

Editorial of the Day – 12.12.2025

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1. The Stark Reality of Educational Costs in India(TH)

General Studies 2- Education

The NSS 80th Round (2025) findings highlight a troubling trend in India's basic schooling landscape- despite constitutional guarantees the Right to Free and Compulsory Education for all children aged 6 to 14 years under Article 21A and policy ambitions (National Education Policy 2020), household expenditure on education is rising, and access is becoming increasingly unequal due to growing reliance on private schools and coaching .

Key Findings from the NSS 80th Round Survey

Enrolment Trends (Public vs. Private Education)- At the national level, enrolment remains divided between government and private schools 55.9% in government schools; 11.3% in private aided schools; 31.9% in private unaided schools.

Urban-Rural Divide

Urban areas- 51.4% of students attends private schools.

Rural areas- Only 24.3% attend private schools.

The gender gap in private school enrolment is modest, 34% of boys versus 29.5% of girls.

Rising Private Enrolment Over Time- Private enrolment has increased at all education levels, both in rural and urban areas, compared with the 75th NSS Round (2017-18). It underscores a growing preference for private education often associated with better perceived quality but higher costs.

Cost of Education

Rural government schools- 25.3% of students pays fees.

Urban government schools- 34.7% pays fees.

In contrast, 98% of private school students, rural or urban, pay course fees.

Household Consumption Expenditure (HCES 2023-24)- Pre-primary private school costs equal the monthly income of the poorest 5% of households. Higher secondary private school costs match the income of households in the third income decile. It clearly demonstrates that education has become a heavy financial burden, even at the basic level.

Private Coaching- Hidden Cost of Learning

Incidence of Private Tutoring- Private tuition, now a parallel education system, is widely prevalent

Rural areas- 25.5% of children takes private coaching.

Urban areas- 30.7% of children does so.

Participation increases with grade level, from around 10-13% at pre-primary to over 40% at higher secondary.

Expenditure on Private Coaching- The average annual cost of private coaching is ₹7,066 in rural and ₹13,026 in urban areas, which add significantly to the already high cost of schooling.

Socio-Economic Correlates of Private Tutoring

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Cost Burden and Inequality– 80th Round of NSS shows that private school students pay up to 9 times more than those in government schools. Urban households, especially in states like Telangana and Delhi, spend significantly more on education, including tuition, transport, and digital devices. The financial burden is disproportionately high for lower-income families, who often cut back on essentials to afford private schooling or coaching.

Policy Blind Spots– There is limited regulation or oversight of the coaching industry, while the **NEP (2020)** acknowledges the issue of private tutoring. The lack of affordable, high-quality public education options pushes families toward private alternatives, reinforcing socio-economic divides.

Parental Aspirations and Social Mobility– Families with higher household income, parental education, and urban residence view coaching as an investment in academic success and social prestige. Many private school teachers are underpaid and underqualified despite high private school fees, compelling parents to spend even more on private tutoring.

Inequality and the Decline of Public Schooling– Free education is a constitutional right. But costly private education is increasingly the norm, perpetuating inequality. Affluent families can afford private schools and coaching, poorer families rely on underfunded public schools, leading to divergent learning outcomes.

Ongoing Efforts to Improve Public Schooling in India

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (2018)– Integrates three earlier schemes– Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE). It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-primary to Class XII.

PM SHRI Schools (2022)– To develop over 14,500 model schools across India. It focuses on Modern infrastructure with smart classrooms;

1. Holistic, inquiry-based pedagogy aligned with NEP 2020;
2. Emphasis on environmental sustainability and experiential learning;

National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR)– It aims to create a unified digital infrastructure for education. It includes

1. DIKSHA platform for e-content and teacher training;
2. UDISE+ for real-time school data;
3. Digital learning resources in regional languages;

Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM POSHAN)– It aims to improve nutritional status and school attendance.

1. Over 11 crore children in government and government-aided schools.
2. Inclusion of pre-primary children and fortified food in some states.

Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme (Union Budget 2025–26)– It aims to provide digital-format textbooks in Indian languages to enhance comprehension and accessibility.

Way Forward– Strengthening Publicly Funded Schools

Addressing inequities requires urgent systemic reforms. Strengthening public education is crucial to ensure that education remains a right, not a privilege. The Journal of Development Studies (2024) finds that private tuition is negatively associated with school quality, students in better schools depend less on tutoring. Improving teaching standards, infrastructure, and accountability in government schools can reduce dependence on private tuition and restore public confidence in free education.

Conclusion

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India's constitutional vision of free and universal education remains far from reality. Education is becoming one of the largest household expenditures for many Indian families with rising private school enrolment, high tuition costs, and increasing reliance on private coaching. India needs to urgently revitalize public schooling, ensure equitable funding, and uphold the constitutional promise of 'education for all' to realize the NEP 2020 goal of universal education by 2030.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-stark-reality-of-educational-costs-in-india/article70385413.ece>

2. The U.S. has released its first National Security Strategy under Trump's second term.

General Studies 3- International Relations

About National Security Strategy

Legal Basis- The U.S. National Security Strategy is mandated by the Goldwater–Nichols Act of 1986.

Nature of the NSS- It is a grand strategy that reveals how the US views the world for the coming years.

1. The strategy exhibits a paradox the desire to maintain Global Dominance while pursuing Isolationism.
2. This approach is termed Transactional Realism, meaning the US seeks to assert dominance but is unwilling to bear the cost or security burden for its allies.

Foreign Policy Priorities Outlined in the Strategy

End of Mass Migration- Washington has identified that the era of mass migration has ended.

Protection of Core Rights and Liberties- Core rights and liberties, including freedom of speech and religion, need to be protected more than ever.

Reduced Global Burden- The U.S. will no longer carry the full burden of global security.

Atlas Syndrome- The feeling of carrying the weight of the world on one's shoulders, especially in the context of reducing responsibilities or retrenchment. Derived from the story of the Titan Atlas from Greek mythology, who is forced to hold up the sky.

Shepherding Peace Deals- It will continue brokering peace deals worldwide to solidify U.S. influence abroad.

Economic Security- Economic security is a top foreign policy priority. Key measures include balanced trade, secure access to critical materials, reindustrialisation, stronger defence and energy infrastructure, and leveraging Wall Street and global digital finance.

Concerns Regarding Europe

Patronising Tone- The NSS warns Europe of possible civilizational erasure due to its economic decline. It faults Germany and EU countries with unstable minority governments whose policy actions do not match their stated desire for peace in the context of Russia's war in Ukraine.

Germany's Pushback- Germany's Foreign Minister stated that issues of freedom and governance in Germany do not belong in the U.S. NSS and that the country does not need external advice.

Implications of NSS

Anxiety About the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)- The NSS has raised concerns about NATO's effectiveness and cohesion.

Risk of Autocracy- By making allies take greater regional responsibility, the U.S. may reduce its own role, giving autocrats more freedom to act aggressively and violate international norms.

Conclusion

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The new U.S. National Security Strategy signals a shift toward transactional realism, combining assertive global ambitions with reduced burdens. While prioritising economic security and selective engagement, it risks weakening alliances, unsettling Europe, and emboldening autocratic powers worldwide.

Source- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/trumps-national-security-strategy-2025-released-india-crucial-era-of-mass-migration-is-over/articleshow/125795567.cms>

