



BLUEBELLS MODEL UNITED NATIONS

2022

LOK SABHA

BACKGROUND GUIDE

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Greetings Members!

It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to this simulation of Lok Sabha at Bluebells Model United Nations 2022. We look forward to an enriching and rewarding experience.

The agenda for the session being '*Discussing the reforms in Education Sector in India*'.

This study guide is by no means the end of research, we would very much appreciate if the leaders are able to find new realms in the agenda and bring it forth in the committee. Such research combined with good argumentation and a solid representation of facts is what makes much as possible, as fluency, diction or oratory skills have very little importance as opposed to the content you deliver. So just research and speak and you are bound to make a lot of sense. We are certain that we will be learning from you immensely and we also hope that you all will have an equally enriching experience. In case of any queries feel free to contact us. We will try our best to answer the questions to the best of our abilities.

We look forward to an exciting and interesting committee, which should certainly be helped by the all-pervasive nature of the issue. Hopefully we, as members of the Executive Board, do also have a chance to gain from being a part of this committee. Please do not hesitate to contact us regarding any doubts that you may have.

All the Best!

Executive Board

Valid Sources

1. Government Reports (Each ministry publishes its own reports including External Affairs Ministry)
2. PTI , PIB
3. Government Websites
4. Government run News channels i.e. RSTV, LSTV, DD News
5. Standing Committee Reports/ Commission Reports
6. RTI Proofs
7. Parliamentary Standing Committee reports
8. Questions and Answers of the parliament

Introduction

India has created one of the largest education systems in existence today. However, despite the extraordinary developments in the last decades, further reforms are necessary. The Indian government, recognizing the true importance of education in the 21st century, has made a firm commitment to creating a knowledge-based society through legislation.

Globalization brings numerous opportunities for India, which the South-Asian country could turn to its advantage due to its demographic and economic potential. More than half of India's population is of working age, and according to forecasts, by 2020 one quarter of the world's labor force will be made up by Indians. Job creation is of central importance to the government, for its success can become the engine of economic development at later stages. In the Age of Information society, however, there is only demand for a well-educated, professional workforce, therefore education is of paramount importance. The education system of the subcontinent's largest country attempts to adjust to the challenges, but there is no doubt about the need for reform. In the past years, India's governments have consciously striven to correct the errors of the old system, to adopt new developments, and to build a knowledge-based society that privileges creativity and innovation.

History of Education in India

India has a rich tradition of imparting knowledge. The 'gurukula' was a type of education system in ancient India with shishya (students) living with the guru in the same house. Nalanda was the oldest university system of education in the world. Students from across the world were attracted to Indian knowledge systems.

Many branches of the knowledge system had their origin in India. Education was considered a higher virtue in ancient India. However, the renaissance and scientific thinking as happened in Europe didn't happen in India at that time. The British who took control of the Indian affairs by that time had different priorities. Education in British India initially lagged a lot.

However, later, the British established the modern education system still followed in India. They replaced age-old systems of education in the country with English ways.

Still, the education system in India needs a lot of reforms.

Indian Education System: The Present Pyramidal Structure

The Indian education system can broadly be considered as a pyramidal structure:

1. Pre-primary level: 5-6 years of age.
2. Primary (elementary) level: 6-14 years of age. Elementary-level education is guaranteed by our constitution under Article 21 A. For this level, the government has introduced Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) under the Right To Education(RTE) Act.
3. Secondary level: Age group between 14-18. For this level, the government has extended SSA to secondary education in the form of the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan.
4. Higher education: generally of three levels: UG→ PG→ MPhil/PhD. To cater to the requirements of higher education, the government has introduced Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan(RUSA).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) related to Education

Goal 4 of SDG: Education for all – ensures equitable, inclusive and quality education along with the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030.

Provisions in the Indian Constitution related to Education

Under Article 45 in DPSP, it was mentioned that the government should provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years within 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution. As this was not achieved, Article 21A was introduced by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002, making elementary education a fundamental right rather than a directive principle. And Article 45 was amended to provide for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years.

To implement Article 21A, the government legislated the RTE Act. Under this act, SSA – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan – got a further impetus. SSA aims to provide Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time-bound manner.

SSA has been operational since 2000-2001. Its roots go back to 1993-1994 when the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched. However, under the RTE Act, it got legal backing.

RTE Act 2009

86th Amendment Act 2002 introduced Article 21-A, which provides for free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act was enacted to implement this fundamental right.

Provisions of the RTE Act

- Right of children to free and compulsory education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school.
 - ‘Compulsory education’ means an obligation of the government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education.
- Provision for a non-admitted child to be admitted to an age-appropriate class.
- Norms and standards like Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours, appropriately trained and qualified teachers are enumerated.
 - Rational deployment of teachers, ensuring that there is no urban-rural imbalance in their postings.
 - Prohibition of deployment of teachers for non-educational work, other than services like decennial census, elections etc.
- It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment (b) screening procedures for admission of children (c) capitation fee (d) private tuition by teachers (e) running of schools without recognition.
- Development of curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the constitution, ensuring all-around development of the child, building a system of child-friendly and child-centred learning.
- To further inclusiveness, 25% reservation is provided for disadvantaged students in private schools.

Criticisms of the RTE Act

- Even though the RTE + SSA have increased access to schools, resulting in a high enrollment rate, dropout rates increased in tandem. However, there is inadequate attention given to this scenario.
- There is inadequate attention to the PTR:
 - There is a fear of financial burden on the government for teacher recruitment and training.
 - The grey area of teacher transfer is also not helping the cause.
- There is a provision of the academic calendar being decided by the local authority, but it has not been implemented.
 - Since all state holidays are not relevant for all localities, such a calendar preparation by local authorities can increase attendance and can also encourage local panchayats to take ownership of schools.
- There is a divergence between urban-rural and rich-poor in education.
 - RTE students in private schools are paying extra fees as the schools claim that the government fund provided for the same is not adequate.
 - Most private schools treat RTE as charity and demand that the onus of universalizing education should be on the government's head rather than putting pressure on them.
- 70% of students are in government schools. So it must be fixed in priority, by providing infrastructure, teacher quality, targeted learning for children from disadvantaged groups to provide an equitable education system.
- Rajya Sabha amends the RTE bill, scrapping the no-detention policy and thus reinstating detention for students of Class V and Class VIII if they fail to pass examinations.
 - Under the RTE Act, till class 8, students should not be failed in exams. This is called the No detention policy. It had reduced dropout rates.
 - There is growing criticism of the policy resulting in reducing the quality of elementary education. Hence the RTE Act was amended to scrap the policy.
- RTE Act prioritized schooling of children only from the age of 6, thus ignoring pre-school education. Kothari commission had recommended the establishment of a centre for the development of pre-primary education in each district.

- RTE Act recommends a PTR of 30:1 for primary classes and 35:1 for upper primary classes
 - District Information System for Education (DISE) report states that 30% of primary and 15% of upper primary schools have higher PTRs.
 - According to Economic Survey 2018-19, the PTR at the national level for primary schools is 23 and 27 for secondary schools. Thus PTR appears to be satisfactory, as there are sufficient teachers. However, the main issue is a balanced deployment of teachers based on student strength.
 - Even though the Student-Classroom ratio (SCR) improved in almost all of the States, there is disparity across the country.

Modern Education in India: The Evolution of the System through various policies

The British government had introduced modern education in India. From Macaulay minute to Wood's dispatch to several commissions like Sadler commission, 1904 Indian education policy etc. build the foundation of the Indian education system during the colonial period.

Radhakrishnan committee

In 1948-49, the University Education Commission was constituted under Radhakrishnan. It moulded the education system based on the needs of an independent India. The pre-Independent Indian education value system was catering to colonial masters. There was a need to replace Macaulayism with the Indian value system. (Macaulayism is the policy of eliminating indigenous culture through the planned substitution of the alien culture of a colonizing power via the education system). Some of the values mentioned in the commission were:

- Wisdom and Knowledge
- Aims of the Social Order: the desired social order for which youths are being educated.
- Love for higher values of life
- Training for Leadership

The Independent Indian education system developed along the lines of this value framework. In the present times, where there are imminent threats of political ideologies hijacking the

pedagogy of education and commercialization of education eroding value systems, it is appreciable to dust off the values promulgated by the commission. Recent controversial circular by the Central University of Kerala (CUK), directing that research topic for PhD students must be in accordance to 'national priorities', and research in 'irrelevant topics' and 'privilege areas' must be discouraged, is a case in point.

Kothari commission

If the Radhakrishnan committee charted out the value system of the Indian education system, it was the Kothari commission who provided the basic framework of the same. The commission provided for:

- Standardization of educational system on 10+2+3 pattern.
- Emphasized the need to make work experience and social/national service an integral part of education.
- Linking of colleges to several schools in the neighbourhood.
- Equalization of opportunities to all and to achieve social and national integration.
- Neighbourhood school system without social or religious segregation and a school complex system integrating primary and secondary levels of education.
- Establishment of Indian Education Service.
- On the job training of the teaching staff and for efforts to raise the status of the teachers to attract talents into the profession.
- To raise expenditure on education from 2.9% of the GDP to 6% by 1985.

This committee report paved the way for the National Educational Policy 1968 which provided the base and roadmap for further development of the education system in India.

National Educational Policy 1968

- The policy provided for "radical restructuring" and equalization of educational opportunities to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development.
- Increase public expenditure of education to 6% of GDP.
- Provide for better training and qualification of teachers.

- Three-language formula: state governments should implement the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi-speaking states, and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking states. Hindi was encouraged uniformly to promote a common language for all Indians.

National Educational Policy 1985

- The policy aimed at the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunities, especially for women, SC and ST.
- Launching of “Operation Blackboard” to improve primary schools nationwide.
- IGNOU, the Open University, was formed.
- Adoption of the “rural university” model, based on the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, to promote economic and social development at the grassroots level in rural India.

T.S.R.Subramaniam committee report

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) – children from four to five years of age – to be declared as a fundamental right.
 - ECCE is inconsistent across states. So all government schools should have facilities for pre-primary education, which would facilitate pre-school education by the government instead of the private sector.
- Exam reform:
 - The policy of no detention should be upheld only till class five and not till class eight.
- Teacher Management:
 - There is a steep rise in a teacher shortage, absenteeism and grievances.
 - Need to constitute an Autonomous Teacher Recruitment Board.
 - Four years integrated B.Ed. the course should be introduced.
- ICT in Education:
 - There is an inadequate integration of information technology (IT) and the education sector.
- Vocational education and training:

- National Skills Qualification Framework should be scaled up.
- The choice of vocational courses should in line with local opportunities and resources.
- Bringing formal certification for vocational education at par with conventional education certificates.
- All India Education Service.
- National Higher Education Promotion and Management Act (NHEPMA):
 - Existing separate laws governing individual regulators in higher education should be replaced by the said act.
 - The role of existing regulatory bodies like UGC and AICTE should be revised.
- National Accreditation Board (NAB) subsuming the existing accreditation bodies.

Kasturirangan Report On School Education (Draft National Education Policy)

For restructuring the education system in India, the government is preparing to roll out a New Education Policy which will cater to Indian needs in the 4th Industrial Revolution by making use of its demographic dividend. Committee for Draft National Education Policy (chaired Dr. K. Kasturirangan) submitted its report on May 31, 2019.

School Education:

Problems

- Low accessibility.
- The curriculum doesn't meet the developmental needs of children.
- Lack of qualified and trained teachers.
- Substandard pedagogy.
- Currently, most early childhood education is delivered through anganwadis and private preschools. However, there has been less focus on the educational aspects of early childhood.
- The policy recommends developing a two-part curriculum for early childhood care and education.
 - Guidelines for up to three-year-old children.
 - Educational framework for three to eight-year-old children.

- This would be implemented by improving and expanding the Anganwadi system and co-locating anganwadis with primary schools.
- The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act):
 - Expanding the ambit of the Act to all children between the ages of three to 18 years, thus including early childhood education and secondary school education.
 - Review recent amendments to the RTE Act on continuous and comprehensive evaluation and the no-detention policy.
 - There should be no detention of children till class eight. Instead, schools must ensure that children are achieving age-appropriate learning levels.

Curriculum framework:

- The current structure of school education to be restructured based on the development needs of students.
- 10+2+3 structure to be replaced by 5-3-3-4 design comprising: (i) five years of foundational stage (three years of pre-primary school and classes one and two), (ii) three years of preparatory stage (classes three to five), (iii) three years of middle stage (classes six to eight), and (iv) four years of secondary stage (classes nine to 12).
- The current education system solely focuses on rote learning. The curriculum load should be reduced to its essential core content.

School exam reforms:

- Current board examinations:
 - Force students to concentrate only on a few subjects.
 - Do not test learning in a formative manner.
 - Cause stress among students.
- To track students' progress throughout their school experience, State Census Examinations in classes three, five and eight should be established.
- Restructure the board examinations to test only the core concept. These board examinations will be on a range of subjects. The students can choose their subjects, and the semester when they want to take these board exams.

The in-school final examinations may be replaced by these board examinations.

School infrastructure:

- Although establishing primary schools in every habitation has increased access to education, it has led to the development of very small schools making it operationally complex. Hence the multiple public schools should be brought together to form a school complex.
- A complex will consist of one secondary school (classes nine to twelve) and all the public schools in its neighbourhood that offer education from pre-primary till classes eight.
- These will also include anganwadis, vocational education facilities, and an adult education centre.
- Each school complex will be a semi-autonomous unit providing integrated education across all stages from early childhood to secondary education.
- This will ensure that resources such as infrastructure and trained teachers can be efficiently shared across a school complex.

Teacher management:

- A steep rise in a teacher shortage, lack of professionally qualified teachers, and deployment of teachers for non-educational purposes have plagued the system.
- Teachers should be deployed with a particular school complex for at least five to seven years.
- They will not be allowed to participate in any non-teaching activities during school hours.
- Existing B.Ed. the program will be replaced by a four-year integrated B.Ed. program that combines high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training. An integrated continuous professional development will also be developed for all subjects.

Regulation of schools:

- Separating the regulation of schools from aspects such as policymaking, school operations, and academic development.
- Independent State School Regulatory Authority for each state that will prescribe basic uniform standards for public and private schools.
- The Department of Education of the State will formulate policy and conduct monitoring and supervision.

Higher Education

- According to the All India Survey on Higher Education, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education in India has increased from 20.8% in 2011-12 to 25.8% in 2017-18. Lack of access is a major reason behind the low intake of higher education. The policy aims to increase GER to 50% by 2035.
- Regulatory structure and accreditation:
 - Multiple regulators with overlapping mandates reduce the autonomy of higher educational institutions and create an environment of dependency and centralized decision making.
 - National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA) should replace the existing individual regulators in higher education. Thus the role of all professional councils such as AICTE would be limited to setting standards for professional practice. The role of the UGC will be limited to providing grants.
 - Separate National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) from the UGC into an independent and autonomous body. It will function as the top-level accreditor and will issue licenses to different accreditation institutions. All existing higher education institutions should be accredited by 2030.
- Establishment of new higher educational institutions:
 - Replacing the current system of establishing higher educational institutions by Parliament or state legislatures. Instead, institutions can be set up through a Higher Education Institution Charter from NHERA.
- Restructuring of higher education institutions:

- Phasing out the current complex system of naming Higher education institutions(HEI) as ‘deemed to be university’, ‘affiliating university’, ‘unitary university’ etc. HEI will be restructured into three types:
 - Research universities focus equally on research and teaching.
 - Universities focus primarily on teaching.
 - Colleges focus only on teaching at undergraduate levels.
- All such institutions will gradually move towards full autonomy.
- Establishing a National Research Foundation (NRF):
 - Total investment in research and innovation in India has declined from 0.84% of GDP in 2008 to 0.69% in 2014. India also lags behind many nations in the number of researchers, patents and publications.
 - NRF will act as an autonomous body for funding, mentoring and building the capacity for quality research.
- Moving towards a liberal approach:
 - Undergraduate programs should be made interdisciplinary by redesigning their curriculum to include: a common core curriculum; one/two area(s) of specialization.
 - Introduce four-year undergraduate programs in Liberal Arts.
 - By the next five years, five Indian Institutes of Liberal Arts must be set up as model multidisciplinary liberal arts institutions.
- Professional development of faculty:
 - Poor service conditions and heavy teaching loads, augmented by lack of autonomy and no clear career progression system, have resulted in low faculty motivation.
 - Introduction of a Continuous Professional Development program and permanent employment track system for faculty in all higher education institutions by 2030.
 - The student-teacher ratio of not more than 30:1 must be ensured.
- Optimal learning environment:
 - All higher education institutions must have complete autonomy on curricular, pedagogical and resource-related matters.

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

- Technology plays an important role in:

- Improving the classroom process of teaching, learning and evaluation
- Aiding teacher training.
- Improving access to education.
- Improving the overall planning, administration and management of the entire education system.
- Electrification of all educational institutions paves the way for technology induction.
- National Mission on Education through ICT:
 - An autonomous body, National Education Technology Forum, set up under the Mission, will facilitate decision making on the use of technology.
- National Repository on Educational Data: maintain all records related to institutions, teachers, and students in digital form.
 - Single online digital repository to make available copyright-free educational resources in multiple languages.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- Less than 5% of the workforce in the age group of 19-24 receives vocational education in India, in contrast to 52% in the USA, 75% in Germany and 96% in South Korea.
- National Policy on Skills Development and Entrepreneurship (2015) aimed at offering vocational education in 25% of educational institutions. The policy expands this to include all educational institutions in a phased manner over a period of 10 years.
 - Vocational courses: All school students must receive vocational education in at least one vocation in grades 9 to 12.
 - Higher Education Institutions must offer vocational courses that are integrated into undergraduate education programs.
 - The draft Policy targets to offer vocational education to up to 50% of the total enrolment in higher education institutions by 2025, up from the present level of enrolment of below 10%.
 - National Committee for the Integration of Vocational Education for charting out plans for the above objectives.

ADULT EDUCATION

As per Census 2011, India had a total of 26.5 crore adult non-literate (15 years and above).

- Establishing an autonomous Central Institute of Adult Education as a constituent unit of NCERT. It will develop a National Curriculum Framework for adult education.
- Adult Education Centers will be included within the school complexes.
- Relevant courses made available at the National Institute of Open Schooling.
- National Adult Tutors Programme to build a cadre of adult education instructors and managers.

EDUCATION AND INDIAN LANGUAGES

- The medium of instruction must be mother tongue until grade 5, and preferably until grade 8.
- 3 language formula be continued and flexibility in the implementation of the formula should be provided. Implementation of the formula needs to be strengthened, particularly in Hindi-speaking states. Schools in Hindi speaking areas should also teach Indian languages from other parts of India for the purpose of national integration.
- To promote Indian languages, a National Institute for Pali, Persian and Prakrit will be set up.
- The mandate of the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology will be expanded to include all fields and disciplines to strengthen vocabulary in Indian languages.

Transforming Education

The policy talked about the synergistic functioning of India's education system, to deliver equity and excellence at all levels, from vision to implementation, led by a new Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog.

EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

Revitalize education governance by bringing in synergy and coordination among the different ministries, departments and agencies.

- Constitute National Education Commission or Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog, as an apex body for education headed by the Prime Minister. It would be responsible for developing, implementing, evaluating, and revising the vision of education and overseeing the

implementation and functioning of bodies including the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Higher Education Regulatory Authority, and National Research Foundation.

- The Ministry of Human Resources and Development must be renamed the Ministry of Education to bring the focus back on education.

FINANCING EDUCATION

- The Draft Policy reaffirmed the commitment of spending 6% of GDP as a public investment in education.
- The draft Policy seeks to double the public investment in education from the current 10% of total public expenditure to 20% in the next 10 years. 5% will be utilized for higher education, 2% in school education and 1.4% for early childhood care and education.
- There should be optimal and timely utilization of funds through the institutional development plans and by plugging loopholes in the disbursement of funds.

Criticism of the New Education Policy of India

- The New Education Policy lacks operational details.
- It is not clear from where the funding will be sourced.
- Enough importance is not given for innovation, startup culture or economic principles to be added in the curriculum.
- One-size-fits for all states can't be a solution as each state in India is diverse in its educational needs. Controversy on NEET has shown this.
- With technological advancement and democratization of knowledge, the policy should have focused more on how to teach rather than what to teach.
- Economic Survey 2017-18 had mentioned the perils of the distinction between research institutions and universities in higher education. The policy recommendation of three distinct higher education institutions of research universities, teaching universities and teaching colleges will further augment the gap between research and universities.
- The draft policy is silent on the Institutions of Eminence and agencies like the Higher Education Funding Agency.

- The role of Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog should be defined clearly. What would be its role vis-a-vis existing regulators? Also, there are criticisms from some quarters that RSA will open the door for the politicization of education.
- Earlier the 3-language formula proposed by the draft policy made Hindi compulsory in non-Hindi speaking states. However, after the furore, the proposal was removed.
- Even though the policy talks about bringing “unrepresented groups” into school and focusing on educationally lagging “special education zones”, it doesn’t comprehensively address the inequalities prevalent in the system. It misses on methods to bridge the gaps between rich and poor children.
- The policy proposes to remove the provision mandating that primary schools be within stipulated distance from students’ homes and common minimum infrastructure and facility standards that should be met by all schools. If a common minimum standard is not specified, it will create an environment where quality in some schools will fall further thus augmenting the inequalities between schools across the country.

India’s education history is rich with ambitious policies failing at the altar of inadequate implementation of the same. In the absence of a handholding mechanism for states to embark on the path-breaking reforms mentioned in the policy and that too in a short time, will be too much to ask.

Funding requirements and governance architecture pose major challenges in the implementation of the policy. Political commitment is required to increase funding. RTE act expansion to include pre-school should keep in mind the present infrastructure inadequacies and teacher vacancies. Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog may face administrative problems and turf battles. Also, it will raise questions on the role of new bodies like the National Medical Council.

The recent controversy on 3 language formula shows the sensitivity of language education in India and care should be taken to appreciate the emotional overtures while implementing the same. Politically acceptability, socially desirability, technologically feasibility, financially viability, administratively doability, judicially tenability are 6 pillars that will impact the implementation of the policy.

Be that as it may, the new education policy aims to address the challenges of (i) access, (ii) equity, (iii) quality, (iv) affordability, and (v) accountability faced by the current education

system. It aims to revitalize and equip the education system to meet the challenges of the 21st century and 4th industrial revolution rather than catering to 19th and 20th century needs of industrialization. Also, India is on the cusp of demographic dividend, rather entered into this phase. So the education system catering to these needs is not a luxury that we hope for but rather a dire need of this moment in Indian history.

The Problems associated with the Education System in India

Education ministry: Over 1.4 million schools and 50,000 higher educational institutions are operating in India. Out of 907 universities, there are 399 state universities, 126 deemed-to-be universities, 48 central and 334 private universities.

- Even after more than a hundred years of “Gokhale’s Bill”1911, where universal primary education was originally mooted, India is yet to achieve this goal.
- China had achieved it in the 1970s. As per Census 2011, over 26% of India’s population is still illiterate, compared to 4% in China. About 50% of India’s population has only primary education or less, compared to 38% in China. The 13% of the population with tertiary education at the upper end in India is comparable with China.
- However, according to Educational Statistics at a Glance (ESAG) 2018, the thrust on providing primary education has yielded results across social and gender categories in Gross Enrolment Rate (GER).
 - Progress has been made in respect of female participation up to secondary level and GER for girls has exceeded that of boys.
 - But the girl’s enrollment rate is lower than that of boys at the higher education level.
 - A gap is visible across social categories in terms of enrollment rate at the higher education level.
- According to NSSO 71st round (2014), drop-out rates are very high for boys at the secondary school level. Reasons for the same are economic activities, lack of interest in education and financial constraints.
- The transition rate from secondary school to senior secondary and further to higher education is very low.

Despite these highly ambitious education policies and elaborate deliberations on the same, the outcomes are rather shaky. Major criticisms and shortcomings of these policies and its implementations are:

- Elitist bias in the implementation of education policies is reflected in the top-heavy structure of India's education profile, neglecting basic education and prioritizing higher education. The ratio of per-student public expenditure at the tertiary level is high relative to the primary level in India.
 - Half the population is crowded at the bottom, either illiterate or with only primary education. Meanwhile, a disproportionately large segment is at the upper end with tertiary education.
- Poor quality of education.
 - 2015 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reflects this deteriorating quality. The report opines that deficits in foundational reading and arithmetic skills are cumulative, which leaves students grossly handicapped for further education.
 - India had fared poorly in Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test 2008, 09.
- Education policies in India are focused on inputs rather than on learning outcomes.
- Issues with teachers
 - Teacher shortages.
 - Local politics.
 - Corruption in teacher appointment.
 - Defects in teacher training.
 - Socio-cultural factors like caste division, cynical attitude towards the teaching profession.
- The incentive structure for government school teachers is highly skewed, guaranteeing poor performance.
 - There is no accountability, as there is a guaranteed lifetime job independent of performance.
- Inadequate public spending.
 - From 1952-2012, education expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure increased from 7.92 to 11.7 and as a percentage of GDP increased

from 0.64 to 3.31. But it is still not reached 6% of GDP, as was recommended by Kothari Commission way back in 1964.

- Expenditure by the government on elementary education is more than tertiary level, but expenditure per student is more in tertiary. So there is a need to increase expenditure in all segments.
- Non-inclusive and in-equitable education system.
 - All India survey on higher education has shown that in West Bengal Muslim students in universities are very low. Lack of education at the primary and secondary level is said to be the main reason.
 - Even though Article 15(4),(5) provides reservation for SC, ST, OBC in higher education institutions, Economic Survey 2018-19 points out their inadequate representation in these institutions.
 - The suicide of Rohit Vemula, a PhD scholar at the University of Hyderabad, in 2016 had brought forward the discrimination still existing in these institutions.
 - Also, the representation of teachers at these levels is skewed against the backward class in spite of reservations. Article 16(4) provides for reservations of backward class in jobs.
 - The rich-poor divide is also visible in all levels of the education system.
 - At the school level, poor children are primarily concentrated in government schools. The poor quality of government schools thus disproportionately affect these children and create a vicious cycle of illiteracy.
 - At the higher education level, the situation is more critical. One reason for the introduction of the National Medical Commission Bill is to curb the exorbitant fees charged by medical colleges.
- The inadequate employable skill of youth in India.
 - Youths coming out of the higher education system in India are not employable, as they lack relevant industry-level skills.
 - India's long-standing neglect of primary and secondary education has limited access to quality basic education. No skill development program can succeed without an underlying foundation of basic education.
 - National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015(PMKVY) had shown disappointing results.

- Budget 2019-20 stated that the government enables about 10 million youth to take up industry-relevant skill training through the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). The Budget has also increased focus on ‘new-age skills’ like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, 3D Printing, Virtual Reality and Robotic.
- Currently, B Tech courses in AI are offered mostly in premier institutions only.
- Sports education is a grossly neglected area in the Indian education scenario. Even today sports education is considered as a luxury in India.
 - Budget 2019-20 proposed National Sports Education Board for the development of sportspersons under the Khelo India program (2017).

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

- It is imperative to improve math and cognitive skills at the school level to make a difference at a higher level.
- There is a need for expanding R&D in India and to go beyond paper presentations and patents to a broader contribution of providing value for society.
- There is also a need to encourage Investigator-led Research for funding science research. Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) 2008, a statutory body of DST, is a step in the right direction.
- Increase funding for research from the private sector as well as from state governments. The private sector should be incentivized to both undertake more R&D and to support STEM research through CSR funds.
 - 50:50 partnerships with SERB for industry-relevant research under the Uchatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY) is the right way to go forward.
 - It would strengthen state universities and provide knowledge in areas specific to a state.
 - National Research Foundation, to fund, coordinate, and promote research at the college level, is proposed by the Kasturirangan report. It is reiterated in Budget 2019-20: NRF will ensure the overall research ecosystem in the country is strengthened with a focus on areas relevant to national priorities without

duplication of effort and expenditure. The funds available with all Ministries will be integrated into NRF.

- Link national labs to universities and create new knowledge eco-systems. Together they can link up with the commercial sectors and help develop industrial clusters.
- Take a mission-driven approach to R&D – focus on a few key areas like:
 - National Mission on Dark Matter
 - National Mission on Genomics
 - National Mission on Energy Storage Systems
 - National Mission on Mathematics
 - National Mission on Cyber-Physical Systems
 - National Mission on Agriculture
- Leverage the rich scientific diaspora that India possesses. The growing strength of India's economy and the growing anti-immigrant atmosphere in some Western countries provides a good opportunity to attract back more scientists. Government programs for the same includes:
 - Ramanujan Fellowship Scheme.
 - Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) Faculty Scheme.
 - Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship.
 - Visiting Advanced Joint Research Faculty Scheme (VAJRA).
- Improve the culture of research thus 'ease of doing research'. There is a need for less hierarchical governance systems that encourages risk-taking and curiosity in the pursuit of excellence.
- Greater public engagement of the science and research establishment is needed. A greater effort at science communication is needed.

Government initiatives on higher education

The government is trying to revitalize the Indian higher education system and for this many initiatives have been launched. Let's discuss important among them.

National Testing Agency (NTA) 2017

- NTA was set up for conducting entrance exams in higher educational institutions. It is based on the recommendations of the Ashok Mishra committee on IIT entrance 2015.

- It will conduct JEE, NEET, National Eligibility Test (NET), Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) and Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT).
- It will provide diversity and plurality in higher education. It will also ensure independence and transparency in conducting the exams.
- However, it should be ensured that the computer-based test should not lead to further exploitation of rural students.

NEET

- NEET stands for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test. It is for admissions in medical courses by replacing a plethora of medical entrance tests with one national level test.
- Supreme Court had said that NEET should be the sole basis for admission to medical courses.
- There is a controversy about whether urban and CBSE students will dominate NEET. The government should pay heed to this criticism.
- Tamil Nadu had claimed that NEET will be difficult for rural and underprivileged children who cannot afford tuition.
 - In Tamil Nadu doctors serving in rural areas get weightage in PG admission. NEET will effectively dislodge this system.
 - This controversy brought forward the conflict between the fair and transparent system of admission to curb the commercialization of medical education and the socioeconomic goals of the state, which in the case of Tamil Nadu includes ensuring enough doctors for rural areas.
- Controversy on NEET had brought the following question to the limelight: should uniformity be thrust upon a country with such vast disparity and diversity? The political leadership should iron out the differences and produce a suitable admission policy. This task should not be left to the judiciary.
- Be that as it may, states can't remain insulated from the need to upgrade their education standard.

RUSA: Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan 2013

- About 94% of students of higher education study in 369 State universities, whereas less than 6% of students study in 150 Centrally-funded institutions.
- 11th 5-year plan (2007-12) opined that the centre's bias towards premier central institutions had skewed funding for these institutions mainly and thus neglected state-level institutions.
- State investment in higher education was declining. UGC's system of direct release of funds to State institutions bypassing State governments also leads to a sense of alienation for the states.
- RUSA tried to correct this bias. The scheme aims at financing state institutions with respect to their governance and performance.
- RUSA has shown the result in increasing performance of state institutions and changes the way regulators functions for the good. State Higher Education Council(SHEC) made medium-long term state perspective plans.
- Cabinet in 2018 decided to continue the scheme. A renewed focus by the centre on RUSA will be a success only if it is impartially administered and states are willing to heed the advice of SHEC.

HECI: Higher Education Commission of India bill

- On the recommendation of the Yashpal committee 2010 for renovation and rejuvenation of higher education, the National Commission on Higher Education and Research bill was introduced but was not passed.
- HECI was proposed to act as an overarching regulator of higher education by replacing UGC, which will maintain academic standards, approving new educational institutions etc. but with no funding powers.
- Draft Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill, 2018 was introduced in 2018. Budget 2019-20 proposed to bring bill on HECI in this year.
- The draft bill had separated funding and placed it under MHRD. This was criticized for the fear of increasing political control and reducing the autonomy of universities.

IoE: Institutions of Eminence 2017

- Around 2005, Times Higher Education World University Rankings and the QS World University Rankings started and in 2009 the Academic Ranking of World Universities started. From India, only the Indian Institute of Science was included in the top 500 every year. This prompted the government to introduce NIRF and IoE.
- Under IoE, UGC was tasked to select 10 government universities and 10 private ones as IoE. These would be given autonomy in operations.
- Selected government institutions would be provided with ₹1,000 crore over five years.
- The IoE tag is expected to help them achieve the world's top 500 higher education institutions in a decade and later into the top 100.
- Institutes among the top 50 in the National Institute Ranking Framework rankings or in the top 500 in international ratings were eligible.
- Criticism
 - Model for the sector remains dependent on state patronage.
 - Entry into the global education race could now become an overriding concern when many systemic issues are plaguing the sector.
 - Funding only for public institutions is discriminatory.
 - Humanities institutions were neglected.
- Need
 - Transparency in the selection process, and the public sharing of benchmarks and guidelines. The furore over the selection of Jio Institute, even before its functioning, had attracted many eyeballs and criticisms.
 - Separate category to include sectoral institutions like IIM.

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2015

NIRF is a methodology adopted by the MHRD to rank higher education institutions in India.

- NIRF is common for public and private institutions as well as state and central institutions. Comparison of state-level colleges with central and private colleges may lead to a vicious cycle of low funding, poor performance, low ranks among state-level institutions because of the resource gap.

- So performance index values should be normalized with respect to investments and resources that have gone into that institution. Also should consider making another ranking system for state-level institutions.

HEFA: Higher Education Financing Agency 2018

Introduced in Budget 2018-19, HEFA is a joint venture of MHRD and Canara Bank

- With an initial capital base of Rs 1,000 crores, it will act as a not-for-profit organization that will leverage funds from the market and supplement them with donations and CSR funds. These funds will be used to finance improvement in infrastructure in top institutions.
- It has been tasked with raising ₹1 lakh crore to finance infrastructure improvements in higher education by 2022.

Foreign Education Providers Bill 2013

- There is no account of programs delivered by foreign universities in India. Inadequate regulation has to lead to low-quality courses offered in this sector.
- Foreign Institution bill was not been able to pass in Parliament. However,

EQUIP report has mentioned the revival of this bill.

There are many other schemes and initiatives like SWAYAM, which offers open online courses from Class IX to post-graduation free of cost, GIAN and IMPRINT which are primarily focused on elite institutes like IITs and IISc.

Other Major Issues connected with the Education sector in India

The Indian education sector is also affected by other issues like the politicization of campuses, gender parity problems, poor-quality standards etc.

Politicization of campuses

- JP movement had provided an impetus to the politicization of students.
- In Indian higher education institutions, university politics has become a launchpad for political ambitions.
- Though campus politics is vital for democracy, as it makes students better citizens, the negative side of the politicization of campuses has been visible across Indian campuses. Recent incidents in Kerala university is a case in point.
- One of the most important problems of student politics in India is that it acts as an appendage to political parties without having an independent identity or autonomy.

Gender Parity

- There is a 2 pronged gender discrimination in the Indian education system:
 - By parents → who send boys to private and girls to government schools. Economic Survey 2018-19: enrollment of girls is higher than that of boys in government schools but the pattern gets reversed in private schools. The gender gap in enrollment in private schools has consistently increased across age groups.
 - By teachers → who reinforced the belief that boys are quick learners.
- Girls are eased out of school to work in home chores or get married.
- The government has launched Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao,(BBBP), a campaign to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India.
 - Economic Survey 2018-19 opines that BBBP has been a success and propose to extend the cause of Gender equality by coining the slogan of BADLAV (Beti Aapki Dhan Lakshmi Aur Vijay-Lakshmi) to enhance the contribution of women in the workforce and the economy.
 - For ranking states based on gender disparity, Digital Gender Atlas for Advancing Girl's Education was launched by MHRD.
- Gender Parity Index (GPI) in education reflects the discrimination against girls in access to educational opportunities.
 - In higher education, gender disparities still prevail in enrollment.
 - Efforts by the Government through programs like Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao, the GPI has improved substantially at the primary and secondary levels of enrolment.

Quality of education

Learning outcomes are not assessed in India as numerical outcomes. 12th Five Year Plan had noted the need for measuring, improving learning outcomes.

- Children of illiterate parents can't supplement school studies at home and also can't afford expensive tuitions, leading to a vicious cycle of illiteracy.

ASER 2018

- From 2014 to 2018, there is a gradual improvement in both basic literacy and numeracy for Class III students but only a quarter of them are at grade level (ability to read and do basic operations like subtraction of Class II level).
- The report also shows that 1 out of 4 children leaving Class VIII are without basic reading skills (ability to read at least a Class II level).

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- Central Rules under the RTE Act were amended in February 2017 to include the defined class-wise, subject-wise learning outcomes.
- Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat
 - Nationwide sub-program of SSA to improve comprehensive early reading, writing and early mathematics program for children in Classes I and II.

TEACHER TRAINING

- Teachers play the most critical role in a student's achievement.
- Need is for better incentives for teachers, investments in teacher capacity through stronger training programs and addressing the problems in the teaching-learning process.
- However, teachers in India, especially in government schools, are considered as a cog in the way for efficient governance. There is an inadequate focus on their motivation and skill updation.

- NCERT study shows that there is no systematic incorporation of teacher feedback into designing pieces of training. Also, there is no mechanism to check whether these training are translated into classroom performance.
- These results in de-professionalizing the teaching profession and curb a teacher's "internal responsibility"—the sense of duty to the job.

DIKSHA

- World Development Report on Education (2018) opined that both teaching skills and motivation matter. Individually targeted continued training is important. In line with this, MHRD and the National Council for Teacher Education launched the National Teacher Platform or Diksha in 2017. It is a one-stop solution to address teacher competency gaps.
- However, the current training through Diksha follows a one-size-fits-all approach. Even though the platform is designed to democratize both access to and creation of content by teachers, its real benefits are in the ability to provide continuous professional development which complements existing physical training.
- This technology-enabled platform allows training to become a continuous activity rather than an annual event and also creates a feedback loop ensuring the effectiveness of the material.
- Diksha has the potential to re-engineer in-service teacher training in India. It is important to create good content and also to ensure technology consumption by teachers, the role of headmasters in promoting teachers' professional development etc.

As India participates in the PISA in 2021, it is to be made sure that we recognize the importance of teachers and their role in education outcomes.

Private Schools vs Public Schools: The big debate in Education

At least 30% of students between the 6-14 age groups are in the private sector.

- There is an increasing perception that the quality of teaching in private schools is better than that of public schools. Thus there is a clamour for increasing the number of private schools and simultaneously limiting public spending on government schools.
- However, the claim on the quality of private schools is debatable as there is a wide disparity of the same among these schools.

Research paper by Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, professor of education and international development at the Institute of Education, London, offers insights into private-public school education in India:

- The paper points out that between 2010-11 and 2015-16, the average enrolment in government schools declined from 122 to 108 students per school, while in private schools it rose from 202 to 208.
- Nevertheless, according to the District Information System for Education (DISE), 65% of all school-going children, 113 million, get their education from government schools.
- The study points out that the migration to private schools is due to the belief among parents that these schools offer better value for money in terms of quality.
- IndiaSpend, in 2016, reported that despite the Rs 1.16 lakh crore spent on SSA, the quality of learning declined between 2009 and 2014. It also points out that less than one in five elementary school teachers in India are trained. Also, the contractual teachers, which are high in number in government schools, are likely to be less motivated and accountable.
- Preference for private school tutoring is there.
- The quality of schools varies between states. In 2016, in Kerala, the proportion of children enrolled in primary government schools increased from 40.6% in 2014 to 49.9% according to ASER 2016.
- States with better-functioning government schools have more expensive private schools as there is no market for the 'low-fee' budget private schools. Around 80% of private schools in India are 'low' fee schools.
- ASER 2016 had shown small improvements in learning outcomes in government schools.
- Between 2010-11 and 2015-16, the number of private schools grew by 35% – to 0.30 million. On the other hand, the number of government schools grew only by 1%, to 1.04 million. The migration out of government schools has left many of these economically unviable.
- Government teachers in India earn four times that of China but don't perform as well. Up to 80% of India's public expenditure on education is spent on teachers. There is a need to link teacher salary to their accountability.

- However, the salary of private teachers is very low compared to their government counterparts. This is due to the “bureaucratically-set high ‘minimum wage’, which is being influenced by strong unions of government school teachers.
- Another reason for the low salary of private school teachers is that the private education sector offers salaries based on market factors of demand and supply. Since 10.5% of graduates are unemployed in India, there is a high supply of teachers.
- Rather than merely increasing the budget outlay for education, the need is to revise the Education policy for better accountability and monitoring mechanisms.
- Gandhi argued that a Public-private partnership (PPP) model may be the solution, with public sector funding and private resources for education, since reforming the present system may not be politically feasible.

Rather than debating about private versus public schools, the focus should be to enable the private sector to set up more schools under the scrutiny of regulatory authorities. There is no point in driving off the private initiative in schooling given the limited resources of the states. Private investment should be encouraged but made accountable for quality and conduct.

The above discussion showed the challenges of the Indian education system. A workforce that India wants to create in this digital age requires reforms in education at all levels. UNESCO’s Global Education Monitoring (GEM) report 2016 had opined that India is expected to achieve universal primary education in only 2050. India is 50 years late in achieving its global education commitments. If the nation wants fundamental changes in the education system, it has to meet the 2030 SDG targets on education. There is an urgent requirement for greater evolution in education in India.

Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP): How to transform Education in India?

EQUIP is a five-year vision plan on education, released by MHRD, in accordance with the Prime Minister’s decision for creating a five-year vision plan for each Ministry.

The EQUIP project is crafted by ten expert groups led by experts within and outside the government:

- Group 1: Strategies for expanding access
- Group 2: Towards global best teaching/learning process
- Group 3: Promoting Excellence
- Group 4: Governance reforms
- Group 5: Assessment, Accreditation and Ranking systems
- Group 6: Promotion of research and innovation
- Group 7: Employability and entrepreneurship
- Group 8: Using Technology for better reach
- Group 9: Internationalisation
- Group 10: Financing higher education

The groups have suggested initiatives to transform the education system completely. Goals set by the groups are:

1. Double GER in higher education and resolve the geographically and socially skewed access to higher education institutions.
2. Upgrade the quality of education to global standards.
3. Position at least 50 Indian institutions among the top-1000 global universities.
4. Introduce governance reforms in higher education for well-administered campuses.
5. Accreditation of all institutions as an assurance of quality.
6. Promote Research and Innovation ecosystems for positioning India in the Top-3 countries in the world in matters of knowledge creation.
7. Double the employability of the students passing out of higher education.
8. Harness education technology for expanding the reach and improving pedagogy.
9. Promote India as a global study destination.
10. Achieve a quantum increase in investment in higher education.

We can see that each of the above goals is known to us for a long time. The problem is its implementation. The political class and all other stakeholders should come together to achieve these goals. The plethora of government initiatives on higher education is a sure sign of the importance given by the political class in the reform of the education system of India. Let's hope that a new dawn of Indian education is around the corner which will bring back the glory of ancient times when India was the centre of knowledge production.

As Economic Survey 2016-17 points out, lack of health, malnourishment etc. affects the cognitive ability of children. This will, in turn, have a detrimental effect on their future educational prospects. This leads to a vicious cycle of inter-generational illiteracy, poor health and ultimately poverty. So education and health are complementary to each other and reforms in one sector should invariably be preceded and followed by reforms in other sectors. In fact, human development as a whole can be considered as a wholesome development and we must appreciate the interlinkages of each section of human capital formation, be it may health, education, digital literacy, skills etc.

Conclusion

In the larger domain of human capital, education and skill development has a big role.

Census 2011 data on literacy gives us a quick perspective on the current status of education. However, education is not just about literacy.

RTE act acts as a cornerstone for Indian education. Nevertheless, it is the various education policies, charted out since Independence, which led to the historical evolution of the education system in India.

The results of these policies can be said to be mixed. There is still a lot of room for improvement.

There are various government initiatives targeting each level of the education system in India. Higher Education System is given a greater focus these days.

The latest update in the education sector is the Kasturirangan report or draft new education policy. It captures the need of the hour for reforming education.

The modern Indian education system is crying for a revamp. The draft New Education Policy (NEP) is the right moment to take stock of its past history, achievements, misgivings and to chart out a futuristic education plan for 21st century India.