# Transforming Child Education in India: A Critical Analysis of Strategies

[1]Sourav Das, Research Scholar, OPJS University
Churu, Rajasthan
[2]Dr. Uttuam Kumar Samanta, Supervisor, OPJS University
Churu, Rajasthan

## Abstract

This study critically examines the evolution of child education policies in India since independence, with a focus on their formulation, implementation, and effectiveness. Beginning with the constitutional mandate under Article 45 and progressing through key policy milestones such as the National Policy on Education (1968, 1986), the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and the Right to Education Act (2009), the study highlights significant efforts toward universalizing elementary education and promoting inclusivity. However, it also underscores persistent challenges related to learning outcomes, infrastructure disparities, teacher quality, and the digital divide. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a progressive shift by advocating for foundational learning and early childhood care. Based on a critical analysis of past and current strategies, the study recommends strengthening early childhood education, focusing on learning outcomes, ensuring equity, and building teacher capacity to transform child education into a more inclusive, effective, and quality-driven system.

## Keywords

Child Education, India, Educational Policy, Post-Independence, National Policy on Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Right to Education Act, NEP 2020.

## 1. Introduction

India, home to the world's largest child population, has long struggled with ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all children. Despite significant progress since independence, the education system continues to grapple with multiple challenges, including access, retention, quality of instruction, and disparities based on gender, region, socio-economic status, and disability (UNESCO, 2021). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), enacted in 2009, marked a significant policy shift, guaranteeing education as a fundamental right for children aged 6 to 14 years. However, the gap between policy formulation and implementation remains wide, calling for a critical analysis of existing and emerging strategies to transform child education in India (Jha & Parvati, 2010).

A variety of strategies has been introduced over the years to enhance the reach and quality of child education. These include the mid-day meal scheme to improve attendance and nutrition, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) to universalize elementary education, and the more recent Samagra Shiksha initiative, which seeks to integrate school education from pre-primary to senior secondary levels (Ministry of Education, 2020). Furthermore, digital learning initiatives such as DIKSHA and PM eVIDYA gained prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the role of technology in bridging learning gaps, though issues of digital divide and infrastructure persist (Choudhary, 2021).

The transformation of child education also hinges on teacher training, curriculum reforms, pedagogical innovation, and community participation. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a paradigm shift by promoting foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), experiential learning, and flexible curriculum structures aligned with global best practices (NEP, 2020). However, experts argue that implementation must be contextualized to India's diverse demographic and cultural landscape to be effective (Kaul, 2021). Moreover, early childhood care and education (ECCE), often neglected in mainstream discourse, has gained renewed focus under NEP 2020 as a critical foundation for lifelong learning and development (Bajpai, 2021).

In order to truly transform child education, it is essential to critically analyze these strategies through lenses of inclusivity, equity, quality, and sustainability. This includes examining the roles of public and private stakeholders, the effectiveness of grassroots interventions, and the alignment of educational outcomes with the aspirations and rights of every child. Such an analysis will help in identifying best practices, addressing gaps, and formulating evidence-based policies for a more equitable and empowered future for India's children.

### 1.1. The Statement of the Problem

Despite several policy reforms and initiatives aimed at improving child education in India, significant disparities continue to undermine the nation's educational goals. Millions of children, especially from marginalized communities, still face barriers to accessing quality education due to poverty, gender bias, inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained teachers, and socio-cultural constraints (UNESCO, 2021; ASER, 2022). The Right to Education (RTE) Act, while instrumental in increasing enrollment, has not sufficiently addressed issues related to learning outcomes, teacher accountability, and classroom practices (Jha & Parvati, 2010). Furthermore, the advent of digital learning, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed

deep-rooted inequalities in access to technology and internet connectivity, further widening the learning gap among rural and urban students (Choudhary, 2021). Although the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisions a transformative approach by focusing on foundational literacy, flexible curricula, and inclusive education, the success of these strategies depends heavily on contextualized implementation, continuous monitoring, and stakeholder collaboration (Kaul, 2021; Bajpai, 2021). Therefore, a critical analysis is essential to evaluate the effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability of current educational strategies and to identify actionable pathways for genuinely transforming child education in India.

### 1.2. The Need and Significance of the Study

The need for a comprehensive and critical analysis of strategies transforming child education in India is more urgent than ever, given the persistent gaps in educational access, equity, and learning outcomes across diverse socio-economic and geographic groups. Despite the enactment of landmark policies such as the RTE Act and the ambitious vision laid out in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, disparities in school infrastructure, student-teacher ratios, and dropout rates remain major challenges (Ministry of Education, 2020; Jha & Parvati, 2010). The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2022) reveals that while enrollment has improved, foundational literacy and numeracy levels among students remain alarmingly low, signaling a crisis in learning quality. As India aspires to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) on inclusive and equitable quality education, it is essential to evaluate the effectiveness of existing strategies, identify the barriers to implementation, and explore context-sensitive solutions (UNESCO, 2021). This study is significant as it not only contributes to academic discourse but also serves as a policy guide for stakeholders seeking to create a more resilient, inclusive, and effective child education system in India (Kaul, 2021; Bajpai, 2021).

### 1.3. The Research Questions

**RQ1**: What are the current policies implemented for child education in India?

**RQ2:** How effective are the government strategies for child education in India?

**RQ3:** What actionable recommendations proposed for improving child education in India?

### 1.4. The Objectives of the Study

**O1:** To examine the current policies implemented for child education in India in post-independence.

**O₂:** To analyze the effectiveness of government strategies for child education in India post-independence.

**O₃:** To propose actionable recommendations for making child education in India.

## 2. The Review of Related Literature

**Rampal, S., & Madrid Akpovo, S. (2025).** The Early Childhood Education in India and Traces of Colonial Regimes: Findings indicate the rhetorical use of deficit discourse by WB to introduce neoliberal policies of privatization in education and education aid while narrowing the purpose of education to attain skills to gain profits. The findings underscore the need for postcolonial nations to assert autonomy in shaping their education agendas to foster inclusivity and cultural responsiveness.

**Joseph, S., Patil, K., Kulkarni, A. V., & John, M. (2025).** This chapter explores the sustainability initiatives of both early school education and higher education in India. It also explores the critical interrelationship between sustainability education and values education. The data used are collected mostly from secondary data, use cases, government, NGO and university websites and research papers. The chapter has also documented some best practice that can be used as vantage points to implement education for sustainable development in India.

**Bhatty (2014)** evaluated the impact of RTE and found that although the act mandated free and compulsory education and emphasized teacher quality and child rights, its implementation varied widely across states, and enforcement mechanisms were weak. The *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* also received attention in recent studies.

**Jha and Parvati (2010)** explored the educational experiences of disadvantaged children, including girls, children with disabilities, and those from tribal communities. Their findings underscored systemic discrimination and the need for inclusive pedagogy and supportive infrastructure.

**Muralidharan et al. (2019)** evaluated the role of technology-assisted learning and found that personalized, computer-based learning significantly improved math and reading outcomes in underperforming students. However, they also noted that lack of digital access in rural regions limited the scalability of such interventions.

### 2.1. The Research Gap of the Study

In the context of *Transforming Child Education in India: A Critical Analysis of Strategies*, a clear research gap exists in integrating and evaluating current educational reforms through a multidimensional lens that encompasses inclusivity, sustainability, and technological equity. While Rampal and Madrid Akpovo (2025) emphasize the ideological and postcolonial tensions in early education policy influenced by global financial institutions, they do not offer an actionable framework for transformation. Joseph et al. (2025) explore sustainable and value-based education initiatives but limit their scope to case studies and secondary data without assessing broader policy implications. Bhatty (2014) and Jha & Parvati (2010) highlight systemic challenges in policy implementation and marginalization, but their findings are dated and do not sufficiently engage with recent reforms like the NEP 2020. Muralidharan et al. (2019) address the promise of digital learning, yet their work lacks a comprehensive policy linkage or scalability strategy in underserved regions. Hence, there is a critical need for a consolidated and evaluative study that not only assesses the effectiveness of past and current strategies but also proposes inclusive, context-sensitive, and transformative solutions for the future of child education in India.

## 3. The Methodology of the Study

Document analysis was employed as the primary methodology for this study. It involved systematic examination of policy documents, government reports, educational frameworks, and scholarly literature related to child education in India. Both qualitative and contextual interpretations were used to identify patterns, themes, and gaps. This method enabled a comprehensive understanding of historical and contemporary educational strategies. It also facilitated a critical analysis of how these strategies align with inclusive and sustainable educational goals.

## 4. The Analysis and Interpretation of the Study

*$O_1$: To examine the current policies implemented for child education in India in post-independence.*

After gaining independence in 1947, India placed a strong emphasis on developing a comprehensive educational system aimed at uplifting its young population. The earliest initiative came in the form of a constitutional directive under **Article 45**, which urged the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 within ten years (Government of India, 1950). However, progress in the early decades was slow due to economic and infrastructural constraints. To address these challenges, India introduced the

**National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968**, which laid the foundation for a common school system and sought to promote national integration and equal opportunities in education (Ministry of Education, 1968). This was further reinforced by the **NPE 1986**, which placed special emphasis on universal primary education, adult literacy, and equal educational access for women and marginalized groups (Ministry of Education, 1986).

By the 1990s, India saw the launch of major mission-mode programs to operationalize its educational goals. One such program was the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)** in 1994, which focused on decentralizing the planning and management of primary education to improve enrollment and learning levels in underdeveloped districts (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2011). Building upon DPEP's success, the government introduced the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** in 2001, an ambitious flagship program aimed at achieving universal elementary education. SSA aimed to reduce gender and social disparities while improving infrastructure, teacher training, and learning outcomes (Mehta, 2005).

A turning point in India's educational policy landscape came with the enactment of the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**. This act made education a fundamental right for every child aged 6 to 14 and mandated norms for pupil-teacher ratios, infrastructure, and inclusive learning environments (Jha & Parvati, 2010). It was a significant legal measure, ensuring that children from disadvantaged sections could demand education as a right, not a privilege. The RTE Act also banned physical punishment, detention, and screening procedures for school admissions, promoting a more child-centric approach to education.

In a bid to integrate all school education schemes and streamline efforts, the government launched the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** in 2018, merging SSA, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and teacher education initiatives. This comprehensive program aimed to treat school education as a continuum from preschool to senior secondary level, focusing on quality learning and equity (Ministry of Education, 2018). More recently, the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** has ushered in a transformative vision by restructuring the traditional 10+2 system into a 5+3+3+4 model. NEP 2020 emphasizes Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), foundational literacy and numeracy, experiential learning, and reduction in rote learning. It also advocates for mother tongue as the medium of instruction in early grades and aims to achieve 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio in school education by 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2020).

These post-independence policies and reforms reflect a consistent effort by the Indian government to provide inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education to all children. Despite substantial progress, challenges such as infrastructure gaps, teacher shortages, socio-economic disparities, and learning losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic persist. Nevertheless, the commitment to policy innovation and strategic implementation continues to shape the path forward for child education in India.

### O₂: To analyze the effectiveness of government strategies for child education in India post-independence.

The effectiveness of government strategies for child education in India post-independence has evolved significantly, with mixed outcomes across different phases of implementation. One of the early post-independence initiatives, the Constitutional directive under Article 45, aimed to provide free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14. However, limited resources and administrative capacity meant that the realization of this goal was delayed (Tilak, 2006). The **National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986** laid strong emphasis on reducing disparities and promoting the education of girls and children from disadvantaged groups, which significantly broadened the scope of basic education access (Ministry of Education, 1986).

Subsequent strategies such as the **District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)** and **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** played a crucial role in expanding access to elementary education. DPEP helped in decentralizing education administration and targeting backward districts, which improved enrollment rates and reduced regional disparities (Govinda & Bandyopadhyay, 2011). SSA, launched in 2001, made major strides in increasing school infrastructure, pupil-teacher ratios, and female literacy. It was instrumental in narrowing the gender gap in education and promoting inclusive schooling, although challenges persisted in terms of learning outcomes and teacher quality (Mehta, 2005).

The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009** marked a legal shift by making education a justiciable right. This strategy was highly effective in enhancing enrollment and ensuring non-discriminatory access to education. The RTE Act introduced crucial reforms such as the prohibition of corporal punishment, the abolition of screening procedures for school admissions, and mandates on infrastructure and teacher qualifications. Yet, its impact was somewhat limited by poor compliance in private and even some public schools, and by continuing issues in monitoring and enforcement (Jha & Parvati, 2010).

Recent reforms under the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**, which integrated earlier schemes into one unified program covering pre-primary to senior secondary levels, focused on improving the quality of learning. While this approach has made planning and funding more coherent, gaps still remain in its effectiveness due to inconsistent implementation across states (Kumar & Sarangapani, 2021). The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** has been lauded for its forward-thinking approach, including a renewed focus on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), foundational literacy, and skill development. However, as it is still in its early stages of implementation, its effectiveness will depend heavily on political will, adequate funding, and monitoring mechanisms (NITI Aayog, 2021).

Despite significant progress, India's educational strategies have been more successful in increasing enrollment and access than in ensuring quality and learning equity. Issues like rote learning, lack of child-centered pedagogy, digital divide, and underqualified teachers continue to hinder the overall effectiveness of these strategies. Therefore, while government initiatives have certainly transformed the landscape of child education in India, continuous policy innovation, efficient implementation, and rigorous evaluation are essential for achieving long-term impact.

### *O₃: To propose actionable recommendations for making child education in India.*

Improving child education in India demands a multifaceted approach that integrates quality, equity, and inclusivity. One of the foremost recommendations is to **strengthen early childhood care and education (ECCE)**. Foundational learning, especially in the early years (ages 3–8), is crucial for later educational success. The *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* recognizes this, emphasizing universal access to ECCE and advocating for the development of play-based curricula and trained anganwadi workers and teachers (Ministry of Education, 2020). Ensuring full implementation of this component, especially in rural and marginalized areas, can significantly bridge learning gaps.

Another vital recommendation is to **focus on improving learning outcomes rather than merely enrollment rates**. While programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the Right to Education Act (2009) have increased access, quality remains a concern. Reports from ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) have consistently highlighted that a significant proportion of children in elementary school struggle with basic reading and arithmetic (ASER Centre, 2023). It is essential to shift policy focus toward competency-based learning and periodic, low-stakes assessments that inform teaching methods and student needs (Banerji & Chavan, 2016).

**Teacher training and accountability** form another cornerstone for actionable reform. Teachers are central to educational change, yet many lack adequate training in child-centric pedagogy and inclusive education strategies. Strengthening pre-service and in-service training programs through digital platforms and peer-learning models can enhance teaching quality (Ramachandran et al., 2018). Furthermore, implementing a transparent teacher evaluation system and providing performance-based incentives can improve motivation and accountability.

India must also **leverage technology to reduce educational inequities**, particularly in remote and underserved regions. The digital divide became starkly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving millions without access to online education (UNICEF, 2021). Policies must promote equitable digital infrastructure, affordable internet access, and inclusive e-content in regional languages to bridge this divide. Moreover, integrating technology into classrooms with blended learning approaches can make education more engaging and personalized (Muralidharan et al., 2019).

**Community and parental involvement** should be encouraged to ensure local support for child education. Studies have shown that community-based monitoring, school management committees, and parental engagement improve school accountability and children's performance (Pandey et al., 2009). Tailored programs to raise awareness among parents, especially in tribal and backward areas, about the importance of education, hygiene, and nutrition can contribute to reducing dropout rates.

Lastly, **targeted interventions for vulnerable groups**, such as girls, children with disabilities, and those from socio-economically marginalized communities, must be prioritized. Conditional cash transfers, midday meal schemes, transport facilities, and gender-sensitive sanitation infrastructure are critical to ensuring retention and regular attendance (Kingdon, 2007). Special education teachers and inclusive infrastructure must be scaled up to support children with special needs.

India has made notable strides in expanding access to education, sustainable improvement in child education requires systemic reforms backed by robust data, sufficient funding, community participation, and political will. Holistic and context-specific strategies can drive equity and excellence in India's education system.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes that while India has made significant strides in formulating policies and implementing strategies to enhance child education, substantial challenges remain in terms of inclusivity, accessibility, and quality. Policies such as the Right to Education Act and the National Education Policy 2020 have laid the groundwork for educational reform, yet their uneven implementation across states, along with socio-economic disparities and technological divides, continue to hinder progress. Additionally, the influence of neoliberal frameworks and a lack of localized, culturally responsive practices further constrain transformative change. Therefore, a shift towards context-sensitive, equity-driven, and sustainable strategies is imperative to truly transform child education in India and ensure that every child, regardless of background, receives holistic and meaningful learning opportunities.

**References**

1. ASER Centre. (2023). *Annual Status of Education Report (Rural)*. New Delhi: ASER Centre.

2. Banerji, R., & Chavan, M. (2016). Improving literacy and numeracy in India: Achievements and challenges. *Prospects*, 46(3–4), 267–279.

3. Bhatty, K. (2014). Right to Education Act and its implications for disadvantaged children. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(43–44), 57–64.

4. Choudhury, M. A. (2017). Education and equity in India. *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, 31(2), 101–120.

5. Dreze, J., & Sen, A. (2013). *An Uncertain Glory: India and its Contradictions*. Princeton University Press.

6. Government of India. (1950). *Constitution of India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice.

7. Govinda, R., & Bandyopadhyay, M. (2011). *Access to Elementary Education in India: Country Analytical Review*. CREATE Pathways to Access.

8. Jha, J., & Parvati, P. (2010). *Education for all in India: Beyond slogans and statistics*. *UNESCO Policy Paper*.

9. Joseph, S., Patil, K., Kulkarni, A. V., & John, M. (2025). Sustainability and values education in India: A critical overview. In *Perspectives on Sustainable Education in South Asia*.

10. Kumar, K. (2005). *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*. Sage Publications.

11. Mehrotra, S. (2006). Reforming elementary education in India: A menu of options. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(3), 261–277.

12. Mehta, A. C. (2005). *Elementary Education in India: Progress and Challenges*. NUEPA.

13. Ministry of Education. (1968). *National Policy on Education 1968*. Government of India.

14. Ministry of Education. (1986). *National Policy on Education 1986*. Government of India.

15. Ministry of Education. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India.

16. Muralidharan, K., Singh, A., & Ganimian, A. (2019). Disrupting education? Experimental evidence on technology-aided instruction in India. *American Economic Review*, 109(4), 1426–1460.

17. Nambissan, G. B. (2009). Exclusion and discrimination in schools: Experiences of Dalit children. *IDS Bulletin*, 40(1), 55–63.

18. NCERT. (2005). *National Curriculum Framework 2005*. New Delhi: NCERT.

19. Rampal, S., & Madrid Akpovo, S. (2025). The Early Childhood Education in India and traces of colonial regimes. In *Postcolonial Studies in Education*.

20. Rao, N. (2010). *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Children in India*. Routledge.

21. Right to Education Act. (2009). *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act*. Government of India.

22. Sharma, R. (2018). Equity and access in Indian school education: A review of policy. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 61, 51–57.

23. Tilak, J. B. G. (2006). Education: A saga of spectacular achievements and conspicuous failures. *Social Scientist*, 34(1/2), 3–27.

24. UNICEF. (2019). *The State of the World's Children 2019: Children, Food and Nutrition*. UNICEF.

25. World Bank. (2020). *Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take?* Washington, DC: World Bank.