Expanding Access And Empowering Communities Perspectives On School Education In 2024-25 Economic Survey Of Vikshit Bharat 2047

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Abstract
The 2024-25 Economic Survey provides a comprehensive analysis of India's socio-economic challenges, with a particular focus on education, access, and community empowerment. The education sector is identified as a key enabler of social mobility, economic growth, and inclusive development. This research article delves into the major themes highlighted in the Economic Survey, examining how policy measures, infrastructure development, and innovative educational models are addressing systemic barriers, expanding access to quality education, and empowering marginalized communities in India.

I. Introduction

Education is universally recognized as a critical determinant of socio-economic development, poverty alleviation, and empowerment. The 2024-25 Economic Survey underscores education as a cornerstone of the nation's social policy, with a strong emphasis on expanding access, improving quality, and ensuring inclusivity[1]. Despite significant progress over the past decades, challenges in providing equitable education persist, especially for marginalized groups, including rural populations, women, and socio-economically disadvantaged communities[2].

This article explores the evolving perspectives on education from the 2024-25 Economic Survey, analyzing the key issues, innovations, and strategies that are poised to expand access and empower communities through education.

Sustainable and inclusive economic growth is essential for long-term development, as it expands opportunities, enhances incomes, and reduces poverty. Effective policies in areas like education, health, social security, and employment are key to transforming growth into meaningful development. These policies must address multiple factors, such as healthcare and access to transport, to ensure children stay in school and citizens can pursue self-growth[3]. In line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the government focuses on holistic development, efficient welfare delivery, and transparent monitoring systems to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

Objectives

This study aims to examine the status, policy initiatives, and progress in school education in India as reflected in the 2024–25 Economic Survey, with a focus on expanding access and empowering communities in line with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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[1] Lokanath Mishra, *Academic Leadership in Higher Education in India: Needs, Issues, and Challenges* (Taylor & Francis, 2024)

[2] Atasi Mohanty, Ashraf Alam, and Aashish Mohanty, 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship for India', *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development Studies*, 1.2 (2024), pp. 134–59.

[3] Srigouri Kosuri, 'NEP 2020 FOR A BETTER BHARAT: CONSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS', *Vidhyayana-An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal-ISSN 2454-8596*, 10.si1 (2024), pp. 227–35.

II.   Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, relying entirely on the analysis of secondary data. The research draws upon a variety of credible and up-to-date sources to explore the state of school education in India. Key references include insights from the Economic Survey of India 2024–25, with a focus on education and social development, as well as relevant reports and documents issued by the Ministry of Education. The study also incorporates implementation reviews of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, along with perspectives found in peer-reviewed journals, working papers, and publications from leading educational think tanks. In addition, recent developments have been traced through newspaper articles, online media, and official press releases. Scholarly books and academic literature on education reforms, equity in access, and community empowerment further inform the analysis. These diverse sources have been critically examined to identify emerging trends, assess policy initiatives, and understand the challenges in realizing inclusive and equitable school education aligned with the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

III.   Review Of Related Literature

Tripathi and Sharma (2024), in their study titled "Exploring the Synergy between National Education Policies and the Holistic Sustainable Development of Students", emphasize the role of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in nurturing students' holistic growth. Their research underlines the need for data-driven strategies and policy alignment to bridge the gap between individual empowerment and national progress. Shelat et al. (2024) contribute to the discourse from an agricultural perspective in "Future Agriculture Viksit Bharat", highlighting the importance of educating farmers and stakeholders to adopt innovative practices. Their findings suggest that capacity building through education is essential for achieving self-reliance and sustainability in agriculture. Nayak and Deshpande (2024), through the ICMAI-CMA Snapshots report, discuss budgetary provisions and economic blueprints supporting the Viksit Bharat initiative. They note that economic empowerment and women's participation, backed by policy and education, are pivotal to sustainable development. Mishra (2024), in "Academic Leadership in Higher Education in India", discusses the institutional and leadership challenges within India's higher education system. He stresses the need for academic autonomy, capacity expansion, and leadership training to empower institutions in contributing effectively to national development goals. Bokil (2024) presents a youth-centric approach in "Youth in ICT & Technology", where the integration of technology and education is seen as a powerful tool to bridge the digital divide. His work highlights how empowering youth through ICT can catalyze societal innovation and inclusion, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Ilcus (2024), in "India Vision 2050", provides a strategic outlook on education's role in nation-building. He emphasizes women's empowerment through education, healthcare, and financial literacy, portraying them as critical levers for the success of the Viksit Bharat 2047 agenda. Mohanty, Alam, and Mohanty (2024) in their work on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) advocate for embedding global citizenship values and sustainability practices in the Indian curriculum. They argue that such educational approaches can nurture environmentally and socially responsible citizens. Mane and Desai (2024) explore the application of Six Sigma strategies to enhance India's global competitiveness. Their study links educational reform and industrial quality management, proposing that operational excellence, when infused into academic and institutional frameworks, can align India with international standards. Devi (2024), in her article on the ULLAS: Nav Bharat Literacy Programme, reinforces the significance of grassroots literacy movements. Her analysis shows that initiatives targeting adult education, especially among women and marginalized groups, are foundational for achieving inclusive development goals under Viksit Bharat.
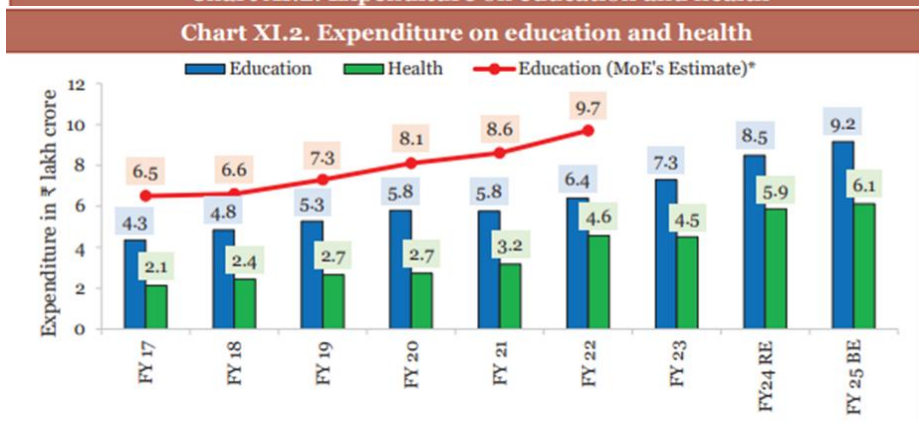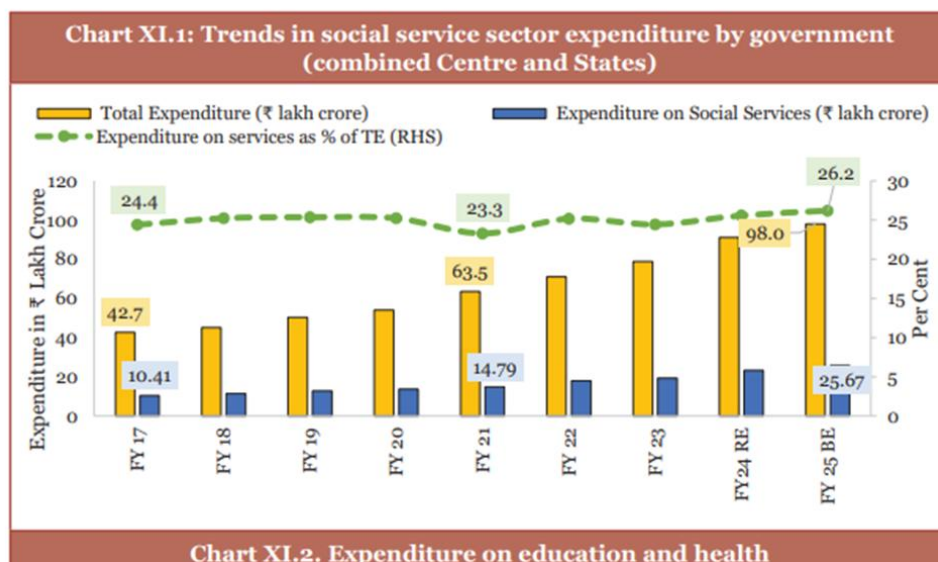
The reviewed literature collectively emphasizes that education when integrated with policy, technology, agriculture, leadership, and social inclusion can serve as a central driver for realizing the aspirations of Viksit Bharat 2047. These studies underline the multifaceted role of education in achieving not just academic excellence, but also societal transformation, economic empowerment, and global competitiveness.

IV.   Discussions And Results
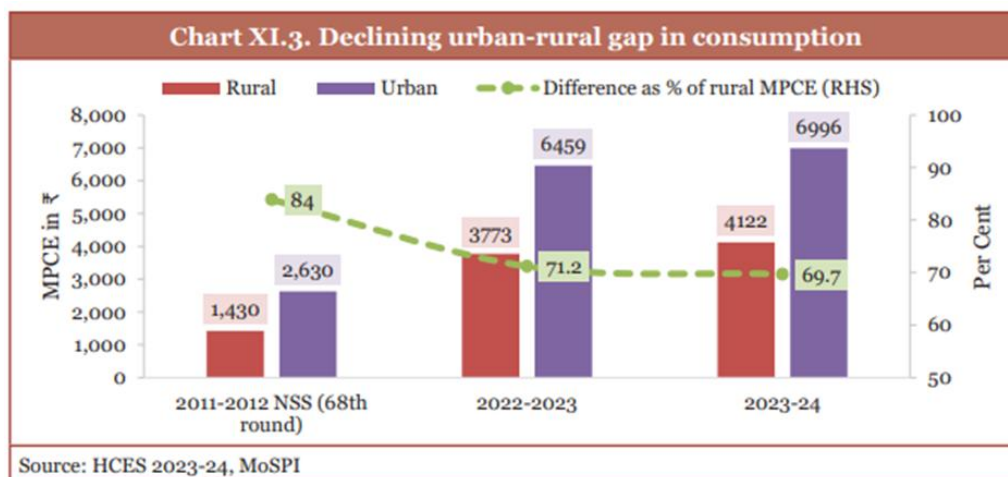
Trend in social services expenditure

The general government's social sector expenditure (SSE) has been increasing steadily, rising from 23.3% of total expenditure in FY21 to 26.2% in FY25 (BE). From FY21 to FY25, SSE grew at a CAGR of 15%, reaching ₹25.7 lakh crore. Expenditure on education rose at a CAGR of 12%, from ₹5.8 lakh crore in FY21 to ₹9.2 lakh crore in FY25 (BE), while health expenditure grew at a CAGR of 18%, from ₹3.2 lakh crore in FY21 to ₹6.1 lakh crore in FY25 (BE)[4].

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[4] 'Economic Survey Report 2024-2025. [accessed 9 April 2025].

Chart XI.1: Trends in social service sector expenditure by government (combined Centre and States)

Legend: Total Expenditure (₹ lakh crore); Expenditure on Social Services (₹ lakh crore); Expenditure on services as % of TE (RHS)

Chart XI.2. Expenditure on education and health

Chart XI.2. Expenditure on education and health

Legend: Education; Health; Education (MoE's Estimate)*

Sources: Budget Documents of Union and State Governments 2023-24.

The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023-24 reveals a narrowing urban-rural gap in consumption, with the urban-rural difference in average monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) declining from 84% in 2011-12 to 70% in 2023-24. Rural MPCE has shown sustained growth, reaching ₹4,247 compared to ₹7,078 in urban areas[5].

Chart XI.3. Declining urban-rural gap in consumption

Legend: Rural; Urban; Difference as % of rural MPCE (RHS)

Source: HCES 2023-24, MoSPI

Social sector initiatives have reduced inequality and increased consumption spending, as reflected in the survey

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V. Education: Treading New Pathways

The education system in India is central to economic development, fostering rational thought and social contribution. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes equitable, inclusive education, aiming for 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030[6]. School dropout rates have decreased, but retention still needs improvement. The government is focused on enhancing infrastructure, with notable progress in facilities like toilets, libraries, and ICT access[7].The NEP 202 states that 'It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution.' Early childhood education is prioritized, with the launch of programs like Navchetana and Aadharshila, focusing on holistic development from birth to six years. The NIPUN Bharat initiative aims to ensure foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) by Grade 3, using innovative teaching methods such as peer teaching to support diverse learning needs[8]. The NEP promotes social and emotional learning (SEL), which has proven benefits for academic and social success. Globally, SEL programs have shown positive impacts on well-being, academic achievement, and employability[9]. These integrated approaches aim to provide comprehensive development, preparing students for lifelong success.

Percentage of basic facilities of schools, infrastructure

Year	2019-20	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Girls Toilet	96.9	97.5	97	97.2
Boys Toilet	95.9	96.2	95.6	95.7
Hand wash Facility	90.2	93.6	94.1	94.7
Library/Reading Room/ Reading corner	84.1	87.3	88.3	89
Electricity	83.4	89.3	91.7	91.8
Medical check-ups in school in a year	82.3	54.6	74.3	75.2
Computer	38.5	47.5	47.7	57.2
Internet	22.3	33.9	49.7	53.9

The government is working towards achieving NEP 2020 goals through various programs like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, DIKSHA, STARS, and PM POSHAN. Recognizing the importance of early childhood development, it launched the National Curriculum for ECCE, Aadharshila, and the Navchetana framework in April 2024[10]. Navchetana supports holistic development for children up to three years, including activities for differently-abled children and maternal mental health. Aadharshila promotes play-based learning for children aged 3-6 years, aiming to enhance ECCE quality with competency-based lesson plans aligned with the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022[11].

School Education

The information you've shared outlines various aspects of India's school education system, highlighting key initiatives, challenges, and achievements. Here's a breakdown of the major points:

Overview of the School Education System:

India serves 24.8 crore students across 14.72 lakh schools, with nearly 98 lakh teachers.

Government schools account for the majority of the system, enrolling 50% of students and employing 51% of teachers, while private schools play a significant role in enrollment and employment.

Enrolment and Retention Rates:

The NEP 2020 aims for a 100% Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) by 2030. While primary enrolment is close to universal (93%), secondary (77.4%) and higher secondary (56.2%) levels still need attention. School dropout rates have improved, with a particular emphasis on improving retention across various education levels. Challenges persist at higher levels, especially for secondary and higher secondary education[12].

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[6] Kosuri, 'NEP 2020 FOR A BETTER BHARAT'pp.56-62

[7] Yogesh Bokil, 'YOUTH IN ICT & TECHNOLOGY: DRIVE TECH INNOVATION FOR SOCIETAL IMPACT AND BRIDGE THE DIGITAL GAP', *A PATHWAYS OF VIKSIT BHARAT@ 2047*, 2024, p. 21.

[8] Rekha Sharma, 'Vision Viksit Bharat 2047: A Development Economics Perspective', 2024

[9] Kosuri, 'NEP 2020 FOR A BETTER BHARAT'.p65

[10] 'Economic Survey Report 2024-2025.Pdf'.Ministry of Finance, Government of India. (2024). Economic Survey 2024-25. Pp.303-323

[11] 'Government of India MHRD NEP_Final_English_0.Pdf' p.29 [accessed 9 April 2025].

[12] 'Government of India MHRD NEP_Final_English_.Pdf'p.47 [accessed 9 April 2025].

Improvements in School Infrastructure:

School infrastructure has seen significant improvements, such as increased availability of toilets, hand washing facilities, libraries, and electricity.

There's been a notable rise in access to digital tools like computers and internet in schools, though there's still a gap in digital access across schools.

Government Initiatives:

A range of programs and schemes have been launched under the NEP 2020, including Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, NISHTHA, DIKSHA, and others, to improve educational outcomes.

In particular, there's a focus on improving the quality of early childhood care and education (ECCE), recognizing its critical role in brain development in the first six years of life[13].

National Mission for Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat):

Launched to ensure all children achieve foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3, this initiative focuses on innovative teaching methods.

Peer teaching is highlighted as a promising method to achieve these goals, supporting diverse learning needs and improving student outcomes.

Peer Teaching:

Peer teaching initiatives are gaining traction, with programs like Mission Ankur and Mission Daksh focused on personalized support for lagging students. Peer tutoring and group work in classrooms, such as through the Nalli-Kali program in Karnataka, are showing positive results in literacy and numeracy skills.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):

The NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of SEL in education, aiming to support not only academic success but also socio-emotional development. The curriculum includes components that focus on physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and cultural development in the early years.

This comprehensive approach emphasizes holistic child development, improving foundational literacy and numeracy, strengthening early education, and making use of innovative teaching strategies. However, there is a continued need for scaling these efforts, particularly in areas such as digital access, secondary education retention, and personalized learning support.

Building strong foundations through literacy and numeracy

The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) for lifelong learning. To ensure all children achieve FLN by Grade 3, the government launched the NIPUN Bharat initiative in July 2021, focusing on preschool through Grade 3[14]. One effective method being used is peer teaching, where students teach and support each other, particularly in resource-limited classrooms. Programs like Mission Ankur in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, and Mission Daksh in Bihar, aim to address learning gaps, with peer teaching helping personalized learning. Successful models like Nalli-Kali in Karnataka and Prerana in multiple states integrate peer learning, with early evaluations showing improved outcomes. The integration of peer teaching into teacher training and scaling successful models is key to supporting NIPUN Bharat's goals.

Empowering minds: Unlocking potential with social and emotional Learning

SEL emphasizes the critical role of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in holistic education, linking it to sustainable development goals, particularly SDG 3 (Good Health & Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). SEL helps students manage emotions, develop positive relationships, and make responsible decisions, all of which contribute to individual well-being and social participation. Early SEL integration fosters resilience, academic success, and mental health, while reducing future mental health challenges[15].

The five core components of SEL outlined by CASEL—Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making—form the foundation of these skills. Research shows that SEL programs improve not just academic performance but also social behavior, reduce psychological distress, and enhance employability[16].

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[13] 'Government of India MHRD NEP_Final_English_.Pdf'.p.27

[14] 'Government of India MHRD NEP_Final_English_0.Pdf' pp.34- [accessed 9 April 2025].

[15] Mohanty, Alam, and Mohanty, 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and Global Citizenship for India'.

[16] Christian Ilcus, 'India Vision 2050', 2024 .

India's NEP 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework emphasize SEL for holistic child development. Initiatives like SEE Learning India and the Life Skills Collaborative are being adopted in various states to foster SEL in education[17]. By creating emotionally supportive learning environments and teaching life skills, these programs aim to improve well-being and learning outcomes, positioning SEL as a strategic investment in the nation's future.

Imparting life skills: The Tim Tim Tare initiative

Tim Tim Tare (TTT) is an initiative that teaches essential life skills like emotional intelligence, communication, and decision-making to students across India. Unlike technical vocational training, TTT focuses on soft skills to help students navigate life's challenges. The program, based on the WHO Life Skills Framework, uses activity-based learning methods like role plays and games to engage students[18].

Started in 2009, Tamil Nadu TTT has expanded nationwide, reaching over 10 crore students, including those in government and specialized schools. It's available through platforms like PM eVidya, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Approved by SCERT, TTT is recognized for its positive impact on students, teachers, and communities.

Bridging the gap: Digital technology in education and the essentiality of digital literacy

Digital literacy is essential for students to stay competitive in the 21st century, equipping them with skills like analyzing, synthesizing, and communicating digital information. The NEP 2020 highlights the importance of technology in improving education and ensuring inclusivity, with initiatives like DIKSHA, SWAYAM, and PMGDISHA supporting digital education. However, a digital divide exists in India, with rural areas, especially females, having lower internet-searching capabilities than urban areas. To address this, the government is implementing various schemes to bridge the gap and enhance digital access, including programs for Divyang students[19].

To keep pace with technological advancements, the government launched Teacher App, a platform offering resources to help educators stay up-to-date and improve their teaching practices. Investments in digital tools, research, and partnerships are vital for creating scalable and equitable learning opportunities across all educational sectors[20].

AI is revolutionizing education by personalizing learning, automating tasks, and supporting teachers and students with tailored tools. Government initiatives like the Apprenticeship Embedded Degree and NCrF aim to link education with industry skills to boost employability.

Children with Special Needs (CwSN): Developing a culture of inclusivity

The Atal Innovation Mission's Frontier Technology Labs (FTLs) introduce students to advanced tech like AI and robotics. Despite the growth of digital learning, traditional methods, such as Tamil Nadu's remedial program, remain vital in bridging learning gaps and ensuring equitable education.[21]

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of inclusivity in education for Children with Special Needs (CwSN), aiming to provide a learning environment where all children are valued and supported[22]. The policy promotes the creation of inclusive classrooms that embrace diversity, focusing on the need for barrier-free infrastructure, compassionate teacher training, and the integration of assistive technologies.

Key initiatives supporting CwSN include:
Barrier-free Infrastructure: The NEP advocates for physical changes in schools to make them more accessible, such as ramps, handrails, and accessible toilets. These improvements are part of a larger effort under the Samagra Shiksha scheme, which has already facilitated infrastructure upgrades in over 11 lakh schools.

Teacher Training: Teachers are being trained to better understand and accommodate the unique needs of CwSN. This training helps educators' foster inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse needs.

[17] 'Government of India MHRD NEP_Final_English_0.Pdf'.pp.42-45

[18] Keshav Shyam, 'Inclusive and Viksit Bharat 2047', : *: October, 2024 Cover: Amit*, p. 174.

[19] Bokil, 'YOUTH IN ICT & TECHNOLOGY'.

[20] U. P. Anilkumar, 'Leave No One behind: AI-Powered Inclusive Development for Viksit Bharat 2047', *Ushus Journal of Business Management*, 23.3 (2024), pp. 19–34.

[21] Rohan Ranjit Mane and Nishita Rohan Desai, 'Empowering Viksit Bharat 2047's Global Competitiveness through Six Sigma Strategies for Operational Excellence.', *South Asian Journal of Management*, 31.5 (2024) .

[22] Ilcus, 'India Vision 2050'.

Assistive Devices: Through initiatives like the Samagra Shiksha scheme, students are provided with various aids, appliances, and assistive devices (e.g., Braille materials) to help them access and engage with education effectively.

Improved Enrolment: There has been a significant increase in the enrolment of CwSN, particularly at the secondary and higher secondary levels. The UDISE+ report (2023–24) shows that 16.8 lakh CwSN are enrolled at the elementary level, with 2.87 lakh at the secondary level and 1.18 lakh at the higher secondary level.

Recovery Post-COVID: The pandemic caused a temporary decline in CwSN enrolment, but efforts are being made to reintegrate these children into formal education systems, helping them overcome the setbacks faced during the crisis.

Additionally, the Accessibility Code for Educational Institutions (2024) focuses on identifying and addressing the physical and communication barriers that prevent CwSN from fully accessing school facilities, further promoting an inclusive education system.

Initiative for CsWN
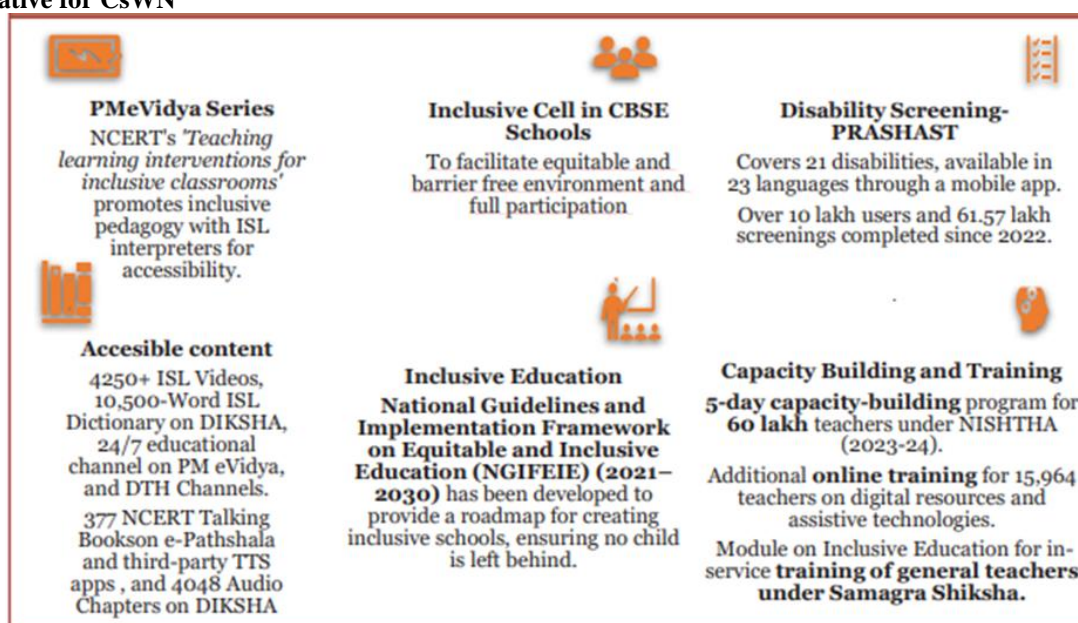
Source: Department of School Education and Literacy, MoE

1. Expanding Access to Education:

Expanding access to education remains a central theme in the Economic Survey of 2024-25. While India has made substantial strides in increasing enrollment rates, with the country approaching near-universal primary education, disparities remain at higher levels of education, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Key Initiatives for Expanding Access:

Digital Learning Platforms: The Survey highlights the growing role of digital technology in bridging gaps in access to education. Online platforms and digital tools are seen as crucial in making quality education available to students in remote areas. Programs like PM eVidya and DIKSHA have brought educational content directly to students' homes, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and continue to benefit learners who otherwise would not have access to physical schools.

Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI): The Economic Survey emphasizes the establishment of PM-SHRI schools to create a model of excellence in education by providing world-class infrastructure, resources, and an enhanced curriculum. These schools aim to set benchmarks for other educational institutions and ensure the delivery of high-quality education.

Universalizing Secondary Education: The expansion of secondary education is crucial in reducing dropout rates, particularly among marginalized communities. The Survey advocates for scaling up scholarships, transportation subsidies, and midday meal schemes to encourage families to send their children to school beyond the elementary level.

2. Empowering Marginalized Communities through Education:
Empowerment of marginalized communities, particularly women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), is a key priority in the Economic Survey's education strategy. Education is regarded as a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and reducing inequality.

Key Strategies for Empowerment:
Affirmative Action and Scholarships: The government has significantly increased financial support for marginalized communities through scholarships, financial aid programs, and reservations in educational institutions. The Survey notes the importance of these measures in improving enrollment and retention rates for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Special Focus on Girl Child Education: The Survey calls attention to the importance of educating girls, especially in rural areas, as a means of empowering women and promoting gender equality. Programs such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have contributed to a rise in female enrollment rates, with targeted initiatives focusing on the safety, accessibility, and affordability of education for girls.

Inclusive Curriculum and Teacher Training: The Economic Survey advocates for the development of an inclusive curriculum that reflects the diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds of India's population. Teacher training programs have been revamped to equip educators with the tools and sensitivity required to address the needs of marginalized students.

3. Quality of Education:
While access to education has improved, the Survey stresses that expanding access must go hand in hand with improving the quality of education. High-quality education is critical in equipping students with the skills and competencies needed to participate in a rapidly changing global economy.

Key Measures for Improving Quality:
National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 Implementation: The NEP 2020 is central to India's long-term strategy for educational reform. The Economic Survey discusses the NEP's emphasis on critical thinking, vocational training, and the integration of digital learning. A key focus is on strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy, ensuring that all children achieve proficiency in basic skills by grade 3.

School Infrastructure Upgrades: Improving physical infrastructure, such as classrooms, sanitation facilities, and digital resources, is crucial for enhancing the learning environment. The Survey advocates for sustained investments in school infrastructure to provide a conducive learning environment for students.

Assessment and Accountability: The introduction of formative assessments, as opposed to a reliance on high-stakes examinations, is discussed as a means to improve student outcomes. The implementation of the National Achievement Survey and state-level assessments are expected to help track progress and identify areas needing improvement.

4. Role of Local Communities in Education:
The Survey highlights the pivotal role of local communities in ensuring the success of educational initiatives. Community involvement in school governance, monitoring, and the provision of educational support is vital for creating a sustainable and inclusive education system.

Key Approaches to Community Empowerment:
School Management Committees (SMCs): SMCs play a critical role in bridging the gap between schools and communities. These committees, comprising parents, teachers, and local leaders, are empowered to make decisions regarding school functioning and resource allocation. The Survey highlights the importance of enhancing the capacity of SMCs to improve school outcomes.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): The Economic Survey also discusses the potential of public-private partnerships in improving educational outcomes. Collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, and private sector players can help in bringing innovative solutions to the classroom, including the provision of learning materials and infrastructure support.

VI. Conclusion:

The 2024-25 Economic Survey presents a hopeful and ambitious vision for India's education sector. The emphasis on expanding access, improving quality, and empowering communities marks a crucial step in addressing educational disparities and building a more inclusive society. However, challenges remain, and concerted efforts will be required from both the government and civil society to translate these policies into tangible outcomes.

By prioritizing digital education, ensuring inclusivity, and strengthening community involvement, India can take significant strides toward achieving its educational goals, ultimately fostering a generation that is not only skilled but also empowered to contribute to the nation's socio-economic progress.

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