



## **EDUCATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND – IN THE LIGHT OF DRAFT DOCUMENT OF NEP 2016**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is the most important element for the growth and prosperity of a nation. We are in the process of transforming itself into a developed nation by 2020. Youth plays a vital role in the formation of a country. The power of youth is believed to be one of the most important assets in the economic growth and prosperity of a country. This becomes even more significant when viewed in the context of a fast ageing population in the developed nations. By 2020 an average Indian expected to be only 29 years old against 37 years in China, 45 years in Europe and 48 years in Japan. This is the Demographic dividend that we need to harness. In order to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, appropriate policies and institutions need to be in place. This paper presents an essay about the factors affecting demographic dividend, states the relation between Education and Demographic Dividend and discusses the challenges to education as per the inputs for draft of NEP 2016.*

**Keywords** – Education, Demographic Dividend, Draft Document of National Education Policy 2016.



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### **Introduction:**

President Pranab Mukherjee on Sunday, 21 Nov. 2016, attended the fifteenth anniversary celebrations of the Indian School of Business (ISB) in Mohali. Speaking on the occasion, he said, “Universities and institutions of higher learning have a huge responsibility of providing quality education, training and skill to nation’s youth. Failure to do so will lead to the demographic dividend turning into a demographic disaster. India has more than 750 universities, 36,000 colleges and several other institutions, but the quality of education leaves much to be desired. Leave apart figuring in international rankings, most of the institutions are not even making their graduates sufficiently employable.”<sup>1</sup>

Education is the most important element for the growth and prosperity of a nation. We are in the process of transforming itself into a developed nation by 2020. Youth plays a vital role in the formation of a country. The power of youth is believed to be one of the most important assets in the economic growth and prosperity of a country. This becomes even

more significant when viewed in the context of a fast ageing population in the developed nations. By 2020 an average Indian expected to be only 29 years old against 37 years in China, 45 years in Europe and 48 years in Japan. This is the Demographic dividend that we need to harness.

In order to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend, appropriate policies and institutions need to be in place. These policies have been identified as creating high skilled jobs, optimum health policies and enhancing the human capital, all of which are seriously lacking in the backward states. Unless immediate action is undertaken to improve the state of infrastructure and policies in these States, the Indian Demographic Dividend will be at serious risk of turning into a curse rather than a gift. (Thakur, 2012)<sup>2</sup>

**Objectives:**The objectives framed for an essay are –

- 1) To put forth the factors affecting demographic dividend.
- 2) To state the relation between Education and Demographic Dividend.
- 3) To discuss the challenges to education as per the inputs for draft of NEP 2016.

**Discussion:**

***Demographic Dividend –***

Demographic dividend, as defined by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) means, “the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older).” In other words, it is “a boost in economic productivity that occurs when there are growing numbers of people in the workforce relative to the number of dependents.” UNFPA stated that, “A country with both increasing numbers of young people and declining fertility has the potential to reap a demographic dividend. Countries with the greatest demographic opportunity for development are those entering a period in which the working-age population has good health, quality education, decent employment and a lower proportion of young dependents. Smaller numbers of children per household generally lead to larger investments per child, more freedom for women to enter the formal workforce and more household savings for old age. When this happens, the national economic payoff can be substantial. This is a “demographic dividend.”<sup>3</sup>

***Factors affecting Demographic Dividend –***

The youth power is believed to be one of the most important assets for the economic growth and prosperity of a nation. This become even more significant when viewed in context of fast ageing population in developed nation. Indian youth needs to be equipped with

knowledge and skill to compete globally. Building human capital is essential and having a young population is not enough until they have certain skills to contribute effectively to the economy. Following *Figure 1* summarises the factors affecting demographic dividend –

Factors affecting Demographic Divident					
Population	National Goals	Education	Skill Development	Values and Culture	Conducive Atmosphere to excel

*Figure 1*

***Education and Demographic Dividend***

*Education plays an important role to build up the human capital so that a skilled workforce is made available which can innovate and promote faster growth. Without proper policies, the increase in working age share may lead to rising unemployment and fuel economic and social risks as well as hamper demographic dividend.*

***Challenges to Education as per the inputs for Draft of NEP – 2016:***

In the document published by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India – *Some Inputs for Draft - National Education Policy 2016*, following, as in *Figure 2*, are the concerns and challenges stated related to access to and participation in education, quality of the education imparted, equity in education, system efficiency, governance and management, research and development, and financial commitment to education development.<sup>4</sup>



*Figure 2*

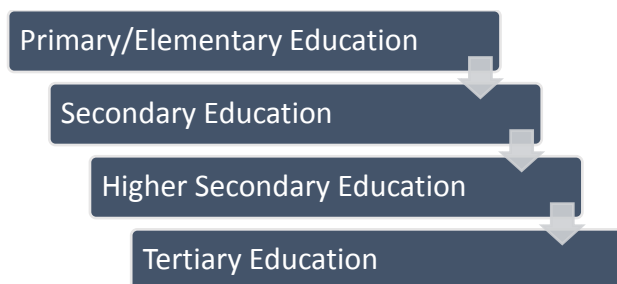
Factors which are taken as concerns and challenges in the draft of NEP 2016 are discussed briefly as follows –

- ***Access to Education***

Research from around the world highlights the importance of early childhood education. However, participation in pre-school education remains low. Expanding access to early childhood education to provide equal opportunity to all children to prepare them better for formal schooling emerges to be a high priority task.<sup>5</sup>

- ***Participation in Education***

Nationally the percentage of out-of-school children aged 6-13 years has declined significantly since 2000. However, the absolute number of out-of-school children remains high. The relatively lower enrolment rates in upper primary and secondary education as compared to primary education are also a matter of concern. Ensuring transition/mobility of students from elementary to secondary to achieve universal secondary education and from secondary to higher secondary and tertiary education, shown in *Figure 3*, continues to be a challenge. The relatively slow progress in reducing the number of non-literates continues to be a concern.<sup>6</sup>



*Figure 3*

- ***Quality of the Education Imparted***

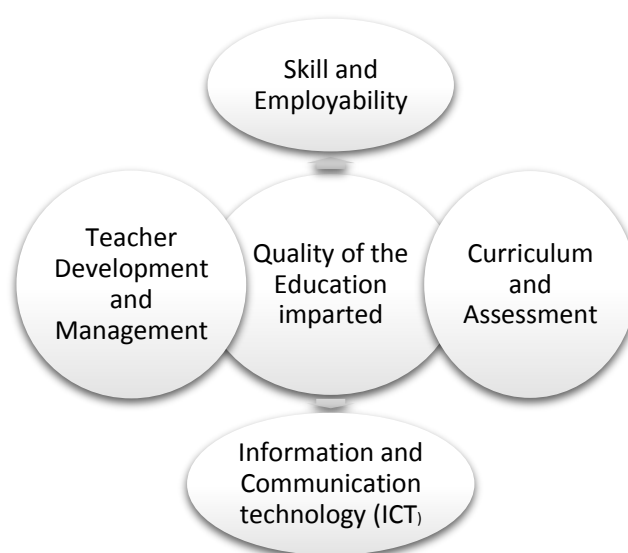
Poor quality of education resulting in unsatisfactory learning outcomes is a matter of great concern. Quality-related deficiencies such as –

- a. inappropriate curriculum,
- b. the lack of trained educators and
- c. ineffective pedagogy
- d. unsatisfactory level of student learning-

-remain a major challenge relating to pre-school education. A significant proportion of children who complete pre-school education do not have school readiness competencies in cognitive and language domains when they join primary school. The majority of pre-school educators are inadequately trained/prepared. The curricula for

pre-school education in many cases continue to be a downward extension of the primary education curriculum.<sup>7</sup>

The quality of education provided in a large number of higher education institutions is a matter of great concern. Accreditation agencies were established in India in 1994 as a measure of quality assurance in order to enhance standards of higher education. Of the 140 universities accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), only 32 percent are rated as A grade. Among the 2,780 colleges accredited by the NAAC, only 9 percent are rated as A grade. Among the accredited institutions, 68 percent of the universities and 91 percent of the colleges are rated average or below average in terms of the quality parameters specified by the NAAC. There has been mushroom growth of private colleges and universities, many of them of indifferent quality. The higher education subsector is constrained by shortage of well-qualified faculty due to vacant faculty positions; poor infrastructure in many private as well as a significant proportion of public higher education institutions; slow progress in the renewal of higher education curriculum to align it more closely with the skills demanded in a diversified economy; and inadequate funding for research and development.<sup>8</sup> Following *Figure 4* summarises factors affecting on the quality of the education imparted –



*Figure 4*

#### *Skills and Employability*

India is one of the youngest nations in the world with more than 54 percent of its total population below 25 years of age. This necessitates that the youth in the country are equipped with the skills and knowledge to enter the workforce through education and training. A large

proportion of the products of the education system are found to lack employable skills. This has substantially lowered the credibility of the higher education system. The utility of higher education in assuring employment remains questionable. Many graduate and post-graduate students do not get jobs in their respective fields. The task of enhancing the employability of the products of the education system ought to be accorded high priority.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Curriculum and Assessment*

A key challenge in this context is expanding opportunities for acquiring relevant skills, including skills needed for work and entrepreneurship; skills and competencies that allow learners to be more creative and innovative, to think critically, to communicate effectively, to solve problems independently; and life skills that enable individuals to grow as responsible citizens and embrace cultural diversity, live and work together harmoniously, etc. The overall assessment practices at the school and college/university level remain unsatisfactory. In most cases the assessment of learning achievement continues to focus on rote learning and testing the students' ability to reproduce content knowledge. The whole assessment system needs to be revamped to ensure comprehensive assessment of the students, including learning outcomes relating to both scholastic and co-scholastic domains.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have made rapid strides in the past couple of decades. Many experiments have taken place in the country, and a large body of knowledge has accumulated in regard to the use of ICT in education. However, the potential of ICT in education has not been fully harnessed. The use of ICT in education remains limited and there is a need to accelerate efforts to use ICT for fostering quality education.<sup>11</sup>

#### *Teacher Development and Management*

In spite of the continued efforts for improving teacher quality and performance, the system for initial professional preparation and continuing professional development of school teachers continue to be characterised by several deficiencies. The current teacher education and training programmes are considered inappropriate in terms of equipping the teachers with the competencies required to cope with the new profile and roles expected of teachers and to enable them to carry out their duties in diverse social, economic, cultural and technological environments.<sup>12</sup>

- ***Equity in Education***

Though substantial progress has been achieved in increasing enrolment in pre-school education, children from disadvantaged population groups still lack access to pre-school

education. Children from economically disadvantaged groups are more likely to receive less opportunity to participate in pre-primary education.

Despite considerable progress, enrolment rates in upper primary and secondary education in some states remain well below the national average. While there has been a rise in the demand for secondary education and increase in the number of secondary schools, the spread of secondary education throughout the country remains uneven. Regional disparities continue, as do differences in access depending on the socio-economic background of students.

Though the number of out-of-school children (OOSC) has declined significantly since 2000, the number and proportion of out-of-school children remain much higher than the national average in some states. The proportion of OOSC has been higher than the national average for SC children, ST children and Muslim children. This indicates that these children need greater and focused attention.

Most states have successfully integrated inclusive strategies to facilitate enrolment and retention of disadvantaged population groups in primary education. Despite these efforts, children from certain sections of the population, such as children with disabilities, children in remote locations, children belonging to nomadic families, migrant children, and other vulnerable/disadvantaged groups have not been able to take full benefit of the educational opportunities. Urban poor children constitute another group of children whose participation in education remains low. Ensuring access to education for the hardest to reach section of population remains one of the key priorities in the context of efforts to achieve universal elementary and secondary education.<sup>13</sup>

- ***System Efficiency***

Even though the drop-out rates at elementary and secondary stages of education have been declining, large numbers of children continue to leave the school before completing elementary education. In 2014-15, the retention rate at primary level was 83.7 per cent and it was as low as 67.4 percent at the elementary level. This indicates that roughly, four in every 10 children enrolled in grade I leave the school before completing grade VIII. Dropout rates in secondary education continue to be high, especially for socially and economically disadvantaged groups of learners. Though the dropout rate is a matter of concern in the case of all categories of students, drop-out rates among socially and economically disadvantaged groups, especially for girls from these groups, remain higher. This brings into focus the need to undertake measures to improve retention in schools of children from socially and

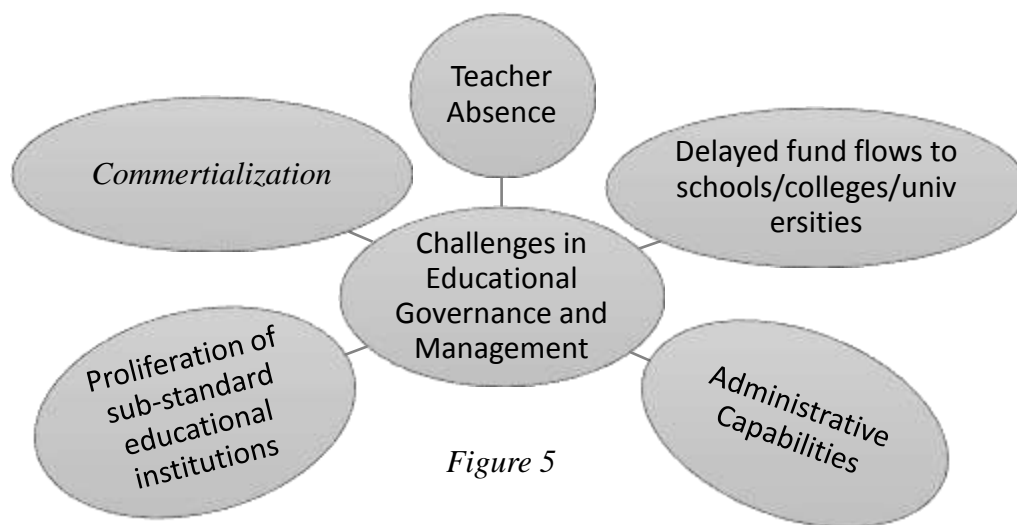
economically disadvantaged communities. Ensuring completion of elementary, secondary and higher secondary education by all enrolled pupils emerges to be high priority task.<sup>14</sup>

- ***Governance and Management***

Several studies have reported the challenges in education governance exemplified by teacher absence, delayed fund flows to schools/colleges/universities and administrative capabilities (shown in *Figure 5*).

Capacity constraints relating to effective programme planning and implementation continue to be a key issue. Consequently, the progress of implementation of planned programmes remains uneven. The governance and management of education system and institutions, especially at the tertiary education stage, has assumed complexity with the advent of a multiplicity of providers, programmes and modes of financing.

Commercialisation is rampant both in school and higher education sub-sectors as reflected in the charges levied for admissions in private educational institutions. The proliferation of sub-standard educational institutions has contributed to the diminished credibility of the education system.<sup>15</sup>



*Figure 5*

- ***Research and Development***

Research and development initiatives in universities in India remain weak. There has been only a limited initiative for –

- a. upgrading the skills of existing faculty;
- b. build synergies between teaching and research to promote excellence in both;
- c. promoting internationalisation by encouraging and supporting higher education institutions and their faculty to engage more deeply with institutions and faculty around the world to improve quality of research;



- d. creating and facilitating alliances for research and
- e. linking university departments with research institutions and industry to accelerate the process of knowledge development.<sup>16</sup>

- ***Financial Commitment to Educational Development***

Insufficient financing of education continues to constrain efforts to expand access to education and foster quality education. Several studies have reported the challenges in education governance exemplified by the delayed fund flows to schools/colleges/universities.

The earlier education policies had endorsed a norm of 6 percent of GDP as the minimum expenditure on education. However, this target has never been met. Shortfall in the funding has been a major constraint to the complete implementation of some of the programmes designed to further expand school, higher and adult education programmes and to maintain a reasonable level of quality in education.<sup>17</sup>

- ***Global Commitment***

The global Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) within the Agenda 2030 seeks to 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'. The EFA agenda initiated in 2000 remains unfinished, particularly those relating to youth and adult illiterates, out-of-school children, low access to Early Childhood Care and Education, inadequate opportunities for skill development and unsatisfactory quality of education and student learning levels.

The NEP will, therefore, pursue both the unfinished EFA agenda and the targets associated with SDG4.<sup>18</sup>

**Conclusion:** The challenges being faced by the education sector call for addressing fundamental issues through innovative approaches and sustained efforts to foster education development in general, and quality education in particular without compromising on access and equity of education. The main thrust of this endeavour should be to devise effective strategies in order to address divergent challenges for the growth of education in India and realising the potential of the country's 'demographic dividend'.

The draft of NEP 2016 envisions and recognizes the central role of *education* in India's social, economic, political and cultural development. In the words of Mahatma Gandhiji- "The real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the

stock exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated.” Inspired by the thoughts of the Father of the Nation, the Policy brings into focus the role of education in inculcating values, providing skills and competencies to citizens which enable them to contribute to nation’s wellbeing. The vision recognizes that long-term economic growth and development of nation is critically dependent upon quality of products of the education system. Which in turn necessitates an education system that is built on premises of quality and equity is central to sustainable development.

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