State of Education in Urban India

Towards Nurturing Human Resources

Urban India has made remarkable progress in the education sector. There is near-universal primary enrolment, a consistent increase in upper primary participation, considerable increase in higher and technical education and decline in gender gap. However, with increase in educational levels, the transition rate declines, along with an increase in repetition and drop-out rates. There is also a decline in learning outcomes (achievement in reading, writing and other comprehensive skills) as students move up the ladder.
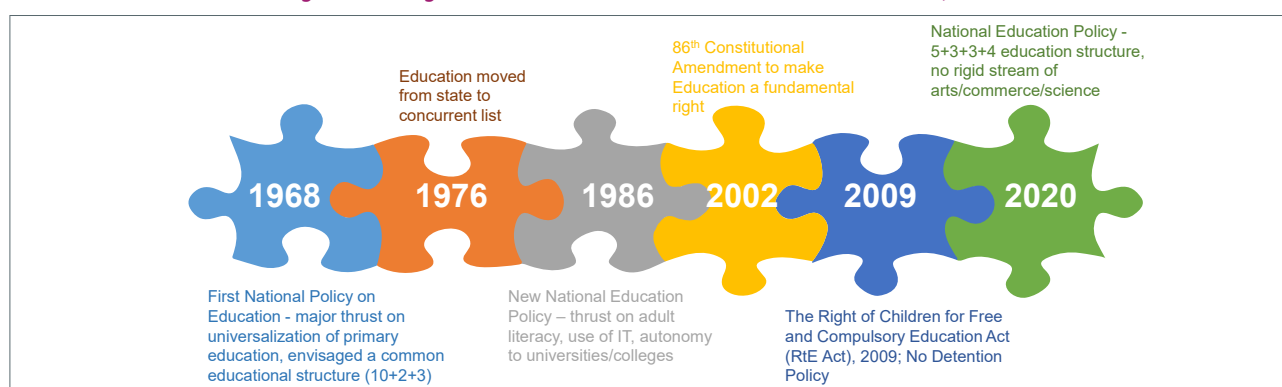
Key Policy Messages

- Need to shift focus from 'universalisation of enrolment' to 'universalisation of attendance' and 'quality education'
- Focus on improving learning outcome, especially in school education, with reorientation of end-term examination for more constructive evaluation
- Extend the coverage of the Right to Education Act (2009) till higher secondary education level
- Prepare a roadmap with timelines to bridge the digital divide among students.
- Ensure timely implementation of National Education Policy, 2020

National Education Policy (NEP)-2020: A New Approach

- In a significant shift from the 1986 policy, which had 10+2 structure of school education, the NEP, 2020 recommended '5+3+3+4' design bringing pre-school education (age 3 to 5 years) under the ambit of formal schooling
- Vocational education will start in schools from 6th class
- Assessment reforms with 360-degree Holistic Progress Card, tracking Student Progress for achieving Learning Outcomes
- All teachers and principals to take at least 50 hours of Continuous Professional Development workshops each year
- Flexibility in choice of subjects between the streams of humanities, commerce and sciences
- With provision for multiple entries and exits, the NEP sets the target for Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at 50 by 2035 in higher education
- Affiliation of colleges to be phased out in 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism to be established for granting graded autonomy to colleges.
- Other reforms include discontinuance of M. Phil. Degree, creation of Academic Bank of Credits to facilitate Transfer of Credits, building digital infrastructure, paving way for foreign universities to collaborate

Key Policy Interventions in Education, India

1968 – First National Policy on Education - major thrust on universalization of primary education, envisaged a common educational structure (10+2+3)

1976 – Education moved from state to concurrent list

1986 – New National Education Policy – thrust on adult literacy, use of IT, autonomy to universities/colleges

2002 – 86th Constitutional Amendment to make Education a fundamental right

2009 – The Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education Act (RtE Act), 2009; No Detention Policy

2020 – National Education Policy - 5+3+3+4 education structure, no rigid stream of arts/commerce/science

Key Facts*

Pre Primary and Elementary Education

- Participation in pre-primary education was very less (49% in the age group of 3-5 years), indicating a major scope for improvement in the foundation stage

- At the primary level, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)[1] was 102.5 and Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR)[2] was 102.2 which shows the considerable progress towards achieving 'universalisation of primary education'

- 98% of students have successfully transited from primary (I-V) to upper primary level (VI-VIII) in 2016-17

- Dropout rate is higher in upper primary (15%) as compared to primary (8%)

- With increasing levels of education, learning outcome declines. The share of students who attained desired (basic) proficiency in language and mathematics subjects in primary level was 48% and 40% respectively. This decreased to 41% in language and 32% in mathematics in upper primary. Imparting quality education and improving learning outcome is the need of the hour

Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

- Both Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) declined at secondary and higher secondary levels as compared to elementary education. The GER was 95 at the secondary (class IX-X) level and 81 at the higher secondary level (class XI-XII) as compared to GAR of 94 and 80 respectively

- Only 78 per cent students transited from secondary to higher secondary in 2016-17 (U-DISE[3])

- At the school level, highest drop-out rate was observed in secondary level (17.1%), followed by upper primary (15.2%) in the same year

- There were 63 schools with secondary classes (IX-X) and 39 schools with higher secondary classes (XI-XII) per 10,000 students at respective levels (U-DISE, 2018-19)

Higher Education

- The Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) for higher education (post higher secondary level) was only 33

- Participation in higher education varies significantly across economic status. GAR in higher education among economically poorer section (bottom quintile class of per capita consumption expenditure) is only 19, while it stands at 33.4 among the richer section (top quintile class)

- Though GER has registered an increase over time, it still remains at least 20 percentage points below that of China or Brazil. This is despite the creation of large number of higher education institutions in recent years

- The number of Indian students enroled in degree programmes abroad doubled from 134,880 students in 2004 to 278,383 in 2017 making India the second-largest contributor of international students worldwide (UNESCO, 2019)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training - TVET

- Around 7% persons aged 15-29 years accessed vocational/technical training

- The highest share of students pursuing technical/professional courses was in the engineering (45%) stream, followed by medicine (10%)

- Only four in every 10 students in technical/professional courses were females, which indicates their low participation

- While developed countries have over 50% of their working-age population formally trained in TVET, India's numbers remains at just 3% (PLFS, 2020)

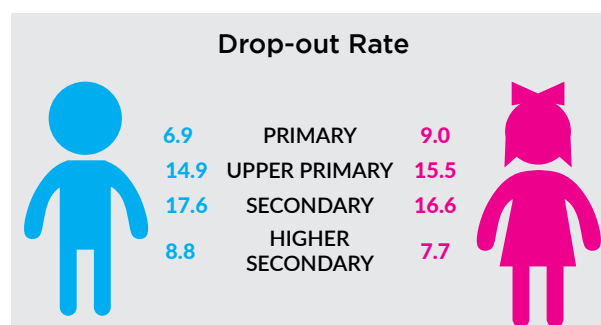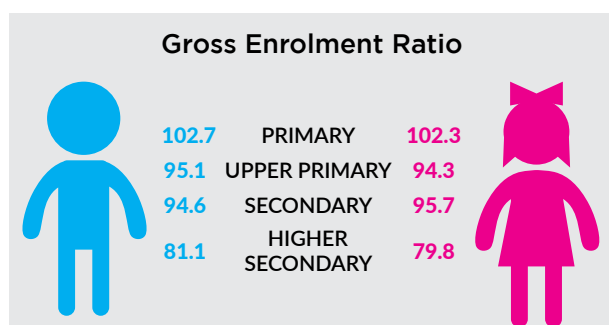Note: * wherever year not stated, data pertains to year 2017-18.

Source: 75th National Sample Survey(NSS): Social Consumption on Education in India, 2017-18; NSS PLFS (Periodic Labour Force Survey), 2020; U-DISE, 2016-17.

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[1] GER is the ratio of the number of students enroled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the reference school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.

[2] GAR is the ratio of the number of students attending a particular level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage to the total number of students in the reference age-group for that level of education.

[3] Unified District Information System on Education

Enrolment and Dropout Rate by Levels of Education in Urban India, 2017-18

Gross Enrolment Ratio

102.7	PRIMARY	102.3
95.1	UPPER PRIMARY	94.3
94.6	SECONDARY	95.7
81.1	HIGHER SECONDARY	79.8

Drop-out Rate

6.9	PRIMARY	9.0
14.9	UPPER PRIMARY	15.5
17.6	SECONDARY	16.6
8.8	HIGHER SECONDARY	7.7

Source: 75th National Sample Survey: Social Consumption on Education in India, 2017-18

Expenditure in Education

- Public spending in school education (class I-XII) per student was Rs. 13,974 in 2014-15

- India spend 4.13% of GDP on education in 2014 (Ministry of Education, 2016), much lower than the 6% suggested by both Kothari Commission (1966) and the National Education Policy, 2020

- Public spending in education as share of India's GDP is higher than Bangladesh (1.95% in 2013), Sri Lanka (2.17% in 2015), Russia (3.96% in 2014) and lower than South Africa (6.14% in 2015), UK (5.68% in 2014) and USA (5.38% in 2014)

- A share of 31% students at primary level and 36% at upper primary received free education in urban India in 2017-18. At secondary and higher secondary levels, this figure stood at 25% and 14% respectively. With the increase in the level of education, the access to free education declines

- Urban households spent Rs. 16,141 per student in school education (class I to XII) in 2017-18, of which 40% was accounted for private coaching

- Around one-fourth of students in urban India attending pre-primary and above level of education was taking/had taken private coaching in general course

- Households spent more money on education for boys than girls across all levels of education
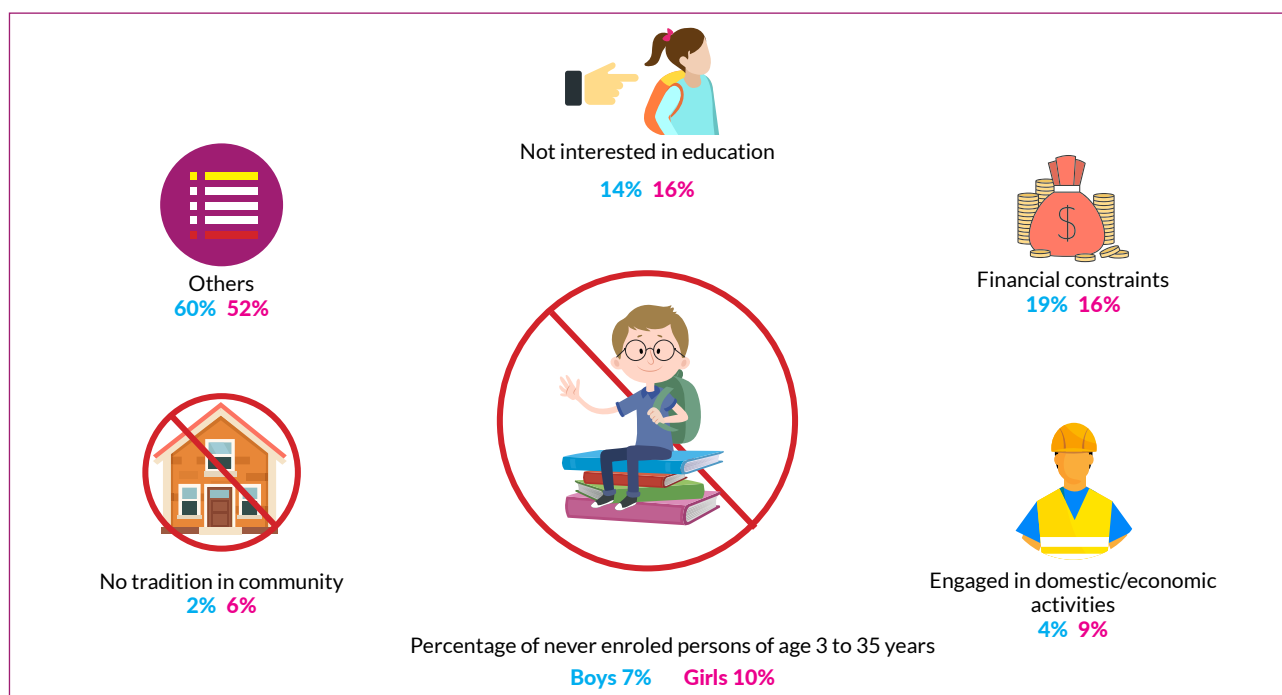
Education and COVID-19

- In India, school closures have affected 320 million students (UNESCO, 2020)

- Decision of shifting traditional classrooms to digital platforms is not only increasing learning inequality among children, but also pushing a large number of children out of school due to the digital divide

- A survey conducted in West Bengal in August 2020 found that around 71% of school children did not have access to online education, and the child labour among school-going children increased by 105% during the pandemic (Indian Express, 2020)

- Students from migrant households in cities are worst affected due to reverse migration and uncertainty of parents' livelihoods

- As schools will prepare to reopen, maintaining physical distancing norms will be a challenge. As per the U-DISE statistics, 3,759 (25%) primary schools in urban India are single classroom schools (National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration- NIEPA, 2017)

- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities are prerequisites for schools to reopen safely in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, only 66 per cent schools in urban India had overall WASH facilities, i.e., drinking water, functional toilets and hand wash facility (NIEPA, 2017)

- Besides disruption in the academic year, there is a risk that prolonged out-of-college may lead to increased drop-out rate and decreased learning outcomes resulting in long-term social and economic consequences. Without remedial measures, this can create a "COVID-19 generation" of workers with lower earnings and lower quality jobs over their lifetime

- A different pedagogy is required for remote teaching, therefore, teachers of higher education are finding it difficult to shift seamlessly from face-to-face to remote teaching and retain attention span of students

Major Reasons for Non-Enrolment, 2017-18

Not interested in education
14% 16%

Others
60% 52%

Financial constraints
19% 16%

No tradition in community
2% 6%

Engaged in domestic/economic activities
4% 9%

Percentage of never enroled persons of age 3 to 35 years
Boys 7%   Girls 10%

Source: 75ᵗʰ National Sample Survey: Social Consumption on Education in India, 2017-18

Recommendations

- Timely implementation of recommendations of the National Education Policy (2020) will bring considerable improvement in outcomes of education in urban India

- While in general, 'supply-side constraints' have been reduced with increased access to schools, there is a need to make the teaching-learning process more 'learner-centric' to reduce failure and drop-outs

- The government should ensure free public provisioning of secondary education (IX-XII standard) and extend the RtE Act to cover children in the 15-18 year age group

- NEP, 2020 acknowledges the need to bridge the digital divide and proposes creating a digital infrastructure. A clear roadmap with timelines needs to be developed in this direction

- In light of COVID-19, budgetary interventions should be made to mainstream out-of-school children in the 15-18 year age group

- Course curriculum needs to be designed for blended learning for higher education and TVET, which include both class room and online teaching

- Open-source digital learning solutions and Learning Management Software needs to be adopted to facilitate teachers to conduct online teaching. The DIKSHA platform, which is present in all states, can be further strengthened to ensure accessibility of learning to students