

# Learners Perspective on Current State of Education

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the perception of learners on the current state of education in India. Exploratory research design has been used. Data was collected using an online questionnaire. The findings reveal that majority of the participants feel that education is not meeting their expectations in terms of development of critical consciousness, moral values, leadership qualities and entrepreneurial skills. Positive response was given by majority of the respondents regarding improvement in communication abilities. Majority of the respondents were in support of privatization of education. However, concern was expressed about perpetuation of social inequality due to privatization. The findings will prove to be useful for bridging the gap between policy and practice. Based on the results, the study recommends that extensive analysis of structural and qualitative features should be undertaken before attempting revision in educational spaces.

**Keywords:** Education, Critical Consciousness, Moral Values, Privatization, Education, Perception

## **Introduction**

Education is one of the vital organs of superstructure of society which plays an important role in shaping the societal values. It is the learning process which develops the ability to undertake critical analysis of any phenomena or event taking place in society. Education provides the required skills and values for becoming an active member of society and is also an important agency of socialization. It socializes the children according to the social and cultural norms of society and also prepares them to earn their livelihood in future. Moreover, it is also a mechanism of social control which prepares the young minds to take rational decisions and

adjust according to the changing life circumstances. The societal needs have given rise to the formal system of education in contemporary societies. According to Petrovskwi (2011), "The ideology of the mass education is one of the key segments of the ideology of a mass society. It is based on the assumption that all people have equal chances of success and that school stimulates individuals to develop their intellectual, emotional, ethical and aesthetic abilities and characteristics as a whole." The views of Petrovskwi establish the importance of education in context of all round development of personality. In this sense education is the defining element of control and change in society. Indian is a democratic country which has moved from an agrarian society to an industrial society and correspondingly new value frameworks and lifestyles have emerged. In modern industrial society achieved status assumes importance and education is the chief means for transforming social relationships and for availing better employment opportunities. The educational opportunities available for individual constitute important determinants of achieving success. It is imperative that the members of society are prepared to adjust according to these changes. Critical thinking, development of morality and good communication abilities are the fundamental skills, which every student enrolled in formal education system is expected to possess. For accelerating economic growth, it is also essential that the basic traits of innovation and entrepreneurship are inculcated and nurtured among the students so they can meet the challenges of future societies. Basu (2014) argues that, "In emerging economies such as India, there is an urgent need for development and promotion of effective indigenous entrepreneurship education systems." Although entrepreneurship abilities are inherent but it is essential that education is designed in a manner so as to give right direction to the entrepreneurial ability. The Indian Education System is book driven and there is not enough emphasis on either innovation or entrepreneurship. According to Patel (2013) "India continues to face severe challenges regarding education system. In spite of the growing investment in education over the years, 25% of its population is still illiterate. The quality of education, whether at primary or higher level, is significantly poor as compared with major developing nations. Whatever our students are learning now is mostly redundant. The syllabus needs to be skill based rather than focussing on mugging up of large chunks of theory". The new information society is changing at a rapid rate and education is important to keep pace with the changes in society. Jain (2019) reports in the study conducted on college students that 14.9 percent respondents strongly disagree and 29 percent disagree, that education promotes entrepreneurial mindset. 27 percent respondents are neutral and 14.7 percent agree that education is aiding in the development of entrepreneurial abilities. Thus

majority of the respondents opine that education does not develop entrepreneurial abilities. The same study also reports that a thin majority of respondents feel that education is helping in development of better communication skills. Ghonge et al, (2020) opine that "There is tremendous growth of education in India in all aspects but it does not satisfy the global demands of market". The present system of education has become dysfunctional for the contemporary society. Such situations generate ideological debates about the role of education in society. New knowledge has to be generated through innovation, research and discovery for the development of society. This paper aims to examine the system of education in context of needs and realities of Indian society.

Along with curriculum another issue which needs attention is the privatization of education. To cater to the demands of growing young population large number of government and private institutions have come up. In the era of globalization the government has withdrawn from service sector to reduce the expenditure and also to provide a more responsive, accountable and efficient system of education. Due to paucity of funds with the government, privatization of education is being encouraged. Sociologically privatization is related to the social class structure. Those who have the ability to pay take admissions in private schools which results in perpetuation of inequality in society. In the present education system there is differential treatment for each segment of society. The OCED report(2012) states that "Equity as inclusion means ensuring that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. Equitable education systems are fair and inclusive and support their students to reach their learning potential without either formally or informally pre-setting barriers or lowering expectations. Equity as fairness implies that personal or socio-economic circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to educational success." The present scenario of Indian education system is presenting just the reverse picture where the wealthy and the affluent have access to good quality education while the less privileged are deprived of educational opportunities right from the initial stages. There is dichotomy in the present system of education in India. Moreover, the education which is being provided does not match with needs and expectations of the society. In a country like India where a number of caste and class based inequalities exist simultaneously, it is essential that educational reforms are accorded top priority.

It is a well- known fact that the performance of students studying in private schools is better than the government schools. Several factors are attributed to this reality. Apart from strict monitoring systems and efficient

management the private schools have definite guidelines for selection of students. The fee structure is also higher than the state run schools hence the students from relatively better familial background take who can afford to provide educational resources for their children. The government schools are open for all students and specific guidelines except age criteria at entry level is not well defined. The government schools provide education to the masses from all backgrounds but they are not able to maintain quality of education which is being imparted. Singh (2015) argues that "The institutions and other developmental programs for weaker classes are still facing resource constraints, which are further aggravated by ignorance, poverty and disadvantages of the people they serve. This is resulting in widening divides and in keeping many educated from weaker and disadvantages sections outside the job and employment markets. The challenge of these marginalized and deprived to the system of education is enormous." It can be argued that this type of education system is actually perpetuating inequality. According to Madan (2016) "If there is considerable social inequality in a society, like what we see in ours, the consequences of a privately paid for education will closely parallel the distribution of the ability to pay. Those with more money will be the ones who pay for higher qualities and levels of education. Those with less money will remain lower down the ladder. If those at the top seek to become more powerful and seek to increase only their own personal wealth then this society, which already has a pyramidal structure of inequality, will tend to become even more narrowly pyramidal. The growth of privatized education will favour those at the upper levels of the pyramid and weaken those at the lower levels."The very purpose of equality through education is being defeated. Several schemes and policies have been formulated to ensure equality of opportunity but efforts for ensuring equality of outcomes are lacking. The Indian education system is reproducing class domination. There are internal contradictions between the constitutional commitments of equality and actual realities of Indian Educational System. Contemporary Indian society is facing a number of challenge in terms of reframing the policies and programmes which have to move beyond the goals of universalization, infra-structural issues and shortage of faculty. This paper aims to examine the system of education in context of needs and realities of Indian society.

### **New Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)**

The New Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) has been launched by the Government of India which aims towards major reforms in the educational system. This policy aims to take develop Indian Education System in a

manner so that it is second to none by 2040. The major target is to provide equitable access to the highest-quality education to all learners irrespective of their socio-economic background. The policy recognizes that education is a great leveler and also the best instrument for inclusion and upward mobility. According to this policy “ the purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper, creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution”. (NEP2020,MHRD). This policy clearly envisions three major thematic changes. It seeks to shift from content centered curriculum to application based learning. It recommends change in assessment model to ensure all round development of students. Experiential learning will be emphasized with focus on development of skills required for becoming global citizens (NEP 2020, MHRD). The much awaited New Education Policy 2020 has come at the appropriate time and the objectives also match with the contemporary needs of Indian society. The policy document is well drafted but the success will depend on its proper implementation and addressing the challenges in practice.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is guided by the functional analysis of Education as examined by Durkheim and Parsons. Durkheim (1956) states that “education is important for society as an integrative and regulative mechanism that binds the people together and helps them to develop consciousness of their responsibilities and relationships within the wider society. The purpose of formal education is to provide each individual with the knowledge and capabilities that are essential for meaningful participation in particular societal contexts.” This implies that education plays a very important role in socialization and social control. Education prepares the individual as future citizens of society. Similarly Parsons (1961) has also emphasized that education primarily serves two important functions. One is allocation and the other is socialization. These two functions together contribute to the maintenance of the social system. The process of schooling through delineates the individuals for various positions in the society through the mechanisms of grading, selection tests and exams. Further, schooling contributes to development of individual personality by inculcating the necessary cultural norms for successful participation in general social life and also for specialized roles related to the position which a person occupies in society. Thus education fulfills the function of socialization, social

integration, social placement and social adjustment in accordance with the needs of the society.

### **Significance of the Study**

The New Education Policy 2020 aims to make the education system learner centric and also develop those qualities among the learners which will make them competent citizens with rational mind capable of taking informed decisions. For this purpose the areas of intervention have to be identified so to make adequate modifications in the curriculum. Since the policy proposes to revamp and revise the entire education structure and curriculum, it is essential that the perception of students regarding the present education system is analyzed. This paper can serve as a reference document for influencing the policies and programmes while introducing educational reforms.

### **Research Objectives**

The study has been conducted with the following objectives:

- To investigate whether education is inculcating skill sets necessary for all round development.
- To analyze the relevance of privatization of education in Indian context

### **Method**

This research study is qualitative in nature. It is the outcome of an online survey and review of studies conducted on analyzing the challenges of Indian education system from the perspective of learners enrolled in higher education institutes. Purposive sampling method has been used. Data has been collected from 100 students. The inclusion criteria was the students who were enrolled in regular courses. The learners enrolled in distance education were excluded from the sample. Percentage analysis of data has been undertaken.

### **Sample Characteristics**

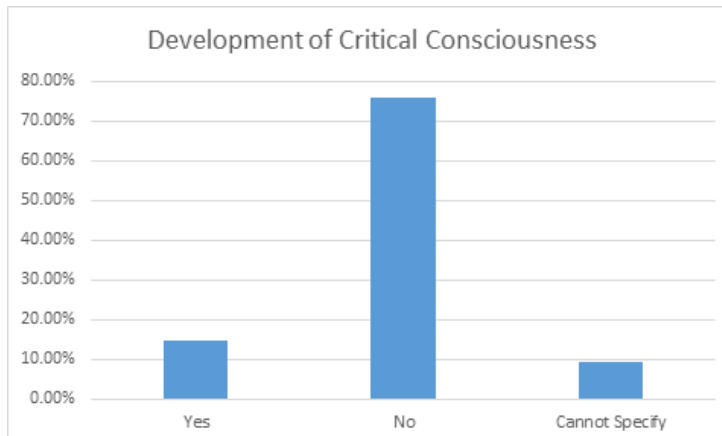
The sample consisted of 50 percent female and 50 percent male respondents. The respondents were in the age group of 18-25 years. The median age is 21 years. 61 percent respondents were enrolled in government institutions while 39 percent respondents are continuing their education in

private institutions.

## Findings

The questions in the survey were asked in context of Indian Education System.

**Graph1:Development of Critical Consciousness**



Graph 1 reveals that 76 percent respondents feel that Indian education system does not develop critical consciousness, 14.6 percent opined that this system aids in the development of critical consciousness while 9.3 percent were not able to specify.

**Graph2: Inculcation of Moral Values**

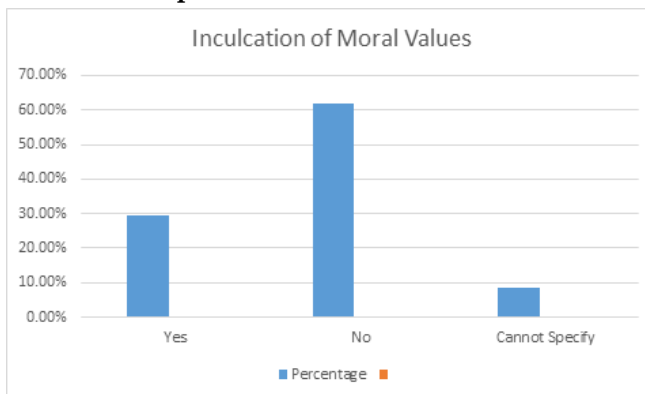
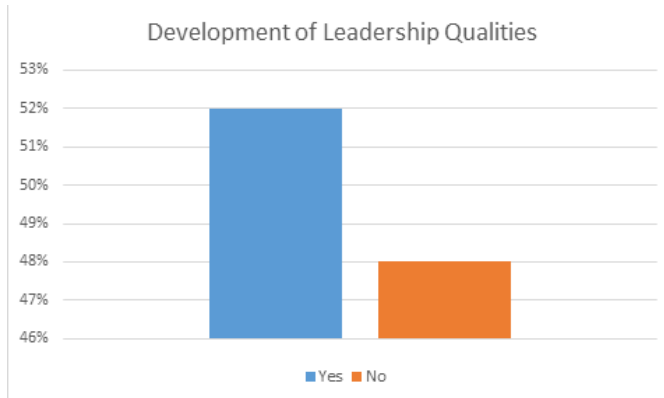


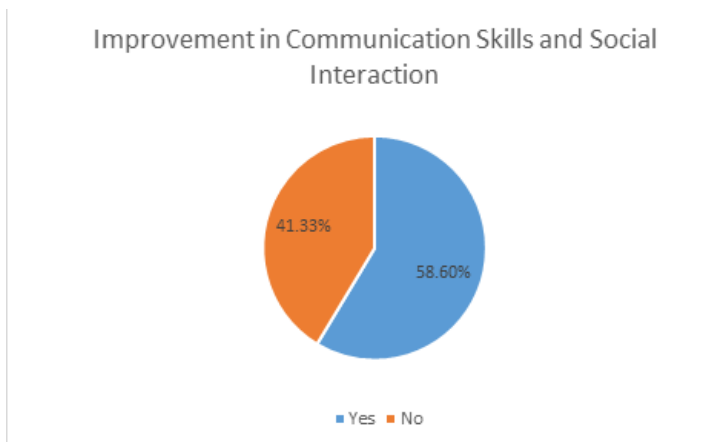
Table 2 shows that 62 percent respondents disagree that the education system inculcates moral values among the learners, 29.33 percent agreed that moral values are inculcated and 8.6 percent were not any to give any opinion

**Graph 3:Development of Leadership Qualities**



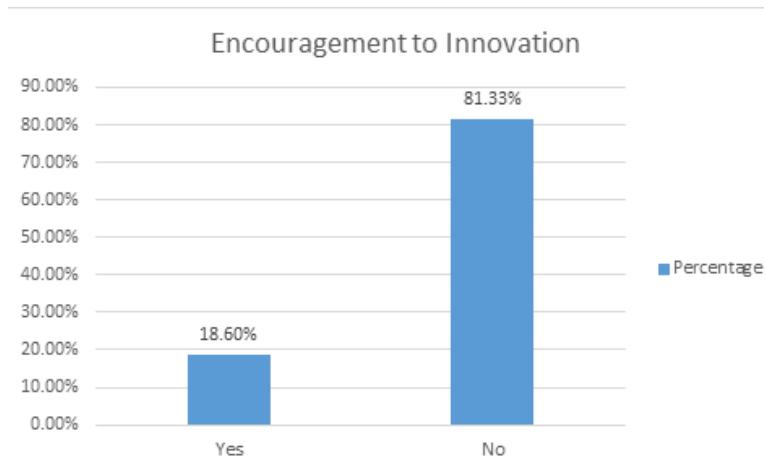
Graph 3 depicts that 52 percent respondents are of the view that the education system develops leadership qualities while 48 percent are of contrary opinion.

**Graph 4: Improvement in Communication Skills and Social Interaction**

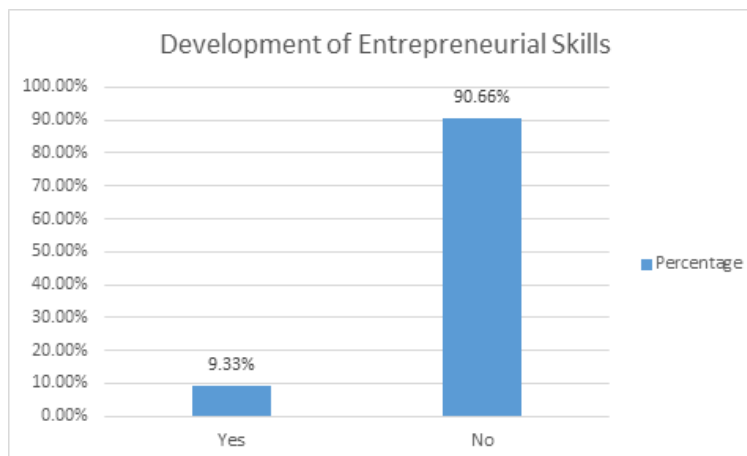


Graph 4 reveals that 58.6 percent respondents opine that communication and interactive skills are improved while 41.33 percent do not support the idea that education system plays any role in improving the communication skills and social interaction.



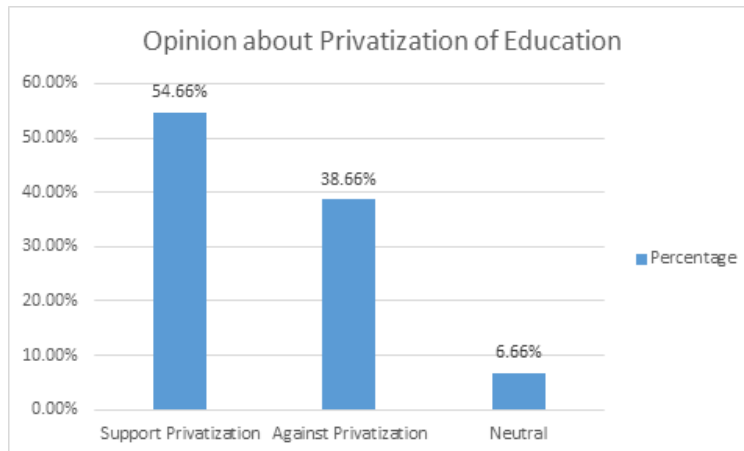
**Graph 5: Encouragement to Innovation**

Graph 5 depicts that 81.33 percent respondents are of the opinion that education system does not encourage innovation while 18.6 percent opine that education encourages innovation.

**Graph 6: Development of Entrepreneurial Skills**

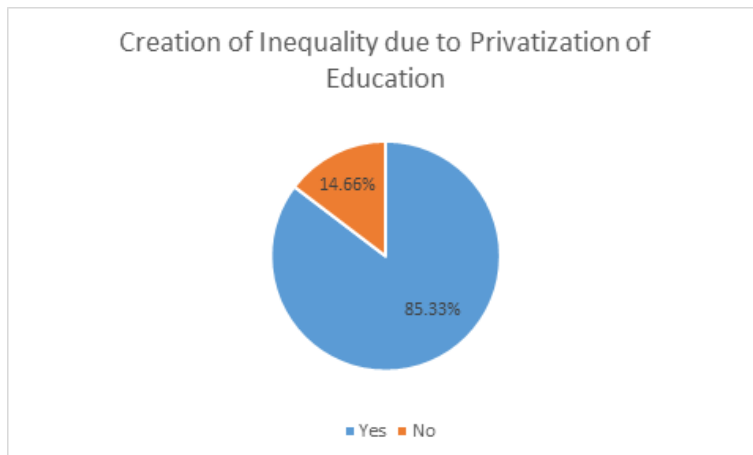
Graph 6 reveals that 90.66 percent respondents are of the opinion that education does not develop entrepreneurial skills among students while 9.33 percent view that education system helps in developing entrepreneurial abilities.

### Graph 7:Opinion about Privatization of Education



Graph 7 shows that 54.6 percent support privatization of education while 38.66 percent are against privatization of education. 10 percent of the respondents were neutral.

### Graph 8:Creation of Inequality due to Privatization of Education



Graph 8 shows that 85.33 percent respondents share the opinion the privatization of education creates inequality in society while 14.66 percent respondents opine that privatization of education does not create inequality.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the study reveal that majority of the respondents feel that the present system of education has failed to develop critical consciousness, moral values and entrepreneurial mind-set among the students. To some extent the present system improves the communication skills and also develops leadership qualities. Similar findings have been reported in the study conducted by Jain (2020) where the students have identified similar drawbacks of education. The respondents are supportive of privatization of education as they realize that the government does not have sufficient resources to cater to the needs of huge population. At the same time majority of the respondents opine that the parallel systems of government funded and private funded educational institutions create inequality in society. The findings also relate to the arguments presented in work of Madan (2016). The findings indicate there is widespread dissatisfaction regarding the objectives and outcome of education in India. The youth unrest and rising unemployment rate of the graduates and post graduates points to the visible disconnect between education and realities of Indian society. The findings of the study may be a useful for the stakeholders involved in the process of revamping and redesigning educational system in India. The findings may also prove to be useful for bridging the gap between policy and practice.

## **Conclusion**

Indian Education system is under severe criticism due to its overindulgence on theoretical knowledge and rote memory. There is an urgent need to make changes in the Indian Education System. The revisions in educational spaces have to be preceded by extensive analysis of the qualitative features of the structural and curricular aspects of education from the viewpoints of all stakeholders like the students, teachers, parents and administrators. It is recommended that application based knowledge should be emphasized at all levels of education and comprehensive review of existing syllabi should be undertaken. The mechanism of implementation of NEP2020 has to be outlined clearly to minimize the uncertainties and challenges in achieving the goals.

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## Web Resources

[https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/NEP\\_Final\\_English\\_0.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf)