

# THE AWARE CONSUMER

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## Educational Landscape in India is Calling for a Change



### INTERVIEW

**Prof (Dr)  
VARINDER SINGH KANWAR**  
CEO,  
National Accreditation Board for  
Education and Training (NABET)

**OUT OF THE BOX**  
Embracing Technology  
Can  
Revolutionise Education

**THE LAST MILE**  
Navigating the Complex  
Tapestry of Challenges  
in Spreading Education

**PLUS**

**ROUND UP • RESEARCH FEATURE • MY MARKET**



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## MESSAGE FROM PUBLISHER & EDITOR

# The Mixed Bag of **EDUCATION** in India

**IT IS EDUCATION** which shapes a person, enhances quality of life and promotes economic development. It is the most critical issue that we need to address to build a brighter future for our country.

Right to Education is a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution - it mandates that every child between the ages of 6 to 14 should receive free and compulsory education.

The government has implemented various schemes and initiatives to improve access to and quality of education in the country. We have made significant progress over the past decades with several positive developments in the recent years. India now has a vast network of educational institutions, both public and private. Many of them are world-renowned and open up excellent future prospects for the students.

However, the goal of universal education still remains a distant dream. Unfortunately, the Indian education system is embroiled in a morass of shortcomings and challenges. To begin with, there is a severe shortage of qualified teachers and adequate infrastructure. The quality of education varies widely, not to mention that we are weighed down by an outdated curriculum that focuses on rote learning. Prioritising

practical and experiential learning that equips students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations is the need of the hour.

And the less said about the affordability of education the better! Education is a landscape of contrasts – with the ramshackle government schools offering a semblance of education free of cost on the one hand and the chic international schools fleecing parents with exorbitant fees in the name of world-class education on the other!

It deeply saddens me to see the gross commercialisation of education as opposed to the social focus earlier. This has made us 'consumers' of education – the educational institutions are taking our money, then why aren't they fulfilling consumer rights aka the other sectors?

**We hope that the Indian education system will improve and provide quality education to all.**

Prof. Bejon Kumar Misra

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**Education is  
not preparation  
for life; education  
is life itself!**

– John Dewey

# Effective relief from constipation.



- Overnight action
- Non-habit forming



**Raho halke,  
jiyo khulke.**

PRAFULL D. SHETH

Editorial Board Member

# EDUCATION IN INDIA: A COMPLEX TAPESTRY OF PROGRESS AND INEQUALITY



**EDUCATION OPENS UP** a world of possibilities for people by empowering them with knowledge and awareness. Despite education being an intricate and challenging landscape in India, our literacy rate is 77.7% now – as compared to a mere 12% in 1947 and 41% in 1981. A digital revolution is on the cards with technology transforming the face of education.

The government introduced a progressive and inclusive National Education Policy 2020 that will restructure the education system even as it enhances its overall effectiveness.

Alas, discrepancies and deficiencies continue to linger – the education system is marked by gender disparity, dropouts, unaffordability and more. We may tom-tom the growing number of educational institutions in the country, but who will delve into the poor quality of learning being doled out to the students?

Does anyone bother to consider why parents and students alike continue to hanker after

'foreign' education as a passport to a successful career and a better life?

For that matter, of the almost 78% literate populace of the country, how many can actually read and write properly, let alone fathom the knowledge that is served to them? How many are capable of using it in their daily life?

Navigating the vast educational divide is easier said than done. For this, we have to focus on addressing the yawning gaps in the education sector. For this, we have to work on balancing access and excellence in education. For this, we have to make the educational environment supportive and empowering. For this, we have to improve the learning outcomes by incorporating AI in the classrooms. For this, we have to

evaluate the effectiveness of the NEP 2020 and speed up its slow implementation.

**The children of today are brimming with potential. The youth are yearning to explore the budding possibilities. Will India rise to the occasion and deliver the kind of innovative education models that the people need? ▶**



**Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today.**

**– Malcolm X**

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RESEARCH FEATURE

## SCRIPTING AN 'EDUCATION FOR ALL' FUTURE FOR INDIA



Education is the foundation of a nation's growth and development. In fact, the quality of the education system of a country directly correlates to its economic status.



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## PRIMARY EDUCATION - TIPPING THE LEARNING CURVE



Primary education in India is going through significant developments and improvements.



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OUT OF THE BOX

## EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY CAN REVOLUTIONISE EDUCATION



The Indian education system is on the cusp of a technological revolution that will enhance both the learning experience and outcomes.



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IN FOCUS

## NEP 2020 - HOW IS THE LEARNING REVOLUTION PLAYING OUT?



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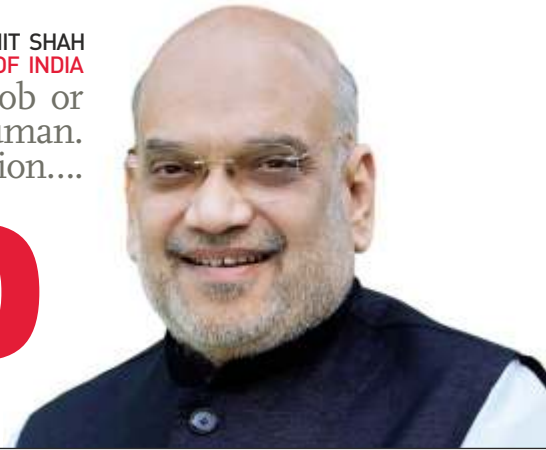
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AMIT SHAH  
HOME MINISTER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The aim of education is not to get a degree, a good job or comforts in personal life, but to become a complete human. We should always make efforts in this direction....



# ROUNDUP



## Cracking Down on Arbitrary Practices of Coaching Institutes

DATA BRIEFING

Almost **70%** of schools in India are not fully prepared to implement the NEP - XSEED Education, a Singapore-headquartered education platform



“The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice.”  
– Brain Herbert

**DO YOU THINK** sending your child to a good school is enough to ensure that they get a sound education? If you say yes, you will be laughed off by most parents who consider private tuitions to be the Holy Grail of education. Citing poor or unsatisfactory teaching in schools, parents opt for after-school tuitions to ensure that their children are 'up-to-the-mark' and can ace the school examinations.

While it cannot be denied that some children who are weak or lagging behind in certain subjects need the extra attention of a private tutor, unfortunately, tuition classes have become the norm across grades and curricula. The students who are going for tuition may get better grades, but at what cost? They hardly pay any attention in class as the tuition teacher will 'teach it anyway'.

Parents shell out thousands of rupees to 'keep up' with the trend of tuitions, not realising that this is doing more harm than good to the children.

Consider this – children come from school and attend tuitions, where is the time for extra-curricular activities, sports and playing? Being confined to studies will impair their overall growth. And the spoon-feeding in tuitions also crushes their creativity, self-confidence and in-built self-study capabilities, making them completely dependent on the tutors. That's not all. Tuitions are undermining mainstream education as the schools are also forced to focus only on academics and examinations at the cost of all-round development of the students!

**Alas, the educational malaise of private tuitions has become so institutionalised that school teachers themselves offer paid tuitions. Why can't they teach students in school, what they later teach in the additional classes?**

**Data from the 71st round of NSSO (National Sample Survey Organisation) reveals that more than a quarter of Indian students (a stupendous 7.1 crore) take private coaching. Around 12% of a family's expenses go towards private coaching, across rich and poor families alike.**

Going ahead, the dream of almost every parent – their child should get admitted to a coveted engineering/ medical college or clear a bank/civils exam – pushes them to enrol their children into a coaching institute. Special coaching is available to prepare students for the American SAT and GRE, learn English for IELTS to get a foreign visa and more.

And at what age does this coaching start? Be prepared to be mocked again if you think it is Class 9 or 10! The 'grooming' for competitive exams begins really young with the 'Foundational Courses' for JEE, NEET, UPSC, etc. targeting students in class 7, class 5 and sometimes even class 2! What's more, many schools itself offer 'special coaching' for these undergrad-level competitive exams for children as young as 5 years! The fees is charged extra for sure!

Some coaching centres even operate illegally within school campuses itself, in which students from Class VI onwards are enrolled.

Parents enrol their children for the coaching in the hopes of securing a brighter future for them. They are often lured

**Our school offers special coaching from class 3 because of the demand. A period or two are allotted for these classes and students are taught from the syllabus of higher classes so that have an edge over others.**

**-- Aparna K  
private school teacher**

by the striking advertisements and sales pitches of coaching institutes selling promises of guaranteed success. The institutes make tall claims without any accountability – like 100% selection, guaranteed admission, 100% job guaranteed, guaranteed preliminary/main examination, etc. And the fees can be pretty hefty, ranging from Rs. 50,000 to a couple of lakhs.

**Coaching centres are mushrooming across the country – they are unregulated and many do not even pay heed to safety norms. The fire in a coaching institute in Surat that killed 20 students is a case in point.**

And what happens to the child? The excessive mental and physical pressure, undue stress and unhealthy competition takes a toll on their mental health sooner or later. This brings us to the propensity of student suicides which is rising every year - 13,089 students took their own lives in 2021 while the number of student suicides between 2019 and 2021 is a whopping 35,950.

The media spotlight on the record-high suicide rate finally opened the eyes of the authorities to the various malpractices infesting the coaching industry. In December 2023, the consumer watchdog, Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) constituted a committee - headed by the CCPA Chief Commissioner and Consumer Affairs Secretary, Rohit Kumar Singh – to look into the issue of coaching centres making false claims regarding success rates of candidates, number of selections, etc., to attract students. The committee organised a stakeholder meeting in January to frame guidelines for the coaching industry.

**In 2023, a record 26 students committed suicide in Kota, the coaching capital of India. That's one death every two weeks!**

After detailed consultations between the government, coaching institutes, law firms and voluntary consumer organisations, the 'Draft Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements in Coaching Sector' were formulated and placed on the website of the Department of Consumer Affairs for public comments till 16th March, 2024.

**The CCPA issued notices to 31 coaching institutes for misleading advertisements and imposed fines on 9 of them. For instance, a penalty of Rs 1,00,000 was slapped on IQRA IAS Institute (a civil services preparation coaching centre) for false claims. It was directed to remove misleading advertisements and stop unfair trade practices.**

**The guidelines define 'coaching' as tuition, instructions or academic support or learning programme or guidance provided by any person.**

The guidelines specify various dos and don'ts for coaching institutes, like:

- Should not make misleading promises like guaranteeing ranks or good marks.
- Should not make false claims about their success rate, selection numbers or ranking of students in any competitive examination without verifiable evidence.
- Should not conceal details about the name, duration or fees of the course opted by successful candidates.
- Should not use name, photos or testimonials of successful candidates without consent.
- Should not attribute students success solely due to coaching institutes without acknowledging the individual efforts of the students.
- Should not use false testimonials of successful students or fake reviews.
- Should not create false impressions among students and parents that coaching is essential.
- Should not create a false sense of urgency or fear of missing out that may heighten anxieties amongst students/parents or indulge in any other practices that may lead to consumer misunderstanding or subvert consumer autonomy.
- The font of disclaimer/disclosure/important information in the advertisement should be the same as that used in the claim/advertisement. It should be placed prominently in the advertisement.

**The guidelines apply to all coaching institutes - with an enrolment of 50 students and above - whether online or offline, and cover all forms of advertisement regardless of form, format or medium.**

The other guidelines that were discussed relate to:

- Should not enrol students below the age of 16 or before passing secondary school examination (Class X).
- Should not engage tutors with qualifications below graduation.
- Should not hire the services of any tutor or person who has been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude.

- Should not conduct classes for more than five hours per day.
- Should charge fair and reasonable tuition fees for different courses and curricula and receipts should be made available.
- Should refund pro-rata fees if a student leaves a course in the middle of the prescribed period.
- Should upload details about tutors, courses, curriculum, duration, fees and hostel facilities on their websites.
- Should accurately represent the facilities, resources and infrastructure available to students.
- Should prioritise the mental well-being of the students. The guidelines ordain, "They should establish a mechanism for immediate intervention to provide targeted and sustained assistance to students in distress and stressful situations..... Trained counsellors could be appointed in the coaching centre to facilitate effective guidance and counselling for students and parents. Information about the names of psychologists, counsellors and the time they render services may be given to all students and parents."
- Other guidelines relate to fire safety, building safety norms and infrastructure requirements.
- It is proposed that both new and existing centres should be registered within three months of the guidelines taking effect.

Once implemented, the proposed guidelines will be governed by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

**The coaching industry is valued at Rs 58,000 crore with an estimated 31,000 coaching centres/private tutorials preparing secondary/higher secondary students for undergrad entry exams.**

**The demand-supply gap is driving the epidemic of intense competition and stress among the students. The 23 IITs admit a mere 17,385 students - 1.6% of the 1.1 million who write the IIT-JEE exam annually. In 2022, 1.8 million students appeared for the NEET exam, while the 695 medical colleges have only 0.16 million seats.**

However, the coaching centres alone cannot be blamed. Parents have high expectations from their children and put undue pressure to succeed. We need to have a more reasonable approach towards our children's education and plans for their future! ▀

**Penalty for violations of the guidelines range from a monetary fine (Rs 25,000 to Rs 1 lakh) to revocation of registration of errant coaching centres.**

**Consumers, Beware**

# Overhauling the Current Landscape of Education

There can be no compromise on education – it is a necessity, not a luxury! Knowledge has power, it gives an air of hope and heralds a start towards a brighter future. However, it cannot be denied that the current education system has become a totally commercialised activity. The focus on growth and development of the students has got lost in the shuffle.....

## UNESCO: Four Pillars Of Learning

### The Four Pillars Of Learning

Awareness  
of world  
issues  
and  
their  
solutions

Active  
involvement  
in solution  
building

Developing  
of attitudes  
and  
commitment  
of global  
citizenship

Demon-  
strating  
respect  
for self  
and  
others

Science / Math / Social Studies / Art / Physical Development

Education, in its broadest sense, imparts a formative effect on the mind, character and physical ability of an individual and sets the stage for leading a fulfilling life.



**Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world!**

– Nelson Mandela



**ALL OF US** reading this magazine are educated folks. Our educational background has shaped our personality - by way of knowledge and awareness – which enhances our quality of life.

We are well aware that schooling is the bedrock of an individual's development. It is this foundation which dictates how our future will be. This is why we ensure that our children receive comprehensive and wholesome education that will prepare them for their personal, professional and social life. It is their education which will enable them to identify their talents and realise their potential in a productive manner while also empowering them to become sensible and sensitive adults tomorrow.

Education goes above and beyond mere intellectual knowledge. It should encompass:

- Overall growth by developing cognitive, physical, social, emotional and creative skills
- Develop self-confidence and critical thinking ability
- Improve communication and social skills
- Ignite curiosity and a love for learning
- Inculcate good habits and an aesthetic sense
- Instil fundamental moral values such as respect, empathy, honesty, integrity, accountability and collaboration
- Foster the ability to deal with emotional situations in daily life

### Behold the Crass Commercialisation

Education was a social enterprise in the days of yore. The core priority was to impart wholesome learning to the children in a philanthropic manner. However, over the years, it has transformed into a completely commercial activity with an eye on maximising returns. Even the so-called charitable institutions are in the 'business' of education – the schools and colleges become a 'source of revenue', with the profits used to fund other philanthropic activities! And we cannot point a finger at the private sector alone - the government institutions in the higher education space are also motivated by augmenting their funds and building surplus reserves.

**Alas, the harsh fact is that though more children than ever are in school, many of them don't learn enough. We need a long-term commitment to educational development to spur the right results.**

This kind of commercial approach to education chips away at the 'inclusive' element of education. Schools and colleges levy hefty fees – the message is clear: those who can afford it are welcome. The rest do not matter!

That's not all. The commercialisation has redefined the very rationale of education – the institutions now focus on delivering 'results' to justify the colossal fee structure. The quality of education is nowhere in the picture as it's become all about translating into top placements, cushy jobs and best corporate offers.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

With education becoming an entirely profit-making venture, the citizens have been transformed into 'consumers' of education. Now, as a consumer, we can and should demand our rights of quality education, transparency, accountability and other expectations!

We cannot deny that the Indian education system has advanced a lot over the past few decades. We are



**Learnacy can be defined as the ability to connect the dots across disciplines and recognise that authentic learning cannot be confined to a silo. It's about understanding what we read in textbooks and their relevance to the larger world.**

– Swagat Yadav, founder of curriculum enrichment platform, One Young India



**What are our children actually getting even after we spend most of our income on their education? Don't you feel cheated as the educational institutions fail to deliver value time and again? Is it even acceptable to make students a product that is being blatantly 'sold' in the market without any due diligence for their overall development?**

producing brilliant minds that have excelled in various fields – there are highly qualified engineers, healthcare professionals, management professionals and more. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that to prepare our children for the workforce of the future, we need to equip them with a range of skills and competencies, such as communication, collaboration, adaptability and innovation.

### Creating Equal Opportunities for All

India needs to build an equitable and inclusive education system where everyone can learn in a safe and healthy

environment. While a lot of measures are being taken in this regard, the system has digressed from its primary purpose of learning!

We, as consumers, also need to come together to lay a foundation for vibrant success in the form of an educated India. Why don't we encourage the underprivileged and illiterate people around us to seek education and especially, ensure that their children go to school regularly? The onus is on us to chart a path for the country that stays at the forefront by constantly evolving, equipping and thriving in the dynamic world of today. ▶

The remote village of Ghansali in Uttarakhand has always lacked good schools, hospitals and job opportunities. Most of the people living here are uneducated and economically weak. Hundreds of families have no choice but to leave their ancestral home, agricultural land and relatives and migrate to other towns in search of better schooling, medical facilities or jobs.

However, the region has witnessed a huge turnaround over the past decade or so. Things started changing when a native of the village, Sudhir K Nautiyal returned home in 2008. He is a textile engineer by profession and has worked for 30 years in the textile industry in both India and abroad.

Disturbed by the deplorable conditions, he decided to work for the development of his village. He donated his own land for the school and used most of his lifetime earnings to build the infrastructure. Following his untiring efforts and dedication, the Himalayan



**SHRI SUDHIR K NAUTIYAL**  
Founder  
Himalayan English School  
Ghansali

English School was established in 2012 in Ghansali, district Tehri Garhwal. It was the first English medium school (K-12) in the entire Bhilangana Tehsil (total 276 villages).

Both the school and its founder has won the heart and faith of the local society. The students come knowing only Hindi and Garhwali, but learn to write in English in the Board exams. During the last 8 years, the school has achieved almost 100% pass results in the Boards, with 80% students achieving First Division marks. This has led to reverse migration - many families have returned home and admitted their children here.

At present, as many as 380 children from Ghansali and the neighbouring villages are attending the school. The 35 teaching, non-teaching and support staff comprise almost entirely of local people.

When one person can achieve so much in one village, imagine what a force like him can do for the country?



## HIMALAYAN ENGLISH SCHOOL, GHANSALI



## Scripting an 'Education for All' Future for India

Education is the foundation of a nation's growth and development. In fact, the quality of the education system of a country directly correlates to its economic status. No wonder the developed nations offer higher quality education than the rest of the world. The Indian government is implementing a slew of measures to provide quality basic education to its vast population.

**A strong education system is the cornerstone of a country's growth and prosperity.**



**INDIA HAS GIVEN** great importance to education since time immemorial. In the ancient times, children were educated in Gurukuls. We have a rich tradition of centres of learning like Nalanda and Takshila. India was known as 'Vishwaguru' - a premier hub for quality education where not only students from all over the globe, but also teachers came to imbibe the principles and methods taught here.

The British rulers introduced English as the formal medium of education in all schools and colleges. They neglected the indigenous schools and mass education, limiting education only to the upper-class Indians. Leading professors have blamed the colonisation of Indian education or 'Macaulayism' for 'uprooting academics from traditional Indian modes of thought', 'marginalising inherited learning' and 'inducing a spirit of self-denigration' among the people.

## Breaking the Barriers Post-Independence

The Government of India instituted the Ministry of Education (MoE) in 1947. As the first Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad envisaged a uniform educational system throughout the country. The MoE is currently divided into two departments:

- **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L)** - deals with primary, secondary and higher secondary education, adult education and literacy
- **Department of Higher Education** - deals with university level education, technical education, scholarships, etc.

Three national bodies have been instituted to govern and supervise the educational institutions:

Education being on the concurrent list, both the Centre and States are equally responsible for providing quality education to all. Every state has its Department or Ministry of Education, which regulates school education within its jurisdiction.

- **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** – It is an autonomous organisation that advises the Government of India on formulating and implementing education policies. It is also the apex body for curriculum related matters - develops textbooks, teacher training materials



and research journals - for school education. It provides support, guidance and technical assistance to a number of schools. The SCERTs are in charge of the school education system at the state level.

### • University Grants Commission (UGC)

– This is a statutory body responsible for the coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education in India. It provides recognition to universities and also extends financial assistance to eligible universities and colleges.

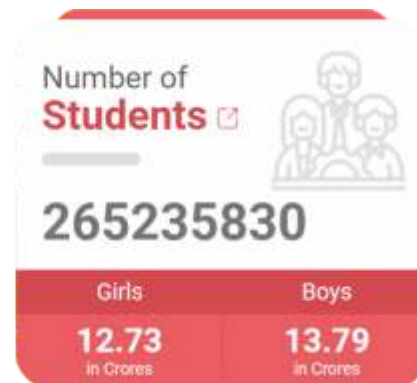
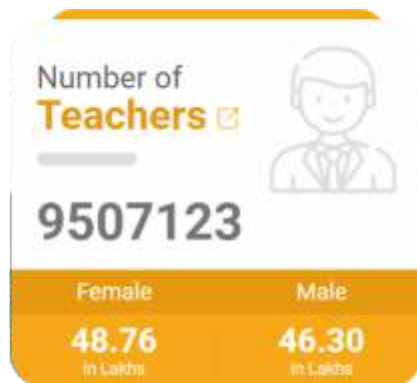


- **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)** – This is another statutory body responsible for regulating technical education in India. It accredits and approves technical and management education institutions in the country.

The modern system of education in India is mainly divided into pre-primary, primary, elementary and secondary education, followed by higher studies.

The most pivotal and comprehensive move by the Indian government was the **Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** through which education has become a fundamental right guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. It mandates that every child between the ages of 6 to 14 should receive free and compulsory education. This will ensure that no child is left behind and that every citizen has access to the tools and resources they need to succeed in life.

According to the Global Partnership for Education, education is considered to be a human right and plays a crucial role in human, social and economic development. Education promotes gender equality, fosters peace and increases a person's chances of having more and better life and career opportunities.



Source: UDISE+ 2021-22 data

In the 2022 Education Index, India's education system scored 0.348 (out of 1) and was ranked at the 139<sup>th</sup> place among 177 nations. This Education Index is derived from the 'knowledge' component of the United Nations Human Development Index. It evaluates two main factors: expected and actual years of schooling and educational achievements at all levels.

In terms of literacy rates, India was ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> among 188 countries in the UNESCO's Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2021, with a literacy rate of 74%.

## National Measures for Improving Education

Recognising the crucial role of education in society, nation building and economic development, the central government has mapped out a number of schemes and other initiatives over the years to improve education access, quality and literacy in the country.

**Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** – This 'Education for All' movement is considered one of the largest initiatives in the educational sector in the world. It was aimed at achieving Universalisation of Elementary Education. The objectives centred on increasing enrolments, improving the curriculum, teacher education, educational planning and management. It also aimed to bridge the gender and social gaps in education and enhance levels of learning for children. It has strengthened the existing infrastructure of schools and constructed new schools where no schooling facilities were available.



**Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** – The SSA was extended to provide universal access to secondary education with the RMSA. It aimed at expanding and improving the standards of secondary education up to class 10 by constructing new secondary schools, additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water facilities, as well as the appointment of additional teachers.



**Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan** – This was launched to ensure that there are separate toilets for boys and girls, potable water facility, hand washing stations and garbage handling systems in each and every school of India. This Clean School Initiative has enhanced sanitation/hygiene practices, thus minimising absenteeism, especially of girls, while enhancing the overall health and performance of all students.



**Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** – This is an overarching programme with a holistic approach to the entire school education sector from pre-school to class 12. It subsumes the three schemes of SSA, RMSA and Teacher Education (TE). It has the broader goal of improving school effectiveness in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning outcomes. It covers everything from inclusiveness, skill development, sports and physical education and digital education to teacher training and administrative reforms. This scheme has been fully aligned with the recommendations of the National Education Policy 2020.

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** - This campaign was rolled out in association with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to promote education of girls and bridge the gender gaps in school enrolment and retention. It emphasises creating a conducive environment for girls' education and addressing societal biases.



Considering the lower number of girls in schools, the government introduced various other schemes to encourage girls to receive an education:

- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGL)
- National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE)
- PRAGATI (Providing Assistance for Girls' Advancement in Technical Education Initiative)
- CBSE Single Child Merit Scholarship
- Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child
- Rani Laxmi Bai Atma Raksha Parikshan



## Mid-day Meal Scheme (renamed to PM Poshan Shakti Nirmaan) –

This is one of the oldest running educational policies of the Indian government. It provides free hot cooked lunch on working days to children in primary and upper primary classes (Grades I to VIII) in government and government-aided

schools. This has not only improved the nutritional status of school-age children, but also encouraged more parents to send their children to school. Retention and attendance rates have also increased. Provision of breakfast is under consideration, as suggested by the NEP 2020.

## Eklavya Model Residential

**Schools** – This scheme aims to provide quality education to children hailing from scheduled castes and other minority sections living in remote and far-flung areas. These special schools are set up to overcome discrimination and provide equal opportunities of basic education along with skill development in sports and other fields.



**SAKSHAM** – This is a scholarship programme to encourage and support differently-abled students to pursue technical education.



There are other schemes to assist such students, like:

- Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)
- Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage
- Identification camps for Children with Special Needs (CwSN)



**Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat (PBBB)** – This scheme focuses on improving the reading, writing and arithmetic skills of students in classes III to V by providing training to the teachers, developing reading materials and creating a culture of reading in schools.



## Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan

**(RAA)** – It promotes mathematics and science education in schools by providing for the development of laboratories and appointment of additional teachers for these subjects.



**National Program for Education of Skills (NPES)** – It aims to provide vocational education to students by establishing vocational education centres in schools and appointing additional teachers for vocational education.



**Ishan Vikas** – This is a comprehensive plan to bring selected students from the North-Eastern states into close contact with the IITs, NITs and IISERs during their vacation periods. They can visit these institutions for a period of ten days, in the form of either an exposure or internship programme.



## STARS (Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States)

– This is a World Bank-supported initiative to improve the quality and governance of school education in six Indian states: Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan. It provides assistance to the states to intensify their efforts at enhancing their school evaluation systems, teacher development programmes, educational data systems and governance structures.



## SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds)

– This is a government-funded e-learning

platform available to students across India. It has a series of modules with recorded lectures on a variety of subjects by professors of premier institutes like IITs and IIMs. They can also be telecast directly on TV on free DTH channels. The online portal is free to use and proved to be very useful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are other digital education programmes, like:

- SWAYAM PRABHA
- Vidya Daan
- PM e-Vidya
- SMART India Hackathon
- National E-Library
- E-Pathshala
- DIKSHA

### National Talent Search Examination (NTSE) –

The purpose of this programme is to identify and nurture talent among students in the country. The exam is conducted in two stages (state and national) for students starting from class X and cash scholarships are awarded. There are other scholarship programmes like:

- National Means cum Merit Scholarship (NMMS)
- Ishan Uday (for students in north-east regions)

**National Achievement Survey (NAS)** – This was instituted to get an accurate picture of the quality of education in schools based on the academic performance of students across the country. The survey is conducted for students of classes 3, 5, 8 and 10 and provides a comprehensive report on the learning levels, knowledge and skills of students in different subjects (including mathematics, science, social science and language) as well as the areas where they need improvement.



### Program for International Students Assessment (PISA) –

The Indian government participated in this programme organised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2021. It is a competency-based assessment which measures the extent to which students have acquired key competencies that are essential for full participation in modern societies. Learnings from the participation are being used to introduce competency-based examination reforms in the school system.



### National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) –

This is a ranking methodology to grade institutions across the country. Depending on their areas of operation, the institutions are ranked under 11 different categories – overall, university, colleges, engineering, management, pharmacy, law, medical, architecture, dental and research. The primary parameters for the overall rankings are Teaching Learning & Resources, Research and Professional Practice, Graduation Outcomes, Outreach & Inclusivity and Perception. The 2023 rankings can be accessed at <https://www.nirfindia.org/2023/Ranking.html>.



**Open Education** – The government set up the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to promote the option of distance and open education for all segments of the society. Various other platforms of open schooling have come up in other states that provide flexibility to those who are unable to attend regular school/college for any reason. AICTE has even permitted business schools to provide online programmes that are more affordable as well as give freedom from scheduled learning to the students.

There are many more such initiatives which have together contributed to the historical growth of the Indian educational system, especially in the rural areas. The progress has been significant, but persistent challenges remain.

The Ministry of Education developed the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) as a unified database of schools across India. It was updated to a digital platform named UDISE+ with a mandate to collect information (from all recognised and unrecognised schools imparting formal education from pre-primary to Class 12) through an online Data Collection Form (DCF) on parameters ranging from school, infrastructure, teachers, enrolments, examination results, etc. This is used for planning, optimised resource allocation and implementation of various education-related programmes and assessments of progress made. **According to UDISE+ 2021-22 data, the Indian school education system is one of the largest in the world with almost 15 lakh schools, over 95 lakh teachers and around 26.5 crore students.**

## Impact of Various Schemes and Initiatives



Source: UDISE+ 2021-22 data



Do not waste time watching reels, get adequate sleep.

– PM Modi during the recent Pariksha pe Charcha event on 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2024

## Pariksha Pe Charcha (Discussion on Examination)

Every year, our Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with students, teachers and parents from across the country, and shares valuable tips on how to take the board and entrance exams in a relaxed and stress-free manner. Participants for the event are generally chosen through a competition – the winners get a chance to attend the event, and some can even interact directly with the Prime Minister. It can be viewed online.

## Enhanced Funding for Education

One of the major obstacles faced by the education system is lack of proper funding. Indeed, India's public expenditure on the education sector remains abysmally low. Even after a whopping 8% increase in allocation in the Union Budget 2023-23 to \$112 billion (over Rs one lakh crore), it only stands at 2.9% of the GDP. In fact, the NEP 2020 aims to increase government expenditure on education to 6% of the GDP!

## Summing Up

The Indian government is committed to working towards the betterment of education in the country. However, as usual, the implementation is weak and varies across states. Additionally, many citizens remain unaware of most of these benefit-driven schemes. ▶



Pariksha pe Charcha is a unique and popular initiative by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi which has enhanced students' self-confidence, helped them manage stress and be healthy and fit.

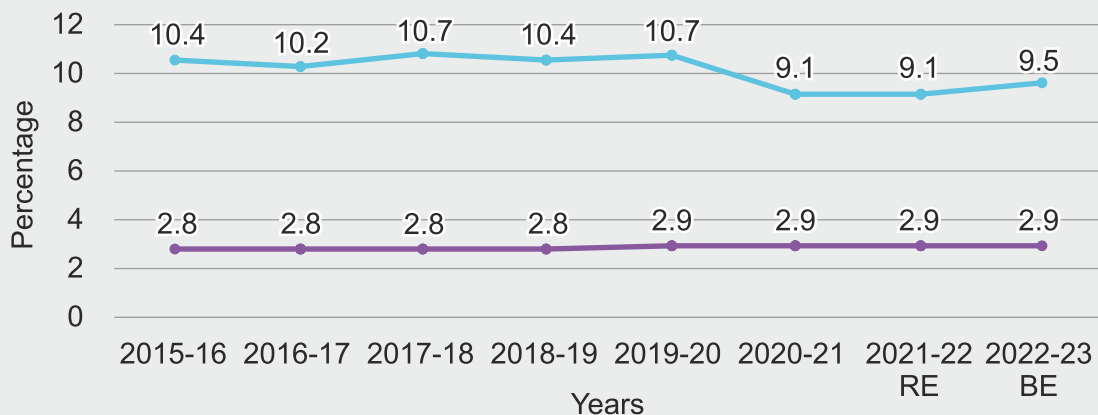
– Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister for Education

The 2023-24 Union Budget allocated Rs 1,12,899.47 crore for education and this year's Interim Budget increased the allocation to Rs 1,20,627.87 crore.

Budget Allocation to Education Sector: 2017-18 to 2023-24 (in Rs crores)

Year	Allocation	Change over Previous Budget	% Change
2017-18	81,868	–	–
2018-19	85,010	3,142	3.84
2019-20	94,854	9,844	11.58
2020-21	99,312	4,458	4.70
2021-22	93,224	-6,088	-6.13
2022-23	1,04,278	11,052	11.86
2023-24	1,12,899	8,621	8.27

(Source: <https://educationforallindia.com/>)



Education expenditure as percentage of GDP

Education expenditure as percentage of total expenditure

# REPORT



## Exploring the Statistical Realities of Education in India

The ASER surveys present a snapshot of schooling in rural India at the primary and secondary stage. The reports reveal a mixed bag of results with peak enrolments and yet, a widening learning gap for foundational skills. The government's AISHE report further sheds light on the status of higher education across the country.



“ Education is one thing  
no one can take away from you. ”  
– Elin Nordegren

**VARIOUS SURVEYS ARE** conducted by different organisations to assess the level and quality of education in India. Leading the pack is Annual Status Of Education Report (ASER) – a national household-based survey that collects information on children's schooling status and basic learning outcomes in almost every rural district in the country. It is being conducted by the Pratham Education Foundation since 2005. The results serve as crucial inputs in the education policies of both the central and state governments.

ASER 2022 primarily focused on the enrolment status and foundational skills of rural children aged 3 to 16 at

the national, state and district level (covering about 3.8 lakh households and almost 7 lakh children). Children aged 5-16 were tested one-on-one to understand their reading, arithmetic and English skills.

According to the report released in January 2023, there was an increase in the enrolment of children in government schools. (Figure 1) However, basic reading and arithmetic skills of young children in Class 3 and Class 5 declined sharply, dropping to pre-2012 levels. (Figure 2)

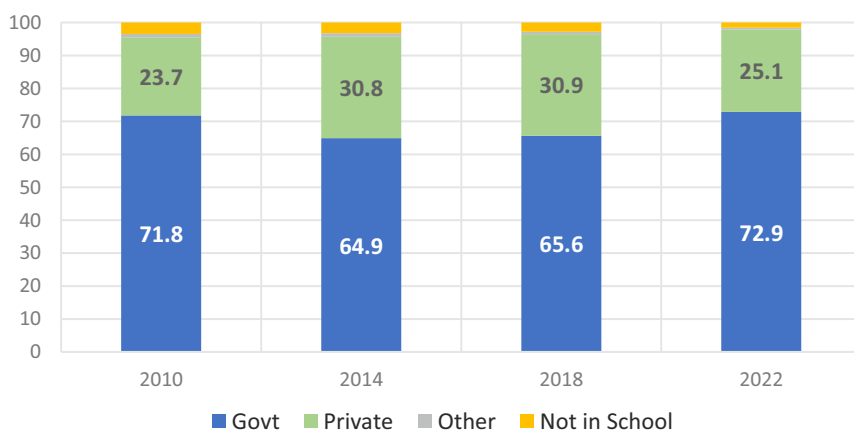
On the brighter side, there was a decrease in the proportion of girls not enrolled in schools for the age group

11 to 14. Nationally, small improvements are visible in all Right to Education-related indicators over 2018 levels. (Figure 3)

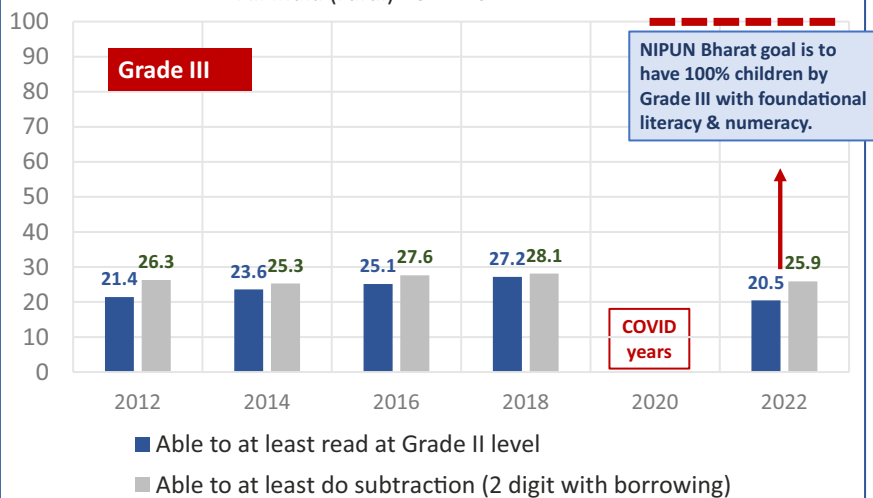
It should be noted that the proportion of government schools with less than 60 students enrolled has increased every year over the last decade. (Figure 4)

The ASER 2023 'Beyond Basics' survey focused on 14 to 18 year old children in rural India to explore their ability to apply foundational skills to everyday situations, and their aspirations for the future. It explored a wider set of domains while also capturing their access, awareness and skills for using digital devices. The survey was conducted in 28 districts across 26 states, reaching a total of 34,745 youth in the spotlighted age group of 14 to 18 years.

**FIGURE 1: % Children (6-14) enrolled in school:**  
All India (rural) 2010-2022



**FIGURE 2: % Children at Grade III who are at "grade" level :**  
All India (rural) 2012-2022



By the end of Grade II in India, children are expected to be able to read a simple text fluently and also be able to do basic operations like subtraction. Hence, it is possible to use ASER data as a 'proxy' for the proportion of children who are at 'grade level' by the time they have reached the middle of the school year in Grade III.

**Why Beyond Basics? - In India, compulsory education ends at age 14. To work full time in the organised sector, you have to be 18. Are our youth adequately prepared for the path ahead - for further education, work and life? For this, understanding what life is like for young people aged 14 to 18 in rural India is very important.**

The report reveals that more than 86.8% of the rural youngsters are enrolled in educational institutions and 84% have finished at least eight years of schooling.

**Of all youth in the age group 14 to 18:**

- 53% are in school (Std X or below)
- 28% are in either Std XI or XII
- 7% are in college
- 13% are currently not enrolled anywhere (Figure 5)

**29% to 37% of those who are in school or college are also engaged in work outside the house. Of those who are not currently enrolled, 55% work.**

# The key takeaways from ASER 2022

The findings of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022 offer a view of how learning outcomes across India were impacted by the pandemic.

## THE SURVEY

ASER 2022 is a citizen-led rural survey led by Pratham Foundation that reached...

700,000 children | 19,000 villages | Across 616 districts

### TUITION CLASSES RISE

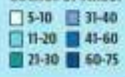
A noted increase in the proportion of children who attend private tuition classes outside of school was identified in the report.

Children that take paid tuitions (Class 1-8)



Nearly all states saw the proportion of students taking some form of paid classes outside of school with some exceptions - Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Tripura.

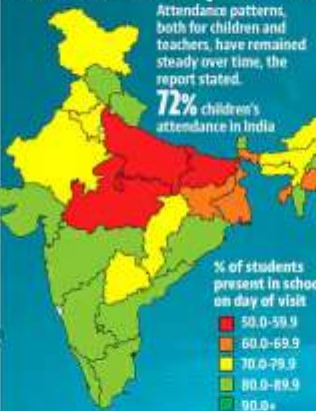
% Children taking paid 'tuitions' outside of school



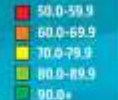
### Attendance stays stable

Attendance patterns, both for children and teachers, have remained steady over time, the report stated.

72% children's attendance in India



% of students present in school on day of visit



### School facilities

Nationally, minor improvements were visible in nearly all Right to Education (RTE)-related indicators over levels observed in 2018.



**TOILETS FOR GIRLS**  
68.4% of schools had useable girls' toilets in 2022, rising from 66.4% noted in 2018



**LIBRARIES**  
44% of schools had books other than textbooks being used by students - this increased from 36.9% in 2018



**PLAYGROUNDS**  
68.9% schools had a playground in 2022, up slightly from 66.5% in 2018

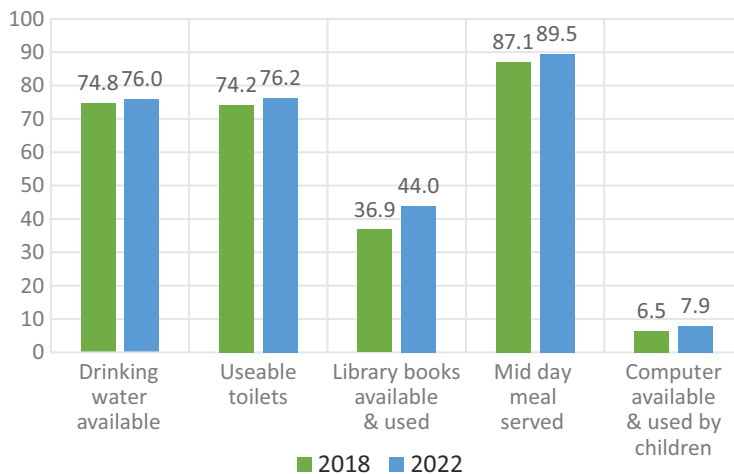
### Rise in presence of smartphones

Nearly 3/4th of all houses said that they had a smartphone, compared to a little over 1/3rd of all houses having smartphones in 2018

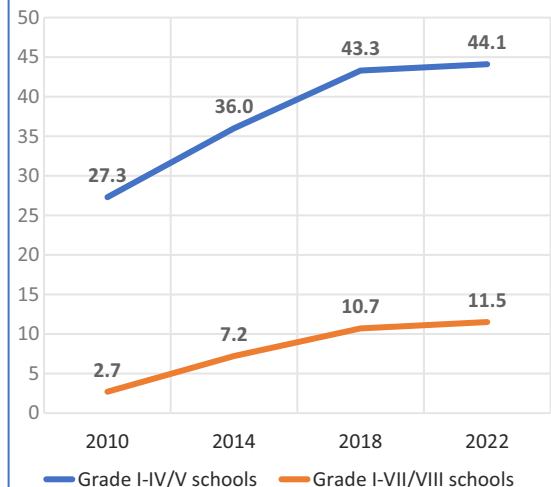
74.8% households said they have a smartphone in 2022, compared to 36% in 2018  
89.1% of these households had internet available



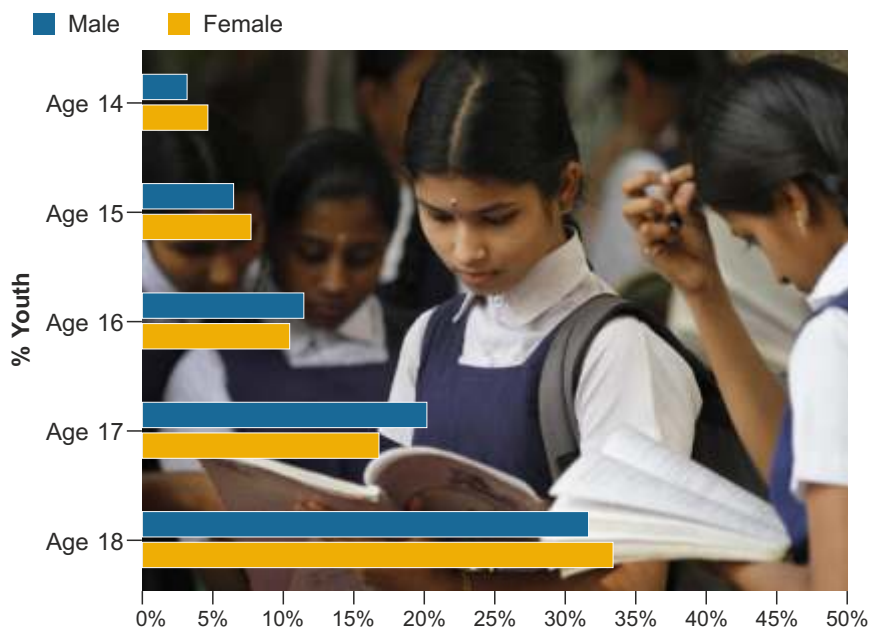
**FIGURE 3: % Schools with functioning facilities: All India (rural) 2018 & 2022**



**FIGURE 4: All India: Proportion of small schools (enrollment 60 or less) among govt schools**



Parameters	2018	2022	Trend
Overall Enrolment (Age Group 6-14)	97.2%	98.4%	Positive
Enrolled in Government School (Age Group 6-14)	65.6%	72.9%	Positive
Girls not Enrolled in School (Age Group 11-14)	4.1%	2%	Positive
Children in Std III (Government or Private Schools) Able to read at Std II level	27.3%	20.5%	Negative
Children in Std III who are able to at least do subtraction	28.2%	25.9%	Negative
Children in Std V across India who can do division	27.9%	25.6%	Negative
Children in Std I-VIII Taking Paid Private Tuition Classes	26.4%	30.5%	Positive
Government Schools with Less than 60 Students Enrolled	29.4%	29.9%	Negative
Average Teacher Attendance	85.4%	87.1%	Positive
Fraction of Schools with Useable Girls' Toilets	66.4%	68.4%	Positive
Schools with Drinking Water Availability	74.8%	76%	Positive

**FIGURE 5: % Youth currently not enrolled in school or college, by age and sex**

**44.3 % of the girls aspired to study in undergraduate programmes as opposed to 41.2% males.**

**Over 55% students of Classes 11-12 opt for humanities, followed by science and commerce. Girls are less likely to be enrolled in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) streams than males.**

**Only 5.6% youngsters are undergoing vocational training or have enrolled in other related courses**

The distressing reality is that 26.4% of the rural students aged 14 to 18 cannot read a Class II level text fluently in their regional languages and 42.7% cannot read easy sentences in English. (Figure 6) Of the 57.3% that can read, 26.5% are unable to tell the meaning of the sentence.

**35% of the surveyed youth were unable to read functional instructions on a packet of ORS solution**

More than half of the children in this age group struggle with simple division (3-digit by 1-digit) problems. Only 43.3% are able to do such problems correctly – a skill that is usually expected in class 3 or 4. (Figure 7)

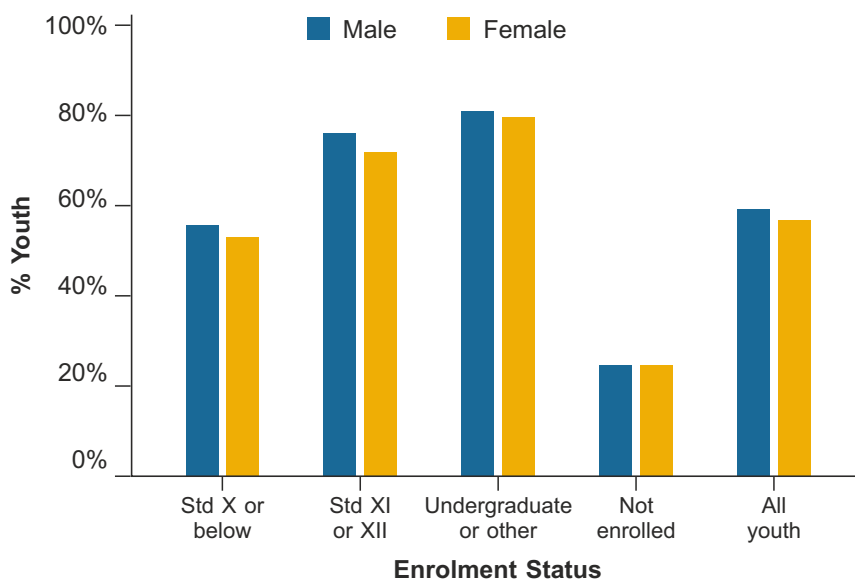
In their daily life, people are expected to do many tasks requiring

the application of numeracy. The survey explored a variety of such common calculations relevant to the daily life of youth - like measuring length using a ruler, calculating time, adding weights and applying the unitary method. Alas, over 50% of the youth are unable to do such common calculations. Of the youth who can do subtraction or more, over 40% failed to do a budgeting task, about 63% cannot apply a discount and around 90% cannot calculate loan repayment. (Figure 8)

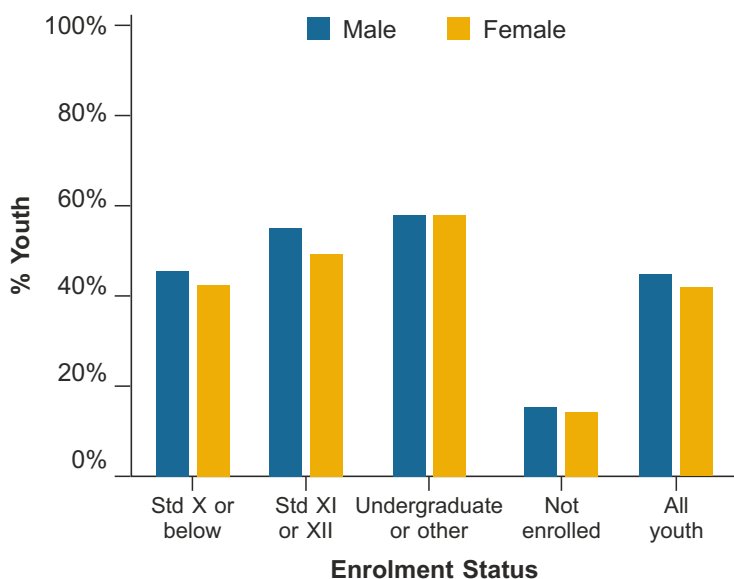
**"NEP (National Education Policy) 2020 recognises the need to 'catch up' in the case of those who have fallen behind. Thus, programmes could be put in place, if they do not already exist, to help students from Std VIII and higher grades who are lagging behind academically."**

**– ASER Report**

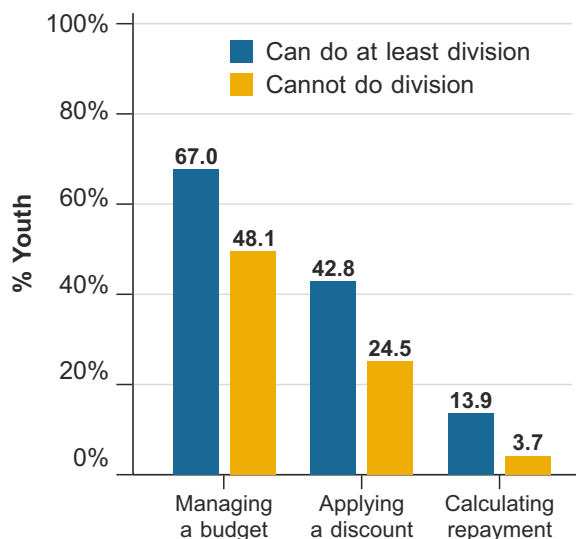
Close to 90% of the youngsters have a smartphone in the household and know how to use it, while only 9% have a computer/laptop at home. 90.5% of the youth reported use of social media while over 66% claimed to have used the smartphone for some education-related activity, such as

**FIGURE 6: % Youth who can read at least sentences in English (ASER English Test)**

**FIGURE 7: % Youth who can do at least division (ASER arithmetic test), by enrolment status and sex**



**FIGURE 8: % Youth who can do financial calculations, by ASER arithmetic level – All Districts**



**Boys in this age group are more than twice as likely to own smartphones compared to girls who are also less likely to know how to use these devices.**

watching online videos related to studies, solving doubts or exchanging notes. However, only about half of them were familiar with the online safety settings that were included in the survey.

## Higher Education

When it comes to the status of higher education, the Ministry of Education, GoI released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022 report in January this year. It covers all the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in the country registered with AISHE, collecting detailed information on different parameters such as student enrolment, teachers, infrastructural information, etc.

**1162 universities, 42,825 colleges and 10,576 standalone institutions responded to the survey.**

The results are as follows:

- Enrolment in higher education increased to 4.33 crore in 2021-22,

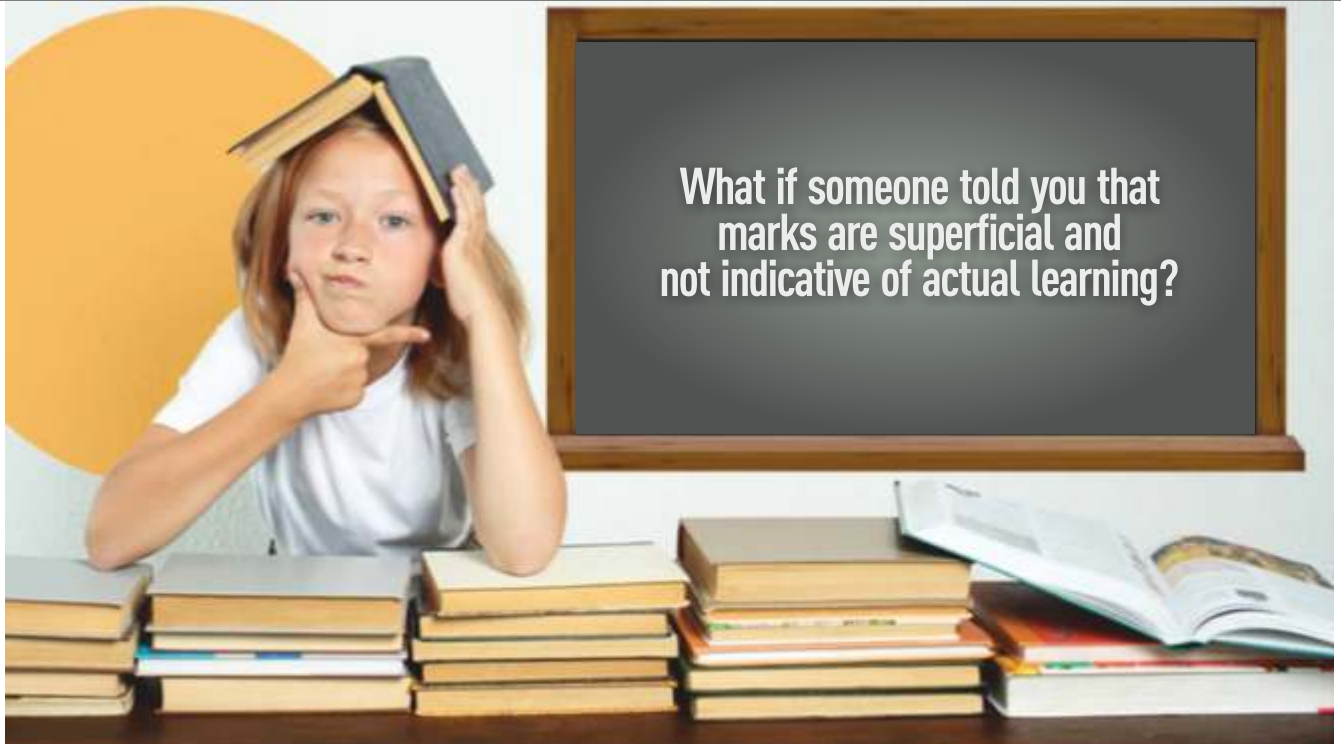
registering an increase of 91 lakh students (26.5%) since 2014-15.

- About 78.9% of the total students are enrolled in undergraduate level courses and 12.1% are enrolled in postgraduate level courses.
- Among disciplines at undergraduate level, enrolment is highest in Arts (34.2%), followed by Science (14.8%), Commerce (13.3%) and Engineering & Technology (11.8%).
- Among streams at postgraduate level, maximum students are enrolled in Social Science (21.1%) followed by Science (14.7%).
- Female enrolment in higher education increased to 2.07 crore, registering an increase of 50 lakh students (32%) since 2014-15.
- GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio) increased to 28.4 (23.7 in 2014-15) and female GER increased to 28.5 (22.9 in 2014-15). Female GER continues to be more than male

GER for the fifth consecutive year since 2017-18.

- Total Ph.D. enrolment increased to 2.13 lakh (81.2%) from 1.17 lakh in 2014-15. Female Ph.D. enrolment has doubled in this period to almost a lakh.
- Government universities constituting 58.6% of total universities, contribute 73.7% of total enrolment. Private universities account for 26.3% of total enrolment.
- The total number of pass-outs has increased to 1.07 crore in 2021-22 as against 95.4 lakh in 2020-21.
- 341 universities/university-level institutions have been established since 2014-15.
- The total number of faculty/teachers in 2021-22 are 15.98 lakh, of which about 56.6% are male and 43.4% are female.

It is clear that there has been a huge growth in the Indian education system, however, the standards of education are still found wanting. Students need more support and encouragement to truly achieve a change in their lives and break free from the bonds of inequality. ▶



## RETHINKING LEARNING:

# Moving Away from Rote Memorisation

The Indian education system is obsessed with rote learning. Examinations merely test the memory of students and not their understanding. While a gradual shift towards more mindful and cognitive learning is underway, can we expect children to be taught 'how' to think instead of 'what' to think? After all, it's meaningful learning that stays for life!



“What makes a child gifted and talented may not always be good grades in school, but a different way of looking at the world and learning.”

– Chuck Grassley

**THE HARSH TRUTH** of education in India is that it is based on rote learning. Students are taught to simply commit vast amounts of information to memory without truly understanding the concepts. And the bigger problem is that most people fail to comprehend how the focus on memorising the 'right answers' can be a drawback! After all, learning everything word to word is what will get you the marks, the choice of subjects you want, the qualifications you desire and the dream job in the end....

**Indian education is heavily focused on theoretical knowledge and does not emphasise practical learning.**

Rote learning starts from an early age – we 'by heart' the alphabets, numbers and tables, then we mug up the formulae, figures and other answers. We are conditioned to learn by repetition, reproduce the answers in a standardised exam and the cycle goes on.

But, what did we actually 'learn' from all those years of rote memorisation? This approach only ends up hampering our ability to think critically, solve real-world problems and apply the knowledge in practical scenarios – skills that are crucial for surviving in today's fast-evolving world?

**To score high marks, students by heart even subject like Mathematics without even trying to understand, analyse and solve the problems!**

There is nothing wrong with rote learning per se. In fact, it is essential to memorise certain basic definitions, formulae and other information. However, we also need a deeper understanding of the subjects to be able to grasp how to actually apply the knowledge in real-life situations. **The irony here is that we can ace competitive exams without understanding even a word of what we are learning!**

**A study comparing board exams across the globe found that rote learning was the highest in India and Pakistan. Another study showed that less than 5% Indian engineers have the analytical skills required for software engineering jobs.**

The outdated curriculum and teaching methods are to blame here. Indeed, most curricula lack relevance and do not address current socio-economic conditions. Even the pedagogy prioritises one-way communication and book learning rather than practical or experiential learning. This dreary approach kills the students' interest as they have no idea why they are learning something, let alone how to connect it to their daily lives.



**The Indian education system seems to be producing zombies since in most of the schools, students seem to be spending majority of their time in preparing for competitive exams.**

**– Anil K. Rajvanshi,**  
leading academic and  
Director of Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute (NARI)

### Why do exams only test memory and not cognitive development?

**The bleak reality hit home to an IIT graduate who went on to undertake graduate studies at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), "Three semesters into my research programme at MIT, my self-confidence dropped like an anvil. The reason was not performance indices - I had done rather well in my graduate coursework [...] The root of my insecurities was the realisation of a simple, but bitter truth: my ability to ace exams back in IIT was in no way correlated with being creative in scientific research."**

### Paradigm Shift

The education system needs to be more practical with a focus on comprehension and logical reasoning – students should be encouraged to question, visualise and think creatively. The examination system should not merely test regurgitation of facts, but call on the students to draw inferences or express something creatively. For this, the curriculum should also be revised to make it more relevant and aligned with the real world. It also calls for a drastic shift in the classroom techniques towards a more constructive, demonstrative and involved approach. Only then can we build lifelong learners who can roll with the punches that life throws at them!

Moreover, education cannot be limited to academic learning alone. Soft skills – such as empathy, integrity, respect for diversity, adaptability, creativity, communication, teamwork and leadership - have to go hand-in-hand to prepare students to be responsible citizens of society.

To give credit where it is due, there is a growing emphasis on providing students with a broader and more diverse education with hands-on learning opportunities

**Why is our thinking limited to what is presented to us? Why can't we think beyond the obvious by pushing the boundaries of possibilities? Why is it so difficult for us to use what we learn in the real world?**

and project-based activities aligned with practical applications. Students are now engaging with the concepts through active discussions in the classroom which prepares them for implementing the knowledge. The teachers are also being trained to incorporate more experiential and activity-based learning in their pedagogy. Policymakers and educators are developing strategies to transition towards deeper comprehension of foundational principles, concepts and their inter-relationships.

**The New Education Policy 2020 proposes a multi-disciplinary approach and vocational training from an early age to equip students with practical skills vis-à-vis only theoretical learning modules.**

However, this is just a drop in the ocean. A lot more needs to be done to encourage the students to effectively analyse and evaluate the information. Modern teaching techniques need to be implemented to foster student engagement and pave the way for creativity, innovation and holistic learning.

To promote divergent thinking, the learning environment should focus on inquiry and independent thinking. The education system should inculcate inter-disciplinary learning, support entrepreneurship and develop real-world thinking. Above all, in a major departure from the conventional system, educational experiences should be tailored to meet the specific needs of each child.

**Point to Note – Why doesn't anyone talk about school-to-work transition that will enable the students to find a good fit with available and emerging jobs?**

**Linking skills to education is crucial here. Top tech companies – like Google and Microsoft – are shifting their hiring criteria from qualifications and grades to testing the actual skills and know-how of the candidates!**



Ultimately, the most forward-looking changes will not be effective until parents, teachers and the community change their traditional mindset of equating test results with success. We have to overcome the obsession with marks and focus on what our children are actually learning.

**Can society move past the thinking which equates a child's worth and potential on their exam scores?**

In sum, encouraging and boosting the young minds for overall development (beyond marks) is essential for them to succeed in their career and life! ▶



# The Benefits Of Gaining Concept Mastery For Students

Enhanced Retention and Transferable Skills

Promoting Lifelong Learning

Unveiling Innovation and Curiosity

Developing Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Developing Confidence and Self-Efficacy

Overall Improvement in Academic Performance

## Skill India Mission – Bridging the Education-Skill Gap

The limited focus on vocational education and skill development has a negative impact on the students who find themselves on the backfoot in terms of employability in the real world. Given the high demand for practical skills, the government is focusing on developing vocational skills in tune with the realities of the job market.



India cannot afford to allow its youth to be ill-equipped to meet the demands of the job market!

**IT IS SAID** time and again that the Indian education system is primarily focused on academic education, and there is little emphasis on vocational education or skill development. This creates a huge gap between what a person has learnt in school/college and the skills required by the job market.

The students enter the real world armed with degrees, certifications and other credentials, only to get a shocking blow of reality – their theoretical knowledge lets them down as it is not aligned with the needs of the industry! They find themselves lacking in practical skills which have become a pre-requisite for employment in the 21st century.

The main issue here is that educational institutions follow a rigid curriculum that hardly affords any practical learning opportunities, or exposure to inter-disciplinary fields. And, there's a heavy price to pay for prioritising theoretical learning at the expense of skill development. The students become the loser in the end, as the education they received does not prepare them for the work environment.

No wonder the educated youth remain jobless and are often forced to take up blue-collar level jobs to earn a livelihood. **In fact, the high level of unemployment in the country can be attributed partly to the failure to get jobs which can be attributed to lack of competency and training.**

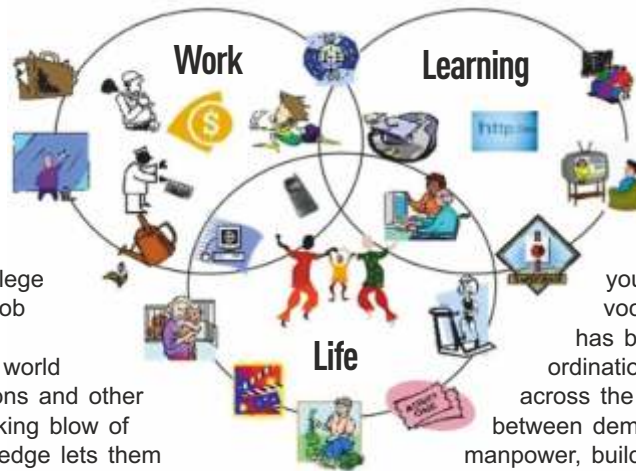
**Lack of basic employability prospects in education is what makes the lower classes send their children to work as an apprentice and learn a craft rather than 'while away' the years in school. At least, they become equipped to make a living in the future.**

**According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), India is likely to face a shortage of 29 million skilled personnel by 2030.**

## Promoting Vocational Education and Skill-Based Training

There is a growing emphasis on incorporating more practical elements in education to meet the demands of the rapidly evolving job market. The National Education Policy 2020 advocates practical learning and life skills that will not only improve the career prospects of students, but also prepare them for life beyond the school/college environment.

Accordingly, efforts are underway to integrate vocational education and skill development programmes into the school curriculum. Skill-based training courses, internship programmes and apprenticeship schemes are



being introduced to equip the students with the necessary employment-ready competencies.

The **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** is responsible for improving

youth employability through vocational education initiatives. It

has been entrusted with the co-ordination of all skill development efforts across the country, removal of disconnect between demand and supply of skilled manpower, building the vocational and technical training framework, skill upgradation, building of new skills and innovative thinking - not only for existing jobs but also jobs that are to be created.



**Our country has one of the lowest percentage of skilled workforce; a meagre 4% as compared to 42% in the US, 76% in Germany, 80% in Japan and a whopping 96% in South Korea. So, the government decided to take the resources to the common man's doorsteps.**

**– PM Narendra Modi**

**India is a country today with 65% of its youth in the working age group. If ever there is a way to reap this demographic advantage, it has to be through skill development of the youth so that they add not only to their personal growth, but to the country's economic growth as well. - Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**



**Skill India offers courses across 40 sectors that help a person focus on practical delivery of work and help him enhance his technical expertise so that he is ready for day one of his job and companies don't have to invest in training him for his job profile.**



The government has launched the **National Skill India Mission** to empower the youth of the country with skill sets which make them more employable and more productive in their work environment. It is an umbrella programme comprising of various schemes and initiatives to create and implement comprehensive skill development training programmes to bridge the gap between industry demands and skill requirements and, therefore, develop the country at large.

This Mission is spearheaded by the functional arms of MSDE – like National Skill Development Agency (NSDA), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skill Development Fund (NSDF), various Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) as well as hundreds of training partners registered with NSDC.

It implements curriculum-based skill training courses, wherein trainees get certifications and endorsements from industry-recognised learning centres. The primary features are:

- Offer training, guidance and support for all traditional types of employment like weavers, cobblers, carpenters, welders, masons, blacksmiths, nurses, etc.
- Emphasise new domains such as real estate, transportation, construction, gem industry, textiles, banking, jewellery designing, tourism and other sectors where the level of skill is inadequate.
- Impart training of international standards so that the youth get jobs not only in India but also abroad.
- Create a new hallmark 'Rural India Skill' so as to standardise and certify the training process.
- Start customised need-based programmes for specific age groups in communication, language skills, behavioural skills, management skills, positive thinking skills, etc.
- Provide innovative and unconventional course methodology involving games, brainstorming sessions, group discussions, case studies and so on.

Some of the prominent schemes under the Skill India Mission are:

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** – This is a flagship skill certification scheme that provides free short duration, industry-relevant skill training (2 to 6 months) along with soft skills to the youth who have discontinued formal education or are unemployed. They get cash incentives for completing the course and placement assistance is also provided by the training partners. Individuals with previously acquired skill or expertise are tested and accredited under the Scheme for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and then trained to adapt them to the current job requirements.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs)** – These are state-of-the-art, accessible and aspirational model training centres set up in every district of India to support the skill development infrastructure in the country. Backed by latest pedagogy and use of technology, the PMKKs are well-equipped to run industry-driven courses of high quality with focus on employability. This will transform the short-term training ecosystem from a mandate-driven delivery model to a sustainable institutional model.
- **Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)** – It aims to improve the various skills training frameworks and the access to quality and market-relevant training for young people across the country. It also seeks to resolve emerging issues such as achieving integration, instilling consistency in skill growth programmes and making them meaningful and open to the sector while promoting private involvement in short-term training.
- **Skill Loan Scheme** – It provides loans - ranging from Rs 5000 to Rs 1.5 lakhs – to people seeking to attend



1,306,117 Enrolled ↑ 2.04%	44,350 Total Batches ↑ 3.31%	482,604 Ongoing Training ↑ 3.88%	485,559 Trained ↑ 0.75%	261,815 Assessments ↑ 0.44%	237,253 Certified ↑ 0.41%
3,488 Training Partners	7,163 Training Centres	36 States	727 Districts	36 Sector	684 Skill Pools

PMKVY Dashboard – As on 15-3-2024



The Skill India Mission is gathering tremendous steam under the guidance of Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan (Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship) and Mr. Rajeev Chandrasekhar, (Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship). A number of other initiatives are underway and it is estimated that over a crore youth join the Skill India mission annually.



**Dharmendra Pradhan**



**Rajeev Chandrasekhar**

skill development programmes. This will eliminate financial barriers for individuals who wish to upgrade their skills or learn new ones.

- **Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan (PM-YUVA)** – It aims to educate and equip potential and early stage entrepreneurs and catalyse a cultural shift to support aspiring entrepreneurs. The candidates are linked to the MUDRA scheme of the government to get assistance in initial business funding.



**Apprenticeship Protsahan Yojana** – Under this, the MSDE revamped the Apprenticeship Act, 1961 to make the legal framework conducive to both the industry as well as young people. Now, the private sector has maximum control – they can even set the targets for apprentices that they require - so that the industry standards are maintained as per market requirement.

**India's first Skill India International Centre was launched at Bhubaneswar, Odisha to impart international-standard training to youngsters with an aim to make them employable for countries such as Canada, Australia and the Gulf region, where there is a huge demand for a skilled workforce.**

**Rozgar Melas** – This is a 1/2-day event where several employers and job seekers come together for the purpose of applying and interviewing for jobs. The melas are organised across the nation on a regular basis to provide suitable job opportunities in private sector to the unemployed youth.

India also has a range of polytechnic institutes that offer diploma/vocational courses focused on delivering technical education. These courses emphasise development of skills and practical experience over theoretical knowledge. Students obtain a diploma upon completion, which qualifies them to seek jobs.

## Conclusion

The skill ecosystem in India is seeing great reforms and policy interventions which is reinvigorating and re-energising the country's workforce today. But, we still have a long way to go. For instance, **what happened to Skill India's goal of training 40 crore young people in different skills by 2022-23?**

Furthermore, there is a need for continuous evaluation and impact assessment to gauge the true effectiveness of the skill training programmes and identify gaps and areas for improvement. The looming question is - Are the skills really translating into meaningful employment opportunities? And where is the focus on incorporating skill-based learning in the school curriculum itself in a way that it can create opportunities for both long- and short-term skill training and employment? ▀

**The National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) is a quality assurance framework - developed by the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) - which grades and recognises qualifications based on the levels of skills and learning outcomes acquired through both formal or informal means. Courses under Skill India Mission are aligned to the standards recognised by both the industry and the government under the National Skill Qualification Framework.**



**Prof. (Dr.)**

## **VARINDER SINGH KANWAR**

**CEO, National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (NABET),  
a constituent Board of Quality Council of India**

Dr. Kanwar has more than 27 years of rich experience in research, teaching and administration. He holds academic and administrative positions in institutes like NIT Hamirpur, Government Polytechnic Hamirpur, Thapar University Patiala and Punjab Technical University Jalandhar. He served as the founding Registrar and Vice Chancellor of Chitkara University, Himachal Pradesh (NAAC A+). He is a member of various inspection committees convened to grant affiliation to the University and to assess compliance with regulatory norms, He is also on the panel of Board of Studies – Civil Engineering of various Universities.

Dr. Kanwar holds a Ph.D. in Civil Engineering. He has written a number of books, research papers and won many awards. He received the 'Time 2 Leap' award under the category 'Best Professor of the Year – Socio Environment Enterprises' in 2021.

NABET plays a pivotal role at the national level in propagating, adoption and adherence to quality standards in education, environment protection, skill training and certification, etc. that have significant bearing in improving the quality of life and well-being of the citizens of India.

**Q What are your views on the current state of education in India?**

I believe India's education system has the potential to be a global leader, but achieving that requires collective commitment to overcoming the challenges and realising the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 which proposes transformative reforms for holistic development.

There is promising expansion - India boasts the third-largest education system globally, educating 280 million students!<sup>1</sup> Literacy rates have climbed to 77.7%, reaching 87.7% for men and 68.8% for women.<sup>2</sup> Higher education enrolment is booming, with the gross enrolment ratio (GER) exceeding 27.3% in 2022.<sup>3</sup> Diverse institutions cater to various needs, from rural schools to world-class universities.<sup>4</sup> However, roadblocks exist, like:

- **Quality concerns:** Pupil-teacher ratios remain high (26:1 in elementary), impacting personalised attention.<sup>5</sup>
- **Rote learning:** Traditional methods often prioritise memorisation over critical thinking and application.
- **Equity gaps:** Gender disparity persists (GER: 31.5% male, 23.2% female), and socio-economic background heavily influences access and outcomes.<sup>6</sup>
- **Skill mismatch:** Graduate unemployment underlines the need for industry-aligned skill development.
- **Funding challenges:** Adequate resource allocation to infrastructure and teacher salaries is crucial.

Looking forward, the NEP 2020's focus on holistic learning, flexibility and skill development offers a promising pathway. However, successful implementation is critical, and this requires concerted efforts from government, institutions and educators. Addressing quality, equity and skill gaps is essential to unlock the full potential of India's young population.

The numbers speak volumes, but remember education is about empowering individuals, fostering innovation and driving national progress. We must strive for a system that benefits every learner, regardless of background.

**Q What measures do you suggest for improving the quality of education in India?**

Here are some key measures I believe could significantly improve quality:

**1. Empowering Educators:**

- **Invest in teacher training:** Allocate resources for ongoing programs in modern pedagogy, technology integration and child-centred learning

- **Improve teacher recruitment and retention:** Offer competitive salaries, career progression opportunities and mentorship programs
- **Reduce pupil-teacher ratios:** This personalised attention, especially in crucial early years, can significantly impact learning outcomes

**2. Reimagining Curriculum:**

- **Shift from rote learning to critical thinking:** Encourage inquiry-based learning, problem-solving and application of knowledge to real-world scenarios
- **Embrace holistic development:** Nurture creativity, emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning alongside academics
- **Focus on skill development:** Integrate industry-relevant skills like communication, collaboration and digital literacy into curricula

**3. Technology as a Tool:**

- **Utilise technology strategically:** Promote its use for personalised learning, interactive resources and engaging assessments, not just rote memorisation
- **Bridge the digital divide:** Ensure equitable access to technology and provide training for both teachers and students

**4. Fostering Equity and Inclusion:**

- **Address gender disparities:** Encourage girls' education through targeted programs and scholarships
- **Support inclusive learning environments:** Cater to diverse needs through individualisation and unique education resources
- **Bridge socio-economic gaps:** Implement need-based scholarships, quality infrastructure upgrades and targeted intervention programs in underserved areas

**5. Collaborative Approach:**

- **Strengthen government-public-private partnerships:** Leverage expertise from diverse stakeholders for innovative solutions and resource mobilisation
- **Empower communities and parents:** Encourage their active participation in school governance and student learning support
- **Promote research and data-driven decision making:** Regularly assess progress, track outcomes and adapt strategies based on evidence

Remember, these are just some starting points.

Addressing the complex challenges of education requires a multi-pronged approach and continuous adaptation to evolving needs. However, by investing in our educators, empowering students and leveraging technology responsibly, we can unlock the true potential of India's education system and empower its young minds to shape a brighter future.

**Q What are your views on the National Education Policy, 2020? How far would you say it has been implemented and what do you foresee in the future?**

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Census of India 2011: <https://www.censusindia.gov.in/>

<sup>3</sup> All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22: <https://www.aish.gov.in/>

<sup>4</sup> University Grants Commission (UGC), India: <https://www.ugc.ac.in/>

<sup>5</sup> Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2022: <https://asercentre.org/>

<sup>6</sup> All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22: <https://www.aish.gov.in/>



NEP 2020 presents a comprehensive vision for transforming the education landscape in India. The policy implementation has seen significant progress, with initiatives like the NIPUN Bharat Guidelines and SAFAL Scheme driving standardisation and assessment reforms. The establishment of PM SHRI Schools and efforts towards accreditation in higher education institutions are also notable achievements.

However, there's still much to be done to realise the policy's objectives fully. Future efforts should focus on bridging learning gaps, refining assessment practices and ensuring alignment across all levels of education. Continued collaboration between government bodies, educational institutions and stakeholders will also be essential for effective implementation and sustained progress.

I'm optimistic about the future of education in India under the National Education Policy 2020, but it will require ongoing dedication and investment to ensure its success.

**Q How can we incorporate vocational training and practical skills into the education system?**

Skill-based education blended with formal education is the need of the hour. The NEP 2020 has proposed to initiate orientation of students from 6th grade onwards for vocational education. For this purpose, it is essential that the curriculum of vocational education should be contextualized. Students should be exposed to indigenous handicrafts & vocational skills as per the location of the schools. This will bring about attitudinal change in students for vocational education. Further, schools should invite local experts from indigenous handicrafts for student orientation.

**Q How can we address the issue of high drop-out rates in schools?**

According to a UNESCO report, countries that have invested in quality preschool education witnessed significant reduction in dropout rates, with up to a 10% improvement in primary school completion. Therefore,

prioritising early childhood education by investing in accessible, quality preschool programs in rural and urban areas will plant the seeds for success.

Studies by the World Bank indicate that targeted interventions for children at risk of dropping out early can lead to a 20% improvement in retention rates through personalised support and bridge programs.

In addition to this, it is crucial to implement inclusive education and address gender disparities. Provide teachers with training on differentiated instruction methods and techniques. Offer specialised support for students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Encourage girls' education through targeted scholarship programs and awareness campaigns. Above all, create a safe and supportive learning environment for girls. Also, offer need-based scholarships and financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Q What should be done to improve primary education to achieve the objective of Education for All and 100% literacy?**

It is imperative to adopt tailored best practices within the Indian school education system with strategies like:

- **Reducing Class Size:** Addressing the issue of large class sizes is particularly crucial in the Indian context. Smaller class sizes often enhance student-teacher interaction, better comprehension and improved academic performance.
- **Maintaining Good Infrastructure:** Ensuring schools have basic amenities is vital. Access to clean water, well-equipped playgrounds and adequately maintained facilities directly influence attendance and create a conducive environment for learning. Government initiatives and community involvement have played a pivotal role in upgrading and sustaining school infrastructure across the country, and these initiatives should be continued and expanded faster.
- **Improving Teacher Qualification:** Focusing on training and hiring qualified teachers is critical to elevating the quality of education. Research on the Indian education landscape highlights the positive correlation between teacher qualifications and student outcomes. Enhancing teacher training programs and recruitment processes is essential for achieving educational excellence.
- **Providing Remedial Classes:** Offering remedial classes is instrumental in providing additional support to students who may be struggling in their learning journey. Tailoring remedial programs to address specific learning needs ensures that no child is left behind, contributing to improved academic performance and overall educational equity.

**Q What role do you think parents and communities should play in the education system?**

Parents and communities play pivotal roles in the education system, acting as essential partners in the holistic development of students. The primary role parents must fulfil is supporting learning at home. They should create a conducive environment at home that fosters curiosity, critical

thinking and a love for learning. They should participate in parent-teacher associations and voice concerns or suggestions for improvement.

Further, communities can contribute to a positive school culture by volunteering, organising events and supporting extracurricular activities. This involvement helps create a sense of belonging and pride within the school community. Collaboration between schools, parents and communities strengthens the overall education system. They can leverage resources, share expertise and implement initiatives that benefit students and the broader community by working together.

**Q What are the primary benefits that NABET accreditation brings to educational institutions?**

Implementing accreditation standards in schools brings about many benefits apart from fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement.

Firstly, the process initiates a benchmarking cycle where schools evaluate their practices against established standards, leading to healthy competition among educational institutes. This competition serves as a catalyst for ongoing improvement efforts, ultimately raising the overall quality of education.

Accreditation also creates a robust database and evidence base for policymakers and practitioners. By analysing this data, stakeholders can identify systemic issues, reflect on policies and implement necessary improvements, thereby establishing a more effective educational system.

Another significant benefit is the capacity building within the system. Accreditation necessitates the formation of internal audit teams, who ensure quality sustenance and maintenance through data-driven analysis. These teams verify processes, systems and regulation compliance, contributing to the overall quality assurance framework.

Accreditation also facilitates benchmarking of pedagogical practices, processes and policies. By comparing their approaches with industry standards, schools can identify areas for enhancement and adopt best practices, ultimately enhancing the learning experience for students.

Additionally, the accreditation process offers regular feedback to management through self-assessment and external assessments by assessors. This feedback loop enables schools to make informed decisions and adjust their operations, ensuring continuous growth and improvement.

In a nutshell, accreditation standards serve as a cornerstone for quality assurance in education. By promoting benchmarking, capacity building, informed decision-making and continuous improvement, accreditation contributes to the overall excellence of educational institutions and the enhancement of student outcomes.

**Q Can you share some suggestions on how educational institutions can ensure alignment between their objectives and accreditation standards?**

Ensuring alignment between educational institutions' objectives and accreditation standards is essential for upholding quality and meeting stakeholders' expectations.

This will ultimately enhance the quality of education and promote continuous improvement. Here's how institutions can effectively achieve this alignment:

- **Conducting a comprehensive self-assessment** - Institutions should meticulously evaluate their mission, goals and objectives vis-à-vis accreditation standards. This entails a thorough assessment of the curriculum, teaching methodologies, student support services and organisational structure to identify areas of strength and improvement.
- **Engaging stakeholders** - Involving faculty, staff, students, parents and community members in the accreditation process ensures that institutional objectives resonate with the broader community's needs and expectations. Their input and feedback are invaluable in shaping the alignment process.
- **Aligning curriculum and pedagogy with accreditation standards** - Reviewing curriculum documents, the context of the school, instructional materials and teaching practices to ensure coherence with accreditation criteria is imperative. This involves mapping learning outcomes, integrating best practices and aligning with relevant standards.
- **Providing professional development opportunities** - Ongoing workshops, seminars and training sessions focused on curriculum development, assessment strategies and data analysis for faculty and staff will empower them to enhance their knowledge and skills in areas relevant to accreditation standards.
- **Seeking external review** - Feedback from accreditation agencies, peer institutions, stakeholders and partners validates alignment with standards. This external perspective provides valuable insights and validation of institutional efforts, further strengthening alignment with accreditation criteria.

**Q How can we prepare students for the workforce of the future?**

Preparing students for the future workforce necessitates a multi-faceted approach that instils essential skills, knowledge and mindset to excel in an ever-evolving landscape. Some of the key strategies to make them future-ready include fostering critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, promoting digital literacy encompassing technology proficiency, and cultivating a culture of lifelong learning to adapt to new technologies. Effective communication, collaboration and real-world experiences through internships and partnerships offer invaluable insights and skill development among students. Additionally, emphasising emotional intelligence and providing comprehensive career counselling and financial literacy education empower students to navigate complex work environments and achieve financial independence.

By prioritising these strategies, educational institutions can equip students with the necessary tools to thrive in a rapidly changing world. By doing so, the students can be better prepared for the future workforce, which will likely be technologically advanced and constantly evolving. ▶



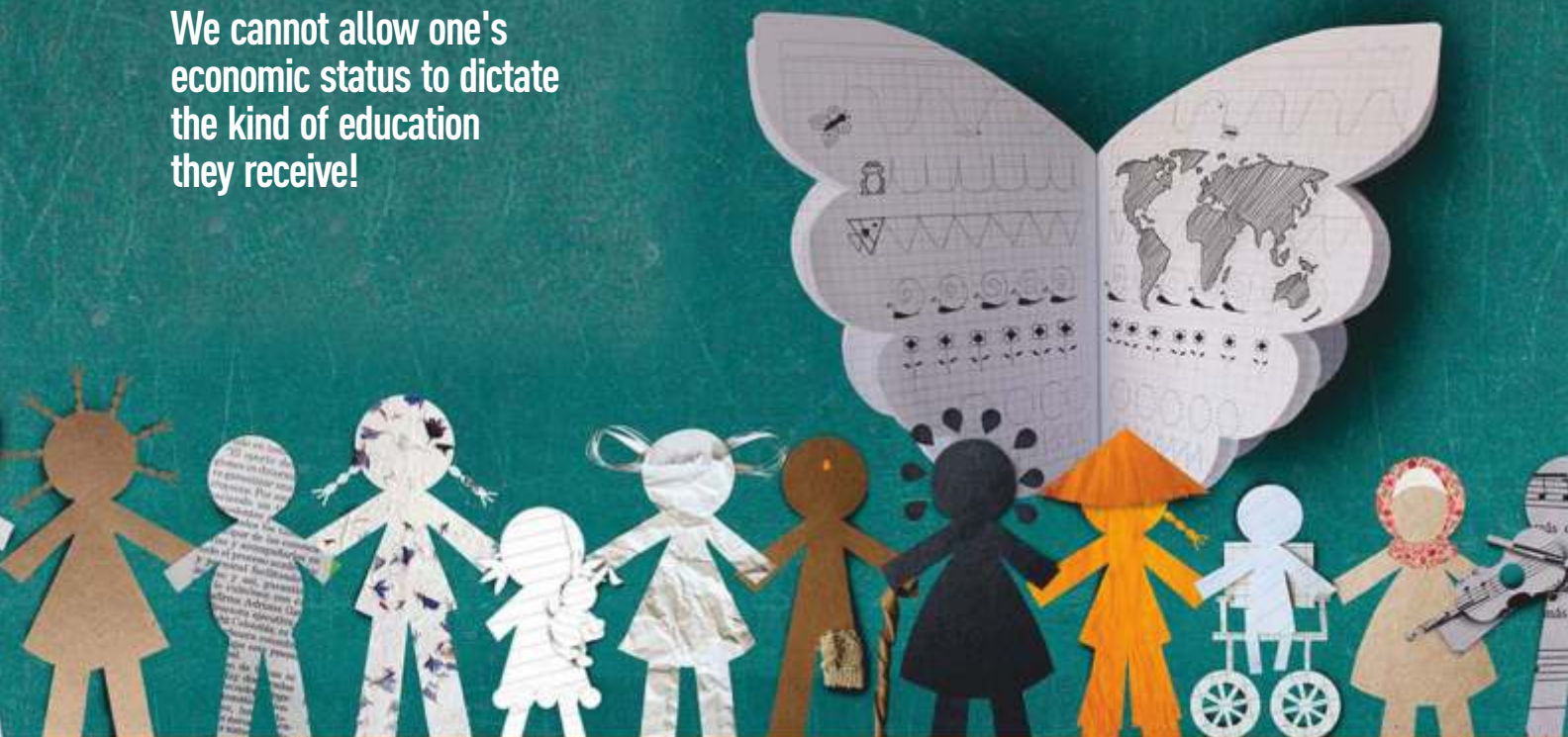
**Pyush Misra**  
Trustee,  
Consumer Online Foundation

## Affordable Learning Paves the Way for Equal Opportunities

“Education in India is still not affordable for a significant proportion of the population. The government should work out ways and means to bridge the huge disparities in fee structures to make education affordable and accessible for all!”

– *Pyush Misra*

We cannot allow one's  
economic status to dictate  
the kind of education  
they receive!



**INDIA BOASTS OF** a rich heritage of learning. Education has been considered vital right since the ancient times. Even today, the poorest of poor aspire to provide a decent education to their children.

**It has been estimated that 91% of Indian parents want their children to have an undergraduate degree. More than 80% want them to get a master's degree too.**

Alas, many children are still deprived of a good education on account of the costs. Especially higher education is so expensive that it can become unaffordable not only for the underprivileged, but also the middle class population of the country!

**ET Online research pegs the overall expenditure of schooling a child in India in a private school from age 3 to 17 at a whopping Rs 30 lakh.**

Consider this – Education is free for children up to 14 years in government schools. However, the quality of education and facilities is so deplorable that even the poor households desire to send their children to private schools.

The fee structure of private schools can be quite mind-boggling. Many private schools charge around a lakh per year. In addition, parents often have to dole out additional payments for uniforms, textbooks, examinations, food, transport, extra-curricular activities, school trips and other expenses, which increases the financial burden.

The fee ranges around Rs 15,000 to 20,000 per annum only in the low budget private schools or in the small towns of the country. However, the quality of education and infrastructure is not always up to the mark. Contrast this with the glitzy international schools in Tier-I and II cities that charge lakhs for their modern teaching practices and global education.

**Families earning Rs 3 lakhs or less per year have no choice but to send their children to a government school because they cannot afford a private one.**

Furthermore, the fees of private schools increases every year with drastic increments in the structure every 3-5 years.

**Even though inflation is rising steadily, leading economists state that the figures fail to fully capture the cost of rising private education, because it is weighted at just 4.5% in the Consumer Price Index based on a decade-old model. It is estimated that education costs increased by around 10-12% in India between 2012-20.**

While learning outcomes are not always a function of the costs, affordable quality education is largely a misnomer in India.

**Middle-class parents try their best to give their children the best education possible. Most of their income goes into paying the school fees and other associated costs.**

College education becomes even more expensive, especially for professional courses. Parents are known to make regular investments for years and even take loans to fund their child's higher education. Still, top-tier colleges and universities are often beyond the reach of an average middle-class family. This translates into a significant decline in the number of students pursuing higher education.

**With people spending crores to get a medical qualification, isn't the commercialisation of healthcare a given? Doctors, surgeons and even pathologists are more concerned with 'earning back' the money they have spent than on providing the requisite healthcare.**

**According to the National Statistical Office (NSO), 1 out of 8 students enrolled in schools drop out midway without completing the education and over 62.9% of all dropouts occur in high school, with poverty, accessibility, parent illiteracy, child labour and marriage being the top reasons for dropping out.**

## Behind the Scenes

In the absence of a proper policy framework for fee structures, the costs vary greatly from one school to another. Even though some regulations do exist, they are not

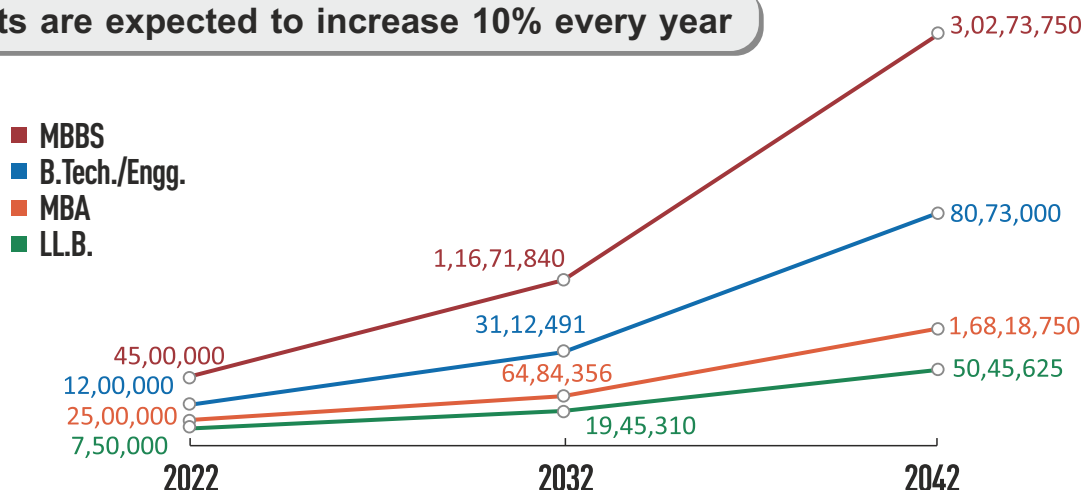


**Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family.**

– Kofi Annan

# COST OF COLLEGE EDUCATION IN INDIA

Costs are expected to increase 10% every year



**Note:** The estimates are conservative and are bound to vary from university-to-university

Source: ET Online Research

implemented strictly. **Most institutions can easily skirt the restrictions and charge whatever they want.** For instance, if the government levies a limit on the tuition fee, the institutions simply create new categories in the fee structure like administration fee, building fee, technology fee, etc.

The schools and colleges are able to fleece the parents buoyed by the growing demand for private education from even the lower sections of society. The cut-throat competition to enrol children in the 'best' schools gives the institutions the leverage to literally get away with blue murder!

**Does this mean that only wealthy individuals can send their wards to schools? Will the underprivileged never be able to afford quality education for their children?**

## Taking Action

Access to education cannot be defined by one's economic status. The glaring imbalance perpetuates a cycle of limited opportunities and unequal outcomes. After all, education is the key to breaking the shackles of poverty and earning a decent living. However, this will not be possible till the inequalities continue to rule over education. Therefore, bringing in affordability should be a top priority for educational policymakers.

The government cannot continue to turn a blind eye while the private players mercilessly exploit the parents for financial gains. Regulating the fee structure is critically important.

In addition to this, the government should also provide suitable financial assistance to the economically backward students – like scholarships and education loans – to fund their academic journey. Meritorious and deserving students



should be recognised, encouraged and assisted to pursue secondary and higher education.

**We hope to witness a tomorrow where every child is empowered to achieve his/her dreams and build a better lifestyle for their families? ▶**

Late Mr. Narindra Nath,  
Founder, Hindustan Syringes and Medical Devices Ltd.



# Making India's Medical Device Industry Self Reliant Since 1957

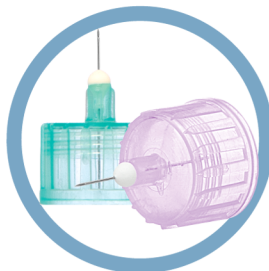
Pioneering the manufacturing of Glass Syringes, Late Respected Mr. Narindra Nath broke frontiers with a philosophy of making India self dependent and putting it on the world map.

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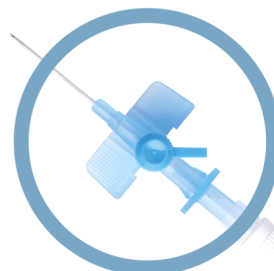
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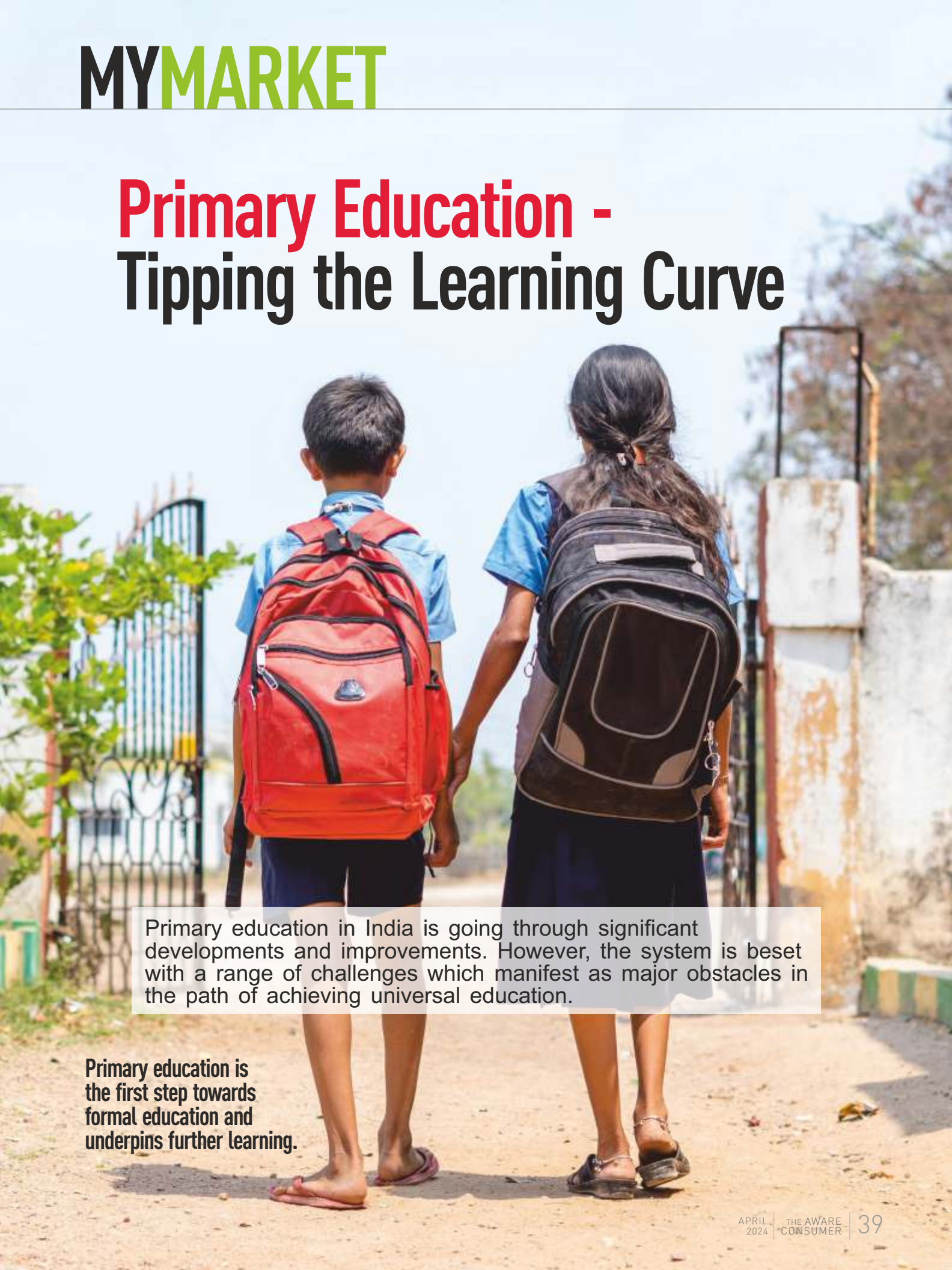


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## Primary Education - Tipping the Learning Curve



Primary education in India is going through significant developments and improvements. However, the system is beset with a range of challenges which manifest as major obstacles in the path of achieving universal education.

**Primary education is the first step towards formal education and underpins further learning.**



**A child without education is like a bird without wings!**

– Tibetan proverb



**PRIMARY EDUCATION IS** also termed elementary education for a good reason. It lays the foundation for a child's learning journey. This is a crucial period where the nascent minds of children open up to fundamental skills, knowledge and awareness of the world around them. It is not just about learning to read and write, but also building emotional and social skills which will shape their overall growth.

As this is the starting phase of formal education, it is imperative that the young children receive wholesome and comprehensive education at the primary level. This is exactly why the government of India has made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14 years.

Indeed, primary education typically starts at the age of 6 and continues for 8 years – class 1 to 4 is classified as lower primary education and class 5 to 8 as upper primary education. The main subjects taught during this stage include mathematics, science, social science, languages (usually English, Hindi and a regional language) and physical education.

**Primary education is designed to give a basic education in reading, writing, mathematics and an elementary understanding of other subjects.**

– *International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)*

Accordingly, it is the duty of the central, state and local governments to establish primary schools for children. There is no screening procedure or fees in these government schools.

India does have a vast state-run public education system – around 80% of the schools offering elementary education are either run by the government or supported by the government. In 2020, it was estimated that the ratio of the total number of government schools to private schools in India was 10:3.

## Numbers Can Be Misleading

India has achieved significant progress in recent decades regarding access to schooling and enrolment rates in primary education. The number of schools is growing steadily. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary education has also increased - according to the government's UDISE+ 2021-22 data, the overall GER at the primary level was 100.13%.

However, the universal enrolment figures merely indicate that more children are attending school. How

**Children in many areas merely go to school without learning anything!**

**Several reports suggest that nearly 70% of students studying in government schools are ill-equipped to learn in the class they are admitted to.**

much do they actually learn is another story altogether. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) – by the non-profit Pratham - reported in 2019 that only 50% of fifth standard students in rural India could read a class 2 textbook, and only 29% of them could do basic division. Indeed, many children leave school with poor literacy and numeracy skills. **What is the use of being called literate when you can barely read, write or do arithmetic?**

The low level of learning is compounded by a high dropout rate, especially among girls. Many girls are made to stop going to school to pursue domestic chores while boys dropout in favour of economic activities to support their families. The level of absenteeism among the enrolled students also remains abnormally high!



**According to a 2021 UNESCO report, India has one of the highest dropout rates globally, with 18.2% of students dropping out before completing primary education.**

The situation is quite grim in terms of both enrolment and dropouts in states with large rural populations like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

## Situation on the Ground

Truth be told, we are facing a severe learning crisis, especially in the government schools. The poor quality of primary education in India is reflected in the continuing low level of learning outcomes and completion rates. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons:

**With nearly 11 lakh primary schools, India has the largest government school system in the world.**

**Infrastructure** – Despite the burgeoning number of schools in the country, there is still a significant disparity in access to education between urban and rural areas. While large numbers of government schools have been constructed in rural communities, many children in villages and remote areas still struggle to access education. Even the schools that do exist are in a run-down condition due to lack of maintenance – some do not have chairs, tables, blackboards or even rooftops while some lack basic facilities such as electricity, clean water and sanitation. *Who would even want to send their children to such schools when their safety and hygiene can be in question?*

Other schools may lack resources like libraries, laboratories, etc. which affects the quality of teaching, as teachers do not get the necessary teaching aids and materials.



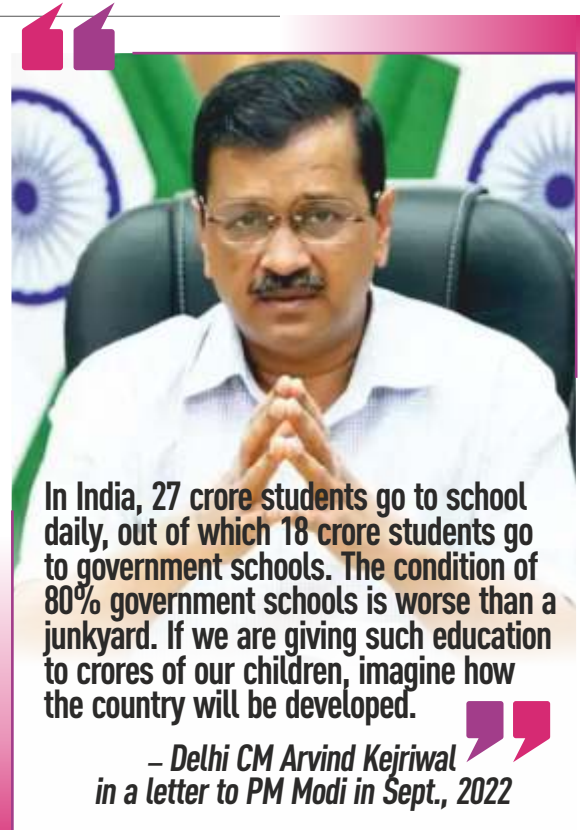
**Some schools are overcrowded while some have less than 50 students in total! Some even have to close down due to zero enrolments!**

**Teaching Staff** – There is a significant shortage of trained and qualified teachers, particularly in the rural areas which lowers the quality of education, increases dropouts rates and reduces attendance. There is a high number of teacher vacancies (almost 60% to 70% in some states) and around half of them are filled by guest or ad hoc teachers.

The Right to Education Act lays down the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) as 30:1 at the lower primary level and 35:1 at the upper primary level.



**According to a report, India has nearly 1.2 lakh schools with just one teacher each.**



**In India, 27 crore students go to school daily, out of which 18 crore students go to government schools. The condition of 80% government schools is worse than a junkyard. If we are giving such education to crores of our children, imagine how the country will be developed.**

**– Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal  
in a letter to PM Modi in Sept., 2022**

**Other Issues** – Barely 15% of the government schools can be called compliant with the Right to Education Act. For starters, many of them charge a 'nominal' fee from the students (in the name of admission, books, uniforms, library, examinations, extracurricular activities, etc.) even though it is supposed to be FREE!

Then again, the curriculum followed by many of these schools remains outdated. Corruption abounds as the officials file false reports about the working conditions of schools.

## The Private Frontier

Dissatisfaction with the quality of government schools makes parents opt for private schools. In contrast, the private education system is defined by better student-teacher ratio, efficient learning methodologies and superior infrastructure, thus delivering an enhanced learning experience.

While private schools abound in the urban areas, there is a growing tilt towards private schooling even in the villages – about 25% of rural students opt for private schools for better education. However, this comes at a substantial cost.

Alas, only those who cannot afford private schools go to the government ones. Even children of teachers who teach in government schools study in private schools!

**According to the ASER Report, 2020, parents prefer private schools for education of boys while girl students are primarily sent to government schools to get basic education.**

**M**any ills are prevailing in the current system which keeps the children from getting a sound education.

There is lack of infrastructure with less essential resources like toilets and inadequate sanitation. Fields are not available for extra-curricular activities. In certain areas, children traverse rivers or makeshift bridges constructed by local residents. In remote areas, girls experience high dropout rates due to the long distances to schools. As girls enter adolescence, safety becomes a concern for them.

Teachers secure their positions through hefty bribes, resulting in a lack of commitment to educating students. The teachers are served first during meals, leaving leftovers for the children, resulting in inadequate nutrition for them.

– Ms. Bina Jain, Patron and former President,  
All India Women's Conference (AIWC)



**In 2021, the Patna High Court asked for data on how many IAS and IPS officers have enrolled their wards in government schools!**

## Making Government Schools the First Choice

The current public school system in India is failing the students. The fact that government school teachers don't trust the system to educate their own children indicates the scale of the challenge that needs to be overcome.

Hence, the goal should not be to merely enrol as many students in elementary schools as possible. The government should take action to provide all necessary facilities in government schools and renovate the dilapidated structures. Ensure that every school has adequate toilets and a playground. This will also increase the enthusiasm and motivation among the students.

Overall, the public school system needs a more effective general administration system. Teachers have to be held accountable for student learning and their responsibilities have to be increased. Better assessments at each grade level will help measure the effectiveness of the government schools.

Additionally, all teachers should be provided regular training for ongoing professional development, especially

in the use of latest course materials and gadgets that can facilitate better learning.

More effective monitoring and improved support systems are also required to ensure that the students get proper access to basic education, like foundational literacy and numeracy, i.e., the ability to read and understand basic text and carry out basic addition and subtraction. A comprehensive review of the curriculum remains the need of the hour. Working on retention of students is equally critical.

The government can take other steps like improving community participation in the government schools and allowing local bodies to take ownership of government schools.

Last but not the least; we have to change the perception that only the underprivileged study in government schools!

## Final Word

Primary schooling build's the basic framework of a child's successful future. It promotes overall growth by developing cognitive, physical, social, emotional and creative skills. Unless the efficiency of primary education in the public sector is improved, the higher levels of education cannot be expected to receive a quantum jump in enrolment. ▀



**Payal Agarwal**  
Editorial Consultant

## Embracing Technology Can Revolutionise Education

“The Indian education system is on the cusp of a technological revolution that will enhance both the learning experience and outcomes. Technology has the potential to make education more inclusive, personalised and dynamic. It is opening up a plethora of opportunities.....”

– Payal Agarwal



Technology heralds a  
paradigm shift in the  
teaching-learning process!

**WITH TECHNOLOGY MAKING** inroads in every field, how can education be left behind! Indeed, technology has the potential to improve the quality of education while making it more accessible, equitable and affordable.



**Technology appears in 6 out of the 10 goals of the United Nations' SDG 4 for Quality Education. These references recognise that technology affects education through five distinct channels - as input, means of delivery, skill, tool for planning and providing a social and cultural context.**

The growing use of digital technology is slowly transforming the dynamics of education, taking it beyond the boundaries of the traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms. Online learning has become possible with virtual classrooms and video meetings that can be accessed from anywhere. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote learning technologies. The abrupt school closures made deploying online learning a necessity through a combination of TV, radio, online and mobile platforms.

However, the role of information and communication technologies is not limited to virtual contexts. It has great scope for enhancing the learning experience in the classroom itself - by way of digital tools, media and learning management systems (LMS). Educational technology - dubbed EdTech - can transform the educational landscape in the classroom. Many schools are now using interactive whiteboards (also called smartboards) audio-visual digital content, educational games and other technology-enabled classroom activities. They are equipped with multimedia centres, students can submit their homework online, software is used for review and the use of cloud-based e-learning initiatives is also growing exponentially.

**The potential of digital interventions in the field of education in India is immense. Global Market Insights estimated that the Indian online education market has grown four times since 2019 to \$3 billion in 2022. Another KPMG assessment pegs India as the second largest market for online education after the USA.**



## How Technology can Enhance Education

Let us take a deeper look at some of the ways in which technology can reshape education:

**Accessibility** – Virtual technology, like online platforms and other digital tools, can bridge the geographical gaps in education by taking learning right to the last frontier of remote areas that have historically lacked access to quality educational resources. This will truly democratise education by making it accessible across the country as countless students can interact with teachers and peers, access resources and even participate in discussions, irrespective of where they reside. Even after the pandemic, many schools and colleges continue to operate in online or hybrid modes.

**Interactive Content** – Innovative e-learning educational materials deliver dynamic digital content in the form of multimedia graphics, videos and virtual labs that make learning much more engaging, enjoyable and effective than the static textbooks. The visual approach not only enables students to grasp complex concepts more easily, but also ignites a genuine interest and enthusiasm to learn. The interactive element is exciting and aids retention as well. To top this, students get the opportunity to explore and develop their best abilities.

**According to a McKinsey report, students who have access to enough technology in their classrooms perform better than those who do not.**

**Gamified Learning** – Educational games turn lessons into challenges; simulations can immerse students in real-world scenarios, thus motivating students to participate and learn in an active manner. They not only make learning fun and captivating, but also build critical thinking skills.

**Personalised Learning** – In a major departure from the conventional one-size-fits-all approach, technology enables tailoring the learning experience to each student's pace, style, aptitudes, challenges, etc. Adaptive learning platforms and AI-driven assessments can be used to identify individual needs and provide targeted instruction and support accordingly. This will foster better understanding and mastery of subjects, setting the stage for optimal learning where no student is left behind.

**Increased Interaction and Communication** – Social media and other online platforms facilitate easier teacher-student communication and student-student collaboration. Students can work together, create shared projects and engage with peers from around the world. Virtual exchange programs can broaden their perspective and promote cultural understanding.

**Redefining Assessments** – Assessments are evolving beyond the traditional paper examinations to continuous formative assessment in real-time through classroom management platforms and online learning apps. They

can measure not just knowledge but skills like critical thinking and creativity too, thus providing a comprehensive view of student capabilities.

**Inclusive Education** – Technology fosters inclusivity by enabling access to students with diverse needs, disabilities and so on. Text-to-speech and speech-to-text tools are extremely effective in such situations.

**On-Demand Learning** – With technology, students can study at their own speed, that too, whenever they want. This kind of flexibility is beneficial for students that participate in sports, extra-curricular activities and other competitive exams as it frees them from the limitations of rigid classroom timetables. Access to courses and study materials anywhere, anytime and through any medium is a boon for those juggling work and studies (especially from underprivileged backgrounds) as they get the space to complete their education in their own time.

Above all, education technology tools will equip students with digital skills and prepare them for the workforce of the future!

## The Road Ahead

Leveraging the power of technology to accelerate learning calls for bridging the gaps in:

- Digital infrastructure – internet connectivity, devices and software
- Human infrastructure – teacher capacity, student skills and parental support
- Logistical and administrative systems – to deploy and maintain tech architecture

Alas, there is still a huge digital divide between the urban and rural areas on account of limited internet connectivity and device access. The issues are accelerated by lack of uninterrupted power supply. Even budget schools in towns and cities do not use digital technology in the classrooms; they also lack the resources to use online platforms for virtual education. During the COVID-19 induced lockdowns too, only a

**According to industry experts, only one in four Indian students, have access to digital learning, which limits their avenues for accessing education.**

**The 75th round of the NSS survey on Household Social Consumption on Education in India (2017-18) showed that only 4.4% of the rural households have access to computers as opposed to 23.4% in urban areas. Similarly, 14.9% of rural households have access to internet facilities compared to 42% of urban households. The numbers have improved marginally in this decade.**

**The percentage of schools having computer facilities was 47.51% and the percentage of schools with internet facilities was 33.91% in 2021-22.**

small proportion of students had internet/device access and most of them could not participate in remote learning.

Even the educators are not well-versed with creating - or even using – the digital content. Many are unable to adapt their teaching methods to online platforms. Some struggle to even use the technology.

**Academics and parents alike are concerned about digital distractions side-tracking the students!**

Additionally, new hurdles related to data privacy, compliance breaches, misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices - like exaggerated fees - are rearing their ugly head.



In this scenario, India needs to develop an Education Technology policy with established standards, standardised safety protocols, strict data and privacy laws and advertisement guidelines. A proper regulatory framework for the education technology ecosystem will help students learn in a safe and efficient environment. It should also develop a proper mechanism for monitoring malpractices and time bound grievance redressal. Steps should be taken to promote the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in education.

## Heralding a Holistic Learning Ecosystem

The National Education Policy 2020 recognises the pivotal role of technology in strengthening learning, unlocking student potential and contributing to poverty reduction. It emphasises the integration of technology in education to create a learner-centric environment that promotes critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving



## The Government School Transformation Programme Odisha under the 5T initiative (Transparency, Teamwork, Technology and Timeliness leading to Transformation) launched by the Odisha government is commendable.



skills. The focus is on shaping a future-ready education system that prepares students for the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

The government has launched various initiatives like Digital India, the ePathshala platform and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Teachers are being trained to leverage technology in their pedagogy for interactive teaching, assessment, etc. Online teacher training programmes and digital literacy initiatives are being undertaken on a regular basis.

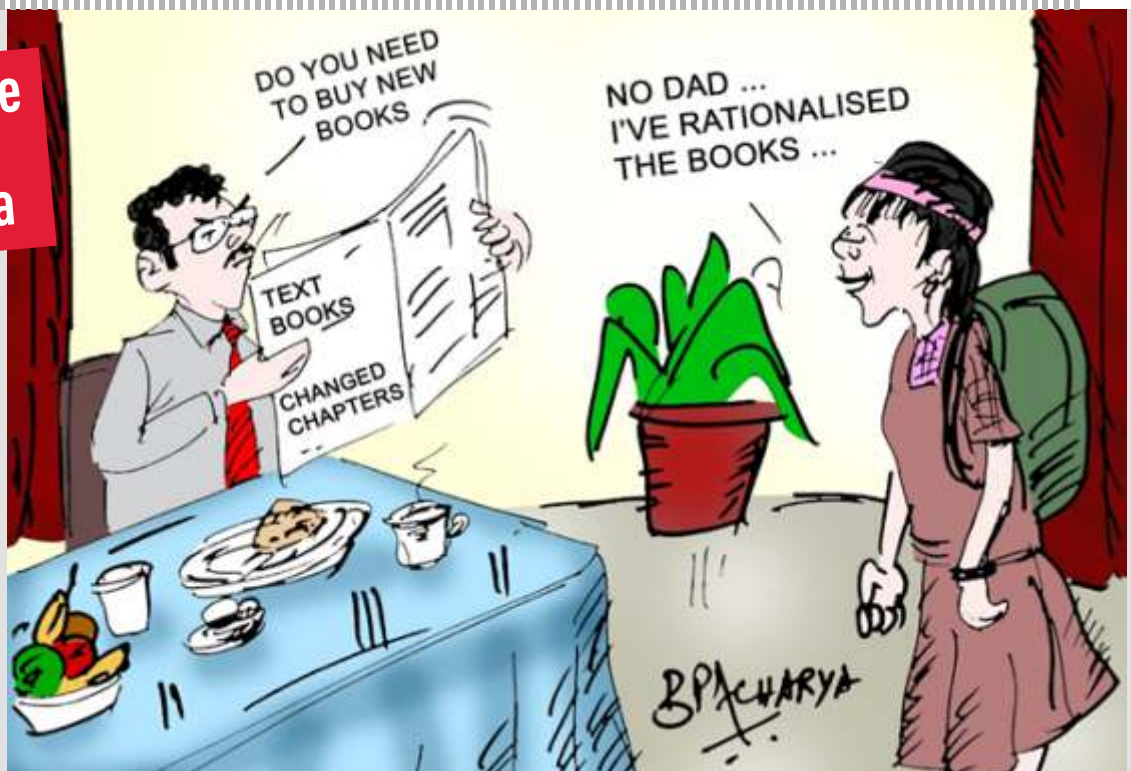
Simultaneously, work is afoot to expand internet connectivity in rural areas, provide affordable devices and develop digital content in regional languages. There is a proliferation of online courses, e-learning platforms and edtech startups today. The EdTech companies are being provided with necessary guidelines and impetus to develop learning management systems, ERP software, assessment platforms, online labs, etc. for schools and universities.

The National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) has been created for exchange of ideas on technology usage to improve learning. It will facilitate decision-making on deployment, implementation and use of digital technologies towards the realisation of NEP objectives. The National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) has been set up to create a unifying national digital architecture to facilitate participation, innovation and adoption in the education technology space.

### Final Thoughts

The conventional classroom setup will hold no value in the future. While technology cannot completely replace the human interface, it has to be integrated into education in a positive and comprehensive manner to promote a more diverse and effective learning environment. Blended learning is what will pave the way for an educated future. ▶

**Obtuse Angle**  
by  
**BP Acharya**



# NEP 2020

## – How is the Learning Revolution Playing Out?

The National Education Policy 2020 is a catalyst for an equitable, resilient and flourishing educational future for our country. Even as we stand poised on the precipice of a new chapter in Indian education, the implementation canvas is painted with a mixed bag of efforts and chequered results!



**NEP 2020 is a well-defined and futuristic education policy that is equipped to deliver high-quality education to every citizen. It is in the infancy stage right now. Only if it is implemented in spirit and intent, can it make the education system responsive to the needs of the students and the economy!**



**The principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done.**  
– Jean Piaget

**THE EDUCATION POLICY** of a country determines the quality and effectiveness of its education system. The government of India formulated a progressive and revolutionary National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that rests on the five pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability.

**Goal 4 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" by 2030. India has to reconfigure the entire education system to fulfil all the critical targets of this lofty education development agenda!**

The NEP 2020 envisions a massive transformation in India's education system to bring it on par with international standards by 2030. The visionary policy heralds a new educational paradigm by providing a comprehensive framework for early childhood care and education, elementary education, higher education, professional education, vocational education and teacher training, in both rural and urban India.

It outlines a holistic education system that will nurture the spirit of the children, minimise the stress on young students, reduce annual school dropout rates and produce skilled personnel for the future. Numerous changes are on the cards that will make the educational environment inclusive, responsive and innovative so that the learning is relevant to the needs of the 21st century. It has been hailed as having the makings of transforming India into a global knowledge superpower!

**"An education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all, thereby making India a global knowledge superpower." – NEP 2020**

## Revitalising India's Education Landscape

The policy ushers in a plethora of disruptive reforms at all levels of school education - upgrading the curriculum including pedagogy, revamping the current exams and assessment system, improving quality of schools, strengthening teacher training and restructuring the education regulatory framework.

The primary change is an intrinsic modification in the grade structure from the traditional 10+2 to a new 5+3+3+4 model covering children in the age group 3-18 years and bringing pre-primary education into the fold. The Foundational stage covers three years of pre-school

followed by classes 1 and 2 where the focus is on activity learning. The Preparatory stage extends from class 3 to 5, Middle stage from class 6 to 8 and Secondary stage from class 9 to 12.

There will be special emphasis on the attainment of foundational literacy/numeracy in primary school and beyond for all by 2025. Students will be taught in the mother tongue/local language (where possible) till class 6 or 8 to ensure understanding. There will be a major reduction in the syllabus for each grade to the core knowledge to enhance discussion-based, analysis-based and experiential learning. The focus will shift from content completion to achieving competency goals, age-appropriate learning outcomes, critical thinking, cognitive development and soft skills. Other changes envisaged are multi-disciplinary education at the higher level without hard separation between subjects, multiple exit options, academic credit banks, integration of technology and institutional autonomy.

**Accumulation of academic credits will support mobility across institutions and promote lifelong learning. It will be a boon for poor students, especially women, who are often forced to drop out for economic and social reasons.**

## What Does it Mean for the Students?

If the proposed changes are implemented with commitment and consistency, education in India will truly be redefined. It will usher in a profound transformation in the way the younger generation perceives and experiences education.

For instance, students will become more self-aware and will be able to better judge what subjects and courses they want to pursue in the future. They will emerge as forward-thinking workers, entrepreneurs and leaders in the morrow.

**"With NEP 2020, every classroom holds the promise of being a garden where the diverse flowers of capabilities, aspirations and talents bloom in the nourishing light of quality education."**

## Setting Sail on the Journey

The NEP does not merely outline the changes for optimising learning, it also lays down a detailed implementation framework stretching over 10 years. The architects of this ambitious plan diligently mapped each major task with a responsible agency along with the principles, methodology and even timelines for completion. In fact, educational institutions will take time to implement it effectively and the timeframe proposed for full compliance is 15 to 20 years!

**With over 350 million Indians in the school and college age groups, the NEP calls for large-scale implementation at a magnitude never before attempted anywhere in the world.**

Implementation of the NEP 2020 involves multiple bodies – the Union and State Governments, Ministry of Education (GoI), State Departments of Education, various Boards, National Testing Agency, regulatory bodies of school and higher education, NCERT, SCERTs, schools, higher education institutions, etc. – working in a synchronised and systematic manner with coherence in planning and synergy.

The path ahead is littered with substantial execution challenges. In fact, the initial two years or so centred on consultations, workshops and review meetings with the relevant stakeholders to address their concerns and discuss innovative ideas for implementation.

For instance, the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L) of the union Ministry of Education organised the 'Shikshak Parv', a festival for teachers, in September 2020. This culminated in a comprehensive implementation plan named SARTHAQ (Students' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement through Quality Education) which defines activities associated with each recommendation of the NEP 2020. Divided into two parts, it delineates 297 tasks, identifies the agencies responsible for taking up each one of them, and also specifies the timelines and intended outcomes of these tasks.

A plethora of other initiatives and actions have been introduced in the almost four years since the launch of NEP 2020 with varied strokes of accomplishment.

- **NIPUN Bharat (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy)** – A much-needed initiative to ensure foundational literacy and numeracy for all children by the year 2026–27.
- **SAFAL (Structured Assessment for Analysing Learning)** – Key stage assessments for determining the health of the system and learning outcomes.
- **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)** – A national assessment centre has been set up in NCERT to set norms, standards, guidelines and implement activities related to student assessment.
- **NDEAR (National Digital Education Architecture)** – An open, interoperable, evolvable, public digital education infrastructure that will keep pace with the rapid expansion of technology.
- **PM e-VIDYA** – A comprehensive initiative unifying all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable coherent multi-mode access to education. It includes DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure

for Knowledge Sharing) as a One-Nation-One-Digital-Platform for Education which is a storehouse of e-books and e-content.

- **PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India)** – Upgrading of 6448 schools in 30 States/UTs (target of 14,500 schools by 2027) as vibrant schools focusing on all round development of students.
- **Vidya Pravesh** – A three-month play-based school preparation programme for grade I.
- **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** – This is a holistic roadmap for the education system to make the NEP's vision and spirit a reality by putting students at the centre of the educational experience. The first-ever integrated curriculum structure was launched in October 2022 followed by Jadui Pitara (play-based learning teaching material) in February 2023. (Both are for children between ages 3 to 8)
- The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 provides a curriculum structure with detailed guidelines for designing course materials for all subjects for the age group 3 to 18 years, across the entire range of diverse institutions in India.
- **National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)** – A statement of quality, defining competencies of teachers at different stages/levels, to ensure that all students are taught by passionate, motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained and well-equipped teachers.
- **NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement)** – An integrated teacher training programme to improve learning outcomes for different stages of school education.
- **Vidyanjali** – The portal enables the community/volunteers to interact and connect directly with schools of their choice to share their knowledge and skills as well as contribute in the form of assets/material/equipment.

- **National Mission for Mentoring (NMM)** – It will create a large pool of outstanding professionals who are willing to provide mentoring to school teachers through a web portal for the mentoring sessions. It has been piloted in 30 central government schools across the country and 60 mentors have onboarded.
- **ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society as Adult Education)** – A New India Literacy Programme targeting all non-literates aged 15 years and above. The scheme is being implemented in both online and offline mode through volunteerism.
- **National Credit Framework (NCRf)** – A comprehensive credit framework encompassing elementary, school, higher and vocational education and



**A Review Committee for reviewing the implementation of NEP 2020 was constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan**



To ensure access to high quality education with equity and inclusion, courses are being offered in Indian languages; entrance exams such as JEE, NEET, CUET are conducted in 13 Indian languages; 100 books for UG students on various subjects launched in 12 Indian languages; and 20 technical books of first year have been translated in Indian languages.

– Dr. Subhas Sarkar, Minister of State for Education

experiential learning, i.e., relevant experience and proficiency/professional levels acquired. It will enable recognition of prior learning in cohesion with multiple exit/entry and mobility across streams.

- **Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)** – This will allow students to accumulate credits from registered higher education institutions and earn various degrees over time.
- **Internationalisation** – IIT Madras has set up a campus in Zanzibar- Tanzania and IIT Delhi in Abu Dhabi. One more IIT is coming up in Sri Lanka.
- Existing programmes such as the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan are being strengthened and revamped to align with the recommendations of NEP 2020.

Top higher education institutions like the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) have made provisions for multiple-exit options in their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Some have enabled students to pursue two programmes simultaneously. In IIT Hyderabad, students were given a semester break with six credits to pursue innovative ventures.



“The adoption of an open curriculum with trans-disciplinary course patterns, including flexibility in electives, has led to the enhancement of skill development and community-oriented projects.”

– Prof. Satyanarayana  
IIT, Tirupati

Many government and private schools have implemented a potpourri of changes in their pedagogical and assessment systems leading to equally varied outcomes. Colleges are allowing students to choose subjects they like; the mixing of subjects is making learning more flexible and personal and setting the stage for comprehensive education.



Even the states that seem reluctant are indeed implementing the policy although they are using different terminology. I am happy. Let them be satisfied with using different terminology. But, with full responsibility I can say almost all states are implementing National Education Policy 2020 which is a very philosophical and historical document.

– Dharmendra Pradhan,  
Minister of Education, Government of India

It is clear that the government is driving change in a sustained manner. Collaboration, innovation and careful planning will be key to achieving the potential of NEP 2020. The educational institutions and other stakeholders also have to immerse themselves in realising the new dream by lowering the inherent barriers and collaborate to choose 'service for the common good' over mere profit-making.

The pace of progress is acceptable till now and the same should be maintained to achieve the set objectives within the given timeframe. Dedicated action plans with constant monitoring are essential to keep the initial enthusiasm going.

## Last Thoughts

The NEP aims that by 2040, India will develop a world-class educational system with equal access to the highest quality of education for all students, regardless of their social or economic status. In many ways, this is just what India needed to blossom into the world's largest and youngest workforce in the coming years.

We are on the right track, but the pace of implementation has to pick up to ensure that the grand vision is actually translated into concrete action in schools and colleges across the country! ▶

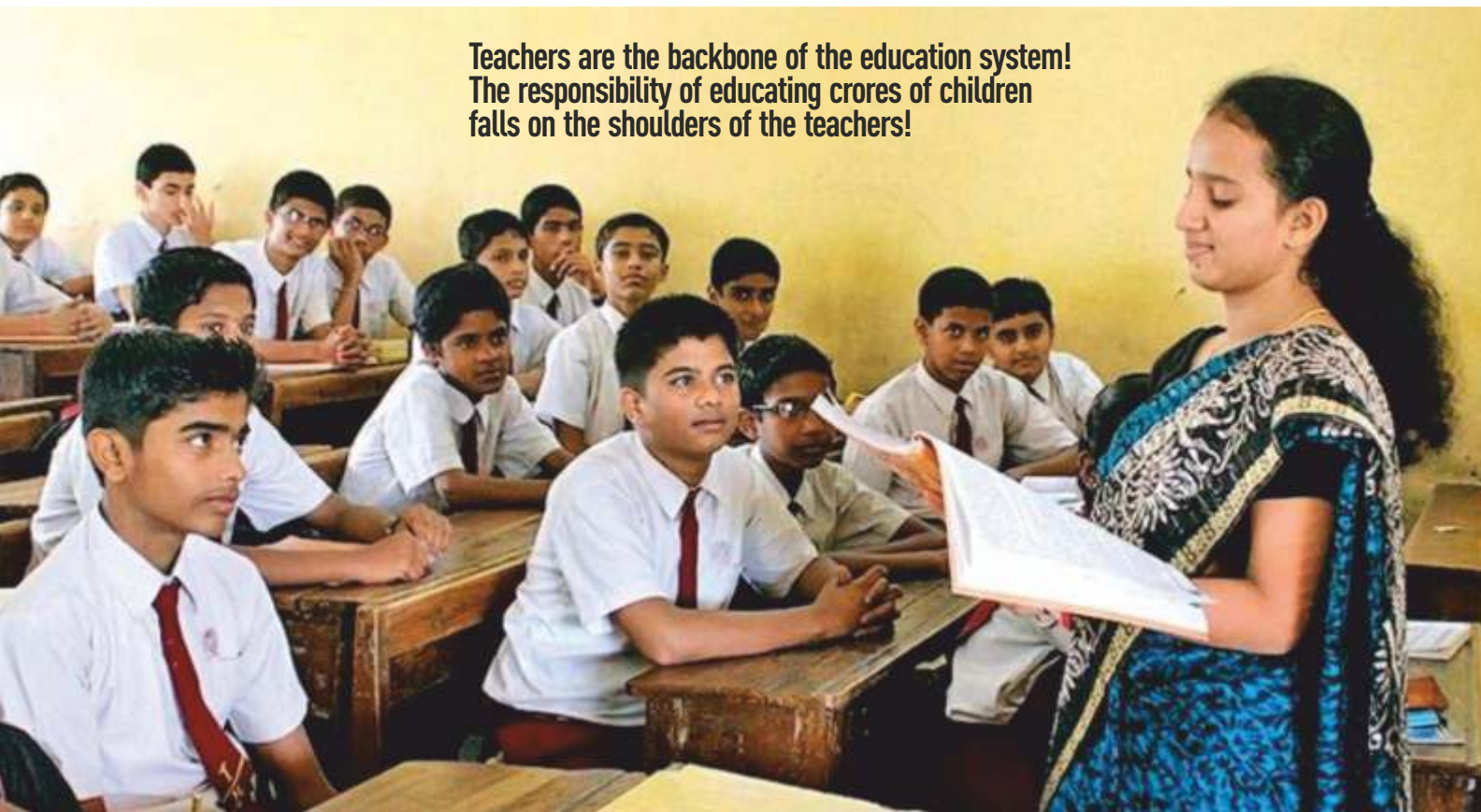
It is only a matter of time before the NEP norms become the building blocks for defining and empowering the career prospects of learners nationwide!

## TEACHER SHORTAGE

### – BRIDGING THE MISSING LINK IN EDUCATION

The education sector is plagued by a teaching staff crisis which has a significant impact on the quality of education provided to the students. This dilemma calls for innovative solutions to train and recruit adequate teachers and close the yawning gap.....

Teachers are the backbone of the education system!  
The responsibility of educating crores of children  
falls on the shoulders of the teachers!



The purpose of education is  
to turn mirrors into windows.

– Sydney J. Harris

**IT IS EDUCATION** that shapes our future! However, more than the level of education, it is the level of teaching that moulds our minds, our personality, our thinking and even our potential. Indeed, the teachers not only impart knowledge, but play a role of mentor, guide and inspiration in our formative years.

*Most of us will recall a couple of favourite teachers from our childhood who ignited a spark in our mind, encouraged us to do better and left a lasting mark on our life.*

## Ground Reality

India faces an acute shortage of trained and qualified teachers, especially in the rural and remote areas where nearly two-thirds of schools have a significant number of vacant posts. The pupil-teacher ratio is severely unbalanced, more so in the government schools in villages.

As such, the classrooms are overcrowded, personal attention is lacking and this affects the overall quality of education. Moreover, many teachers leave the profession, leading to a lack of continuity in teaching. A lot of students fall behind in their learning and are never really able to catch up to cover the gaps.

Alas, the problem will only get worse as the population continues to grow and more children enter school....

**The UNESCO's '2021 State of the Education Report for India: No Teacher, No Class' reveals that there is a disturbing shortage of over one million teachers in schools. A total of 19%, or 11.16 lakh teaching positions in schools lie vacant across the country. In rural areas, the vacancies are as high as 69%. Additionally, around 1.1 lakh schools in India are single-teacher entities, of which nearly 9 in 10 are in rural areas. The report further states that in 15 years, about 30% of the current teaching workforce will need to be replaced!**

This severe imbalance is further compounded by teacher absence and negligence. In a popular study, the researchers made unannounced visits to 3700 schools in 20 major Indian states. They found that, on average, 25% of government primary school teachers are absent every day. In another study, although three-quarters of the teachers were in attendance in the inspected government primary schools, only half of them were found teaching. This is in spite of government school teachers being paid much higher salaries than many of their private school counterparts!

Even the higher educational institutions are facing huge shortages of qualified and competent faculties; the paucity is amplified in professional and technical institutions. And with the number of engineering students increasing every year, the institutions are weighed down by almost 70% shortage in faculty.

Various academicians and other experts have asserted that the NEP 2020 will not 'reach the unique flavour

**According to UDISE+ 2021-22 data, there are 9.5 million teachers to teach 250 million students in India. The numbers may look favourable, but the root of the problem is skewed deployment, particularly in the rural areas and public schools.**

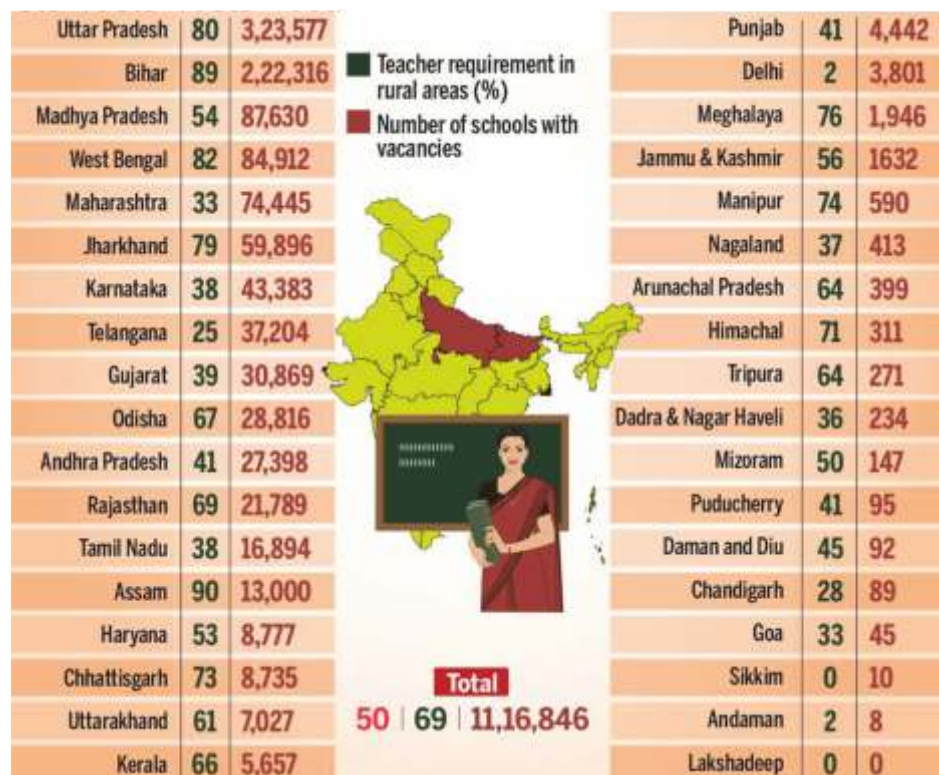
expected' until the nagging dearth of teachers is rectified.

The politics of teacher recruitment and fiascos in states like West Bengal, Bihar, etc. where the government did not bother to induct teaching staff is a case in point. What we need is clearly laid down processes backed by the intention to deliver....

## The Whys and Wherefores

Can we blame the teaching community for this deplorable state? The teaching profession is largely characterised by low salaries, poor working conditions and a lack of career development opportunities. This is compounded by lack of proper

## TEACHER VACANCIES IN INDIA



Source: State of the Education Report for India 2021 UNESCO

**“Teacher workload is high - contrary to public perception - although invisible, and [is] a source of stress. Teachers value being given professional autonomy, and disregarding this is demotivating.” – UNESCO report**

**“There are several schools in remote areas that function with only one or two teachers, who teach all the subjects and also take care of mid-day meals as there is a shortage of non-teaching staff.”**

**– Indra Mani Upadhyay, PGT Hindi, Kendriya Vidyalaya, CRPF Lucknow.**

infrastructure and resources. Many teachers work at very low salaries, without contracts, not even health or maternity leave benefits. Some of the overburdened teachers also fall victim to stress and burnout.

Despite the adverse circumstances, most teachers are dedicated to their profession. Many do not hesitate to go above and beyond their duty to ensure that the students get the best shot at education. Some even go to the extent of buying teaching aids and materials with their own money. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching community rose to the occasion by quietly adapting to the daunting challenges of online classes and learnt digital skills to deliver uninterrupted education to the students.

The hard truth is that not even one in fifty students choose teaching as a profession. This scenario needs to change – teaching should become a well-respected and, more importantly, a well-paying profession! Until then, talented and meritorious students will continue to opt for more lucrative career options. Even the existing teachers will be sucked out from the profession with the lure of better-paying jobs in other sectors.



**“While the students of IIM Ahmedabad land up jobs with yearly pay package of Rs 8.20 lakh on an average, their teachers still languish on a salary of about Rs 2.5 lakh.”**

**– Narayan Murthy  
founder of Infosys**

**According to a report by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), nearly one-third of the teachers do not have the necessary qualifications to teach.**

**According to a NCTE study, around 20% of regular teachers and 40% of contract teachers do not have professional qualifications for elementary education.**

**The National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021 survey conducted by the Department of School Education and Literacy, MoE reveals that about 92% teachers believe that there is scope for professional development and that there should be better training for them. Of the 5 lakh teachers surveyed from 1.18 lakh schools in 720 districts (both rural and urban areas), 65% feel that they are overworked.**

To add to the shortage issues, many of the teachers, especially in government schools, are not adequately trained. They simply lack the skills to deliver quality education. In fact, the government tries to fill the vacant posts by employing contract teachers - with or without the required professional qualifications - and on a low salary!

This leads to sub-par teaching practices and ineffective classroom management which, in turn, affects the future employability of students and their contribution to the workforce.

Even the higher educational institutions complain of difficulties in hiring trained faculty and lament the shoddy level of the hiring pool. The standards of content, character and innovation have dwindled to record lows. There are a lot of grey areas as

the teachers fail to engage with the students, perform proper assessments or even evaluate them on a continuous basis. They literally play to the gallery with a focus on 'pleasing' the students in a bid to get good feedback and so on.....

### **Walking the Talk**

It goes without saying that there is a pressing need for comprehensive training programmes and professional development opportunities to enhance the skills and effectiveness of the teachers. The focus should be not just on upgrading their knowledge and competences, but also equipping them with the latest teaching methods, introducing child-centred learning and the use of technology in the classroom. This kind of training will enable them to adopt innovative pedagogical approaches and



**The harsh reality of our education system is that teaching is still a chance not a choice. The required qualification and the life-long learning part is neglected during recruitment and the dark reality of losing the job anytime is also rearing its ugly head in this profession.**

**– Sudha P. Sridevi**

**Principal of Bommarasipet's Ivy League Academy, Telangana**

technologies as well as understand the needs of the students.

Various reports have called for strengthening teachers' capacity building by improving the quality of teachers' training, linking training with career progression and involving teachers in designing a holistic teachers' capacity building programme. There should be a proper competency framework that analyses the training needs and disseminates training accordingly. Moreover, the government needs to increase its investment in training teachers apart from offering higher salaries and benefits, improving their working conditions and offering counselling for stress management.

**The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has laid down the minimum requirements for teachers from kindergarten through class 12. The eligibility criteria for teaching B.A., B.Sc. and B.Com. has also been recommended. Only individuals with a 4-year B.Ed. or 4-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) degree will be eligible to work as teachers from 2030. The policy document further states that stringent action will be taken against 'substandard' stand-alone teacher education institutions.**

The government, non-government and private organisations do conduct various teacher training programmes – pre-service, in service, refresher and induction training - to improve the quality of teaching. The government especially focuses on recruiting and training more teachers in the rural areas. Some of the key government agencies involved in teacher training at different levels are:

- **National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) -**

This is a statutory body that sets standards for teacher education programmes in India. It also researches teacher education and provides guidelines for teacher training institutes. The NEP 2020 has charged NCTE with formulating a new and comprehensive National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education and a common National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST).



- **State Institute of Education (SIE)** – This is a state-level organisation providing pre-service and in-service training to teachers. It also develops and evaluates teacher education programmes.
- **District Institute of Education and Training (DIET)** - This is a district-level organisation that provides pre-

service and in-service training to elementary and secondary school teachers. It also conducts research and provides support to schools in the district.

Many challenges have come to the fore – like lack of qualified trainers to train all the teachers, lack of standardised training programmes, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient resources - which lead to inconsistent training quality and content.

**Teacher training will be re-envisioned through innovative pedagogy, curriculum transaction, continuous professional development, dipstick surveys and ICT implementation. The District Institutes of Education and Training will be developed as vibrant institutes of excellence for this purpose. – Union Budget 2023-24**

## Summing Up

The children of India are being shortchanged due to dearth of trained teachers. There is a dire need to address the teacher shortages and facilitate adequate training to ensure every child receives quality education. It is only with proper support and resources that the teaching community can continue to nurture the nation's future! ▶



**One aspect that needs more attention is the incentives that teachers have to effect change. Training must be linked with recognition and progression along their career paths.**



**Prof. ARUN C MEHTA** is the former HoD of EMIS (Educational Management Information System) Department of NIEPA. He has worked in the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), a premier institute under the Ministry of Education, GoI, for almost forty years and contributed significantly towards the development of indicators in terms of their construction, definitions, interpretation, limitations and implication in plan formulation. He was also part of the EFA Assessment, prepared India Country Report and represented the country internationally. During his career, Prof. Mehta engaged in data analysis and wrote extensively on indicators and their use in plan formulation.

## Indian Students Abroad: Exploring the Brain Drain Phenomenon

**IN A RAPIDLY** evolving global education landscape, the phenomenon of Indian students pursuing higher education abroad is often called 'brain drain'. This article discusses a journey to unravel the intricacies of this trend, shedding light on the driving factors, its implications for India, and the tantalising prospect of a 'brain gain'.

### Exploring the Brain Drain

**Global Quest for Excellence** - The relentless pursuit of high-quality education drives many Indian students to foreign shores. Renowned international universities beckon with cutting-edge programmes, world-class faculty and unparalleled research opportunities.

**Global Exposure and Diverse Perspectives** - Studying abroad opens doors to diverse cultures and perspectives, fostering a global mindset and intercultural competence - a skill set increasingly prized in today's interconnected world.

**Gateway to Career Advancement** - For some Indian students, the allure lies in the promise of better job prospects, even the possibility of securing employment in their host countries' post-graduation.

**Hub of Innovation and Research** - Access to advanced research facilities and a culture of innovation in foreign universities is a magnet for Indian students seeking higher education abroad.

### The Impact on India

**Transfer of Skills and Knowledge** - While the brain drain phenomenon may lead to the outward flow of talent, many returning Indian students bring back invaluable skills, knowledge and international exposure. This influx contributes significantly to various sectors within India.

**Global Networking** - Indian students abroad weave intricate global networks that can pave the way for international collaborations, trade agreements and diplomatic relations, ultimately benefitting India in the long run.

### Pressure Points on India's Education System

The exodus of Indian students pursuing foreign education underscores the dire need for substantial improvements in the

quality and accessibility of higher education within India.

**Economic Implications** - Indian students studying abroad make substantial financial contributions to their host countries, indirectly benefitting the foreign economy through fees and other maintenance charges.

### Nurturing Brain Gain Potential

**Reverse Brain Drain** - The phenomenon of reverse brain drain comes into play when Indian students who have completed their education abroad return to India armed with knowledge, skills and a global perspective. This return migration holds immense potential for India's growth.

**Entrepreneurship Flourishes** - Returning Indian students often dive into entrepreneurial ventures, launching startups and innovative enterprises contributing to India's economic prosperity.

**Academic and Research Synergy** - Indian students who have experienced foreign education can act as bridges, facilitating academic collaborations between Indian institutions and their alma maters.

### Government Initiatives

Forward-thinking government policies and incentives can play a pivotal role in encouraging Indian students abroad to return and actively participate in India's growth across various sectors.

### Concluding Observations



The 'brain drain' phenomenon among Indian students pursuing education abroad is a multi-faceted issue with far-reaching implications. While it entails a temporary loss of talent, it also holds the potential for long-term gains through skills transfer, global networking and the promise of reverse brain drain.

To fully harness the potential of Indian students studying abroad, India must address the fundamental factors that drive them overseas, such as enhancing the quality of higher education and fostering innovation. Striking this balance is pivotal in pursuing global opportunities while contributing to the home country's development. ▶

# Navigating the Complex Tapestry of Challenges in Spreading Education

Improving education in India requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the varied obstacles faced by the education system. The pitfalls of the current system impact the future prospects of our nation at large.



 The ability to read, write, and analyse; the confidence to stand up and demand justice and equality; the qualifications and connections to get your foot in the door and take your seat at the table - all of that starts with education. 

– Michelle Obama

**EDUCATION IN INDIA** faces many challenges - improving access and quality, increasing enrolment and completion rates, reducing dropouts, enhancing learning outcomes and employability, promoting innovation and technology, strengthening governance and accountability and still more. The sector is witnessing significant changes driven by government initiatives that focus on enhancing access and quality, improving infrastructure, promoting early childhood education, bridging the digital divide and promoting inclusive practices. Efforts are underway to reexamine the curriculum and make it relevant, up-to-date and effective.

There are some more paradigms where focus and reforms are imperative. Like:

**Pressure Cooker Environment** – Children step into the education system at a tender age and face intense competition early on. Alas, intelligence and performance are measured solely by the grades achieved in examinations. This puts an immense pressure on the students to excel academically and get perfect scores. To add to this, the limited seats in top institutions fuel a cutthroat competition which can take a toll on the children's mental and physical health. The relentless cycle of rote learning and exam pressure creates a complete disinterest in learning.

The education system needs to move away from the tendency to rely on examinations to evaluate the students. Inculcate continuous assessment methods which take practical knowledge into consideration as well. Society also needs to overcome the mindset of equating high scores with intelligence and competence.

**Sports Education and Extra-Curricular Activities** – Even though people talk about all-round personal development of the children, extra-curricular activities are still viewed as a 'detour from academics'. Professionals like doctors, engineers, lawyers and chartered accountants are held in high esteem while music, arts and other creative pursuits are still considered as 'hobbies'.

Sports and physical education also do not get the traction they deserve. They are reserved to a couple of hours of week and are sacrificed during exams and for the higher classes. Making sports education an integral part of the curriculum – on par with academics - is crucial to emphasise the relevance of sports, promote physical fitness and develop athletic abilities.

There is a lot of talent across the length and breadth of the country – encouraging students to train and practice from a young age will enable them to shine in their field of interest and make a lucrative career out of it. Here, the schools will also need support to develop the infrastructure – facilities and equipment – to provide access to various kinds of sports.

**Girl Education** – Despite efforts to promote gender equality in education, the male literacy rate is 82.14% while only 65.46% of females are educated. The enrolment rates of girls continue to be lower than boys. The gender



disparities are especially high in the northern states where societal norms hinder girls from accessing education. To add to this, many girls drop out of school due to socio-economic factors.

The government should focus on providing girls with equal access to education, ensuring their safety and security, and addressing gender bias in the classroom.

**Higher Education** – There are more than 900 universities and over 40,000 colleges in the country offering undergraduate programmes (Bachelor's degrees), postgraduate programmes (Master's degrees), and doctoral programmes (Ph.D.).

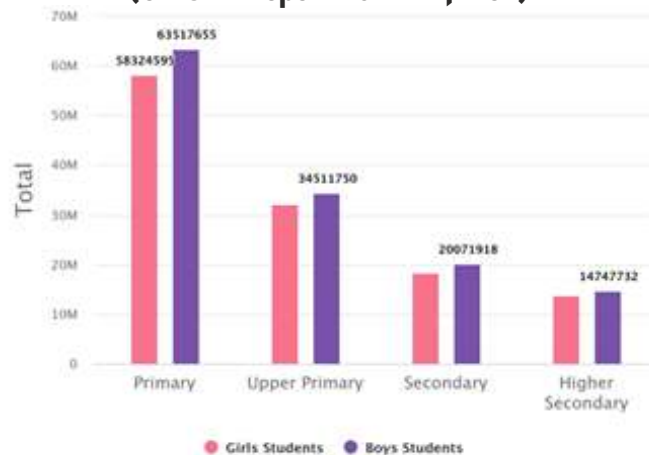
**India has a publicly funded higher education system that is the third largest in the world after the United States and China.**

However, the standard of higher education in India is low and it fails to enable the youth to compete on a global scale. It lags on all frontiers – quality, infrastructure, facilities, faculty, research output and international rankings compared to global standards. This is why many students from well-to-do families prefer to study abroad to reap the benefits of diverse courses, state-of-the-art facilities, teaching excellence and a supportive learning environment.

**In the 2020 QS World University Rankings, only two Indian universities - the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) - ranked among the top 200. India's best university, IISc Bangalore, ranks only 172<sup>nd</sup> globally.**

Given the uneven quality of higher education, India still has a long way to go to match the standards of the world's leading education systems. We need to build a world-class higher education system that provides quality education, encourages innovation and empowers our students to take on the world.

## Number of Boys and Girls in Schools (UDISE+ Report 2021-22, MoE)



**The National Education Policy 2020's target of achieving a 50% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education by 2035 (from 27.2% in 2020) is extremely challenging given the current limitations.**

**Adult Literacy** – Education is not just for children; in other words, it is not age-limited. Indeed, why should those who have crossed the age of formal education have to stay uneducated throughout their life? After all, it is literacy that paves the road to employment, self-sufficiency, population control and even economic development.

**Alas, India has over 35% of the world's total illiterate population and is home to the largest number of adult non-literates in the world.** There are 18.12 crore non-literate adults in India (13.13% of the total population). This is primarily because adult education was neglected in India for the longest time.....

**According to the United Nations, Basic Literacy is the ability to read 40 words per minute, write 20 words per minute and do 2-digit arithmetic.**

India can become totally literate only when its adult illiteracy is eradicated. Adults who missed the opportunity or were otherwise denied access to mainstream formal education should get a second chance to get educated. This will allow them to gain valuable skills that will enhance their career prospects and expand their professional knowledge.

The government is striving to extend educational options to non-literate adults (15+ age). The latest endeavour is the 'New India Literacy Program' targeting 5 crore non-literates between 2022-23 to 2026-27. It has five components - Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Vocational Skills Development, Basic Education and



The scheme is based on technology and implemented predominantly through online mode. The teaching-learning material and resources have been made available on DIKSHA platform of NCERT and can be accessed through the mobile apps. Further, other modes like TV, radio, Samajik Chetna Kendra etc. are also to be used for dissemination of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

– Annapurna Devi  
Minister of State for Education, GoI



Continuing Education. However, it relies primarily on volunteer teachers and college students due to insufficient funds to hire teachers exclusively for adults. Under this, 22.7 lakh adults appeared for the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT) last year.

## NEP 2020 aims to achieve universal literacy in India by 2047!

In conclusion, addressing the above challenges will require a concerted effort from the government, educators and the wider community. By investing in education and introducing reforms to modernise the system, India can ensure its citizens have access to high-quality education needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Then we will produce excellent people who are well-equipped to reason and act, are courageous and resilient, have a scientific mindset and a creative imagination, and also have strong ethics and values! ▶



**Pragmatic steps for changing the education landscape** - Education is getting increasingly commercialised all over India. New markets for several contents, courses and careers are created through a massive dose of hype.

Looking at the huge diversity of needs, the government has created a framework of open, distance and online education through open universities and school boards, with a guarantee that successful students will be treated at par with students from regular schools, boards, colleges and universities in admissions, jobs, etc. This step has done well but needs to be aggressively promoted by all governments for improving affordability, access and opportunities. Anomalies and unconstitutional policies like denying access to open school students from taking part in examinations like NEET for medical, Homeopathy and other

professional courses are to be removed forthwith for aligning our national interests with our tried and tested methods.

We have seen results of several online initiatives in education and skilling. Massive boost to designing content and course creation for affordable as well as flexible education and skilling landscape with emerging technology will really help us.

Indian wisdom is reflected in 'Yogah Karmasu Kaushalam' exhorting us to bring excellence in all pursuits. This can happen only through skilling in all tasks and jobs from manual to mental. Massive thrust to continuous skilling is hence vital for changing the education landscape.

In today's fast changing world, many corporates worldwide are thinking to change their hiring policy from formal degrees to skill sets. We shall have to build flexibility and agility in our new landscape to move ahead.

– Mr S B Dangayach, Founder Trustee of Innovative Thought Forum and patron member of Global Homoeopathy Foundation (GHF)

**JAGO  
GRAHAK  
JAGO!**



A snapshot of success stories of consumer activists who are relentlessly battling for consumer rights. We will highlight decisions and awards in favour of the consumers. This should motivate other youngsters to take up the cause of the consumer for not only social benefit, but their own good too! Jai Ho Grahak!

## North Delhi District Commission Holds Bank Liable For Failure To Reverse Unauthorised Transactions

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN** you notice an unauthorised transaction in your bank account? Would you inform the bank and the police immediately? And what if the said authorities fail to take action? Would you approach a consumer commission for redressal of your grievance?

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, North Delhi recently underscored the importance of accountability and timely action in addressing unauthorised bank transactions by making a decisive ruling in favour of the aggrieved consumer.

The case of Harish Chander vs. Indian Bank and Jio (CC No. 280/2022) pertained to three online transactions done from his savings account in Indian Bank with a total amount of Rs 10 lakhs being transferred to an unknown account in ICICI Bank. The complainant, Mr. Harish Chander was shocked by the incident and promptly informed his bank branch at Greater Kailash, New Delhi. He requested the

bank officials to freeze the account at once and report the incident so that the fraudulently withdrawn amount can be reversed from the beneficiary's account. He also proactively filed complaints with the police and Cyber Crime Portal regarding the incident.

Despite the harried man's dogged insistence, the branch manager told him that they are doing whatever is appropriate and will work according to the bank's rules, regulations and timings, and not as per the wishes of the complainant.

It later came to light that the root of the problem was due to deficiencies in Jio's service. The telecom provider had issued the complainant's mobile number to another SIM card which paved the way for the unauthorised transactions. This highlights a gross failure in the verification process for the SIM card change. However,

the bank's lacklustre response and uncooperative attitude exacerbated the situation.

Mr. Chandra faced extreme mental trauma as the said amount was the retirement money of his father and he could not fathom why the bank was not taking any action to reimburse the amount. Feeling harassed by the rude and irresponsible attitude, he finally approached the consumer commission for redressal.

Noting the lack of due diligence by Indian Bank which caused a significant setback to the complainant, the Commission directed the bank to pay Rs 10 lakhs within 30 days, (along with 9% p.a. interest) from the fraudulent transaction date. An additional compensation of a lakh was mandated for the mental distress and harassment suffered by Mr. Chander.

The Commission acknowledged Mr. Chander's prompt reporting on the day of the fraudulent transactions. Citing Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines, which place the onus of proving customer liability on the bank in unauthorised electronic transactions, the Commission delved into the specifics of zero and limited liability scenarios outlined by the RBI.

While Mr. Chander is relieved to finally get justice, it should be noted that the fraudulent transfer took place on 25th October, 2021, while the award came over two years later in January 2024! ▶



UPDATE ...



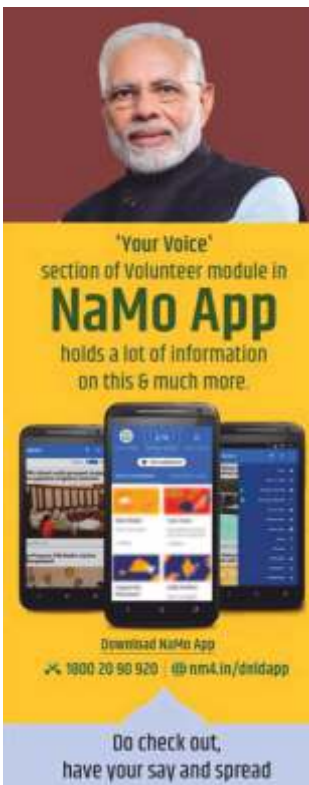
Moving a Step Ahead

Update on the February edition

# NATIONAL PARTIES CROWDSOURCING IDEAS FOR ELECTION MANIFESTOS

**WITH THE ELECTION** Commission of India scheduling the Lok Sabha 2024 elections from 19th April to 1st June, the election manifestos have become the flavour of the season. The top political parties are calling on the citizens to share their ideas and suggestions.

At the Nav Matdata Sammelan (New Voters' Conference), Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed around 30 lakh first-time voters from across 5800 locations in the country in a virtual interaction. He stated, "I invite the youth of India to contribute to the BJP Manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Share your thoughts on the NaMo App. I look forward to meeting some of the contributors myself in the future." He also called upon the youth, who are connected over social media, to not just vote but also help people whose names were not on the voters' list get their names included in it.



teachers, doctors, etc. in around 250 places. The drive ended on 15th March.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi further announced that he has already received 15 lakh suggestions over the last 1.5 years through his NaMo App. You can also submit your ideas

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched a fortnight-long drive – called 'Sankalp Patra Suggestion Campaign' with the aim to touch one crore people for gathering inputs for its manifesto called the 'Pledge Paper'. Around 1000 video raths (chariots) travelled to over 4,000 assembly constituencies across the country to crowdsource suggestions. A 'Missed Call' campaign was also initiated whereby giving a missed call to 9090902024 sent a link for registering with suggestions in writing or voice message.

As part of the drive, the party also invited suggestions through the NaMo App, placed 6,000 drop boxes across the country, held meetings with opinionmakers and mobilised its cadres to do door-to-door reach-out with potential voters. 125 BJP leaders engaged with people from different occupations like fishermen, sportspersons, farmers, traders,



at <https://www.narendramodi.in/share-your-inputs-for-bjp-s-election-manifesto-for-2024-elections-578587>.

The Indian National Congress (INC) is also aiming for a 'people's manifesto' and invited ideas from the public apart from holding consultations in every state. The party has launched a website – [www.awaazbharatki.in](http://www.awaazbharatki.in) and an email address – [awaazbharatki@inc.in](mailto:awaazbharatki@inc.in) – where people can send in their suggestions for its 2024 election manifesto. The website allows visitors to submit their suggestions subject-wise.

Congress leader P. Chidambaram, who heads the Manifesto Committee said "The present exercise is to receive suggestions from the members of the public. This will be a people's manifesto. So, it is important to gather as many suggestions as possible in the few weeks available to us." He further promised that the party will "incorporate as many as possible" into its manifesto for the Lok Sabha polls.

**We have submitted our 'Consumers' Manifesto' magazine to the national parties as well as the leading newspapers of the country. We sincerely hope it prompts the requisite attention and action.... ▶**

# Webinar on Consumers' Manifesto – Resolutions for 2024

**THE FEBRUARY MAGAZINE** edition was a starting point for creating awareness about our consumers' manifesto. We followed up on this by organising a national webinar - in association with RJS Positive Media - on 25th February, Sunday at 11 am.

The event was moderated by Mr. Sanjay Rai while Ms. Bina Jain introduced the special invitees and welcomed everyone to the webinar.

The Chief Guest, Mr S B Dangayach - Founder Trustee of Innovative Thought Forum, National Vice President of Arogya Bharati and patron member of Global Homoeopathy Foundation – spotlighted the fact that most Acts are simply made on paper without any roadmap for implementation. He gave the example of the landmark Consumer Protection Act, 2019 before outlining the aspects that should be covered in the election manifestos from the consumers' perspective.

He passionately underscored the criticality of transparency in real estate dealings, highlighting issues that deceive the consumers such as undisclosed area discrepancies and unexpected costs post-purchase. He stressed the need for standardised forms and full clarity on the plans when investing in property.

Mr. Dangayach also advocated the integration of Ayush practices into mainstream healthcare systems while calling for equal recognition of Ayush practitioners. He emphasised the necessity of significant investment in education and skill development for children. He further urged the consumers to adopt innovative



approaches and systematic thinking. Aligned with the vision of a self-reliant India, he offered his support for initiatives promoting potential and feasible work.

The keynote speaker, Mr. Manohar Manoj - politician, expert analyst on Indian television, editor of Economy India and formerly senior journalist at Rashtriya Sahara – stressed on the various aspects of consumer protection and consumer rights. He highlighted the need for good quality, correct measurements and proper guarantee and warranty programmes without any manipulations.

Mr. Manoj touched on the economic corruption prevalent in the country and called on the political parties to reform the policies to ensure consumer rights are protected at all

times. He stated that this is a vast area which touches on all aspects of governance and should be addressed accordingly. He further emphasised issues like fair MRPs (especially in e-commerce), legalisation of MSP for farmers, ponzi schemes, etc.

He pointed out that the public should be considered as consumers of the government and there should be service centres – like in other areas – for fair redressal of their complaints and problems. He also called for strict legislation, robust monitoring by regulatory authorities and sound legal processes.

This was followed by a healthy interaction with the attendees. Mr. Ishaq Khan stressed that the political parties only create the manifestos to win votes. There is a pressing need to spread awareness among the citizens to beware of such manipulations and consider what will be most beneficial for them.

Mr. Prafull Sheth stated that the election manifestos should focus on moving from a symbolic approach to a substantial one by way of evidence creation. Troubled by the almost 5.5 lakh pending cases in the consumer commissions and years of delay in getting judgments, he also invoked the need to make the consumer aware, confident, proactive and powerful in all domains. He said that the government needs to build such a culture rather than playing ball over state and central subjects!

Mr. Sanjay Rai applauded the tone of the discussions and delivered a vote of thanks before closing the webinar. ▶



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)



India National Congress (INC)



Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)



Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)



Communist Party of India (CPI)



Communist Party of India - Marxist (CPI-M)



All India Trinamool Congress (TMC)

## YOUR OPINION MATTERS

## letters to the



## editor

(February issue:  
Consumers' Manifesto:  
Resolutions for 2024)

We are truly humbled by the praise and acknowledgment that is flowing in from varied sources. Please feel free to send in your comments, views or feedback on The Aware Consumer magazine at [bejonmisra@theawareconsumer.in](mailto:bejonmisra@theawareconsumer.in) – we will publish your opinions and implement your feedback while ensuring that your voice is heard on the right platforms.



The Feb edition of Aware Consumer has given an intellectual and legal awareness to the dynamics of Election Manifesto and Health Insurance. Both subjects are need of the consumers to ensure democratic sustainability and human progression.

Election manifestoes need to be comprehensive to include national security, economic policies and remain socially inclusive. As such, these documents need consumer concurrence and ECI scrutiny. States with high debts should not be allowed to follow freebies policy in the name of welfare. As political parties are main stakeholders, participation of citizens exercising their civil rights and concerned regulatory authorities need to bring about accountability measures to the manifestos.

Universal health insurance and integrated health grievance redress mechanism to ensure healthcare support is not discriminatory is essential to be brought as part of consumer awareness.

I extend my heartiest compliments for a very informative and stimulating publication.

– **Brig Dr Laxmi Chandra Patnaik**,  
Bhubaneswar • [lcpatnaik@gmail.com](mailto:lcpatnaik@gmail.com)



Article on 'Supreme Court To Deliberate Whether Pre-Poll Freebies Are A Corrupt Practice' is the need of hour for a consumer as well as citizen. It is discussed well. But who will tie the bell? Similarly, Mrs. Bina Jain's article is also good and necessary for Indian population, since cost of healthcare is increasing

– **Dr. G. Selvaraj**, Chennai • [jeselvan@gmail.com](mailto:jeselvan@gmail.com)



The cover story is excellent. Not many consumer groups in India have ever thought of such an initiative. We - from Consumer Rights Education and Awareness Trust (CREAT), Bengaluru - during the last State elections sent a consumer manifesto to all parties. Not a single political party even acknowledged it. Nevertheless, we will continue our efforts. The Aware Consumer group should meet political parties and have a dialogue. Please keep bringing new issues in your magazine

– **Y.G. Muralidharan**, Founder Trustee, CREAT, Bengaluru  
[ygmuralidharan@gmail.com](mailto:ygmuralidharan@gmail.com)



The Aware Consumer's issue about election freebies is very relevant in today's context as elections are round the corner. The way the topic is taken up makes you involved in the matter by making you aware as a consumer and awakens you as a responsible citizen who should not be taking things lying down. Meticulous care has been taken to cover the topic full length. While the editorial - View point - introduces you to the topic, Desktalk clarifies what it is all about. The other article 'Comparison on the politics of election manifesto' is a research feature which gives you a real insight. The Supreme Court deliberation and the interview give you the judiciary and policymakers opinion. A magazine well compiled and worthwhile - good job done - kudos to the brilliant professor. I am Impressed!

– **Nalin Gulati**, Varanasi • [nalingulati@yahoo.com](mailto:nalingulati@yahoo.com)



Yet again, excellent compilation! I think this is the first time any publication has taken it up for the consumers, spelling it out for the political parties. Very timely too. I think we should give it a very wide outreach, if possible even in popular mainstream media.

– **Dr. Alka Mukne**, Mumbai  
[alka.mukne@gmail.com](mailto:alka.mukne@gmail.com)



It was a pleasure to read all the articles which I found were very informative, helpful and interesting. The contributors to the articles have very rightly denounced the freebies culture and I am sure the Indian voters are mature enough to see them for what they are and do not fall for them. Please continue with the good work, enlightening us on the various ills and challenges of our populace. Kudos and my best wishes.

– **Rasik M Talati**, Vadodara, Gujarat • [rtalati@hotmail.com](mailto:rtalati@hotmail.com)

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