Topic 1 – Governance and its Effects on Education

India is proud to be the largest democracy in the world, with over 800 million eligible voters in the 2014 election, and with 550 million voters voicing their opinion in the 16th Lok Sabha elections. India is currently the world’s second largest country by population and is set to become the largest in the world by 2022 with 1.4 billion people, surpassing that of China. By being the largest free democracy in human history, India understands its need to be a world leader in responsible governance, though it understands its need to improve greatly in the upcoming decades if it wishes to lift its population out of poverty and malnutrition.[[1]](#footnote-1) India also boasts the largest university in the world by enrolment, the Indira Gandhi National Open University in Delhi has an enrolment of just under 3.5 million students, that is 10% of the current population of Canada. With ten other publicly funded university with an enrolment of more than 100 000, five of which have more than half a million, India prides itself with the education of all its population, regardless of caste.[[2]](#footnote-2) The Government of India is also aware that by being the largest democracy, with millions of public servants spread out from Kashmir to Tamil Nadu to Nagaland, while being a developing country, that corruption is present in all levels of government, which, until recently, has been generally overlooked by leaders and local police.[[3]](#footnote-3) India realises that there are great disparities in wealth, social standing, and access to education, and that without good governance, there can be no way that lower class Indian families will be able to send their children to school, which would in turn stimulate the Indian economy, create jobs and improve the lives of tens of millions of families across the Indian subcontinent.

Corruption is sadly rampant in India, with approximately 62% of its population witnessing first hand of influence peddling to earn public sector jobs as well as bribes being given to elected officials and police chiefs to receive favours in return. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has recently upheld his 2014 promise of tackling corruption and improving the ease of which people conduct business transactions. As of Tuesday, November 8th, both the 500 and 1,000 rupee notes were banned and devalued until the government began circulating brand new 500 and 2,000 rupee notes, implanted which a small GPS chip that could be tracked, if need be, by tax officials.[[4]](#footnote-4) Black money, as it has been dubbed, is the popular action in which many people, of all social backgrounds, hide their money earned from under the table or unknown jobs to not pay any taxes, costing the Indian government billions of rupees of lost revenue. Many richer people, which benefitted heavily from not paying taxes, could no longer return the notes to the bank nor exchange them for newer notes, without having to face the scrutiny of the tax collecting agency in India. As bad as that may sound, India boasts itself with the level of primary education offered to its citizens, with 95% of India’s rural population living within at most a 1 kilometer of a primary school. However the results are far from perfect, ranking 63rd out of 64 countries participating in the OECD’s PISA survey, studying the level of education of children around the world, it was discovered that only 48.2% of students in the fifth grade can read at the second-grade level. To see this manifest in an economical sense, one may attribute India’s productivity growth to a lack of progress in the foundational elements of countrywide, high-quality education.[[5]](#footnote-5) The commonly seen image of Indian education, is often the privately run, urban schools, but that image would be factually inaccurate to say the least, 87% of India’s primary school involvement comes from rural areas. A possible solution to this would be to give lunch meals to students, and when tested it was found that enrolment increased by 20%.

The delegation of India, on behalf of the Indian government believes it to be crucial that both UNESCO and India’s government can work together to properly maintain a gradual improvement of the quality of education provided to India’s rural regions. A joint task force between UNICEF and the Municipal Corporation of Mumbai, currently runs many programs to supplement primary and secondary school education, such as libraries and learning resource facilities. Pratham, the venture’s title, engages volunteers from the 16,000 local communities in India and trains them to run the programs themselves, eliminating the possibility of corruption, by placing the gift of providing education to children to those closest to them, and not in government offices.[[6]](#footnote-6) India’s governmental corruption leads to a lower standard of education in the rural areas, where there is little to no incentive to invest, however by focusing on a specific task, and not a one-size-fits-all system, that primary education can be improved greatly. If UNESCO and various charities around the world, including the World Health Organisation and the International Monetary Fund, invest in creating a system where all public schools in India have access to electricity, running water, bathroom facilities and educational technologies ranging from laptops to textbook, libraries to online resources, that India’s most impoverished will be able to rise and improve India’s economy, society, and, in turn, its own governance. When youth flourishes, so does democracy. And as the adage goes; Today’s youth, tomorrow’s leaders.

Topic 2 - Preservation of World Heritage Sites

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) as well as the World Heritage Convention (WHC), list a total of 35 world heritage sites in India, 27 of which are cultural, 7 are natural and one is mixed. The government of India is proud that it is one of the top 6 countries by number of UNESCO world heritage sites, and prides itself with the fact that these 35 sites are protected by international organisations such as the United Nations, and the cultural value of India’s history is being respected and preserved for generations to come.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Sendai Framework for Action 2015 – 2030, adopted by UNESCO, is a plan that outline four points to understanding and assessing the risks faced by heritage sites. They are; 1. Understanding disaster risk, 2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, 3. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction, and finally 4. Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience.[[8]](#footnote-8) In conformity with the preceding points, India is prepared to respond to these labels and quickly, and effectively, act to save the cultural treasures of the world, both inside India and in high-risk areas such as Syria and war-torn countries, where governments often neglect the heritage sites that mean so much to humankind’s shared history.

In the past decades, UNESCO has worked successfully in assessing sites in critical danger and quickly establishing a route and plan which would mitigate, and hopefully reverse, the dangers caused by both human and natural activities. An example of such would be the Wieliczka salt mines in southern Poland, were water infiltration risked damaging the centuries-old salt carvings and grand hall along with their salt chandeliers carved out by miners in the 1600s. UNESCO rapidly established a fund and executed its plan to its fullest. In India, the Group of Monuments at Hampi, the old capital of the Hindu Kingdom of Vijayangaar was listed as an “in-danger” site on the Danger List 1999-2006. The partial construction of two cable suspension bridges within the protected area caused worry from UNESCO, which noted that there was a lack of management and proper architectural approach to their construction. There were many overlapping jurisdictions within the Hampi protected area from local villages and municipal governments. A joint effort between the Government of India, UNESCO, and local experts created a single managing body to overlook the proper protection and to make sure companies and foreign interests respected the UNESCO world heritage site.[[9]](#footnote-9) And because of this collaboration, one of the two bridges was taken down and the Group of Monuments at Hampi was taken off the In-Danger List in 2006.

The government of India recognises that both climate change and improper human activities are the leading causes of the degradation of various world heritage sites around the world. There is a total of 1052 world heritages sites around the world, whether they be cultural, natural or mixed, there are 50 of them that are registered as in critical danger, with most of them being in conflict zones. India strongly believes that UNESCO must be granted more access and more privileges around the world to combat the trafficking and illegal selling and destructive of human history. Mrs. Mechtild Rossler, the Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, said that although India is a leader and shining example within the developing world, it must work harder to combat illicit artefact trafficking.[[10]](#footnote-10) India accepts this challenge to the fullest and will work with any international body to help protect all heritage sites around the world.

Topic 3 - Supporting and Accomplishing Education 2030

The Incheon Declaration was adopted in May 2015 at the World Education Forum, which is a commitment by various countries and the global education community to a single education agenda, otherwise entitled; Education 2030. Education 2030 calls for bold, urgent and immediate action to help the lives of those being left behind, the impoverished, the weak and the uneducated. The declaration entrusted UNESCO to continue the role as coordinator of the Education 2030, whose success will lay with the varying federal governments of each country, and it will be the government who will have the primary responsibility for the successful implementation of this accord. Its key points address inclusive and fair, quality education to all levels of academics. The Education 2030 Framework for Action outlines 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This declaration is meant to be organised jointly with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Populations Fund, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children’s Funs and the World Bank, as well the governments of the country itself.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The government of India believes that fulfilling SDG 4 (Quality Education) will be the key to economic prosperity and societal change. Yet the government of India also believes that there should not be a single international guideline for primary and secondary education, since as mentioned previously, most of India’s public enrolment comes from rural areas, where access to proper technologies, educational equipment and adequate staffing is commonly lacking. Countries such as Canada, Finland or even Australia, should not be compared with India or any other developing for that matter. Each country has their own problems, their own solutions, their own unique situations, each country has varying educational systems. Yet, India does not want to be perceived as a proponent to the Sustainable Development Goals, it is in fact, a large advocate for them. India would rather that each country have their own outline, plan, and it should up to that country to decide how they could properly and efficiently use the resources provided by the varying United Nations branches to best attain the objectives set by the Incheon Declaration. India has just recently implemented Vision 2030, a plan to modify and improve the current university system in India to best accommodate the 140 million college students by 2030, representing 25% of the world’s graduates. India has set four objectives; to expand the differentiated university system with a three-tiered educational structure, transition to a learner-centered form of teaching, intensify the use of technology and reform governance in both the Ministry of Education and varying university administrations.[[12]](#footnote-12) India recognises with the deepest of hearts that it is not the jewel of development, glimmering with governmental reforms to help combat poverty. 50% of Indians do not have a proper shelter, and 85% of villages don’t have secondary schools, shocking numbers nonetheless.[[13]](#footnote-13) The government of India believes that by creating a centralised educational program made for India, by Indians, will be the best course of action. Considering the changes in technologies and leaps that it has made within the education, India is compelled to pursue investing in technologies that will make education more accessible to all for a fraction of the cost, allowing more money to be diverted to properly feeding its rural students.

The delegation of India suggests that SDG 4 can be completed by creating a centralised educational system, unique to each country, using resources made available by numerous international bodies including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Developing educational technologies and taking into consideration why poor families cannot afford to send their children to school (most rural families cannot pay for their food without having their child working), and adapting to each situation with profound research. Education is the key to ensuring that India becomes richer, smarter and that India’s government becomes more transparent as more people rise in the societal ladder and are less likely to be overlooked by their elected leaders. By fulfilling SDG 4, the government of India believes it can fulfill all 17 SDGs. A smart India means a smart future for the world, let’s that this step and ensure the success of future generations.

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