


WEEKLY

FOCUS

#56, DEC 2021

VISIONIAS  
INSPIRING INNOVATION



# SCHOOL EDUCATION: MIND IS A TABULA RASA

## INTRODUCTION

Mind is a Tabula Rasa (Mind is a clean slate) i.e., mind at its origin is a blank paper devoid of any knowledge or character. This idea was propounded by English philosopher **John Locke** in 17th Century and conveys the meaning that the experience and learning one gets in the early years leaves a lifelong imprint on the person. School Education, being a part of student's life in this critical period has a significant role in filling this 'clean slate'.



But what is school education and why is it considered so important? What have been the achievements of the prevalent education system in India? What are the challenges that it faces? How the New Education policy, 2020 aims to ameliorate these issues? And what ground level interventions can be made for achieving these aims? In this article, we will attempt to answer these questions.

## WHAT IS SCHOOL EDUCATION AND WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

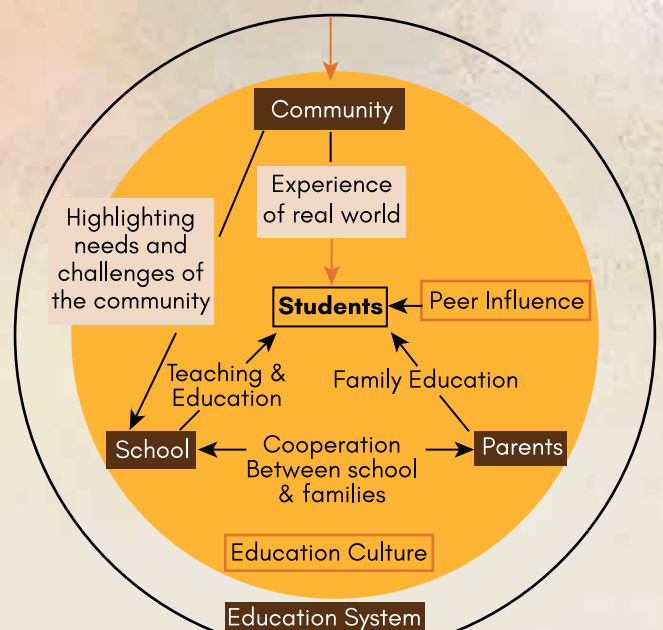
School is an institution that enables learning. This learning encompasses teaching, school's culture, available resources and every aspect of the school which touches the life of the student. In India, the school education system engages the student for roughly 12-15 years up till the student is 18 years of age, thus playing the central role in a student's life.

The importance of good quality school education in a student's life can be seen in following ways-

- ❖ **Building the foundation of learning:** Over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in the early years in order to ensure healthy brain development and growth.
- ★ In India, the school education starts at the age of 3 in the form of Anganwadis, Pre-schools or Balvatikas and thus plays a very important role in the foundation of learning.
- ❖ **Shaping the character of an impressionable mind:** With large number of students from diverse backgrounds, teachers and a system of code of conduct, the school represents a microcosm of society. It is in this microcosm, that the student learns values like equality, empathy, friendship, honesty among others.
- ★ For instance, learning to be honest in the formative years cultivates a permanent 'sense of guilt' in the student for dishonest behaviour.
- ❖ **Opportunity for an integrated learning environment:** Continuous interaction between students, families and societies can be capitalized upon to create an integrated learning environment for students by institutionalizing the participation of all stakeholders in the learning process.
- ★ For example, the RTE Act mandates that each school must have a functioning School Management Committee (SMC), comprising parents, local authority officials, teachers and 'local educationists or children' to create a bridge between the school administration and the local community.



### THE THREE WAY COMMUNICATION OF COMMUNITY, PARENTS AND SCHOOL





- ❖ **Enabling exploration and self-discovery:** The availability of teachers, peers, facilities and resources and adequate amount of time provides all the ingredients for a student's journey of self-discovery. The process of exploration can help the students identify their interests and skills and their full potential.
- ❖ **Affecting national and global development:** By enabling holistic development of the individual, good school education translates to national and global development via economic, social as well as cultural contribution.

## WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION?

### Indian education policy: a timeline

The following timeline documents important policies introduced by the Indian government since independence.

#### Kothari Commission

Made recommendations to reform education by ensuring relevance to needs, improved productivity, national integration, a focus on moral values, and closer involvement of universities in pursuing these aims, leading to the National Policy on Education in 1968.

#### 42nd Constitutional Amendment

Reinforced national and integrative role of education emphasising quality standards for teachers and encouraging increased personnel development, research and internationalisation. Education became a 'concurrent subject with dual responsibility at both central and state levels.

#### Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Teacher Education

Established the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETOs) and strengthened the role of the SCERTS in teacher education.

#### Midday Meal Scheme

Aimed to improve the nutritional status of primary school children through the compulsory provision of free midday meals for all primary pupils. Revised in 2001 and 2004 and set for expansion to include breakfast in 2019-20.

#### Right to Education Amendment

The 86th Constitutional Amendment introduced the Right to Education for all children up to age 14 and the right to early childhood care up to age six.

#### 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'.

1952-53

#### Secondary Education Commission

Established aims and made recommendations for secondary education regarding age groups, objectives, and importance of mother tongue, Curriculum content and 'multipurpose schools'.

1964-66

#### National Policy on Education (NPE)

Included stipulations on compulsory education up to age 14, greater equality of opportunity, the (then new) three language formula and improved teacher education.

1968

1976

#### (New) National Policy on Education (NPE)

Emphasised greater integration of women, SCs and STs, expansion of adult education, incentivisation for low-income families, recommending a child-centred approach at primary level and expanding the open university system.

1986

1987-88

#### District Primary Education Programme

Aimed to achieve universal primary education, leading to SSA in 2000.

1993

1995

#### Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

Introduced to achieve universal primary education through the provision of new schools (access) and the strengthening of existing school facilities, as well as increasing teacher capacity and support and improving teaching-learning materials (quality) (see Indian government education initiatives section below.)

2000-02

2002

#### National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

Developed by the National Council for Educational Research and Training, the NCF strongly advocated a move away from rote learning and towards more child centered practices.

2005

2007-08



**Girls' Hostel Scheme**

The Scheme for Construction and Running of Girls Hostel for students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools aimed to provide accommodation for girls near schools to reduce dropout due to distance to school, financial constraints and related societal factors, with a focus on disadvantaged girls in 'Educationally Backward Blocks'.

**Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)**

A major programme that aimed to improve quality, equity of access (irrespective of gender, socio-economic background and disabilities) and enrolment and completion ratios at secondary level, with specific foci on teacher training, provision of basic facilities, science and ICT education and inclusivity (see Indian government education initiatives section below).

**Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage**

Provided assistance for all students with disability to continue studying in grades 9-12 after completion of primary education.

**Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**

Aims both to celebrate the girl child and to ensure the survival, safety and education of girls, including commitments to building more girls toilet and drinking water facilities thereby reducing the number of female dropouts.

**Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan**

Launched to encourage greater enquiry, creativity and interest in science, maths and technology, and to develop stronger links between schools and higher education institutions.

**National Education Policy**

The policy seeks to overhaul key aspects of the education system including revisions to the Right to Education Act and governance structure of the system.

2008

**National Scheme for Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education**

Aimed to promote increased enrolment of girls in secondary (14-18) education, with a specific focus on girls from SC and ST communities. Included a financial deposit (Rs 3,000) for eligible students to withdraw upon successful completion of secondary education at age 18.

2008

2008

**National Mean-Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme**

Introduced scholarships of Rs 6,000 per annum to 'meritorious' students from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue education from grades 9-12.

2009

**RTE Act**

Provided all children aged six to 14 with the right to free and compulsory education in a local school and laid out a rights-based framework that casts legal obligations on central and state government. Also specifies teacher-pupil ratios, school working days and teacher working hours and qualifications as well as prohibiting physical punishment, mental harassment and selective admission of pupils.

2009-10

2009-10

2012

**Justice Verma Commission on teacher education**

The report published after this commission's deliberations made a series of important recommendations to improve the provision of teacher education in India

2014

2014

**Scheme to Provide Quality Education in Madrasas**

Aims to provide for the modernisation of madrasa education through the National Institute of Open Schooling. Aims to reach one million Muslim children

2015

2018

**Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**

Aims to subsume and merge SSA RMSA and Teacher Education, with a focus on ensuring a continuum' from preschool right up to senior secondary level and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal 4.

2020



**Near Universalisation of Primary Education:** Since committing to the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 (and enactment of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001), India has reduced its "out of school" children by over 90 per cent as per UNESCO.

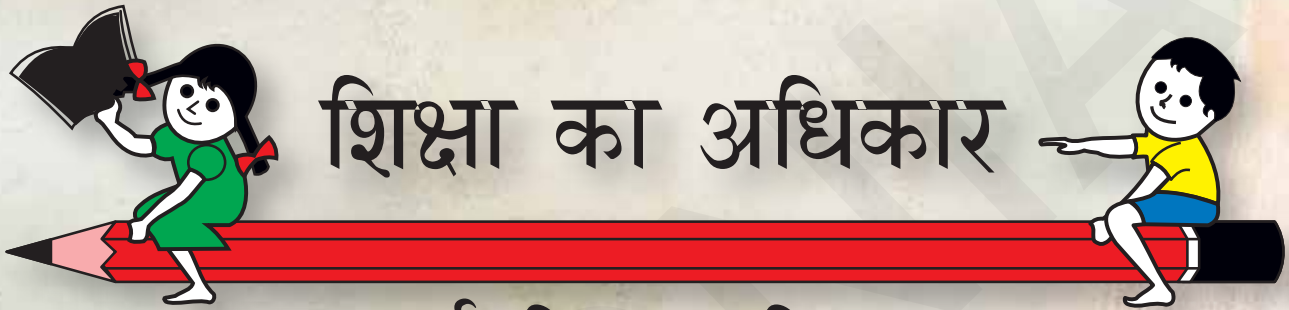


A corollary of increasing primary education is the **growth in literacy rates** from 18.5% in 1951 to 65% in 2001 to **74% in 2021**.





- ❖ **Progressively moving towards gender parity:** The growth in primary enrolment is accompanied by a 60 per cent increase in female school enrolment and India is now predicted to be the only country in South and West Asia to have an equal ratio of girls to boys in both primary and secondary education. Several initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Sukanya Samridhi Yojana etc. have contributed towards this change.
- ❖ **Increasing school availability:** According to government estimates, total number of schools in India have increased from 971,000 in 2000 to 1.52 million in 2015. This can be accredited to several initiatives taken by the Government especially key initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Right to Education.
- ❖ **Increased Private Participation:** The percentage of rural private schools had reached almost 25% in 2011. This can be partly attributed to Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which lays down norms and standards for private schools.
  - ☀ Springing up of number of private schools translated to growth of a large pool of teachers.
- ❖ **Development of a strong institutional framework:** Since independence, the institutional and regulatory framework of education has strengthened in the form of NCERT, growth in educational boards such as CBSE, State Boards and adoption of international boards etc.



## शिक्षा का अधिकार

सर्व शिक्षा अभियान  
सब पढ़ें सब बढ़ें

### THE TWIN TOWERS: RIGHT TO EDUCATION AND SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN

Two prominent initiatives of the Indian government, **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001** and the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**, have promoted greater focus on issues of access, **inclusivity and quality in education**.

The 2009 RTE Act stipulates that **schooling is free and compulsory** for all children aged 6 to 14. This right is complemented by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan with the **objective of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE)**.

Contribution of these two initiatives can be seen in following ways-

- ☀ Schools being established in the remotest hamlets of the country **bringing equity to formal education**. Also, all private unaided schools are required to **reserve at least 25 per cent of school places** for children 'belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups'.
- ☀ RTE paved the way for **Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE)** - a system whereby teachers are expected to use formative as well as summative assessment techniques to track learner progress in both academic and non-academic (extracurricular) domains.
- ☀ Studies have shown that the '**No-Detention Policy (NDP)**' (part of RTE) has had a positive effect on academic learning outcomes and has led to **improved motivation and the creation of a "fear free" learning environment**.

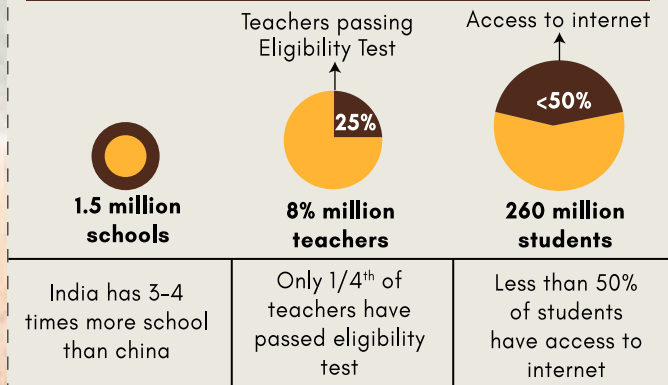


## OTHER MAJOR STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION

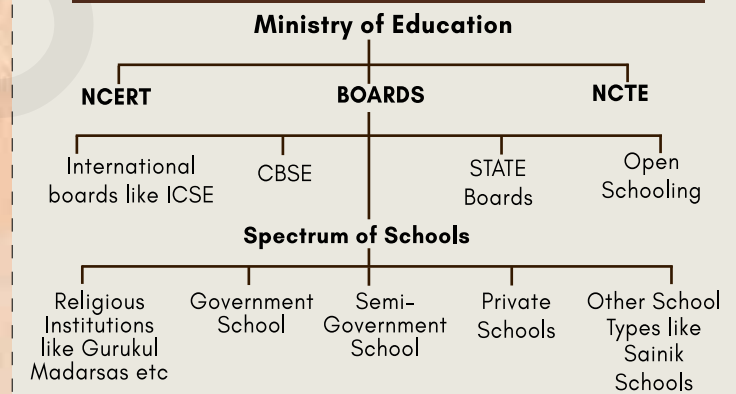
- ✦ **Focussed efforts to improve the quality of education with** initiatives like:
  - ☀ Amendment of RTE Rules to Include Learning Outcomes and Amendment of RTE Act 2009 for **Training of all Untrained Teachers**.
  - ☀ National Achievement Survey, National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (**NISHTHA**)
  - ☀ Development of a single source data for School Education - **Re-engineering Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE)**.
  - ☀ **Reforming the Performance Grading Index (PGI)** by expanding the idea to create PGI: State and PGI: District.
  - ☀ **Comprehensive review** of the 2005 **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** announced by NCERT.
  - ☀ **School Education Quality Index (SEQI)** by NITI Aayog.
  - ☀ **National Initiative for Proficiency in reading with understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN)**.
- ✦ **Student-centric initiatives:**
  - ☀ **Pariksha pe charcha** in which Prime Minister interacts with students, teachers and parents from across the country.
  - ☀ Other initiatives include reforms in Mid-day meal scheme, Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme- DHRUV etc.
- ✦ **Digitization and technological initiatives:**
  - ☀ **SWAYAM:** An online platform making courses available for all subjects in a massive open online course (MOOC) format.
  - ☀ **DIKSHA:** A platform that has been set up for teachers to access learning resources and for professional development purposes.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIA'S SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM

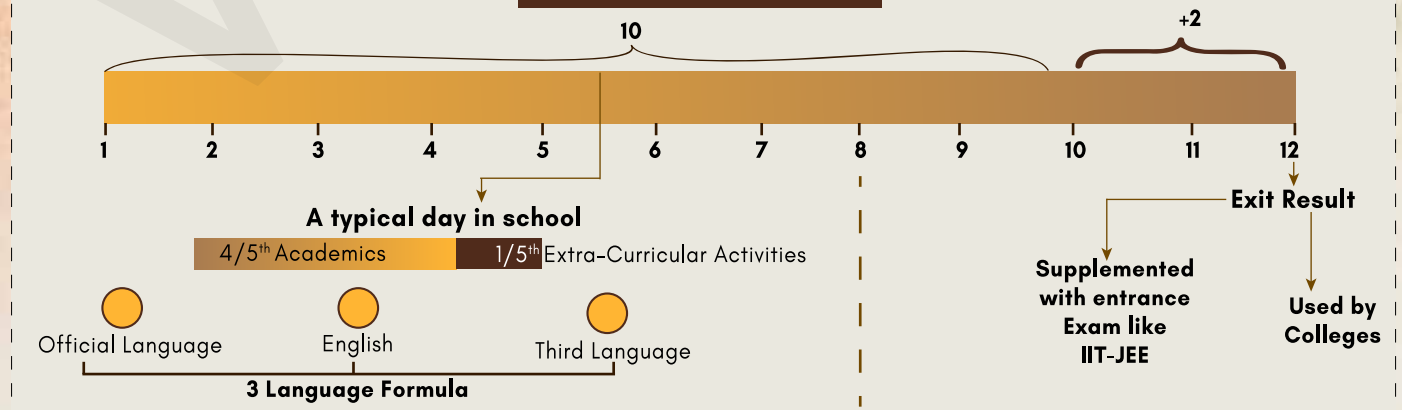
### ONE OF THE LARGEST EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN THE WORLD



### DIVERSE INSTITUTIONAL SET UP



### THE SCHOOL SPECTRUM





# WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES IN OUR SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM?

## ACADEMIC CHALLENGES

- ❖ **Focus on rote-based versus competency-based learning:** Currently, the focus of schools is largely on completion of syllabus and learning for exams.
- ❖ **Weak remedial programs that are not designed to cater to varied learning levels:** Students in an average classroom are at diverse learning levels with several of them behind the current grade level. A one-size-fits-all teaching model furthers this gap and cascades the learning losses with each successive year.
- ❖ **Unhealthy competition especially from standards 9th to 12th:** Becoming a part of the growing competition culture, students tend to focus more on grades rather than learning. This type of mindset is extremely detrimental as it can foster the behaviour where students only retain information for a test and then flush it out of their brain afterwards.
- ☀ Prevalence of such a culture can cause a lot of stress and pressure on the student **affecting their mental health** and self-esteem if he/she is unable to achieve the desired goal.
- ❖ **Weak assessments and no means to track real-time & granular learning data:** Increased reliance on standardised assessments has led to issues such as teaching to the test, a more narrowed curriculum, teacher cheating, and student exclusion. This also makes it difficult to draw inputs to customize teaching content and methodologies, training content, etc.
- ❖ **Teacher capacity constraints and inadequate trainings to address them:** According to NITI Aayog estimates, many teachers are themselves scoring <60-70% in papers of the grades that they teach. The current training model is unable to cater to such large gaps.
- ☀ The issues in the current model include lesser than required duration of training, one-size fits all approach, no customization to teachers' training needs, and no subsequent tracking of impact/ change in classroom.



## INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND CAPACITY ISSUES

- ❖ **Sub-scale schools contributing to lack of resources and ineffective delivery:** Of the nearly 1.1 million government schools in India, ~400,000 have fewer than 50 students.
- ☀ These sub-scale schools suffer from a host of challenges - at most two teachers, leading to multi-grade teaching and a lack of subject-specific expertise and focus; lack of dedicated Principals as well as facilities such as playgrounds, boundary walls or libraries.
- ❖ **Shortage of teachers:** There is a shortage of one million teachers across the country, and this challenge is exacerbated by the concentration of teachers in urban locations.
- ❖ **High share of teacher time spent on administrative tasks:** As per a report by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) only ~19% of a teacher's annual school hours are spent on teaching activities with remaining time spent on non-teaching activities such as election duties, data collection, mid-day meal distribution etc.
- ❖ **Inappropriately structured education departments with large vacancies:** The organization structures of the education department across States typically have overlaps in functions and responsibilities across different parts of the department.
- ❖ **Curriculum design lopsided towards academics:** Less than 1/5th of a typical school day is spent by the students on activities beyond academics which include art, music, dance and sports among others.



- ❖ **Infrastructural issues:** Apart from in cities, in most places students are forced to walk kilometers to access schools. Further, according to the latest Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) report, over 6,000 schools across India do not have a building, around 20% schools do not have functional electricity connection, many do not have drinking water and hand wash facilities, only 20% of schools have functional children with special needs (CWSN)-friendly toilets and many do not have separate toilets for girls.
- ☀ All this contributed to high drop-out rates ;47 million adolescents in India have not progressed to upper secondary school, the highest in the world.

## GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RELATED ISSUES

- ❖ **Excessive commercialization of education:** It transforms the education sector into a business which could lead to unethical practices. This includes the issue of corruption in admissions, decreasing affordability of schools etc.
- ❖ **Inadequate efforts to address prevailing social issues:** Ethnic issues such as caste based discrimination, gender issues such as patriarchy and economic issues such as poverty propel the drop out rates particularly among females, students from rural areas, Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) sections.
- ❖ **Low expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP:** As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), spending on education can be seen to have fluctuated, from 4.1 per cent in 2000-01 to 3.3 per cent in 2019-20, against the 6% recommended by every national policy since 1968.
- ❖ **Lack of technology enabled data systems for academic and administrative matters:** Data opacity often leads to a lot of these decisions being driven by ad-hoc rationale instead of facts and reason.
- ❖ **Lack of accountability and performance-based reviews and incentives:** Professional growth and monetary benefits for government teachers are not directly linked to performance and thus there is no real incentive for them to orient towards achieving results such as delivery of quality education, timely provision of hygienic mid-day meals, etc.

The **outbreak of the pandemic aggravated these issues** further leading to lowering of learning outcomes, increment in dropout rates and enlargement of gulf in educational access due to prevalence of digital divide.

### IN CONVERSATION!

#### School Education in times of COVID-19



**Vinay:** Hey Vini. Are you attending today's morning class?

**Vini:** No, the internet connection in my phone is very weak. It gets very difficult to understand the class.

**Vinay:** You used to never skip class in school, you are doing so too regularly nowadays.

**Vini:** I don't intend to do so, but my parents don't understand the need for a good internet connection. They feel that its wastage of money.

**Vinay:** You are a very bright student, you should not give up like that.

**Vini:** I am not giving up, but it is too much stress to manage studies at home with distractions and poor internet connection. I don't even get to meet my school friends.

**Vinay:** Many of my friends were also stressed and drifted away from studies due to lockdown. Talking to a councillor helped them a lot. You can try that. In fact, our History teacher Sharma Sir is also a councillor, maybe he can talk to your parents.

**Vini:** Thanks Vinay. I will try to contact him after School.







LATER IN THE DAY

**Vini:** Hello Sir, I am Vini. I am facing some problems with my studies, Vinay told me that I could talk to you about them.

**Sharma Sir:** Hello Vini. I would be happy to help. What problem are you facing?

**Vini:** It is very difficult to study at home, I am not able to understand what the teacher teaches and even my parents are not able to help. Should I drop out of school and do something else?

**Sharma Sir:** It is very mature of you to acknowledge these issues. Before making any decision, try to understand that howsoever difficult, this is a temporary phase and it will pass. Also, like you, your parents and teachers are also facing difficulty with new methods of learning and the associated technology.

**Vini:** Then what should I do sir?

**Sharma Sir:** Keep the communication channels open with your teachers and parents. This will help them understand your needs better and relieve your stress to a large extent.

You can try out more channels like creating a Whatsapp group with your peers and teachers or asking for doubt clearing sessions over the phone. In any case, just share your concern with the teachers. We will collectively find a way out.

**Vini:** Thankyou sir! It was very helpful talking to you.

## HOW NEW EDUCATION POLICY AIMS TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES?

The New Education Policy, 2020 Aims to address these Issues by Taking Transformative Steps in Following Areas-

AREA	INTERVENTION
Strengthening the foundation of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A <b>National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCPFECCE)</b> for children up to the age of 8 will be developed by NCERT.</li> <li>☀ The numerous rich local traditions of india involving art, stories, poetry, games, songs, and more, will also be suitably incorporated in it.</li> </ul>
Building of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A <b>National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy</b> will be set up by the Ministry of Education to ensure the same.</li> <li>☀ The mission would include requisite teacher training, curriculum alteration and content repository development along with dimension of Health and Nutrition keeping in mind the holistic nature of development.</li> </ul>
Curtailing Dropout Rates and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ This would be done by <b>providing effective and sufficient infrastructure</b> so that all students have access to safe and engaging school education at all levels.</li> <li>☀ This would be complemented by carefully tracking students, as well as their learning levels.</li> </ul>
Restructuring school curriculum and pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ 5+3+3+4 design to ensure that the structure remains responsive and relevant to the developmental needs and interests of learners at different stages of their development. This include:</li> <li>☀ Focus on holistic development of learners</li> <li>☀ Reduction of curriculum content</li> <li>☀ Experiential learning</li> <li>☀ Flexibility in course choice</li> <li>☀ Flexibility in the three-language formula</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Curricular Integration of Essential Subjects, Skills, and Capacities.</li> <li>✦ Creating National Textbooks with Local Content and Flavour.</li> <li>✦ Transforming Assessment to test higher-order skills such as analysis, critical thinking ability etc.</li> <li>✦ Supplementary enrichment material, guidance and encouragement for Gifted Students/Students with Special Talents.</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: right;"> </div>
<p><b>Transforming teaching</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ This would be ensured by taking following reforms-             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ <b>Providing Scholarships and taking Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs)</b> to ensure quality in recruitment and deployment of teachers.</li> <li>✦ <b>Overhauling the service environment and culture of schools</b> to maximize the ability of teachers to do their jobs effectively.</li> <li>✦ <b>Continuous Professional Development (CPD)</b> through workshops.</li> <li>✦ <b>Better Career Management and Progression (CMP)</b></li> <li>✦ Creating a common guideline for <b>National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST)</b>.</li> <li>✦ <b>Providing additional special educators for children with disability.</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Making Education Equitable and Inclusive</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ <b>Separate strategies</b> will be formulated for focused attention on reducing the social category gaps in school education.</li> <li>✦ For example, providing bicycles and organizing cycling and walking groups to provide access to school.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Efficient Resourcing and Effective Governance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ <b>Establishment of school complex/school cluster</b>, consisting of one secondary school together with all other schools offering lower grades in its neighbourhood including Anganwadis, in a radius of five to ten kilometers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard-setting and Accrediation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ Regulation aims <b>to empower schools and teachers</b> with trust, enabling them to strive for excellence and perform at their very best, while ensuring the integrity of the system through the enforcement of complete transparency and full public disclosure of all finances, procedures, and educational outcomes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Key Areas</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✦ <b>Technology Use and Integration:</b> An autonomous body, the <b>National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)</b>, will be created to provide a platform for the free exchange of ideas on the use of technology.</li> <li>✦ <b>Encouraging Online and Digital Education:</b> This includes pilot studies for online education, creation of Digital Infrastructure, online teaching platforms, content repositories, blended models of learning etc.</li> <li>✦ <b>Strengthening the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE):</b> CABE is a forum for widespread consultation and examination of issues relating to educational and cultural development.</li> <li>✦ <b>Financial Commitment:</b> Policy envisions a substantial increase in public investment in education (including Central and State Government) up to <b>6% of the GDP</b>.</li> </ul>



## IN CONVERSATION!

### Can NEP bring a paradigm shift in the education system?



**Vini:** Hey Vinay. Is your school participating in the next week's inter-school hockey tournament?

**Vinay:** No Vini. My school does not have a team for any sport. In fact, my school does not encourage participation in any of the extra-curricular activities.

**Vini:** But your school is very good for academics. Every year, the district topper is from your school. Also, your school is not as expensive as mine.

**Vinay:** I agree. The teachers are very knowledgeable. But the exam pattern is such that we are more focussed on memorising than understanding. I can hardly recall what I learnt last year.

**Vini:** That is true for my school too. We rarely discuss any topic. The teacher is always in a hurry to complete the syllabus. Why is it that we go to school 6 days a week for 6 hours every day and still don't have enough time?

**Vinay:** Maybe it's the size of the syllabus. The problem in villages is even more serious. My cousin in our native village tells me that his school remains closed most of the days and teacher hardly ever comes.

**Vini:** That is sad. But this should not be the case. Every student has the Right to Education. I want to study in a school which has good teachers, extra-curricular activities and fees which my parents can afford. But it seems like a dream.

**Vinay:** Don't get disheartened. Have you heard about the New Education Policy? It is very progressive and futuristic, it may lead to some dramatic changes in school education.

**Vini:** Sounds exciting. Let's see what happens.



The aims highlighted by the policy Envision a Transformative Idea for the education ecosystem. At any Rate, Realization of this vision will take time. How can this process be Accelerated?

## WHAT INTERVENTIONS CAN BE MADE FOR ACCELERATING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THESE AIMS?

### Focus on academic reforms:

★ **Competency Framework** where learning outcomes are measured by how well a class has mastered the given competency.

★ **Assessment Reforms:** Transition from testing of memory to testing of command over competencies, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity through better designed question papers through spot testing formats.

★ **Learning Enhancement Programs:** To effectively inculcate remediation programs, students should be grouped based on learning levels for the entire academic year to enable constant bridging of gaps.

★ **Digital Learning (in physical/remote classrooms):** Digital learning needs to be complemented by creation of digital libraries, creation of streamlined content dissemination channels and ensuring reach to the digitally disconnected.

#### Inspiration

Seekhne ke Pratiphal (Himachal Pradesh) focuses on 'learning outcomes' rather than syllabus completion.

#### Inspiration

Spot Testing and Learning Tracking Format (Jharkhand) has been successful in testing learning abilities.

#### Inspiration

Gyan Setu-Learning Enhancement Program (Jharkhand).

### Four types of Digital Intervention can be Leveraged in school Education

Computer Labs



Smart Classrooms



Broadcasting Network



Parent's Smartphones





## Strengthen Administrative and Delivery Systems:

- School Optimization:** The idea of School complexes propagated by the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020 can be implemented by ensuring a strategic roadmap for re-organisation spread in phases across 2-3 years and strong political will.
- Administrative Efficiencies through Tech and Data Systems** by building a strong Education Management Information System (E-MIS).
- Organization restructuring:** This includes strengthening core academic institutions (like SCERT), merging departments with similar activities and designing an Education Department for the future.
- Communication streamlining:** Ensuring streamlined and seamless information sharing between levels, i.e. from top (State) to bottom (teachers), and vice versa etc.

## Strengthen Human Capacity:

- Recruitment and rationalization of teaching and administrative staff** by developing a transparent transfer policy.
- Customised and Tech based Teacher training and mentoring.**

- Drive Accountability:** Academic monitoring and data backed reviews through routine visits and reporting by block officers.

## Create Shared Vision and Motivation for Change:

- Driving engagement of key actors** for generating momentum around systemic transformation.
- Encouraging competition** within the system by incentivizing stakeholders.

### Inspiration

School consolidation to create Adarsh schools in Rajasthan.

### Inspiration

Shala Darpan MIS (Rajasthan) which helped in taking informed data backed decisions.

### Inspiration

Comprehensive proposal for restructuring the Education Department in Odisha.

### Inspiration

Communication streamlining via WhatsApp and SMS in Himachal Pradesh.

### Inspiration

Madhya Pradesh has taken an online teacher rationalization process, moving close to 10,000 teachers from surplus to deficit schools.

### Inspiration

Odisha School Monitoring App (OSMA) forms the basis for block and district level reviews.

### Inspiration

CM of MP announced the Wall of Fame initiatives for well performing schools.

### Inspiration

Saksham Ghoshna's (Haryana) competitive spirit nudges blocks to attain grade-level competency.



"It takes a village to raise a child", but the schools have the responsibility to raise hundreds of children. Raising hundreds of children will need thousands of hands from government to community to parents to we as individuals. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that the school reformation is accompanied with societal efforts to make every child's educational journey as beautiful as possible.

*Done with School? The world of Higher Education is on its way. Stay Tuned!*



## TOPIC AT A GLANCE

### Importance of School Education

- ❖ **Building the foundation** of learning in the early years of schooling.
- ❖ **Shaping the character of an impressionable mind** by inculcating values like equality, empathy, friendship, honesty among others.
- ❖ **Opportunity for an integrated learning environment** with School, Parents and Community, all doing their part.
- ❖ **Enabling experimentation and exploration** with help of peers, teachers and the school ecosystem.
- ❖ **Affecting individual, national and global development** through awareness, character development and development of necessary skills.

### Achievements and initiatives in the context of School Education

- ❖ **Near universalization of primary education:** Implemented through initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.
- ❖ **Progressively moving towards gender parity:** Efforts made through initiatives like BBBP, Sukanya Samridhi etc.
- ❖ **Increasing school availability** due to initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Right to Education.
- ❖ **Increased Private Participation** after standardization of process with Right to Education Act.
- ❖ **Development of a strong institutional framework** in the form of NCERT, CBSE etc.
- ❖ **Other major initiatives** taken by the Government:
  - ✦ On **Quality of Education** such as **NISHTHA, Re-engineering U-DISE, SEQI, NIPUN** etc.
  - ✦ **Student centric initiatives** like **Pariksha pe charcha, Mid-day Meal** etc.
  - ✦ **Digitization and technological initiatives** like **SWAYAM** and **DIKSHA**.

### Challenges faced by the School Education System

Academic Challenges	Institutional Structure and Capacity Issues	Governance and Accountability Related Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Focus on rote-based learning</b> rather than competency-based-learning.</li> <li>❖ <b>Weak remedial programs</b> that are not designed to cater to varied learning levels.</li> <li>❖ <b>Unhealthy competition</b> especially from standards 9th to 12th.</li> <li>❖ <b>Weak assessments</b> and no means to track real-time &amp; granular learning data.</li> <li>❖ <b>Teacher capacity constraints</b> and inadequate trainings to address them.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Sub-scale schools</b> contributing to lack of resources and ineffective delivery.</li> <li>❖ <b>Shortage of one million teachers</b> across the country.</li> <li>❖ High share of <b>teacher time spent on administrative tasks</b>.</li> <li>❖ <b>Inappropriately structured education departments</b> with large vacancies.</li> <li>❖ <b>Curriculum design lopsided</b> towards academics.</li> <li>❖ <b>Infrastructural issues</b> vis-à-vis accessibility and functionality of schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Excessive commercialization of education</b> fuelling corruption and unaffordability.</li> <li>❖ Inadequate efforts to address <b>prevailing social issues in education</b>.</li> <li>❖ <b>Low expenditure on education</b> as a proportion of GDP.</li> <li>❖ <b>Lack of technology enabled data systems</b> for academic and administrative matters.</li> <li>❖ <b>Lack of accountability and performance-based reviews and incentives</b>.</li> </ul>

### Reformative Steps Proposed by the New Education Policy

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for <b>Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECCE)</b>.</li> <li>❖ National Mission on <b>Foundational Literacy and Numeracy</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Curtailing Dropout Rates</b> and Ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels.</li> <li>❖ Restructuring school curriculum and pedagogy with a <b>5+3+3+4 design</b>.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Transforming teaching</b> with steps like Teacher Eligibility Tests etc.</li> <li>❖ Establishment of <b>school complex/school cluster</b>.</li> <li>❖ Financial Commitment of <b>6% of GDP</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>National Educational Technology Forum (NETF)</b>.</li> <li>❖ <b>Strengthening the Central Advisory Board of Education</b>.</li> </ul>

Pillars	Interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on <b>Academic Reforms</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competency framework</li> <li>• Assessment reforms</li> <li>• Learning enhancement programs</li> <li>• Digital learning (in classrooms/ remote)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Strengthen Administrative &amp; Delivery Systems</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School optimization</li> <li>• Administrative efficiency through tech &amp; data systems</li> <li>• Organization restructuring</li> <li>• Communication streamlining</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Strengthen Human Capacity</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment &amp; rationalization of teaching &amp; admin staff</li> <li>• Teacher training &amp; mentoring</li> <li>• Investing in school leaders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Drive Accountability</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic monitoring &amp; data backed reviews</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Create a shared Vision &amp; Motivation for Change</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driving engagement of key actors (e.g., parent community)</li> <li>• Competition framework</li> </ul>

