EAC-PM

The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister releases the report on State of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in India

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The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) released the report on the State of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in India. The report prepared by the Institute for Competitiveness highlights the importance of early education years in the overall development of a child. It further highlights the role of well-planned early interventions like the National Education Policy (2020) and the NIPUN Bharat guidelines, leading to long-term improved learning outcomes.

Access to quality early childhood education is a fundamental right for all children. The earliest years of a child's life need to be understood in the backdrop of socio-economic, psychological, and technological hindrances they face, which further affect the potential of a child in numerous ways. During the panel discussion organized on the occasion Dr Bibek Debroy, Chairman, EAC-PM said "Education leads to positive externalities and the quality of Education imparted is important especially during the formative years. The present attainments in literacy and numeracy and the variations among states should be the focus for remedial action."

A child needs to develop solid Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) skills. FLN refers to basic reading, writing, and mathematics skills. Falling behind in the Foundational Learning years which encompass pre-school and elementary education makes children more vulnerable as it negatively impacts their learning outcomes. In addition to the existing issues pertaining to foundational learning years, the ongoing pandemic has highlighted the importance of technology in overall child’s education. Therefore, focus on the foundational learning is the need of the hour to ensure universal access to quality levels of education for all children in pre-primary and primary classes in India.

The Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy is the first step in this direction, establishing an understanding of the overall state of Foundational Learning across children aged below ten years in Indian States and Union territories. The Index includes five pillars comprising of 41 indicators. The five pillars are: Educational Infrastructure, Access to Education, Basic Health, Learning Outcomes and Governance. India is committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. Zero Hunger, Good health and Well being and Access to Education are the significant goals that have been mapped with the Index on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

Given the distinct levels of development of States across India and their varying child population size, States were categorized into different tiers to help bring forth better analysis. Various states across India have been classified based on their child population, i.e., those aged ten years and below.
Key Highlights:

1. Some states may serve as role models for others in certain aspects, but they too need to learn from other states while addressing their challenges. This holds true not only for high performers but also for low performing states. For instance, while Kerala has the best performance in the small state, it can also learn from some lower-scoring regions, such as Andhra Pradesh (38.50), which outperforms Kerala (36.55) with respect to access to education.

2. States have performed particularly worse in the Governance pillar because over half of the states have a score that is below the national average, i.e., 28.05, the lowest across all pillars. These pillar-wise analyses help states assess the state of the budgetary measures and steps needed to improve the state of education and identify existing gaps that obstruct their growth.

3. The issue of Access to Education is one that demands prompt action on the part of the States. The performance of Large States such as Rajasthan (25.67), Gujarat (22.28), and Bihar (18.23) is noticeably below average. Whereasthe North-eastern states have the highest scores as a result of their superior performance.

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