



STARS Programme: World Bank

Why in News

Recently, the [World Bank](#) has approved the **Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) Programme**.

- It will improve the quality and governance of school education in six Indian states of **Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan** through the [Samagra Shiksha](#).

Key Points

- **Expected Beneficiaries:** Around 250 million students (between the **age of 6 and 17**) in 1.5 million schools and over 10 million teachers will benefit from this **USD 500 million** programme.
- **In Line with Previous Assistance:** It will strengthen public school education and support the **country's goal of providing 'Education for All'**, for which the Bank had provided total assistance of more than USD 3 billion prior to this plan as well.
- **Objectives:** STARS will **help improve** learning assessment systems, strengthen classroom instruction and remediation, facilitate school-to-work transition and strengthen governance and decentralized management.
- STARS will **support India's renewed focus on addressing the learning outcome challenge** and help students better prepare for the jobs of the future, through a **series of reform initiatives**, which include:
 - **Providing Customised Solutions:**
 - Focusing more directly on the delivery of education services at the state, district and sub-district levels by providing customized local-level solutions towards school improvement.
 - **Addressing Specific Demands:**
 - Addressing demands from stakeholders, especially parents, for greater accountability and inclusion by producing better data to assess the quality of learning.
 - Giving special attention to students from vulnerable sections, with over 52% (as a weighted average) of children in the government-run schools in the six project states belonging to vulnerable sections, such as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and minority communities.
 - Delivering a curriculum that keeps pace with the rapidly evolving needs of the job market.
 - **Equipping Teachers:**
 - Equipping teachers to manage this transformation by recognizing that teachers are central to achieving better learning outcomes.
 - **More Investments:**
 - Investing more in developing India's human capital needs by strengthening

foundational learning for children in classes 1 to 3 and preparing them with the cognitive, socio-behavioural and language skills to meet future labour market needs.

- **SDGs:** It is in line with the [Sustainable Development Goal for education \(SDG 4\)](#) and will help produce better data on learning levels by improving the **National Achievement Survey (NAS)**.
- **PISA:** STARS will assist India in participation in the **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**.
 - PISA is a **worldwide study** by the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#) (OECD) in member and non-member nations.
 - It measures **15-year-olds' ability** to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

Success Stories

- India has **successfully achieved gender parity in enrolment in primary education** but that is **not the case in secondary education**. Under STARS, each state is expected to not only stabilize this downward trend but also improve the completion rate for secondary education.
- India has **significantly improved access to education** across the country.
 - **Between 2004-05 and 2018-19**, the number of children going to school increased **from 219 million to 248 million**.
 - However, the **learning outcomes** of students across all age groups continue to **remain below par**.

Challenges

- **Fails to Address Capacity Issues:**
 - Major **vacancies** across the education system **remain unaddressed**.
 - **Without capable and motivated faculty**, teacher education and training cannot be expected to improve.
- **Ignoring Decentralisation:**
 - The World Bank ignores that **decentralising** decision-making **requires the devolution of funds and real decision-making power**.
 - It **requires** not just **investment** in the capacity of the front-line bureaucracy but also in **increasing their discretionary powers** while fostering social accountability.
- **Excessive use of [Information and Communications Technology](#):**
 - **Technology does not address** most of the **systemic or governance challenges** but it simply by-passes them.
 - Its usefulness depends on whether preconditions for effective use of ICT-systems have been put in place otherwise it only worsens the problems.
- **Over-reliance on measurement by standardised assessments:**
 - The programme **spends money on testing infrastructure for standardised assessments** which is a waste of time and resources.
 - Schools in India need improvement so the money **should be invested in improving the capability** of the system to improve learning.
- **Outsourcing:**
 - Outsourcing to non-state partners not just **takes away discretion** from state actors but also takes away the **sense of accountability and ownership** towards their job.
 - **New private initiatives do not have institutional memories**, nor do they have a **grasp of socio-cultural realities** that play an important part in the delivery process.
 - State structures rely on past experience (institutional memory) to meet new

challenges and build additional memories with every new reform they undertake.

Way Forward

- The administration must be **equipped with adequate physical, financial and human resources** because an overburdened bureaucracy with vacancies and without basic equipment cannot be expected to be effective.
- Administrative or governance reforms **must give greater discretion to the front-line bureaucracy** to address local issues and innovate if required.
- Outsourcing, an over-reliance on measurement by standardised assessments and excessive use of ICT will not get people closer to an **Atmanirbhar Bharat**. For that, the education system needs to **enable itself to develop capability to reform itself**.

Source: TH

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