



Mains Practice Question

Q. Creation of a vibrant knowledge society can be ensured by higher quality education to all thereby making India a 'Global knowledge Super Power'. Explain. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by showing a contrast between India's status of knowledge superpower in ancient times and status of education today.
- Briefly mention the key advantages, which could work in its favour in India becoming Global knowledge Super Power.
- Mention various challenges that are ailing India's education system.
- Conclude your answer by enumerating the steps to be taken to make India a knowledge superpower.

Introduction

From the very dawn of history, India has been the Global knowledge Super Power, as it can be reflected in India's contribution to the fields like mathematics, medicine, literature. However, the status of education in India, in present times, is in a dismal state.

The importance of education can be depicted by the words of **Nelson Mandela - "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"**. Thus, becoming a global knowledge superpower is a pretext of becoming a political superpower.

Body

India has several key advantages which could work in its favour in the becoming global knowledge superpower. For example:

- **Young Population:** India enjoys the advantage of having a young population. It is estimated that, in 2020, an average person will only be 29 years old in India, which is much younger when compared with many developed countries such as the US, EU.
- **Critical mass of English-speaking workers:** At present, English-speaking workers are estimated to be beyond 70 million.
 - Such linguistic skills are important to allow Indians to connect with the rest of the world and to benefit from the opportunities in the global marketplace.
- **Large and Impressive Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora allows for invaluable knowledge linkages and networks globally.
 - At the same time, the highly influential diaspora of Indian professionals and entrepreneurs have been instrumental in bringing high technology investments to Bangalore, Hyderabad and other Indian cities.

Associated Challenges

India's system of higher education suffers from several limitations:

- **High Education, a Privilege:** Gross enrolment ratio in higher education is less than 9% in India, compared to 15% in China and more than 20% in many developing countries such as Mexico, Malaysia, Thailand, Chile and Brazil.
 - Post-liberalization, there has been mushrooming of private education institutions, but these have largely benefitted the relatively better-off sections of the Indian society.
 - Another challenge for the education sector is bridging the digital divide in the country.
- **Regional Disparity:** The enrolment ratios vary across Indian states, with the southern and western states faring better than their eastern counterparts.
 - The problem in the education sector has further compounded the lack of proper teaching facilities and best-practices, especially in rural areas.
- **Lack of Quality Teaching:** Some of the causes identified by education experts are a high teacher to pupil ratio, at 1:42 in some states and as high as 1:83 in others.
 - There are also no standard teacher training processes in place, and accountability and benchmarking are almost absent.
 - Also, the outdated rote learning is also in practice, without sufficient conceptual understanding.
- **Lack of a Futuristic Vision:** Despite nearly six years of deliberation and two committee reports, the human resource development ministry is yet to roll out the new National Education Policy (NEP) which will be the board rule book for the future of education in India for next several years.
 - Last National Education Policy (NEP-1986) came almost three decades back.

Way Forward

- **Shifting Towards EDU-TECH:** There is need to give special emphasis on the use of technology in the education sector and enhancing learning and adapting by the use of technology such as online classes, education portal and class-wise broadcast on dedicated education channels.
- **New Integrated National Curriculum Framework:** A new national curriculum framework needs to be devised, with focus on multi-linguistic, Industry 4.0 (data analytics, artificial intelligence etc.), and integration of sport and art, environmental issues etc.
- **Investment in knowledge-Based Industries:** Due to scope and utility of knowledge-Based Industries, there is a need for investment in Information and Communications Technology, Defence and Space Technology, Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology, etc.
- **Knowledge as a Public Good:** Nobel Laureate Economist Joseph Stiglitz's cities knowledge as a public good. Therefore, the Indian government must play a dominant role in the provision of knowledge.
 - In this context, the Government must increase public expenditure on education, which remains quite low at 3.2% of GDP.

Conclusion

Improving secondary and tertiary education remains critical in the pursuit of becoming a knowledge superpower, but the government also needs to address the lacuna related to elementary education.