



Towards Inclusive Education: Policy Reforms For Children In India

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Abstract

Education is a fundamental right that shapes the future of individuals and societies. In India, a country characterized by its vast diversity and socio-economic disparities, the formulation and implementation of effective education policies are critical to achieving equitable access to quality education for all children. The Indian education system has undergone significant transformations over the decades, with numerous policies aimed at addressing the challenges of enrolment, retention, and quality of education. This article explores the evolution of education policy for children in India, highlighting key initiatives and reforms that have emerged in response to the changing needs of the population. By examining the impact of these policies on educational access and quality, this analysis seeks to illuminate the path forward in creating an inclusive and effective educational framework that fosters the holistic development of every child in the nation. Through a comprehensive understanding of past and present policies, we can better envision a future where education empowers children to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. The country's education policy has undergone significant transformations over the years, aiming to address the complex issues of accessibility, equity, and quality in education. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the latest landmark reform, endeavours to revitalize India's education system, focusing on inclusive and holistic development of children. This article examines the evolution and key provisions of India's education policy, and its implications for children's education. By analysing the policy's strengths and weaknesses, this article aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on creating a robust and equitable education system that nurtures the potential of India's future generations.

Keywords: Education Policy in colonial and postcolonial period, Children education, Education for all, Right to Education, National Education Policy, Expenditure on education, Drop-out, School infrastructure etc.

Education is a basic human right. A child's right to education entails the right to learn. Yet, for too many children across the globe, schooling does not lead to learning.

Education is a fundamental right that shapes the future of individuals and societies. In India, a country characterized by its vast diversity and socio-economic disparities, the formulation and implementation of effective education policies are critical to achieving equitable access to quality education for all children. As India prepares to celebrate its 78th Independence Day on August 15, 2024, the urgency of addressing educational challenges is more pronounced than ever. With India being the most populous country in the world, the 2011 Census revealed that 26 percent of its population is illiterate, translating to approximately 121.08 crore individuals, with a staggering 88.4 crore illiterate people residing in rural areas.

The largest number of these illiterate individuals are children, who often find themselves engaged in various forms of labor, including domestic work and hazardous occupations. Many come from impoverished backgrounds, highlighting the systemic barriers to education. The aspiration of achieving "Education for All" by 2015 has largely faltered, with educational expenditure in India standing at only 3.3 percent of GDP as of 2010—significantly lower than that of the USA, Russia, and France. Consequently, access to quality education has remained largely restricted to the elite, particularly benefiting male children. The marginalization of children from weaker sections of society perpetuates a cycle of illiteracy and socio-economic disadvantage.

This article explores the evolution of education policy for children in India, highlighting key initiatives and reforms that have emerged in response to these pressing challenges. By examining the impact of these policies on educational access and quality, this analysis seeks to illuminate the path forward in creating an inclusive and effective educational framework that fosters the holistic development of every child in the nation. Through a comprehensive understanding of past and present policies, we can better envision a future where education empowers children to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. Education has practically remained largely accessible to the elites and that too mostly to male children. The children of the weaker section of the society were denied education. The educational advancement of the common people were seen as a threat to the continuation of the feudal society.

Some important sociological thinkers and philosophers who emphasized the essential role of education for children and its benefits for society:

John Dewey: A key figure in progressive education, Dewey believed that education should be experiential and focused on the needs of children. He argued that education is essential for democracy and social progress, fostering critical thinking and social responsibility.

Jean Piaget: Known for his work on cognitive development, Piaget emphasized the importance of education in nurturing children's intellectual growth. He believed that education should align with children's developmental stages to facilitate effective learning.

Maria Montessori: Montessori advocated for child-centered education, promoting independence and self-directed learning. She believed that education should respect children's natural development and empower them to become active participants in society.

Emile Durkheim: A foundational sociologist, Durkheim argued that education is vital for social cohesion and the transmission of cultural values. He saw education as a means to integrate individuals into society and promote moral development.

Paulo Freire: Freire emphasized critical pedagogy and the importance of education as a tool for social justice. He believed that education should empower marginalized individuals and promote critical consciousness, enabling them to challenge oppressive systems.

John Stuart Mill: An advocate for liberal education, Mill argued that education is crucial for individual development and societal progress. He believed that an educated populace is essential for the functioning of a democratic society.

Hannah Arendt: Arendt emphasized the role of education in fostering critical thinking and responsible citizenship. She believed that education should prepare individuals to engage thoughtfully with the world around them.

Howard Gardner: Known for his theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner advocated for a more inclusive and diverse approach to education, recognizing that different children learn in different ways. He believed that education should nurture each child's unique talents.

Maxine Greene: A philosopher of education, Greene emphasized the importance of imagination and the arts in education. She believed that education should cultivate a sense of possibility and encourage individuals to engage with societal issues.

Indian Thinkers:

Jyotirao Phule

- **Pioneer of Education for All:** Phule was a strong advocate for the education of women and marginalized groups. He founded the first school for girls in Pune in 1848, emphasizing that education should be accessible to all, regardless of caste or gender.
- **Social Reform:** Phule viewed education as a means to challenge and dismantle the caste system. His work laid the foundation for subsequent social reform movements in India.

Savitribai Phule

- **Champion for Women's Education:** As Phule's wife, Savitribai played a vital role in the movement for women's education in India. She became one of the first female teachers in India and worked tirelessly to educate girls and women from marginalized backgrounds.

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy

- **Social Justice Advocate:** Periyar was a vocal critic of caste discrimination and advocated for rationalism and education as tools for social reform. He emphasized the need for education to eradicate the caste system and promote equality.

Mahatma Gandhi

- **Holistic Education:** Gandhi promoted an educational philosophy centered on character development, self-reliance, and social responsibility. He believed that education should prepare individuals to be responsible citizens and contribute positively to society.

Tagore's Philosophy

- **Education and Humanism:** Rabindranath Tagore emphasized the importance of an education that nurtures creativity and individuality. He founded Santiniketan, where he promoted a holistic approach to education that integrated nature, art, and culture.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

- **Social Reformer and Educator:** Gokhale was an advocate for educational reform in India and believed in using education as a means to uplift the masses. He emphasized the need for an education system that catered to the needs of the Indian populace.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

- **Advocate for Equality:** Ambedkar emphasized education as a crucial tool for social and economic upliftment, particularly for marginalized communities. He believed that education could empower individuals to challenge oppressive social structures and fight for their rights. He criticized the caste system and advocated for a modern education system that promotes equality and social justice.

These thinkers collectively highlight the fundamental role of education in fostering individual potential and promoting a just and equitable society.

Methodology:

Literature Review:

- Explain that you conducted a comprehensive review of existing literature on education policy in India. Specify the types of sources you consulted, such as academic books, journal articles, and policy documents.
- Mention any specific databases or search terms used to gather relevant literature.

Analysis of Government Reports:

- Detail the process of reviewing key government documents, such as the National Education Policy, reports from the Ministry of Education, and other relevant publications.

- Discuss how you analyzed the content of these documents, focusing on specific themes or issues related to education policy for children.

Data Sources:

- Specify the statistical data and indicators you used from government databases, such as enrollment rates, literacy statistics, and educational expenditures.
- Explain how you ensured the reliability and validity of these data sources.

Synthesis of Findings:

- Describe how you synthesized the findings from the literature and government reports to draw conclusions about the state of education policy in India.

Educational Reforms by the British:**Macaulay's Minute (1835):**

The origin of the modern education system can be traced in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1835, Lord Macaulay passed the resolutions to the establishment of schools teaching European literature and science. These schools became immediately popular because of English education by some of the educated Indians and particularly leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others.¹ The English education schools helped to get into Government services. This was mainly due to the Proclamation issued by Lord Hardinge in 1844 to serve in public offices that were educated in English schools.

Wood's Despatch (1854):

Sir Charles Wood prepared a comprehensive document that laid the foundation for a modern education system in India. It emphasized the importance of primary education and established a network of schools and colleges. He promoted the idea of training teachers and developing curricula. Sir Charles Wood was the President of the Board of Control. He had an important effect on spreading English learning and female education in India. In 1854, he sent a dispatch to Lord Dalhousie, the Governor General of India. Charles Wood suggested that primary schools must adopt vernacular languages. The high schools must adopt Anglo-vernacular language and at the college English should be the medium of education. This is known as Wood's Despatch. The main intention to encourage the English language was to use as workforce in the company's administration in India. The Wood's Dispatch is called Magna Carta of English Education in India.

Hunter Commission (1882):

William Wilson Hunter recommended the expansion of primary education and the establishment of a system of public education that would be accessible to all, emphasizing the need for trained teachers. He was a statistician, a compiler and a member of the Indian Civil Service. In 1882 as a member of the Governor General in Council he was appointed he chairman of the Commission on Education. Hunter Commission was appointed to report on the whole question of education in India. The Commission recommended that "Secondary

¹ Government of India, Ministry of Education, Report of the Secondary Education commission Mudaliar Commission Report.pp.7,8.

Education as far as possible be provided on the grant-in-aid basis and that the Government should withdraw as early as possible from the direct management of Secondary Schools."² The report of the Hunter Commission of 1882 is a valuable document and an excellent survey of secondary schools during that period, and made fundamental recommendations of education at this stage.

Indian Universities Act (1904):

It established greater control of universities by the British government, aimed at regulating higher education and ensuring that it served colonial interests.

Raleigh Commission (1902):

He recommended significant reforms in secondary and higher education, emphasizing the importance of science and technical education.

The Universal and Compulsory Education had been focus since 1911 when Gokhale Bill for Elementary Education (GBEE) was prepared. The first law on compulsory education was the Bombay Municipality (Primary Education) Act, 1918. Some Princely States also had laws for the promotion of education such as the Baroda Education Act, 1893; the Mysore Education Act, 1913.

In Article 45 of the Constitution postulates as a Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP), the achievements of free and compulsory education for all children up to age of 14 years.

Educational Reforms by the Government of India:

Kothari Commission (1964-66):

The Kothari Commission, officially known as the Education Commission of 1964-66, played a pivotal role in shaping India's education policy. Chaired by Dr. Daulat Singh Kothari. It focused on providing a framework for a national system of education, emphasizing the importance of equity, quality, and relevance in education. He recommended a common school system and emphasized the need for educational planning and policy formulation.

National Policy on Education (1986):

- It aimed at promoting an integrated approach to education and providing universal access to education. It emphasized the need for quality education, particularly for marginalized sections of society.
- **Quality Education:** Improving educational standards, with a focus on marginalized sections, including:
 - Scheduled Castes (SCs)
 - Scheduled Tribes (STs)
 - Girls and women
 - Disadvantaged groups

² Government of India, Ministry of Education, Report of the Secondary Education commission Mudaliar Commission Report.pp.9, 10.

Key provisions included:

- **Universal Elementary Education:** Ensuring compulsory education for all children aged 6-14.
- **Vocationalization:** Integrating vocational training into secondary education.
- **Equity:** Special measures for disadvantaged groups, such as scholarships and reservations.

The 1986 NPE was later modified and updated with the National Policy on Education (1992), which reaffirmed the commitment to universal access and quality education.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001):

Its aimed at providing universal elementary education, focusing on the enrollment and retention of children, particularly girls and those from disadvantaged communities. It included initiatives for improving the quality of education and infrastructure in schools.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in 2001, aimed to universalize elementary education (ages 6-14) across India.

Key objectives:

- **Universal Enrolments:** Ensure all children have access to elementary education.
- **Retention:** Improve student retention rates, especially among:
 - Girls
 - Scheduled Castes (SCs)
 - Scheduled Tribes (STs)
 - Disadvantaged communities
- **Quality Enhancement:** Improve education quality through:
 - Teacher training
 - Curriculum reforms
 - Infrastructure development (classrooms, toilets, drinking water)
- **Inclusive Education:** Mainstream children with special needs.

Right to Education Act (2009):

It made education a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14 years, ensuring free and compulsory education.

It established norms for quality education, teacher-student ratios, and infrastructure.

The Right to Education Act, 2009, made education a fundamental right for children aged 6-14, ensuring:

- **Free Education:** No costs or fees for elementary education.
- **Compulsory Education:** Mandatory attendance for all children.
- **Quality Norms:** Standards for:
 - Teacher-student ratios (1:30)
 - Classroom and school infrastructure
 - Teacher qualifications and training

Key Provisions:

- **Universal Accessibility:** Neighborhood schools within 1 km radius.
- **Inclusive Education:** Reservation of 25% seats for disadvantaged groups.

- **No Discrimination:** Prohibition of physical punishment, harassment, and screening procedures.

National Education Policy (2020):

It aimed to transform the Indian education system by promoting holistic and multidisciplinary education. It focused on vocational education, early childhood care, and education, and integrating technology into teaching and learning.

There are some other initiatives taken by government of India for spread the education. In Article 45 of the Constitution postulates as a Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP), the achievements of free and compulsory education for all children up to age of 14 years.

During the post-independence era, the educational laws aimed at creating equal opportunities for all sections of the society, to meet the constitutional goals. In 1960, the Union Ministry of Education prepared the Delhi Primary Education Bill.

The first National Policy on Education was made in 1968. Before 1976, education was exclusively the responsibility of States. In 1976, through 42nd Constitutional Amendment, this included education in the Concurrent List. The Central Government continues to play the lead role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programs, such as National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA), 1986 as updated in 1992.

National System of Education as envisaged in the NPE is based on a national curricular framework, which had a common core along with other flexible, region-specific components. It also emphasized the need for a much higher level of investment in education of at least six per cent of the national income. While efforts are on to increase allocation on education, it has been proposed to constitute a fund called Bharat Shiksha Kosh (BSK) to enlist the support of all concerned and mobilise extra budgetary support in order to bridge the gap between actual requirements and the available budgetary support.

The National Policy of Children (1974) also clearly states its commitment in this direction. The National Policy on Education (NEP) 1986, Programme of Action (POA), 1986 and a revised NEP and POA (1992) attempted to remove these inadequacies by laying special emphasis on early childhood care and education.

Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (RC) recognised the child's right to education and the states are duly bound to ensure that at least primary education should be made compulsory. Article 28, directs that education should be aimed at developing the child's personality and talents, preparing the child for active life as an adult in society. Article 40 of the India Constitution too imposes a duty similar to Article 28 of the Convention.

The Constitution Bench in Unnikrishnan's case curtailed the parameters of the right of education by holding –

“----- The citizens of this country have a fundamental right to education. They said right flows from Article 21. This right is however, not an absolute right. Its contentions were that parameters have to be determined in the light of Art 45 and 41. In other words, every child / citizen of this country has a right to

free education untill, he completes the age of fourteen years. Thereafter the right to education is subject to the limits of economic capacity and development of State.” (Rao 2004: 198)

In the Jomtien Conference in 1990 emphasized that basic education has been the focus of international attention. The Delhi Declaration of the Nine high populated (E-9) countries had recognized in 1993 that the aspirations and development goals of the countries could be fulfilled only by assuring education to the entire population. The

Dakar Conference of World Education forum in April 2000 reviewed the progress made to achieve the goals of Education For All (EFA) and set a further framework for action towards EFA. This Dakar Framework for Action covered all facets of basic education such as early childhood care and education, elementary education, education for adolescent, adult education, gender equality and quality improvement. India is committed to the goals of Education For All (EFA), which was reiterated in the Ministerial Review Meeting of E-9 countries held at Beijing in August 2001.

In 2001, Education for All Campaign (the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 played an important role for enrolment in primary schools of India. India is also committed to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Draft National Education Policy was released in May 2019 which was a revised version of 1992 education policy. The draft includes a strong focus on teachers’ continuing professional development and a push towards the greater access for mother-tongue-based instruction. A draft version of the revised National Education Policy has been prepared. It will be implemented after the approval of the Parliament.

Important steps taken by the Government of India:

In 1976, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Reinforced national and integrative role of education, emphasizing quality standards for teachers and encouraging personnel development, research and internationalization. Education became a ‘concurrent subject’ with dual responsibility at both central and state levels. In 1987-88, Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Teacher Education Established the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) and strengthened the role of the SCERTs in teacher education.

In 1995, Mid-day Meal Scheme was launched to improve the nutritional status of primary school children through the compulsory provision of free mid-day meals for all primary pupils. It was revised in 2001 and 2004 and set for expansion to include breakfast in 2019–20.

In 2007–08, Model School Scheme Public-private partnership initiative that planned 6,000 model schools (one in each block) as a ‘benchmark of excellence’ to ensure access to quality schooling for ‘talented rural children’. In 2008, the National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme introduced of Rs 6,000 per annum to ‘meritorious’ students from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue education from grades 9–12.

In 2009, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) a major program that aimed to improve quality, equity of access (irrespective of gender, socioeconomic background and disabilities) and enrolment and

completion ratios at the secondary level, on teacher training, provision of basic facilities, science and ICT education.

The Right to Education Act (RTE) is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted on 4 August 2009. It provides free and compulsory education for the children between the age of 6 to 14 years in India under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of every child on 1 April 2010. The title of the RTE Act incorporates the words ‘free and compulsory’.

There are some other initiatives taken by the government to improve education among the children in India. In 2014, the Beti Bachao and Beti Pathao were introduced to protect the girl child and access to education.

Where do we stand today?

Table-1. Literacy Rates in India (In percentage)

Census year	Persons	Males	Females
1951	18.3	27.2	8.9
1961	28.3	40.4	15.4
1971	34.5	46.0	22.0
1981	43.6	56.4	29.8
1991	52.2	64.1	39.3
2001	64.8	75.3	53.7
2011	73.0	80.9	64.6

1951-1971: Age group 5 and above, 1981-2011: Age group 7 and above

Data Source: Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

Source: Education Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept of School Education and Literacy, Government of India, 2018.

In data explore that in the 1951 census the total literacy rate was 18.3 percent in India. The literacy rate among the male was 27.2 per cent and female was 8.9 percent only. It has seen there are huge changes occurred in literacy rate in India from one decade to another decade.

In the 2011 census, the total literacy rate was 73 per cent. There were total 80.9 per cent male was literate and female literacy rate was 64.6 per cent.

There are challenging tasks for the government to increase the female literacy rate in India. The new Education Policy may help to increase the literacy rates in India.

Table-2: Teacher-Pupil ratio from 1950-51 to 2015-16

Highest level taught in the School / Years	Primary School	Upper Primary School	Secondary School	Senior Secondary School
1950-51	24	20	NA	21
1960-61	36	31	NA	25
1970-71	39	32	NA	25
1980-81	38	33	NA	27
1990-91	43	37	NA	31
2000-01	43	38	31	35
2005-06	46	34	32	34
2006-07	44	34	31	34
2007-08	47	35	33	37
2008-09	45	34	32	38
2009-10	41	33	30	39
2010-11	43	33	30	34
2011-12	41	34	32	33
2012-13*	28	25	NA	NA
2013-14*	25	17	26	41
2014-15*	24	17	27	38
2015-16*	23	17	27	37

Source: Education Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept of School Education and Literacy, Government of India, 2018.

The data reveals that the teacher pupil ratio since 1950-51 till 2015-16, there was no such huge changes occurred in the ratio of teacher and pupils. In 1950-51, in Primary Schools there were teacher-pupil ratio was 1: 24, in 2015-16, the teacher pupil ratio was 1: 23 which was almost same.

In the Upper Primary Schools, in 1950-51, the teacher pupil ratio was 1: 20, in 2015-16, the teacher pupil ratio was 1:17. It was even less than earlier.

As per the data 2000-01, the teacher-pupil ratio were 1: 31 and in 2015-16, the teacher pupil ratio was 1:27 which was quite high than earlier in Secondary School. In 1950-51, in the Senior Secondary Schools the teacher pupil ratio was 1:21 and in 2015-16 the ratio became 1:37.

Table-3 The teachers-pupil ratio in 2015-16.

Type of Institution	Number of Teachers	Pupil Teacher Ratio
Primary	2606120	23
Upper Primary	2612347	17
Secondary	1431591	27
Senior Secondary	2041864	37

Source: Education Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept of School Education and Literacy, Government of India, 2018.

There are total 2606120 primary teachers and teacher pupil ratio was 1:23. There are 2612347 Upper Primary schools teaching and the ratio of teacher-pupils was 1:17. In 2015-16, in the Secondary and Senior Secondary schools, there were total 14,31,591 and 20,41,864 teachers were teaching. The teacher-pupil ratio was 1:27 in Secondary schools and Senior Secondary schools, the ratio was 1: 37 in 2015-16.

Table-4: Annual Drop-out rate in School Education**All Categories of Students**

Classes/ Year	Primary			Upper Primary			Secondary		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
2011-12	5.89	5.34	5.62	2.13	3.20	2.65	NA	NA	NA
2012-13	4.68	4.66	4.67	2.3	4.01	3.13	14.5	14.5	14.54
2013-14	4.53	4.14	4.34	3.09	4.49	3.77	17.93	17.79	17.86
2014-15	4.36	3.88	4.13	3.49	4.6	4.03	17.2	16.9	17.06

Source: Education Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept of School Education and Literacy, Government of India, 2018.

The data reveal that the average students' drop-out rates in school education from 2011 to 2015. In 2011-12, the primary schools the dropout of boys were 5.89 per cent and girls 5.34 per cent and total dropout were 5.62 per cent. But in 2014-15, the boys' dropouts were 4.36 per cent and girls 3.88 per cent and total dropout were 4.13 per cent in Primary schools. It is showing a sharp reduction in dropout of boys and girls during that period. At the same time, in Upper Primary Schools 2011-12, the dropouts of boys were 2.13 per cent and it increased by 3.49 per cent in 2014-15 in Upper Primary Schools. In 2011-12, the dropouts of girls were 3.20 per cent in Upper Primary schools and it also increased by 4.6 per cent in 2014-15. Lastly, in the Secondary Schools, the dropouts of boys were 14.5 per

cent in 2012-13, which reached 17.2 per cent in 2014-15. In 2012-13, the dropouts of girls were 14.5 per cent which reached 16.9 per cent in 2014-15. So the total dropouts in Secondary were 17.06 per cent. It is a great concern that students dropouts increased more as per their class standard.

➤ **Expenditure in Education:**

The expenditure on education had increased Rs 97,000 Crore (around £11 billion) in 2004-05, to Rs 560,000 (around £63 billion) in 2015–16, according to MHRD budget analyses. In 2014, an NSSO survey 30 indicated that average household expenditure per student in general education was Rs 6,788 (just over £75), and that 26 per cent of students were taking private tuition, especially at secondary levels, where this figure rises to 37 per cent.

Table- 5. Public expenditure on Education and GDP (Rs in Crore)

Year	GDP at Current price (at Factor cost) (Rs. Crore)	Total Expenditure on Education by Education & other Departments (Rs. Crore)	Expenditure on Education by Education & other Departments as % of GDP
1951-52	10080	64.46	0.64
1960-61	16220	239.55	1.48
1970-71	42222	892.36	2.11
1980-81	130178	3884.20	2.98
1990-91	510964	19615.85	3.84
2000-01	1991982	82486.48	4.14
2005-06	3390503	113228.71	3.34
2006-07	3953276	137383.99	3.48
2007-08	4582086	155797.27	3.40
2008-09	5303567	189068.84	3.56
2009-10	6108903	241256.02	3.95
2010-11	7248860	293478.23	4.05
2011-12	8736039	333930.38	3.82
2012-13*	9946636	368132.87	3.70
2013-14(RE)*	11236635	433640.59	3.86
2014-15(BE)*	12433749	502929.34	4.04

Data Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

* Base year has been revised from 2004-05 to 2011-12.

Source: Education Statistics at a Glance, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept of School Education and Literacy, Government of India, 2018.

The data reveals that in 1951-52, the total expenditure on education was Rs. 10080 Crore and expenditure on education was only Rs. 64.46 Crore which was 0.64 of total GDP of India.

As the latest data shows that there was drastic increase in education sectors by the Government of India. In 2014-15, It was Rs. 1,24,33,749 Crore allotted and the expenditure was Rs. 5,02,929.34 which was the total budget of 4.04 per cent.

In 2023-24, the education budget allocation was Rs. 1,12,473 crore, which was an increase from the earlier years, reflecting the government's focus on the education sector, including schemes under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The Union Budget 2024-25, the education budget provision in India stands at Rs. 1,17,634.92 crore. This represents a continued commitment to improving education in the country. In the future, the Government of India and all states have planned to increase the expenditure on education almost 20 per cent of total public expenditure.

National Education Policy 2020:

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has constituted the Committee under Chairmen Dr K. Kasturirangan in June 2017 for drafting National Education Policy. The Committee submitted its report in May 2019. It addressed the challenges such as access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability faced by the current education system. The new Draft National Education Policy proposes many changes in both school and higher education. The Draft NEP follows the initiative of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (Education For All) to create a unified free and compulsory education system for the children aged 3 to 18 years in India. It is integrated into a curriculum that promotes a wider range of interests which includes music, dance, art and physical education as well as the vocational subjects at higher levels.

The education policy aims to universalize the pre-primary education by 2025 and will offer foundational literacy for all by 2025. There is an aim to achieve 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio for all school education by 2030. It recommended new Curriculum and Pedagogical Structure, with 5+3+3+4 design to cover the children in the age group 3-18 years.

It emphasizes on mother tongue-based education and protect and promote the Indian culture through the study of classical languages and regional languages. It proposes the teaching of other classical languages and literature, including Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian and Prakrit in schools. The Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog or the *National Education Commission* an apex body . It will be chaired by the Prime Minister and will comprise eminent educationists, researchers, Union Ministers, representation of Chief Ministers of States, eminent professionals from various fields. The Ministry of Human Resource and Development to be re-designated as the Ministry of Education (MoE)

The Draft National Education Policy 2019 will play an important role in the transformation of the Indian education system. It has the provision to provide quality education, innovation and research based education which may foothold for a knowledge superpower.

Last but not the least the education is the key to unlocking India's true potential. A literate and educated population is essential for national development and prosperity. The importance of child-centric education policies cannot be overstated, as they lay the foundation for future generations to drive innovation, progress, and social change. Education is not just a fundamental right; it is a powerful tool for improving health, ensuring gender equality, fostering political participation, and combating poverty. It empowers individuals to create a more just, equitable, and prosperous society.

The Government of India has made notable strides, particularly through initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which was approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020. This policy offers an innovative and inclusive approach to education reform, aiming to address the evolving needs of India's young population. However, the path to achieving full literacy and educational equity remains challenging. It will require collective effort—by policymakers, educators, communities, and civil society—to overcome the barriers that still prevent many children from accessing quality education.

Now is the time to transform India's education landscape. By prioritizing accessible, high-quality education for every child, regardless of background or circumstance, we can build a brighter future. Together, we have the opportunity to create a vibrant knowledge society, one that fosters creativity, skills, and critical thinking, making India a global leader in education.

As we look to the future, it is crucial that India continues to evolve its education policies to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world. Investing in our children's education is an investment in India's growth, prosperity, and global relevance.

Let us remain committed to ensuring that education becomes the cornerstone of a society that empowers every child to thrive. Together, we can harness the transformative power of education to create a more just, prosperous, and innovative India—a beacon of knowledge and progress for generations to come.

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