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**Dr. Manisha Bharti**  
Assistant Professor, B. N.  
College of Education,  
Dhoraiya, Banka, Bihar, India

### Impact of mass education in eradicating poverty and sustaining economic development in India

**Dr. Manisha Bharti**

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#### Abstract

Mass education, the provision of basic education to the public, is crucial for social and economic development. Governments view education as a fundamental human right, reducing inequities, expanding opportunities, and promoting inclusive growth. In India, mass education is vital in reducing poverty and supporting economic growth by addressing inequality and providing individuals with necessary skills. This article examines the role of mass education in poverty reduction, economic stability, worker skill improvement, innovation, and social progress, using empirical evidence, case studies, and theoretical frameworks to highlight its transformative influence.

**Keywords:** Mass education, economic development, educational models, FPE, Nehruvian socialism

#### Introduction

Mass education, often known as the extensive supply of basic education to the whole public, is a critical component in achieving both social and economic development (Daniel, J., 2010) [3]. In today's world, governments see the enormous worth of educating their inhabitants, not just as a tool for individual empowerment, but also as a method for accomplishing larger social goals such as poverty eradication and sustainable economic progress. Education is seen as a fundamental human right and a key driver in reducing inequities, expanding opportunities, and promoting inclusive growth. Mass education is critical to reducing poverty and supporting economic development in India by tackling numerous dimensions of inequality and providing individuals with the skills and information they need to thrive (Dreze, J., & Sen, A, 2002) [4]. This article investigates the role of mass education in eliminating poverty and supporting economic growth. It investigates how education helps to reduce poverty, maintain economic stability, improve worker skills, innovate, and promote fair social progress. The article analyses these areas using empirical evidence, case studies, and theoretical frameworks to highlight education's transforming influence.

#### Background of the Study

Mass education refers to the large-scale, inclusive educational systems that aim to ensure every individual, regardless of socioeconomic status, has access to a basic level of education. Typically, mass education includes primary, secondary, and sometimes tertiary levels of education, although in certain contexts, it may extend to vocational and adult education. The advent of mass education often coincides with increased public investment, policy reforms, and the establishment of compulsory schooling systems designed to make education a universal right. At the most fundamental level, education directly affects an individual's ability to secure employment and earn higher wages. This income growth plays a vital role in lifting individuals and families out of poverty, as they can afford better housing, healthcare, and nutrition, which further promotes long-term well-being. Mass education has a significant role in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Children born into poor families often lack access to basic resources, including education (Evans, G. W., 2004) [5]. By providing universal access to education, governments ensure that even children from disadvantaged backgrounds have the opportunity to improve their economic prospects. The long-term impact of education on reducing poverty becomes evident when the children of educated parents are more likely to attend school, pursue higher education, and secure jobs that further

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Manisha Bharti**  
Assistant Professor,  
B. N. College of Education,  
Dhoraiya, Banka, Bihar, India

enhance the family's socioeconomic status. In addition to boosting individual income, education contributes to reducing income inequality within societies. As more people gain access to education, the income gap between the wealthy and the poor narrows. Educational attainment allows disadvantaged populations to compete in the job market and gain access to better-paying jobs, which can level the playing field between different socioeconomic groups (Keep, E., & Mayhew, K., 2014) <sup>[6]</sup>. For instance, countries like South Korea and Finland have successfully reduced income inequality through investments in mass education systems that provide equitable access to quality education for all citizens. Mass education has a profound impact on empowering women, particularly in developing countries where gender disparities in education have historically been significant. Educating women leads to a host of positive outcomes, including delayed marriages, reduced fertility rates, and improved child health. Women who receive an education are more likely to participate in the workforce, earn a sustainable income, and contribute to household financial stability. According to the United Nations, closing the gender gap in education could increase global GDP by trillions of dollars annually (Wodon, Q., & De La Briere, B., 2018) <sup>[7]</sup>. As women are empowered to contribute to economic growth, they help drive poverty reduction efforts. A key driver of sustained economic development is the availability of a skilled and educated workforce. Mass education systems create a pool of individuals with diverse skills and competencies, which are essential for driving innovation, productivity, and economic growth. Countries that prioritize education are better positioned to compete in the global economy because they possess the human capital needed to innovate and adapt to changing technological and economic conditions. As economies evolve and shift towards knowledge-based industries, the demand for educated workers continues to rise. Sectors like information technology, finance, healthcare, and engineering rely heavily on a workforce that is proficient in specialized skills. Mass education ensures that citizens acquire the foundational knowledge needed to succeed in these industries, thereby enhancing overall economic productivity. Education is a cornerstone of innovation and technological advancement, both of which are critical components of economic development technological breakthroughs, and entrepreneurial ventures (Kurotomi, M. F., Franklin, A., Aladei, G., & Helen, O., 2017) <sup>[8]</sup>. Innovation is often driven by higher education and research institutions, which serve as hubs for knowledge creation and dissemination. Countries with well-developed educational systems, such as Germany, Japan, and the United States, consistently lead in global innovation rankings, underscoring the link between education and technological progress. Moreover, education plays a crucial role in enabling societies to adapt to technological changes. As industries undergo digital transformation, workers must continually update their skills to remain competitive in the labor market. Lifelong learning initiatives and vocational training programs, often integrated into mass education systems, ensure that individuals can adapt to new technologies and economic demands.

**Social Stability and Inclusive Economic Growth** Mass education promotes social stability by reducing poverty, inequality, and social unrest, all of which can hinder economic development (Commission on Growth, 2008) <sup>[2]</sup>.

A more educated population is likely to be politically engaged, civic-minded, and supportive of democratic institutions. Education also fosters tolerance and understanding, which are essential for maintaining social cohesion in diverse societies.

In addition, education is critical for fostering inclusive economic growth. When education is accessible to all citizens, regardless of their background, it ensures that the benefits of economic development are more evenly distributed. Inclusive growth not only lifts individuals out of poverty. By equipping marginalized communities with the skills and knowledge needed to participate in the economy, mass education promotes shared prosperity (Leitch, S., 2006) <sup>[9]</sup>. Education and health are closely linked, and improvements in education often lead to better health outcomes. Educated individuals are more likely to adopt healthier lifestyles, seek medical care, and understand the importance of nutrition and hygiene. For example, educated mothers are more likely to vaccinate their children and ensure. A healthier workforce is more productive and better able to contribute to economic development. Moreover, education reduces the economic burden of healthcare costs on families and governments, allowing for more investment in other areas that promote growth, such as infrastructure and innovation (Black, C. M., 2008) <sup>[11]</sup>.

### Case based Discussion on the Global Perspective



**Fig 1:** Finland's Educational Model

Finland is largely considered as having one of the world's greatest educational systems. The country's dedication to mass education, free schools, and equal opportunity has produced significant economic and social results. Finland's emphasis on high-quality teacher training, small class numbers, and personalized learning has resulted in consistently outstanding student achievement on international examinations like the PISA's educational achievement has led to economic gains. The country's highly trained workforce has fueled innovation and economic growth, especially in the technology industry. Furthermore, Finland's egalitarian education system has helped to reduce economic disparity and raise residents' living standards.

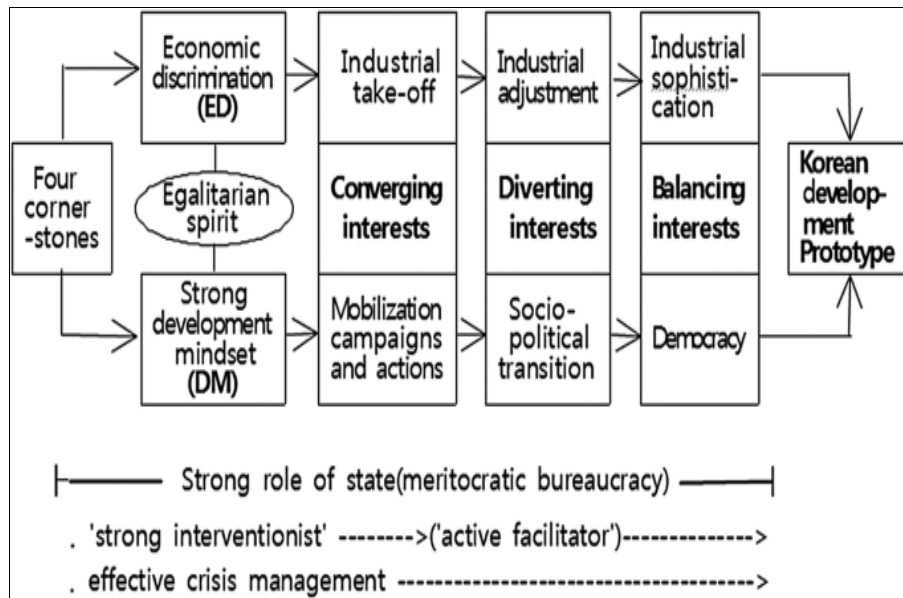


Fig 2: Transformation of Economy of S. Korea

Strong emphasis on education is frequently cited as the reason for South Korea's explosive economic growth in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With an emphasis on expanding access to basic and secondary education, the nation made large expenditures in mass education after the Korean War. The creation of a highly trained workforce was facilitated by the government's encouragement of higher

education and vocational training. The country's well-educated workforce was instrumental in advancing technology-intensive industries such as electronics, shipbuilding, and automobiles. Today, South Korea ranks among the world's most developed economies, with a high GDP per capita and a strong focus on research and innovation.

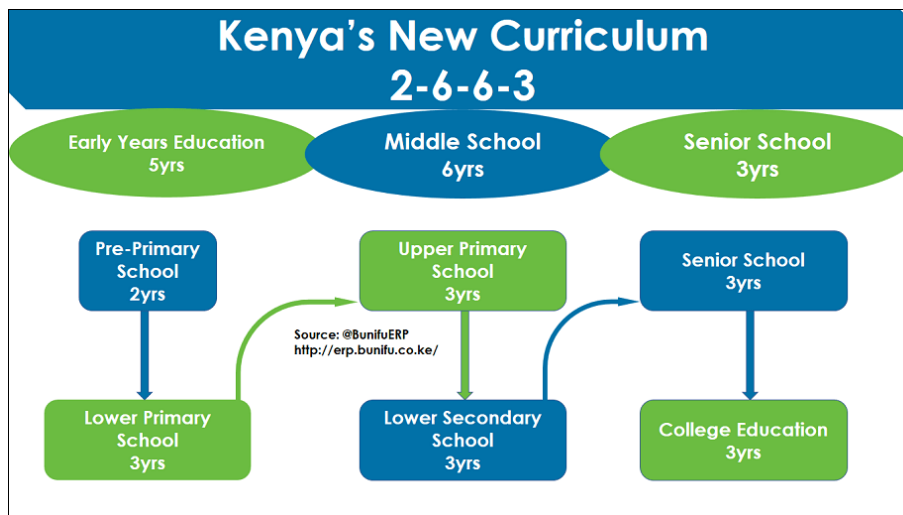


Fig 3: Kenya's Free Primary Education Initiative

In 2003, Kenya introduced the Free Primary Education (FPE) initiative, which aimed to provide free access to primary education for all children. The initiative led to a significant increase in enrollment rates, particularly among children from poor and marginalized communities. While the program faced challenges related to overcrowded classrooms and resource shortages, it has nonetheless contributed to improvements in literacy rates and educational attainment. Education has played a crucial role

in Kenya's efforts to reduce poverty and improve economic outcomes. The FPE initiative has enabled more children to acquire the basic skills needed to participate in the workforce, which has contributed to higher household incomes and improved living standards. While Kenya continues to face challenges in achieving universal education, the FPE initiative represents an important step toward eradicating poverty through education.



Fig 3: Discussion and Analysis based on Indian Perspectives

### Post-Independence: Nehruvian Socialism (1947-1991)

After gaining independence in 1947, India adopted a socialist economic model under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This phase was marked by:

- **State-led Industrialization:** The government took the lead in establishing industries, particularly in heavy sectors like steel, energy, and defense. Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) were established to control key sectors of the economy.
- **Five-Year Plans:** India adopted the Soviet-style Five-Year Plans to direct economic development. These plans emphasized self-sufficiency, import substitution, and a mixed economy where both the public and private sectors played a role.
- **Agrarian Reforms:** Land reforms and agricultural policies were aimed at redistributing land and improving agricultural productivity, although they were not uniformly successful across states.
- **License Raj:** A system of licenses, quotas, and regulations controlled private industries, leading to limited private sector participation and growth.

While this model led to the establishment of basic industries and some economic growth, it also resulted in inefficiencies, low productivity, and sluggish economic performance. By the 1980s, India faced fiscal deficits, foreign exchange crises, and stagnation.

### Economic Liberalization: Market-Oriented Reforms (1991-Present)

The 1991 economic crisis forced India to shift from a closed, state-controlled economy to a more open, market-driven model. Key features of this phase include:

**Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization (LPG):** PM na FM, India adopted reforms to open up its economy. This involved reducing government control, dismantling the License Raj, and liberalizing foreign trade and investment policies.

**Privatization:** Many state-owned enterprises were privatized, and private sector participation was encouraged in sectors like telecom, power, banking, and insurance.

**FDI and Trade Reforms:** The government eased restrictions on foreign direct investment (FDI) and trade, integrating India more into the global economy. This led to a surge in

exports and foreign investments, particularly in the IT and services sectors.

- **Tax Reforms:** The tax system was overhauled, and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced in 2017 to unify indirect taxes and create a common market within India.
- **Financial Sector Reforms:** Reforms in the banking sector, capital markets, and insurance were introduced to attract more investment and ensure efficient financial intermediation.

### Key Drivers of Economic Growth

- **Information Technology (IT) and Services Sector:** India emerged as a global hub for IT services, outsourcing, and business process management. The services sector became a major contributor to GDP, accounting for around 55-60% of India's economic output.
- **Manufacturing and 'Make in India':** The government launched the Make in India initiative in 2014 to boost domestic manufacturing and job creation. The goal is to transform India into a global manufacturing hub.
- **Agriculture and Rural Development:** Despite the focus on industry and services, agriculture remains a crucial part of India's economy, providing livelihoods to nearly half the population. Schemes like PM-Kisan and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) have aimed to support rural development and farmers' income.
- **Startups and Innovation:** India has become a leading country in terms of startups and entrepreneurship, particularly in sectors like fintech, e-commerce, and edtech. Initiatives like Startup India and Digital India have encouraged innovation and technological adoption.

### Inclusive Growth and Social Development

To address inequality and ensure more inclusive development, the government has implemented several social welfare programs:

- **Financial Inclusion:** Programs like Jan Dhan Yojana have promoted financial inclusion by providing bank accounts to millions of unbanked individuals, while Aadhaar has helped streamline government benefits.



- **Social Security Schemes:** Initiatives like Ayushman Bharat (for healthcare) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (for housing) aim to improve the quality of life for the poor and underprivileged.
- **Education and Skill Development:** Massive investments in education and skill development, such as Skill India and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, are aimed at improving human capital and reducing poverty.

### Challenges and Criticisms

Despite its achievements, India's economic development model faces several challenges:

- **Unemployment and Informal Economy:** While growth has been robust, the creation of formal sector jobs has lagged. A significant portion of the workforce remains in the informal sector, which lacks social security and job security.
- **Income Inequality:** Economic growth has not been evenly distributed. Urban-rural disparities, regional imbalances, and income inequality between different social groups remain significant challenges.
- **Agrarian Distress:** Agriculture, though critical to the livelihoods of millions, has seen slow growth, with frequent issues of debt, low productivity, and dependence on monsoons. Agrarian distress and farmers' protests are recurring issues.
- **Infrastructure Deficit:** Although progress has been made in infrastructure development, particularly in roads, electricity, and digital connectivity, India still faces a significant infrastructure gap, which hinders industrial growth and rural development.

### Sustainability and Future Directions

India's future development model is likely to focus on sustainable growth, addressing climate change, and balancing economic growth with environmental protection:

- **Digital Transformation:** The ongoing digital revolution is expected to continue shaping India's economic future, with investments in digital infrastructure and technologies like AI, 5G, and blockchain.
- **Skill and Innovation-Driven Growth:** With the Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) initiative, the government is focusing on boosting domestic industries and reducing dependency on imports, while also fostering innovation and skills to compete globally.

### Outcomes of Education driven Economic Model

#### Human Capital Development

Education is a key driver of human capital development. When people have access to quality education, they acquire skills that improve their employability and productivity. This leads to better job opportunities and higher incomes, which helps reduce poverty. In India, programs such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and the National Literacy Mission have been critical in expanding access to primary and secondary education, especially for marginalized communities.

#### Economic Mobility and Reduced Inequality

Mass education enables social mobility by providing individuals, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic status.

Education levels the playing field by giving everyone the chance to compete for better-paying jobs. In a country as diverse as India, where caste, gender, and regional disparities persist, education offers a pathway to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

#### Increased Labor Market Participation

A more educated population leads to higher participation in the labor market, especially for women. When people, particularly women, receive education, they are more likely to enter the workforce, contributing to economic growth. For example, India has witnessed a gradual rise in female labor force participation, though it remains lower than the global average. Education is key to closing this gap, enabling more women to contribute to household incomes and reducing poverty at the community level.

#### Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Education fosters entrepreneurship and innovation by equipping individuals with problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and knowledge of new technologies. This contributes to the creation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are vital for India's economic development. SMEs generate employment and contribute significantly to India's GDP, helping sustain economic development at both local and national levels.

#### Improved Health Outcomes

Education has a direct impact on public health, which in turn affects economic productivity. Educated individuals are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyles, access healthcare services, and make informed decisions about family planning, nutrition, and disease prevention. This reduces the economic burden of poor health on families and the state, allowing more resources to be directed toward economic development.

#### Strengthening Democratic Governance

An educated populace is more likely to participate in the political process, demand accountability from leaders, and advocate for policies that promote economic development and poverty reduction. In India, mass education has played a role in raising awareness about social issues such as corruption, gender inequality, and environmental sustainability, which are critical for long-term economic progress.

#### Rural Development

Mass education is vital for the development of rural areas, where the majority of India's poor reside. By providing rural populations with access to education, the government can stimulate agricultural innovation, improve the efficiency of local economies, and reduce rural-urban migration. Programs aimed at educating farmers about modern techniques and sustainable practices are helping increase agricultural productivity, thereby lifting rural communities out of poverty.

#### Reduction of Population Growth

Educated populations tend to have lower birth rates, which can reduce the strain on resources and public services. In India, where population growth has historically been a challenge, education—particularly of women—has been linked to lower fertility rates. This demographic shift is

important for sustaining long-term economic development.

### Digital Literacy and Technological Advancements

In today's global economy, digital literacy is increasingly important. India's push toward digitization, under programs like Digital India, aims to provide access to digital education and skills, particularly in rural areas. By ensuring that the population can participate in the digital economy, the government is helping people secure better-paying jobs and fostering economic growth in industries like information technology (IT) and e-commerce.

### Global Competitiveness

Finally, education is essential for making India more competitive in the global economy. By producing a highly skilled workforce, India can attract foreign investment, boost exports, and participate in high-value industries such as technology, pharmaceuticals, and engineering. This economic competitiveness is vital for sustaining long-term growth and reducing poverty on a large scale.

**IT and Software Boom:** India's focus on education, particularly in technical and engineering fields, has driven the rapid growth of its IT and software services sector. The country is now a global leader in outsourcing and software development, with cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad emerging as IT hubs. **Contribution to GDP:** The services sector, largely fueled by educated professionals, contributes around 55-60% of India's GDP. The success of the IT and business process outsourcing (BPO) industries has brought economic prosperity to urban centers.

**Skilled Workforce:** Education has improved the skills and capabilities of India's workforce, particularly in technical and managerial roles. Institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have produced globally competitive professionals. Indian professionals, especially in fields like software engineering, healthcare, and finance, have gained international recognition. The Indian diaspora, especially in the United States and Europe, plays a significant role in contributing to foreign remittances and building international networks. Education has been a key factor in the rise of India's middle class. Improved access to higher education has enabled many families to move up the socio-economic ladder, leading to better job opportunities, increased income, and improved living standards. The expansion of the middle class has contributed to higher consumer spending, which in turn drives economic growth in sectors like retail, housing, healthcare, and entertainment. India's education system, combined with government initiatives like Startup India, has contributed to the growth of a vibrant startup ecosystem. India is now one of the top startup hubs globally, with successful companies in fintech, e-commerce, health tech, and more. Cities like Bengaluru, Pune, and Gurgaon have become centers for technological innovation, research, and development. Higher education institutions, incubators, and accelerators are fostering entrepreneurship and innovation among young graduates. Education has played a critical role in improving gender equality by empowering women to pursue careers in various fields. Programs focused on girl child education have significantly increased female enrollment in schools and universities. Educated women are increasingly contributing to the economy, especially in sectors like education, healthcare, and IT. Their participation in the labor force

helps in reducing poverty and improving family welfare. While some regions have benefited immensely from education-driven development, there remain significant disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as between states. States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka have fared better in terms of educational outcomes compared to states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, leading to uneven economic growth. While urban centers have thrived due to better access to education and jobs, rural areas still struggle with lower literacy rates and fewer economic opportunities. This has led to migration to cities, causing challenges like urban overcrowding and strain on infrastructure. **Agri-Tech:** Education has introduced innovations in agriculture, such as the use of technology, better farming practices, and management techniques. However, agricultural productivity still faces challenges, and greater integration of technology and education is needed to improve the sector further. **Manufacturing Sector:** India's push towards Make in India has focused on improving the skill level of the workforce to boost the manufacturing sector. However, the manufacturing sector's growth has not matched that of services, largely due to challenges in education quality, skill gaps, and labor reforms. **Job Creation vs. Skills:** Although the emphasis on education has improved employability, India still faces a mismatch between educational outcomes and job market requirements. While higher education institutions produce graduates, many are not adequately trained for the jobs available, leading to underemployment and a surplus of unemployable graduates. **Unemployment Among Educated Youth:** High levels of unemployment persist among educated youth, especially in non-technical fields. The slow pace of formal job creation, coupled with a rising number of graduates, has created a gap between the supply and demand of labor. **Expansion of Private Institutions:** With the growing demand for education, private schools, colleges, and universities have proliferated across India. While they offer more options for students, this has led to concerns about inequality, as private education is often expensive and inaccessible to the poor. While the private sector has improved access to education, concerns over the quality of education in both private and government institutions persist, particularly in areas like faculty quality, infrastructure, and student outcomes. Government expenditure on education has risen, with policies aimed at improving both primary and higher education. Initiatives such as the Right to Education Act, Mid-Day Meal Scheme, and scholarships for marginalized groups have helped increase enrollment, though challenges remain in the efficient use of resources. Although government investments in education have yielded positive results in literacy and enrollment, returns on investment in terms of economic development are inconsistent, especially in rural and backward areas where quality of education is still a concern.

### Conclusion

Mass education is a critical component of India's attempts to alleviate poverty and promote economic growth. By investing in education, India can empower its inhabitants, decrease inequality, and build a long-term economic future. The problem today is to guarantee that this education is accessible, of good quality, and meets the needs of the 21st century economy. Mass education is critical to reducing

poverty and supporting economic development in India by tackling numerous dimensions of inequality and providing individuals with the skills and information they need to thrive. India's education-based economic development has yielded major benefits, notably in the services sector, middle-class expansion, technological innovation, and gender equality. However, persisting difficulties such as unemployment, educational quality, and regional inequality emphasise the need for changes that bridge the gap between education and the labour market and guarantee that education-driven growth benefits all segments of society. Long-term sustainable development will necessitate ongoing improvement in both the quality and accessibility of education in all regions.

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