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As literacy rate a sufficient indicator of quality of education

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EDUCATION is a never-ending learning process that shapes and reshapes an individual to develop beneficial qualities. However, the education provided by the teachers in schools is an institutionalised process that caters to the students. The kind of education provided in schools takes up a major chunk of our learning process. So it is necessary that this education possess certain attributes in order to have a significant enough impact on a person. It cannot be translated into just a number, percentage or a low-slung benchmark.

Unfortunately, the kind of education that reaches out to the mass in our country has become merely a number or publicity stunt to flaunt the growing literacy rate or the rising enrolment rate. The quality aspect of education, which looks at cognitive, social and moral skills that are essential for constructing a highly skilled workforce, is hardly ever scrutinised and evaluated.

As far as quality of education is concerned, there are two ways of looking at it as per a report by the research programme consortium EdQual: "The 'economist' view of education uses quantitative measurable outputs as a measure of quality, for example enrolment ratios and retention rates, rates of return on investment in education in terms of earnings and cognitive achievement as measured in national or international tests." Thus, both quantitative and qualitative indicators are necessary in evaluating good quality edu-

cation. Firstly, looking at the quantitative measurable outputs of quality, it can be said that we have championed in terms of literacy rate, which according to a UN report in 2015 is 91 percent in contrast to 83 percent in 2000. There has been an improvement in the dropout rate from 21.4 percent in 2014 to 20.9 percent in 2015 (BANBIES-Education Database). At the same time, the enrolment rate has also recovered significantly from 87.2 percent in 2005 to 97.7 percent in 2014, according to BANBIES.

However, the return on the money spent in education, which shows how the skills achieved by the students are paying off as they enter the workforce, has still not been explored widely. The higher the level of skill, the higher will be the efficiency level contributing to the economy. Also, with higher skills and efficiency, the productivity level will also be higher. Increased productivity will result in higher profitability and thus greater return from the skills of the workforce will be ensured. However, despite the existing flamboyant literacy rate, it may be derived that the return on investment in education is not desirable given the lower middle income status of our country and a poor standard of living for the greater portion of the population.

Now looking at the qualitative aspect, according to a report by the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in March 2015, a great number of the students completing primary school are still unable to read or write properly, or perform basic mathematical calculations. Although the literacy rate is going up, the question of defi-

ciency in the outcome of primary education still remains pertinent. The poor quality of education and the lack of proper teaching methods can be attributed as reasons for this crisis. Due to lack of proper training and development, teachers have a poor understanding of creative teaching methods. They tend to stay limited to orthodox methods of learning. According to a report by RACE, a non-

students are then asked to memorise and reproduce in their exams. As far as class discussion is concerned, teachers are reluctant to apply interactive learning methods and stay limited to 'yes' or 'no' questions. This learning method does not actually contribute to any life, social or cognitive knowledge of students. This limits the ability of students to gain skills that are necessary in practical life.

factors that are essential in a holistic development of a child. These include: the health of the students, their families and communities; the environment within and outside classrooms; awareness regarding gender and health, among other social issues; and training and assessment of teachers and the materials used by them. The paper provides a detailed understanding of each of the factors that can be beneficial in addressing the problem of lack of quality in education provided in the schools.

However, students get stuck in the vicious circle of swallowing the limited bookish knowledge taught in class, then reproducing the same thing in their exam scripts without even retaining much of what their 'learned'. Cognitive skills are linked to the ability to think critically and deeply on subject matters and connecting them with other relevant information to make better sense of it. It enhances one's ability to create new things and resolve problems better and faster. However, not highlighting these skills in our current curriculum leaves deficiencies among children that result in an ill-equipped generation.

From the current context it can be seen that a significant part of the workforce in our country migrates for work; their salary then comes back to our economy in the form of remittance. Remittance is the biggest driver of growth in our country. However, if the workers remain unskilled and poorly educated, their income abroad will not increase and they will only

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In order to assess the qualitative or cognitive aspect of the education provided in schools in our country, it is important to first set a benchmark. In a paper presented by UNICEF in 2000, some basic guidelines were given on the quality of education, which took into account various internal (cognitive, social, moral skills, for example) and external

be assigned with blue-collar job are highly risky and low paying. These workers, due to lack of education and skills, don't only have a poor living standard abroad, but also unable to protect their right foreign country. Several cases of abuse and ill treatment against Bangladeshi workers abroad have been reported; this cannot only be addressed through policy reform also by providing quality education to low-income groups which will enable them to seek better jobs with higher pay and better working conditions. It is time to improve our image from being known as a nation that churns out an unskilled and uneducated labour force in only heavy, industrial jobs to one that produces knowledge-based, skilful employees. The changing trends of the market requires students to be more and more tech savvy, and thus the curriculum and education methods need to be designed in a manner that prepares young students to compete in the constantly changing market. In order to become innovators, inventors, entrepreneurs and creators, students must have a wider range of skill sets. Schools need to give them the space to think outside the box. We need an education system that empowers the future generation of our country to dream big and an education method that enables them with the right strength, courage, morals and intellect to chase that dream.

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