



**CHETANA**  
International Journal of Education (CIJE)

Peer Reviewed/Refereed Journal  
ISSN : 2455-8279 (E)/2231-3613 (P)

Impact Factor  
SJIF 2024 - 8.029



Prof. A.P. Sharma  
Founder Editor, CIJE  
(25.12.1932 - 09.01.2019)

**Evolution of India's National Education Policies:  
A Comprehensive Analysis of Past and Present Reforms**

**Dr. Vijay Khichar**

Associate Professor

**Dr. Abhishek Lunayach**

Associate Professor

<sup>2</sup>Engineering College Bharatpur

Email: vijaykhichar13@yahoo.com, abhilunayach27@gmail.com, Mob.-8949950579

First draft received: 15.11.2024, Reviewed: 25.11.2024, Final proof received: 20.12.2024, Accepted: 30.12.2024

**Abstract**

*Education in India has witnessed substantial changes over the years, transitioning from traditional teaching methods to a more skill-oriented framework. It now emphasizes not just the study of disciplines like history, economics, mathematics or science but also the development of practical skills that empower individuals to effectively utilize resources. A robust education system equips citizens with the knowledge and expertise needed to contribute meaningfully to national development. To advance this vision, India has recently introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, marking a significant step in its educational evolution.*

*An exploration of India's educational policies reveals the transformative reforms implemented over time, shaped by the efforts of various committees and commissions to improve educational standards. This paper undertakes a comparative analysis of India's educational policies since its independence in 1947, with particular attention to the three landmark National Education Policies introduced in 1968, 1986, and 2020. It delves into key milestones, budgetary allocations, actual expenditures and the evolution of the education system, from primary schools to higher education institutions.*

*The study also examines advancements in infrastructure, access to education and changes in student demographics across different eras. By comparing the objectives and outcomes of these policies, the paper highlights their collective impact on shaping the Indian education system. Focusing on the challenges addressed and solutions proposed by each policy, especially the NEP 2020, this research aims to provide a detailed understanding of the progress achieved and the ongoing challenges in India's educational landscape.*

**Key terms:** National Education Policy, Commission, Committee, Syllabus, India, Budget, GDP etc.

**Introduction**

Education is a cornerstone for developing knowledge across diverse fields, empowering individuals with the skills necessary for personal advancement and societal contribution. Investing in education yields long-term advantages, fostering individual growth while contributing significantly to societal and national development. Educated individuals are invaluable assets, capable of addressing key challenges like poverty and contributing to the upliftment of marginalized communities. A robust education system instils moral values, promotes innovation and serves as a catalyst for economic and social development.

Historically, India's educational roots lie in the Gurukul system, where students acquired knowledge under the

mentorship of a Guru, focusing on holistic learning and life skills (Adam William, 1983) <sup>(1)</sup>. Over time, this evolved to include institutions like Bihar's ancient monasteries, the Nalanda and Vikramshila universities, Buddhist centres of learning, and traditional *madrasas*, which served as hubs of knowledge and education. The introduction of modern education during British rule, significantly shaped by Christian missionaries (Kanika B, 2017) <sup>(2)</sup>, laid the foundation for the contemporary system, which continues to evolve to meet the nation's ever-changing needs.

Education in India has undergone significant transformations since the country gained independence in 1947. Various Governments have introduced several policies to address issues such as literacy rates, gender

disparity, regional imbalances and the need for a more skilled workforce. The evolution of these policies reflects India's efforts to modernize its education system, align it with global standards and meet the needs of its growing population.

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the major educational policies introduced in post-independence India, focusing on their evolution, key objectives and features. It examines how these policies have expanded access to education, promoted equity and improved teaching quality, while addressing vocational training and skill development. The study evaluates the economic investment in education, comparing budgetary allocations with actual expenditure, highlighting discrepancies that have hindered policy implementation, particularly in rural and tribal areas. It explores the distribution of educational institutions and student demographics, assessing the impact on educational accessibility. The paper also identifies key challenges, such as infrastructure gaps, regional disparities and curriculum misalignment with industry needs and offers solutions. A critical analysis of the NEP 2020 is presented, emphasizing its nascent to reform Education system of India by integrating technology, enhancing teacher training and aligning education with job market demands

#### Need of the Study

The Indian education system has witnessed multiple reforms and policy changes since independence, yet many deep-rooted challenges remain unresolved. The persistent issues of inadequate infrastructure, disparities in regional and tribal areas, lack of regulatory oversight, student-teacher imbalances and a disconnect between the education system and the demands of the labour market continue to hinder the nation's educational progress. In particular, the gap between the GDP allocated to education and the actual expenditure, along with the growing commercialization of education and the brain drain due to poor higher education quality, reflect systemic inefficiencies that must be addressed.

This study is critical because it provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of India's educational policies since independence, focusing on how political, economic and social factors have shaped their implementation and impact. By examining past and current educational policies, including the "National Education Policy (NEP) 2020", the study seeks to identify key areas of improvement, particularly in bridging the infrastructure gap, aligning education with industry needs and enhancing regulatory transparency. Furthermore, it will explore how political interference, regional disparities and the commercialization of education have impacted the approachability and eminence of Indian education system.

#### Research Objectives

- To analyse the evolution of educational policies in India post-independence and their key features.
- To investigate the gap between GDP allocation and actual expenditure on education.
- To analyse the regional inequalities in educational facilities, with a particular focus on rural and tribal regions.

- Study the effectiveness of regulatory bodies such as UGC and NAAC in maintaining educational standards.
- To evaluate the commercialization of education and its impact on equitable access and quality.

#### Research Methodology

This research utilized a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative analyses. Historical and policy analysis will form the qualitative aspect, while quantitative data on GDP allocation, expenditure and educational institution growth was analysed statistically. The study was mainly based on extensive use of secondary data which includes:

- Government reports on education (such as Ministry of Education reports, NEP documentation and UGC reports).
- Historical data on educational policies from various commissions (Kothari Commission, University Education Commission, etc.).
- Statistical data on GDP allocation, infrastructure development, student enrolment, teacher-student ratios and educational institution counts from national databases like NSSO, Census of India and AISHE reports.

#### Review of Literature

The review of literature presents a detailed examination of India's educational policies, focusing on the challenges and reforms since independence. Research by *Tilak (2008)*<sup>(3)</sup> highlights the persistent underfunding of education, particularly with locus on *Kothari Commission's* proposal to dedicate 6% of the GDP to education., which has been chronically unmet, affecting the sector's quality and infrastructure. Similarly, *Agarwal (2006)*<sup>(4)</sup> discusses the shortcomings of higher education, noting outdated curricula and limited access for marginalized communities, while calling for better governance and increased public spending to address these issues.

*Dreze and Sen (2013)*<sup>(5)</sup> emphasize the inequalities between rural and urban education systems in India, pointing out the significant gap in resource allocation and educational outcomes, which have hindered inclusive growth. Their work suggests that without targeted improvements, disparities in education will continue to challenge India's socio-economic development. Furthermore, *Chatterjee (2018)*<sup>(6)</sup> critically evaluates the draft NEP 2019, focusing on its reforms in higher education, while also highlighting the need for stronger teacher training and regulatory frameworks to support effective implementation.

*Kingdon (2017)*<sup>(7)</sup> addresses the rise of private schooling and the growing inequalities it exacerbates in India's education system. Her research argues that the uneven regulation of private institutions has resulted in varying quality, deepening the divide between the rich and poor. *Verma (2014)*<sup>(8)</sup> similarly focuses on tribal education, highlighting the barriers faced by tribal students, such as lack of infrastructure and language barriers and calling for more inclusive policies tailored to these communities unique needs.

*Srivastava and Noronha (2014)*<sup>(9)</sup> discuss the roles of regulatory bodies like UGC and NAAC, pointing out their limitations due to political interference and lack of autonomy. They argue that more transparent and powerful regulatory mechanisms are essential to uphold educational standards. Collectively, these studies suggest that while educational policies have sought to expand access and improve quality, gaps in funding, governance and regional equity continue to impede their success.

*Rao (2019)*<sup>(10)</sup> examines the role of the “National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)” in ensuring quality in higher education institutions in India. While he finds that NAAC accreditation has led to improved performance in many institutions, its effectiveness is limited by resource constraints and political interference. Rao argues for greater autonomy and funding for NAAC to fulfil its mandate effectively. Similarly, *Bhattacharya (2022)*<sup>(11)</sup> highlights the political dynamics influencing educational policy reforms, emphasizing how political interests can lead to inconsistent policy implementation and bias in scholarship distribution. He advocates for insulating education from political pressures to ensure fair and consistent implementation of transformative policies like the *NEP 2020*.

The *NITI Aayog (2018)*<sup>(12)</sup> report outlines a vision for India's development, stressing the need for increased public investment in education, innovation in teaching methods and equitable access across rural and urban areas. *Sridhar (2020)*<sup>(13)</sup> analyses the NEP 2020's potential impact on higher education, focusing on its emphasis on flexible curricula and vocational training while cautioning that successful implementation will require significant financial support. *Singh (2015)*<sup>(14)</sup> traces the evolution of higher education policy, calling for greater state involvement to improve quality and standards. Additionally, the *AISHE 2021-2022*<sup>(15)</sup> report highlights enrolment increases alongside significant access disparities, particularly for marginalized communities. These challenges underscore the need for a well-implemented and inclusive policy framework, such as the NEP 2020, to drive meaningful change in India's education system

### Findings of the Study

Education policy refers to the governments framework of plans, rules and regulations designed to maintain consistency in the education sector. Before implementing any policy, it is essential to address core questions highlighted by *Taylor et al. (1997)*<sup>(16)</sup> concerning education and its values, including assessment, curriculum and pedagogy. These considerations involve understanding the policy's purpose, justification and potential impact.

*Kogan (1975)*<sup>(17)</sup> outlined four fundamental values shaping educational policy: educational, social, economic, and institutional. These are further grouped into primary values (educational, social, and economic) and secondary values (institutional). It is essential to consider these values during policy implementation to ensure that the outcomes positively shape society's future.

### Historical Profile of Educational Policies in India

#### • The University Education Commission (1948-49)

Post-independence, the first significant reform in the Indian education system was initiated with the establishment of the University Education Commission, chaired by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. This commission emphasized the pivotal role of higher education in fostering critical thinking, self-reliance and leadership. Recommendations included the expansion of educational opportunities at all levels and enhancing the quality and accessibility of higher education. Key aspects included strengthening undergraduate and postgraduate programs and increasing the number of universities to meet the growing demand for higher education.

#### • The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)

Chaired by *Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar*, this commission focused on reforming secondary education to align with individual aptitudes and national requirements. It advocated introducing diversified courses to cater to vocational, technical and academic streams. The commission emphasized the importance of teacher training and the establishment of higher secondary schools to provide more structured educational pathways.

#### • The Kothari Commission (1964-66)

The recommendations of the Kothari Commission served as the foundation for India's first National Education Policy in 1968. It proposed a comprehensive framework addressing all levels of education. Significant recommendations included the establishment of a common school system to promote equality, the expansion of technical and adult education and the introduction of the 10+2+3 educational structure. These measures aimed to enhance access, equity, and quality in education.

#### • National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968

As the first official education policy of independent India, the NPE 1968 aimed to promote equal opportunities for all, especially marginalized communities. It also sought to embed Indian cultural values in the curriculum. Notable goals included providing free and compulsory education for children up to 14 years, encouraging regional language learning and setting up institutions focused on agriculture and industrial training.

#### • National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 and Program of Action 1992

The NPE 1986 marked a turning point in Indian education by focusing on inclusivity, particularly for women and marginalized communities. The 1992 Program of Action expanded on these efforts, addressing emerging challenges in the sector. Key initiatives included Operation Blackboard, aimed at improving primary school infrastructure, the promotion of distance learning through open universities and a greater focus on vocational education and integrating technology into the curriculum.

• **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)**

Launched as a major initiative to universalize elementary education, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan became one of the largest educational programs globally. Its primary goal was to ensure free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14 years. Special attention was given to increasing girls' enrolment and encouraging community participation in school management to improve accountability and inclusivity.

**Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009**

The RTE Act legally reinforced the right to free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years. It introduced key provisions, such as reserving 25% of seats in private schools for economically weaker sections, enhancing school infrastructure and addressing issues related to teacher quality and pupil-teacher ratios.

**National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**

The NEP 2020 represents the most comprehensive reform of India's education system to date, aiming to make education more flexible, multidisciplinary and globally competitive. The policy envisions a transformation rooted in the principles of equity, quality and access. Major features include the adoption of a 5+3+3+4 curricular structure, allowing secondary-level students the freedom to choose subjects and promoting instruction in the mother tongue or local language up to Grade 5, preferably up to Grade 8. The policy also emphasizes multilingual education, classical language introduction and merit-based teacher recruitment. Higher education institutions are set to transition into multidisciplinary entities, with an overarching goal to foster collaboration and holistic learning.

**Figure 1 Key Pillars of NEP 2020**



Through these policies, India has steadily worked towards building an inclusive and progressive educational framework, addressing historical challenges while aligning with contemporary global standards.

**Below table 1 compares main features of all educational policies of India:**

**Table 1: Comparative evaluation of main Features of NEP 1968,1986 and 2020**

Aspect	NEP1968	NEP1986	NEP2020
Value	National integration and unity	Human development of individuals	Global standard education system
Structure	10+2 system	10+3+1 system	5+3+3+4 system
Access	Emphasis on universal access	Focus on access to education for all	Increased access with a focus on marginalized groups
Curriculum	Emphasis on regional languages	Curriculum overhaul and flexibility	Multidisciplinary and flexible curriculum
Medium of Instruction	Hindi and regional languages	Work on regional language and English	Mother tongue/local language till Grade 5
Teacher Education	In-service training for teachers	Teacher training and education reform	Emphasis on professional development
Vocational Education	Limited focus on vocational training	Emphasis on vocational education	Integration of vocational education at all levels
Higher Education	Expansion of universities and colleges	Need for higher education reform	Multidisciplinary institutions emphasized
Technology	Minimal emphasis on technology	Limited use of technology in education	Strong focus on technology integration
Educational Financing	Limited government funding	Increased financial support for education	Higher budget allocation for education
Community Participation	Involvement of community in schools	Greater community involvement	Enhanced community engagement
Gender Equity	Acknowledgment of gender disparity	Focus on women's education	Strong emphasis on gender equality
Research and Development	Less emphasis on research	Encouragement of research in education	Focus on research and innovation in education
Cultural Education	Emphasis on Indian culture and values	National values and cultural education	Promotion of local culture and heritage
Assessment	Focus on examinations	Continuous and comprehensive assessment	National Assessment Framework introduced
Industry	Limited industry involvement	Focus on ICT/IT and women's education	Special emphasis on inclusion of all groups
Flexibility	Rigid structure of education	Greater flexibility in educational paths	Flexible learning pathways and options
Parental Involvement	Minimal encouragement	Encouragement of parental involvement	Strong emphasis on parental engagement
Implementation	Top-down approach	Need for decentralized implementation	Emphasis on collaborative implementation

Source: NEP 1968, 1986 and 2020

**Quantitative Evaluation of NEP Policies Status**

**(a) GDP Allocation and Expenditure on Education**

The table 2 comparing GDP allocation and actual expenditure on education highlights a consistent trend of underfunding in India's educational sector across various policies. Despite the gradual increase in allocated GDP percentages—from 1.5% in 1948-49 to 6% in the National Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 and beyond—actual expenditures have often fallen short. For example, while the NPE 1986 targeted 6% allocation, less than 5% was spent. This persistent gap suggests systemic inefficiencies in policy implementation, which could severely impact educational access, quality and equity, particularly for marginalized communities. <sup>(18)</sup>

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aimed to make substantial reforms in India's education system, including a key recommendation to allocate 6% of the country's GDP to education. This ambitious goal was intended to drive meaningful improvements across the educational sector, such as infrastructure development, teacher training, curriculum reform, and equitable access to education for all. However, the actual budgetary allocations have raised concerns regarding the government's commitment to realizing these reforms.

In the recent fiscal years, the budgetary allocation for education has been significantly lower than the NEP's targeted 6%. For instance, the allocation for 2024-2025 stands at 2.7%, while in 2023-2024 and 2022-2023, the allocation was 2.9%. The figures for earlier years are equally concerning, with 2021-2022 at 4.6% and 2020-2021 at just 1.33%. These figures fall drastically short of the NEP's target, signalling a potential gap between policy ambitions and actual funding.

Data from UNESCO <sup>(19)</sup> also underscores this concern. According to UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report, many countries are underfunding education, with India being no exception. The report highlights that despite India's recognition of education's pivotal role in social and economic development, public investment remains insufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, teacher quality, and digital resources. The UNESCO report also notes that the financial resources

required to meet global education targets, such as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, remain largely unmet in India.

The discrepancy between the allocated funds and actual expenditure on education raises questions about the effectiveness of the current policy execution. Without adequate funding, many of the key goals outlined in the NEP 2020, such as universal access to quality education, the enhancement of teacher training, and the creation of a robust digital infrastructure, are at risk of not being realized. Moreover, the inconsistent allocation over the years suggests that the government's commitment to making transformative changes in the education sector may be undermined by fiscal constraints or competing priorities.

For NEP 2020 to achieve its vision of creating a globally competitive, inclusive, and equitable education system, it is imperative that the government ensures consistent and substantial investment in the sector. This includes not only meeting the recommended 6% GDP allocation but also ensuring that the funds are effectively utilized to bring about tangible improvements in educational quality, access, and outcomes. Transparent financial planning, better governance, and accountability mechanisms will be key to ensuring that the lofty aspirations of NEP 2020 are translated into reality.

Addressing the discrepancies between allocated and actual spending is crucial for achieving educational goals and ensuring that resources are effectively utilized. This analysis underscores the need for enhanced accountability and monitoring mechanisms in the education sector, as well as targeted reforms to ensure that allocated funds directly benefit educational infrastructure, access and quality in India.

**Table 2 GDP Allocation and Expenditure on Education**

Policy	GDP Allocated (%)	Actual Expenditure (%)
University Education Commission (1948-49)	1.5%	1.2%
Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)	2.0%	1.7%
NPE 1968	4.0%	3.5%
NPE 1986	6.0%	4.0%
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)	6.0%	4.3%
RTE 2009	6.0%	4.5%
NEP 2020	6.0%	Less than 5%

Source: Indian Policy Report, 2014, 2022

**(b) Growth in Educational Institutions**

The table 3 illustrating the growth in educational institutions from 1948-49 to NEP 2020 reveals significant expansion across schools, colleges and universities in India. Under the University Education

Commission (1948-49), there were 210,000 schools, 500 colleges and 20 universities. By the time of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968, these numbers had increased to 300,000 schools, 1,500 colleges and 50 universities, indicating a steady growth trajectory.

The growth accelerated notably with each subsequent policy. By NPE 1986, schools had risen to 400,000, colleges to 3,000 and universities to 80. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001 marked a substantial leap, with schools reaching 600,000, colleges at 7,500 and universities at 250. The most dramatic increase is seen in NEP 2020, which projects 1,500,000 schools, 45,000 colleges and 1,000 universities. This table underscores the Indian government's commitment to expanding educational infrastructure, highlighting an emphasis on increasing access to education at all levels, particularly as the population grows and educational demands evolve.

**Table 3: Growth in Educational Institutions**

Policy	Schools	Colleges	Universities
University Education Commission (1948-49)	210,000	500	20
NPE 1968	300,000	1,500	50
NPE 1986	400,000	3,000	80
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)	600,000	7,500	250
NEP 2020	1,500,000	45,000	1000

Source: Indian Policy Report, 2014, 2022

**(c). Educational Status: Student Enrolment and Gender Disparity**

The table 4 on educational status, specifically student enrolment and gender disparity from 1948-49 to NEP 2020, highlights significant trends in total enrolment and gender representation in India's education system. Initially, under the University Education Commission (1948-49), there were 20 million students enrolled, with a stark gender disparity where 80% were male and only 20% female. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 saw a slight increase in total enrolment to 30 million, but the gender gap remained pronounced, with 70% male and 30% female students.

By NPE 1986, total enrolment rose to 50 million and although there was some improvement, male representation still dominated at 60%, while female enrolment reached 40%. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in 2001 marked a significant turning point, as total enrolment surged to 200 million, with male students making up 55% and female students increasing to 45%. The most balanced enrolment was recorded under the NEP 2020, with 250 million total students, where the gender disparity further narrowed to 52% male and 48% female. This evolution indicates a positive trend towards gender equity in education, reflecting ongoing efforts to enhance female participation and reduce gender disparities over the decades.

**Table 4: Educational Status: Student Enrolment and Gender Disparity**

Policy	Total Students (millions)	Male (%)	Female (%)
University Education Commission (1948-49)	20	80	20
NPE 1968	30	70	30
NPE 1986	50	60	40
Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)	200	55	45
NEP 2020	250	52	48

Source: Indian Policy Report, 2014, 2022

### Problems and Solutions of Each Policy

Each educational policy introduced since independence has encountered various challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, low quality of education and high dropout rates. Over time, the focus has shifted from quantity to quality, with emphasis on inclusivity, technology integration and vocational training. Various issues pertaining to each policy is been illustrated in variables below:

### GDP Allocation and Expenditure in Education: A Persistent Gap

One of the most critical challenges in India's educational sector has been the discrepancy between the GDP allocated to education and the actual amount spent. Over several decades, various governments have committed to increasing the share of GDP for education, but the implementation has often fallen short. For instance, while the **National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968** recommended that 6% of GDP be allocated to education, actual expenditure has typically hovered around 3-4%. This gap has severely impacted educational outcomes, particularly in terms of infrastructure development, teacher quality and the availability of educational institutions in remote regions.

### Lack of Infrastructure Development

Across the various educational policies, the lack of infrastructure has been a recurrent issue. In rural and tribal areas, many schools still lack basic amenities such as electricity, toilets and drinking water facilities and cleanliness. For example, under the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001)**, despite efforts to improve school infrastructure, thousands of schools, particularly in remote areas, remain under-resourced. Poor infrastructure not only affects the quality of education but also leads to higher dropout rates, especially among girls.

- **Urban vs Rural Divide:** The urban centres have benefited more from infrastructure improvements compared to rural areas, where the need is greater. States like UP, MP Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand, parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan etc and those with significant tribal populations still struggle with inadequate educational facilities.

- **Lack of Institutes in Tribal Areas:** States with significant **Adivasi** populations like Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand have fewer higher educational institutions, contributing to higher illiteracy rates and a lack of access to quality education.

### Imbalance in Student-Teacher Ratios

The imbalance in student-teacher ratios has been another longstanding issue in India's educational system. The **Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009** mandates a pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1 at the primary level, but many states have failed to achieve this target. In states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, teacher shortages are acute, with some schools operating with a ratio as high as 100:1. This lack of qualified teachers severely hampers the quality of education and individual attention given to students.

### Lack of Regulatory Bodies and Their Effectiveness

India has multiple regulatory bodies (like AICTE, UGC, NAAC, NIRF, PCI, MCI etc) but their effectiveness has been questioned repeatedly due to issues of bureaucratic inefficiency and lack of transparency.

- **UGC and NAAC Transparency:** The UGC is responsible for maintaining educational standards in higher education institutions, while NAAC accredits colleges and universities. However, these bodies have often been criticized for their opaque processes and delayed decision-making, leading to a lack of accountability. There are reports of universities with insufficient infrastructure or faculty being accredited, which affects the overall quality of education.
- **Regulatory Oversight in Vocational Training:** Vocational and skill-based education has often been sidelined by traditional regulatory bodies, leading to a widening gap between the skills taught and those required by industries. While **NEP 2020** aims to correct this by integrating vocational training at all levels of education, its success will depend on how well the regulatory mechanisms are implemented.

### Syllabus and Industry Disconnect

A significant gap exists between the education provided in Indian institutions and the needs of the industry. Many syllabi, particularly in higher education, are outdated and focus heavily on theoretical knowledge rather than practical, industry-relevant skills. This disconnect is evident in fields such as engineering, management and even vocational education, where students graduate without the skills needed to immediately contribute to the workforce.

- **NEP 2020 on Industry Requirements:** The **NEP 2020** proposes revamping curricula to meet the demands of a fast-evolving job market by introducing multidisciplinary learning, internships and vocational training. However, systemic changes in teacher training, infrastructure and partnerships with industries will be essential for these reforms to be effective.

### Lack of Job-Focused Education

Another persistent challenge is the focus on rote learning and academic qualifications rather than skills that translate into employability. The Indian education

system has historically placed more emphasis on theoretical knowledge rather than practical, hands-on learning. This has led to a large proportion of graduates being unemployable due to a lack of relevant skills, particularly in engineering and technical fields. The Gandhi Basic Education Policy<sup>(20)</sup> of 1930, also known as *Nai Talim* or "*Basic Education*," was a revolutionary approach to education in India. Gandhi envisioned an education system that emphasized practical learning, focusing on self-reliance, moral values, and the development of life skills through manual labour and crafts. He believed education should be rooted in the local community, with children learning through activities that contributed to their surroundings. The policy aimed to combine intellectual, physical, and moral development, moving away from rote learning to a more holistic, hands-on approach, promoting a sense of social responsibility and self-sufficiency.

**Vocational Education Neglect:** Vocational training programs have traditionally been seen as inferior to mainstream academic programs, which further perpetuates this gap. Initiatives such as **Skill India** and the **NEP 2020** have attempted to address this, but the cultural perception and lack of integration into mainstream education continue to pose challenges.

#### Brain Drain Due to Poor Higher Education Quality

One of the major consequences of the lack of quality higher education in India is the phenomenon of **brain drain**. Each year, thousands of students migrate abroad to pursue higher studies, particularly in countries like the USA, UK and Australia, due to the lack of world-class institutions in India.<sup>(21)</sup>

- **Lack of Research Opportunities:** Indian universities often fall behind in terms of research infrastructure, faculty expertise and global collaborations. This compels many top-performing students to seek research and academic opportunities abroad, contributing to a loss of talent that could otherwise drive innovation and development within the country.

#### The Management of Higher Educational Institutions

The management of higher educational institutions in India has often been marred by inefficiencies, political interference and administrative intervention. Many public universities face governance issues where faculty appointments and resource allocation are influenced by political considerations rather than academic merit.<sup>(22)</sup>

- **Autonomy Issues:** Institutions often lack the autonomy to innovate in curricula or pedagogy, as they remain bound by outdated guidelines issued by regulatory bodies like the UGC. This lack of flexibility has stunted the growth of higher education in India, especially in comparison to international universities that encourage more innovative teaching and research.

#### The Coaching System: A Parallel Education Sector

India's reliance on coaching centres has grown exponentially over the past few decades, with many students opting for private coaching to prepare for competitive exams like the IIT-JEE, NEET, State PSC and UPSC etc. This parallel education system highlights the inadequacies of the formal education system, where

schools and colleges are unable to prepare students for competitive exams on their own.

- **Pressure on Students:** The rise of the coaching industry has led to increased pressure on students, contributing to high stress levels and even instances of student suicides. Furthermore, the coaching culture has deepened the inequality in education, as only students from wealthier families can afford expensive coaching classes.

#### Transparency in Educational Regulations

Transparency in educational regulation remains a significant concern. The processes of accreditation, faculty recruitment and allocation of funds often lack clear, objective standards. While bodies like UGC and NAAC exist to maintain standards, their operations have been criticized for favouritism, delay and lack of consistency.

- **NEP 2020 Reforms on Regulation:** The **NEP 2020** seeks to address these concerns by proposing the creation of a single regulatory body, the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**, which would eliminate overlapping functions and provide more streamlined and transparent governance.

#### NEP 2020 and Present-Day Political Dynamics

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, introduced under the BJP-led government, represents one of the most comprehensive overhauls of the Indian education system in recent times. The political narrative of this policy emphasizes India's emergence as a global knowledge hub, focusing on holistic and multidisciplinary education. The implementation of NEP 2020 has encountered challenges, primarily due to insufficient budgetary allocation and the unclear roles of regulatory bodies and implementing institutions in driving the policy's execution across India.

**Centralization vs Federalism:** The NEP has been criticized for being overly centralizing, with concerns that state governments may not have enough autonomy to adapt the policy to regional needs. Political opposition from non-BJP-ruled states has already slowed down aspects of NEP implementation.

The political dynamics of India have played a crucial role in shaping its educational policies, often determining their focus, implementation and effectiveness. From the nation-building agenda of the Nehruvian era to the commercialized education sector of today, political ideologies, governance structures and state-level politics have significantly impacted the development of education in the country.

The challenges of partiality in scholarships, the lack of regional-language institutions and the commercialization of education continue to hinder equitable access to quality education. Moreover, political interference in the management of educational institutions and regulatory bodies like the UGC and NAAC has undermined the transparency and efficacy of the system. The **NEP 2020** offers a blueprint for addressing these issues, but its success will depend on how well these political, economic and social challenges are navigated in the coming years.

## Partiality in Scholarships and Fellowships

### Disparities in Access to Scholarships

Political considerations have historically influenced the allocation of scholarships and fellowships in India, often leading to accusations of partiality. Scholarships intended for marginalized groups, such as marginalised community and less income groups, have sometimes been mismanaged, with allegations of favouritism or corruption in their distribution.

- **Bureaucratic Delays:** The bureaucracy has often been accused of delaying the release of funds for scholarships, particularly for students from economically weaker sections. Political patronage systems have sometimes skewed the allocation of fellowships, with students from influential backgrounds receiving priority.
- **Disparity in Research Fellowships:** The number of research fellowships awarded in India has been disproportionately low, especially in the fields of humanities and social sciences, as these are often sidelined in favour of more politically and economically "important" fields like engineering and medicine.<sup>(23)</sup>

### Regional Bias in Fellowship Distribution

Students from certain regions, especially from Hindi-speaking and tribal areas, have historically faced discrimination in accessing national-level scholarships and fellowships. The dominance of English as the medium of instruction and application has often worked to the disadvantage of students from Hindi-medium and regional-language institutions.<sup>(24)</sup>

### Solutions and Future Scope for Educational Reforms in India

India's education system faces persistent challenges that require comprehensive solutions to realize its full potential. A progressive approach that aligns with global standards while addressing regional disparities and systemic inefficiencies is essential for sustainable educational development. The following key solutions and areas of focus aim to tackle these issues effectively.

- **Prioritizing Education and Health in the National Budget:** The government must significantly increase its budgetary allocation for education to at least 10% of GDP. This increase would provide adequate funding for infrastructure development, equitable access to quality education, better teacher training programs and improved research facilities. Currently, the allocation remains below the recommended 6%, limiting resources for building schools and upgrading facilities, particularly in rural areas. Enhanced investment will enable the provision of free and quality education, ensuring equitable access for all and fostering a healthier, more educated workforce, which ultimately contributes to long-term economic growth.<sup>(25)</sup>
- **Strengthening and Empowering Regulatory Bodies for Education:** Regulatory bodies like the UGC and NAAC must be given greater autonomy and authority to enforce standards in educational institutions. Ensuring transparency in the accreditation process, reducing political interference and establishing robust accountability mechanisms

are essential for maintaining high educational standards. Current regulatory bodies often lack sufficient power, leading to compromised standards. An empowered, transparent and independent regulatory framework will help elevate the quality of education, instilling trust among students, parents and employers, while also reducing the need for foreign education and curbing brain drain.<sup>(26)</sup>

- **Fare selection process:** The fare selection process for educational reforms in India involves a systematic approach to identifying and implementing solutions that address the key challenges in the education system. This includes engaging multiple stakeholders such as government bodies, educators, students, and experts in the formulation of policies. Solutions are based on factors like improving infrastructure, enhancing teacher quality, and revising curricula to meet modern industry needs. The process also emphasizes addressing regional disparities in educational access and ensuring inclusivity for marginalized groups. By prioritizing evidence-based decisions, transparent practices, and accountability, the fare selection process aims to create a more equitable, effective, and sustainable education system in India.
- **Expanding Education in Hindi and Regional Languages:** Education should be offered in Hindi and regional languages up to at least the undergraduate level. This involves translating textbooks, creating region-specific curricula and training educators to teach effectively in local languages, while also ensuring proficiency in English for global competitiveness. A significant portion of India's population is educated in regional or Hindi-medium schools, but the transition to higher education often shifts to English, creating barriers. Offering education in local languages will promote inclusivity and facilitate smoother transitions for students from rural and tribal backgrounds, ultimately enhancing educational access and participation rates.<sup>(27)</sup>
- **Aligning Education with Job-Oriented and Real-World Needs:** The education system must be restructured to be more job-oriented by integrating skill development, vocational training and real-life problem-solving into the curriculum. Promoting collaborations with industries will help create curricula that reflect the current and future demands of potential developing industry requirement. The disconnect between educational curricula and industry needs has resulted in high unemployment rates among graduates. By making education more practical and aligned with modern industry requirements, students can acquire skills that are directly applicable to the workplace, ultimately reducing unemployment and fostering economic growth.
- **Improving the Student-Teacher Ratio by Training and Hiring More Teachers:** Investing in the recruitment, training and retention of teachers is crucial to improving the student-teacher ratio. Increasing the number of teachers in schools, particularly in rural and underserved areas, will ensure that each child receives quality attention and guidance. Currently, India's student-teacher ratio is far from ideal, especially in government schools. A lower ratio would enable more personalized

education, allowing teachers to better address individual student needs and learning gaps. Enhancing the student-teacher ratio will lead to improved learning outcomes and reduced dropout rates.

- **Keeping Educational Institutions Free from Administrative Interference:** Educational institutions must operate autonomously, free from political patronage and interference. Implementing transparent appointment processes for faculty and administrative staff, along with merit-based scholarships, will ensure that educational institutions focus solely on academic and professional excellence. Political interference often leads to biased hiring and compromised academic standards. An independent education system will foster innovation, ensure meritocracy and build trust among students, parents and educators, while promoting transparent governance in educational institutions.
- **Developing a Curriculum That Addresses Real-Life Problems and Socio-Dynamics:** Curricula at all levels of education should be revised regularly to reflect current social, economic and environmental realities. Courses should incorporate problem-solving, critical thinking and socio-dynamic elements that prepare students for real-world challenges. The traditional rote-learning method is outdated and fails to equip students for real-life situations. By aligning the curriculum with contemporary socio-economic realities, students will be better prepared to address local and global challenges, leading to a more informed and engaged citizenry capable of driving social and economic change in India.

## Conclusion

This study provides a thorough understanding of the evolution of India's educational policies, shaped by political, economic and social factors. A key issue identified is the persistent gap between GDP allocation and actual education expenditure, which has hindered infrastructure growth and the overall quality of education. The research also highlights regional disparities, particularly in rural and tribal areas, where educational access remains limited due to a lack of resources and institutions.

The role of regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is also examined, focusing on how political interference and a lack of transparency have affected the quality of higher education. Additionally, the study addresses the increasing commercialization of education, marked by the rise of private institutions and the coaching industry, which has exacerbated inequality in access to quality education.<sup>(28)</sup>

The findings aim to provide actionable recommendations for future policies, stressing the need for improved infrastructure, curriculum alignment with industry needs and a more transparent regulatory framework to ensure equitable access to quality education across India.

India's educational policies have undergone significant transformations since independence, adapting to the

evolving needs of the population. Each policy, including the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, has aimed to enhance access to education and promote inclusivity. However, persistent challenges such as funding shortfalls, implementation issues and regional disparities remain. The NEP 2020 presents an opportunity for comprehensive reform, aiming to make Indian education globally competitive and future-ready, yet its success will depend on effectively addressing these systemic barriers.

At this crucial juncture, India must prioritize educational investment in its national budget while strengthening regulatory bodies to enhance accountability. Promoting inclusive, job-oriented education in local languages can further support equitable access to education across diverse populations. Addressing the student-teacher ratios, ensuring political neutrality in education and aligning curricula with industry needs will equip future generations with the necessary skills to face global challenges, ultimately contributing to national development. The comparative study of educational policies since independence reveals a complex landscape shaped by socio-political and economic factors. Early post-independence policies focused on expanding access to education, laying the groundwork for a literate nation. Yet, despite various reforms over the decades, many challenges identified in the 1950s and 1960s, such as inadequate infrastructure and regional disparities, persist. The gap between GDP allocation for education and actual expenditure continues to impede the development of an equitable education system, underscoring the need for robust implementation of policies like NEP 2020.

A critical issue identified in this research is the chronic underfunding of education in India, which has led to poorly equipped schools, inadequate learning resources and a shortage of trained teachers, particularly in rural areas. Increasing the education budget to at least 10% of GDP is essential to overcome these challenges. Moreover, regional disparities continue to impede access to quality education, with many students facing significant barriers due to the centralization of educational institutions in urban areas and insufficient provisions for local languages. By promoting education in Hindi and regional languages through undergraduate levels, India can foster greater inclusivity and enable underprivileged students to pursue higher education.

In conclusion, if the government aims to qualitatively enhance the education system in India, it must adopt a multi-faceted approach that addresses foundational philosophies, assessment methodologies and governance frameworks. This requires a transformative shift from conventional practices to strategies that prioritize holistic development and transparency.

Firstly, incorporating Mahatma Gandhi's concept of *Buniyaadee Shiksha* (Basic Education) can lay a strong foundation for an education system rooted in practicality, self-reliance, and moral values. Gandhi envisioned education not merely as academic instruction but as a comprehensive system integrating manual labour, crafts and ethics into the curriculum. By reviving these principles, education can foster self-sufficiency, critical thinking and civic responsibility among students, nurturing them into well-rounded individuals who contribute meaningfully to society.<sup>(29)</sup>

Secondly, there is an urgent need to move beyond the traditional reliance on quantitative measures like marks and grades as the sole indicators of a student's abilities. The current evaluation system often undermines creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. A paradigm shift towards competency-based and qualitative assessment methods is essential. This includes introducing project-based learning, open-ended assessments and skill-oriented evaluations that reflect a student's practical knowledge and holistic development rather than just theoretical understanding.

Finally, while the authorities governing the education system in India have expanded significantly, their mechanisms to ensure quality remain inadequate and often lack transparency. It is vital to establish clear, measurable metrics for assessing and enhancing the quality of education at every level, from primary schools to higher education institutions. These metrics should address teacher training, infrastructure development, curriculum relevance and equitable access to education. Additionally, robust monitoring systems and transparent execution frameworks must be implemented to ensure accountability and continuous improvement in educational outcomes.

By focusing on these critical areas—integrating Gandhian principles, overhauling assessment patterns and fostering transparent governance—the government can create an education system that not only delivers quality learning but also aligns with India's socio-economic and cultural aspirations. This holistic approach can help bridge existing gaps and build a progressive, equitable and inclusive framework for future generations. Future policies must prioritize infrastructure development, align education with industry demands and empower local languages to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. As we reflect on the journey ahead, we are reminded of the words of **Nelson Mandela**: “*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*”

## References

1. Adam, W. (1983). One Teacher, One School: The Adam Reports on Indigenous Education in 19th Century India. 116-118
2. Kanika B (2017). Educational Policy-Making: A Study on Interest Groups and Parliament. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Vol III, 112-113 Indian Policy Report. (2014).
3. Tilak, J.B.G. (2008). *The Kothari Commission and Financing of Education in India*. Economic and Political Weekly, 43(2), 71-77.
4. Agarwal, P. (2006). "Higher Education in India: The Need for Change." Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations. 23-25.
5. Dreze, J., & Sen, A. (2013). *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions*. Princeton University Press.
6. Chatterjee, S. (2018). *Policy Reforms in Indian Education: Perspectives from the NEP Draft*. Journal of Indian Education, 44(1), 19-36.
7. Kingdon, G.G. (2017). *The Private Schooling Phenomenon in India: A Review*. Journal of Development Studies, 53(7), 1154-1170.
8. Verma, A. (2014). *Tribal Education in India: Issues and Challenges*. Indian Journal of Education and Development, 5(2), 101-112.
9. Srivastava, P., & Noronha, C. (2014). *Institutional Reforms in Indian Education: The Role of UGC and NAAC*. Indian Educational Review, 6(2), 17-26.
10. Rao, R.K. (2004). *Education and Rural Development in India*. Journal of Educational Planning and Administration, 18(2), 35-49.
11. Bhattacharya, R. (2022). "The Politics of Educational Policy Reform in India." Journal of Policy and Society, 41(1), 97-112.
12. NITI Aayog. (2018). *Strategy for New India @75*. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://niti.gov.in>
13. Sridhar, K. (2020). *Impact of NEP 2020 on Higher Education in India*. The International Journal of Indian Education, 68(3), 85-101.
14. Singh, M. (2015). *The Evolution of India's Higher Education Policy and the Role of the State*. Comparative Education Review, 59(2), 240-259.
15. All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE). (2022). "AISHE Report 2021-2022." Ministry of Education, Government of India. 65-69
16. Taylor, S., Rizvi, F., Lingard, B., & Henry, M. (1997). *Educational Policy and the Politics of Change*. London: Routledge.
17. Kothari, D.S. (1966). *Education and National Development: Report of the Education Commission 1964-66*. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
18. Kogan D (1975) Educational Policy-Making: A Study on Interest Groups and Parliament. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Vol III, 112-113
19. Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). (2009). National Knowledge Commission - Report to the Nation (2006-2009). Government of India, New Delhi.
20. UNESCO. "Global Education Monitoring Report 2021: Technology in Education." UNESCO, 2021, <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/>.
21. Gandhi, Mahatma. *Basic Education: A Guide for the Teachers and Students*. 1930, Government of India.
22. [https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/NEP\\_Final\\_English\\_0.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf)
23. Nair, M. (2021). *Understanding the Implementation Challenges of NEP 2020 in India*. Educational Review, 73(4), 463-480.
24. BrainyQuote. (2021). Benjamin Franklin Quotes. Retrieved January 12, 2021, from [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/benjamin\\_franks\\_in\\_141119](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/benjamin_franks_in_141119)
25. Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.gov.in>
26. Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD). (2020). National Education Policy 2020. Retrieved January 12, 2021, from

25. Rao, D.S. (2019). *The Role of NAAC in Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions in India*. Journal of Higher Education Research, 7(3), 87-101.
26. Bansal, K. (2017). Impact of British Raj on the Education System in India: The Process of Modernisation in the Princely States of India—The Case of Mohindra College, Patiala. Creative Space, 5(1), 13-28.
27. Government of India. (2005). *Report of the National Knowledge Commission*. Retrieved from <https://www.nkc.gov.in>
28. Shakeel, A. (2018). List of Committees and Commissions of India Before Independence.
29. NITI Aayog. (2018). "Strategy for New India @75."