**Insights into Yojana: January - 2016**

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Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world”

Nelson Mandela.

This famous quote sums the cardinal importance of education and it is all the more true as far as India is concerned. Historically, education has occupied prominent position in the country. The ancient system of education was oriented towards earning a living. The priestly class in ancient India studied to gain knowledge while the kshatriyas and the vaishyas studied for specific purposes like statecraft, warfare or running a business.

After independence, the policy makers worked hard to transform the elitist system of education created by the British into a mass based system, built on the principles of equality and social justice. This was achieved through the enactment of Right to Education Act and announcement of the National Education Policy. Subsequently, policy makers also tried to universalize education through measures like the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Mid Day Meal Scheme. Today, when it comes to education, India is better placed globally. From 12% literacy rate in 1947 to 74.4% literacy rate in 2011, India has come a long way on the education front. Highly educated, tech-savvy and scientifically trained Indian citizens are engaged in a variety of employments in every nook and corner of the world. Kerala with 93.91% and Mizoram with 91.58% lead and inspire other states to achieve further heights.

The journey so far, however, has not been without challenges and problems. Accessible to education is still a dream for many children in the country. Equitable educational access to tribals, marginalized, SCs, STs and for children with special needs is a major point of concern too. However, these issues are now being recognized and the government is working on several initiatives for inclusive growth of these sections of society on priority. Technology is being used to provide better access to education through programmes like GIAN, SWAYAM and National Digital Library. Inbuilt monitoring and effective assessment system, vocalization of education at high school and college levels have also been recognized as the
need of the hour. Through various programmes children are also made to understand the importance of life skills.

With miles already travelled, the continued focus of the government would enable the country to build individuals who believe in themselves and are able to serve the real purpose of Education.

Transforming Indian School Education: Policy Concerns and Priorities

It is more than six decades ago that India embarked on the task of transforming elitist system of education inherited from the colonial past into one that is mass based and built on principles of equality and social justice. Since independence, the country has witnessed several significant policy measures. One of the most significant moments in this journey has been the amendment of the constitution making education a Fundamental Right and adopting the corresponding Right to Education Act in 2009.

Having achieved near universal enrolment of children in elementary stage, the country has embarked on the ambitious path of making secondary education universal and ensuring equitable access to higher education for all. The country is also poised to move on major initiatives on the quality front to ensure that children not only go to school but also receive quality education. But, this demands several policy reform measures and investments on certain priority areas.

What things to be considered and why?

1. Consolidation of existing schools:

In India, both central and state governments have been following supply based approach for locating social sector facilities, in general and for locating schools in particular. But, this approach has led to considerable amount of irrational considerations in the distribution of available resources and consequent imbalances in educational facilities. This has also led to non-utilization or under utilization of facilities. Since the top-down supply approach has not been able to deliver the expected results, it is time for the centre and state governments to look for other approaches.

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It should also be noted here that majority of primary schools in the country have less than 100 children enrolled. With swift demographic shift taking in many parts of the country, this problem is expected to become even more challenging.

Hence, governments should consider consolidating the schools with very few students. This would also demand examining alternate means of facilitating participation of children through provision of transportation and residential facilities.

The governments must also ensure that the schools are properly equipped with adequate material and human resources based on local parameters such as the size and location of the school and the accessibility to neighbouring habitations. However, it is not desirable to fix a national norm in this regard.

2. **Early interventions:**

Recent studies have clearly showed that nutrition and cognitive stimulation early in life are critical for long-term skill development. It is because undernourished children have higher rates of mortality, lower cognitive and school performance, and are more likely to drop out of schools.

- Hence, institutional support for children before the school age is critical. The Integrated Child Development Scheme tries to address this to a certain extent with development support being given the children in the age group 0-6 coupled with prenatal and post natal care facilities for mothers.
- However, the progress under this scheme has not been so much impressive and resources allocated too are inadequate. Hence, it is time to work out an independent policy on preschool education to be pursued along side school education.

3. **Child Labour:**

Trapped in intergenerational debt and deprived of basic education, many poor children are often engaged in remunerative labour to ease the financial pressure on their families. This severely affects their education. For such children, education is the only means through which they can liberate themselves from the misery.

- Hence, the government should put in place such policies that encourage parents to send their children to schools. It is also essential to design policies that help delineate concrete alternate programmes of education which effectively take children out of work.
4. Investing in the Teacher:

Recent Teacher Eligibility Tests have revealed that a large number of teacher-aspirants in the country do not qualify despite having requisite academic and professional degrees. This highlights the poor quality of aspirants that aspire to enter the education system.

- Thus, it is time to develop a proper policy on professional development of the school teacher. Such a policy should incorporate several critical elements such as subject matter upgradation and use of ICT.
- The policy should also effectively link participation in professional development programmes with career prospects.

5. Reshaping the Gender Discourse in Education:

Many consider that the problem of universal elementary education in India is essentially a problem of girls’ education. Several factors seem to be impeding girls’ education in India. These include- traditional mindset in villages, lack of basic infrastructure, absence of effective early childhood intervention programmes and location of schools.

- To address these issues, the government should put in place a policy which includes provision of basic infrastructure. The government should also make suitable arrangements to have more women teachers in the school.
- The policy should also be linked to the local dynamics that surrounds the girl children at home, in the community and at the school.
- So far, several programmes have been launched to address these issues like ‘beti bachao, beti padhao’. Yet it is necessary to formulate a more comprehensive policy for girls’ education that goes beyond the school years and shift the focus from mere parity to gender equality.
- The policy should also address the needs of reorienting the youth in order to socially impact their attitudes as they grow. It should also address the education of young men and women who enter colleges and universities who would eventually shape the societal values and orientations.

6. ICT and school education:
A UNESCO report entitled ‘Our Creative Diversity’ points out, exclusion from technology places those concerned at a disadvantage in the coming “information society”.

- There is tremendous potential in the ICT which can be used to recast the quality of school education experiences in India.
- To achieve this, suitable policies and programmes that effectively transform the school experiences of the young learner should be put in place. It is time to move beyond the current paradigm of supplying hardware and propriety softwares to schools and embed ICT into all aspects of school life.

7. Refocusing the Curriculum Debate:
Curriculum is critical in determining the quality of education imparted. Considerable attention has been during the recent years to revamping the school curriculum. However, the discourse has remained truncated. Hence, a comprehensive policy which addresses the contours and contents of the school curriculum should be put in place.

8. Engaging the Civil Society and Private Sector:
The last two decades have witnessed emergence of a number of non-governmental organizations and corporate sector actively involved in school education.

- However, the efforts by the three stakeholders namely, the government, NGOs and Private entities have been viewed as three distinct compartments.
- It is time that a comprehensive policy is framed to find common ground and propose a framework in which all the stakeholders occupy common public space of education in a mutually supportive fashion and not occupy exclusive domains that divide.

Conclusion:
If the above mentioned issues are not addressed, it would lead to an incomprehensibly wide range of experiences and interests in the society, which would ultimately affect the overall well-being of the society. Hence, the new education policy has to envision a new world of values and ethics of learning to learn and live together. If such a policy has to be substantive and not
merely rhetorical it must be based on shared values and experiences of people living this vastly diverse cultural, linguistic, and economic context.

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**Financing Education**

**Brief History:**

*It was in 1968* that is after 18 years the development planning was launched, the first *National Education Policy was formulated in India*. It took another 18 years to come out with the *second Education Policy in 1986*. It was slightly revised in 1992. There has not been any new policy in this regard since then. However, changing landscape in the education sector has made time ripe to have a New Education Policy.

Before formulating any new policy in this regard, issues relating to financing education should be carefully examined. For finances are clearly indicative of government’s priority in favour of a given sector.

**Why state funding is must for education sector?**

Looking at the diverse benefits it produces to the society and its role in several spheres of development, *education is widely acknowledged as an important public good and a social responsibility*. Because of its direct relationship with development and the externalities it produces, state funding of education has been the most dominant method of financing education in most developing and advanced societies of the world. Historical evidences and contemporary experiences support such a view.

- Public funding of education protects and nurtures the public good character of education and ensures equitable expansion of education.
- Promoting common interests of all the citizens it also has the potential to serve the national developmental needs.
Current status:
As resolved in the National Education Policy 1968, it has repeatedly been reiterated that we spend at least 6% of GDP on education. However, no government has been able to do it. Presently, less than 4.5% of GDP is allocated to education.

It is time to revise this goal. Both the centre and states should be seriously held responsible to achieve the set target. The governments should make generous funding for this sector. Resources need to flow out of specific tax and non-tax revenues of the government.

Things to be considered in the new policy:

- There should be a proper and a clearly defined pattern of sharing of responsibilities in funding education between the union and the state governments.
- Issues related to development in technical, vocational and other skills among youth, and access to education among weaker sections should be taken care of.
- The new policy should have provisions aimed at improving levels of learning and promoting high standards and excellence in higher education.
- Before considering expanding secondary and higher education with new schools, colleges and universities, it is necessary to ensure that the existing institutions are well developed and are put on sound resource base in terms of not only financial resources, but also in terms of physical and human resources.
- Reasonable proportions of resources should be committed to research and scholarships to promote equity and merit.
- Flow of funds to the educational institutions need to respond to the varying needs of various institutions. On one hand they should fulfill the basics needs of these institutions and on the other; they should reward the institutions who are performing well.
- Strong universal and high quality education systems are developed in advanced regions of the world with the funding exclusively by the state in case of school education, and in case of higher education, with heavy public funding supplemented by liberal funding by the society at large, specifically through philanthropic donations from various sectors. Hence, it is necessary to have such a funding plan in India to promote the missing source of funds.
- It is also necessary to see that non-philanthropic and profit-seeking private sector is not promoted in education by the state.

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• The state should not consider PPP model in education. This model might work well for infrastructure and other sectors. But, given the specific nature, characteristic features and functions of education, PPP may not be suitable in education sector.

• The government should also consider formulating a 10-20 year national plan of education funding that corresponds to a long term perspective plan of education development. This plan should be based on sound principles of financing of education, such as adequacy, equity and efficiency. Such a plan should assure the education system at all levels a steady flow of funds for a 10:20 year period, with sufficient provisions for rewards and punitive action.

Lastly, it is imperative for state to play a dominant role in financing education at all levels. At the same time, it should also try to raise resources from other sources, such as philanthropy, alumni etc.

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**Technology in Education: Hopes and Aspirations of a Fidgety Generation**

**What is schooling?**
Schooling is an investment in extending human potentials, in prompting the student to expand on human achievement towards an improvement of the quality of life.

**Technology in education:**
Technologies, which are just a few decades old, have made life easier for the present restless generation. Technological investments are aimed at improving the capabilities of human beings.

**What makes these technologies so popular?**
1. Presence of coloured screen.
2. Personalization of the device itself.
3. Size of the device.
4. Ease of use.
Significance of technology in education:
Access to education, however cherished a goal for our society, remains out of reach for a large proportion of the population. Technological deployments could help reduce costs, improve efficiencies and in general expand the reach and its affordability.

Problems that technologies might pose:
Few tech success stories in the North might prompt us to disproportionately invest more on technology, that too on higher education and in English. However, such investments would only increase the already present barriers. It would also lead to loss of languages which in turn might lead to loss of cultural identities, thus threatening the very fabric on which our society is built.

Popular technological applications in India:
- The National Repository of Open Educational Resources - This is popular at the school level. It has contents in various Indian languages.
- Courses like the National Digital Library and e-Gyankosh are famous at the higher education level.
- Another popular technological application is that of online course delivery. The advent of Massive Open Online Courses, known commonly as MOOC, has seen great interest in its scalability and reach.
- A similar initiative by the UGC, known as the e-PG patshala focuses on developing courses at the post graduate level in a very large number of disciplines and subjects.

If rightly applied, technology can overcome digital divides and address issues of restrictive digital access. The goal, however, should be leverage these to enhance interest in every section of the society in problems which have denied access to knowledge, services and participation of people at large in the economic prosperity of the nation.
National Digital Library: Building a National Asset

The concept of library is continuously evolving. These days, with the use of ICT tools the quality and quantity of contents available online are improving. In India, the digital library initiatives have been sponsored by various ministries, notably Ministry of HRD under its National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT). In spite of several such initiatives, most of the challenges faced by students, teachers and general users in using digital contents remain unaddressed to a large extent.

What are the problems that the users have to face?

- Users still have to visit individual websites to access e-resources.
- They need to learn retrieval/search techniques separately.
- They face the lack of vernacular access and limited contents.
- There is hardly any integration of learner-learner, teacher-teacher, and teacher-learner communication within the learning environment.

In this background, MHRD has initiated the National Digital Library (NDL) pilot project under National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT).

- The idea was actually put forth by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur.
- In this regard, the MHRD not only approved of the project, but also granted Rs. 100 crore for the project.

About NDL:

The NDL aims to streamline Institutional Digital Repository (IDR) and other study material into one common online. It is modeled on the Institutional Digital Repository (IDR), but will consist of IDRs of several universities and any student will be free to access it. For instance, a student of IIT Madras will be able to access study material of a specialisation taught exclusively at IIT Kharagpur.

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Except for copyrighted content, the data will mostly be available for free. The content for the NDL will be derived from institutes of all types of specialisations and will include school-level study material as well.

Another focus of the project is to create e-content, comprising video lectures, interactive questions and answers and books, in multiple languages.

Keeping in mind the evolving technology, plans are on to make the interface available across all platforms — cell phones, tablets and laptops. Content will also be developed keeping in mind the needs of differently-abled students.

While the NDL is a relatively new concept in India, it has already made its appearance in most universities in the west. The multi-faceted project would start by incorporating digital content of about 50 institutions at the primary level, keeping the next target at about 100 institutions.
Conclusion:
So far, the Indian digital library initiatives are mainly seen as academic and research oriented. Though some useful resource material such as land records, cartographs, policy documents, legal judgments, parliamentary discussions etc., are being made available, they are not on large scale. Most of these initiatives are done in isolation without any coordination with other similar institutions. It can also be seen that many of the initiatives are one time projects with a limited grant, often without any proper planning for continuity. Important issues such as project objectives, preservation methods, content selection, coordination with other similar initiatives, access mechanism, sustainability and cost factor are often not addressed. Hence, it is time for the government to come with a policy which addresses the above mentioned issues.
A Vision for Quality Education

According to a recent study, even top schools in major cities in India suffer from the entrenched tendency to impart rote learning. This may be shocking to even those who believe that private educational institutions place greater emphasis on quality and holistic education.

- However, for those closely observing the school education scenario, it is a re-affirmation of a bitter truth: schools in our country are, by and large, quite far from seeing education as a process of learning with understanding, acquiring knowledge through self-discovery and conceptualization.
- Education in India remains a mere transmission of information in a rigid classroom atmosphere, where the emphasis is on memorisation and the objective is to rush through a pre-determined syllabus and prepare children for examinations.

What is ‘Quality in Education’?

Quality is multiple perspectives and is not a unitary concept. The dimensions of quality in education include achieving pre-determined targets and objectives.

How can we ensure quality in our education system?

- By internationalization of our existing education system.
- With the help of PPP model in higher education.
- With increased role of central government funded institutions.
- By improving the quality of regulation and by revamping regulators.
- By vocalization of education.
- By following outcome-based teaching-learning model in elementary schools.
- By adopting technology to improve access to education.
- By having a relook at students’ financial assistance schemes.
- By revamping teacher education system.

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Conclusion:
The National Curriculum Framework 2005 was a game attempt to provide a vision of education as a pursuit of both quality and equity. Yet, despite increasing awareness that learning is not mere information accumulation and that teaching ought to be recast into a facilitation of children's discovery of their own potential and understanding, the emphasis in practice continues to be on textbooks and exams. Conceptual understanding is not encouraged anywhere near enough, and sport, art, debate, and cultural activity are kept at the distant periphery. It is time not merely for fostering greater awareness about the need for holistic education but also to chalk out more imaginative pedagogic means to make education an inclusive and quality-centric epistemic process.

Women’s and Girls’ Education: Issues in India
The problem of women’s education in India is one which attracts our attention immediately. In our country, due to conservative traditionalism, women’s status has, through ages, been considered to be lower than that of men.

- It is now well established that gender equality in education and enhancing the access of girls to basic education is influenced by three inter-locking sets of issues—systematic, content and process of education and economy, society and culture.

Why girls are pulled out of schools in India?
Girls in India are often pulled out of schools for the following reasons:

Family responsibilities: Girls provide free labor at home for the family. Home is also where they learn to be a better housewife. Many girls are kept at home because it is a better payoff than going to school. Having the girl attend school is not valuable to the whole family. This problem is lucidly evident in India, even in urban areas, but more prevalent with poorer families. Girls can be found doing everything from farm work to household chores.

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Family honor: Many girls in India are often kept out from receiving a primary education or pulled out early to protect family honor.

Inadequate facilities: Schools are unable to provide safe and sanitary facilities for young girls to attend, and with the population increasing at a rapid speed the priority for new facilities is given to boys. In many cases, though, this is exacerbated by basic infrastructural problems: roads, running water, and electricity are often scarce.

Shortage of female teachers: This has received major attention in the recent past. The problem can be solved, but it starts with first educating girls so they can aspire to be teachers. The government, however, does not see this as a problem and continues to deny that there is gender inequality within the education sector. There have been efforts by the government to enroll more girls but this has not paid any rich dividends.

Other challenges:
- No suitable Curriculum for the education of girls.
- Lack of social consciousness among rural women.
- Unwillingness of lady teachers to serve in rural areas.
- Lack of enthusiasm and interest among the officials in charge of education.

How can we improve the situation?
- NGOs and nonprofits can offer the most helpful solution to this problem because of grassroots movements across rural India. Many of the past efforts have come from reviewing previous reports. NGOs and nonprofits work at a local scale where a difference can made, whereas the government has worked on a larger scale with less success.
- The government’s response can help the whole process of providing primary schools for girls. The Indian government has recognized the problem but it has been slow to act on the issue. Also, the government should ensure safe and non-discriminatory environment to girls in educational institutions.
- Expanding Options for Schooling: increasing school supply, establishing community schools, and creating alternatives to formal schooling. Community schools are the ultimate means of giving parents voice in the running of school.
Local schools, and are particularly valuable in reaching girls by offering flexibility in timing, venue, and curriculum, which accommodate the domestic demands, safety concerns, and relevancy requirements of parents.

- **Improving Quality and Relevance of Schools and Classrooms:** Providing basic inputs (physical facilities, writing material and textbooks), offering mother tongue based teaching and bilingual education, and strengthening curricula making them more open to diversity. Giving gender diversity training for teacher, and improving teacher accountability and quality is also very crucial for improving the quality of education.

- **Creating Incentives for Households to Send Girls to School:** Conditional cash transfers (example – Bolsa Familia program in Brazil), scholarships for girls, and school feeding programs are some of the incentives that can be provided.

- **Expanding the Knowledge Base About What Works:** Create a girls’ education evaluation fund that would finance evaluation of initiatives to build the knowledge base for policy.

**Conclusion:**

Girls’ education is crucial for the betterment of humanity. And the challenge is not only give girls the opportunity for schooling, but to address the factors to improve their retention in school. And better understanding the nature of barriers that lead to their exclusion in various countries, is the first step. It also helps meet the economic growth and social development objectives.

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**Inclusive Education in India**

Children with disabilities and special needs also have the right to education just as normal children do. Inclusive education strives to address the learning needs of children with special needs, with a particular focus on those who are subject to being isolated and excluded.

- The philosophy behind inclusive education is to **promote opportunities for all children to participate, learn and have equal treatment, irrespective of their mental or physical abilities.**

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While the awareness on inclusive education in schools throughout the country is still at an infancy stage, educational institutions are somewhat sceptical about having both normal and special children studying in the same classroom. And in circumstances, where a former excluded child is given admission into a mainstream classroom, the outcome of the action is questionable.

**Factors responsible for this:**

In India, a majority of children with special needs do not receive any formal education, in spite of the practice of inclusive education in some schools. This is because children with disabilities and learning deficiencies are segregated from mainstream schools and other regular routines and social activities of normal children.

- Other contributing factors to this situation are lack of affordability and awareness on the kind of education choices available to children with special needs.

**How inclusive schools should be?**

Inclusive schools have to be well-equipped in all aspects to cater and deliver quality education for all children.

- This includes having a balanced curriculum that is appropriate for all categories of children, teachers who have the ability to handle the individual needs within the classroom and thereby promote an environment where personal development, social skills and student participation are strongly encouraged.
- Another critical aspect of inclusive education for a special needs child is in having the acceptance and friendship of classmates. This kind of support also aids in the progress of special children and helps them gain confidence within the school environment.

**Role of parents:**

- Parents have a vital role as partners to make inclusive education successful within the classroom. This is possible when the children with special needs continue to live at home and attend school, just like normal children.
Parents should also be involved with the teachers and administrative staff at the school to coordinate travel arrangements, school activities and learning materials for their special child.

**Various initiatives in this regard:**
The Indian government continues to include children special needs under several of their education initiatives, including the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). This is a government programme that aims at improving and providing quality primary education for all children.

- There are several national and local NGOs that champion the cause of children with disabilities and provide specific resource centres in support of inclusive education.

**Conclusion:**
Thus, it is understood that children with special needs have a distinctive experience undergoing inclusive education along with normal, non-disabled classmates. There are several barriers for providing education to special children in a regular classroom. These can be overcome by creating more awareness on inclusive education, by schools having the resources and the ability to re-structure their curriculum to cater to all types of students, by recruiting teachers who have the skills and proficiency to meet varying demands within the classroom and by having the support of family. If these changes are implemented, it will increase the confidence of a number of special children to aspire for a valuable education like their normal peers.

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**Education of the Marginalized, SCs and STs**
Marginalized groups continue to face discrimination in India despite constitutional guarantees and laws prohibiting discrimination. Few recent instances have showed that age-old discriminatory attitudes based on caste, ethnicity, religion, or gender, are still active in some schools.
Overview:
Scheduled Castes [SC] and Scheduled Tribes [ST] constitute around one-fourth of the total population of India. Both of these communities are considered as deprived and exploited for various reasons.

- While SCs were subjected to discrimination and marginalization through the processes of *untouchability and rigid caste practices*, STs were deprived and exploited because of their *socio-cultural and geographical isolation in Indian society*.
- The dominant and depressed caste groups in India are characterized by the differential access to societal opportunities and entitlements, social mobility and larger social/public resources. It is the lower strata of the society, particularly that of SCs and STs, to which social opportunities and economic facilities have long been denied. Even, *access to education was structurally guided by the system of social stratification*.
- Given the socio-structural denial of opportunities and freedoms historically, the representation of SCs and STs in various domains/sectors of public life has remained abysmally low.

Challenges:
Though the number of SC/ST children in primary classes has gradually increased in the last five decades yet a large number of students drop out by the time they pass 5th standard.

- According to the 2011 Census, the average literacy rates of people aged above 15 among Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are about 9% and 17.4% less than the national average, respectively.
- The female literacy rate is 19.5% less than that of males. This difference increases to 23% and 23.5% among the SCs and STs, respectively, indicating the double discrimination faced by Dalit and Adivasi women.
- The *dropout rates among SCs and STs are significantly higher than the national average and more girls discontinue schooling than boys.*
Constitutional guidelines for their upliftment:
The broader concerns for upliftment of weaker sections was put in place with India adopting a social democratic form of government – in which explicit constitutional guidelines were placed to promote the participation and development of SCs and STs.

- Among others, the articles 15, 16(4), 16 (4A) and 17 under the Fundamental Rights ensure non-discrimination in education, employment/workplace; they formally abolish practices of untouchability and urge for positive discrimination in employment and promotion.
- Article 46, under Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), directs the state to promote the socio-economic and educational interest of weaker sections (i.e. SCs/STs) and secure them from all forms of exploitation and marginalization.
- Apart from these provisions, the article 320, 335, 338, 338A and 340 in their various provisioning ensure and promote the participation and development of weaker sections.

Measures Adopted for Educational Development of SCs and STs:

- In view of the constitutional directions, a provision has been made in all Five Year Plans providing crores of rupees for raising the level of education among the SCs and STs by opening schools, giving pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, constructing hostels particularly for girls, creating book-banks, mid-day meals, loans to students, coaching centres, houses for teachers and so forth.
- Reserving seats in educational institutions including engineering and medical colleges.
- Relaxation in age and marks for admission.
- Free special coaching to students aspiring for admission to professional courses or preparing for central and state level competitive examinations.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 also contemplated the following measures for the education of SCs:

- Incentives to SC families to send their children to school regularly till they reach the age of 14.
- Pre-matric scholarship scheme for children of families engaged in low occupations (scavenging, tanning, etc.) from class I onwards.

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• Constant monitoring to ensure enrolment, retention and successful completion of courses.
• Recruitment of teachers from SCs.
• Various facilities in hostels.
• Locating schools, Balwadis and Education Centres in such a way as to facilitate full participation of SCs.
• Constant innovation in finding new methods to increase participation.

For the STs, besides the above measures, other measures suggested were:

• Priority to opening primary schools in the tribal areas.
• Devising instructional materials in tribal languages at the initial stages.
• Encouraging educated tribals to take up teaching in tribal areas.
• Establishing residential schools on a large scale.

**Conclusion:**

With the passage of time, there has been tremendous growth both in terms of the increase in the number of educational institutions (both school and higher educational institutions) and the relative proportion of enrolment of various social groups, including SCs and STs. The new reform initiatives and increasing plan allocations to the education sector is also seen along with new policies and programs for weaker sections in education. However, there are many issues which need to be addressed by the government through its upcoming Educational Policy.

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**Vocationalisation of Education in India**

The greatest challenge in Indian education system today is to provide **skill based education to the youth**. This is exacerbated by a mismatch in demand and supply for the skilled workforce. The penetration of vocational education and training remains poor not only in rural areas, but also in urban regions where there is a higher installed capacity to impart the same.
According to a survey conducted by NSSO:

- In India, the percentage of population that completed primary education was 70%, but less than 10% went on to complete a graduation course and above. Almost 97% of individuals in the age bracket of 15–60 years had limited exposure to technical education, which is another indicator of low skills sets among Indians.
- According to the occupational profile of India’s workforce, 90% of the workforce population is employed in skill-based jobs, whereas more than 90% had no exposure to vocational education or training even though more than half of the seats remain unutilised in vocational education.
- There is a lack of training facilities and skills development in as many as 20 high-growth industries such as logistics, healthcare, construction, hospitality and automobiles.
- India has roughly close to 5,500 public (ITI) and private (ITC) institutes as against 500,000 similar institutes in China. India has only 4% formally trained vocational workers.

While there remains a requirement for skilled professionals in the industry, the supply for the same is hampered by:

- **High dropout rate at Secondary level**: Vocational Education is presently offered at senior secondary level but the students at this level aspire for higher education.
- At present, the vocational system doesn’t put much emphasis on the academic skills, resulting in lower incidences of vertical mobility.
- There is a lack of participation by private players in the field of vocational education.
- Vocationalisation of education in India is not in line with industry needs.
- There is a lack of opportunities for continuous skill up-gradation.
- There is no clear provision of certifications and degrees for the unorganised/informal sector.
How can the situation be improved?

- By retaining the aspects of general education in VET
- By formulating courses having distinct tracks for students of different educational attainments
- By specifying entry requirements
- By introducing few courses devoted to certain skills training at the primary and secondary level in all schools
- By making VET part of various literacy and adult education schemes

- Providing more autonomy to the institutes.
- Developing indicators of internal and external efficiency
- Introducing modules relevant to work place requirements
- Introducing different tracks within courses for different levels of specialization.
- Offering incentives to students as part of their course
- Constantly monitoring and updating curricula.
- Reviewing the skills and courses offered.
- Conducting teaching in English as well as local languages

Increasing the flexibility of VET

Overcoming challenges faced by training Institutes

New Directions

Increasing the resource allocation

Increasing the capacity of institutes

Assessing the impact on employability

Others

- Enhancing fees, coupled with student loan schemes.
- Raising funds through access on employers.
- Making it obligatory for companies to finance public vocational education and training programmes

Exploring the innovative delivery models
- Public-private partnerships
- Decentralized delivery
- Distance learning and computerized training.

Collecting and analysing data like:
- Wage premium or other advantages enjoyed by VET graduates.
- Use of utilization in training institutes.
- Nature of employment post-training.

- Enhancing the training options available for the informal and unorganized sector.
- Establishing an independent regulatory agency for VET

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Various government initiatives:

Last decade saw an upsurge of initiatives to address the convergence of education and skills, such as the framing of the National Skills Policy 2009, as well as the establishment of the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skills Development Agency (NSDA), the creation of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), and setting up of the Sector Skills Councils to spearhead the selection and articulation of outcome oriented competencies for high volume jobs.

- The formation of the Ministry for Skills Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) to coordinate the various skillling initiatives in the country, and the Make in India and Skill India campaign have also gone long way in re-energising the relationship between education and skills.
- The launch of various other initiatives like the National Skill Development Mission and Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana are also a move in the right direction.

Conclusion:

Having understood the importance of vocational education, the new government at the centre has come out with various initiatives. But the need of the hour is action, not contemplation and theorizing. Still, the pace of implementation is extremely slow. There is great need for acceleration of the pace of progress in vocationalisation of education. And also the youth in India should be able to handle 4Cs- communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.

Need For a Good Assessment System
Why do we need Assessment?
It is because Assessment focuses on learning outcomes, diagnosis of learning difficulties and consequent remediation to improve learning.

Present assessment model:
In India, we have been using Classical Test Theory (CTT) in all our measurements and assessments which have inherent limitations. Experts argue that such models do not serve any purpose beyond certification.

Concerns:
- Existing quality assurance agencies in India assess teachers on the basis of their achievements in terms of qualifications and publications. It does not assess their teaching skills.
- Existing assessment indirectly gives credit to teachers for performance of their students, whereas, paid private tutoring might have contributed more to student performance.
- Quality of higher education teachers is promoted by making teachers participate in orientation and refresher courses. However, the quality of such courses are not always encouraging.

Any alternative?
Modern testing methods like IRT (Item Response Theory) have more scope in improving the testing and system over a period of time. IRT is already being used in many international studies.

Advantages of IRT:
- It assesses the true ability of students irrespective of the difficulty of tests.
- Uses multiple tests to have more number of measurements points.
- It identifies strengths and weaknesses.
SWAYAM: The Indian e-Learning Platform

Following the footsteps of Western Countries, the government of India, in recent years, is emphasizing on the use of ICT for education in a big way. In this regard, the Ministry of HRD has launched a major initiative called ‘Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds’ (SWAYAM).

What is it?
SWAYAM is an online platform of the Ministry of HRD through which online programmes/courses will be offered to students in India. It is an indigenous IT platform for hosting Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

What it does?
It will provide one integrated platform and portal for online courses, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). These courses cover all higher education subjects and skill sector courses. By delivering about 2000 courses SWAYAM courses per year, the Ministry of HRD has planned to educate tens of millions of students across the country.

Main aim of this initiative:
The initiative is aimed at ensuring that every student in the country has access to the best quality higher education at an affordable cost.

SWAYAM would provide:
- High quality learning experience using multimedia on anytime, anywhere basis.

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Apart from creating fresh Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), MHRD is also utilizing the e-content sanctioned to institutions and repurposed to MOOCs. In this regard, various institutions like CEC, UGC, NPTEL and NIOS are helping the MHRD.

The Psychological Challenges in Educating Adolescents

What is Education?
The word education means different things to different people. But, as per the widespread understanding, education means attending regular school, learning academic curriculum, getting grades, attaining a formal degree which will ultimately permit and certify one as capable of joining the productive workforce of the country.

Evolution of Education:
Over the past few decades, Education, along with its definition, has evolved. Education, in modern times, is defined as a creation of choices, making people aware of those choices and enabling them to make use of those choices.

Importance of Adolescence Education:
Over the years, suitable arrangements have been made for the betterment of education system in the country at various levels. However, amongst all, adolescence education has received much lower attention compared to primary, secondary and higher levels.
Why do we need to concentrate on Adolescence education?

Generally, children in the age group 11-19 years are considered as adolescents. They constitute 1/5th of the world’s population and nearly a quarter of India’s population. Adolescence marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood.

- These are truly the years of creativity, optimism and a spirit of adventure. These are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking and of giving in to negative peer pressure.
- They have very special and distinct needs, which cannot be overlooked. On the other hand, addressing their needs would help in the overall development of the country and also would also promote social harmony, gender justice and population stabilization.
- Adolescence time period is largely dependent on the surrounding environment.

Stats:

According to ICMR study, the overall prevalence of child and adolescent mental health disorders is 12-14%. The study also shows that the common disorders in the age group 12-16 years are: psychosis, hysterical neurosis, and conduct disorders. Mild mental retardation was also observed among 6% children in the age group 12-16 years.

How can schools help address these problems?

To address various issues related to adolescence health including mental health needs, health has to be made integrate in the educational curriculum and schools have to adopt the framework of health promotion.

- Schools should constantly strengthen their capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.
- Schools should also create awareness about health by helping school children, staff, family and community to care for themselves.
- They should take informed decisions over circumstances that affect their health and create conditions that are conducive to health.
- They should initiate various programmes like nutrition services programme and social health services programme.

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Types of Mental Health Intervention in Schools:

1. **Mental Health Promotion** to build awareness and resilience.
2. **Universal and Selective Prevention** to reduce risk and vulnerability factors and build protective factors.
3. **Preventive and Early Intervention** Strategies for those with early signs of disorder.

In carrying out the above mentioned interventions, the school might opt for environment-centred approach or child-centred approach.

**Conclusion:**

To empower youth, every nation, society and community has to work towards promoting an atmosphere of well being. Life skills help adolescents acquire knowledge, values and attitudes. They also help them live in a healthy and productive manner. Schools have a major role to play in this endeavor.

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Education in Ancient India

Ancient universities in India

**Nalanda - Key facts:**
- Considered to be the world’s first University, Nalanda was an ancient centre of higher learning from 427 to 1197.
- It was devoted to Buddhist studies, but it also trained students in fine arts, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, politics and the art of war.
- It also had a library and dormitories for students, and accommodations for professors. It housed nearly 10,000 students and 2000 professors.
- Students from Japan, China, Korea, Tibet, Indonesia, Persia and Turkey came here to learn.
- It was also a pilgrimage destination from 1st century A.D.
- Buddha often visited this site. Sariputra and Moggallana, two of Budhha’s disciples, are from this area. A tomb named after Sariputra is found here and he was supposedly born here.
- Many monks lived here and studied. Famous among them was Naropa. He was instrumental in bringing Buddhism to Tibet along with Shantirakshita and Padmasambhava.
- Hsuan Tsang, the famous Buddhist pilgrim from China, came here and taught for five years in 7th A.D.
- In 12th Century Muslim invader Bakhtiyar Khalji sacked the university.
- In 1860s, archaeologist Aleexander Cunningham identified the site. Excavations by ASI began in 1916.

**Takshashila**
- According to the available references Takshashila is dated back to at least the 5th century BC. Some Jataka tales composed in 5th century AD mention about this place.

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Chanakya (or Kautilya), the Maurya Emperor Chandragupta and Ayurvedic healer Charaka studied at Taxila. Chanakya composed the famous treatise Arthashastra (Sanskrit for the knowledge of economics) here.

Generally, students entered Takshashila at the age of sixteen. The Vedas and the eighteen arts, which included skills such as archery, hunting and elephant lore, were taught, in addition to its law school, medical school, and school of military science.

The main ruins of Taxila are divided into three major cities, each belonging to a distinct time period.

1. The oldest of these is the Hathial area, which yielded surface shards similar to Red Burnished Ware (or soapy red ware) recovered from early phases at Charsadda—these may date from as early as the late 2nd millennium BCE to the 6th century BCE. Bhir Mound dates from the 6th century BCE and has Northern Black Polished Ware.
2. The second city of Taxila is located at Sirkap and was built by Greco-Bactrian kings in the 2nd century BCE.
3. The third and last city of Taxila is at Sirsukh and relates to the Kushan rulers.

In addition to the ruins of the city, a number of buddhist monasteries and stupas also belong to the Taxila area. Some of the important ruins of this category include the ruins of the stupa at Dharmarajika, the monastery at Jaulian, the monastery at Mohra Muradu in addition to a number of stupas.

- Legend has it that Takṣaśilā derived its name from Takṣa, who was the son of Bharata, the brother of the Hindu deity Rama and he founded the city.
- According to another theory propounded by Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi, it is related to Takṣaka, Sanskrit for "carpenter", and is an alternative name for the Nāga, a non-Indo-Iranian people of ancient India.
- In the great Hindu epic, the Mahābhārata, the Kuru Kingdom's heir, Parikṣit (grandson of the Arjuna) was enthroned at Takṣāsilā.
- Traditionally, it is believed that the Mahabharata was first recited at Takṣaśilā by Vaisampayana, student of Vyasa at the behest of the seer Vyasa himself, at the Snake Sacrifice.

Other centres of learning

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Other centers of ancient learning in and around India include Odantapuri in Bihar, Somapura in Bangladesh, Jagaddala in Bengal, Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh, Vikramasila in Bihar, Sharada Peeth in modern day Kashmir, Valabhi in Gujarat, Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu, Manyakheta in Karnataka, Puspagiri and Ratnagiri in Orissa. In Sri Lanka, Sunethradevi Pirivena, a centre of Buddhist learning was also famous.