



Fixing the Government Schools Issue

This editorial is based on [“Govt schools need urgent fixing”](#) which was published in the Hindu BusinessLine on 27/02/2023. It discusses the issue of Governments schools and ways to address it.

For Prelims: Mid-Day Meal, Self-Help Group, Panchayat, Integrated Child Development Services, New Education Policy 2022, ASHA, Nipun Bharat Mission, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

For Mains: Government Schools Issue, Education related issues, Government Policies & Interventions

According to the [Annual Status of Education Report 2022](#) report, government schools saw a sharp rise in enrolment for the first time in 16 years; basic literacy levels of children have taken a big hit, with their reading ability as compared to numeracy skills worsening much more sharply and dropping to pre-2012 levels.

Government schools in **many states are predominantly attended by children from vulnerable social groups**, where girls' education is often treated as a formality for marriage prospects. In addition to funding issues, **there is a need to improve governance in schools and renovate dilapidated facilities** due to [Covid-19](#) closures.

As ASER 2023 confirms, boys and girls of elementary school-going age have all come back to schools, but the current education system is failing them. However, it is possible to make learning attractive for children with little effort.

While a lot has been done to improve the schools on the supply side with [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan](#) and subsequent efforts, there is a **need for rejuvenating and re-imagining learning in schools**.

What are the Issues with the Functioning of Government Schools?

- **Poor Infrastructure:**
 - Many government schools lack basic facilities such as proper classrooms, clean drinking water, toilets, libraries, and playgrounds. This affects the overall quality of education provided to the students.
- **Lack of Trained Teachers:**
 - A significant number of government schools do not have well-trained and qualified teachers. This results in poor quality of teaching and a lack of enthusiasm among students.
- **Outdated Curriculum:**
 - The curriculum followed by many government schools is outdated and does not provide relevant skills required in the current job market. This results in a lack of employability among students.
- **Inadequate Funding:**

- Many government schools suffer from inadequate funding, which affects their ability to provide basic facilities and attract well-qualified teachers.
- **Lack of Accountability:**
 - There is often a lack of accountability among school administrators and teachers in government schools. This results in poor quality of education and a lack of motivation among students.
- **Poor Teacher-Student Ratio:**
 - The teacher-student ratio in government schools is often low, resulting in inadequate attention given to individual students.
 - According to a report, India has nearly 1.2 lakh schools with just one teacher each.
 - The [Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education \(RTE\) Act](#), 2009 in its Schedule lays down Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) for both primary and upper primary schools.
 - At primary level the PTR should be 30:1 and at the upper primary level it should be 35:1.

What are the Constitutional Provisions and Laws related to Education in India?

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - Part IV of Indian Constitution, **Article 45 and Article 39 (f) of Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**, has a provision for state-funded as well as equitable and accessible education.
 - The **42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1976** moved education from the State to the Concurrent List.
 - The education policies by the Central government provides a broad direction and state governments are expected to follow it. But it is not mandatory, for instance Tamil Nadu does not follow the three-language formula prescribed by the first education policy in 1968.
 - The **86th Amendment in 2002** made education an enforceable right under Article 21-A.
 - **Article 21A** of the Constitution makes it obligatory on the State to provide free and compulsory education to children between the age of 6 and 14 years.
- **Related Laws:**
 - [Right To Education \(RTE\) Act, 2009](#) aims to provide primary education to all children aged 6 to 14 years and enforces education as a Fundamental Right.
 - It also **mandates 25% reservation for disadvantaged sections** of the society.
- **Government Initiatives:**
 - [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan](#), [Mid Day Meal Scheme](#), [National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning](#), [PRAGYATA](#), [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao](#), [PM SHRI Schools](#)

What should be the Way Forward?

- **Making Local Government Responsible with Funds:**
 - Local governments and women's collectives **should be given the responsibility for elementary schools with funds and functionaries.**
 - They must be **authorised to fill any vacancy by rationalisation or recruiting a community volunteer** who has cleared the Teacher Eligibility Test.
 - The devolved funds should be sufficient to meet the needs for basic learning and support. The school should become a community institution rather than be a government entity, which **can draw on voluntarism/donations and get the support of gadgets** to ensure healthy learning outcomes.
- **Training Teachers:**
 - All teachers and teacher educators (block and cluster coordinators, State/District resource persons) **should be trained in the use of gadgets and course material** that can facilitate learning.
 - Every classroom **must have a large TV and a good sound system to provide online**

Lessons that supplement what is taught in class.

▪ **Utilising SHGs:**

- The **Mid-Day Meal** responsibility must be handed over to the village level **Self-Help Group (SHG)** of women.
- The **Panchayat and School Management Committee** shall be the supervisors of the SHG.
- Teachers should not have any role in the Mid-Day Meal scheme, except teaching.

▪ **Developing Public Libraries:**

- Public libraries **should be developed where youths in the village can study and prepare for jobs and admissions** to good institutions.
- Such community institutions attract volunteers.
 - **Karnataka has done outstanding work on strengthening its public libraries** and this has gains for school learning outcomes as well.

▪ **Using Innovating Methods:**

- Sound boxes, video films, play-way learning items, indoor and outdoor sports, cultural activities for learning on a scale can be used.
- With support from **Integrated Child Development Services**, **toys-based learning in early childhood can be started.**
 - The **New Education Policy 2022** mandates a continuum from ages 3 to 8 to ensure this important early beginning in life.

▪ **Healthcare Management:**

- The **school leadership should take responsibility for the nutrition challenge** as too many committees can weaken concerted efforts.
- It is important to assign accountability for the well-being of children to field functionaries such as Aanganwadi Sevikas, **Ashas**, **Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMS)**, and Panchayat Secretaries.
- **Collaborating with the local government is crucial for effective healthcare management** and to make a positive impact.

▪ **Promoting Community Campaigns:**

- There **should be community campaigns and regular school level interactions with parents.**
- Teachers must build a relationship with every household to ensure children's care and learning.
- The **Nipun Bharat Mission** to ensure oral and written literacy and numeracy, should become a people's movement like the Total Literacy Campaign.

Drishti Mains Question

Analyse the challenges faced by government schools in providing quality education to students and suggest measures to improve the effectiveness of the public education system in India.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following provisions of the Constitution does India have a bearing on Education? (2012)

1. Directive Principles of State Policy
2. Rural and Urban Local Bodies
3. Fifth Schedule
4. Sixth Schedule
5. Seventh Schedule

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3, 4 and 5 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans:(d)

Mains

Q1. How have digital initiatives in India contributed to the functioning of the education system in the country? Elaborate on your answer. **(2020)**

Q2. Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. **(2021)**

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