

General Studies-2; Topic– Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Human Resources.

Innovation in School Education in India

1) Introduction

- Education is the foremost sector that shoulders the biggest responsibility of shaping the future of nation.
- The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) on India's education system has once again highlighted the low learning levels in the country's schools.
- For the country to play a rightful role in world affairs, it is imperative that the Government takes education as a major area for intervention.

2) Need for Innovation

- Promoting creativity and incentivizing innovations through our educational institutions is a first step towards broadening and deepening the impact of innovations in our society and economy.
- As in all sectors, innovation will be essential to bring about qualitative changes in education.
- These changes are needed to increase efficiency and improve the quality and equity of learning opportunities.
- Skills including critical thinking, creativity and imagination, can be fostered through appropriate teaching, and practices.
- Technology-based innovations in education reshape the environments in which schools operate.
- To provide alternative ways of learning for students with special needs.

3) Present Status

- The infrastructure provision is far from satisfactory (for both students and teachers).
- The administrative support system is also not contributing to solving the crisis.
- Privatisation is not a remedy. If one compares children from similar backgrounds, private schools in many States are not better than government schools.

4) Driving Digital Change in India

- With two-thirds of its population under the age of 35, India will soon be the youngest country in the world.
- If well-trained and well-skilled, it could be the workforce for the world.
- The key to reaching and teaching a vast population spread across a large and diverse country is digital technology.
- Thanks to the ubiquity of mobile devices, they can reach a much larger audience via online courses and virtual classrooms.
- Not only organizations, but the government is also investing heavily on bettering the education ecosystem, be it with revamping the National Education Policy, launching Skills India initiative, SWAYAM roll out etc.
- Technology assists teachers in providing a more effective learning experience for the students.
- Schools must therefore strike a balance between technology-enabled and nature-based teaching to equip its students for a better tomorrow.

5) Challenges in Implementing Technology in Education

- Convincing parents and teachers about the benefits that technology driven education offers is one of the biggest challenges.
- Use of technology in education is depended on Internet connectivity that requires more bandwidth and infrastructure. This is an added cost to the institution.
- India still face internet connectivity issues in rural areas.
- Many teachers are still sceptical about the use of technology in education as they fear it might replace their role in future.
- So the challenge here is to convince them to incorporate technology as an aid in teaching rather than a threat.

6) Recommendations for Improving School Education

- **Teachers must only teach**
 - a. A study by the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA) revealed that teachers spend only around 19 percent of their time teaching.
 - b. They spend rest of their time mostly on non-teaching administrative work. This must be stopped.
 - c. Employ young people, equip them with a tablet computer and let them be cluster administrators.
 - d. One cluster of schools consists of around ten schools.
 - e. The cluster administrators will overtake the administrative tasks and ensure that teachers and headmasters can focus on academic work.
 - f. At the same time, millions of qualified young people are seeking jobs. We can tackle both.
 - g. It will increase the effectiveness of schools, improve learning, and contribute to a revival of an old and honorable profession – teaching.
 - h. This will be highly cost-effective.
- **Create a single-window system for infrastructure and mainstream fund-flows**
 - a. In Bihar, only around 10 percent of the schools fulfil infrastructure norms.
 - b. A study revealed that files for renovating schools often takes two-year time through various departments.
 - c. We can digitalise this process entirely and create a single-window system.
 - d. The same can be applied for teacher salaries and school funds.
 - e. These can be transferred directly from the State to the teachers and schools.
 - f. In return, this will free the District and Block administration from the burden of moving files the bureaucratic hierarchy.
 - g. Instead, the BEOs and DEOs can focus on ensuring that all children go to school and that the schools function.
- **Empower School Management Committees**
 - a. School Management Committees are largely dysfunctional.
 - b. Parents are often not aware of their rights and if they are it is difficult for them to make their voice heard.
 - c. Social audits have proven to be effective.
 - d. IT allows us to do this on large scale at low cost.
 - e. Mobile phones are largely available even to illiterate parents. Text-to-Voice systems can be facilitated for large scale social audits.
- **Enabling, Empowering Parents at Every Step**
 - a. The government can enquire parents about their satisfaction and facilitating their participation in School Management Committee.

- b. The data collected can help to detect corruption and leakage while giving voice to parents without relying on local middleman.
- c. Central call-centers connected to a state-level database can record and track complaints.
- d. This does also require proper staffing, reorientation and reorganisation of the education bureaucracy at the Block and District level.
- e. Technology is a tool, not a panacea.

7) **Conclusion**

- Education needs innovation to keep it fresh and relevant.
- It is not just the teachers and educators who form it, but also the students who shape it.
- Empowered by technology and tools, our education system can indeed scale up to edify, empower our citizens to help the country on its journey to becoming a digital and knowledge economy.