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GROWTH PROSPECTS OF **SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDIA** **– A LEGAL ANALYSIS**

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Abstract:

After the pandemic induced lockdown, much of India's education system came to a jolting halt. Though a small proportion of educational institutes were resilient to this interruption owing to their extensive capability and capacity. These niche institutions are out of scope in this present discussion. The current measure of quality of education is discussed. Equality and endeavors towards equality has plummeted manifold owing to the economic downturn. The pandemic merely exacerbated the pre-existing inequality that has denied the young adults of our country their constitutional right to have a quality education. This paper analyses the relatively newly formed National Education Policy, 2020 and how far it is effective towards bringing equitable educational prospects. Constitutional perspective of educational egalitarianism is deliberated further. The research is *Doctrinal* in nature. There is a separate discussion on the effect of "Quasi-Federal" structure of government on education and how far autonomy of states is hampered and diminished. This paper further discusses on the prospects of India becoming a global leader in terms of education given its humongous growing adult population. Taking a detour from the primary cogitation, steadily increasing rate of tuition in educational institutes and how it disables socially, educationally and financially downtrodden from accessing a quality, sustainable and state-of-the-art education is also discussed. Research on how inadequate capacity and subpar capabilities in government run secondary educational institutions work in tandem depriving financially disabled children from having equal opportunities as opposed to their counterpart on the other end of the spectrum is done. This research assumed importance in this contemporary day and age owing to the progressing leadership capabilities that India is effusing combined with

assuming leadership of two of the most prominent transnational and multilateral groupings. The data used in this research is *Secondary and Tertiary data*.

Keywords: Secondary Education, New Education Policy, Federalism, Educational Equity.

1. Introduction:

Education as we know, learn and profess has been deeply skewed in its meaning and stands for something far from what it was intended for. Evolution of education or any other aspect of human development is natural and in most of the cases is to be certainly encouraged. However, evolution of such nature is to be avoided when it turns murky and renders no trace of the original character of such an aspect and possibly houses within its interpretation a meaning that runs counter to what was earlier envisaged. Education in India has been in practice as long as there has been a systematic society with orderly societal roles envisaging duties albeit discriminatory in nature. Educational institutions ranging from The Nalanda University to the ‘Gurukula’ system are few exemplifications. India has the capacity building capability and is better positioned than ever in terms of opportunities to broaden and unfurl its framework in the global arena. However, this stride becomes increasingly harder to achieve when the opportunities of “world class” education is ‘restricted’ access based on numerous underlying factors that comprise but is not exclusive of social, economic, political ‘influence’. In this context this article assumes much importance. The objectives of this article are laid down below.

2. Objective:

- To shed light on the lack of means available and measures taken to make education equitable.
- To elucidate the opportunity of global influence in terms of education and educational institutions.
- To examine the current efficiency of education system in India.
- To understand the “Welfare Oriented” principles enshrined in the Constitution of India.

3. Methodology:

This article undertakes the *Doctrinal method* of research. Data is collected from *Secondary* and *Tertiary* sources such as books journals, newspapers, articles, previous research by scholars, international treaties and conventions and other e-sources, etc. The current topic has been critically analysed and comparatively studied, to provide a succinct analysis to the best of the researchers' ability and knowledge and the knowledge resource available.

4. Contemporaneous Indian Educational Framework:

The Indian educational system has long been criticized for its lack of focus on practical skills and its emphasis on rote learning and memorization. This has resulted in a high level of educational inequality, with students from disadvantaged backgrounds often struggling to keep up with their more privileged peers who often get specialized assistance from institutional experts. The primary issue with the current educational framework in India is the lack of emphasis on hands-on learning and critical thinking skills. Many students are expected to simply memorize information without understanding its context or relevance. This has led to a system where students are not equipped with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce or to be active and engaged members of society.¹

Further, the lack of funding for education and supplementary educational activities poses a serious issue. According to a report by the World Bank, India spends only 3.3% of its GDP on education, which is significantly lower than the global average of 4.9%. This lack of funding has resulted in poorly equipped schools, lack of resources, and inadequate infrastructure, which hinders the learning process of students. Another problem with the Indian educational system is the lack of resources and support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.²

Many schools in rural, remote and impoverished areas are underfunded and poorly equipped, leading to significant gap in the quality of education between these schools and those in more affluent areas. This has contributed to a cyclical self-fulfilling prophecy of poverty and inequality, as students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have the opportunity to receive a

¹ Ashwin Honawar, *Pros and Cons of Education System in India*, (Surejob Blog, Education, June 2019)
Available at: <https://surejob.in/10-fundamental-problems-with-education-system-in-india.html> (Accessed on 24 December 2022)

² Ananye Krishna, *The Sorry State of Education in India*, (OxHRH Blog, 22 June 2017)
Available at: <https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/the-sorry-state-of-education-in-india/> (Accessed on 24 December 2022)

high-quality education. There is also the matter of physical access to education and skill development. There is a wide gap between students in the rural areas and the urban areas both in terms of education and extra-curricular activities.³

In addition, the Indian educational system is heavily reliant on standardized testing, which has been criticized for its confined focus on narrow subjects and its lack of emphasis on creativity and problem-solving skills. This has led to a system that is overly focused on preparing students for exams rather than helping them develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the real world.⁴ Additionally, there is a lack of skilled teachers in India, as many qualified teachers opt for higher paying jobs in top tier institutions that are out of reach to these kids and jobs in other sectors. The under-appreciation of qualified teachers has resulted in a shortage of trained and competent teachers in schools, further hindering the quality of education. Moreover, there is a widening gap in the student-teacher ratio which further leads to the deterioration of education.⁵

Overall, the current educational framework in India is failing to adequately prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. It is in urgent need of reform in order to better serve the needs of all students and to provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

4.1. Gauging the Goodness:

An overall observance gives a basic understanding and idea of the working of Indian education system. The success and quality of the existing education system could be evaluated according to the actual performance and results. Some of the various ways of assessing the quality of education is as follows:

- Student performance: One way to measure the quality of education in India is through the performance of students on various standardized tests such as the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and the National Achievement Test (NAT). These tests assess the

³ Major Issues in the Indian Education System (Byju's Blog)

Available at: <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/indian-education-system-issues-and-challenges/> (Accessed on 25 December 2022)

⁴ Dr. Sanchita Ranjan, *Drawbacks of the Indian education system*, India Study Channel Blog, October 2021)

Available at: <https://www.indiastudychannel.com/resources/181017-Drawbacks-of-the-Indian-education-system> (Accessed on 25 December 2022)

⁵ *What is Wrong with the Indian Education System?* (senses blog)

Available at: <https://senseselec.com/blogs/what-is-wrong-with-the-indian-education-system/> (Accessed on 25 December 2022)

knowledge and skills of students in various subject areas such as mathematics, science, and language arts.

- **Teacher quality:** Another important factor in the quality of education is the quality of teachers. This can be measured through various indicators such as the qualifications and training of teachers, their teaching experience, and their effectiveness in the classroom.
- **School infrastructure:** The infrastructure of a school, including the availability of resources such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, can also impact the quality of education.
- **Curriculum and instructional materials:** The quality of the curriculum and instructional materials used in a school can also impact the quality of education.
- **Dropout rates:** The dropout rate of students can also be used as an indicator of the quality of education. High dropout rates may indicate that students are not engaged or motivated to continue their education.
- **Parent and community involvement:** The involvement of parents and the community in the education of students can also impact the quality of education. This can be measured through indicators such as parental involvement in the decision-making processes of schools and the participation of community members in educational activities.⁶

5. Addressing the Urban-Rural Disparity:

There is a significant urban-rural disparity in the Indian education system, with urban areas generally having better access to education and higher educational attainment relative to their rural counterparts. This disparity is due to a variety of factors, including economic, social, and cultural differences between urban and rural areas.⁷ Various scholarly empirical research articles has been published in this area that concretely supports the authors' postulation that indeed pandemic has played a major role in exacerbating the 'Urban-Rural divide'.⁸

⁶ *Quality and learning indicators* (International Institute of Educational Planning Blog, August 2021)
Available at: <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/issue-briefs/monitor-learning/quality-and-learning-indicators>
(Accessed on 25 December 2022)

⁷ Pallab Kumar Nath, *Rural Urban Inequality in School Education in India*, (SlideShare Blog, 2020)
Available at: <https://www.slideshare.net/PallabKumarNath1/rural-urban-inequality-in-school-education-in-india>
(Accessed on 25 December 2022)

⁸ Dr. Moyuri Sharma, MS. Kasthuri Das, *A Study on Inequalities in Education created due to Rural-Urban Divide and class position with special reference to Assam*, Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (6317-6321), Vol. 12 No. 10 (2021).

5.1.Exacerbation of Urban-Rural Disparity:

Hard data sheds lights on the fact that there is indeed a huge gap between the urban population and the rural population when it comes to access to internet.⁹ It is a well-known fact that owing to total governmental lockdowns, any and all forms of education had to be based on online, internet reliant platforms as opposed to pre-pandemic and pre-lockdown mode of education. A report by the UNESCO suggests that out of all the low and middle-income countries 40% of countries were not able to support education to communities those were previously disadvantaged by due to their social, economic, linguistic and physical disability.¹⁰ An empirical study conducted in Assam to assess the actual real-life impact of the pandemic in general and the subsequent lockdown in particular on students studying in IX and X standard, whose parents' income, usually in the form of daily wages, suggests their being below the poverty line, adjusting for error suggests that,

- The respondents (students) prima facie were not able to receive proper education pre-pandemic.
- Merely 14% of the respondents were able to avail online mode of education post-pandemic.
- 91% of the respondents agreed that lack of a smartphone is the primary reason behind hampered education.¹¹

5.2.Economic Factor:

One major factor contributing to the urban-rural disparity in education is the economic differences. Urban areas tend to have higher levels of economic development and access to resources, such as funding and infrastructure, which can lead to better educational opportunities. In contrast, rural areas often have lower levels of economic development and fewer resources, which can make it more difficult to provide quality education. For instance, many rural schools do not have sufficient infrastructure or resources, such as classrooms, libraries, and laboratories, which can negatively impact the quality of education. This is coupled with the growing phenomenon of “Middle Class Consumerism”¹² whereby people in the highly populated urban areas are advantaged by the

⁹ UNESCO Report (2020): Over 154 cr. Students hit by Schools, Colleges Closer due to Covid-19; Girls to be Worst hit.

¹⁰ Apte,J.(2020): The Challenge of (online) Education in India During The Covid-19 Pandemic.

¹¹ A Study on Inequalities in Education created due to Rural-Urban Divide and class position with special reference to Assam, *Supra* note 8.

¹² Freire de Mello, L., de Paula, S.A., *Middle-Class Consumers and Consumerism as a Lifestyle*, (2019) In: Leal Filho, W., Azul, A., Brandli, L., Özuyar, P., Wall, T. (eds) Responsible Consumption and Production. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Springer, Cham.

5.3. Social and Cultural Factors:

Another factor contributing to the urban-rural disparity in education is social and cultural differences. Urban areas tend to have more diverse and cosmopolitan populations, which exposes students to a wider range of educational opportunities and resources. In contrast, rural areas tend to have more traditional, regressive and homogenous populations, which tends to curtail the educational opportunities and access to resources. For example, traditional gender roles and cultural expectations may discourage girl children from attending school in rural areas, leading to higher dropout rates among girls compared to boys. This can lead to poor student performance and higher dropout rates in rural areas. Many rural schools struggle to attract and retain qualified teachers, particularly in technical subjects such as Science and Mathematics, which can lead to inadequate subject knowledge.¹³

5.4. Other Factors:

The urban-rural disparity in education in India is a significant issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals and society as a whole. Children who do not have access to quality education are less likely to succeed in school and are ill prepared for higher education and workforce. This can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and inequality, as those who do not have access to education are less likely to have the skills and knowledge to compete for good jobs and improve their socioeconomic status. To address the urban-rural disparity in education in India, there is a need for increased funding and resources for rural schools, as well as efforts to attract and retain qualified teachers in rural areas. Addressing social and cultural barriers to education, such as traditional gender roles and expectations, is also important. Finally, it is essential to invest in the development of infrastructure and resources in rural areas to ensure that students have access to quality education. Better policy making goes a long way towards achieving equity.¹⁴

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71062-4_50-1 (Accessed on 25 December 2022)

¹³ *Shaping the Bright Minds of Tomorrow: Education in Urban and Rural*, (mygov Blog, December 2019)

Available at <https://blog.mygov.in/shaping-the-bright-minds-of-tomorrow-education-in-urban-and-rural/> (Accessed on 25 December 2022)

¹⁴ *ibid*

6. National Education Policy, 2020 and its Implications:

The ancient Indian education system is one that has been commended all over the world. The “Gurukula” system prevailed as evident from ancient lore and sacred texts. The advent of the British introduced a new education system, curated by the British rulers. However, being a colonising country, the education policy was targeted for the upliftment of the British occupants and not the Indian citizens. The first post-independence initiative towards revamping the Indian Education System was brought about in the form the Indian Education Policy, 1968, introduced by the Indira Gandhi government. The next NEP was introduced in the year 1986, which was later modified in the year 1992. The latest and most revolutionary National Education Policy was passed in 2020.¹⁵

The NEP 2020 resulted in waves throughout the country. This policy envisaged a revamped and ameliorated path towards ensuring quality education from the school level to the university level. The primary focus was the capacity of each individual and their inherent capabilities and skills. The policy aimed to cultivate these potential talents, nurturing each person to become a valuable addition to the society as a whole. The main principle of the policy is that “*education must develop not only cognitive capacities - both the ‘foundational capacities’ of literacy and numeracy and ‘higher-order’ cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions*”.¹⁶ The policy is broadly divided into 4 parts: (i) School Education; (ii) Higher Education; (iii) Other key areas of focus; and (iv) Making it happen;

6.1. Key features of NEP, 2020:

- *Shift from rote learning to critical thinking:* NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills in students, rather than focusing on mere rote factual learning.

¹⁵ Shreya Tandon, *An overview of the National Education Policy, 2020*, (ipleaders blog)
Available at: <https://blog.ipleaders.in/overview-national-education-policy-2020/>
(Accessed on 26 December 2022)

¹⁶ Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, *National Education Policy, 2020*
Available at: https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
(Accessed on 26 December 2022)

- *Early childhood care and education:* NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of early childhood care and education, and calls for the expansion of the existing Anganwadi system to cover children up to the age of 6.
- *Curriculum and pedagogy:* NEP 2020 calls for a flexible and modular curriculum, with a focus on experiential learning and integration of vocational education. It emphasizes the importance of project-based learning, and promotes the use of locally relevant and contemporary content in the curriculum. It also advocates for the use of multiple languages in the classroom and encourages the inclusion of Indian knowledge systems and traditions in the curriculum.
- *School education:* NEP 2020 proposes a five-year integrated school program, from ages 3 to 8, followed by a three-year program from grades 9 to 12. An innovative pedagogical approach has been adopted and the traditional 10+2 system has been substituted with a 5+3+3+4 system. NEP 2020 aims to increase the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in preschool to secondary education to 100% by 2030, and to increase the GER in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035.¹⁷
- *Higher education:* NEP 2020 calls for a multi-disciplinary approach to higher education, with a focus on research and innovation. The policy proposes several reforms in the higher education sector, including the establishment of a common higher education regulator for both the university and college sectors, the introduction of a four-year undergraduate program, and the expansion of online and distance education. It also recommends the establishment of a National Research Foundation to support and promote research in the country.¹⁸
- *Language:* NEP 2020 calls for a three-language formula, with a focus on the promotion of Indian languages. It also proposes the establishment of a National Language Commission to advise on language-related issues. It advocates for the use of mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction at the primary level, and for the inclusion of Indian languages in the curriculum at all levels. It also recommends the establishment of a National Language Commission to promote the development and use of Indian languages.
- *Teacher education and training:* The policy emphasizes the importance of high-quality teacher education and training, and recommends the establishment of a National

¹⁷ Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India, *Salient Features of NEP, 2020*, Available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1847066> (Accessed on 26 December 2022)

¹⁸ Nawale, Arvind & Nawale, Apurva. (2022). *National Education Policy-2020 and Higher Education: A Road towards Reform*. 60. 16-21.

Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST). It also proposes the establishment of a National Teachers' Congress and the creation of a National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

- *Inclusion and equity*: NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of inclusion and equity in education, and calls for measures to improve access to education for disadvantaged groups, such as girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized communities.

Apart from the above mentioned salient features, providing autonomy to educational institutions.¹⁹ This highly ambitious policy cannot promise fruitful results despite its best intentions. Though the policy is a relatively new one and it is not possible to judge its effectiveness in bringing about equitable educational prospects effectively, it is evident that the policy has its own issues. The implementation of the NEP 2020 will depend on the adequate allocation of resources and the commitment of all stakeholders, including the government, educators, and communities, to its implementation. It will also be important to monitor and evaluate the impact of the policy on educational outcomes and equity, and to make adjustments as needed to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education.

7. Constitutional Mandate of Educational Egalitarianism:

7.1. Egalitarianism:

Egalitarianism as an idea derived its traces in legal philosophy and jurisprudence through the *Natural Law Theory*. Egalitarianism is based on the concept of justness of enjoyment of ones advantage. When the said advantage is due to choice made voluntarily by the said person, then it is said to be just. On the other hand, when the difference in that person's advantage is due to factors outside of that person's choices, it is said to be unjust.²⁰ According to the idea of egalitarianism, a person's fortune depends on their choices but not on their endowments or other unchosen factors and circumstances.²¹ Rawl suggests his theory of egalitarianism is better than the then prevailing *laissez-faire* when it comes to distribution and re-distribution of resources. This he reasoned is due to the inherent advantage that certain people possess due to their being born in the higher ranks of the social, economic and political hierarchy. Samuel Scheffler argues

¹⁹ Shisira Bania, *National Education Policy-2020 & Institutional Autonomy in Indian Higher Education System: Issues and Challenges in Implementation*, Issue 6, Vol 4, EASJEHL 260, (2021).

²⁰ Samuel Scheffler, *What Is Egalitarianism?*, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2003, pp. 5–39. JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3558033> (Accessed 27 Dec. 2022).

²¹ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.70

that equality when perceived from the social and political ideals, it must include and go beyond the proposition that all people have equal moral worth.²² The concepts of access, equity and quality cannot be pursued independently and sequentially, but concurrently.²³ When we discuss egalitarianism, in Indian context, the affirmative action of reservation occupies an elevated position. The Constitution of India in general and Part III in particular places the subjects of the state i.e., people and their rights, paramount.

Pre-Constitution, caste and sub-caste hierarchies determined social, economic, personal, professional and most other aspects of a person. Features of caste system are broadly outlined into the following,

- Providing restrictions on marriage;
- Regulating restrictions on feeding and sexual intercourse;
- Regulating communal life within a small society (though these small societies reside within the larger society).²⁴

Education is powerful tool, albeit prone to ineffectiveness, in assisting in vertical and horizontal mobility. It is one of few means that generally helps achieve betterment in an individual's life. Especially in Indian context owing to its largely agrarian society, education plays a paramount role in the society and in the minds of people of being causal to "a better life". Education (quality education) has been largely privatized in India. Private educational institutions incorporated the capitalistic approach towards education right from recruitment of staffs to admission of students. Though these private institutions have to some extent proved of providing "quality" education, equitable educational prospects for children from socially, educationally, politically and economically disadvantaged strata of the society is largely lagging behind. Sociologists argue that equity and quality in education are not opposite ends of the spectrum, such that the pursuance of one undermines the other, but can and should be pursued together and such is the most economically and socially educational policy.²⁵ However, the proposition mentioned herein albeit is based on factors prevailing in the United States of America, is to some extent applicable in the Indian demographic.

²² What is Egalitarianism? , *Supra* note 20. Pg. 33.

²³ Joshi, B. K. ,*Equity vs. Quality*, India International Centre Quarterly, vol. 34, no. 3/4, 2007, pp. 142–53. JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23006335> , (Accessed on 27 December, 2022)

²⁴ Brij Raj Chauhan, *The Nature of Caste and Sub-Caste in India*, Sociological Bulletin, vol. 15, no. 1, 1966, pp. 40–51. JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42864639> , (Accessed 27 December, 2022)

²⁵ Ben Levin, *Greater Equity in Education*, The Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 93, no. 7, 2012, pp. 74–75. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23210013>. Accessed 27 Dec. 2022.

7.2. Equity in The Constitution:

The Constitution of India (herein referred to as 'The Constitution') is the *Supreme Legislation* of India. All or any laws (includes by-laws, rules, regulations, orders, directions etc.) must be confined within the ambit this Supreme document.²⁶ The Constitution from its inception has had freedom, liberty, fraternity, equality as its basic tenets upon which other facets are built upon.²⁷ Article 14 of The Constitution guarantees to every person the right to equality before law and equal protection of laws.²⁸ The literal interpretation of this provisions merely renders that state shall treat its subject equally. However, the underlying principle presupposes the fact that not all human beings are same and there are inherent differences. The Constitution recognize these differences and demands additional affirmative actions in insofar as equitable as possible. The Constitution revolves around the principles of Justice, Equity and other ideals of Natural law theory. Equals must be treated equally, while unequals must be treated differently.²⁹

Similarly, there is duty upon the State to not discriminate against individuals on the following bases, religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth.³⁰ However, taking cognizance of the prevailing inequality in numerous dimensions, exception provisions were also appended. Actions in the form of positive discrimination i.e. for the advancement of the said classification, are valid. Affirmative actions for the upliftment of inherently weaker section of the society cannot be construed to mean discrimination against the "non-advantaged" i.e. the other section ineligible for said measures.³¹ In *Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India*,³² the Supreme Court of India upheld the validity of granting exception to affirmative discriminative actions in favor people belong to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS)³³ and reasoned that affirmative actions are meant for the upliftment of the citizens and is not confined only to socially weaker sections but to any morph of weaker section. The Constitution is based on equitable principles and places no restrictions nor conditions with respect to law and policy making on equity based education.

²⁶ INDIA CONST. art. 13, 1949.

²⁷ INDIA CONST. Preamble, 1949.

²⁸ INDIA CONST. art. 14, 1949.

²⁹ 13th edition, Mahendra Pal Singh, *V.N. Shukla's Constitution of India*, EBC Explorer, Delhi.

³⁰ INDIA CONST. art. 15(1), 1949.

³¹ INDIA CONST. art. 15(3), 15(4), 15(5), 1949.

³² 2022, SCC OnLine SC 1540

³³ INDIA CONST. art. 15(6) *amended by* The Constitution (One Hundred and Third Amendment) Act, 2019.

8. Centre-State Relationship in Education and Autonomy of States:

The relationship between the Central government and the State governments in the field of education in India is complex and has been evolving over time. The Indian Constitution grants the Central government and the State governments concurrent powers to legislate, formulate and regulate education and educational policy. Both levels of government play a role in shaping education policy and implementing education programs. The Centre and the State have certain autonomy in framing their own policies and implementation strategies within their respective jurisdiction. One of the main challenges in the centre-state relationship in education is the issue of *autonomy of states*. The Central government has the power to set National Education Policies and Standards, and to provide financial and technical assistance to states for the implementation of the said policies. However, the States have the autonomy to design and implement their own education policies and programs within the framework set by the Central government.

This decentralization has allowed states to have a greater say in the educational policies and programs that are implemented within their jurisdictions, and has allowed for a greater scope of flexibility and innovation in the education sector. At the same time, it has also led to disparities in the quality and accessibility of education across the states, as some states may have more resources or a stronger commitment to education than others.

To address this issue, the central government has implemented numerous policies and programs to promote equitable access to education and to improve the quality of education. For example, the Right to Education (RTE) Act³⁴, which was enacted in 2009, guarantees the Right to free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The Act also lays down norms and standards for the infrastructure and facilities that should be provided in schools, and requires states to report on the progress made in implementing the Act.

In addition, the Central government also provides financial and technical assistance to states for the implementation of various education programs and initiatives, such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which aims to universalize elementary education in the country, and the Rashtriya

³⁴ The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, No. 10, Acts of Parliament, 2009 (India)

Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), which aims to improve the quality of secondary education in the states.

Despite these efforts, the centre-state relationship in education continues to be a source of tension, as states often resist central government interference in their educational policies and programs. Some states have argued that the central government should provide greater autonomy and flexibility to the states in the implementation of education policies, while others have argued that the central government should provide more guidance and support to ensure that all states are able to provide high-quality education to their citizens.

Historically, the central government has played a more dominant role in education policy, with the state governments having a more limited role in policy formulation and implementation. However, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which was released by the Government of India in July 2020, aims to promote greater decentralization and autonomy in the education sector. Under the NEP 2020, the Central government will provide policy guidance and support to the states, but the states will have greater flexibility in designing and implementing their own education policies and programs. This includes the power to design their own curriculum and pedagogy, choose their own teaching languages, and determine their own teacher education and training programs.³⁵

The NEP, 2020 also emphasizes the importance of collaborative decision-making and partnership between the Central and State governments in the education sector. It recommends the establishment of a National Education Commission (NEC), which will be composed of representatives from Central government as well as state governments, and will serve as a forum for consultation and dialogue on education policies. Thus, NEP, 2020 aims to promote greater autonomy for the states in the education sector, while also maintaining a system of national-level policy guidance and support to ensure that all students have access to high-quality education. This balance between Central government and state governments control is an important aspect of the education system in India.

³⁵ Albert P, *Autonomy is Key*, (The Hindu, March 2020)

Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/education/autonomy-is-key/article31067455.ece> (Accessed on 26 December 2022)

9. India as a Global Leader Steering Educational Reforms:

After being freed from the shackles of British rulers, there was a prevailing notion among international players that India “doesn’t have what it takes”. This proposition is proved wrong and even reversed to the extent that there is a legitimate prediction that India may well become a global power. With the growing diversity in Indian diaspora, Indian culture, though diverse and humongous within the boundaries, and tradition is dispersed across the globe. One such practice that has cultural heritage in India, but has substantial global reach in terms of usage and disciples is Yoga.

Indian influence as a global leader can implement itself effectively through “soft power”. Joseph S. Nye, who coined the term broadly defines “soft power” as a form of power, which in itself is subject to numerous definitions and prone to arguments in definitions, and ability to achieve a desired outcome without coercion, but enticement by the ideas or the ability to set agenda in ways that shape the preferences of others. He goes on to say that if a State is able to establish its own agenda through soft power, it need not resort to its economic, military and other sources.³⁶ However, soft power has the potential to make and break countries as evident from the case American soft power and Nazi Germany soft power. The intentions behind usage of such powers need to be kept in check.

Numerous scholars, academicians, scientists, thinkers, philosophers and intellects around the world attribute India as a unique nation, with huge degree of diversity, exoticism, and enigmatically attractive. The take away from such character attributions is to resonate with India’s possession of qualities required to influence the global masses through its soft power. Cultural phenomenon of a country is a huge soft power determining factor. Indian culture is deemed ancient, vibrant, and colorful and an amalgamation of numerous past cultures and in that a mixture of variety of practices and beliefs bound in a defined territory. The “Gurukula” system of education discussed earlier has the potential to harvest this dividend of cultural soft power. Impersonal pedagogy³⁷ has taken root post colonization which has severely impacted the Gurukula

³⁶ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and William A. Owens, *America's Information Edge*, Foreign Affairs 75 (2) (March – April, 1996), 21

³⁷ V. Kaladharan, *From Meditative Learning to Impersonal Pedagogy: Reflections on the Transformation of an Indian Gurukula*, *Qui Parle*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2011, pp. 207–18. JSTOR, Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5250/quiparle.20.1.0207> (Accessed on 28 December, 2022)

system of education. However, it cannot be asserted that this system of education is perfect and free from any forms of discrepancies.

Apart from Indian culture, soft power can be exercised through other facets too such as Indian spirituality, Indian way of life, Indian democracy, Indian diaspora and medicine.³⁸ India has set the ambitious target of becoming a Tuberculosis free country within 2025 (TB Mukht Bharat)³⁹. In this context India has the potential to become the global leader in terms of Tuberculosis diagnosis through early adoption of world-class technologies, development of capacities and capabilities couples with indigenous innovative measures.⁴⁰ This leadership can aid in enhancing soft power in the arena of medical education.

Indian education has been influencing countries around the globe since the 60s especially Third World Countries through innovations such as the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme which provides bureaucratic assistance to Third World Countries.⁴¹ Other forms of partnership includes MOUs between Indian Institutions and Foreign Universities promoting knowledge sharing, joint-programs, vocational and multidisciplinary courses etc. Human capital is the contemporary measure of power, the more efficient, and productive and result-producing the human capital is the higher the power of the country in relation to other countries.⁴² India assuming presidency of two of the world's most prestigious multi-lateral grouping i.e. G20 and Shanghai Cooperation Organization, advances India's prospects of moving India's agenda further in the global realm.

There indeed is an ocean of opportunities for India to promote "Indigenous" form of education in the global arena. However, effective utilization of opportunities is the need of the hour where the window of effective policy implementation is relatively narrow for us to reap the benefits and hoist India in the "big leagues".

³⁸ Amit Kumar Gupta, *Soft Power of the United States, China, and India: A Comparative Analysis*, Indian Journal of Asian Affairs, vol. 26, no. 1/2, 2013, pp. 37–57. JSTOR, Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43550355> (Accessed on 28 December, 2022)

³⁹ Press Information Bureau, Govt. of India, *President of India launches Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan*, Available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1858024> (Accessed on 28 December 2022)

⁴⁰ Peter Small, *Why India should become a global leader in high-quality, affordable TB diagnostics*, Indian J Med Res. 2012 May;135(5):685-9. PMID: 22771602; PMCID: PMC3401703.

⁴¹ Dr. Roma Debnath, Indian Institute of Public Administration, *India Emerging as a Global Leader*, Sixty-Sixth Members' Annual Conference, 2022.

⁴² *ibid*

10. Conclusion & Suggestions:

“Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” or *“One Earth · One Family · One Future”*

-Theme of India’s G20 Presidency

India’s social, cultural and educational heritage is one of the ancient systems in the world. However, post-colonialism, traces of ancient indigenous education system started fading away and this is exacerbated by the introduction of Western Education System, commonly known as “Macaulay Education System”. Secondary education in India is at a watershed moment when we take into consideration the population dividend potential amassed over the last century. It is imperative that effective and efficacious policy making along with uptick in allocation of educational funds needs to go hand in hand. However, these measures are to be complimented with some degree of administrative and academic autonomy to these secondary education institutions. There is a blatant inequality between opportunities available to children of urban and rural domicile. This disproportion is worsened substantially by the pandemic induced lockdown and economic shutdown. Education as field of executive and legislative authority is under the “Concurrent list” of the Constitution effectively giving powers to Central and State governments. This opens the Pandora box of back and forth power struggle in which the students are left in abeyance. Respective governments must work in tandem with skill development of students as their utmost priority. Scientific temper must be the base upon which policy formulation is carried out. India certainly has the advantageous tail wind in this contemporary era, it is upon us to utilize it advance towards our destination.