report by sociologist James Coleman and his colleagues. Drawing on a large, nationally representative sample, the Coleman Report found that most of the variation in student test scores occurs within rather than across College, that family background is the strongest predictor of academic achievement, and that most measurable school inputs like student-teacher ratios are only weakly correlated with student outcomes. Subsequent evaluation studies of different educational interventions also tended to be disappointing, and helped contribute to a sense of pessimism about the ability of College to improve poor student's life chances.

6. Conclusion:

Although significant progress has been made in India towards enhancing literacy in the country and universalization of basic education, but there still remains a lot to be accomplished in order to achieve the mission of 100% literacy along with increasing the enrolment of children in the schools and motivating them to complete the schooling, thus reducing the drop out ratio at various stages. Greater dependence on technology in education audio-visual aids for teaching purpose so as to encourage learning by doing and supplement face-to-face with audio-visual teaching will surely help in increasing the literacy rate and improving the involvement of students in education. Schools and Colleges should take initiatives to improve the quality of the education delivered to the students. Providing tablet PC's and a Wi-Fi enabled campus, enables the students to gain uninterrupted access to knowledge. Shyness may be one of the reasons for students to avoid to interact in a classroom. To overcome this, Webinars on a particular topic for students having doubts in that topic can be conducted frequently as a doubt clearing session. Equality in education can be achieved by avoiding the categorization of students based on castes and communities. Mark based system helps in improving the equality among the students. Parents below poverty line should be encouraged by the Government, to send their son/daughter to schools or colleges, by providing scholarships for them. This also helps in increasing the overall literacy rate across the country. Finally, depending on technology to provide quality education and establishing equality among the students by the educational institutions with the help of the Government, helps in improving the literacy rate and to improve the quality of the education delivered to the students.

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