

# A STUDY OF POLICIES ADOPTED BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATING FOR IMPROVING THE LITERACY RATE

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## Abstract

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has drafted a definition of literacy as the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."

The National Literacy Mission defines literacy as acquiring the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic and the ability to apply them to one's day-to-day life. The achievement of functional literacy implies (i) self-reliance in 3 R's, (ii) awareness of the causes of deprivation and the ability to move towards amelioration of their condition by participating in the process of development, (iii) acquiring skills to improve economic status and general well being, and (iv) imbibing values such as national integration, conservation of environment, women's equality, observance of small family norms.

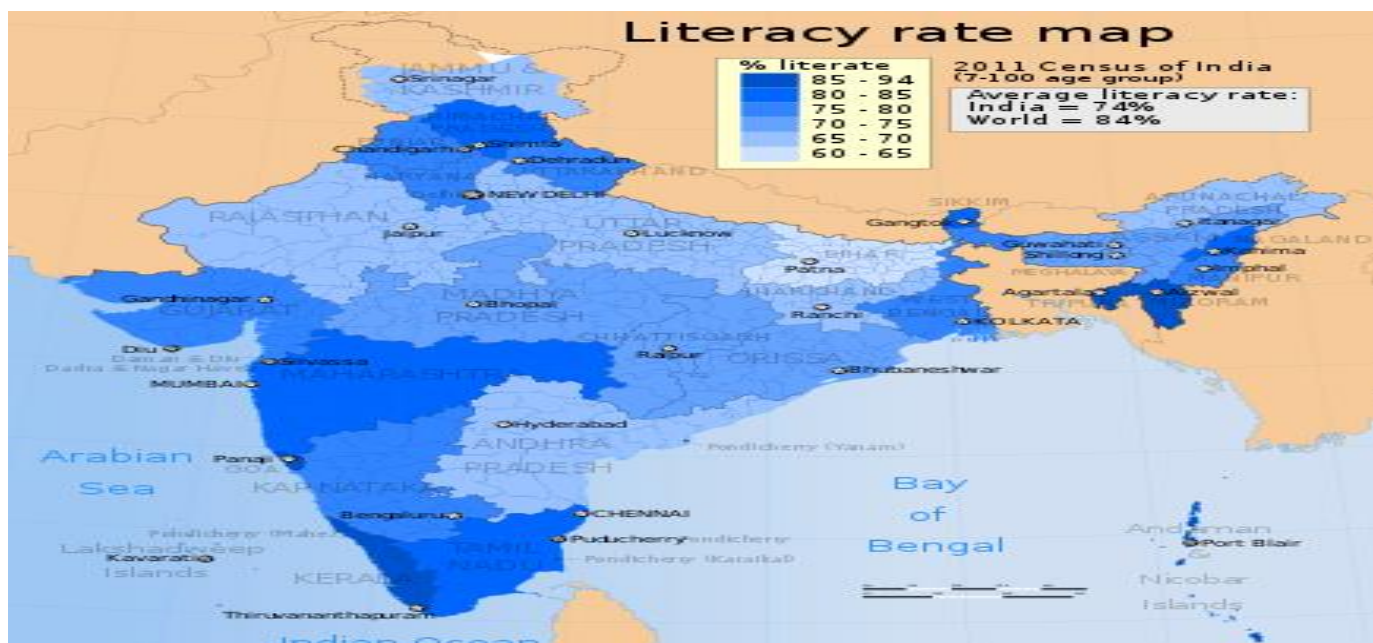
The working definition of literacy in the Indian census since 1991 is as follows

### Literacy rate

Also called the "effective literacy rate"; the total percentage of the population of an area at a particular time aged seven years or above who can read and write with understanding. Here the denominator is the population aged seven years or more.

### Crude literacy rate

The total percentage of the people of an area at a particular time who can read and write with understanding, taking the total population of the area (including below seven years of age) as the denominator.



### Comparative literacy statistics on country

The table below shows the adult and youth literacy rates for India and some neighbouring countries in 2002. Adult literacy rate is based on the 15+ years age group, while the youth literacy rate is for the 15–24 years age group (i.e. youth is a subset of adults).

Country	Adult literacy rate	Youth literacy rate ages 15–24
China	96.4% (2015)	99.7% (2015)
Sri Lanka	92.6% (2015)	98.8% (2015)
Myanmar	93.1% (2015)	96.3% (2015)
World Average	86.3% (2015)	89.6% (2010)
India	<b>74.04% (2011)</b>	<b>90.2% (2015)</b>
Nepal	64.7% (2015)	86.9% (2015)
Pakistan	60.00% (2015)	74.8% (2015)
Bangladesh	61.5% (2015)	83.2% (2015)



### Growth of literacy

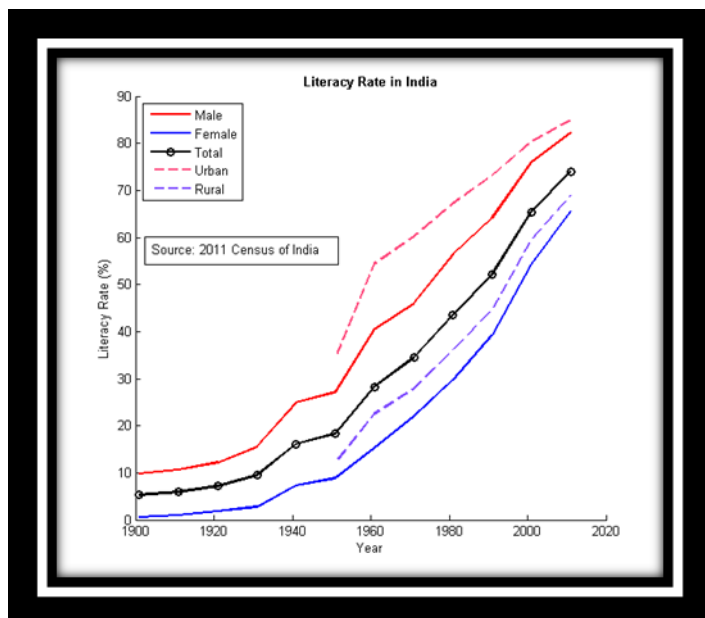
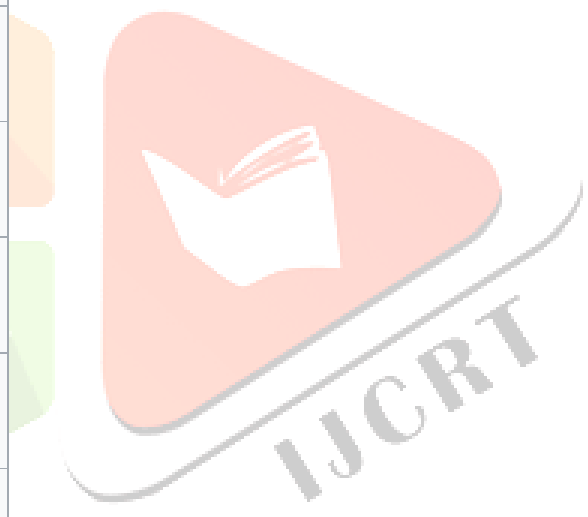
Prior to the British era, education in Indian commenced under the supervision of a guru in traditional schools called gurukuls. The gurukuls were supported by public donation and were one of the earliest forms of public school offices. However these Gurukuls catered only to the Upper castes males of the Indian society and the overwhelming masses were denied any formal education. In the colonial era, the gurukul system began to decline as the system promoted by the British began to gradually take over. Between 1881–82 and 1946–47, the number of English primary schools grew from 82,916 to 134,866 and the number of students in English Schools grew from 2,061,541 to 10,525,943. Literacy rates in accordance to British in India rose from 3.2 per cent in 1881 to 7.2 per cent in 1931 and 12.2 per cent in 1947.

In 2000–01, there were 60,840 pre-primary and pre-basic schools, and 664,041 primary and junior basic schools. Total enrolment at the primary level has increased from 19,200,000 in 1950–51 to 109,800,000 in 2001–02. The number of high schools in 2000–01 was higher than the number of primary schools at the time of independence.

In 1944, the Government of British India presented a plan, called the Sergeant Scheme for the educational reconstruction of India, with a goal of producing 100% literacy in the country within 40 years, i.e. by 1984. Although the 40-year time-frame was derided at the time by leaders of the Indian independence movement as being too long a period to achieve universal literacy, India had only just crossed the 74% level by the 2011 census.

It should also be noted that the British India censuses identify a significant difference in literacy rates, by: sex, religion, caste and state of residence, e.g.:

1901 census – literacy rate	Male %	Female %
Madras	11.9	0.9
Bombay	11.6	0.9
Bengal	10.4	0.5
Berar	8.5	0.3
Assam	6.7	0.4
Punjab	6.4	0.3
United Provinces	5.7	0.2
Central Provinces	5.4	0.2

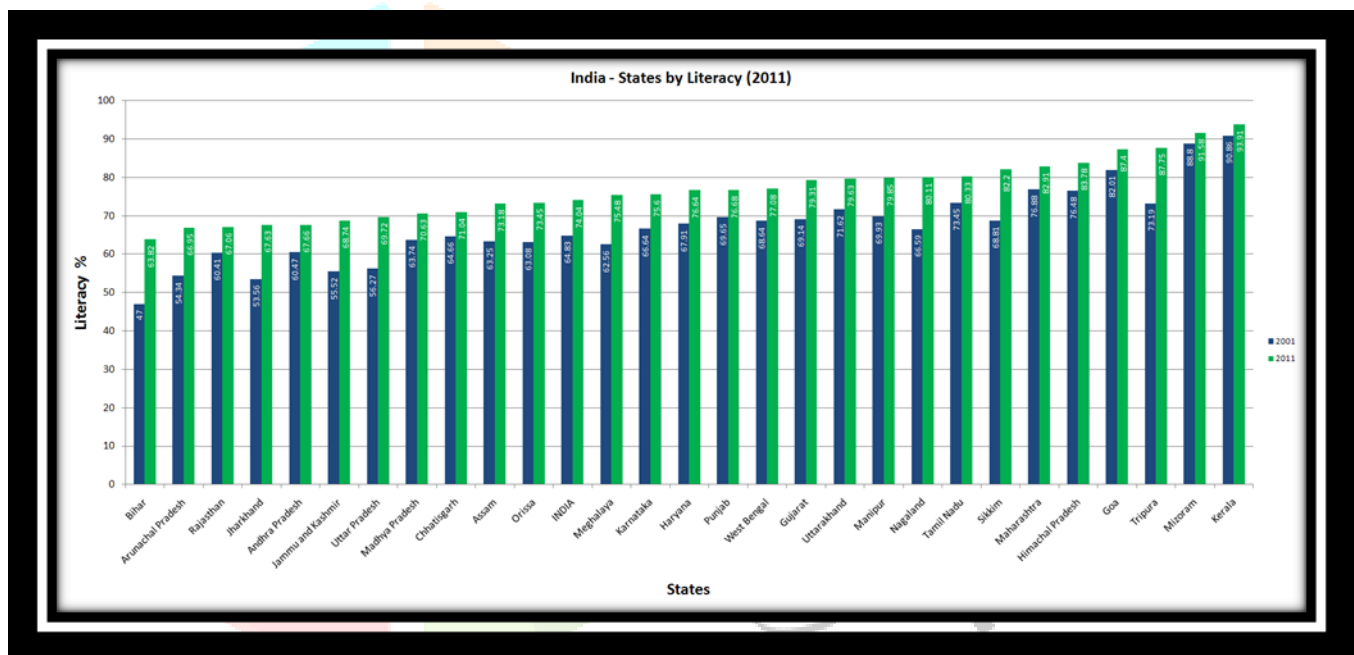


## Literacy rate variations between states

India's literacy rate is at 74.04%. Kerala is the most literate state in India, with 93.91% literacy. Bihar is the least literate state in India, with a literacy of 63.82% Several other social indicators of the two states are correlated with these rates, such as life expectancy at birth (71.61 for males and 75 for females in Kerala, 65.66 for males and 64.79 for females in Bihar), infant mortality per 1,000 live births (10 in Kerala, 61 in Bihar), birth rate per 1,000 people (16.9 in Kerala, 30.9 in Bihar) and death rate per 1,000 people (6.4 in Kerala, 7.9 in Bihar).

Every census since 1881 had indicated rising literacy in the country, but the population growth rate had been high enough that the absolute number of illiterates rose with every decade. The 2001–2011 decade is the second census period (after the 1991–2001 census period) when the absolute number of Indian illiterates declined (by 31,196,847 people), indicating that the literacy growth rate is now outstripping the population growth rate.

Six Indian states account for about 70% of all illiterates in India: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal Slightly less than half of all Indian illiterates (48.12%) are in the six Hindi-speaking states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.



### What are the steps to be taken to improve literacy rate in India?

Pass into law that all children will be given free education for the objective of creating literacy across the population

Set a target to have (for example) 99% of the population having good literacy skills by the age of 16 within 21 years (gives you give years to get everything in place)

Set a team of experts to define:

- 1) what literacy levels are to be set for each child age (in groups),
- 2) create a curriculum to educate to those standards,
- 3) define how students are tested / retested,

Set up a team to plan and organize an education structure across the country which that:

- 1) identifies suitable property for education (inc. new property),
- 2) defines and builds a team structure and humans resourcing plan,
- 3) defines equipment and services support structure plan.

Everyone feeds financial budgets into a central accounting team to manage and distribute finding. Project management team then kicks off project with project plan and authorises delivery contracts.

Something like that..

I purposely avoided suggesting 'everyone gets a free laptop' because as we all know human nature will mean most of them will end up on the black market.

### **A lack of access to education**

“Imagination is the space in your head that can be stretched and grows smaller as you grow older. It can be triggered by thoughts that lead to unlimited possibilities.” These are the words of Thomas Vos, 12, from Pinelands North Primary School in Cape Town, and set the tone for this year’s *Pan-African Literacy for All* conference.

**Imagination and literacy: theory and practice**, and the many academic presentations, panel discussions, keynotes and workshops at the conference will be concerned with finding ways in which to make meaningful gains in literacy on the continent. The conference, provides a platform for literacy professionals and researchers to engage with policy makers in government and the donor community for the benefit of local communities across the continent.

### **Inspiring creative learning**

Africa has a rich history of storytelling that is central to community life, and for social cohesion. A recurring theme at the conference was understanding that literacy is an issue central to the human experience. Literacy must go beyond the basic ability to read and write, but must allow an individual to enter other worlds through words by reading or expressing oneself by writing. Reading can, and must be done for pleasure and not just for the sake of utility. Learning to speak, to read and to write enlarges the potential for pleasure in life, and the benefit to society is great.

This notion was concisely expressed by David Harris, CEO of the DG Murray Trust who said, “Empathy, critical thinking and imagination are the three musketeers of a thriving society,” he went on to say that these three are fostered and achieved through access to literacy.

It is through initiatives, like Africa Code Week, which aims to equip future generations with the skill set they need to thrive in the 21st century workforce – but at the same time encourages a more interactive and exciting way of literacy development (learning to code).

### **Mother tongue learning**

One of the key gleanings around the education of children on the continent, is the need for children to learn to speak read and write in their home languages. Multi-lingualism is a strength in any society and is especially important in India where there is a history of colonization that resulted in the systematic marginalization and erasure of Indian indigenous languages.

Prof. Sally Beach, a literacy professor from the University of Oklahoma said, “Mother tongue teaching of early reading leads to better readers in mother tongue and English.” UNESCO research has also shown that there is real intrinsic value to mother-tongue-based education that goes beyond emotional attachment, loyalty to identity, culture and values. Thus reading and writing in indigenous languages is vital to improving literacy in India.

### **What recent measures are taken by the Indian govt. to improve Literacy Rate?**

Indian Government is trying their best to improve the literacy level in the country and they have taken many necessary steps in recent times to improve the overall education system in both city and rural areas. It is true that in recent years they have been able to bring more and more students in the arena of education.

However, still four of ten Indian people are illiterate according to a report of UNESCO.

### **Free Education:**

Free education system is more and more spread by the Government in various areas of India especially in the rural territories. Poverty is one of the main hindrances for a lot of parents in both city and village to send their children to schools. So the government is trying to provide the primary right of proper education to the students free of cost in various areas and it has become successful. In many areas more and more students are coming to schools for study. However, Government has to reach more rural areas to bring more students to schools.

### **Establishing new schools:**

Few decades ago, lack of schools was a huge problem especially in rural areas. Study in a private school is much more expensive and often the poor students can not avail this facility. The students had to go miles after miles to reach their schools which created a lot of problems. However, in recent years Government has established more and more schools in various rural areas and the problem is solved to a great extent. However, there is still many a village where the schools are far away. Many a student's especially the girls face safety problems while going to these schools. Therefore, the Government needs to take necessary steps on that to bring more girl students into school.

### **Various schemes:**

Government has taken various effective schemes to spread education in more and more students in various remote areas. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Scheme is one of them. In this scheme, the government is providing education to many a student absolutely free. Mid Day meal scheme has also been extremely successful to bring more students in the schools. As the students are getting the food in schools, the parents are sending their students in schools rather than in a hotel to become a child labor. However, it is true that in various places all these facilities are not properly received.

### **Free Uniforms and scholarship:**

Recently government is providing school uniforms, text books, and some other necessary things related to study to the students in many places. Government scholarships are increasing the interest of lot of poor students for higher studies. Government is arranging various study courses and vocational trainings absolutely free.

### **Proper use of fund:**

In India, Government is trying to generate more funds for the study of the students in various areas. However, recently the Government is looking into the thing that the fund which is generated for the study of the children is properly used. The fund should reach the rural and remote areas where the students really need it. The Government is trying to assure that the fund is used for the proper reasons related to study only.

It is true that recently Government has taken a lot of measures to improve the education system in various areas in India. However, they need to continue this and generate more funds to make a proper infrastructure to make more and more children interested to study in schools.

### **CONCLUSION**

Given the structural inequalities and exclusionary and discriminatory character of Indian society, the State has developed remedies against caste and ethnicity-based exclusion and discrimination and for empowerment of excluded groups, the SC/STs, which constitute about one-fifth of India's total population. The safeguards against exclusion and discrimination in the forms of legal measures and affirmative action's



cover public employment, public education and legislative seats and also other government amenities like public housing, etc. However, affirmative action policy in India is conned to the government sector only and the vast private sector is excluded from its jurisdiction. The Government has used some sort of an Informal affirmative action policy in the private sector.

Over time, there has been considerable improvement in the share of SC/ST reservation and representation in government employment and educational institutions. The reservation in legislative bodies has also ensured the SC /STs some space in the executive and decision making process. The impact of formal reservation policy in government sector and informal affirmative action policy in private sector has led to some improvement in the human development of SC /STs. However, as compared to non-SC / ST population of the country, the rate of improvement has been rather slow. And as result, despite positive improvements, the disparities in human development between SC and ST sand non-SC / ST continue even today.

During the course of the implementation of reservation policy, some problems have become apparent. Although the Government has taken steps to improve the implementation of reservation policy, there has been resistance to the policy in indirect forms and as result, its success is uneven across sectors and department. Reservations is close to the population mark of SC / STs in lower categories of jobs, but lower than the population mark in case of high grade positions and technical education institutions. Owing to the indirect nature of resistance to implementation of reservation policy, the extension and the percolation of the reservation policy to several government sectors has been slow.

The other issue that recently acquired prominence is the demand made by SC / ST groups to extend the affirmative action policy of the Government to the private sector employment and educational institutions and other private sector spheres as well; this is under active consideration by the Government of India.

Education, thus for the weaker sections of the society needs to become the panacea and an inclusive growth strategy for their economic and social up-liftmen.

