India is one of the few countries in the world that have a dedicated policy on welfare of the children. The genesis of the child welfare policies in the country could be discerned from the relevant provisions of the constitution that envisaged that the state would seek to secure the welfare of the people including the vulnerable sections of society like children. Apart from these, certain specific provisions have also been made in the constitution to address the typical issues and challenges facing the children in the country in view of their vulnerable social and economic conditions. For instance, given that Indian children used to face and even face today the stupendous challenge of child labour owing to their adverse social and economic conditions of life, the constitution made specific provision to outlaw the menace of child labour. It made it incumbent upon the government that it initiates appropriate measures to make sure that the children below the age of fourteen years are not engaged in the any factory, enterprise or other activities that may prove hazardous to their health and other welfare. Thus, the child welfare policies in India may be considered to be a judicious mix of both negative as well as positive interventions through which the government not only prohibits the negative aspects of the welfare of the child but also set into action a number of positive welfare measures through the numerous challenges facing the children could be addressed in a suitable manner.

Another important marker of the welfare policies of the country has been taken to be the policy pronouncements outlined in the successive five year plans. As a matter of fact, for a long period of time, the major development strategy as well as the policy decisions of the country has been proclaimed through the successive five year plans only. The basic premise of the five year plans in the country has been based on the understanding that the planned economic development would be the only plausible system of development in the country. The theoretical argument in support of this strategy has been presented by the fact that the economic resources of the country are very constrained in comparison to the developmental requirements of the country. In such a situation, the only way out left for the government is to evolve such a strategy of development through which it could assess the available resources in the country in respect of the developmental needs of the people and thereby plan for the different
sectors of economy that might have needed to propel the growth of the economy as well as development of the people.\textsuperscript{1} Thus, in the proper conceptualisation of the issues and challenges of the protection and promotion of the rights of the child as well as their welfare, it becomes necessary for us to look at the policy pronouncements coming through the various five year plans that have played critical role in giving shape to the child welfare policies in the countries.

The genesis of the child welfare policies in the country could be traced to the general imperatives of the people through which they needed the basic requirements of life such as food, health and education. But the tight position of the government in terms of the lack of sufficient economic resources as well as the low level of social awareness of the people, the issues and challenges of the welfare of the people could not be properly conceptualised. For instance, for a long period of time, the perspective of the policy makers in the country has been such that they thought that the creation of the basic infrastructural facilities in the country would be more important than going for the group based rights and privileges for the people. Their understanding was based on the fact that once the infrastructural development of the country could be established, the ancillary goods and services could very well be produced and distributed amongst the different sections of society.\textsuperscript{2} But in the absence of such infrastructural facilities, it would not be possible for the government to go for massive production of even the basic requirements of the people such as food and clothing in the main. Hence, for a long period of time, the issues of child welfare and for that matter, the welfare of any sections of the society could not gain the attention of the government and therefore remained neglected at the hands of the policy makers in the country.

Nevertheless, the policy makers in the country remained conscious of the facts that the constitution of India did make certain specific as well as general provisions for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child that may form the backbone of any policy for the welfare of the child. Such awareness though kept the policy makers abreast of the need for evolution of a dedicated policy for the welfare of the child; they could not take any concerted measure on this count for obvious reasons. It was during such a critical juncture of ambivalence of the policy makers that the international thrust for the formulation of dedicated policies and evolution of specific
institutions and organisations for the protection and promotion of the child rights needed to be evolved in the country came into focus. India being an ardent supporter of the United Nations and its specialised agencies, it got motivated at the persuasions of the international bodies to take concerted steps towards the evolution of a concrete policy perspective on the issues of the child. Thus, the time came for the policy makers in the country to start massive consultation towards the framing of the national policy for the child apart from the move to create a number of bodies and institutions that may be charged with the task of the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. This chapter seeks to provide a critical overview of the child welfare policies in the country.

4.1 National Policy for Children, 1974

Governmental attention to the issues and challenges facing the protection and promotion of child rights in the country eventually led to the formulation of the first national policy for the children in 1974. Given that the issues of the welfare and all round development of the children is a subject where the stakes of the states are not less than that of the central government, the government of India thought of going through an expansive and intensive discussions and deliberations on the different issues and challenges facing the children in the country and the ways and means to resolve them. Accordingly, the government formed an advisory cum consultative committee consisting of a variety of stake holders ranging from the government officials, public functionaries, representatives of the nongovernmental organisations, child activists and the representatives of the professional fields from which critical supports for the welfare of the children could be drawn. This committed held wide ranging discussions and debates amongst themselves and also invited inputs and suggestions from the general public so as to involve all kinds of suggestions and opinions in the formulation of the novel policy for the welfare of the children in the country. These deliberations led to the generation of certain degree of agreement amongst the different stake holders and a draft policy on the welfare of the children was prepared. After the approval of the central government, the national policy on the children was put into public domain on 22 August 1974.

The national policy on the children has in fact been the most extensive and well researched draft on the issues and challenges facing the children in the country on the
count of the protection and protection of their rights.\(^6\) The policy laid stress on three distinct aspects of the welfare of the children. One, it emphasised that the issues of the development and growth of the children needed to be understood in contexts different from the contexts in which the normal development discourse of the country is rooted. In other words, it pointed out the unique features and issues in the conceptualisation of the welfare of the child in such a way the unique needs and requirements as distinct from others needed to be recognised. Next, it argued that the discernment of the basic needs and requirements of the children in the country needed to be matched with the suitable policy interventions in the form of various policies, programmes, and schemes for the welfare of the children. In the end, the policy also suggested for the creation of a dedicated set of bodies and institutions that could be bestowed with onerous responsibility of ensuring the fulfillment of the basic needs of the children so as to provide for a health and meaningful development of this vulnerable section of the society. Thus, the national policy on the children provided a balanced and comprehensive perspective on the issues and challenges facing the vast majority of the children in the country.\(^7\)

Reflecting the true spirit of the time and prevailing social and economic conditions in the country, the national policy for the children consisted of such elements as the focal points of the welfare of the child that was basically negative in nature and sought to control the loses rather than foster the growth and development of the children. For instance, one of the important elements of this policy was the emphasis on the reduction in the infant mortality rate in the country. This was also to be accompanied by the reduction in the maternal mortality rate as well. Such a focus of the policy on the reduction of the mortality rates of the infant as well as the mothers seemed to be quite plausible given the very high rate of mortality amongst such sections of society.\(^8\) As a matter of fact, the rate of the mortality of the infant and the mothers were so high at that time that people would fear to tread on the path of the giving birth to the babies. Moreover, the explosion in the population of the country was also propelled by this fear of the people that there needed to be more than two to three children in the family as there might not be any guarantee that the child born now may be able to survive and become the productive asset for the country. Thus, the policy laid stress on the fact that as part of the child welfare measures, concerted
efforts must be made to reduce the infant mortality rate along with the mortality rate of the mothers.

 Though during the decades of seventies reduction in the rate of the infant and mother mortality became the backbone of the policy for children, the policy also emphasised that there must be vigorous efforts on the parts of the government for the reduction of the incidences of malnourishment in the children. In fact, at that time, the birth and survival of the children was a kind of vicious circle through which each and every child has to pass through. For instance, many of the children would die at the time of their birth itself, but in case a child survives, there was a great chance that the child would be malnourished and would suffer from various kinds of nutritional deficiencies. In other words, the survival of a baby from the infant mortality would invariably be threatened by the dangers of nutritional deficiencies that would go to induce some sort of stunted growth in the children. Hence, the national policy called upon the government to go for reduction in the cases of the malnourished children to the maximum extent possible. However, at that time, a major problem in the formulation of a concerted policy was also the lack of data on the number of children in the country. The policy therefore, also suggested that the government must also make concerted efforts to ensure that there is cent percent registration of birth in the country so as to have an accurate data and records for the provision of various services from the government.

### 4.2 National Policy for Children, 2013

The new national policy for the children announced in 2013 as a revised version of the national policy for children, 1974. As the previous national policy itself had presented a wider vision for the children in the country, the new policy has tried to reinvent the government's policy for the children in view of the new realities and challenges. As part of its foray for setting the stage for the comprehensive conceptualisation of the ideas of child welfare, the policy also came up with two plausible issues that should have constituted the core of the national policy for the children in the country. In other words, the policy called for the universalisation of early childhood care and growth of all the children. As a matter of fact, the issues of early childhood care and the growth of the children is very closely related to the issues and concern raised by way of the call for the reduction of the mortality rates for
the infant and their mothers. The stunted growth of the child could be avoided only after providing them with the nutritious foods and other supplementary nutritional supports in such a way that the medically prescribed amount of all the nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, calcium, fat and protein etc. are available to the children in a properly regulated and monitored manner. The policy indeed also called for the universalisation of the access to quality education for all the children in the country. It professed that the health and education are the two sides of the same coin as far as the welfare of the children is concerned. In the absence of the one, the full fruits of the other could probably not be reaped.\textsuperscript{10} Hence, it took the universalisation of the nutrition as well as education as supplementary to each other in such a way that one needs to be supplemented with the provision of the other. However, in the countries like India, the access to education for the children is also fraught with the danger that the children once brought to the premises of the school may not like the ambience of the school and may think of running away from the school sooner or later. The policy therefore argued for the efforts on the part of both the government as well as the general public that the children once admitted into the school must remain enrolled in the school till their education is not complete. Only such a follow up action could ensure that the fruits of the health and education for the children could be fully reaped in the long run in the country.

The national policy has a special component for the girl children given the numerous kinds of problems faced by them in comparison to the boys in the society. Thus, the four basic issues related to the girl children raised in the policy pertained to the total eradication of the female foeticide, female infanticide, the abolition of the child marriage, along with ensuring the survival, development as well as the protection of the baby girls. This could well be considered as a welcome move on the part of the national policy given the pathetic conditions in which the girl children are placed in the country.\textsuperscript{11} The policy has indeed been able to reach at the roots of the problems relating to the girl children and suggested the precise and comprehensive plan of action for the government as well as the common public to adopt and implement in their domains. The adverse sex ratio in the country that has been the characterising feature of the census in the country year after year could be improved only initiation of the concerted measures on this count. The girl children in the country in fact faced the double whammy of either getting born dead and even they are able to born as an
alive baby, they were likely to be killed by their parents given the social taboos associated with the birth of a girl child in the country. Hence, the policy presented a comprehensive and interlined plan of action by calling for the protection of the girl child from female foeticide, and female infanticide and once the girls are saved protecting from the curse of child marriage and securing their development and wellbeing in the long run.

The policy came out with the ideas that appeared radical in terms of their applicability in the domain of the child welfare. For instance it suggested that the government must act to ensure that the there is improved access to the water and sanitation to all the people in general and children in particular in all parts of the country whether rural or urban.\(^\text{12}\) This assertion of the policy was based on the assumption that the children are very vulnerable to various kinds of infections and other contagious diseases given their tender age and the lack of the proper development of their immune system. In such a scenario, the objective of the healthy and nutritional growth of the children could not be guaranteed unless the children are blessed with the pure drinking water and the access to all kinds of sanitation in the habitats they live whether rural or urban. This suggestion of the policy was quite radical and far reaching in the consequences given the lack of the realisation of the fact in the country that the issues of health and nutrition are closely related to the issues of safe drinking water and appropriate access to sanitation. Thus, the present move of the government to push for the cleanliness drive in the country through the vigorous moves for the safe drinking water and the access to sanitation including the access to lavatories for all in the rural or urban areas is the products of the ideas mooted through this policy.\(^\text{13}\)

Probably in order to make sure that the children are not abused or exploited in the country at the hands of anybody, the policy offered another radical measure in terms of provision for the access to all the children all kinds of legal and statutory aid and support along with social protection from various kinds of abuse, exploitation and neglect. As a matter of fact, the plight of the children in the developing countries like India has become so much pathetic for ostensive reasons of lack of awareness about the tools and techniques available to the victims to get his or her grievance redressed. The policy tried to break this kind of glass ceiling by calling upon the government to make sure that the children abused or exploited at the hand of anybody must be
offered the legal assistance so that the perpetrators of injustice on them must be brought to the book. Moreover, the policy goes one more step ahead by raising the issue of the children getting abandoned by their parents or left out in the open to fend for themselves at a very early age of their life. Hence, the policy seeks to ensure that the social protection measures of the government must be expanded to such an extent that the destitute or the dejected children in the society must be given some kind of refuge by the government agencies by way of offering them residence as well as other kinds of vital inputs in the growth of their personality through the measures like health and education in the best possible atmosphere of love and care.

Child labour has been one of the foremost problems faced by the children in the developing countries like India. The nature of the child labour in such countries are quite complex and intermingled with other aspects of the life of the children as well as their parents in such a way that it becomes very difficult to make out whether a child is engaged in the child labour or doing some activity that could be of his liking and a kind of support mechanism to his parents. However, the child labour in terms of the employment of the children in the factories and other commercial enterprises has been a curse that has explicitly been prohibited by the constitution of India along with the various kinds of legal stipulations made under both the central as well as the state laws. Hence, taking clue from these constitutional, legal as well as statutory provisions, the national policy on children came down heavily on the menace of the child labour and argued for the abolition of the child labour in all forms and for all kinds of activities. It went to the extent of exhorting the government to identify the avenues where the children face different kinds of drudgery and exploitation including child labour and take concerted measures to eradicate them. Thus, the policy has sought to break the unconventional grounds in the areas of the protection and the promotion of the rights of the children by calling upon the government to shoulder its constitutional responsibility of eradicating the child labour and introducing the children into the meaningful domains of education and play.

Finally, the national policy for the children tried to break another ground in the country by calling upon the government to make sure that the children are made the equal if not more partners in the various processes and products that may go into deciding the choice of these people in the matters and decisions affecting their lives.
Child Welfare Policies in India

This seems to be a path breaking proposition for two reasons. One, even at the international levels and in the countries that are considered to be developed and where democracy has taken deep roots with people adequately trained to exercise their democratic rights, the talk of the involvement of the children in taking part in the decision making appear to be a revolutionary idea. Two, in the countries like India where the introduction of democracy had raised the eyebrows of the majority of the experts and practitioners of democracy all across the world on the ground that the people in the country are not adequately trained to exercise their democratic rights, the call for the children to become the able partners in the making of the decisions affective their life could really be called as a revolutionary idea. Thus, the government of India could have been up for a novel experiment where it would have to involve a whole lot of children in deciding the courses in which the trajectory of the child development in the country could have gone towards. Nevertheless, the suggestion of the policy indeed reflected the democratic ethos of the country that need to visit almost all the probable walks of life.¹⁶

A critical examination of the suggestions offered by the policy might lead us to believe that the policy seemed to have gone through the issues and challenges facing the life of the children in the country to such a way that there would not be any other policy on the children in the country. Moreover, instead of offering concrete and doable suggestions, the policy offered a long list of vague and general prescriptions that appear to be generalist and without any substance from the perspective of their implementation on the ground. Anyway, the policy did the yeomen's service to the cause of the protection and promotion of the child rights in the country by putting the different aspects of the child welfare in the right perspective. The government had tried to implement a number of the suggestions offered by the policy in a gradual and phased manner.¹⁷ For instance, as one of actions having a great symbolic value, the government announced the celebration of January 24 as the National Girl Child Day to be celebrated all across the country under the auspices of the ministry of the women and child development since, 2009. Though the suggestions offered by the policy could not have been implemented at that point of time, they nevertheless laid the foundation for the relooking at the issues and challenges of the protection and promotion of child welfare in the country. The successive moves of the different governments to make concerted efforts for the realisation of the dreams of the
children for the health, nutrition and education are the steps in the direction that must be attributed to the national policy for the children.

4.3 Policy in Plans

Until the abolition of the planning commission and its replacement with the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, the major medium through which the development discourse moved in the country had been the five year plans. As a matter of fact, the idea of the planned economic development of the country has been the gift of the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the country. Even during the days of the national movement, Nehru along with a number of other nationalist leaders were very much influenced with the pace and nature of the economic development of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, their socialistic leanings had naturally made them fans of the Soviet model of economic development that moved around the idea of democratic centralism.\(^{18}\) As a concept, the idea of democratic centralism is based on the understanding that the system of economic development in the country would be as much centralised in nature as would be needed in spite of the fact that the country has adopted the democratic system of government in which the major centres of decision making would be decentralised and the participation of almost all the major stake holders would be ensured in the process of arriving at the major decisions regarding the social and economic development of the country. Thus, after the country gained independence, the five year plans became the major policy documents through which major thrust of the government on different sectors of the economy as well as different walks of life including child welfare were declared.\(^{19}\)

It needs to be put to the credit of the policy makers and the planners of the country that from the very beginning they seemed to be aware of the importance of the child and the child welfare in the vortex of the social and economic development of the country. This is the reason that references to the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare had been highlighted in the plans. For instance, as early as the first five year plan, specific reference was made to the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare in these words: “Children should receive much greater consideration than is commonly given to them.”\(^{20}\) However, due to the constraints of the economic resources as well as the level of social consciousness in
the country, the planners could not stipulate any specific provision in the first five year plan in terms of the policies, programmes or any specific scheme for the welfare of the children in different parts of the country. Thus instead of placing any specific emphasis on the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare, the plans tried to focus on the agricultural development in the country as the need for food grains had overtaken any other consideration for the planners.

Thus, for a long period of time the different five year plans kept on mentioning the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare but failed to make any concrete move in terms of the policies, programmes, schemes or allocation of funds for the development of the child in the country. As a matter of fact, for a major period of time, the various five year plans tried to club the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare under the broad heading of social well being so as to make sure that all the marginalised as well as disadvantaged sections of society are able to secure their dues from the allocations made for the different sectors of economy. However, a major turnaround in the plight of the children insofar as the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare are concerned, came with the announcement of the national policy for the children. The exhortations helped shape the opinion of the planners and the policy makers towards the pressing the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare. In the subsequent plans therefore greater stress started being made on the adequate attention to the conditions of the children and evolution of the ways and means of ameliorating their conditions in the society.  

The paradigm shift in the realm of the child welfare in the country arrived with the setting up of the dedicated ministry of the women and the child welfare in 2006. This move brought about two distinct changes in the national vision on the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare. One, it sought to provide an integrated approach to the questions of the child welfare by clubbing it with the issues of the women empowerment as the two have truly been very much intertwined. Two, it also sought to create a dedicated system of
administration for taking care of the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare through the ministry. In other words, instead of the previous practice of fragmenting the different aspects of the child welfare in a number of segments to be taken care of by different ministries and departments, now the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare are likely to be taken care of by a single machinery set up for the purpose. Moreover, the twelfth five year plan came up with a new vision of child welfare in the country by outlining a distinct policy perspective and allocating separate funds for addressing the pressing issues bogging down the amelioration of the conditions of the children even after more than seven decades of independence.  

4.4 Policy Perspectives in Legal Instruments

There have been a large number of legal instruments through which distinct policy perspectives have been evolved in the country. For instance, the policy regarding the adoption and maintenance of the children has been explicated through the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act passed in 1956. The Act confers that a woman could adopt for herself in her own right. Adoption of female child was not permissible prior to passing of this Act and any oral or documentary evidence would be of no use, when adoptee failed to prove any family custom prevailing in family for adopting a female child. Section 15 of the Act says that the adoptive father or mother or any other person nor can the adopted child renounce his or her status as such and return to his family of his or her birth. The validity of adoption cannot be adjudicated in a writ petition.

Another important act that sets out the government policy on an important issue of the children is the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994. It regulates the use of pre-natal sex determination techniques. Though it permits the use of pre-natal sex determination techniques for detecting chromosomal or sex linked disorders only by the registered institutions. The Act also bans the advertisement using pre-natal diagnostic technique for sex determination. Section-5 of the Act state that the pre-natal diagnostic procedure can be conducted only with the consent of the pregnant woman and a copy of written consent is given to her.
The Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act (ITPA), 1956 prohibits commercial sexual exploitation and all cases relating to prostitution registered under the Act. This Act defines a minor as a person between 16 to 18 years of age. The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, passed in 1986 outlines the policy on the subject of saving the children from being employed in hazardous and dangerous industries. Section-5 of the Act makes provision for setting up of the Child Labour Technical Advisory Committee by the Central Government and the Committee is authorised to give advice to the Central Government in the matter relating to child labour in occupations and process. Section 13 of the Act deals with the health and safety measures of the child employment in occupations or in processes. The Act also proclaims that if an accused employer is unable to prove that children employed were not below 14 years, he can be convicted for offence of employing child labour.

The Juvenile Justice Act of 2000 as amended in 2006 stipulates the broad contours of the juvenile justice in the country. The Act adopts child-friendly approach by catering to the development needs of the children and their rehabilitation in institutions established under law. This Act has been amended in 2006 to set up Juvenile Justice Board and Child Welfare Committees and compulsory registration of Child Care Institutions. The Act has been further amended in 2011 to remove discriminatory references to children affected by diseases like leprosy, tuberculosis, hepatitis-B etc. As per new provisions more power has been entrusted to Child Welfare Committee and Child Protection Units in each district of the State to oversee its implementation and provide care, education, training for rehabilitation of the children.24

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act is also an important policy document on the subject of the child marriage in the country. The marriage performed in violation of the Child Marriage Restraint Act is an unlawful marriage. Section 5 of the Act punishes a person who performs, conducts or directs any child marriage shall be liable to punishment, unless he proves that to the best of his knowledge the marriage in question was not a child marriage. According to Section 6 (1) of the Act when a child marriage is contracted person having charge of such child, whether he is guardian or parent or in any other capacity whether lawful or unlawful, that person is liable to be punished. The offences committed under this Act are cognizable offences as defined under the Code of Criminal Procedures, 1973.
4.5 Policy through Welfare Schemes

The basic aspects of the child welfare policies in the country could also be seen through the prism of various policies and programmes initiated for the protection and promotion of the children in the country. In this regard, the Kishori Shakti Yojana has shown the policy of the government for the adolescent girl child. The objective of the scheme is to increase self-confidence, boost morale and give dignity to the adolescent girls. The scheme includes two schemes such as Girl to Girl Approach and Balika Mandal Scheme. ICDS Scheme launched in 1975 and universalised in 2008-2009, provides a package of six services to all children in 0-6 years of age and especially children belonging to the disadvantaged, marginalized and weaker sections of the society. ICDS enriches and develops childhood by providing a platform where the nutritional and non-formal educational needs of children in 0-6 years of age. Other major national and state level programmes like Kishori Shakti Yojana, Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for the Adolescent Girls (SABLA), Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana, Ladli are also implemented through ICDS.

The integrated child development services (ICDS) is the umbrella scheme under which various policy perspectives of the government for the welfare of the children are pronounced. At present there are more than seven thousand operational ICDS projects having 13.40 million anganwadi centres providing supplementary nutrition to 46 million children in 6 months – 3 years of age, 38.1 million children in 3 – 6 years of age and 19.1 million pregnant and lactating mothers and pre-school education to 34.9 million beneficiaries in 3-6 years of age. India’s Integrated Child Development Services program is its largest national program – and one of the largest such programs in the world - for promoting the health and development of mothers and their children. The scheme is targeted at children below the age of 6 years and their mothers (particularly if they are pregnant and lactating) and the benefits take the form of inter alia supplementary nutrition, immunisation, regular health checks, referral services, education on nutrition and health, and pre-school learning. In addition, mothers and children are provided with iron, folic acid, vitamin A tablets to combat, respectively, iron deficiency, anemia, and exophthalmia.²⁵

The scheme which is based on the principle that the overall impact of these benefits would be greater if they were provided in an integrated manner, rather than on a
piecemeal basis - is administered from a centre, called the Anganwadi (meaning village courtyard) Centre - hereafter, AWC - by workers, and their helpers, trained and paid an honorarium under the scheme.”

Many aspects of the ICDS have been examined by researchers and, in particular, the delivery of specific services and the delivery of ICDS services in specific parts of the country. However, one aspect of the delivery of ICDS services that has been neglected in the scheme is the issue of who are the beneficiaries? Are they mothers (and their children) from deprived groups who, but for the AWCs, might not have received such services and, indeed, might not have been aware of the importance of such services? Or, are they mothers (and children) from more privileged groups who, even in the absence of AWCs, would recognize the importance of such services and have the resources to acquire them from other sources. In both cases, AWCs would add value to the lives of mothers and children but, in the latter situation, they would do so by displacing existing services.

Though the scheme of ICDS has been conceptualised to be an all inclusive scheme, the instances of social exclusion has been reported in the implementation of the scheme from time to time that goes against the stated objective policy of the government. In other words, the evidence on social exclusion in relation to the ICDS program is at best mixed. First, there was a relative lack of AWCs in Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and Muslim habitations; second, even in mixed-caste villages, the village AWC was usually not located in the parts in which the deprived groups lived. Although the location of AWCs is an ostensibly neutral factor, activists in a study of 14 villages across four states (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh) argued that it is not a mere accident that in none of the surveyed mixed-caste villages was the AWC located in the Dalit or Adivasi hamlet. The decision to locate not just the AWC, but also other valued institutions and services, in the upper caste so-called ‘main’ village is influenced by the upper caste and class and politically powerful groups in the village.

However, in certain studies, it has been showed that the ST children in certain sampled districts comprised 27% of the total number of children in these districts but as much as 40% of the total number of children enrolled in the districts’ AWCs. So, even though locational factors might militate against inclusivity, the utilisation of ICDS services, as measured by enrolment in AWCs, would suggest that while better location
could improve inclusivity, inclusivity itself is not a problem per se. On the other hand, some researchers claimed that, in addition to the locational factor, a large number of eligible children from impoverished and food deprived households did not access ICDS services, including supplementary nutrition for infant and small children….and that the denial of these services is not random or accidental but is frequently the outcome of active social discrimination, based on caste, gender and disability.

Following from this mixed bag of results, some based on data from specific parts of India, the purpose of this paper is to use all-India data to evaluate the ICDS programme from the perspective of inclusivity by firstly, econometric estimates regarding the relative strength of the personal and household circumstances of persons in determining the likelihood of utilising ICDS services; secondly, estimating the proportion of inter-group differences in utilisation rates that is the result of inter-group differences in personal and household characteristics and the residual proportion which is the result of caste/religious identity; thirdly, suggesting a trade-off between quality and utilisation by hypothesising that the poor quality of ICDS services leads the Hindu upper castes to exit the ICDS market and seek these services elsewhere; thirdly, the evaluation of the ICDS program, as summarised above, is particularly important in the light of the Government of India’s view, as articulated in its Eleventh Five Year Plan, that growth is not perceived as sufficiently inclusive for many groups, especially Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minorities.

In terms of the Government of India’s flagship social welfare programs, of which the ICDS is one (the others being the Total Sanitation Program and the National Rural Health Mission), access to services by people from deprived groups is the key to inclusivity. The obverse of inclusion is, of course, exclusion and one of the purposes of this paper is to measure the degree of exclusionary bias in the provision of ICDS services or, in other words, to measure the relative access to ICDS services by mothers and children from deprived” groups, compared to access by those from more privileged groups. The results reported in this paper are based on data provided by the Indian Human Development Survey for 2005 which asked ever married women between the ages of 15 and 49 about whether they received various types of ICDS services. There were, in total, 33,482 such women, each woman drawn from a different household, where these (33,482) households were drawn from a variety of
social groups and faced different economic circumstances. In addition to information about the women’s households, the IHDS also provided information on the circumstances of the women in terms of inter alia their age, education level, and number of children.

It should be emphasized that this paper is an analysis of access to ICDS services by women of differing personal and household circumstances. It is not an analysis of their access to health services in general or, about the quality of the health services they accessed or, indeed, about their and their children’s health outcomes. Strength of Factors Influencing the Utilisation of ICDS Services Given that the utilisation rates of ICDS services differed between mothers from different caste/religious groups, and differed also between mothers of different economic/educational/age related/locational attributes, this section estimates the relative strength of the different factors which exercised a significant influence on the utilisation of ICDS services; and, in particular, it enquires whether, after controlling for the non-caste/religion factors, there was still significant correlation between the mothers’ caste/religion and their utilisation rates? The answers to these questions were provided by estimating log it equations for each of the six ICDS services provided through the AWCs, namely, benefits to lactating mothers, children’s immunization, children’s health monitoring, children’s supplementary, children’s growth monitoring, and early education - with the dependent variable for each equation taking the value 1 if the mother utilized that benefit and 0 if she did not.

It should be emphasized that in estimating the legit model, it was not possible, for reasons of multi-co linearity, to include all the categories with respect to the variables: the category that was omitted for a variable is referred to as the reference category (for that variable). The explanatory variables for the equations were: The mother’s social group: Christians, Sikhs, and Jains; Scheduled Castes; Scheduled Tribes; OBC Hindu; OBC Muslim; Upper Caste Muslim. The reference category was ‘Upper Caste Hindus’. The “household income of the mother, as defined by the quintile of total household income, with mothers in households whose income was in the fifth (highest) quintile being the reference category. The principal source of the mother’s household income: agriculture, labourer, salary, with mothers in households whose principal source of income was trade comprising the reference category. The mother’s age
group: 15-20 years, 21-30 years, 31-40 years, with mothers aged 41-50 comprising the reference category.

The number of years of schooling of the mother: zero years, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, with mothers with over 10 years schooling comprising the reference category. The mother’s regions of residences include South: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Kerala, Tamil Nadu; West: Gujarat and Maharashtra; East: Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, and the North-East; North: Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi. The Central region (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand) was the reference region. Nature of residential area are urban non-slum; urban slum; rural with urban non-slum as the reference category. The Decomposition by Social Group of the Probabilities of Utilizing ICDS Services From the concluding observations of section 3 follows a more general question: how much of the mean difference in the utilization of an ICDS service between mothers in the different caste/religious groups is due to differences between them in their (non-group) attributes (attributes contribution)? And how much is due to the fact that the mothers belonged to different groups (caste/religion contribution)? These questions remain critical points in the successful working of the government policy on child welfare.26

4.6 Policy for Rehabilitation

The Integrated programme for Street Children by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment seeks to prevent destitution of children who are without homes and family ties and are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The programme rehabilitates these children and facilitates their withdrawal from life on the streets. The Integrated Programme for Juvenile Justice seeks to provide care and protection to the children in difficult circumstances and in conflict with laws. The special features of the scheme include establishment of a National Advisory Board on Juvenile Justice, creation of Juvenile Justice Fund, training of judicial, administrative police and NGOs responsible for implementation of JJ Act brings quality improvement in existing infrastructure, expanding non-institutional services like sponsorship and foster care as an alternative institutional care. The Child helpline is a toll free telephone service which is run with the support of Women and child Development Ministry and is working in 72 cities across the country. Anyone can call for assistance for the interest of children. The
Child Budgeting identifies budgetary allocations of Central and State Governments to address specific needs of children through child specific programmes, identify major constraints for effective utilisation; devises methods for tracking expenditure and monitoring performance relating to child development programme. The Elimination of Child Labour Programme implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Government of India sanctions rehabilitation of working children and elimination of child labour.27

Needless to mention that, though India has a comprehensive legal regime and policy framework to protect the rights and interests of the children, greater momentum is required for effective implementation of these policies and programmes for well-being of the children by improving their level of education, health and nutrition etc. Above all a just and fair environment is desirable for all children at home, school or any other place, with growing mind and body to see a shining tomorrow and ultimately to become responsible citizens of India. Five Year Plans have been devoting special attention to women and children. The First Plan stated Children should receive much greater consideration than is commonly given to them. The first few plans provided for children under the head of ‘Social welfare’ along with other disadvantaged sections of the society. After the formulation of the National Policy of the Child, there were exclusive provisions for children in the subsequent plans. Later, “Women and child specific policies and programmes were formulated after the setting up of Union Ministry for Women and Child Development in 2006. Successive plans adopted an integrated approach for the welfare of the child by providing grants to the state governments for child welfare. The Eleventh Plan acknowledging the rights of children envisioned an inclusive growth for all children, irrespective of their class, caste, ethnicity, religion and gender besides advocating for ending the exclusion and discrimination faced by women and children.

The Twelfth Plan represents a Child Rights Paradigm that mandates the fulfillment of children’s right to survival, development, protection and participation as foundation of human development and for faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth.28 Achievements Over a period of time child specific legislations, policies and programmes have developed the concept of childhood and child welfare from a non-entity to an important entity in the society. The achievements in the field of child welfare under various parameters are as follows: i. Infant Mortality Rate Figure no. 1
provides information about the IMR in India since 1971. It was 140 in the year 1975 and has been decreased steadily over a period of time to 42 in 2012. There are “wide variations within the country states like Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh have always had IMR much higher than the national average, whereas states like Goa, Mizoram, Kerala and Manipur have least IMR.

4.7 Schemes for Health and Nutrition

It is a commonplace knowledge that the basic issues that lay at the core of any efforts for the welfare of the child relate to the schemes of health and nutrition. Though there has always been a subtle understanding in the circles of policy makers and planners that the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare revolve primarily around the subjects of health and nutrition, there has not been much concerted and focused efforts on the part of these people to make sure that the children along with the women are provided with the sufficient level of health care and adequate amount of nutrition. As a matter of fact, it was only after the setting up of the millennium development goals that the concerted efforts were initiated for the provision of the health and nutrition of the children and their mother. Before that the discourse of child welfare remained confined to the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare. Though the rights based approach for the welfare of the child has its own advantages, it could surely not provide much scope for the factoring of the issues like health and nutrition. But the highlighting of the issues of stunted growth of the children brought out by a number of studies compelled the government to reorient its strategy and make health and nutrition as the mainstay of the child welfare in the country.29

The schemes for the provision of the health and nutrition for the child in the country is implemented through two parallel sets of programmes. At the outset, the flagship programme through which the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare including the provisions of the health and nutrition are administered has been the integrated child development services scheme that has now been implemented in all parts of the country with hundred percent coverage of both the geographical areas as well as the children all across the country. This scheme has no doubt been able to bring about miracles in the spheres of
the provision of health and nutrition of both the mother as well as the children. In fact, this is the unique selling point of the scheme that it has tried to integrate the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare with special emphasis on the health and nutrition through the integration of the health of the pregnant woman, lactating mother as well as the child. Thus, the health and nutritional needs of the child has been sought to be addressed from the very beginning as the mothers are considered as the basic source for the food and nutrition of the child from the time of its conception till the child starts feeding on the external supports available from outside.

The other approach to the securing of the food and nutrition of the children has been through the set of segregated schemes, plans and programmes that aim at fulfilling one particular needs of the child. Such schemes or programmes are generally initiated keeping in view one or the other typical challenge that has been found to have been plaguing the general health of the children or for which a global campaign has been launched as part of the international pursuit to eradicate the particular disease or the problem. For instance, the vigorous pursuance of the pulse polio programme in the country has been one of the specific programmes initiated at the insistence of the international as well as the national child rights activists who argued for the eradication of the polio from the lexicon of health and diseases in the country with the support of all the major stake holders. In other words, the issues and challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of the children and their welfare has been sought to be addressed through the segmented approach aimed at tackling one problem at a time by evolving concerted measures for the same. Though such an approach seem to be segmental and lacking integration with the other issues and challenges, the results of even this approach has been found to be quite encouraging in the country as has been exemplified by the eradication of the deadly polio virus that had been crippling the life and livelihoods of a lot of children in the country.

As part of the segmental approach to the health and nutrition of the children, a number of important schemes and programmes have been initiated over the period of time. The basic nature of these schemes has been such that the components of health and nutrition had been added to these schemes whose main focus has been something else. For instance, the scheme called the Prime Minister Gramodaya Yojana has a distinct
component for the health and nutrition of the children in the rural areas of the country that has been playing the major role in detecting and addressing the health and nutritional issues of the children. Further, the national nutritional programme for the adolescent girls has also been initiated as a major scheme to address the developmental needs of the girls that are on the verge of gaining puberty and likely to experience a number of health and nutritional issues. Another important scheme that has significant bearing on the health and nutritional issues of the children in the country has been the national rural health mission implemented under the auspices of the ministry of the health and family welfare. Further, in the present times, a number of other scheme such as the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Indradhanusha universal vaccination scheme as well as the other schemes of the government are also aimed at providing critical inputs to the issues of health and nutritional needs of the children in different parts of the country.

4.8 Policy on Education for Children

The destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms. This is how the Education Commission described the role of education in social and economic transformation of India. While the development planners rightly recognized that expansion of educational facilities has to be accompanied with significant improvements in quality and relevance of education at all levels, the outcome is quite disappointing. At the international level, the development experience in social sectors shows that a literate society has enormous gains over an illiterate society and no illiterate society has ever been able to modernize and progress. We are now transiting to a knowledge society where the quality and relevance of education would play a crucial role in economic development. Poor quality of teaching learning and systemic level inefficiencies affect the learners as well the society in many ways. The long-term implications include lower productivity levels of the perspective workforce, resistance to modernization and perpetuation of inefficient production systems where cost benefit ratio adversely affect the economic sustainability of production processes. India gained full political independence in 1947. The literacy rate at this time was around 16%. Since then access to education has grown significantly. This research explores the policies for educational access and the politics that have surrounded them, with a particular focus
on elementary education, currently the first eight years of education, split into primary (1-5) and upper primary (6-8).\textsuperscript{30}

Major policy initiatives in Indian education are numerous. Up until 1976, education policies and implementation were determined legally by each of India’s constitutional states. The 42nd amendment to the constitution in 1976 made education a ‘concurrent subject’. From this point on the central and state governments shared formal responsibility for funding and administration of education. In a country as large as India, now with 28 states and seven union territories, this means that the potential for variations between states in the policies, plans, programs and initiatives for elementary education is vast. Periodically, national policy frameworks are created to guide states in their creation of state-level programmes and policies.

Ideas about and policies for state-supported elementary education can be traced far back in India’s history. In the British colonial period the Education Dispatch of Charles Wood in 1854 recognized the responsibility of government for elementary education in the vernacular medium. Wood’s dispatch had most impact on secondary and higher education, reaffirming what Macaulay had recommended some twenty years earlier: that education beyond Grade 6 primary be delivered through the medium of English, be oriented to Western science and literature and produce a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. Despite the commitment on paper to vernacular medium elementary education colonial government policy in practice concentrated on the urbanized, upper and middle classes. The professional classes who belonged to certain higher castes among the Hindus, were more than eager to get English education for themselves to enable them to get comfortable jobs, but showed little enthusiasm for spreading education to the masses. In any case the idea that government had a responsibility to provide mass education was far from the top of policy agendas for education in most countries of the world at that time, not least in Britain.

Nonetheless, the Education Commission of 1882 promoted the role of government responsibility for education and in 1911 an Elementary Education Bill - Gokhale’s Bill - was introduced to establish compulsory elementary education as a state responsibility. The Bill included provisions for banning the child labour of boys, the enforcement of school attendance and fee exclusions for parents with a monthly
income of less than Rs.10. The Bill met with significant resistance from many quarters, including several Maharajas and other ‘prosperous Indians’, fearful that it would interfere with the employment of children on the land. It was defeated in the Imperial Assembly. After independence, industrial development was a key element of Nehru’s vision and contrasted markedly with Gandhi’s concept of development rooted in villages and local and sustainable technology. Drawing from Soviet experience, a Planning Commission was established in 1950 to oversee the development of Five Year Development Plans that embraced programs and funding for economic and social objectives, including education. These plans combined submissions from the states with national priorities. Subsequently the states developed annual plans based on the plans. Expansion of a Western style education was central to Nehru’s vision of industrial development within a socialist, planned economy and society. The Constitution established the shape of the post-Independence combined democratic system of India. Article 45 promised free and compulsory education for all till the child attains the age of fourteen years within a period of ten years. Ten years was much shorter than the 40 years proposed by the British Government in 1944 in a plan drawn up by the Central Advisory Board of Education and known popularly as the Sergeant Plan, and shorter too than the sixteen years proposed subsequently by the Kher Committee.  

Post independence education policies were generated via commissions on the one hand and the plans on the other. The first education commission was established in 1948 shortly after independence to examine the development of university education. It became known by the name is its chair, Radhakrishnan. A second commission was established in 1952 to consider the development of secondary education. It too became known by the name of its chair, Professor Mudaliyar. It would be a further twelve years before the Kothari commission was established to review primary education comprehensively including the consideration of the needs of mass. Plans for mass education were incorporated into the plans. These plans set out economic priorities and growth targets alongside programs and targets for other sectors, including education, regarded as a ‘social service’. The states played a very important role in the development of these plans through the setting of five year state targets and funding mechanisms and the creation of detailed annual plans. Between 1950 and 1976
education was a ‘state subject’ managed exclusively at the state level, though some funding was provided centrally.

The first plan focused almost solely on the creation of more schools as a means to assure universal provision, and this remained the key preoccupation of policy makers throughout the 1950s. By the mid 1960s, primary school provision was supplemented by alternative schooling arrangements for working children and those who had already dropped out of the formal system, and by adult education programs. A series of national reviews in the early 1960s revealed that the opening of more schools and programs had not ameliorated high drop-out and repetition rates. As a result, a number of other measures, including a ‘no detention’ policy and various incentive schemes, were put into place. Still, the implementation of these policies was inhibited by the general level of poverty across the country and varied greatly as a result of the diverse, and highly unequal, economic and social circumstances of individual states.

In any case universal elementary education sat uncomfortably within the overall national development plan oriented towards industrial development and modern technology. Mass education was not easily integrated into an industrial development model and was viewed as a social service or as consumption rather than as an investment. “There was a tension between education’s role in building human capital for industrial development and its role in social transformation through contributing to the declared values of democracy, national unity and equality. Although each successive plans speaks of the importance of achieving universal elementary education, the financial allocation patterns ‘cast doubt on the political will to spend enough money on elementary education.’ With respect to that part of total expenditure contributed by plan allocations record that between the First and the Sixth Five Year Plans, plan allocations to elementary education as a percentage of total plan outlay declined from 7.86% to 2.58%, rising to 3.55% in the seventh plan period.

In contrast with the 1948 and 1952 commissions on the university and secondary education sectors respectively, the 1964 commission was charged with examining education comprehensively across primary, secondary and tertiary and with proposing a national system of education. The chairman of the commission was Dr. D. S. Kothari, a physicist from Delhi University. Of the sixteen commission members all were education experts, including five foreigners from France, Japan, Soviet Russia,
the UK and the USA. Essentially this was an expert committee, with the technical expertise of the majority of members lying in higher education, especially in science and technology. The commission travelled and consulted widely, held conferences, interviewed 900 persons and received letters and memoranda from 2,400 individuals and groups. Twelve task forces and seven working groups laboured for two years and reported in June 1966.

The commission had been established during Shastri’s Congress government and continued its work under Indira Gandhi who became Prime minister on Shastri’s death in 1966. Gandhi was Nehru’s daughter and no relation to Mahatma Gandhi. The tenure in the cabinets of both Shastri and Indira Gandhi of M. C. Chagla as Education minister ensured a degree of continuity of effort. The commission’s report was sent to the Vice Chancellor’s Conference, the Central Advisory Board of Education and members of both Houses of Parliament as well as to state governments. The announcement of elections in early 1967 delayed the consultation processes. Unemployment, economic stagnation and a shortage of food were beginning to compromise the popularity of the Congress Party and although it was re-elected in March 1967, their majority was much reduced. The new Minster of Education, Dr. Triguna Sen, the Rector of Jadavpur University, was already a member of the NCE. Though dedicated to the implementation of the report’s recommendations through the creation of a national policy, Sen lacked political base; therefore he found it difficult to carry the state governments and others with him, particularly when he ceased to command the confidence of the Prime Minster. Undaunted, Sen proceeded to appoint a Committee of Members of Parliament, which represented all the different political parties.

Elementary education was viewed as contributing to agricultural modernisation. The English-speaking policy elites at that time were keen on propagating the US-inspired strategy of agricultural modernisation based on modern technologies. To the extent that elementary education attracted policy attention it was an education oriented to a scientific outlook in support of agricultural modernisation rather than basic education. In the meantime progress on implementing the 1968 National Policy on Education was slow. In 1971, the Second All India Educational Survey included a full counting of all habitations with schools irrespective of their population size. Based on the findings of
the survey, distance norms – requiring a school within one kilometre of each habitation with a population of 300 or more – were taken up by the national government which continues to be the guiding framework for expansion of the school system in the present day. Access to elementary education increased. Like predecessor reports and plans for education, the private school sector mushroomed, especially in metropolitan areas and at the upper secondary level. The establishment of upper secondary schools was followed by that of the federal elementary classes. These proved to be very popular among the middle classes and among those who could pay. From then on, but with two exceptions, the government school system began to cater to the children of the poorest in society. The exceptions were the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) funded centrally for the children of the armed forces and the civil servants, and the Narvodaya Vidyalayas introduced after the 1986 policy for talented students in rural areas.

A widely shared view is that education is meant for academics only and that politicians should keep their hands off it. When the Education Commission was appointed, M.C. Chagla boasted that it consisted only of academics and that he had not appointed a single politician on it. But this isolation makes educationists blind to many aspects of the educational reality which are basically political. On the other hand, politicians remain largely ignorant of basic educational problems because of this very isolation so that when they interfere in education - which they often do - they do more harm than good. In other words the educationists desire full political support without any political interference (which is their concept of autonomy); and politicians interfere too frequently with education (which is their concept of responsibility for the legislature) without committing themselves to provide any support.34

When Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980 she set about modernizing the economy and society and about changing education policy to enhance the role of technology. In this thinking she was assisted and influenced by her western and science-educated sons Rajiv and Sanjay, neither of whom held formal office at that time. How India could keep abreast of modern technology and how all people could share in social transformation through technology became their overriding concerns. While the majority of the nation’s children now had access to an elementary school, literacy rates were still very low.
The 1986 National Policy on Education is regarded by most education commentators to be the most important post independence education policy. It continues to underpin education in India to the present day. From its beginnings, the process of formulating the 1986 education policy attracted political will at the highest level. Rajiv Gandhi was internationally oriented, well aware of the technological changes going on in the world beyond India and wished to see India’s manpower compete on the international stage. Early in his period of office he changed the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, reflecting a broadening of the role of education.

While educational opportunities had certainly expanded, the conditions under which teaching and learning took place had not improved. The Fifth AIES revealed conditions of serious overcrowding (with as many as four or five classes operating simultaneously in either one or two classrooms) in almost two-thirds of government primary schools, and found that almost half of all children to enroll in primary school failed to complete the first five years of schooling. Points of tension in the formulation of the policy emerged between those who promoted higher education and those who promoted elementary education, and between those who promoted elementary education and the Navodaya Vidyalayas, schools for talented students. The NPE was structured around the themes of education for equality, educational re-organisation, technical and management education, reorienting the content and process of education, the teacher, management of education and resources and review. With respect to elementary education it gave greater attention on the need for improvements to school environments (including building conditions, and the availability of drinking water and toilet facilities for both girls and boys), instructional materials, and teacher training.

The NPE called for a child-centered approach and the establishment of minimum levels of learning - an agreed set of learning outcomes and competencies for each grade level – in an effort to encourage both equity and quality in primary teaching and learning. The policy called for the removal of disparities in education and programs for the education of girls and women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other educationally ‘backward’ sections and areas, minorities, the handicapped and adult education and for de-centralization of education management to District Boards of Education and local communities. The policy called for the creation of a legal framework for regulating and improving the standards of teacher education through the
formation of a National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). Hitherto the training of teachers was in the hands of the private sector and had left much to be desired. With respect to elementary education, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) were to be established to organise pre and in-service training for elementary teachers.

The draft policy was submitted to CABE and NDC. They accepted its content and recommended an enhancement of plans for implementation. The policy text needed to be accompanied by a detailed Programme of Action in order to spell out recommended actions in more detail. In the early years of implementation there was high level political will from the centre. But implementation of the 1986 policy was slow. The main bottlenecks lay in the lack of political will in the states and in the administrative service. Resistance to the implementation of the reforms was neither active nor visible. From the perspective of central government, they did not really encounter any opposition as such to what they set out to do. But people would not oppose anything that you say or anything that you do, but would still ensure that none of that happens.

Inevitably there were differences between the states in the degree of policy implementation. The states that adopted the reforms most enthusiastically were those that had valued and provided education in the past such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. These were also the states that were industrializing rapidly and required education personnel. The 1986 policy comprised many elements, only some of which were evaluated systematically. The component of the 1986 policy that came to be known as the Operation Blackboard (OB) scheme has been well documented in a case study of its implementation in 30 schools in the Baroda district of Gujarat. Although there is an overarching, unifying policy intention of moving towards UEE, there was dissent among key stakeholders as to what the route to achieve this should be, and to who should set the direction and pace of change – a political subtext.

The OB scheme had three main input components – rooms, teachers and teaching-learning equipment. Single room schools were to be provided with an extra classroom to provide more learning space for children and separated teaching space for teachers. While the policy intention was sound, not all stakeholders, especially state-level officials, shared the intention. State-level officials were faced with limited resources and extra classrooms were not always a priority. The policy included a comprehensive programme of pre service and in-service training as well as an orientation programme.
for all teachers from Class 1 to Class 12. The scale of the training was enormous - half a million teachers were being trained each year on the same day(s) of the year. Initially this training was of a rather general nature and over time a second ‘special orientation’ programme, intended to give stronger orientation to classroom dynamics, was introduced. Four hundred District Institutes of Education and Training were established in each of India’s 400 districts to conduct training.

As the 1986 policy and OB were being implemented across the country, support for the incumbent government was waning. Rajiv Gandhi lost the elections in 1989 to a coalition government led by V P Singh. The new government appointed a committee to review the 1986 policy in 1990, one year earlier than was required by the regular policy review process. The urgency reflected the nature of the coalition in power, which had the support of backward and minority communities and had on its agenda a contentious reservation policy recommended by the Mandal Commission. The 1990 review committee was chaired by Acharya Ramamurti, an associate of J.P. Narayan whom, as we saw earlier, had opposed Indira Gandhi in the mid 1970s. The member-secretary was an additional secretary in the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The majority of members had links with higher education. Three were connected with non-governmental organizations that were running schools. Mathur explains how the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi re-surfaced in the policy discourse, repeating the tension in the late 1970s.

Subsequently the Adiseshiah Committee was established and reported in April/May 1992. A slightly revised National Policy on Education was produced in 1992, giving similar emphasis to the need to provide quality education to all sectors of Indian society in order to decrease social and economic inequality, and to provide adequate school facilities and improved learning environments. The 1992 National Policy is regarded by most as a minor extension of the 1986 policy and indeed is titled ‘National Policy of Education 1986 with modifications undertaken in 1992. There has been no revision to the 1992 policy since then and it remains the cornerstone of the current education policy of the government. The struggle for the right of the children for free and compulsory education finally fructified in 2009 when the parliament the enacted a law to make it a fundamental right.
4.9 Conclusion

The issues of the child welfare have indeed been recognised as the important part of the government policy right since the days of the independence. But due to various social and economic reasons, the making of a dedicated policy for the welfare of the children could not become the priority of the government. However, in the successive five year plans as well as through other broader policies such as for education and health, the government remained conscious of the need for the issues and challenges facing the development of the children in the country. After much delay and procrastination, the government finally came out with the first national policy for the children in the country in 1974 that sought to provide a holistic perspective on the issues and challenges facing the protection and promotion of the rights of the child along with the need for evolution appropriate policies, schemes, policies and programmes for the welfare of the child. Though the policy could not provide a fine tune perspective of the child rights as well as child welfare in the country, it surely tried to bring the issues of the child welfare on the centre stage of the developmental discourse in the country.

In the present times, the crux of the welfare policies relating to the protection and promotion of the rights of the children along with their welfare relate to the different aspects of the needs and requirements of the child. Thus, the policy perspective on the children in the country has been provided through two parallel streams. First, there have been a number of dedicated policies, plans, programmes as well as scheme for the welfare of the children that have now been implemented at the all India basis through the financial support of the centre as well as by the resources of the state governments. Along with that, a number of the vital aspects of the life and physique of the children are also being taken care of through the creation of a sub component in such policies for the children in such a way that these policies and programmes help in the realisation of the dream of making the children of the country hale and hearty along with guaranteeing for them the basic needs and requirements of their life primarily in term of the health and nutritional support through the ICDS. Thus, India can now be recognised as one of the important countries in the world that had indeed able to evolve over the years a concerted and coordinated policy framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of the children. These policies are now implemented on a
pan India basis in all part of the country. Though the implementation of these policies cannot be said to be satisfactory, they have surely been able to achieve some good results despite all sorts of constraints and difficulties in bringing about a turnaround in the fortune of the children in the country.
ENDNOTES

1 Vibha Sharma, 'Development of the Concept of Childhood and Child Welfare in India', in Vibha Sharma and Ashlie Brink (eds.), Childhood through the Looking Glass, Glasgow: Inter University Press, 2016, p. 81

2 Ibid


4 Ibid


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30 S. Pandey, 'An exploratory study on the apprehensions and implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009', *Journal of Dialogues on Education*, 2(2), 2013, p. 32


34 *Ibid*