

# Accessibility of Quality Based Education with Equity: Challenges for New Education Policy

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**Abstract:** The new policy on education emphasizes an integrated approach which recommends providing learning-outcome based education with the provision of proper nutrition to all children. This integrated approach to education extends the ambit of the Right to Education early childhood to a higher secondary level of education by covering all children between the ages of 3 to 18 years. The objective of accessibility of quality based education with equity in the neighborhood school up to age 18 can be achieved but needs proper implementation of policy. National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round) data reveals that about 39 percent household has reported distance of school having secondary level classes is more than 2 kilometer and 12.2 percent household reported distance is more than 5 kilometer in rural areas which is about 5 times more of urban areas.

**Keywords:** Education Policy, Accessibility of education, Quality of education, Equity in education

## Introduction

Since the adoption of the modern education system with the Charter Act of 1813 till the new education policy 2020, India has made several efforts for the progressive development in the area of education.

A number of commissions and committees have been set up and on the basis of their recommendations policies have been made in India to increase accessibility of free and compulsory education to all children up to age 14 in India. Few important are, Secondary Education Commission 1952, National Education Commission 1964, National Policy on Education 1986, Modification in National Policy on Education, 1992, etc. Education Commission Report, 1964- 1966, mainly highlights compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, as specified by the constitution of India. National Policy

on education, 1986 emphasize on the removal of disparities and to equalize education opportunity. A number of constitutional amendments also have passes to enhance accessibility of education to all children up to age 14 like, The Constitution Act 2002 (Eighty-sixth Amendment), inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India envisages free and compulsory education for all children of the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) came into force in April 2010, entitled every child of the age of six to fourteen years has the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till the completion of elementary education. New Policy on Education, 2020 recommends a number of quality improvements in every area of education but most importantly in the area of elementary education which emphasizes an integrated approach to education. This integrated approach recommends providing learning-outcome based education with the provision to provide proper nutrition to all children. Every child in the age range of 3-6 years has access to free, safe, high quality, developmentally appropriate care and education by 2025 and access for children aged 3 - 8 years to a flexible, multifaceted, multilevel, play-based and activity-based education is of utmost importance (NEP, 2020). This integrated approach to education extends the ambit of the Right to Education early childhood to a higher secondary level of education by covering all children between the ages of 3 to 18 years.

By the present government of India the national education policy 2020, has came up with a very impressive recommendation, modification in The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (which entitles every child of the age of six to fourteen years to the right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till the completion of elementary education) by increasing the range of ages covered by the act from 6-14 to 3-18 years and to provide education with nutrition which help to increase the capability of learning of child.

To start walking in a new path, should try to identify the challenges left behind on the old path. Therefore before India starts to walk on a new path of policy should analyze what are the Challenges to achieve the objectives of policy. The present work simply try to identify where India has reached by following the old path of policy and what are the major challenges in the path to provide free and compulsory quality education with equity in a neighborhood school with the help of unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social

Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round). By thoroughly viewing the analysis some major issues automatically highlight which are important to achieve the objective of new education policy and identify the challenges; which ensure compulsory quality based education with equity in the neighborhood school to all children.

### Accessibility of quality based education with equity: Analysis and Discussion

In the words of Farrington and Farrington (2005) accessibility can be defined as “The ability of people to reach and engage in opportunities and activities”. Pirie (1981) observes accessibility as being similar to reachability and convenience. Gulliford et al. (2002) consider the accessibility from two different perspectives viz. “having access” refers to availability of services and “gaining access” refers to an individual’s ability to utilize the available services. Accessibility based on good quality basic education with equity can still be identified as the foremost roadblock in the path of universalization of free and compulsory education to all children. Accessibility of education with equity to all children is always determined by the accessibility and reachability of school. The table indicates the availability and reachability of schools to the masses.

**Table 1: Distance to Nearest School for Various level of education by Sector**

Distance to Nearest School Having Primary Level Classes					
Sector	<i>Within 1km</i>	<i>1km to 2km</i>	<i>2km to 3km</i>	<i>3km to 5km</i>	<i>More than 5km</i>
Rural	94.12	4.92	0.71	0.19	0.06
Urban	92.54	6.54	0.73	0.12	0.08
Total	93.6	5.45	0.72	0.16	0.07
Distance to Nearest School Having Upper Primary Level Classes					
Sector	<i>Within 1km</i>	<i>1km to 2km</i>	<i>2km to 3km</i>	<i>3km to 5km</i>	<i>More than 5km</i>
Rural	66.46	19.02	8.31	3.81	2.41
Urban	82.94	13.08	2.92	0.82	0.24
Total	71.82	17.09	6.55	2.83	1.7
Distance to Nearest School Secondary Level Classes					
Sector	<i>Within 1km</i>	<i>1km to 2km</i>	<i>2km to 3km</i>	<i>3km to 5km</i>	<i>More than 5km</i>
Rural	36.74	23.57	16.69	10.79	12.2
Urban	72.65	18.65	5.97	2.02	0.7
Total	48.44	21.97	13.2	7.94	8.45

Source: Author’s Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

It can be illustrated from table 1 that about 94 percent households have reported the availability of school having primary level classes within 1 kilometer and also no prominent difference existed between rural and urban areas. The availability of schools having upper primary and secondary level classes varies across the distance. About 14 percent of households have reported the distance of upper primary school is more than 2 kilometer and about 2 percent households reported more than 5 kilometer in rural areas. In urban areas the percentage of households with distance of upper primary school more than 2 kilometer is only 3 percent. The data is more considerable in respect of school having secondary level classes which indicate about 39 percent household reported distance of school having secondary level classes is more than 2 kilometer and 12.2 percent household reported distance is more than 5 kilometer in rural areas which is about 5 times more of urban areas.

Among social groups the data highlighted education accessibility status for Scheduled Tribes. About 20 percent scheduled tribe households have reported distance of upper primary school is more than 2 kilometer and 4.47 percent has reported distance of upper primary school is more than 5 kilometer. Similarly about more than 50 percent scheduled tribe households have reported distance of school having secondary level classes is more than 2 kilometer and 19.42 percent scheduled tribe households reported distance of school more than 5 kilometer which is almost double of national average. This is a noticeable concern or can say a major challenge of policy makers for the new path of accessibility of elementary education with equal opportunity to all.

The prominent difference has been found in the distribution of population in respect of whether ever enrolled. 30.9 percent of the rural female population has reported that they have never enrolled which is almost double of its urban counterpart. The 19.78 percent male population has reported that they have never enrolled in rural areas and 10.82 percent in urban areas. National average for the never enrolled population is 21.48 percent. The data related ever enrolled but not completed their enrolled course is also considerable. 36.22 percent of the population has reported that they ever enrolled but not completed their enrolled courses in rural areas but no significant variation has been observed across gender. In urban areas 30.05 percent male and 25.58 percent female gender have reported that they ever enrolled but not completed their enrolled courses.

**Table 2: Distance to Nearest School for Various level of education by Social Group**

Social Group	Distance to Nearest School Having Primary Level Classes				Distance to Nearest School Having Upper Primary Level Classes				Distance to Nearest School Having Secondary Level Classes			
	Within 1km	1km to 2km	2km to 5km	More than 5km	Within 1km	1km to 2km	2km to 5km	More than 5km	Within 1km	1km to 2km	2km to 5km	More than 5km
Scheduled Tribe	92.44	6.37	1.15	0.05	58.42	21.22	15.89	4.47	30.44	19.53	30.62	19.42
Scheduled Caste	94.81	4.55	0.61	0.03	69.00	19.29	10.08	1.63	44.22	24.15	23.70	7.93
Other Backward Class	93.94	5.08	0.92	0.07	74.55	15.35	8.65	1.45	49.57	21.50	20.46	8.46
Others	92.69	6.29	0.91	0.11	74.09	16.84	7.86	1.21	55.50	22.03	17.31	5.16
Total	93.60	5.45	0.88	0.70	71.82	17.09	9.38	1.70	48.44	21.97	21.14	8.45

Source: Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

**Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Ever Enrolled and Completed persons aged 5-29 Years by Gender and Sector**

Whether Ever Enrolled persons aged 5-29 years						
Gender	Rural		Urban		Rural + Urban	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	80.22	19.78	89.18	10.82	82.87	17.13
Female	69.91	30.09	85.10	14.90	74.18	25.82
Total	75.00	25.00	87.19	12.81	78.52	21.48
Ever Enrolled Whether completed						
Gender	Rural		Urban		Rural + Urban	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Male	63.45	36.55	69.95	30.05	65.52	34.48
Female	64.15	35.85	74.42	25.58	67.46	32.54
Total	63.78	36.22	72.07	27.93	66.44	33.56

Source: Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

**Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Ever Enrolled and Completed persons aged 5-29 Years by Social Group**

Social Group	Whether Ever Enrolled		Ever enrolled whether Completed	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Scheduled Tribe	70.58	29.42	52.52	47.48
Scheduled Caste	74.74	25.26	62.46	37.54
Other Backward Class	77.73	22.27	68.82	31.18
Others	86.79	13.21	70.88	29.12
Total	78.52	21.48	66.44	33.56

Source: Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

There is a huge variation of every enrolled population across social groups. The 29.42 percent scheduled tribe population has reported that they have never enrolled, 25.26 percent scheduled caste population has reported that they have never enrolled, 22.27 percent other backward class has reported for never enrollment where only 13.21 percent belong to other social groups and have reported that they have never enrolled. Enrolment in school varies across the social group. Deprived social group percentage for whether ever enrolled persons aged 5-29 is lesser than forward social group of the society. Similar in the respect of ever enrolled whether completed; 47.48 48 percent scheduled tribe population has reported that they have not completed their enrolled courses whether the nation average is 33.56 percent.

**Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Ever Enrolled and Completed persons aged 5-29 Years by Religion**

Religion	<i>Whether Ever Enrolled</i>		<i>Ever enrolled whether Completed</i>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Hinduism	79.33	20.67	67.40	32.60
Islam	72.14	27.86	60.42	39.58
Christianity	89.64	10.36	70.20	29.80
Sikhism	88.43	11.57	75.26	24.74
Jainism	91.90	8.10	89.76	10.24
Budhism	91.27	8.73	50.44	49.56
Zoroastrianism	100.00	0.00	78.94	21.06
Others	80.15	19.85	67.05	32.95
Total	78.52	21.48	66.44	33.56

*Source:* Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

Across religion Islam persons aged 5-29 years has reported highest 27.86 percent for never enrollment in any course. The second highest reported religion is Hinduism which has reported 20.67 percent for never enrolling in any course. Zoroastrianism has reported 100 percent enrollment. Similarly Islam religion has reported highest 39.58 percent for ever enrolled but not completed their enrolled course. 32.60 percent Hinduism religion has reported the same.

As per level of current attendance 72.29 percent rural population choose government institution for primary level of education but more than 50 percent urban population choose un-aided private institution for primary level education. As per level of education increases percentage of rural population to choose government institution decreases whether it increases in urban area. At all level of education 68.31 percent rural population are getting their education in government institution but only 34.93 urban population are getting their education in urban areas. 42.61 percent population are getting their education in private un-aided institution in urban areas. No significant variation has found for the percentage of population for diploma/certificate course at each level. About 35 percent have chosen for a diploma/certificate course government institution, about 25 percent private aided and about 40 percent private un-aided institution. About 50 percent of rural population are getting their graduation and above level of education in government institution.

**Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Students by type of institution attended for various level of education**

Level of Current Attendance	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	Government	Private Aided	Private Un-aided	Government	Private Aided	Private Un-aided	Government	Private Aided	Private Un-aided
Primary	72.29	4.99	22.52	30.87	17.45	51.41	62.04	8.07	29.67
Upper Primary	75.84	7.86	16.23	38.05	20.19	41.53	65.97	11.08	22.84
Secondary	68.72	13.10	18.10	38.76	23.98	36.87	60.35	16.14	23.34
Higher Secondary	55.03	19.33	25.25	35.90	27.79	35.91	48.93	22.03	28.65
Diploma/Certificate Course (upto secondary)	39.76	26.19	33.93	29.58	30.22	40.20	36.33	27.55	36.05
Diploma/Certificate Course ( higher secondary)	35.76	23.40	40.46	28.58	29.76	41.36	32.98	25.86	40.81
Diploma/Certificate-Course (graduation & above)	32.77	25.73	40.82	29.09	29.26	39.86	30.89	27.53	40.33
Graduation	47.36	22.49	29.50	35.54	29.50	34.57	42.27	25.51	31.69
Post Graduation & above	50.66	22.38	26.92	48.08	22.09	29.45	49.33	22.23	28.23
Total	68.31	9.89	21.60	34.93	22.12	42.61	58.76	13.38	27.61

Source: Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)



**Table 7: Percentage Distribution of Students Reason for Preferring Private Institution**

Reason for Preferring Private Institution			
	Rural + Urban	Rural	Urban
Government institution is not available nearby	12.14	14.53	9.23
better environment of learning	49.65	50.27	48.90
English is the medium of instruction	10.13	7.33	13.53
Quality of education in govt. institution not satisfactory	17.55	17.97	17.03
Tried for govt. Institution but could not get admission	7.49	6.62	8.55

*Source:* Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

Surprisingly about half of the respondents (49.6 percent) have reported the reason behind choosing private institutions for their education is better environment for learning and 17.55 percent respondent choose private institution for their education due to the quality of education in government institutions are not satisfactory. These data really raise a question mark over the quality of government institutions at each level of education. 12.14 percent has reported that they choose private institutions due to no availability of government institutions nearby.

**Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Students aged 5-29 years for Purpose of taking private coaching**

Purpose of taking private coaching	
Augmenting basic education	89.17
preparation for exam getting job	1.79
preparation for admission to institutes/course	1.52
others	7.52

*Source:* Author's Computation by using unit level data of National Sample Survey on Social Consumption: Education, 2014 (NSS 71<sup>st</sup> Round)

The reason behind the purpose of taking private coaching is also noticeable. 89.17 percent have reported they are taking private coaching for augmenting basic education. It also indicates the quality of basic education provided by schools of our nation.

## Conclusion

With the new education policy India is ready to start a new path to achieve the objective of universalization of compulsory quality based education to all children up to age 18. A view lens of data analysis and discussion following can be concluding remarks as an identification of major challenges in the path to achieve the same objective.

The first and foremost challenge in the path policymaker is accessibility of school to all children in the neighborhood. Data reveals that accessibility of primary education in the neighborhood has been almost achieved but it has to go a long way to achieve accessibility of education at upper primary and secondary level in the neighborhood.

Among social groups the accessibility and reachability of school to all Scheduled Tribes children in the neighborhood is also a big challenge among policy makers to fulfill the objective of New Education Policy.

As per level of education increases the percentage of population to choose government institutions decreases in rural areas whether it increases in urban areas. Surprisingly about 65 percent of the respondents have reported the reason behind choosing private institutions for their education is “better environment for learning” and the “quality of education in government institutions are not satisfactory”. So this also can identify as a big challenge among policy makers to provide accessibility of quality based education with equity to all, especially deprived or economically backward children up to age 18.

Accessibility of quality based education for all with equity is the foremost objective of national policy on education but a number of challenges seem in the path to achieve the objective. Only proper implementation of policy can face the challenges in the path to achieve the objective but proper implementation of policy itself is a big challenge in front of policy makers and implementers.

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