



Transforming Indian Education: Towards Long-Term Vision

This editorial is based on “[A broken education system: Apps and coaching classes are the wrong solution](#)” which was published in Indian Express on 21/12/2023. The article discusses the education sector being in a state of crisis partly due to reckless commercialisation and politicisation which must be rebuilt with a step-by-step strategy and a national consensus that commits to insulate it from narrow political considerations.

For Prelims: [Unified District Information System For Education \(UDISE\)](#), [National Education Policy 2020](#), [National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning](#), [PRAGYATA](#), [PM SHRI Schools](#), [National Family Health Survey-5](#), [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#), [Artificial Intelligence](#).

For Mains: Features of [National Education Policy 2020](#), Major Issues Related to the Education Sector in India, Government Initiatives Related to Educational Reforms.

By 2030, India will have the largest number of young population in the globe, a population size that will be a boon only if these young people are skilled enough to join the workforce. [Quality education](#) will play a major role in it. But the current state of Education faces major challenges like lack of adequate infrastructure, **low government expenditure on education (less than 3.5% of the GDP)** and as per the [Unified District Information System For Education \(UDISE\)](#) the **pupil-to-teacher ratio at the national level for elementary schools is 24:1**. So it's high time to tune the Indian Education System with global standards and adopt modern learning approaches that are responsive and relevant. Also, vitalise [National Education Policy 2020](#) to see the light of day.

What is the Status of Education System in India?

▪ History:

- The ‘**Gurukul**’ was a type of education system in ancient India with shishya (students) living with the guru in the same house. **Nalanda** has the **oldest university system of education** in the world. Students from across the world were attracted to Indian knowledge systems.
- British Government brought various reforms in the education system through **Macaulay Committee recommendations, Woods’ Despatch, Hunter Commission Report, University Education Act, 2004** which had profound impact on society.

▪ Current Status of Education in India:

- The gender gap in literacy in India began narrowing in 1991, with an accelerated pace of improvement. However, the current female literacy rate in India still significantly lags behind the global average of 87%, as reported by [UNESCO in 2015](#).
- Furthermore, India's **overall literacy rate of 74.04%** is below the world average of 86.3%. A significant number of states in India fall within the average range, just slightly above the national literacy level.

Table 1
Literacy Rate Trend in India 1951-2011

Census Year	Persons	Decadal Increase	Males	Females	Gender gap
1951	18.33		27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.3	9.97	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	6.15	45.96	21.97	23.99
1981	43.57	9.12	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	8.64	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	64.83	12.62	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	9.21	82.14	65.46	16.68

▪ **Different Legal and Constitutional Provisions:**

◦ **Legal Provisions:**

- The government has implemented the [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan \(SSA\)](#) as part of the [Right to Education \(RTE\) Act](#) for primary level (6-14 years).
- Moving to the secondary level (**age group 14-18**), the government has extended the SSA to secondary education through the [Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan](#).
- Higher education, encompassing undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), and MPhil/PhD levels, is addressed by the government through the [Rashtriya Uchhatar Shiksha Abhiyan \(RUSA\)](#) to meet the requirements of higher education.
 - All these schemes have been subsumed under the umbrella scheme of **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**.

◦ **Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Article 45** of the [Directive Principles of State Policy \(DPSP\)](#) initially stipulated that the government should ensure free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 within 10 years of the Constitution's commencement.
 - Additionally, Article 45 was amended to **extend its scope to encompass early childhood care and education for children below six years of age**.
- Since this objective wasn't realized, the [86th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2002](#) introduced **Article 21A**, transforming elementary education into a fundamental right instead of a directive principle.

What are the Issues in the School Education System in India?

▪ **Election-Driven Focus of the Government:**

- During elections, the poor gain bargaining power, leading to a focus on immediate needs like freebies and guarantees. While people aspire for income security and better basic entitlements, **they are sceptical about the government's commitment, be it education, health, living conditions etc.**

▪ **Education Sector Crisis:**

- The education sector is in crisis due to **reckless commercialization and politicisation**. It lacks a step-by-step strategy and a national consensus and focuses on easy solutions like technology as a substitute for solid investments in quality education.

▪ **Limits of Edutech:**

- The book "**The Learning Trap**" highlights the limitations of technology in fixing the broken education system. Edutech start-ups, **such as Byju's**, failed to deliver on promises, emphasising the need for good teachers over technological solutions.

- **Impact of Tuition Industry:**
 - The tuition industry, **valued at over Rs 58 billion**, is rapidly expanding. Government policies **devaluing high school examinations and the focus on national exams as gateways to professional careers** contribute to the growth of this parallel education system.
- **Preference for Tuition Centers:**
 - **Parents increasingly prefer tuition centres to regular schools**, leading to stress-induced suicides and mental health problems among students. **The divide between well-educated and less-educated students is widening.**
- **Quality Variance in Schools:**
 - **India's public and private schools vary in quality, with poorly trained and paid teachers** contributing to the rise of tuition centers. The government's focus on running its own schools neglects monitoring and quality improvement.
- **Widening Educational Divide:**
 - **The educational divide between the rich and poor is widening**, with the second category of students struggling within a failed system. The government's approach to **teaching materials lacks innovation** and fails to address the growing challenges.
- **Lack of Societal Involvement:**
 - Education **should become a societal concern rather than solely a government responsibility, which is missing in Indian context.**
 - Solutions involve widening **social participation, engaging civil society, and encouraging volunteerism**, while also making teachers accountable for results.
- **Insufficient Education Spending:**
 - India's education **spending is insufficient, stagnating at 2.61% of GDP, far below the recommended 6% by the Education 2030 Framework for Action.** Adequate attention and increased budget allocation are missing for real growth and development.
- **Political Leadership and Fiscal Imagination:**
 - Real growth and development hinge on political leadership commitment and fiscal imagination. With India's spending on education remaining low, a fundamental shift is lacking that can meet the challenges and achieve global leadership in education.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure in Schools:**
 - According to the **UDISE for 2019-20, only 12% of schools have internet facilities** and 30% have computers.
 - About 42% of these schools lacked furniture, 23% lacked electricity, 22% lacked ramps for the **physically disabled**, and **15% lacked WASH facilities** (which include drinking water, toilets, and hand wash basins).
- **High Dropout Rate:**
 - The dropout rate is very high in primary and secondary levels. Most of the students in the 6-14 age groups leave the school before completing their education. It leads to a waste of financial and human resources.
 - According to the **National Family Health Survey-5**, not being interested in studies was the reason given by **21.4% of girls and 35.7% of boys aged between 6 to 17 years for dropping out of school before the 2019-20 school year.**

What are the Long-Term Solutions to the Education System in India?

- **Towards Experiential Learning Approach:**
 - There is a need for **inclusion of problem-solving and decision-making related subjects in the school curriculum** to offer hands-on learning experience to students and prepare them to face the outside world when they enter into the workforce.
 - **Experiential Learning can reap maximum benefit** from its ability to extract active participation from every student, which in turn triggers their **emotional intelligence** and sets them on a path to self-learning.
 - Linking **Artificial Intelligence with the Educational Sector** will also facilitate experiential learning.
- **Implementation of National Education Policy:**
 - The implementation of the NEP can help shake the education system from its slumber.
 - Moving away from the **current 10+2 system to a 5+3+3+4 system** will bring the pre-

school age group formally into the education set-up, which is not being implemented uniformly across all the states.

▪ **Education-Employment Corridor:**

- India's educational setup needs to be enhanced by **integrating vocational learning with mainstream education** and providing right mentorship at school (especially in government schools) to ensure that **students are guided in the right direction** from the start and are aware of career opportunities.
- Students in rural regions have great potential and are motivated to study but lack the right mentoring. **This is required not just for the children but also for their parents** that will in a way also reduce the gender gap in education.

▪ **Reducing the Language Barrier:**

- While keeping English as a means of **education for international understanding (EIU)**, it is important to give other Indian languages equal importance.
- Special publication agencies **can be established to translate resources** into a variety of languages so that all Indian students have the same opportunity regardless of their linguistic background.

▪ **Taking a Note From Past to Future:**

- It is important to look to the future while keeping our **long-established roots** in mind.
- There is **much to learn from the 'Gurukul' system** of ancient India, which focussed on holistic development beyond academics, centuries before the topic became a buzzword in modern education.
- **Ethics and value education** remained at the core of learning in the ancient Indian education system. Values such as **self-reliance, empathy, creativity, and integrity** remain a major area in ancient India that have relevance even today.
- The ancient evaluation of education was not restricted to grading thematic knowledge. **Students were assessed on the skills they learned and how well they can apply practical knowledge to real-life situations.**
 - The modern education system can also devise similar systems of assessment.

What are the Government Initiatives Related to Educational Reforms?

- [National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning](#)
- [Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan](#)
- [PRAGYATA](#)
- [Mid Day Meal Scheme](#)
- [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#)
- [PM SHRI Schools](#)

Drishti Mains Question:

What are the issues with the school education system in India? How can the current system in India address these challenges and ensure inclusive quality education?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution does India have a bearing on Education? (2012)

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans- (d)

Mains

Q1. How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. **(2020)**

Q2. Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. **(2021)**

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