

# State of School Education in India [UPSC Notes for GSI]

## State of School Education in India

### Context

- The Annual State of Education Report (ASER by Pratham) released recently gives the overall trends in education in India in addition to the lacunas in the education system.
- National Education Policy has also stirred a debate about the direction that education in India needs to take.

### Problems faced by the Indian school system

- India's spending on education as a percentage of GDP is 3.8% as per World Bank. This is inadequate to meet the educational needs of the largest school-going population in the world.
- The quality of teachers is also a serious concern. India also lacks high-quality Teacher-training infrastructure.
- Teacher absenteeism is also a chronic problem that affects education in India.
- Even though many schemes regarding the improvement of school infrastructure are being implemented, it is still inadequate.
- The Right to Education (RTE) Act has improved enrolment in many places. But the quality of education is still a concern.
- Mid-day meal scheme is being implemented across the country to improve student retention. But the quality of meals served has been a cause for constant concern.

### ASER Report - Major findings

- The proportion of children (ages 6-14) who are not enrolled in school has fallen below 3% for the first time and stands at 2.8% in 2018.
- The overall proportion of girls in the 11 to 14 age group out of school has fallen to 4.1%. This figure is more than 5% in only 4 states.
- Further, ten years ago in 2008, nationally, more than 20% of girls in the 15 to 16 age group were not enrolled in school. In 2018, this figure has decreased to 13.5%. The difference between the number of girls and boys enrolled in schools has also come down.
- The percentage of children (age 6-14) enrolled in private school was 30.6% in 2016 and is almost unchanged at 30.9% in 2018. Additionally, there has been a decrease in private school enrolment in many states.
- Nationally, in 2018, 4 out of 10 government primary schools visited had less than 60 students enrolled. This number has increased every year over the last decade. It was 26.1% in 2009, 30% in 2011, 33.1% in 2013, 39.8% in 2016, and stands at 43.3% in 2018.
- At the all India level, no major change is seen in students' and teachers' attendance. Nationally, substantial improvements are visible over this 8-year period (2010-2018) in the availability of many school facilities mandated by RTE. The fraction of schools with usable girls' toilets doubled, reaching 66.4% in 2018. The proportion of schools with boundary walls increased by 13.4 percentage points, standing at 64.4% in 2018. The percentage of schools with a kitchen shed increased from 82.1% to 91%, and the proportion of schools with books other than textbooks available increased from 62.6% to 74.2% over the same period. However, stark differences exist between states.
- Slightly more than half (50.3%) of all children enrolled in Std V can read at least a Std II level text.
- Even though many states have shown improvement in the arithmetic skills of students, the overall national metric has not shown a significant rise.
- For the age group 14 to 16, the all India figure for the proportion of girls who can read at least an Std II level text is very similar to that of boys.
- In basic arithmetic, boys seem to hold a substantial advantage. Nationally, 50% of all boys in the age group 14 to 16 can correctly solve a division problem as compared to 44% of all girls.
- There is an increase in enrolments in private schools. Students of private schools fare relatively

better in performance. However, this is a relative phenomenon and in absolute terms students of private schools also face the same learning challenges as in public schools.

### Way Forward

- Government spending on education as a whole (not just school education) should be increased to at least 6 percent of GDP by 2022 from the present 3%. According to the World Bank, the world average is 4.7%.
- State governments should develop and formulate robust mechanisms to enforce regulations on teacher qualifications, teacher absenteeism, and learning outcomes.
- Small schools, especially in sparsely populated regions must be given transport facilities.
- Greater emphasis should be put on continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) to achieve the defined learning outcome. Remedial classes, if and when necessary, should be put in place in a timely and effective manner.
- Flexibility in education - Courses with fixed credits must be introduced with a set minimum credits to be earned to appear for the final examination. This will encourage students to learn subjects based on their interests.
- Students with an advanced aptitude in certain subjects must be mentored separately to nurture their talent.
- Design guidelines for states to implement vocational education at the school level. Additionally, the syllabus of vocational education must be updated regularly after consultations with all stakeholders.
- Life skills, including coping with failure/crises and stress management, should be included as part of the school curriculum. Easy and safe access to mental health support should be strengthened.

### Draft National Education Policy, 2019

#### Key observations and recommendations of the draft Policy include:

1. Early Childhood Care and Education: the draft Policy recommends developing a two-part curriculum for early childhood care and education. This will consist of: (i) guidelines for up to three-year-old children (for parents and teachers), and (ii) educational framework for three to eight-year-old children. This would be implemented by improving and expanding the anganwadi system and colocating anganwadis with primary schools.
2. The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act): It recommends extending the ambit of the RTE Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education.
3. Curriculum framework: The current structure of school education must be restructured on the basis of the development needs of students. It suggests that the curriculum load in every subject should be reduced to its essential core content. This would make space for holistic, discussion and analysis-based learning.
4. Teacher management: For teacher training, the existing B.Ed. programme will be replaced by a four-year integrated B.Ed. program that combines high-quality content, pedagogy, and practical training. For all the subjects, an integrated and continuous professional development will also be developed. Teachers will be required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of continuous professional development training every year.
5. The draft Policy recommends establishing a National Research Foundation, an autonomous body, for the purpose of funding and mentoring, and also creating the capacity for quality research in India.
6. Education Governance: It recommends creation of a National Education Commission or Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog, as an apex body for education, This body would be headed by the PM. This body will be responsible for developing, executing, assessing, and revising the vision of education in the country on a continuous and sustained basis. It will oversee the implementation and functioning of several bodies.
7. Vocational Education: It recommends integrating vocational educational programmes in all educational institutions (schools, colleges and universities) in a phased manner over a period of 10 years.
8. Education and Indian Languages: it recommended that the medium of instruction must either be the mother tongue/home language/local language upto standard five, and preferable till standard eight,

wherever possible. It recommended that this 3-language formula be continued with flexibility in the implementation of the formula.

