

## General Studies – 2; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources

### The state of education in India

#### 1) Introduction

- “The true teachers are those who help us think for ourselves,” said Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan.
- The essence and role of education articulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986/92 continues to be relevant even 25 years after its formulation.
- The enforcement of Article 21-A and the RTE Act represented a momentous step forward in our country’s struggle for universalising elementary education.

#### 2) National Policy on Education(NPE) states:

- Education is fundamental to our all-round development.
- Education contributes to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit - thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our Constitution.
- Education develops manpower for different levels of the economy.
- In sum, education is a unique investment in the present and the future.

#### 3) Concerns / Challenges

- The Annual Status of Education Report conducted by Pratham, an Indian NGO, had assessed in 2014 that 75 per cent of all children in Class III, over 50 per cent in Class V and over 25 per cent in Class VIII could not read texts meant for Class II.
- National Survey Sample results in 2015 indicated sharp decline in learning outcomes in mathematics, science and English in the secondary schools.
- There is ample evidence that the Indian child is as good a learner as any in the world. It is just sheer lack of basic opportunity that has kept the Indian child at very low education standards.
- The main problem is the bureaucratic and political intervention in the educational administration.
- The system is not “inclusive” and does not give a second chance to the weaker sections.
- The fundamentals of teacher management, teacher education and training as well as school governance and management are lacking
- The curriculum is rote-oriented and little practical thought has been given.
- Lack of infrastructure and access promised to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the Right to Education Act (RTE)
- Many parents are illiterate so they have little idea what their children are learning.
- Evidence shows that In many villages the primary school is deserted, and school buildings are used for storing hay.
- RTE requires all children aged six to 14 to attend school but pays little attention to what they learn when they are there.
- Poor quality of education in schools includes absence of around 25 per cent of teachers every day.
- Lack of drinking water and proper toilet facilities at schools.

#### 4) Way Forward

- Proper governance standards, with adequate incentives, and checks and balances, have to be put in place
- The focus of the entire structure at the Centre, states and the educational regulatory institutions should shift to student, teacher, principal and school.
- The fundamentals of teacher management, teacher education and training as well as school governance and management have to be strengthened.
- Improve quality and standards of school education and literacy towards building a society committed to Constitutional values.
- Recruitment of teachers should be centralized at the state level, with the State Public Service Commissions, using a rigorous assessment process. This will address the matter of quality of intake.
- Technology might be leveraged to improve student learning, teacher training, monitoring and support, management of schools and the quality of learning, especially in remote districts.
- Increasing teacher accountability
- Promoting gender equality through education has an important role to play.
- Making education more practically relevant to the labour market
- Currently spending on education is low in India and stands at 3.6 percent of the GDP. The government should increase spending on education.

### 5) **Higher Education**

- India's higher education system is the third largest in the world, next to the United States and China.
- **Reasons for lack of Higher Education**
  - a. Due to financial hardship, inferior schools, and social compulsions for early marriage for girls, the majority of young people drop out of school. So they have no access to higher education.
  - b. For socially disadvantaged groups discrimination at workplace lower the rate of return from higher education for them compared to other groups.
  - c. Intensive entry examination preparation in coaching classes (or private tuition) with high fees is often out of reach for poor students.
- **Concerns / challenges**
  - a. Extreme faculty shortage, deficiencies in library books, laboratory facilities, computer and broadband internet, classrooms and buildings, etc.
  - b. Over all our research quality is much below the world average.
  - c. The rise of IT sector and engineering education in India has boxed students into linear path without giving them a chance to explore and discover their passions.
  - d. Higher education has become a business in a big way, turning colleges into lucrative degree-giving factories.
- **Recommendations**
  - a. Funding of higher education - Sourced from Special cess, CSR, alumina fund, easy loans from banks, progressive fee structure etc.
  - b. India should set up 1 or 2 world class universities which should have all resources, funding and global exposure.
  - c. Link major R&D centres of country with government colleges in all states, to encourage inclusion of students in research initiatives in the country
  - d. Setting up Higher Education Commission (HEC) as recommended by Yashpal Committee to promote interaction across different departments and universities
  - e. Revisiting the role of UGC as observed by Subramaniam Committee

- f. Distance education through use of technology like online videos and courses for those who can't afford to join higher education institutes
- g. Political intervention should be minimized to make educational institutions autonomous and increased competition among them.
- If India does not look at the collapse of its higher education closely not only will we be leading to a new brain drain but a collapse of aspirations.

