CURRENT REFORMING SCENARIO IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

India has been emerged as a global leader and a strong nation. Education is the key to the task of nation building as well as to provide requisite knowledge and skills were required for sustained growth of the economy and to ensure overall progress. Our current education system selectively discards talented students with inquisitiveness, ability to ask questions and dream to do something challenging, something better for the society. India's efforts at reforming educational sector, analyses the growth of education in India during last two decades and suggests ways to ensure that education remains both affordable and accessible to all.

Key words: Achievements, Education, Literacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Indian Education System

Until the late 1970s, school education had been on the State List of the Indian Constitution, which meant that States had the final say in the management of their respective education system. However, in 1976, education was transferred to the Concurrent list through a constitutional amendment, the objective being to promote meaningful educational partnerships between the Central and State Governments. Today, the Central Government makes the national policies and the States have to follow it. The National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated in 1968 and the National Policy Resolution of 1986, which was later, updated in 1992, where specific responsibilities for organizing, implementing and financing its proposals were assigned (Gopinath, 2020a). About 80% of the funding for higher education has been provided by the states and 20% by the center through various bodies such as the University

Grants Commission. The Central Advisory Board of Education maintains the coordination between the central and state governments (Gopinath, 2020b).

2. PRESENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

Education has been identified as a critical input for economic development and for human resource development. Recent reforms to public education include the new common core state standards for learning, the local control funding formula for school districts, the rise of charter schools and the growth of partnership between schools, nonprofit businesses and other government agencies. India's education system is divided into different levels such as preprimary level, primary level, elementary education, secondary education, undergraduate level and post graduate level (Gopinath & Kalpana, 2020)

3. ACHIEVEMENTS IN EDUCATION SECTOR

By the end of the 10th Plan period, National Literacy Mission (NLM) which was launched in 1988, covering the age group of (15-35 years), had made 127.45million persons literate, of which, 60% were females, 23% belonged to Scheduled Castes and 12% to Scheduled Tribes. It led to an increase of 12.63% in literacy - the highest increase in any decade. Female literacy increased by 14.38%, SC literacy by 17.28% and ST literacy by 17.50%. In a special lecture organized by National Literacy Mission Authority , Nobel Laureate Prof. AmartyaSen, emphasized the importance of literacy citing examples of developed countries (Gopinath, 2020c). He said that the lack of proper education is the root cause of many problems in India and hailed the Right to Education as a very important step.

4. ERADICATION OF ILLITERACY

Post-independence India inherited a system of education which was characterized by large scale inter and intra-regional imbalances. The country's literacy rate in 1947 was only 14 percent and female literacy was very badly low at 8 percent. As per recently concluded census 2011, Literacy rate in India has significantly increased from 18.33% in the year 1951 to 74.04% in the year 2011 (Table No.1). More women literates added in the recent decade compared to men literates, so gap between men literates and women literates also reduced from 24.82 in 1991 to 16.68 in the year 2011(Table No.1).

Table 1 Literacy rate in India

CENSUS YEAR	PERSONS	MALE	FEMALE	GENDER GAP
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.3
1961	28.3	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.82
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census of India – 1951 to 2011.

From the table No.2, it was evident that the number of literates increased by 117% , Male 94% and Female 158% during the reforming period from 1991 to 2011. Effective Literacy rate has been increased by 21.83 points, Male 18.01points and 26.17 points (Table No.3) in 2011 when compared to 1991. Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns of the Government of India since Independence. A number of significant programmes have been taken up since Independence to eradicate illiteracy (Gopinath, 2020d).

Table 2 Literates in India (Reform period)

	1991	2001	2011	Difference	% Growth
POPULATION	84,63,02,688	1,02,87,37,436	1,21,01,93,422	36,38,90,734	43
PERSONS	35,84,02,626	56,07,53,179	77,84,54,120	42,00,51,494	117
MALE	228,983,134	33,65,71,822	44,42,03,762	21,52,20,628	94
FEMALE	129,419,492	22,41,81,357	33,42,50,358	20,48,30,866	158

Year 1991 is taken as base year for calculation of Difference and percentage of growth

Source*: Census of India – 1991, 2001 and 2011.*

Table 3 Effective Literacy rate (%) (Reform period)

	1991	2001	2011	Increase/Decrease
PERSONS	52.21	64.83	74.04	+21.83
MALE	64.13	75.26	82.14	+18.01
FEMALE	39.29	53.67	65.46	+26.17

Year 1991 is taken as base year for calculation of Points of Increase/Decrease.

Source*: Census of India – 1991, 2001 and 2011.*

From the Table No.4, it was evident that number of Literates has been increased from 358.40 Million in 1991 to 778.45 (more than doubled) Million in 2011 and the number of illiterates reduced from 328.16 Million to 272.95 Million (nearly 17%) during the same period.

Table 4 Number of Literates and Illiterates (Reform period)

YEAR	POPULATION	ILLITERATES	LITERATES
	(In Millions)		
1991	846.3	328.16	358.4
2001	1028.73	304.14	560.75
2011	1210.19	272.95	778.45

Population is taken aged 7 and above.

Source*: Census of India – 1991, 2001 and 2011.*

5. UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY (PRIMARY) EDUCATION

India is committed to the goal of universal elementary education for all children. This goal is part of the Education for All (EFA) goals adopted at the World Education Forum, Dakar in April 2000. The EFA goals include, inter alia achieving universal elementary education by the year 2015, ensuring equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill programmes for young people and adults, achieving 80% improvement in adult literacy by 2015, achieving gender equality in education by 2015 and improving all aspects of quality of education (Gopinath, 2020e). The Indian government lays emphasis to primary education up to the age of fourteen years (referred to as Elementary Education in India.) 80% of all recognized schools at the Elementary Stage are government run or supported (Gopinath, 2020f).

6. THE SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is intended for the enlargement and growth mainly in the primary education. The aim of this flagship program was to attain universalization of primary schooling at an acceptable level by 2010. SSA is being implemented in partnership with State Government to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.2 million habitations. The present rules of SSA have been modified recently by putting into practice the "Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education" which has been enforced from April 1, 2010 onwards.

Table 5 Progress Overview Under SSA

Access	99% of the rural population has a primary school within 1 km. 366559 new schools opened till September, 2010.
Gross Enrolment Ratio	GER increased in 6-14 age groups to 114.37 in 2008-09 from 96.3 in 2001-02 at the primary level and to 76.23 in 2008-09 from 60.2 in 2001-02 at the upper primary level.
Gender Parity Index (GPI)	Improved from 0.83 in 2001-02 to 1.00 in 2008-09 at primary level & from 0.77 to 0.96 at upper primary level.
Dropout Rate at the primary level	Reduced by 14.10% to 24.93% in 2008-09 from 39.03% in 2001-02. Dropout rate for girls declined by 16.98% points during same period.
Pupil-Teacher Ratio	In 2008-09 the PTR at the national level was 44:1 for primary and 34:1 for upper primary level. 11.13 lakh teachers recruited by December, 2010.

Source: Annual Report 2010-11, Department of School Education & Literacy and Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

As for the year 2011-2012, the Union budget ministry has put forward to apportion an amount of Rs 21,000 crore, which is almost 40% higher than the last year for SSA.

7. OTHER SCHEMES FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION

Scheme of Infrastructure Development in Minority Institutions (IDMI) has been operationalized to augment infrastructure in private aided/unaided minority schools/ institutions in order to enhance quality of education to minority children. Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE) commonly known as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) was launched as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995 covering all children studying in Classes upto I-VIII standard. The District Education Revitalization Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalize primary education in India by reforming and vitalizing the existing primary education system. This primary education scheme has also shown a high Gross Enrollment Ratio of 93–95% for the last three years in some states. Significant improvement in staffing and enrollment of girls has also been made as a part of this scheme (Gopinath, 2020h).

8. ADULT AND WOMEN EDUCATION

SAAKSHAR BHARAT was launched in 8th September, 2009 aiming to accelerate Adult Education, especially for women in the age group of 15 years and above. It targets to raise literacy rate to 80% by 2012 and reduce gender gap to half by the same period. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level(NPEGEL) is implemented from educationally backward blocks (EBB).Kasturiba Gandhi BalikaVidyalaya (KGBV) provides for setting up residential upper primary schools for girls from SC, ST, OBC and Muslim communities. The Mahila Samakhya scheme was started in 1989 to translate the goals enshrined in the NPE into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas particularly those from socially and economically marginalized groups (Gopinath, 2020g). Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarasas (SPQEM) seeks to bring about qualitative improvement in Madarasas to enable Muslim children. They attain the standards of the national education system in formal education subjects. There has been a phenomenal growth in enrolment of women students in higher education in the country. The share of girl's enrolment which was less than 10% of the total enrolment on the eve of independence has been increased to 41.60% in the beginning of the academic year 2010-11.

National Policy on Education, 1986 (as modified in 1992) lays special emphasis on education of Persons with Disability. 29.72 lakh children with special needs have been identified by the household surveys 90% of them have been covered through various strategies.

The Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 indicates that differently-abled persons should have to access in education at all levels.

9. SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education covers children with the age of 14–18 years. One of the feature of India's secondary school system is to emphasis on profession based vocational training to help students to attain skills for finding a vocation of his/her choosing.

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) launched in March, 2009 is the flagship programme in secondary education for universalising access to secondary education and improving its quality, while ensuring equity. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Schools Scheme was launched in December, 2004 to provide opportunities to build their capacity on ICT skills. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme called "Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education" was launched in 2008-09.The Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education provides for diversification of educational opportunities so as to enhance individual employability, reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of skilled manpower and provides an alternative for those pursuing higher education. The scheme of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) was approved by Government of India in November1962 to provide uninterrupted education to the wards of the transferable Central Government employees. Residential Now a days schools were setup with an aim of providing excellence coupled with equity and social justice. The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is an autonomous body is being work under the aegis of the Ministry of HRD. There are 11500 schools affiliated with CBSE as on 31.12.2010 which include KVs, Government, Independent and JNV schools located in India and 24 other countries of the world (Gopinath, 2020i).

National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was initiated as a project in 1979 under the Central Board of Secondary Education. It has approximately 1.6 million Learners on roll emerged as the largest Open Schooling organization in the world. 14 lakh students are enrolled at the secondary and higher secondary level through open and distance learning. At higher education level, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) co-ordinates distance learning. The Distance Education Council (DEC), an authority of IGNOU is co-coordinating 13 State Open Universities and 119 institutions of correspondence courses in conventional universities. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an apex resource organization to assist and advise the Central and the State Governments on academic matters related to school education.

10. HIGHER EDUCATION

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, after China and the United States. The main governing body at the tertiary level is the University Grants Commission (UGC), which enforces its standards, advises the government, and helps coordinate between the centre and the state. The other important policy initiatives in higher education are programmes for general development of universities and colleges; special grants for the construction of hostels for women; scholarships to students, scheme to provide interest subsidy on educational loans for professional courses to ensure that nobody is denied professional education because he or she is poor and making interventions to attract and retain talent in the teaching profession in the higher and technical education (Gopinath, 2019).

Table 6 List of University Level Education Institutions (as on 31.12.2010)

Education Institutions	Nos.
Central Universities	42
Institutions Deemed to be Universities	130
State Universities	261
Private Universities	73
Institutions of National Importance	33
Institutions Established under State Legislature Acts	5
Total Number of Institutions	544
Number of Colleges	31,324
Women Colleges	3432
Faculty Strength in Universities (at the beginning of the academic year 2010 - 11) (in Universities 1 Lakh (14%) and in Colleges 5.99 Lakhs (86%)	6.99 Lakhs

Source: Annual Report 2010-11, Department of School Education & Literacy and Department of Higher Education.

11. EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, OVER ALL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIA

As per Report of the Higher education in India, Issues related to Expansion, Inclusiveness, Quality and Finance, the access to higher education is measured in term of gross enrolment ratio increased from 0.7% in 1950/51 to 1.4% in 1960–61. By 2006-07 the GER was increased to 12 percent. By 2012, (the end of 11th plan objective) is to be increased to 15%.

11.1. Distance Education System

Realizing the important role of education in the overall development of individual as well as the nation, the Ministry has been taken several initiatives to promote distance education. As on date (2009-10) there are more than 200 distance educational institutions in the dual mode universities and institutions which are either offering programmes through distance mode or are in the process of seeking approval of Distance Education Council to start offering programmes through distance mode.

11.2. Technical Education

Technical Education plays a vital role in human resource development of the country by creating skilled manpower, enhancing industrial productivity and improving the quality of life. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) was set-up in November 1945 as a national level Apex Advisory Body to conduct survey on the facilities on technical education in 2010-11 there were 79 centrally funded Institutions in the country which are as follows:

Table 7 List of Institutes of Technical & Science Education (as on 31.12.2010)

Institutes of Technical & Science Education	Nos
Indian Institute of Technology (IITs)	15
Indian Institute of Management (IIMs)	11
Indian Institute of Science (IISc.)	1
Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research (IISERs)	5
National Institutes of Technology (NITs)	30
Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs)	4
National Institutes of Technical Teachers Training & Research(NITTTRs)	4
Others	9
Total	79

Source: Annual Report 2010-11, Department of School Education & Literacy and Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Several new measures have been taken to implement the Government vision of providing increased access with equity and excellence. Eight (8) new IITs, five (5) new IIMs and ten (10) new NITs have been set up and are functional. 20 new IIITs will be set up in Private Public Partnership (PPP) mode. Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme envisages on focus in strengthening the Institutions to produce high quality engineers for better employability, establish centres of excellence for focused applicable research, Training of faculty for effective teaching, enhancing Institutional; and system Management effectiveness.

11.3. Financial Assistance

To provide financial assistance to meritorious students from weaker section for pursuing higher studies and professional courses, the Ministry has started Central Sector Scholarship Scheme for College and University Students. The Ministry has also launched a new Central Scheme to provide full interest subsidy during the period of moratorium on educational loans for students belonging to economically weaker section. Central Government has also approved an outlay of Rs.2,31,233 crore for implementation of the combined RTE-SSA programme for the five year period of 2010-11 to 2014-15. The outlay for XI Plan for education is more than 9 times higher than X Plan which shows the commitment of the Government to provide education to all.

12. THE UNFINISHED TASKS

12.1. Literacy Level

According to the Census Data 2011, India is heavily overpopulated with a population of 121,01,93,422 which means India today is a power house of talent of 121,01,93,422 plus. But this tremendous power house can be compared to rocks, which need to be polished to be transformed into diamonds. At the time of Independence, India's literacy rate stood at 14% and in 1991 it was 52.21%According to Census 2001, it was 64.8% and presently (2011) it is 74.04% (Table No.1). So, apparently we have come a long way. But when we compare this to China's literacy rate of 94%, we surely have a long road ahead. If we see the current scenario there is a rampant corruption, crime, unlawful activities, and exploitation taking a toll on India.

12.2. Elementary / Primary Education

Every year the Union Budget makes an attempt as to broaden the education standards in the country. As per the current Union Budget (2010-11) allocation, an amount of Rs.52,057 Crores is set aside for the education. This is a huge amount, even though a disappointment struck when the increment hike is significantly less than anticipated for the execution of acts like Right to Education due to shortage of resources and lack of political will, this system suffers from massive gaps including high pupil to teacher ratios, shortage of infrastructure and poor levels of teacher training. Enrollment has been enhanced, but the levels of quality remain low.

In spite of the claims of fair work done by the states with regard to improving access and enrolment in elementary education, any progress made has been overshadowed by high drop out and wastage rates which, in turn, were the result of shortfalls in other related elements of elementary education. Unless something is done to drastically reduce drop-out rates, by the year 2016, there would be approximately 500 million people in the country with less than five years of schooling, and another 300 million that will not have completed high school. In other words, about two-thirds of the population will lack the minimum level of education needed to keep pace with and take advantage of the social changes occurring within the country and world wide. The target before India at this stage is not only to eradicate illiteracy and bring every child within the fold of school education but also to ensure good quality in school education.

To improve the quality of education by reducing the class size would require a further 20 percent increase in the number of classrooms. Together, this will necessitate increasing the total

number of classrooms by 65 per cent within 20 years. An enormous increase in the number of teachers will also be required to achieve the alternative scenario, i.e., eliminating primary school drop outs and is being reduced by the teacher-pupil ratio from the present high level of 1:42 down to around 1:20, which is the UMI reference level. Together, this will require an additional three million primary school teachers, more than twice the number currently employed. Similar increases will be required at middle and secondary school levels.

12.3. Education in Private Sector

According to current estimates, 80% of all schools are government schools are making the government the major provider of education. However, because of poor quality of public education, 27% of Indian children are privately educated. The pupil teacher ratios are much better in private schools (1:31 to 1:37 for government schools) and more teachers in private schools are female.

12.4. Secondary Education

We will need to expand the supply of secondary school teachers very significantly, invest large resources in school buildings and in the preparation and distribution of education materials. Great innovation is being needed in thinking about how all this is to be done, and how the large resources needed will be generated and invested efficiently and responsibly.

12.5. Higher Education

The opportunities for higher education, in terms of the number of places in universities, are simply not adequate, in relation to our needs. The objectives of reform and change, in our higher education system, must be expansion, excellence and inclusion. The higher education system needs a massive expansion of opportunities, around 1500 universities (currently only about 350) nation wide, which would enable India to attain a gross enrolment ratio (GER) of at least 15 percent, by 2015.

To generate quality, there is a need for reform of existing universities, to ensure frequent curriculum revisions, introduction of the course credit system, enhancing reliance on internal assessment, encouraging research and reforming the governance of institutions. Presently, accreditation is voluntary as a result of which less than one-fifth of the colleges and less than one-third of all universities have obtained accreditation. Mandatory accreditation in the higher education would enable the higher education system in the country to become a part of the global quality assurance system. Legislation has been introduced in Parliment (3rd May, 2010) to provide for mandatory accreditation and creation of an institutional structure for the purpose.

13. TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

The major challenges before the technical education system are one to access, equity and inclusion. Another area of concern is the inadequate availability of faculty both in terms of quality and in numbers. Promotion of R&D efforts, improvement in employability of trained graduates and postgraduates coming out of the technical institutes, are some of the areas where efforts are required.

The professional education streams are plagued by problems similar to the higher education system. Rapid reforms are still required in professional streams like the Legal, Management, Medical and Engineering streams, etc.

13.1. Vocational Education and Training

In India, only 7% of the country's labour force works in the organised sector and hence Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important element of the nation's education

initiative. There is an urgent need to redefine the critical elements of imparting vocational education to make them flexible, contemporary, relevant, inclusive and creative. Also the existing Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and Industrial Training Centres (ITCs) are widely seen facing problems, such as poor quality trainers, lack of flexibility and outdated infrastructure.

The Government needs to take rapid steps, to strengthen the structure of these institutes.

14. WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Women have a much lower literacy rate than men. Far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools many of them drop out. According to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless). A survey that was conducted in India showed results which support the fact that infant mortality rate was inversely related to female literacy rate and educational level. The survey also suggests a correlation between education and economic growth.

14.1. Rural Education

The government continued to view rural education as an agenda that could be relatively free from bureaucratic backlog and general stagnation. However, in some cases lack of financing balanced the gains made by rural education institutes of India.

14.2. Public Expenditure on Education in India

As a part of the tenth Five year Plan (2002–2007), the central government of India outlined an expenditure of 65.6% of its total education budget of 438.25 billion (US$8.33 billion). According to UNESCO, India has the lowest public expenditure on higher education per student in the world. Although the country targeted towards devoting 6% share of the GDP towards the educational sector, the performance has definitely fallen short of expectations.

14.3. Other Issues

One study found out that 25% of public sector teachers and 40% of public sector medical workers were absent during the survey. Among teachers who were paid to teach, absence rates ranged from 15% in Maharashtra and 30% in Bihar. Only 1 in nearly 3000 public school head teachers had ever dismissed a teacher for repeated absence. A study on teachers by Kremer etc. found that only about half were teaching, during unannounced visits to a nationally representative sample of government primary schools in India. A study of 188 government-run primary schools are found. Nearly 59% of the schools had no drinking water and 89% had no toilets. Modern education in India is often criticized for being based on rote learning rather than problem solving.

15. CONCLUSION

All the positive steps taken till now are welcome. However, implementation of the initiatives is a key to success. These are some points that the nation will have to consider upon. And the path ahead isn't that easy. Walls, windows, doors and teachers will not make a school, till we have hungry children wanting to be in the fields and factories, to earn their meals. The Vision and Mission of Education for all will have to inculcate and imbibe in one and all, leaders and followers for every child born poor and needy, there will have to be a well-drawn plan, to ensure that she doesn't remain so – for if we fail in providing the basic needs of food and shelter to a child, she/he will never see the light of the day, through education – at least. A healthy mind

comes in a healthy body. The nation should strive towards total health of children, education will follow. Education for the masses is a massive task. It would need a single minded focus of the State, to implement this programme in a country, which is the 7th largest in the world in terms of size and the 2nd most populated of all. Reform in education is a cultural, political, financial and administrative challenge. The children of today are to be the citizens of tomorrow. We as a citizen of today will be able to provide a slate to every child and a pen to write his/her own future and we will achieve this at least in the coming decade.

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