IDD Vision
The IOCOM Digest and Dialogue (IDD) is to be recognized as a world class outcome management Journal/Periodical.

IDD Mission
IDD’s Mission is to provide useful, timely and thought-provoking content in outcome management driven disciplines that addresses a broad spectrum of practices for knowledge exchange among academicians, researchers and practitioners.

IDD Objectives
1. Bridge the gap between academicians and practitioners in the discipline of outcome or benefit management
2. Provide a platform to academic researchers and practitioners for disseminating their research work.
3. Promote adoption of innovative outcome or benefit management disciplines
4. Highlight challenges being faced by the outcome managers (practitioners)

IDD Scope
1. The IDD journal will cover application of the cross cutting themes of Outcome management disciplines. No other journal in the world is having such orientation.
2. IDD journal’s main emphasis is on applied research.
3. IDD journal will accommodate articles based on both qualitative and/or quantitative approaches. However, preference will be given to mixed methods and action research.
4. Geographical territory of our journal is the entire globe.
**Introduction of IOCOM**

IOCOM is a not-for-profit corporation registered in Canada. It is an organization of professionals, academics and an alliance of international and national associations, societies and networks engaged in the discipline of outcome management.

IOCOM invites professionals and academics to create a forum for the exchange of useful and high-quality theories, methodologies and effective practices in outcome management drawn from all management disciplines. IOCOM encourages outcome management practitioners from all disciplines to make use of our resources, to participate in our initiatives and to contribute to our goals as individuals or through their organizations. We offer global linkages to outcome management professionals, organizations and networks about events and important initiatives, as well as opportunities for exchanging ideas, practices, and insights with peers throughout the world.

**IOCOM’s Vision**

To create a world where professionals, academia, organizations and networks with a focus and interest in effective outcome or benefit management, collaborate to strengthen the theory and practice of the discipline that benefits society.

**IOCOM’s Mission**

To promote outcome or benefit management in the world at large through multidisciplinary professional and academic collaboration and contribute to the quest for outcome or benefit management evidence in decision making for business and organizational viability.

IOCOM organizational and individual memberships are free and provide the benefits of professional connectivity worldwide and access to IOCOM’s E-Journal, Digest and Dialogue (IDD).

Please visit our web site at www.iocomsa.org and join IOCOM.

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Message from the Chair/ President

Greetings from Ottawa, Canada! Welcome to another issue of IDD, Vol. 06 No. 2. This edition is focused on the education ecosystem and sub-systems: educational administration; e-educational environments; educating citizens of the 21st century; collaborative learning culture; collective intelligence; emotional education (social and emotional well-being); and the ecology of learning ecosystem: families, schools, community, networks and society.

The education ecosystem supports the accomplishment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) no. 4, which is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

In this message, I am introducing another member of the United Nations family of non-governmental organizations. This one spearheads the education ecosystem and its sub-systems, science and culture, in the world: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, commonly known as UNESCO1.

Most of us have been influenced and affected by UNESCO’s programs, especially the preservation of cultural heritage in our countries. UNESCO preserves 1,073 world heritage sites in 167 countries for the benefit of future generations. Its world heritage site designation aims to protect the world's most valuable natural and cultural treasures. But often, that designation is not enough. Many world heritage sites have been neglected due to inadequate funding or reduced to rubble from regional conflicts and wars.

UNESCO headquarters is located on the Place de Fontenoy, in Paris, France. The organization has 193 members and 11 associate members. Membership in the United Nations carries with it the right to membership in UNESCO. Non-member states may be admitted to UNESCO through a special process.

The Governments of the States Parties to the UNESCO Constitution3 on behalf of their peoples declared:

“That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

UNESCO seeks to build peace through international cooperation in education, the sciences and culture. Its programs contribute to achieving the SDGs defined in Agenda 2030, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

1 https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco
2 https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/
3 https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000261751.page=6
UNESCO’s slogan is: “Building peace in the minds of men and women”.

In 1942, several governments representing the European nations confronting Nazi Germany and its allies met in the United Kingdom for what is known as the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME). The Second World War was far from over. Yet those countries were looking for ways and means to reconstruct their systems of education once peace was restored.

This meeting culminated in the decision to convene a larger conference, which occurred shortly after the war ended. It assembled representatives of 44 countries who decided to create an organization that would embody a genuine culture of peace. In their eyes, the new organization must establish the “intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” and, in so doing, prevent the outbreak of another world war.

Mission
As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO’s mission – pursuant to its Constitution – is to “contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information”.

Its overarching objectives of peace and equitable and sustainable development address global priorities on Africa and gender equality, and respond to post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

Strategic objectives
UNESCO is driven by nine strategic objectives:
SO 1: Supporting member states to develop education systems to foster high-quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all;
SO 2: Empowering learners to be creative and responsible global citizens;
SO 3: Advancing education for all (EFA) and shaping the future international education agenda;
SO 4: Strengthening science, technology and innovation systems and policies – nationally, regionally and globally;
SO 5: Promoting international scientific cooperation on critical challenges to sustainable development;
SO 6: Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and promoting ethical principles;
SO 7: Protecting, promoting and transmitting heritage;
SO 8: Fostering creativity and the diversity of cultural expressions; and
SO 9: Promoting freedom of expression, media development and access to information and knowledge.
UNESCO has five functions:

- Serving as a laboratory of ideas and generating innovative proposals and policy advice in its fields of competence;
- Developing and reinforcing the global agenda in its fields of competence through policy analysis, monitoring and benchmarking;
- Setting norms and standards in its fields of competence and supporting and monitoring their implementation;
- Strengthening international and regional cooperation in its fields of competence, and fostering alliances, intellectual cooperation, knowledge-sharing and operational partnerships;
- Providing advice for policy development and implementation, and developing institutional and human capacities.

These functions are implemented at global, regional and national levels, with different degrees of emphasis. Headquarters provides policy advice, while related capacity development is mostly provided at national level. Field units are delegated adequate authority to allow them to respond to national needs, with suitable accountability mechanisms.

One of UNESCO’s programs is to support Indigenous peoples\(^4\) who number between 370 million and 500 million. These people are confronted with marginalization, extreme poverty and other human rights violations. UNESCO’s job is to address the multiple challenges they face, while acknowledging their significant role in sustaining the diversity of the world’s cultural and biological landscape. These Indigenous peoples represent the greater part of the world’s cultural diversity. In addition, they have created – and they speak -- the major share of the world’s almost 7,000 languages.

Other key programs target youth\(^5\). UNESCO believes young people **have the creativity, the potential and the capacity to make change happen – for themselves, for their communities, and for the rest of the world.** UNESCO is committed to help them work together to drive social innovation and change, participate fully in the development of their societies, eradicate poverty and inequality, and foster a culture of peace.

I hope this brief introduction to UNESCO will stir your interest in reading more about this organization and exploring some of the designated world heritage sites.

As part of its mandate, UNESCO has been tracking school closures around the world resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Using a UNESCO report, the lead article in this issue of IDD examines outcomes of COVID-19 on education ecosystems, and particularly on young girls and parents and caregivers.

\(^4\) [https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples](https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples)

\(^5\) [https://en.unesco.org/youth](https://en.unesco.org/youth)
Elsewhere in this issue, I have written about the cultural heritage ecosystem in Sri Lanka. My sincere thanks go to the contributors to this issue for their time and effort; I encourage others to join them. IDD needs writers from all outcome management disciplines to maintain a continuous flow of articles, short or long.

IDD is your e-journal. Let the world know what you are doing to shape the outcomes of your organization. Help us make the IDD a world-class professional e-journal!

Enjoy reading your e-journal!

Sandiran (Sandi) Premakanthan
Founder President/Chairman, Board of Directors, IOCOM
Editors’ Note

The editorial team takes pleasure in presenting the second issue of Volume 6 of IDD, dedicated to the theme of education ecosystems and outcomes. These articles provide insights into various education systems and raise issues for debate for practitioners, researchers, academia and policymakers. Your comments will be highly appreciated.

The coronavirus pandemic continues to spread rapidly around the world. The two lead articles in this issue examine this human tragedy and its devastating impacts. IDD associate editor John Flanders examines the pandemic’s outcomes, so far, on education ecosystems. In almost every nation of the world, school closures forced by the pandemic have placed unprecedented challenges on governments to ensure learning continuity, and on teachers, students, caregivers and parents.

In Pakistan, one of the key education programs aimed at addressing gender disparities is the Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings (TVET) system. However, COVID-19 has shuttered all educational institutions, including the TVET institutes. IDD editor Atiq ur Rehman and co-author Gulcheen Aqil, a technical advisor working in the TVET system, examine how COVID-19 has affected the lives of women associated with the system.

UNESCO has made it its mission to promote access to culture during this time of self-isolation forced by the coronavirus. With that in mind, IDD chair Sandiran Premakanthan offers IDD’s readers an “etour” of stunning UNESCO designated world cultural heritage sites in his native Sri Lanka.

Over to India, where rising unemployment, combined with an increasing enrolment, indicates two things: first, the economy is not creating enough jobs, and second, graduates are not meeting employers’ requirements. Author Prof. S.T. Bagalkoti, of the Department of Economics, Karnataka University, warns this huge dearth of jobs and inadequate skills is likely to impede India’s growth. He examines the challenge for higher education in India.

And finally, in our fifth article, Author Alan Clarke, Director at HAC Consulting Ltd, United Kingdom, reveals that that the academic education system in Sri Lanka is under extreme pressure. His report examines Sri Lanka’s education system and analyzes whether it is capable of educating the nation’s youth to a level where they can have an impact on the economy.

We are confident you will find these articles useful and insightful. The theme of the next issue is also education ecosystems. We invite you to write on any aspect of the theme – COVID-19, innovations in technology and education, overcoming barriers for children to access education, or other topics. If you have an idea, let us know latest by 31 May 2020.

Keep safe and well,

Atiq ur Rehman, Susanne Moehlenbeck, and John Flanders

Disclaimer:
The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the articles of this Journal belong solely to the authors of the article.
COVID-19 and education: An ecosystem in crisis

John Flanders

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has catapulted education ecosystems around the world into a crisis that is unprecedented in history, one that may take years to return to “normal”, whatever that may look like.

UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, has been tracking the impact of the pandemic on education.

As of May 8, 2020, UNESCO estimated that 72 per cent of the world’s students— that is almost 1.3 billion learners— have been affected by school and university closures. The majority of these students are enrolled in primary and secondary schools, but there are also millions affected at the pre-primary and tertiary education levels. A total of 177 countries have shut school doors nationwide, while others, such as the Russian Federation, have implemented localized closures. More than 60 million teachers are no longer in the classroom.

In the United States, the 50 states and four U.S. territories have closed their schools, at least temporarily. New York City, the epicenter of the nation’s coronavirus outbreak, has closed its public schools through the end of the school year. That means more than three months of regular schooling for 1.1 million children will be lost. In Canada, the optimistic target date for re-opening schools is the end of May.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, over 154 million children, about 95 per cent of the enrolled, are temporarily out of school, UNESCO reported. Late in March, the governors of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the Brazilian states hardest hit by the virus, closed schools despite Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, who had called coronavirus fears a “fantasy”.

Everywhere, closures are placing unprecedented challenges on governments to ensure learning continuity, and on teachers, students, caregivers and parents. Going to school is the best public policy tool available to raise skills. The global lockdown of educational institutions may cause a major interruption in learning.

In a joint report, UNESCO and Plan International, a humanitarian organization that advances children’s rights and equality for girls, warned that the school closures will hit girls hardest globally.

“The potential for increased drop-out rates will disproportionately affect adolescent girls, further entrench gender gaps in education and lead to increased risk of sexual exploitation, early pregnancy and early and forced marriage,” the report stressed.
In a report for the Washington, D.C.-based Brookings Institution, Dr. Rebecca Winthrop, a senior fellow and co-director of the Center for Universal Education, said the level of disruption in education is much greater today, when compared to school closures during previous global crises. One such example is the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic in which 40 U.S. cities closed schools.

“This is in part because over the last 50 years school has become a central feature to childhood—not only educating children but acting as the largest national childcare scheme—in virtually every country in the world,” wrote Dr. Winthrop, who holds a doctorate from Columbia University and whose research focuses on education globally. “Today, 90 per cent of the world’s young people are enrolled in primary school now compared to 40 per cent in 1920.”

This report examines outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic on international educational ecosystems.

**Nations focusing on ensuring continuation of learning**

School closures impact not only students, teachers, and families; they have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. Closing schools puts the spotlight on student debt, digital learning, food insecurity and homelessness, as well as access to child care, health care, housing, the internet and disability services.

The impact has been more severe for disadvantaged children and their families. It has interrupted learning, compromised nutrition, enhanced childcare problems, and resulted in an economic toll on families who have not been able to work.

In almost every country, teachers and school administrators are encouraged to use applications, such as online lessons, to communicate with learners and parents. But parents can do only so much, especially as many of them are working from home to save their careers. Typically, their role is seen only as a complement to the input from school.

“Parents supplement a child’s maths learning by practising counting or highlighting simple maths problems in everyday life; or they illuminate history lessons with trips to important monuments or museums. Being the prime driver of learning, even in conjunction with online materials, is a different question,” cautions a research paper from The Centre for Economic Policy Research.

A UNESCO “World Education Blog” of late March 2020 reported that for all countries, avoiding the disruption of learning to the fullest extent possible is the first priority. “All countries are introducing or scaling up existing distance education modalities based on different mixes of technology,” it said.

According to UNESCO, most countries are using the internet, providing online platforms for continued learning. They include **Argentina**, Canada, **China**, **Egypt**, **France**, **Greece**, **Italy**, **Japan**, **Mexico**, **Netherlands**, **South Korea**, **Spain**, **Sweden**, **United Kingdom**, **United States**, **Vietnam**, and **Zimbabwe**.
Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and the United States.

Others such as France, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Korea, Mexico, the United States, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Viet Nam, are delivering learning content through public television networks and other media. Costa Rica, Islamic Republic of Iran and Thailand are using existing apps to maintain communication between teachers and learners.

In Ontario, Canada’s most populous province, the provincial government began online learning on April 6, three weeks after the schools were shuttered. But some parents found the move challenging.

A Toronto mother, who is a single parent of two and who works in a job considered an essential service, said: “For me, I’ve just had to say to the school, this isn’t working for my family. I can’t put added stress on my kids right now. They’re already going through this emotional trauma.”

The Ontario Ministry of Education is recommending elementary students spend between five and 10 hours on learning per week – that’s one to two hours a day -- depending on their age.

Another major challenge is the digital divide. Many U.S. households lack not only hardware, such as chromebooks, but also sufficient internet connections. According to data from Microsoft Corp., almost 163 million Americans are not using the internet at broadband speeds.

As a result, American educators face an enormous challenge. “The reality is that probably the majority of school districts, and there are more than 13,000 of them, don’t have the ability to provide continuous virtual online instruction,” the American School Superintendents Association in Alexandria, Virginia, reported.

In Southeast Asia, several schools have been closed and many universities have shifted in-person classes to online learning. As in many other developing regions, a large segment of Southeast Asia’s population doesn’t have access to the internet or electronic devices.

Only three countries have over 80 per cent internet penetration, with Singapore leading the way, followed by Brunei and Malaysia. For countries like Indonesia, the most populous nation in the region, only 56 per cent – 150 million of its 268 million population – have access to the internet. Penetration rates in Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam are less than 60 per cent.

**Devastating impact on girls**

Of the total population of 1.6 billion learners out of school globally, UNESCO estimates that nearly 743 million are girls.
According to the joint UNESCO-Plan International report, more than 111 million of these girls are living in the world’s least developed countries where getting an education is already a struggle. These girls live in areas of extreme poverty, economic vulnerability and crisis, where gender disparities in education are highest.

In Mali, Niger and South Sudan — three countries with some of the lowest enrolment and completion rates for girls — closures have forced over 4 million girls out of school.

“For girls living in refugee camps or who are internally displaced, school closures will be most devastating as they are already at a disadvantage,” the report said. “Refugee girls at secondary level are only half as likely to enrol as their male peers.

“We are only beginning to understand the economic impacts of COVID-19, but they are expected to be widespread and devastating, particularly for women and girls. In the Global South, where limited social protection measures are in place, economic hardships caused by the crisis will have spillover effects as families consider the financial and opportunity costs of educating their daughters.”

The report said that while many girls will continue with their education once the schools reopen, others will never return to class. “Education responses must prioritize the needs of adolescent girls at the risk of reversing 20 years of gains made for girls’ education,” it said.

UNESCO said there are lessons to be learned from the 2014 Ebola epidemic in Africa. At the height of the epidemic, 5 million children were affected by school closures across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the hardest hit countries. Poverty levels rose significantly as education was interrupted. UNESCO said several studies found that the closure of schools increased girls’ vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse both by their peers and by older men, as girls were often are at home alone and unsupervised.

“Transactional sex was also widely reported as vulnerable girls and their families struggled to cover basic needs,” UNESCO said. “As family breadwinners perished from Ebola and livelihoods were destroyed, many families chose to marry their daughters off, falsely hoping this would offer them protection.”

**Ensuring access to nutritious meals a major concern**

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of school children are now missing out on the school meals on which they depend, according to the World Food Programme. The impact on children and their families is dire. These children are at risk of hunger and will no longer have the protection of key vitamins and micronutrients they receive in the school meals.
“For poor families, the value of a meal in school is equivalent to about 10 per cent of their monthly income,” the WFP said. “For families with several children in school, that can mean substantial savings. The loss of the school meal means a loss of income.”

In countries where schools are closed, the WFP is working with governments and partners to identify alternatives to ensure that children and their families continue to receive the food and nutritional support they need during the COVID-19 crisis. This includes providing take-home rations in lieu of the meals, home delivery of food and provision of cash or vouchers.

Even in the United States, one of the richest nations in the world, many students rely on schools to provide free or low-cost meals. These meals — which speak to the country’s larger problem of income inequality — are a necessary staple for many families. Now American authorities are scrambling to address this issue, on top of all the other challenges the pandemic presents.

On a typical school day, the National School Lunch Program provides low-cost or free lunches to 29.7 million children. In New York City, the Department of Education offers free breakfast, lunch, and after-school meals to public school students during the school year. Around 600,000 meals are distributed daily when school is in session.

In Japan, families are receiving a refund for school fees while closures are underway and school lunches are being delivered to families in several school districts. Argentina and Washington State in the United States have also taken measures to continue school meal programs despite closures.

In China, measures are taken to guarantee continued food supply for students staying or under isolation at school. The Autonomous Community of Catalonia in Spain is ensuring nutritious meals for vulnerable children by issuing redeemable credit cards for any commercial food establishment.

**Heavy burden on parents and caregivers**

Distance and home learning invariably place a heavy burden on parents and caregivers, UNESCO says. Many are struggling to support children in their new learning environment, often juggling between supervision, their own work and household chores.

In China, online pedagogical support is provided to parents or caregivers. Italy is also offering them online courses on how to manage the relationship with learners during confinement. Similarly, in Spain, diverse communication platforms and apps such as Edugestio help teachers and parents/caregivers share the learning process.

Some countries, such as Guatemala, are providing teaching guidelines and learning materials to parents/caregivers to ensure the continuation of learning offline.
Others – France, Japan and the Republic of Korea -- are keeping a small number of schools open to accommodate children who cannot be cared for at home. In countries where citizens were not currently put under home-based confinement, such as Japan and Thailand, regular visits by teachers to families are also organized to monitor the progress and well-being of students and to advise parents or caregivers.

In addition, UNESCO emphasized that the social isolation of children must be addressed. Schools are hubs of social activity and human interaction. When schools close, many children and youth miss out on social contact that is essential to learning and development, the Agency said.

“I miss seeing my friends and talking to them face to face and having classes together,” said 17-year-old Nanda from Indonesia. “I also miss my school routine, waking up early in the morning and worrying about the homework I didn’t do. I believe we will get through this, stay optimistic.”

Online communication apps, such as WhatsApp, are used to ensure communication between teachers and students as well as among students in many countries, for example, Thailand. In others, such as China, Japan, Spain and the United States, psychological assistance is provided for those in need, including a 24-hour hotline and monitoring calls to avoid the feeling of isolation.

“Education in Emergencies”: Useful body of knowledge during crisis

The Brookings Institution report points out that despite this unprecedented situation, there is a useful body of knowledge on schooling during prolonged crises. The report’s author, Dr. Rebecca Winthrop (pictured), writes that over the last 20 years, “education in emergencies” has coalesced as a field of research and practice led by practitioners and academics working in humanitarian aid and global development.
“During this time, standards of practice have been developed, including technical guidance, new research programs and college courses, a global fund for education in emergencies, and academic journals,” she said.

Education in emergencies refers broadly to ensuring people affected by emergencies and crises—no matter the type or source of the crisis—have access to safe, relevant and quality education. This includes focusing on the cycle of prevention of and preparedness for emergencies, as well as the response to and recovery from emergencies.

Dr. Winthrop said that central to this field is a set of global standards that were developed in 2004 by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). These INEE minimum standards were based on a combination of practitioner know-how and academic evidence. They are frequently used to respond to crises in low- and middle-income countries often characterized by displaced populations and destroyed infrastructure.

Despite these differences with the current COVID-19 pandemic, the education in emergencies community can offer lessons learned and good practices in almost any case where education is disrupted for a protracted period. The Brookings report highlights four such lessons:

- **Mobilize education networks to disseminate life-saving public health messages**

  In the early stages of emergencies, it is important to quickly restart educational activities by gathering children and youth each day for many reasons. That would include disseminating crucial life-saving health and safety messages.

- **Plan for school closures to last months, not weeks**

  Returning to the pre-crisis routine of schooling always takes much longer than you think. It is very likely school closures will last months, not weeks, and the sooner the education community can acknowledge this and prepare a longer-term response, the better.

- **Consider unintended consequences and find ways to mitigate them**

  Continuity of education is one of the most broad-reaching activities to support children’s resilience and well-being and reduce anxiety during an emergency. However, not all children will need individualized mental health support, and indeed this is rarely feasible. For the majority of children, ensuring continuity of safe and appropriate education and other basic social services is enough to help them adjust to the new normal.

- **Build schools back better**

  A central principle in post-crisis recovery is to take advantage of the moment to build back better. This could mean constructing schools that are more structurally sound. For example, after the deadly 2005 earthquake in northern Pakistan, schools were rebuilt and retrofitted with improved designs. Another potential area may be the integration of
technology into education. Remote learning may force many educators and school administrators to get up to speed on what technology can offer.

So when will the schools re-open?

Parents in particular have a pressing question amid all the school closures: When will the kids head back to the classroom?

In the United States, reporters posed that question to Dr. Anthony Fauci (pictured), director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, during a White House coronavirus press briefing on April 7.

His best guess – this fall, maybe. "I fully expect—though I'm humble enough to know that I can't accurately predict—that by the time we get to the fall ... we will have this under control enough that it certainly will not be the way it is now, where people are shutting schools. But it’s going to be different. It (the virus) is not going to disappear."

Dr. Fauci stuck to a general timeline because he thinks that by then testing will be more widespread and that it will hopefully be easier to see who has had the disease through the presence of antibodies. "I think we're going to be in good shape" come the latter part of the year, he said.

In late April, US President Donald Trump urged individual states to “seriously consider” reopening their public schools before the end of the academic year, even though several states have said it would be unsafe for students to return until the summer or fall.

Conclusion

The battle towards a state of normalcy continues. With the situation evolving day by day, countries are employing a multiplicity of approaches to minimize the impact of the pandemic on learning.

As the UNESCO snapshot illustrates, policies go beyond rolling out distance learning modalities. They encompass measures to address the social dimensions of this crisis, which is affecting the lives
of children in myriad ways. Due to prolonged confinement, children are being separated from their peers and teachers and deprived of socializing activities, including sports.

Some day students will return to their classrooms and COVID-19 will be a terrible memory. But as the confinement and social distancing continue, it is critical to protect their well-being and mental health, and to increase support to families, teachers and caregivers.

**Sources**


COVID-19 in Pakistan: Impact on the technical and vocational education of women

Atiq ur Rehman
Gulcheen Aqil

Introduction

Pakistan currently has the largest generation of young people in its history, with about two-thirds of the total population under 30 years of age, according to a recent United Nations Development Program report. The median age in Pakistan is 22.5 years, which means that half the population is above that age, and half below (UNDP, 2017).

Of the total population of 212.8 million, about 60 per cent or roughly 125.2 million are in the working-age population aged between 15 and 64. Of these individuals, 60.6 million are women. This is significant because gender disparity is deeply rooted in the economic, cultural, social and political systems of Pakistan.

One of the key programs aimed at addressing such disparities is the Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings (TVET) system. With its bourgeoning young population, Pakistan prioritized the provision of technical and vocational skills to equip its youth for employment. The poor constituted the major target group of the TVET system and women were to be among the major beneficiaries.

Approved by the federal cabinet in 2018, TVET is seen as an integral element to achieve relevant objectives set under Vision 2025, which is the key government policy document for the nation’s macroeconomic development. TVET helps young people learn skills that substantially increase their potential to attain decent jobs. Skills (trades) taught to women include dressmaking, embroidery, handicraft, fashion designing, beauty services, cooking and baking, and web-designing.

TVET has faced a number of challenges – limited training capacity, outdated workshops and laboratories, obsolete training equipment, archaic teaching methods and antiquated curricula, discrimination against women in training opportunities and employment, and a gender wage gap.

But now it faces a new challenge, one that has thrown economies around the world into chaos – the coronavirus pandemic. As of 20 April 2020, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pakistan had reached 8,418, while the nationwide death toll hit 176. On a regional basis, COVID cases were mainly concentrated in Punjab (3,721 cases) and Sindh (2,537). The country is under complete lockdown. All educational institutes, including the TVET institutes, industries and shopping malls, are closed. The policy of physical distancing and isolation is being implemented. People are confined to their homes.
This article examines how COVID-19 has affected the lives of women associated with TVET system, directly or indirectly.

A word about methodology

This study used qualitative methodology to achieve its stated objective. The authors collected qualitative data by gathering responses from women using social media tools, including Facebook and Twitter, as well as communication tools such as Skype. A review of literature -- reports of government, non-government and international organizations -- provided material for contextual analysis.

Admittedly, the study does have a limitation. It is difficult to estimate the exact magnitude of the impact of COVID-19 on women associated with the TVET system. The situation is continually unfolding and getting worse day by day; no one knows when the peak of the crisis will arrive. Hence, the analysis in this article is based on emerging evidence, not complete evidence.

Contextual analysis: The state of gender gap in Pakistan

Women in Pakistan are at clear disadvantage in many ways. On the Global Gender Gap (GGG) Index 2020, Pakistan ranks 151st out of 153 countries. The GGG Index measures gender gaps from four dimensions: economic participation and prosperity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Except for political empowerment, Pakistan ranks very low on all these dimensions (Figure 1). Even more worrisome, Pakistan’s rankings have fallen during the last four years.

In terms of scores for these indices, Figure 1 shows that Pakistan’s situation is better in two areas: educational attainment and health and survival indices. However, in an absolute sense, the situation is not that rosy (see Figure 2). For example, the literacy rate among women is only 51.8 per cent, compared with 72.5 per cent for men, as reported in the Pakistan Economic Survey of 2017-18.

Economic empowerment is an area of great concern. Of a total civilian labour force of 65.5 million only 14.8 million are female, according to data from the Government of Pakistan, 2019. Another issue is that even amid the low labour force participation, unemployment among women is comparatively high. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey of 2018-19, the unemployment rate among women was 8.3 per cent in 2017-18, much higher than the 5.1 per cent rate among men in the corresponding year.

Furthermore, unemployment rates for women were well above those for men in three age groups: 20-24 (15.17 per cent vs 10.47 per cent), 25-29 (14.37 per cent vs 4.05 per cent), and 30-34 (11.94 per cent vs 2.04 per cent), as reported in the Labour Force Survey of 2017-18 and the Pakistan Economic Survey of 2018-19.
Gender wage inequality is another major area of concern. According to estimates of the World Bank (2020), the gender wage gap in Pakistan is 43.8 per cent, which is highest in the world. In this context, the role of TVET is critical to address gender inequalities. TVET is also important because it is a tool to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goal 5, which reads: “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”.

**Figure 1. Ranking of Pakistan on Global Gender Gap Indices (2016 vs 2020)**

**Figure 2. Scores of Global Gender Gap Indices of Pakistan (2016 vs 2020)**
Women in the TVET system

According to a 2018 report from the Pakistan Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training, the nation’s formal TVET sector had 3,740 training institutes, which the report termed “grossly inadequate to respond effectively to the needs of both youth as well as industry”.

In total, 18,681 teachers were working in the TVET system in Pakistan, of whom women comprised only 4,416, less than one-quarter. In the formal TVET system, in 2018-19, only 471,000 persons were enrolled; just over one-third or about 161,000 were female (GoP, 2019). That total female enrolment and total female staff would number more than a million if we include teachers and students associated with TVET-related programs run by NGOs as well as the private sector.

The German development agency GIZ -- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH -- is also running a comprehensive program, known as the TVET Sector Support Program (SSP). In addition, there are many organizations running entrepreneurship programs for women. Those such as the Small and Medium Enterprise Authority (SMEDA) have taken initiatives for developing women entrepreneurs (Government of Pakistan, 2019).

Outcomes of COVID-19: Economic impact

In a recent policy brief, Pakistan’s Ministry of Human Rights warned that a pandemic is likely to further compound pre-existing gender inequalities in a developing country such as Pakistan, which already has very low indicators of socio-economic development.

The document provides evidence on existing multidimensional gender inequalities and identifies specific vulnerabilities of women and girls to the transmission and impact of COVID-19. It said that about 20 per cent of women in Pakistan are currently involved in income-generating activities. Most of them are part of the informal low-wage market and for many, incomes have fallen and jobs are in jeopardy.

“During public health emergencies, it is these low-wage markets that are most adversely affected,” the policy brief said. “Many women, including domestic workers and those working for small and medium businesses may also be laid off due to the inability of employers to continue paying wages during lockdown.”

COVID-19 has already had harsh outcomes for women working with private sector institutes and women and girls who are studying in public sector institutes. This is because most private sector institutes have stopped paying salaries to teachers, while students of public sector institutes are no longer getting scholarships.
In addition, in many public sector institutes, a number of teachers were working on the basis of daily or hourly rates. They are also no longer receiving any salaries. Such teachers and students are facing tough economic times. Many projects and programs of NGOs have almost been shelved; this has hit women hard who were either employed on such interventions or who were the beneficiaries. The economic impact will only deepen with time.

**Social and psychological impact**

Fear of the coronavirus is high in Pakistan, and this is having a huge effect on the mental health of women, especially the poor. Fear and anxiety over life and economic conditions are growing every day.

The Ministry of Human Rights policy brief said that in Pakistan, norms dictate that women and girls are the main caretakers of the household. This can mean giving up work to care for children out of school and/or sick household members. Income levels drop while exposure to the virus increases.

“It is estimated that with the current lockdown situation, the workload of household chores on women and girls will increase substantially and will further shrink their time dedicated for learning and skills development,” the brief warned. “This will have serious impediments on the efforts of women empowerment which will not only be seen in the short run, but also in the medium and long run.”

Women’s health and reproductive outcomes have improved substantially over the years in Pakistan and the gender gaps in health care have substantially narrowed as well, the policy brief said. Still, only 55 per cent of women have access to adequate health care. Only 34 per cent have reported consulting a doctor or a medical professional for health-related problems, evidence that women are less likely to seek and receive medical attention, the brief said. With transportation available only sporadically, the fear is that women will not receive timely care for COVID-19.

“This could lead to serious complications in elderly women and those with weakened immune systems, many of whom are spread across Pakistan. Evidence suggests that in case of an outbreak of disease, there is an additional burden of domestic work and disease prevention that falls on women. Women are, therefore, more likely to be exposed to the virus and continue with their domestic responsibilities, even if they fall ill.”

The brief said 28 per cent of women aged between 15 and 49 have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, while 6 per cent have experienced sexual violence. One-third (34 per cent) of women who have been married at some point have experienced spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence. The lockdown is causing an escalation in incidents of violence as nerves in households fray. Legal support systems exist for protecting women against domestic violence.
However, such systems are no longer functional, leaving women in a more vulnerable situation. This is because government has had to shut down offices as a result of the virus.

Threats of robberies are also growing. A teacher said: “A major asset for a woman is her jewelry, since such valuable items are kept at homes, and threats of robberies are growing as economic hardships are going to increase.”

Household work for women has also increased, as servants are no longer available for work. Food consumption in families has increased, which has added further stress. A female teacher said: “I keep working in kitchen from morning to late night.”

Some outcomes are positive. For example, women have more time available to look after their children, and in many families, religious activities have increased.

A summary of the social, economic and psychological impact on gender in TVET system is presented in Table 1.

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**Safety measures**

Economic and social safety measures do exist. One of the major safety measures is individual philanthropy. According to a study by the Pakistan Centre for Philanthropy, total donations contributed by individuals in Pakistan in 2014 amounted to about PKR 234 billion (US$1.44 billion). This was almost 1 per cent of gross domestic product, and about 50 per cent of the total budget allocated under the Public Sector Development Program for that year.

Federal and provincial governments have also launched programs to provide economic support to poor families. However, it is also worth mentioning that the teaching faculty of TVET institutes belongs mostly to lower middle class families. The lower middle class considers donations as a social stigma; hence, they are likely to be hit hardest by COVID-19. They are considered as the least resilient segment of society.

Psychological support for both men and women is rare and exists for just a few issues. Men usually don’t share their concerns or need for psychological support because of social pressure and their gender roles. Women’s needs for psychological support are either completely denied or not accepted.
by family members because of their subservient gender roles and set norms in the society. Domestic violence and abuse are considered purely private matters.

Another daunting aspect of this need is social stigmatization, especially for men. In Eastern cultures, men feel such a need shows a man’s weakness or portrays a distorted image of masculinity. Hence, getting access to psychological support leads to a social stigma. In view of this, it is not easy to get such support.

Recommendations

Following are the recommendations of the authors to address the above issues:

- Government should provide financial assistance to all those who have lost jobs because of COVID-19, especially the daily wage laborer.

- The State Bank of Pakistan should reduce the benchmark interest rate (officially called the discount rate) from 11 per cent to 2 per cent to support TVET institutes that intend to adopt online teaching/training systems. This would allow the institutes to re-engage their teachers and students and start activities. It has been suggested that telecommunication companies should step forward and provide free or subsidized internet connectivity to women teachers and students.

- TVET teachers and students should be provided inputs so they can supplement their earnings through producing products at their homes. TVET graduates who can produce items/products working from their homes can also be given such incentives.

- Women teachers who are sitting at home should be entrusted with the task of creating awareness about the precautionary measures about COVID-19.

Conclusion

Pakistan currently has the largest population of young people ever recorded in its history. If this demographic dividend could be harnessed and provided skills to meet domestic and international market requirements, this huge group of young people, almost half of whom are women, would yield increased industrial productivity.

In Pakistan, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system was seen as offering the shortest and swiftest path to productive youth engagement. Without the participation of skilled youth and women in economic activity, no country can realize socioeconomic stability and prosperity.
Unfortunately, because of the majority disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, nations are plunging into a major global, economic downturn, with potentially strong adverse impacts on the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, particularly women. This article has attempted to show some of these impacts on the women of Pakistan.

Hopefully, these groups will be able to recover when life returns to “normal”, whatever that may look like.

References


Cultural education and economic outcomes: Sri Lanka’s world cultural heritage sites

Sandiran Premakanthan

Introduction

“In moments of crisis, people need culture” says Ernesto Ottone⁶, assistant director general for culture for UNESCO, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

“COVID-19 has brought into stark relief, as crises often do, the necessity of culture for people and communities,” he says. “At a time when billions of people are physically separated from one another, culture brings us together. It provides comfort, inspiration and hope at a time of enormous anxiety and uncertainty.”

But he added: Culture is in crisis. Many artists and creators, especially those who work in the informal or gig economy, are now unable to make ends meet, much less produce new works of art. Cultural institutions are losing millions in revenue with each passing day. Many World Heritage properties are now closed, which will have disastrous social and economic outcomes for the countries and communities with these sites.

UNESCO has made it its mission to promote access to culture during this time of self-isolation. It has launched the social media campaign #ShareCulture. It has encouraged people around the world to share their culture and creativity with one another online.

With that in mind, this article offers IDD’s readers an “etour” of stunning UNESCO designated world cultural heritage sites in Sri Lanka. These sites are popular tourist destinations that contribute to the nation’s cultural richness and economic prosperity and generate valuable foreign exchange. This pictorial story arises from visits to these sites by the author and his family, who are natives of Sri Lanka.

Tourism one of the biggest contributors to Sri Lanka's economic outcomes

The spotlight was very much on Sri Lanka’s tourism sector in 2019, after the globally recognised travel guide Lonely Planet named it as the number one travel destination for the year.

The island nation welcomes millions of visitors a year from around the world. India, China and the United Kingdom remained its largest source markets in 2018. The number of

tourists visiting the country went from fewer than 500,000 in 2009 to just under 2.5 million in 2019, according to the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority.

Data from the World Travel and Tourism Council show that the industry is one of the biggest contributors to the country's economic outcomes. Tourism has been a central driver of Sri Lanka's rising gross domestic product over the last decade.

Tourism is worth almost $4.4 billion (all US dollars) to Sri Lanka each year, accounting for almost 5 per cent of the country's GDP. More than 800,000 jobs (around 10 per cent of total employment in the country) depend on the sector, both directly and indirectly.

This has occurred despite horrendous setbacks in the last two decades. The tsunami of December 26, 2004, crippled the country’s economy, compounded by the civil war of three decades which ended in 2009. On April 21, 2019, Easter Sunday, Sri Lanka’s tourism and hospitality industry took a direct hit when Islamic terrorists carried out a well orchestrated attack on Christian churches and luxury hotels in the heart of Colombo and coastal towns of Negombo and Batticaloa.

Now the nation has to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Tourism Strategic Plan of 2017-20 foresaw a transformation of the tourism industry to make Sri Lanka competitive in the global travel marketplace. The plan recommended long-term actions toward achieving the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the outcome of Vision 2025, which is the government’s target to attain upper-middle-income status by the middle of the next decade.

Strategic outcomes for 2020 included earning $7 billion from tourism that year, employing 600,000 Sri Lankans in the sector and supporting industries – 10 per cent of them women – and increasing daily spending per visitor to $210.

Sri Lanka foresaw a relatively new market niche in wellness tourism. This market in 2017 was worth an estimated $639 billion globally, according to the Global Wellness Institute, an international industry body. The segment was forecasted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.5 per cent until 2022, considerably higher than the 3.2 per cent growth seen for tourism overall.

By 2022, estimated global expenditure was forecasted to rise to $919 billion, with 1.2 billion wellness trips annually. A positive for Sri Lanka, in 2017 some of the highest spenders on wellness tourism overlapped with its largest source markets: Germany ($65.7 billion), China ($31.7 billion), India ($16.5 billion) and the United Kingdom ($13.5 billion).

However, with the current COVID-19 crisis, all forecasts will need significant revisions.

The family vacation: UNESCO has designated eight World Heritage sites in Sri Lanka -- six cultural and two natural.
They include:

- Ancient City of Sigiriya, an ancient rock fortress, the most-visited location by foreign tourists in 2017 with more than 563,000 foreign visitors;
- Ancient City of Polonnaruwa, 2,500-year-old historical ruins, the second-most visited with nearly 249,000;
- Sacred City of Anuradhapura and Mihintale, the centre of Theravada Buddhism for many centuries, which saw more than 100,000 foreign visitors;
- Golden Temple of Dambulla;
- Sacred City of Kandy and
- Old Town of Galle and its fortifications

My wife and I and our three sons arrived in Sri Lanka on December 24, 2004, for our first visit since we migrated to Canada. We were anticipating a great three-week vacation on the golden sand beaches. Unfortunately, after the Christmas celebrations, on December 26, the tsunami which originated in Indonesia swept the coastline of Sri Lanka, bringing death and destruction of unimaginable proportion.

All hotels and beach resorts were closed. We tossed out our scheduled itinerary, and instead, took tours inland, including visits to the UNESCO World Heritage sites. Our eight-day cultural tour started at the capital, Colombo. We traveled along the beautiful western coastline (also affected by the tsunami but to a lesser degree) via Chilaw and Puttalam to the cultural triangle marked by the cities of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa and Kandy (Figure 1: Sri Lanka map).
Sacred City of Anuradhapura (1982)

Our first stop was the sacred city of Anuradhapura, one of the ancient capitals of Sri Lanka, famous for its well-preserved ruins of an ancient Sinhala civilization. (Sinhala is the official language of Sri Lanka.) The city, over 3,000 years old, is actually one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world.

We headed to the Ruwanwelisaya Buddhist temple, where it is a strict custom to remove your shoes and cover your legs before entering. The Ruwanwelisaya is a stupa (a hemispherical structure) containing relics considered sacred to many Buddhists all over the world. Originally built in 140 BC, then renovated in the 20th Century, it is guarded by a wall of 344 elephant statues.

Ruwanwelisaya Buddhist temple, Anuradhapura

Anuradhapura is also home to a huge holy fig tree, believed to be a descendent of the tree under which the spiritual founder of Buddhism was enlightened.

The Sapling of Sacred Bo Tree (the tree under which Lord Buddha meditated) and the sacred tooth relic (believed to be Buddha’s tooth) were brought to Sri Lanka in the period of the Anuradhapura Kingdom.
Royal Park of Anuradhapura Kingdom

Kuttam Pokuna (Twin ponds) - Anuradhapura Kingdom
Mihintale a mountain peak near Anuradhapura

Next, we visited Mihintale to view the giant Buddha statue high in the mountains. Mihintale is a mountain peak near Anuradhapura. It is believed by Sri Lankans to be the site of a meeting between the Buddhist monk Mahinda and King Devanampiyatissa, which inaugurated the presence of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

The giant Buddha statues of Mihintale Sri Lanka

Mihintale is the cradle of Sri Lankan Buddhism. We climbed the Mahinda Mountain, a stone staircase consisting of 1,840 steps. These steps lead to the summit in three phases. On the first plateau, the Kantaka Cetiya (temple) stands out by the simplicity of its structure; on the second plateau, vestiges of monastery buildings have survived.

The third plateau is the object of special veneration, for according to the legend it is here that the Buddha meditated. At this height (300 metres or 985 feet), the panorama is stunning.

7 https://www.easyvoyage.co.uk/sri-lanka/mihintale-3260
Staircase to Mihintale mountain top

Aradahana gala (Meditation rock) in Mihintale
Ancient City of Polonnaruwa (1982)

Polonnaruwa city ruins

Kingdom of Polonnaruwa

After Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa is the second oldest of Sri Lanka’s ancient kingdoms we visited. It reached its glory as the country’s commercial and religious center in the 12th Century. Like Anuradhapura and Kandy, it too is one of the three points marking the cultural triangle.

The main highlight is the sacred quadrangle. A raised set of stone ruins, carved with lions and lotuses on the outer walls, it has four staircase entrances leading to a central dagoba with four seated Buddha statues inside.
Ancient City of Sigiriya (1982)

Sigiriya – the name means “Lion Rock”\(^8\) – is the most famous of the country’s heritage sites and one of the top Sri Lankan tourist attractions. It is a 5th Century palace and fortress of King Kasyapa during his reign of 473-495, built on the flat summit of the rock standing majestically 200 metres (660 feet) straight up. Climbing Sigiriya to view the fortress and ruins of the palace was a highlight of our trip. Platforms and terraced gardens along the way let you to catch your breath.

\(^8\) https://www.ceylonexpeditions.com/sigiriya-rock-fortress-sri-lanka
UNESCO named Sigiriya rock as a heritage site in 1982 under the name “Ancient City of Sigiriya Sri Lanka”. It took us nearly three hours to climb the 1,200 steps to reach the fortress, and descend. The panoramic view from the top is unforgettable.

This fortified garden city of Sigiriya rock fortress is an exceptional masterpiece of ancient urban planning, landscape and architecture and exceptional hydraulic engineering. Sigiriya is versatile and has a many-faceted appeal.

The main features of Sigiriya rock are Sigirigraffiti, Lion’s paw entrance, boulders garden, mirror wall, fresco paintings of female figures, extensive networks of landscaped garden, water gardens, moats, ramparts and the remains of the palace.

The graffiti are scribbled on the surface of the mirror wall on the rock -- over 1,800 pieces of prose, poetry and commentary written by ancient tourists. These graffiti offer a fascinating insight into the history of Sigiriya and the evolution of language in Sri Lanka over a period of 800 years. The majority of the graffiti refer to the beautiful paintings of semi-nude females. Females depicted in the frescoes are the ladies of King Kashyapa’s royal court, the ladies of his harem.
Golden Temple of Dambulla (1991)

![Image of Golden Temple of Dambulla](image)

Dambulla cave Buddha statues

Our next overnight stop was Kandy, the hill capital of Sri Lanka. On our way, we visited the Golden Temple of Dambulla, another heritage site. This isn’t just one temple. It is actually a well-preserved cave temple complex, built on a 180-metre (600-foot) high rock which we climbed.

Dambulla is the largest and best-preserved cave temple complex in Sri Lanka⁹. There are more than 80 documented caves in the surrounding area. Major attractions are spread over five caves, which contain statues and paintings.

These paintings and statues are related to Gautama Buddha and his life. There are a total of 153 Buddha statues, three statues of Sri Lankan kings and four statues of gods and goddesses. The latter include Vishnu and the Ganesha. The murals cover 2,100 square metres (23,000 sq ft). Depictions on the walls of the caves include the temptation by the demon Mara, and Buddha’s first sermon.

Prehistoric Sri Lankans would have lived in these cave complexes before the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. There are burial sites with human skeletons about 2,700 years old in this area, near the cave complexes.

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Sacred City of Kandy (1988)

Surrounded by lush forest and tea plantations, Kandy is a delightful town perched high in the hills in the centre of the island. Kandy served as the capital of the Sinhalese kings from 1592 until 1815 (when the British arrived).

Sri Wickrama Rajasinha10 (1780-1832) was the last of four kings to rule the last Sinhalese monarchy of the Kingdom of Kandy in Sri Lanka.

The Nayak Kings were of Telugu origin who practiced Shaivite Hinduism and were patrons of Theravada Buddhism.[1][2] The Nayak rulers played a huge role in reviving Buddhism in the island.[3] They spoke Tamil, which was also used as the court language in Kandy alongside Sinhalese.

Palace of King Sri Wickrama Rajasinha

The Kandy Esala Perahera, also known as the Festival of the Tooth, is a festival held in July and August in Kandy. This historical procession is held annually to pay homage to the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha, which is housed at the Sri Dalada Maligawa in Kandy. Decorated elephants with magnificent tusks carry the casket of the sacred tooth relic during a colourful parade.
Decorated elephant carrying the casket containing the Sacred Tooth Relic of Lord Buddha (lead elephant on left)
Kandian dancers at the Esala Perahara festival

After the tour of Kandy, we left for Nuwara Eliya, a famous hill country tourist getaway from the hot, humid weather. Called Little England, it was a hill country retreat where the British colonialists could enjoy pastimes such as fox hunting, deer hunting, elephant hunting, polo, golf and cricket.

From Nuwara Eliya, we visited my old school, St. Thomas College in Gurutalawa, located in a valley surrounded by mountains. I was fortunate to attend this prestigious private boarding school modeled along the lines of Eaton and Harrow in England.

Old Town of Galle and its fortifications (1988)

Moving from the Cultural Triangle to Sri Lanka’s southwest coast, you come to Galle, which is famous for its Portuguese architectural buildings and the Galle Fort, which is a world heritage site.

Founded by the Portuguese in 1505, Galle really took off when the Dutch started building in 1663. We were unable to visit the fortification on our tour. Galle was one of the areas hardest hit by the tsunami, which left unimaginable devastation. However, my wife and I were able to tour the Galle lighthouse and fortifications on subsequent visits.
Galle Dutch Fort with clock tower in Sri Lanka

Lighthouse Galle Fort Sri Lanka
Our tour ended when we returned to Colombo along the inland winding roads. We included a stopover at my grandfather and grandmother’s ancestral home in Balangoda, a small-scale tea plantation (Orange Hill) at one time. The closest major town on the map is Ratnapura, famous for precious stones.

During this tour, we were unable to visit the two natural sites: the Central Highlands of Sri Lanka (2010) and Sinharaja Forest Reserve (1988).

**Conclusion**

COVID-19 has temporarily ended Sri Lanka’s rapid growth in the tourism industry over the last decade. The question is, how long before visitors are able to return in numbers to Sri Lanka and the world heritage cultural sites in particular?

To make Sri Lanka a major competitive force in the global travel market again will require the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, along with Tourism Promotion Bureau, to review and revise its Tourism Strategic Plan of 2017-20.

This may require government, foreign and local investments in this vital sector if the industry is to continue to contribute to the country’s economic outcomes as the third largest foreign exchange earner. Intervention will also be required to meet the UN’s 2030 sustainable development benefits and the government’s Vision 2025, the target to attain upper-middle-income status by the middle of the next decade.

All this will require Sri Lanka to take aggressive steps to re-capture its share of the global wellness tourism market.
Does Sri Lanka’s education system have a negative impact on the nation’s economy?

Alan Clarke

Introduction

Sri Lanka’s National Education Commission, an advisory body for the nation’s President, suggests that a highly educated person has become “the central resource of today’s society, for no country is better than its people.”

The NEC continues: “Without education it is impossible to increase the productivity of people. A range of useful skills and appropriate social attitudes are necessary to mobilize the resources available in the country to improve the quality of life.” (National Education Commission, 2017).

As this article will show, the academic education system in Sri Lanka is under severe pressure. Ranawana S. 2019 explains: “Although the number of government-run Sri Lankan universities has increased to around 25, the total number of places available is far from adequate. Less than 20% of the students who are, in theory, qualified to attend them can be admitted.”

Ranawana goes on: At the same time, educational quality is impacted by comparatively low levels of education spending. Sri Lanka’s education spending stood at 2.1 per cent of GDP in 2015 (World Bank), and represented 7.3 per cent of all government spending in 2014.

This is below the spending levels in other South Asian lower-middle-income countries such as India and Pakistan, where education expenditures amounted to 3.84 per cent and 2.5 per cent of GDP in 2013, respectively (World Bank). (World Education Services 2017).

Therefore, it appears that there is a very real danger that there will be many students with good Advanced Level results who will be in limbo with no real pathway to higher education.

This article examines Sri Lanka’s education system and analyses whether it is capable of educating the youth of Sri Lanka to a level where they can have an impact on the economy.

Sri Lanka’s Vision and Mission statements

It could be argued that all nations believe that educating their citizens will improve the economy by having more skilled and educated workers either working in, or leading organisations, both small and large.
This philosophy is also enhanced by parents wanting their children to succeed at a higher level than themselves and making sacrifices to educate their children.

This argument holds well in Sri Lanka, as the vision and mission statements from the Ministry of Higher Education show:

**Vision**

Sri Lanka to be an international hub of excellence for higher education by 2020.

**Mission**

To Delight Students, The Industry, Staff And Other Stakeholders Of The Higher Education System Of Sri Lanka By Formulating And Implementing Results Oriented Policies & Strategies And To Deliver Results In An Effective And Efficient Manner Through A Participatory Process To Produce The Best Intellectuals, Professionals, Researchers, Entrepreneurs To Deliver Innovative Solutions To Make Sri Lanka “The Wonder Of Asia”.

(Ministry of Higher Education, Sri Lanka, 2020)

Vision and mission statements are easy to produce, but the reality in Sri Lanka is that it is unlikely that these targets will be met by 2020.

**Education in Sri Lanka: A brief history**

Education in Sri Lanka has a history of more than 2,300 years. In former times, the country was educated by religious institutions. “The village temples and Pirivenas (monastic colleges) were the traditional educational institutions for the Buddhists while Hindus who nurtured Brahmin Guru tradition had their education at Hindu temples.” (National Education Commission, 2017).

The Portuguese and the Dutch moved the education system to what could be termed as education as we know it. However, when the British took over the country in 1815, “they had a lasting impact on the education system of the island and laid the foundation of the present education system.” (National Education Commission, 2017).

“In Sri Lanka, ‘free education for all’ was introduced in the early 1950s for primary, secondary and tertiary education up to the bachelor’s degree. As a result, all children attend at least primary school, and Sri Lanka’s basic literacy and numeracy rates approach 100%.” (Ranawana, S. 2019).

Indeed, according to World Education Services, “there are 9,931 government schools offering free education in Sri Lanka, as well as 98 recognized private schools, many of which are fee-based
international schools. In addition, “in 2016, over 1.7 million elementary school-aged children were enrolled in a government school, representing roughly 27 percent of the population under 18. Sri Lanka has achieved almost universal elementary school attendance, youth literacy rates, and gender parity in schools. (World Education Services, 2017)

But, since the 1960s, there has been a rapid rise in private schools and higher education institutions, due to the rise in population and in demand. Unfortunately, not all these higher education institutions are recognised by the Universities Grant Council (UGC) as having degree awarding powers. The UGC currently lists 11 non-state institutions with degree-granting status on its website, as well as six non-state institutions with recognized programs. Total enrolments at non-state institutions are said to have reached roughly 69,000 students as of 2014. (World Education Services, 2017).

To meet the rising demand and to seize an opportunity, many foreign universities have partnered with local institutions to offer their degrees. Other institutions have been formed to deliver diploma courses, but the standards of some of these are, allegedly, variable.

**Higher education in Sri Lanka**

Clearly, Sri Lankan students want to gain a degree qualification so that they have access to improved job opportunities. However, out of 337,704 candidates who sat the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level examinations in 2019, only 53 per cent qualified for university entrance and only 20 per cent were admitted to state universities due to limited places available (Vinayagamoorthy, J. 2020).

This lack of places at state universities has meant that private institutions have filled the gap. These institutions, naturally, charge for their courses. Even with these private institutions there is still a lack of places for “A” Level students to study for a degree. Also, in addition to these students, there are about 5,000 students who have studied Edexcel or CIE GCE Advanced Level examinations from the international school system who are not eligible to enter the state university system.

According to a 2013 *University World News* report, Sri Lanka’s 15 state universities admit “only 23,000 students … annually, out of the 220,000 who sit the university entrance (A-Level) examination every year.” That same year, some 12,000 Sri Lankan students reportedly sought university education abroad, (World Education Services, 2017).

In an attempt to alleviate these shortfalls, the Ministry of Higher Education in Sri Lanka has introduced an interest free student loan scheme. The ministry said: “The majority of the students who were not able to secure seats in State Universities are not in a position to afford the course charges in foreign universities, foreign university affiliated local institutes or local non-state degree awarding institutes.” As such, students can access a loan amount of Rs 800,000/- (about US$4,445) for degree programmes with higher market demand and also Rs 300,000/- (about US$1,670 for additional expenses. (Student Loans, MOHE).
Although this is commendable, the average salary in Sri Lanka is Rs 1,578, 225/- (about US $8,770) (Annual Survey Sri Lanka). This, of course, means that a significant amount of people do not earn this amount, so to repay the full loan of Rs 1,100,000/- (about US$6,110), could be difficult for most students, even if they get a job.

With the view to increasing the number of local degree-awarding institutions, the UGC has approved 12 institutions to have degree-awarding powers. This group is the Sri Lanka Association of Non-State Higher Education Institutes (SLANSHEI). Even with the formation of this group, there is still a significant shortfall in degree places. This is where other private institutions have stepped in.

With regard to these private institutions, “in Sri Lanka, there is no measurable restriction for establishing a Higher Education Institute. Anyone could start an education institution overnight.” (Vinayagamoorthy, J. 2020).

This should be worrying for students. How do they know they are attending a quality course and institution? Even if the private institution is delivering, say, a UK degree, is that recognised outside Sri Lanka? It is understood that many institutions offer “franchised” degrees rather than the university degree.

The question is whether this franchised degree is recognised in the same way as the university degree in the job market outside Sri Lanka. “There is no legal entity or regulatory body to monitor the functions of these foreign university programmes” (Vinayagamoorthy, J. 2020).

To further strengthen this observation, “there are a number of unregistered providers, which avoid the lengthy and costly recognition procedures stipulated by the government by taking advantage of a regulatory loophole that allows them to operate by seeking affiliation with foreign universities. Under current law, affiliated institutions can freely enter franchising and validation agreements to offer degree programs in partnership with foreign providers, although the UGC does not recognize the final degrees awarded by foreign institutions. In 2015, a reported 4,518 students were enrolled at unregistered higher education institutions, most of them in business-related programs.” (World Education Services, 2017).

Given these statements, students who find themselves in the situation of having to choose a private institution, which is not recognised by the UGC, should be very careful when making their choice. Ranawana, S. (2019) also observes that “legislators have been considering a new law to regulate higher learning for more than a decade, but the legal framework for accreditation of degrees – both undergraduate and postgraduate – is not yet in place.”

Three years ago, the National Education Commission warned that “education stands at the crossroads today and the present structure of education, pace and nature of improvement cannot meet the needs of the present situation”. The commission also suggested that “yet another need is to develop a genuine indigenous base for education through endogenicity in conceptualisation without depending on foreign
models.” Also, “the challenge here is to develop the capacity to perform the desired task.” (National Education Commission, 2017).

However, to date, the status quo appears to have remained. But a partial solution may be on the way. In a discussion between the author and Mr A. Wanasinghe (CEO, Horizon Campus, a founding Member of SLANSHEI), he explained that the Government of Sri Lanka will support the private sector in order to increase access and more students to non-state universities, through their policies.

In addition, commitment has been given by the Government of Sri Lanka for building five world class universities in government-approved cities, such as Puttalam, Deniyaya, Hambantota, Kandy, Batticaloa and Killinochi, and also to offer investor-friendly incentives to aid this.

The problem of shortages of recognised degree-course places is further exacerbated by the fact that there is a lag for students being able to access the interest free loan scheme. “The next intake will be selected from the students who have qualified for higher education base on the GCE Advanced Level examination in the year 2018.” (Student Loans, MOHE).

This means that students who have studied for the GCE Advanced Level in 2019 who do not get accepted in a state university will have to wait another year before they can access the interest free student loan scheme.

Discussion

It can be seen from the above that the academic education system in Sri Lanka is under severe pressure. Individuals, quite rightly, want to achieve success through education and the ability to secure senior placements in industry. But it has been shown that there is a bottleneck, or logjam in this system. Some questions arise:

1. What are the students who achieve the desired results at Advanced Level going to do if they have to wait for a year for access to the interest free loan scheme?
2. Will they be guaranteed a place, even if they wait for a year?
3. What do students who can’t access the approved state and non-state institutions do?
4. Should the Government and educators be thinking of alternative pathways to facilitate educated citizens into jobs?

It appears that there is a very real danger that there will be many students with good Advanced Level results who will be in limbo with no real pathway to higher education.

Some commentators suggest that the pure academic route to good employment may not be the best route. Indeed, it could be argued that university education is not for everyone and, from experience, not all young adults develop at the same rate, while some are just not ready for university at 18.
Vocational education and training a small solution?

So, would vocational education and training (VET) be a small solution to the problem? The concept of “earn as you learn” has grown in the United Kingdom and many individuals are now enrolling in apprenticeships.

Historically, however, the concept of VET has had a stigma of second-class education, with those undertaking such education coming from lower social status groups. Sych, S. M. (2016) suggests “academics have been given a higher social and educational value to that of the trades” and “the idea of tradespeople and crafters seen as less valued, having less intellect and therefore incapable of abstract thought and problem solving pervaded many cultures including ancient Rome and Imperial China.” Sych also explains that her “parents believed that getting an education would open doors and opportunities which were never afforded to them.”

Kincheloe, J. L. (2018) also supports the notion that VET is inferior, stating “vocational education students are not capable of understanding the economic and work system into which they are being taught to fit. They are learning ‘how’ not ‘why’; indeed, ‘why questions’ are often deemed downright insubordinate”.

Sych continues: “Perceptions of the working classes and trades people coming from a lower social status has prevailed throughout history with the views of these people having the inability to negotiate complex thought and analytical cognition.” She also suggests “it is not uncommon to see children of doctors, lawyers, or teachers becoming doctors, lawyers, or teachers themselves. Parents who have attended post-secondary institutions and who have earned degrees want their children to do the same.”

Is VET really a second-class education?

But is VET really a second-class education? “Researchers Backes-Gellner and Geel (2014) provide information for parents and others. They suggest that vocational graduates entering the work force have greater employment prospects than academic graduates with the risk of unemployment lower over the long term.” (Sych, S.M. 2016).

Also, “they note that employers are searching for potential employees who are the product of the VET system, as they prove to be more skilled, do not have to be re-trained, and are ready to start work immediately upon graduation, whereas “academic graduates first need to complement their general knowledge with occupation-specific qualifications (p. 281).” (Sych, S.M. 2016).

This contradicts what AllAboutSchoolLeavers Ltd. portrays on its UK website (http://allaboutschooleavers.co.uk/article/article/222/vocational-vs-academic-routes) (2020): “Academic study will hone analytical and debating skills, written communication skills and in-depth
knowledge, as well as ability to retain and relay information, which will be valuable in the workplace.”

The apprenticeship scheme in the United Kingdom is growing and government and businesses, large and small, are supporting it. They appear to solve the problem of paying fees and candidates are awarded qualifications up to level 7.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service UK website (ucas.com) gives this information. “You’ll earn a salary, and your course fees will be covered by your employer and the government. You just need to be willing to manage your time between work and study.” (ucas.com).

Conclusion

The title poses the question: Does Sri Lanka’s education system have a negative impact on the nation’s economy?

It could be argued that, yes, it does. Many students are working hard to gain Advanced Level qualifications and places at university, whether state or non-state, are limited. Those who cannot find a placement in a state university have to pay for their higher education, whether it be from the government interest free loan scheme, from commercial loans or from their own funds.

Students wishing to access the loan scheme have to wait at least one year before they can even apply for the loan, so what do they do in that time? Some will get jobs, which will contribute to the economy, but others will do very little. If those who are waiting have the funds, they might choose to study abroad, or they may have decided to study abroad regardless.

World Education Services states: “Outbound mobility is generally expected to increase in the future, given the country’s robust economic growth, capacity constraints in higher education and demographic pressures (almost 40 percent of Sri Lankans are under 24 years of age).” However, “that said, countervailing factors – especially government support for an increase in the number of private and transnational higher education providers in the country, may alleviate capacity issues and impede that growth at least somewhat.”

Clearly, this migration could have a detrimental effect on the economy. These students take their funds abroad and will most likely work abroad post study. They may not return to work in Sri Lanka at all, thus creating a “brain drain” from Sri Lanka.

If the answer to the question posed is yes, how could it be reversed? The government needs to increase the capacity of university places rapidly and at the very least build those five new universities. Promoting the benefits of VET might also break the myth that if you aspire to have a
senior role in an organisation, you have to go to university. This route could get those students waiting to go to university, for a year or more, into a job and contributing effectively to the economy.

Whether these measures would slow down the “brain drain” is a moot point. Those with more than sufficient funds would still go abroad to get degrees from world class, top ranking universities. But if it can be shown that they could get a degree from a foreign university, which is recognised and approved by the UGC, they may choose to stay in Sri Lanka. Thus, they could enjoy the benefits of a much-reduced fee compared to the fees abroad, plus a lower cost of living. The talent could then be kept in Sri Lanka.

The above would depend on whether the Sri Lankan government has the will, funds and vision to educate the population in an effective way so that the economy increases and moves from a middle-income economy, which would improve the lives of its population.

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“Stubborn Unemployability”: The Challenge for Higher Education in India

S.T. Bagalkoti

Introduction

India has embarked upon an ambitious goal of becoming a $5-trillion economy by 2025. Of course, with the current economic slowdown and COVID-19 lockdown, the date will get postponed. An increase in gross domestic product (GDP) would have to come mainly through increased productivity and high value production in every sector, both of which require advanced technical and professional skills.

The World Economic Forum (WEF) estimates that by bridging the skills gap, India could add $1.97 trillion to its GDP by 2028. A highly skilled workforce is, therefore, a necessity for accelerated growth of the Indian economy.

The strength of India’s economy lies in an expanding domestic market. KPMG, a multinational professional services network, reported that India will have the largest working-age population in the world by 2022 [1]. However, a grave concern is the steadily rising unemployment among the educated youth [2].

In 2018, the overall unemployment rate was estimated at around 6 per cent, double what it was between 2000 and 2011. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reported the unemployment rate at 8.74 per cent in March 2020 compared with 7.34 per cent in April 2019. India’s unemployed are mostly the higher educated and young people in the age group 20-24.

Among urban males, for instance, this age group in 2018 accounted for 13.5 per cent of the working-age population, but 60 per cent of the unemployed.

Rising unemployment, combined with an increasing enrolment, indicates two things: first, the economy is not creating enough jobs, and second, graduates are not meeting employers’ requirements. This huge dearth of jobs and inadequate skills are likely to impede India’s growth [3].

While jobless growth is a widely discussed phenomenon, fears are being expressed about the non-employability of graduates. It is disturbing that employers are not able to find workers with requisite skills despite a large output of graduates. This paper examines issues relating to the skills gap and employability in India.

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* Suggestions from Prof. Ishwar Chandra Awasthi and John Flanders (reviewer) are duly acknowledged; the usual disclaimers apply.
Education and the skills gap

Skills are the attributes learnt and inculcated by the learners for use in their daily life, as well as in productive and management processes. Skills enhance the capabilities of individuals, hence their potential for higher human development. Different levels of education infuse different types of skills. However, higher education is the terminal level of education for most learners, after which they join the labour force.

Higher education promotes performance, prosperity and competitiveness through various mechanisms: fostering innovation; developing skills of higher order; knowledge creation and its diffusion; creating high value employment; and contributing to overall socio-intellectual development of the society [4].

This is why higher education has caught the attention of virtually every country, and has expanded and diversified significantly in the post-Second World War period. Early beginners such as European countries and the United States, and emerging economies, such as the Southeast Asian countries, have created a dynamic and responsive system of higher education, capable of attracting students from other nations.

Although higher education aims at broader human progress, market forces have rendered it to an industry that produces job-ready graduates. Globalization has commodified education; skills are considered as those attributes that can increase production, productivity and returns to everyone -- workers, firms and society.

Higher education in India: Push for a skilled pool of workers

In India, efforts were intensified in the post-independence period to create a technically and professionally skilled pool of workers by setting up universities and colleges in the government sector and sponsoring private sector efforts. By 2018-19, there were 993 universities and nearly 40,000 colleges, which enrolled 37.4 million students.

While 30 per cent of universities were affiliating (setting up colleges), 38.8 per cent of universities were privately managed. Nearly 60 per cent of universities (and colleges) were located in urban areas, while almost 57 per cent of the universities were general universities. Similarly, 77.8 per cent of colleges were privately managed; 64.3 per cent were private but unaided, while 13.5 per cent were private but government aided [5].

Of the total enrolment of 37.4 million, 48.6 per cent were female students. The Gross Enrolment Ratio, or GER, measures enrolment as percentage of a specific age-group of the population. For higher education, the ratio for the 18-23 age group in India for the year 2018-19 was 26.3 per cent, almost identical for both genders. The ratio for marginalized groups was somewhat lower: 23 per cent for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 17.2 per cent for Scheduled Tribes (STs). The proportion in distance enrolment was 10.62 per cent, of which 44.15 per cent were female students.

The GER in higher education increased slowly from 1.5 per cent in 1960-61 to 8.1 per cent by 2001-02; by 2018-19, it had expanded to 26.3 per cent. The Ministry of Human Resource Development’s target is 32 per cent by 2022, which might be a little difficult to achieve.
In terms of programs, 79.8 per cent of students were enrolled in undergraduate programs and barely 0.5 per cent in doctoral studies. The most popular degree was a bachelor of arts, followed by bachelor degrees in science and commerce.

At the undergraduate level, the largest proportion (35.9 per cent) of students opted for arts/humanities/social sciences courses followed by science (16.5 per cent), engineering and technology (13.5 per cent) and commerce (14.1 per cent). Some 47,427 students enrolled were from abroad [5]. However, the proportion of individuals aged 25 and above completing secondary level education was the lowest in India among the BRICS nations.

The higher education system in India is one of the largest in the world, but not in terms of quality, as is revealed by its global ranking. Not one Indian higher education institution ranks in the global top 100, and the research output of our institutions is not considerable. Enrolment is predominantly in the arts/humanities (non-STEM) stream, and negligible in research.

The number of Indian students in foreign universities is huge. There are regulatory bodies and accreditation institutions, but often the processes are procedure-driven and conflict with the autonomy of the higher education institutions. The system faces many problems as will be discussed later.

**Skill mismatch: what is being produced is not what is demanded**

The skill gap or mismatch is a perceived deficit/shortage of attributes desired by employers. India’s National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has published extensive reports on state-wise and industry-wise skill shortages. India’s skill mismatch can be divided into two categories: first, the skill deficit or gap, where a worker’s skills do not match the requirements of the job; and secondly, the skill underutilization (over-education or over-skilling) that arises when the level of education and skills exceeds those required by the job being performed [7].

The disconnect between the demand and supply sides is obvious: what is being produced by educational and training institutions is not what is being demanded in the economy. This mismatch occurs in two ways. First, there is a quantitative mismatch between the supply generated by the educational infrastructure and demand generated by the economy (for example, some critical disciplines within medicine or engineering or even bio-technology or even critical skills). Second, the education system does not emphasize quality and relevance (an issue which is rampant) and this produces a serious distortion in the labour market.

Other manifestations of the skill gap in India include: more than 60 per cent of engineering graduates remain unemployed; more than 75 per cent of technical graduates are not job-ready (NASSCOM); about 93 per cent of BTech, MBA and MCA graduates lack employability skills (ASSOCHAM); and highly qualified people (even those with a PhD) are applying for clerical cadre jobs. [8] If a highly qualified person gets a job meant for people who have lower qualifications, the social cost of the higher education of that person becomes a dead-weight loss for the country.
A 2019 survey by the firm Aspiring Minds, a pioneer in workforce assessments, revealed what it called the ‘stubborn unemployability’ of Indian engineering graduates. It said the situation calls for “systemic long-term changes in higher education in India”. For example:

- Though this stream is the largest beneficiary of globalization, only 3.84 per cent of engineers are employable in software-related jobs;
- Barely 3 per cent of engineers possess new-age skills in areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, data engineering and mobile technologies. The employability in these areas is only 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent;
- Nearly 38 per cent of Indian engineers were unable to write an error-free code, three times the comparable proportion of Chinese [9].

Wheebox, a global talent assessment company, through its regular employability skill tests (WEST), estimates the employability of graduates by major streams, gender and states. Its latest report, the sixth in a series, shows that the overall employability of India’s graduates has increased to 47.68 per cent [10] (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Employability of Graduates in India (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stream</th>
<th>Employability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BE/B.TECH</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.S.C.</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MBA</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.PHARMA</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.COM.</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITI</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.A.</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLYTECH</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: India Skills Report, 2019 (Wheebox)

Though the employability of engineering graduates is highest, still 43 per cent of them are not job-ready. In terms of polytechnic, ITI, B.A. and B.Com. graduates, fewer than one-third are employable. This implies a huge wastage of resources that go into educating these graduates, as well as the cost of firms in training them.

The employability of female graduates is marginally lower than that of males. The regional distribution of higher education institutions and the employable talent does not match, thereby indicating that merely having institutions does not guarantee quality graduates. Many surveys of employers also reveal difficulties they face in finding graduates who are job-ready. The causes are well documented:

**Low enrolment:** Even after 70 years, the enrolment ratio in higher education is barely 26 per cent, which varies across gender, region and disciplines. The unmet demand for higher education in India is high, as the number of institutions is far less than what the National Knowledge Commission has recommended. Moreover, the majority enrolment is in non-STEM streams.

**Low quality of teaching and learning:** Many systemic weaknesses are affecting quality, such as: a chronic shortage of faculty, poor teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance, and separation of research and teaching. It is reported that 35 per cent of professor posts are vacant, as are 46 per cent of associate professors and 26 per cent of assistant professor posts. [10] More than 40 per cent of teaching positions are managed by
contractual faculty, which is deleterious to the quality of higher education. The pupil-teacher ratio in India is higher than in other emerging economies. Above all, unlike in foreign universities, where teacher performance is evaluated by their peers and students, the Indian mechanism does not ensure accountability, thereby eroding performance levels.

**Constraints on research and innovation:** With a miniscule PhD enrolment, India does not have an adequate number of researchers. It has fewer opportunities for interdisciplinary/ multidisciplinary activity; it lacks early stage research experience; its ecosystem for innovation is weak; and its industry engagement is insignificant. The number of researchers in India was barely 218 per million population in 2015. India accounted for 5.31 per cent of the total world publications in science and engineering, which is only about one-fourth of China’s output. With low spending on research and development, India’s inventive capacity as reflected in her performance in intellectual property rights is abysmally low. This has implications for her long-term growth. China, with a poor record in inventive capacity until recently, has emerged as a major innovating country. We need to learn from its experience.

**Governance/leadership:** With multiple regulatory bodies, there are duplication and ambiguity of regulations leading to frequent adjustments. The appointment of vice-chancellors is seldom on the basis of merit. They neither exhibit any vision for development of the university or higher education, nor provide an effective academic leadership. Corruption and inbreeding are rampant in state universities. The appointment of members on statutory bodies is also politically motivated.

**Resource crunch:** Several committees have recommended spending a minimum of 6 per cent of GDP on education, but that has never transpired. Universities lack resources to create and maintain teaching-learning infrastructure and promote research and extension. Although the bulk of the enrolment in higher education is in state-run universities and colleges, they get only 35 per cent of the UGC grants; the rest go to the central universities [11].

These constraints have resulted in sub-optimum facilities, curtailed autonomy and stifled creativity in the institutions, leading to the production of poor-quality graduates [12]. The internationalization of knowledge creation and rapid technological change [13] have added to the challenges. The penetration of disruptive technologies in the workplace has turned the employment scenario bleak.

Therefore, the systemic inadequacies should be addressed and avenues for skilling, re-skilling, up-skilling and life-long learning created. Technology can be leveraged to reach the last mile to deliver the skills training. Online and distance-learning platforms (including MOOCs, SWAYAM) can be employed to design short-term courses and integrate the curricula of the higher education institutions. In this backdrop, the Draft National Education Policy (2019) recommends a holistic model of developing higher education in India.

**Draft National Education Policy (DNEP): Addressing the challenges**

The Committee for Draft National Education Policy submitted its report on May 31, 2019. The report proposes an education policy that seeks to address the challenges of: (i) access, (ii) equity, (iii) quality, (iv) affordability and (v) accountability faced by the current education system. It envisions an India-centred education system to create an “equitable and vibrant knowledge society” [15], in
line with the SDG4 which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030.

The policy identified lack of access as a major reason behind the low intake of higher education in the country. Its main objectives are to revamp the higher education system, create world-class, multi-disciplinary higher education institutions across the country and to nearly double the Gross Enrolment Ratio to 50 per cent by 2035 from the current level of about 26 per cent.

The policy focuses on improving learning and skill levels of students and aligning them to market requirements; improving the quality of teaching; reforming the management of higher education institutions; providing funds for creating world class facilities; and improving research and skill outcomes.

In the area of skills and employability, the DNEP recommended their integration with the regular curricula, rather than teaching them as add-on courses; the goal is to help the students to obtain gainful employment and emerge as entrepreneurs. It proposed joint certificate programs in colleges in collaboration with Skill Sector Councils for producing graduates who are job- and market-ready.

In the area of R&D, the DNEP suggests creating new departments, incubation centres, collaboration and research networks for promoting creativity and entrepreneurship. In addition, it proposes to encourage inter-disciplinary studies and research to develop new knowledge on a sustained basis.

Among the measures suggested to improve teacher quality and performance are:

- Establishing positions of academic assistants and academic associates for researchers;
- Appointing a task force of experts to evaluate the existing recruitment and promotion processes in line with the leading best practices;
- Setting up national and state training academies for induction and orientation training for faculty members;
- Improving performance appraisal mechanisms, including peer reviews, and;
- Incorporating lateral entry and adjunct faculty from industry and government.

For strengthening governance for sustaining the quality of higher education institutions, the policy proposes an Education Commission comprising academic experts for identifying emerging knowledge areas and for recommending reforms in pedagogic, curricular and assessment reforms. At the institutional level, it proposes involvement of stakeholders, including representatives from industry and alumni. Other provisions in the DNEP include a cap on the number of affiliating colleges to 100, and setting up campuses of foreign universities.

Given the financial constraints of India’s higher education system, the DNEP reiterates the need to increase public expenditure on education to 6 per cent of GDP and calls for participation of private philanthropy and corporate social responsibility. Measures for increasing internal revenues of institutions through tuition fee enhancement, alumni funding and endowments, will be assessed by case. It suggests performance-linked funding of higher education institutions to promote excellence and efficiency.
The draft was widely debated and more than 65,000 suggestions were received from various stakeholders. Some felt the draft is grand in vision but weak in operational aspects; others said it is guided by short-term compulsions rather than a long-term vision [16]. It also did not contain any insight into how the policy will be funded [17, 18, 19]. The draft is yet to become a full-fledged policy.

Conclusion

The purpose of education is not merely to find jobs. It has a broader goal of emancipating society from socio-economic and political ills that it may be facing. By inculcating the needed skills, education enhances the capabilities and human development potential of individuals. Moreover, from a developing country’s perspective, in order to maximize the return on investment in education, one is compelled to aim at productive employment of the graduates.

Viewed from this angle, India’s higher education system has failed to create employability. Despite initiated measures, many issues, such as lack of autonomy and adaptability, resource maneuverability, poor governance and weak linkages, make it the weakest among the BRICS economies.

The GER, pupil-teacher ratio, public spending, research personnel and the number of patents filed are highly adverse. Obviously, the quality of graduates and research is not commensurate with either the size of the system, or with the demands of the growing economy.

As rightly visualized by the DNEP, corrective measures should start with: granting greater autonomy to the institutions of higher education; higher motivation and encouragement of the faculty; forging stronger links with industry, alumni and other stakeholders; increased resource allocation and searching non-conventional revenue sources; and effective governance and realistic accreditation. These measures strengthen the overall higher education system and also the skills it imparts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has opened up additional challenges; on-line tutoring could be the preferred mode of delivery of courses and skills. Integrating skill-based programs with regular curricula and effective multi-modal deliveries -- regular, online, distance, flipped, twinning, credit-transfer, and so on – will help students learn effectively.

References


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Call for articles

Dear Sir/Madam

The IOCOM Digest and Dialogue (IDD) is an e-journal of the International Organization for Collaborative Outcome Management (IOCOM). It is web-based openly accessible periodical published on a quarterly basis. Its readers include members of the IOCOM present in more than 80 countries and professional organization and networks with a distribution of about 5000 active readers. Readers tend to be (managers, directors, consultants etc.,) with an interest in exploring how to improve the delivery of outcomes across diverse societal sectors.

The editorial team invites you to write 2500-3000 word articles on any of the outcome management ecosystems and sub-themes. Articles on a chosen sub-theme should address the impact or influence on targeted populations in society. Please e-mail your interest to write an article indicating the title and an abstract of about 100 words.

Outcome management ecosystems

This concept of business ecosystems could be adopted to develop a tree of outcome management ecosystems. Here are some examples of outcome management ecosystems:

- Leadership and people management ecosystem and subsystems: leadership development, leaders & managers, union-labour management, strategic planning and management, facets of human resources management; building & leading teams, negotiation and conflict resolution, complex employee behaviours in the workplace; motivating people, recruitment, retention, staff/employee appraisals, career & professional development, building employee capabilities, stress management, work-life balance, women & gender studies, organizational justice, participatory management.

- Financial, accounting and banking ecosystem and sub-systems: corporate finance, international finance, forensic accounting and fraud investigation, financial economics; cost-benefit analysis, contribution analysis, banking ecosystems: money laundering, digital currency, fintech, cryptocurrency, financial inclusion, innovative financial solutions for poor (micro financing); financial insurance; financial risk management: risk & loss control management.

- Business management/administration ecosystem and subsystems: business economics; business law, organizational behaviour, business ethics; business continuity, international business/trade; marketing and distribution; management reporting.

- Oversight management ecosystem and interconnected sub-systems: audit, evaluation, total quality management (TQM) and ISO family of standards; continuous improvement, auditing ecosystems: auditing environmental and occupational health & safety (OH&S) management systems.

- Government and non-government organizations (NGO) management ecosystem and sub-systems; good governance, open government, public management/administration, NGOs contribution to social and economic development, Indigenous people and governments, provincial/state and municipal and local governments, organizational diversity, gender and
minority issues at workplaces, cultural diversity, diversity and talent management, social and functional categorization, diversity and ethical issues.


● Information technology and information management ecosystems and sub-systems: Information resource management; information and communication technology (ICTs); digital preservation, cybersecurity, internet, data ecosystem including big data, data analytics; artificial intelligence, blockchain, machine language.

● Learning and innovations ecosystem, and sub-systems management of innovation; learning ecosystem, learning culture, learning fit, measurement, innovation ecosystem, start-ups ecosystem, technology eco-system; innovation, law, and technology.

● Industrial/manufacturing management ecosystems and sub-systems: product design and development, production management; plant maintenance; statistical quality control, quality assurance; productivity sciences ecosystems: industrial engineering/work study (motion & time study), method study (process re-engineering), work measurement, ergonomics and workplace design; operations management; robotics.

● Supply chain management ecosystem and sub-systems: logistics, procurement, product life cycle management, asset management, supply chain planning, supply chain enterprises applications; supply chain visibility, green supply chain, risk and supply chain resilience, integrated logistics hubs, one belt one road (OBOR).

● Engineering management ecosystems and sub-systems: civil engineering; mechanical engineering, electrical and electronics engineering, aeronautical engineering, architectural engineering, computer & software engineering, environmental science engineering.

● Agricultural management ecosystem and sub-systems: agricultural policies, agricultural management services, food security and environment, sustainable agriculture, gender in agriculture, trade of agricultural commodities, World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on agriculture, use of digital technology in agriculture, land grabbing, natural disasters and resilience;

● Health management/administration ecosystem -sub-systems: patient care, health outcomes and quality of life; health information systems ecosystem: eHealth: informatics, innovations and information systems; occupational health & safety: law & regulations; occupational hygiene; health law, ethics, & policy; health administration, health education and promotion, health risk communication, patient outcome management, midwifery, indigenous medicine, specialized health ecosystems – cardiovascular, quality of life, health emergency response management, health services research, health insurance, medicare system, dental care and dental hygiene, pharma care and pharmaceutical outcome research management and policy.
Criminal justice administration ecosystem and sub-systems: criminal law; law enforcement (law & order), legal administration, offender (correctional) management; parole system, crime & socio-legal studies, e-justice.

Education management ecosystem and sub-systems: educational administration; e-educational environments; educating citizens of the 21st century; collaborative learning culture; collective intelligence; emotional education (social and emotional well-being); ecology of learning ecosystem: families, schools, community, networks and society.

Environmental management ecosystems and sub-themes: An ecosystem consists of all the living and non-living things in a specific natural setting including plants, animals, insects, microorganisms, rocks, soil, water and sunlight are major components of many ecosystems: two types: terrestrial (forest; grassland; desert and tundra) and aquatic (fresh water; and marine). Other related sub-themes include climate change, air pollution control and greenhouse effect, alternative sources of clean energy (wind, hydro and solar) and conservation of species.

Four possible levels of outcome management ecosystems and sub-systems:
- Those driven by clusters of management and technical disciplines;
- Those driven by sector agendas: agriculture, education, health, social services and so on;
- Those driven by national (country) level results agendas (political agendas); and
- Those driven by international and global agendas: climate change, sustainable development goals, World Health Organization (WHO) and other United Nations (UN) agendas.

With kind regards,

Editorial Team
Volume 6, No 3 July – Sept 2020

Issue 6.3 Education management ecosystem and sub-systems: educational administration; e-educational environments; educating citizens of the 21st century; collaborative learning culture; collective intelligence; emotional education (social and emotional well-being); ecology of learning ecosystem: families, schools, community, networks and society.

Last date for the submission of articles: May 31, 2020

Volume 6, No 4 Oct – Dec 2020

Issue 6.3 Environmental management ecosystems and sub-themes: An ecosystem consists of all the living and non-living things in a specific natural setting including plants, animals, insects, microorganisms, rocks, soil, water and sunlight are major components of many ecosystems: two types: terrestrial (forest; grassland; desert and tundra) and aquatic (fresh water; and marine). Other related sub-themes include climate change, air pollution control and greenhouse effect, alternative sources of clean energy (wind, hydro and solar) and conservation of species.

Last date for the submission of articles: June 30, 2020

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Words limit: 2000-3000
Referencing/citation Style: APA (6th ed.);
Font and font size: Times New Roman, 12 pts
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