



## 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- **Outdated Curriculum:**
  - The curriculum followed by many government schools is outdated and does not provide relevant skills required in the current job market.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 **42<sup>nd</sup> 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 **86<sup>th</sup> 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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