

A Comparative Analysis of Equitable and Inclusive Education in India and Russia: A G20 Research Paper

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Abstract

Education is crucial, but socially, economically, or physically disadvantaged groups lack equal access. Achieving equity in education is essential and recognized as a fundamental right. India and Russia, as diverse and large countries, have room for development. Harsh climate and isolation hinder progress in Russia, while India faces cultural challenges due to diversity. India aims to provide basic education to all, while Russia strives for high-quality education matching European standards.

India's Right to Education Act and reservations ensure free education and affirmative action. Russia addresses special needs and provides equal access for remote and indigenous communities. The G20 plays a significant role in shaping education systems. This paper examines inclusive education in India and Russia, the role of the G20, and proposes solutions which can potentially have drastic improvements within these countries in these regards.

Objective

To develop an understanding of the current status of Equitable and inclusive education in Russia and India and have a comparative study with the analysis of impact of G20 on the two countries' education.

Research Methodology

This research has been carried out with theoretical data available on the internet and in various articles and research papers in order to obtain comparative data of the position of India and Russia in terms of inclusive and equitable education and also the role of G20 in this aspect.

Keywords

G20, Education, Equality, Inclusivity

Introduction

India: The Indian constitution defines India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic and the values of equality, liberty, inclusivity and equity are practised and respected from micro to macro level. India has a mixed economy with a GDP of 3.18 lakh crores USD (2021).

Russia: The Russian Constitution declares Russia to be a republic of the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. With Ruble as its currency, Russia has a market-based economy and has a GDP of 1.78 lakh crores USD (2021).

G20: Group of Twenty known as G20 is a forum for international economic cooperation. The G20 was founded in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis as a forum for the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors to discuss global economic and financial issues. G20 is an important organisation from the current economic, political and socio-cultural contexts as every country endeavours to enable themselves to economically develop and be a self-sustaining country in the context of globalisation. G20 has expanded its agenda and includes trade, climate change, sustainable development, health, agriculture, energy, environment, and anti-corruption.

Main Paper

History of Indian Education: Since the independence of India, the country has introduced many policies and laws for the betterment of the education system in india. The Indian Education Commission was formed in 1964 for the same. Better known as the Kothari commission, it realised that the existing facilities and arrangements for the training of educational administrators are inadequate. Training is needed to orient educational administrators to educational expansion and improvement programmes.

Earlier, to take into the problems of university education, the University Education Commission was appointed by the Government of India in 1948 and the Secondary Education Commission for recognising the secondary education needs.

In 1968, the National Education Policy was introduced. Based on the report and recommendations of the Education Commission (1964– 1966), the government announced the first National Policy on Education in 1968, which called for a "radical restructuring" and equality of educational opportunities so that national integration and more cultural and economic development can be achieved.

His new policy called for "special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity." The NPE (1986) recommended an overhaul of the system of planning and the management of education. The Central Advisory Board of Education(CABE), formed in 1991 submitted its report in January 1992 which is known as the National Programme of Action of 1992.

This policy aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and national culture and to strengthen national integration (ciet.nic.in/moocspdf/Education/e-PG_EDN_13.08_e_text.pdf, last accessed 26/05/2023)

History of Russian Education: Since the formation of the Russian Federation in 1991, the country has been working on improving its educational system through many laws, acts, innovations and “revolutionary changes”. This has been shown right from the beginning with the first Federal Law of Education on July 10, 1992. Drastic changes were made throughout the 2000s with the National Concept of Education in the Russian Federation and Concept of Modernization of Russian Education until 2010. Furthermore, there have been changes and improvements towards quality and equity of education throughout the years.

The Indian Education System: As per the constitution of India, school education was originally a state subject—that is, the states had complete authority on deciding policies and implementing them.

The role of the Government of India (GoI) was limited to coordination and deciding on the standards of higher education.

That is, school education policies and programmes are suggested at the national level by the GoI though the state governments have a lot of freedom in implementing programmes.

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), set up in 1935, continues to play a lead role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programmes.

There is a national organisation that plays a key role in developing policies and programmes, called the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) that prepares a National Curriculum Framework.

The school system in India has four levels: lower primary (age 6 to 10), upper primary (11 and 12), high (13 to 15) and higher secondary (17 and 18).

The lower primary school is divided into five “standards”, upper primary school into two, high school into three and higher secondary into two.

Two of these are coordinated at the national level, of which one is under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and was originally meant for children of central government employees who are periodically transferred and may have to move to any place in the country.

The CBSE also has 141 affiliated schools in 21 other countries mainly catering to the needs of the Indian population there.

Now a large number of schools across the country are affiliated to this Council.

Both the CBSE and the ICSE council conduct their own examinations in schools across the country that are affiliated to them at the end of 10 years of schooling (after high school) and again at the end of 12 years (after higher secondary). (Sources: <https://www.gnu.org/education/edu-system-india.en.html> last accessed 28/5/23)

The National Scientific, Technology, and Innovation Policy 2022 aims to place India in the top five in terms of research output quality in this decade by establishing a strong scientific, technology, and innovation ecosystem in the country. Furthermore, it seeks to achieve 30% female involvement in science by 2030. Creating a gender-diversity dividend in STEM subjects, on the other hand, requires fundamental social and psychological changes. (Stemming the gap: driving change through equitable education - TOI)

The Russian Education System: There are two approaches of defining the role of education in the Russian society:

According to the first one, education is an instrument for fixation, reproduction and compiling of the existing system of relationships in the society. In this case education plays a subordinate role and follows society development. It is the condition of the society that defines the content of education and possibilities for future change. The second approach is based on the idea that education is not only the factor of knowledge reproduction but it is the motive power of society development. It is a unique tool that allows reconsidering the existing system of relations in the society and transition to a new stage of development. This means completely different content of the educational system and its organisation.

In Russia, there are two types of education: General and Professional.

General: It has 4 pretty self-explanatory stages:

1. Preschool (ISCED level 0)
2. Primary (ISCED level 1) lasts 4 years
3. Basic (ISCED level 2) lasts 5 years
4. Secondary (ISCED level 3) lasts 2 years

Professional: There are four stages:

1. Training for professions
2. Vocational education
3. Higher education
4. Postgraduate education

G20 Influencing Education: Being an international organisation with 46 countries, G20 plays a considerable role in shaping the educational patterns of the member countries. Following four priority issues have been identified for deliberation in the G20 Education Working Group meet:

1. Ensuring Foundational Literacy and Numeracy especially in the context of blended learning.
2. Making Tech-enabled learning more inclusive, qualitative and collaborative at every level
3. Building Capacities, promoting Life-long Learning in the context of Future of Work
4. Strengthening Research, promoting Innovation through richer collaboration and partnerships

Inclusive and Equitable education in India: The Goal 4 (SDG14) of the 2030 global Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015 - seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030(National Education Policy, 2020).

While previous policies discussed access and equity, it was in the 1986 National Policy on Education (NPE) that Education for Women's Equality, Education of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Sections, Minorities Education, and Education of the Handicapped were dealt with as separate sections with separate provisions. It contends that education is a great leveller and the most effective means of attaining economic and social mobility, inclusion, and equality.

Gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals), socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and minorities), geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns, and aspirational districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socio-economic conditions are broadly classified as SEDGs socio-economically disadvantaged group in the Policy. Certain geographical areas contain significantly larger proportions of SEDGs. Also, there are locations that have been identified as Aspirational Districts by the Government which require special interventions for promoting their educational development. The Policy recommends that regions of the country with large populations from educationally-disadvantaged SEDGs be designated as Special Education Zones (SEZs), where all schemes and policies are fully implemented through additional concerted efforts, in order to truly change their educational landscape.

The provisions made in the NEP to overcome the disparities include:

1. Gender-Inclusion Fund to offer equitable quality education and to support female and transgender children in getting access to education through various methods such as sanitation and toilet provisions, bicycles, conditional cash transfers, and so on.
2. Inclusion Fund schemes will be developed to address access issues for other SEDGs. The Policy aims to eliminate any disparity in access to education (including vocational education)
3. Creating high-quality boarding facilities provided in school sites where children may have to travel a long distance, and especially for pupils from SED backgrounds
4. Strengthening Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas
5. Building more Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas and Kendriya Vidyalayas around the country, particularly in aspirational districts, SEDs, and other underprivileged regions, to expand access to high-quality education.

Inclusive and Equitable education in Russia: According to statistics, currently, approximately 4% of individuals with disabilities or incapacity for work are enrolled in higher education institutions of the Russian Federation. Thus, according to this figure, it is clear that higher education in the Russian Federation is available to a limited number of individuals with disabilities or incapacity for work. To involve more people with disabilities in the higher education system, it is necessary to create special conditions that make training possible and attractive for these individuals. The growing disparity between healthy and physically disabled people has recently created more and more contradictions and crisis situations, due to which the world community is faced with global questions concerning the possibilities of the future existence of human civilization. These dangers to society have become particularly acute in recent decades; this is evidenced by the awareness of the need to develop a concept of sustainable development.

In Russia, the concept of inclusive education is gaining momentum, with a focus on providing equal educational opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities. According to statistics from the Russian Ministry of Education, in the academic year 2019-2020, there were over 285,000 students with disabilities enrolled in Russian schools. Of these students, over 75,000 were enrolled in inclusive education programs, demonstrating the growing importance and success of inclusive education in Russia. However, there is still a need for more resources and training for teachers to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed in their educational pursuits.

Russian students show the lowest 'achievement gap' between students from the highest and lowest socio-economic groups. Students who came from well-off families, with high levels of family wealth, parental education and high-status occupation, tended to score 100 PISA points higher, across the board – for Science, Mathematics, and Reading. 100 PISA points is a big difference, equivalent to one standard deviation or, according to the OECD, about three years of instruction. The gap is present in the Russian Federation as well, but is almost half of the European average, and ranks Russia ahead of all other

European PISA countries in terms of the lowest size of the gap. Similarly, the share of poor performers from the poorest quintile in Russia was 29.1 percent.

Impact of G20 on Indian education: Keeping in consideration the recommendations of G20, India has adopted the methodology of Edtech. Edtech refers to the practice of integrating various ICT tools and techniques into the teaching pedagogy to make learning more interactive and engaging. Another advantage of edtech is the possibility of individualised learning. This means teaching pace as well as content can be tailored to suit the learning journey of each student. An illustrative example of such learning is that offered by edtech firms such as BYJU'S and many more, where students can learn at their own pace through interactive visual tools on their learning app.

India proposes to build on and carry forward the deliberations (in the G20 committee) held under past presidents and address the problems that are preventing the full transformational potential of education from being realised. In line with this spirit, priority areas have been identified for deliberation that will serve to:

1. Identify and address major problems that is being encountered by learners across the world, preventing education from becoming an effective tool for improving lives.
2. Help build on the strengths acquired during the past years, especially the use of technology in education.
3. Enable a relook at the teaching and learning methods, contents, curricula, pedagogies, assessment and more, so that education can be made more relevant for the capacities and skills required in the 21st century and to ensure that education prepares learners of all ages and throughout life to address contemporary challenges;
4. Encourage collaboration between people, industries and societies in the quest for widening the horizons of knowledge and using it for the good of humankind.

Future recommendations of G20 in the field of education: The Group of Twenty (G20) has substantial influence in global economic policy but has been peripheral in global education governance. There is intensification of education policy-relevant engagement within the Think 20 (T20), the "ideas bank" and official engagement group of the G20. Considering the range of digitization challenges affecting G20 countries, the strength of previous G20 recommendations to respond to these challenges has been weak in comparison. The issues of digitalisation and skills development have been raised consistently by the G20 but have not intersected prior to 2017. The G20 2015 Skills Strategy calls on G20 members to identify what skills are required by their respective labour markets whilst not explicitly mentioning digital skills (G20 Leaders, 2015).

Digital financial literacy (DFL) is likely to become an increasingly important aspect of education for the Digital Age. The development of the 'gig' economy means that individuals will become more responsible for their own financial planning, including for retirement.

Consumers will need to have increasing financial sophistication to make effective use of financial technology (fintech) products and avoid fraud and costly mistakes. G20 countries need to agree on a standardised definition of digital financial literacy, design tools to assess it, and develop strategies and programs to promote digital financial education, including special programs for vulnerable groups.

Observations and Findings: Both India and Russia are making satisfactory progress toward a bright educational future. Both countries have implemented numerous schemes and plans for improving education. India has leaned more towards incentivization of backward classes to come to school via midday meal programs and the inclusion of more technologies with the NEP(2020). Russia on the other hand, has phenomenal education which is equitable and inclusive that helps the country to progress even further.

While both countries are leading the way towards a bright future and education, there still are certain areas of improvement in their systems that can be rectified by extracting methodologies from each other's systems.

For instance, The Union of India should try to have an education free for all. Increased emphasis on sciences and inclusion of more technology and infrastructure in schools, and most importantly, improving their literacy rates to a reputable degree can help in this case.

Meanwhile, The Russian Federation should look towards making education much more inclusive and equitable in remote and backward areas like Siberia, putting emphasis on how they can incentivize them to come to school like India has with the midday meals, and finally, lay more importance on discipline, prevention of bullying and inclusion of more teachers from the backward regions to eradicate discrimination.

Future Scope: This research can be carried forward by establishing an inter-relation between the Inclusive education and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy and analysing examples based on the same. A study can be carried out on the ways in which popper FLN in the nations can lead to equity and inclusivity in education.

Solutions:

1. Incentivization of students from socially and economically backward classes to go to school. A good example of this in action is the Midday Meal Programme in India, in which lunch is provided in school itself.
2. Providing quality education to remote and economically backward regions by improving infrastructure, building schools and teacher training centres.
3. To get equity and inclusiveness in students, teachers have to be equitable and inclusive. There must be diversity in the backgrounds of teachers. The teachers must also be qualified to teach the students. I.e quality of education infrastructure and human capital.

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