

## **Current Economic Policy of Government & Education in India**

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*Abstract*

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## **Introduction**

Education is the single most important instrument for social and economic transformation. A well educated population, adequately equipped with knowledge and skill is not only essential to support economic growth, but is also a precondition for growth to be inclusive since it is the educated and skilled person who can stand to benefit most from the employment opportunities which growth will provide.

India's Constitution, through its preamble and the chapters on the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, provides an useful starting point to situate and analyze the rights to development in the Indian context. As is well-known, the Indian Constitution, as it came into being in 1950, was interpreted to have a clear distinction between a set of fundamental rights vis-à-vis which an individual is guaranteed against coercive or arbitrary state action, and a set of directive principles which should be the guiding principles, or the goals and aspirations, for State's actions in the interest of the citizens' welfare. Thus, the directive principles, which essentially consist of what the contemporary discourse views as preeminent rights to development such as the rights to food, shelter, health, basic education etc, are inferior to the fundamental rights.

## **State of Education in India**

India's performance in the field of education, has been among the most disappointing aspects of its post-independence scenario as the country currently houses the largest number of illiterates and has the dubious distinction that every third illiterate in the world is an Indian. Out of approximately 200 million children in the age group 6-14 years, only 120 million are enrolled and the net attendance figure is just over 60 percent (which may be an overestimate) of enrollment. In short, the prospects of even minimal literacy appear to be bleak. Of course, it is not the case that there has been no progress at all; during the last half-a- century, educational facilities have expanded substantially and the percentage of literate population has risen from 18 in 1951 to 65 in 2001. However, the simple point is that the deficit is still a huge one even in terms of crude quantitative indicators and quite a few countries in Asia such as Srilanka, Indonesia or China, among others, have done much better than India during roughly the same period.

No doubt, the school dropout rates are also very high in India, mainly because the conditions of schools in our country are dismal, especially in the rural areas. It is not the case that high dropout rates are largely due to lack of demand for schooling from the relatively proper households, as is sometimes fallaciously assumed, but the problems are mainly on the supply side. Even the minimal infrastructure, such as

proper rooms, desks, drinking water facility, toilets etc. are distant dream in a large number of schools. It is well acknowledged by now that even with small incentives- such as meal- attendance at school tends to improve substantially. Clearly, basic infra-structure and decent physical environment can go a long way in retaining children at school. Also, the overall social climate plays a critical role in this respect; for instance, it is well-documented that the attitude towards the students from low caste families by their teachers and fellow students sometimes forces them to drop out. Similarly, entrenched gender biases result in girl children either not being sent to school or for their dropping out earlier. Thus, due to a range of reasons, a large number of children of school going age have remained out of school, their proportion being highest in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

To tackle the problems of children not entering the school or dropping out early, almost all the major states in India have tried to make primary education mandatory, and a number of legislations have been passed to this effect.

Mandating an act is obviously no guarantee that it would be translated on the ground in the absence of appropriate infrastructure, requisite investments etc. Moreover, many of these acts were ambiguous along with having a very elastic time frame, and by all accounts the respective governments did not show any serious commitment to them.

### **Literacy Programmes**

we may recall here that to push up the literacy rate, a number of specialized literacy and adult education programmes have also been experimented with. National Adult Education Programme, Social Education Programme, Farmer's Education and Functional Literacy Programmes, Shramik Vidyapiths, Total Literacy campaigns and many other such programmes have been a regular feature for over three decades now, but serious and valid reservations about their efficacies have often been expressed by researchers. However, it may not be unreasonable to hold the view, on the basis of available evidence, that in terms of quantity as well as quality, these programmes have not achieved much.

### **Schemes to Achieve Objective of Universalization of Literacy**

There are some major schemes with the objective of universalization of literacy. The scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), or also known as the National Programme for Universalization of Elementary Education (NPUEE), was launched in November 2000. This is a centrally sponsored scheme for universalization of elementary education, and its effort is to incorporate all existing programmes of elementary education in the central / centrally sponsored category under this new frame work in consultation and partnership with states.

Ministry of HRD has taken several significant initiatives during XIth Five Year Plan and the momentum of which are being continued / accelerated during the XIIth Five Year Plan. Some of these are:

- a) Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas (SPQEM)
- b) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)
- c) Extension of Mid- Day - Meals (MDM) Scheme to Madarsas
- d) Saakshar Bharat
- e) Jan Shikshan Sansathan (JSS)
- f) Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
- g) Sub - Mission on Polytechniques under the coordinated Action for skill development.
- h) Girls Hostel Scheme
- i) Setting up model schools.
- j) Scholarship / Fellowship Schemes and Multi Sectoral Development Programmes (NSDP)
- k) National Policy on Education (NPE) covers elementary education to colleges in both rural and urban India.
- l) Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) launched in 2013.

#### **Education policies which changed the education scene in India**

There are major and minor education policies introduced in 2016. Undoubtedly, 2016 was a breath taking year with major changes in the education policy and with the introduction of a number new policies. These are –

- a) HRD Ministry launches digital payment campaign so that cashless payment can be made across the centrally aided institutions.
- b) No detention policy to end for class 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>.
- c) No varsity can deny admission to student till final degree is issued.
- d) Male students can now file sexual harassment complaints.
- e) Telangana makes gender education compulsory at graduation level.
- f) ICSE, ISC schools to now have mandatory yoga classes.
- g) Students not allowed to pursue two regular degrees together.
- h) Free higher education for the poor (Assam government).
- i) Haryana board makes Aadhaar card mandatory for board exams 2017.
- j) Guwahati government announces education facilities for students with disabilities.

- k) Govt. school teachers to be sent abroad for training.
- l) Online facility begins for medical college applications.
- m) Himachal Pradesh CM launches Rajiv Gandhi Digital Student Yojna.
- n) Sanskrit, Indian languages to get boost under New Education Policy.

### **Failed education policy needs urgent reforms**

Our failed education policy needs urgent reforms. The majority of our workforce can't be trained for high skill, high- productivity jobs. India's poor performance stands out when compared to that of some other Asian neighbours and other emerging market economies. India is finally approaching the goal of universal primary education, more than a hundred years after it was originally mooted in 1911. As of 2012, over 26% of India's population was still illiterate.

Oddly, the 13% of population with tertiary education. This peculiar top-heavy structure of India's education profile, neglecting basic education and attaching priority to higher education, starkly captures the elitist bias in the implementation of India's education policy. Half the population is still crowded at bottom, either illiterate or with only primary education. Mean while, a disproportionately large segment is also bunched at the upper end with tertiary education.

Even these statistics, depressing as they are, do not fully reflect the depth of India's education policy failure. For that, we have to look at the shocking learning outcomes reported in the 2015 Annual States of Education Report (ASER). About 52% of class V students could not read a simple text meant for class II students and could not do simple subtraction. Sadly, these outcomes have shown no improvement over successive Aser surveys. Such deficits in foundational reading and arithmetic skills are cumulative, leaving students grossly handicapped for further education.

Why was India's school education policy been so ineffective? Among many factors I believe the following are the most important. First, education policy in India is focused on inputs rather than learning outcomes, which is what matters. Second, education policy has a strong elitist bias in favour of higher education as opposed to primary or secondary education. Finally, the most importantly, the incentive structure for government school teachers is highly distorted, virtually guaranteeing poor performance. Learning outcomes are also generally better in private schools.

The failure of India's education policy has far reaching consequences. The large majority of our work force cannot be trained for high skill, high productivity jobs. Given the low education profile of the presently underemployed workers, they would mostly have to be employed in lower medium skill jobs, but would be better paid in organized sector than in the unorganized sector. Unfortunately, neither is the

demand for such workers growing fast enough, nor is the supply of such suitably skilled workers who can move from unorganized to the organized sector. So reforming our dysfunctional education system is a paramount importance.

### **Conclusion**

Thus to conclude it can be said that recent policy initiatives of the government do not generate much optimism with respect to taking up the huge deficits in the education sector, and even appear to be retrogressive in important ways.

Of course greater attention to the elementary education is much needed, but reducing support for already resource - deficit higher education may have very damaging impacts in the long run.

