



Education Reforms for Equal Learning Opportunities

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Abstract:

Education has become a basic need of every person. Although education is a means of livelihood, today education is known as a means of getting employment. Education is also expected to change to that extent. The rapid progress in technology and science all over the world, due to which completely new flows are being created in production techniques and structures, are having an impact on all sectors. Since the new generation is going to face these changes, it is expected that the work of preparing it for it should be done through education. There is also an increase in traditional colleges and colleges providing vocational education. Although schemes like scholarships are being implemented, they are not seen being implemented in rural areas. However, the quality of women's education in those areas where they have been implemented has improved. The quality is deteriorating due to the fact that vacant professor positions are not filled in aided colleges or professors are working on an hourly basis. The salary paid to employees in private colleges is meager. Therefore, the employees' attitude towards work is not right. There is an increasing trend towards vocational education over traditional education because vocational education provides employment quickly. There is more political interference in the education sector. Politics takes place from teacher recruitment to providing educational facilities to the grassroots. Due to this, primary, secondary, higher secondary schools, colleges and the University Grants Commission also have to suffer. Due to the current state of education as mentioned above, today's young generation does not look at the education sector as an employment. Therefore, research is expected in the education sector. And if implemented accordingly, social transformation will take place in the right direction.

Keywords - Changes in the new education policy, Inequality between men and women in education, Inequality in regional educational facilities, Dominance of private universities, Vocational and traditional education.

Introduction:

Education is a key factor affecting the quality of the human resource. Education is one of the many components of social infrastructure improvement. A highly educated and appropriately trained workforce drives a country's economic development. Education reform aims to bring about changes in public education. The meaning and practices of education have changed due to debates over what content or experiences result in an educated individual or an educated society. Historically, the motivations for reform have not reflected the current needs of society. A coherent concept of reform includes the idea that major systemic changes in educational standards will produce social returns in the health, wealth, and well-being of citizens.

As part of a broader social and political process, the term education reform refers to a series of significant, systematic reforms that affect a nation's public school system to improve its

educational laws, standards, procedures, and policies to reflect the needs and values of contemporary society.

In the 18th century, classical education, taught by a private tutor in the home at the family's expense, was primarily a privilege for children from wealthy families. Innovations such as encyclopedias, public libraries, and grammar schools were intended to alleviate some of the financial burdens associated with the classical education model. Victorian-era inspirations emphasized the importance of self-improvement. Victorian education focused on professionally valuable subjects such as modern languages and mathematics rather than classical liberal arts subjects such as Latin, art, and history.

The history of educational pedagogy in the United States ranges from teaching literacy and proficiency in religious doctrine, to establishing cultural literacy, to integrating immigrants into democratic societies, to creating a skilled workforce in industrialized workplaces, to preparing students for careers and to compete in the global marketplace. Educational inequality is also a motivation for education reform, which seeks to address community problems.

Educational reforms are essential to creating equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location. By implementing policies that prioritize access to quality education, resources, and innovative teaching methods, we can bridge the gap that often exists among diverse communities. Furthermore, sustainable business models in the education sector can play a crucial role in supporting these reforms, as they emphasize the importance of long-term investment in educational initiatives and the development of partnerships between public and private entities. This holistic approach not only fosters a more inclusive learning environment but also encourages the adaptation of curricula and teaching practices that are relevant to the ever-evolving demands of the global economy. Ultimately, the synergy between educational reforms, equal learning opportunities, and sustainable business practices can pave the way for a more educated and resilient society (Rathod et al., 2024).

Educational reforms are essential for creating a more equitable learning environment that provides equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their socio-economic background. By implementing policies that prioritize access to quality education, we can break down barriers that hinder marginalized communities from reaching their full potential. This vision aligns with the broader goal of "Viksit Bharat," or a developed India, where an educated and skilled population becomes the cornerstone of sustainable growth and development, ultimately fostering social cohesion and economic prosperity for the nation as a whole. Through concerted efforts in educational reforms, we can ensure that every child has the chance to thrive and contribute to a brighter future for India (Harale & Pawar, 2024).

Research Objectives:

1. To study the provisions of the new education policy.
2. To study the gap in education between men and women.
3. To study the gap between traditional education and vocational education.
4. To suggest measures for equal opportunities in education.

Assumptions:

1. There is disparity in educational facilities in Pune district.
2. In Pune district, the number of people pursuing vocational education is increasing day by day compared to traditional education.
3. There is disparity in educational level between men and women in Pune district.

Current Status of Education:

Public schools are funded by controlling three levels: the central, state and local levels. Since April 2010, the Basic Law of Free and Compulsory Education for Children in the Age of 6 to 14 Years in India has been enacted. This law has caused a huge controversy in the number of students pursuing primary education. In 2011, 75% of children between the ages of 7 and 10 were literate. India is the third-largest country in terms of higher education after the United States and China. Scientific research has received a significant boost from public institutions through higher education. The gross enrolment ratio in higher education increased to 24 percent in 2013. However, this ratio is low compared to the number of students in developed countries.

In India, the proportion of private schools providing primary and secondary education to children aged 6 to 14 years was 30.9% in 2018. The number of private schools in India is increasing. According to the Annual Report of Education, in 2012, 96.5% of children aged 6 to 14 years were enrolled in schools in rural areas. From 2007 to 2014, the proportion of children who were enrolled in primary schools was 95%. Due to this, the proportion of children who were not enrolled in schools has decreased to 2.8 percent. In 2018, 229 million students were enrolled in schools in rural and urban areas. Since 2002, 23 lakh students have been added to the number of students from classes 1 to 12. In this, the number of female students has increased by 19%. While there is quantitative growth, quality is being neglected. The proportion of children in government primary schools is 95%. But only 40 percent of the adolescent students study in classes 9 to 12. In India, there is a growing trend of studying in private schools instead of public schools.

The All India Council for Technical Education was established in 1945 to develop technical skills among students in India. In the modern era, there is a huge demand for technicians who pursue technical education. Technical education is provided in India through two channels, formal and informal. In the private sector, private institutions run short-term technical courses. Technical and vocational courses are run at the secondary and higher secondary levels. In 2017-18, there were 10,396 engineering education institutions in 29 states and 7 union territories in India. Engineers who study at the Indian Institutes of Technology are in high demand.

Inequality between Men and Women:**1. Military Schools:**

The government has established military schools in 33 districts of the state to attract youth to join the army from their student days. The main objective is to cultivate qualities such as discipline, confidence, bravery, leadership and patriotism among the students. There are 42 schools in the state, out of which 4 schools are for girls only, 4 are for co-education and 34 are for boys. Out of these, 38 schools are aided. The details of the number of students in these schools are as follows -

Table No. 1

Sr.No.	Year	Number of students	Percentage (%)
1	2014-15	17796	11.00
2	2015-16	15345	9.48
3	2016-17	14653	9.06
4	2017-18	18924	11.70
5	2018-19	21686	13.40
6	2019-20	21209	13.11
7	2020-21	18685	11.55
8	2021-22	9664	5.97

9	2022-23	11882	7.34
10	2023-24	11880	7.34

Source:- Economic Survey of Maharashtra (2014-15 to 2023-24)

The above table shows that the percentage of girls in the number of students in military schools is negligible. The lowest number of students was in 2021-22 and the highest number was in 2018-19. The average number of students is decreasing.

2. Samagra Shiksha:

In line with the sustainable development goal of education, by adjusting the three schemes Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan and Shikshak Shiksha, a new integrated scheme 'Samagra Shiksha' is being implemented in the state from the financial year 2018-19 to ensure inclusive and equal quality education from pre-school to higher secondary.

The objectives of this scheme are as follows -

1. To increase quality education and student learning outcomes.
2. To reduce social and gender disparities in school education.
3. To ensure equity and inclusiveness in school education at all levels.
4. Ensure that minimum school standards are met.
5. Promote vocational education.
6. Implement the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.
7. Strengthen and upgrade the State Council for Educational Research and Training/State Educational Institutes and District Educational Training Institutes as the main institutions for training teachers.

The details of funds sanctioned and expenditure incurred under Samagra Shiksha are as follows –

Sr. No.	Year	Approved Fund	Expenditure (cr.)
1	2018-19	1854.54	1354.06
2	2019-20	2226.56	557.67
3	2020-21	1807.49	322.96
4	2021-22	1239.30	675.37
5	2022-23	1543.43	735.65

Source:- Maharashtra Primary Education Council

The above table shows that the ratio of expenditure sanctioned and expenditure is higher in the academic year 2018-19. Whereas, it is seen to have decreased the most in 2020-21.

Regional Imbalance:

1. Important indicators regarding primary (Class 1 to 5) and upper primary (Class 6 to 8) education –

Sr. No.	Percentage of schools with facilities	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1	Drinking water	99.4	99.5	99.6
2	Functional toilets for girls	96.5	96.3	99.1
3	Protective wall	84.6	88.5	85.1
4	Computer	66.7	63.2	70.5
5	Accessible road for the disabled	92.2	93.1	93.9
6	Playground	86.8	86.3	87.5
7	Library	87.5	89.3	91.7
8	Electricity connection	95.3	98.3	94.9

Source:- Maharashtra Primary Education Council

The above data shows that the expenditure on computer literacy has decreased. Computer education is provided in a fair amount in urban areas than in rural areas.

2. Higher and Technical Education:-

According to the All India Higher Education Survey Report 2020-21, there are 42 state universities (23 public, 18 private and one open), 21 deemed universities (12 private, 9 government), seven institutions of national importance and one central university in the state. Based on the All India Higher Education Survey Report, the information on higher education in the state can be stated as follows –

Sr.No.	Details (Percentage of women)	2019-20	2020-21
1	Percentage of students in higher education	45.75	45.19
2	Percentage of students in universities and other institutions	39.41	41.83

Source:- All India Higher Education Performance Report 2020-21 Central Government

The above table shows that the proportion of women is less than that of men.

3. Value of Education :-

In addition to the instrumental and intrinsic value of education to an individual, education is also valuable for society. All societies benefit from productive and knowledgeable workers who can generate social surplus and respond to preferences. Furthermore, democratic societies need to create citizens who are capable of participating in the project of shared governance. Education has both instrumental and intrinsic value for individuals and for societies as a whole. The instrumental goals of K–12 education for individuals include access to higher education and a constellation of private benefits that follow college education such as access to interesting jobs with more vacation time and better health care; greater personal and professional mobility, better decision-making skills (Institute for Higher Education Policy 1998) and more autonomy at work. Research further shows that education levels are correlated with health and wealth: the more education a person has, the healthier and wealthier she is likely to be. At the same time, education is also considered intrinsically valuable. Developing one's skills and talents can be enjoyable or good in itself and a central component of a flourishing life, regardless of the consequences this has for wealth or health.

Conclusion:

1. The expenditure on education is less than other sectors.
2. The number of schools for girls in military schools is insufficient. And it is only in 33 districts.
3. There is a discrepancy between the approved funds and the expenditure of the overall expenditure. It is seen that the approved funds are not spent completely.
4. It is seen that the central government is cutting education expenditure.
5. There is a discrepancy between men and women.

Recommendations:

1. The reduced provision of the central government on education should be six percent of the GDP instead of three percent.
2. Recruitment of employees in all categories in the education sector should not be on a contractual or hourly basis but should be full time.
3. The monthly salary of contractual teachers should not be less than the total salary of regular teachers. The pay commission should be abolished and teachers on hourly basis should be given equal right to salary. (The principle of equal pay for equal work should be followed.)
4. Professors should give first priority to research and teaching in the educational and social sectors.
5. There should be no urban-rural gap in implementing educational government schemes.

6. The government should provide financial provisions and facilities to vocational education rather than traditional education.
7. The government should take strict steps to implement the approved expenditure in a proper manner.
8. Increase the number of schools for girls to more than four. Show separate numbers for boys and girls.
9. Give more emphasis on digital education than traditional education.

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