

Five challenges for India in the next decade

India will be more than a \$ 7 Trillion economy by 2030 and is expected to be the third largest economy in the world by 2026 / 2027. What is needed for such an economy? There are no quick fixes for India. India has a long road ahead and will always be a 'work in progress' country. The journey must go on....

a. Improve quality of teachers

We have 900 universities, 40,000 colleges and 1.7 million schools. We have 5.8 million primary teachers and 2.1 million secondary teachers. Innovations like Mid- day meals, free schooling etc. got children to school and away from child farm labor. We have 96.5 % of rural children enrolling in schools, we need a different quality of pedagogy. Pedagogy must be far more digital and visual to spur creativity and new knowledge. In many schools, one teacher teaches all subjects, in some cases teachers are used for election duty, polio duty etc. We have to upgrade teacher and pedagogy quality if we want the future generations to be curious, to be future ready and be lifelong learners. We must pay our teachers well and promote the deserving teachers. Teachers are role models and can inspire generations. Finally, a school system must be accountable to its stakeholders, ie the parents.

b. Bring down power distance.

‘Power distance is the extent to which less powerful members of institutions and organizations in a country expect and accept that power is distributed equally’. India’s score is 77 which is high. This means that most things are hierarchy led and top down. This leads to some cohesion, some collectivism and a lot of individualism. Leaders are seen as unapproachable and lacking humility. India is the world’s millennial capital, millennials will resent this and hence leaders have to change. One can start by seeking feedback, however tough it is. Leaders must challenge their people to bring ideas to the table and not challenge them into silence at the table. Leaders must embrace and champion diversity in every sense to bring down power distance.

c. Strengthen Institutions and governance

A recent trust survey showed that trust in companies headquartered out of India, Mexico, Brazil and China is low compared to other countries. India has the maximum number of listed companies in the world and hence it is crucial for India to lead in board governance. India will be an economic super power by 2030 and if we want to be trusted and be good partners we have to strengthen institutions and governance. Contracts cannot change because people change. Enforcement of

contracts will help us plan better and focus our efforts on execution.

d. Performance over Pedigree

India has a huge talent base. We produce 1 million engineers, second only to china, half a million MBAs the most for any country and 50,000 doctors every year, again the most for a country. However, only 5 % of engineers can code and only 19 % of MBAs are employable by industry. Often times this talent does not get its due place on the stage because of non-performance issues like pedigree and parochialism. This decade will see change. The Indian cricket team is a good example of a performance system taking over a pedigree system of picking players from a Bangalore or a Mumbai or a Delhi. IPL is the talent market that changed it. Most organizations and institutions must do the same in the next decade because talent will find its way into an honest performance system. Being from a particular batch at IIM or in any service should not be the guarantee of promotion , only performance should matter.

e. Media must be free and 'independent'

'There has been no famine in the last 200 years in any country that's democratic with a free media' said a celebrated economist. When we say free, we also

mean frank and independent. The business model of the media business is disrupted with online behavior. Till the media industry solves the business model issue, they will be challenged to be free and independent. The coming decade will throw up many more complex issues for India and the world and we will be challenged to seek answers to them. Having an independent media with a set of values will help the country.