

Access to Education

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Capacity in the existing institutions should also be increased, wherever there is demand. An innovation in higher education needs to be encouraged and curriculum review should be conducted to ensure that the students in Higher Education Institutes are ready for the job market or self-employment. Creating a network of institutions will help addressing problem of lack of experienced faculty.

Research in the area of higher education needs to be encouraged and financed by the government and private sector

Historical evidences show that in India, education was a privilege and was only accessible to people who belong to upper class and caste and was not accessible to the masses. The educational content was largely religious coupled with elitist medium of instruction making education more inaccessible to society at large. This monotony broke during India's struggle for freedom when demand for state sponsored Free and Compulsory Education was placed before Hunter Commission in 1882. In 1911, a Bill was moved for compulsory education in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, albeit unsuccessfully, and in the midst of stiff resistance. The demand was reiterated in 1937, at the All India National Conference on Education where the idea of self-supporting 'basic education' for a period of seven years through vocational and manual training was proposed. This concept of self-support was floated in order to counter the Government's persistent excuse of lack of resources. The next landmark development in the history of Free and Compulsory Education (FCE) in India was the Post War Plan of Education Development of 1944, also called the Sargent Plan¹, which recommended FCE for eight years (six to fourteen years' age group).

Thereafter in 1968, the National

Policy on Education (NPE), was formed which was the first official document evidencing the Indian Government's commitment towards school education. The NPE went through a couple of amendments thereafter. A key milestone in history of achieving access to education was 86th Constitutional Amendment Act passed in December 2002 making free and compulsory education a Fundamental Right for all the children in the age group of 6-14 years. Article 21-A of the Constitution of India and its consequent legislation, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which became operative in the country on 1 April 2010, makes it incumbent on Government to provide free and compulsory education to children of 6 to 14 years of age².

Not undermining the contribution of the State Governments, education being on concurrent list, Government of India also initiated several schemes/programmes to improve access to quality education. Following is a list of key programmes/schemes which Central Government started during the last two decades .e:1991 (when Globalisation began) or so.

- Operation Black Board (OBB)
- Lok Jumbish Project
- Strengthening of Teacher Education
- Mahila Samakhya

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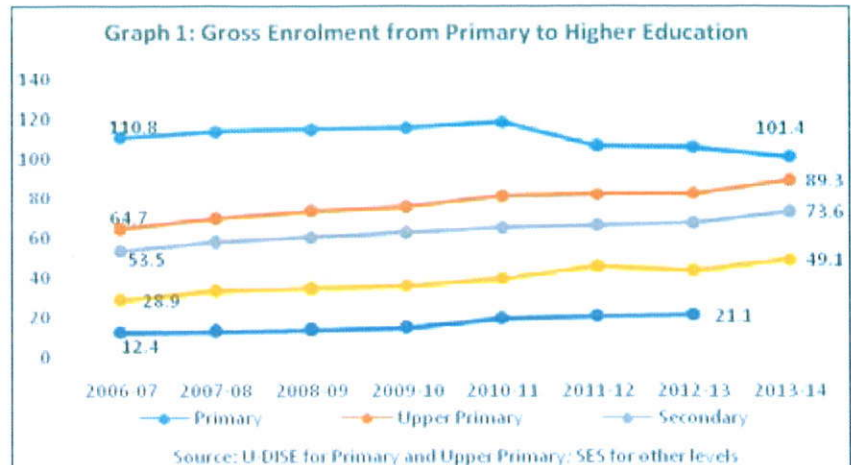
- Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS and AI)
- District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
- Model Schools
- Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDM)
- Scheme for Providing Quality Education for Madrasas (SPQEM)
- Infrastructure Development in Minority Institutions (IDMI)
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
- Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
- Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

Through the above mentioned programmes and schemes, significant progress has been achieved to provide “access to schooling facility”. However, “access to education” demands not merely physical access to a neighbourhood school within a notified distance, but also social access by providing basic facilities, adequate teachers and addressing exclusionary practices, especially those based on caste, gender, ethnicity and disability.

Access and Participation

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)

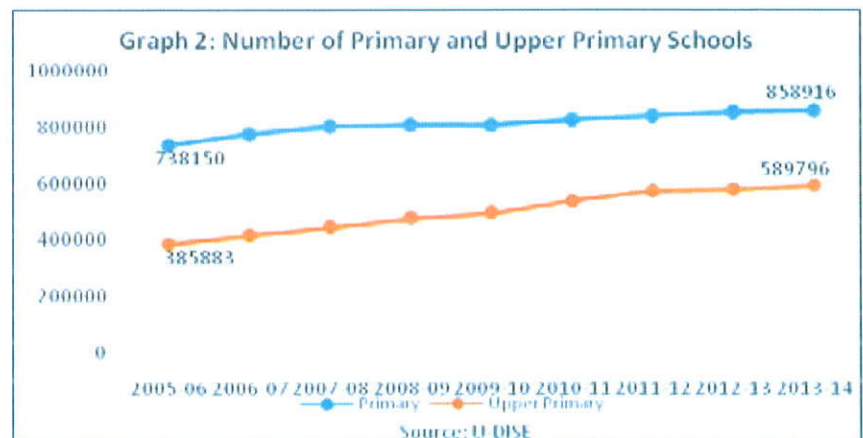
One of the proxy, yet most useful, indicator for assessing the access to education is GER. It is defined as the percentage of the enrolment in classes under consideration to the estimated child population in the relevant age groups. Enrolment in these stages includes under-age and overage children. Hence, the total percentage may be more than 100 per cent in some cases. As evident through Graph 1, GER at Primary level is highest and decreases as we move up in the level of education. This clearly indicates large number of children dropping out of system before completing basic education and only one out of five children make it to the higher education. It is pertinent to mention that there are States where the GERs



are significantly lower than the national average and smaller pockets (District or Block) may be far lower GERs than the averages. Therefore, a detailed analysis with GERs by gender, social category and State/District will assist in identifying the special focus areas within States and Districts.

Elementary Level: SSA, during its more than a decade long investment has sanctioned hundreds of thousands of schools, which has resulted in significant increase in the number of primary and upper primary schools. In 2005-06, the country had 7,38,150 primary schools which increased by 59 per cent (8,58,916) in 2013-14. These schools were mostly sanctioned on the basis of the state specific norms for opening new schools in unserved habitations. The norms for primary was normally 1 Kilometer (km) and upper primary 3 Km. Access was nearly universalized at primary level (around 98 per cent as per MHRD reports) by

2010. While at upper primary level, there were still gaps. With the RTE Act coming into force, every child became entitled to having elementary education in a neighborhood school. This necessitated the requirement of defining neighborhood and providing new schools wherever required. Subsequently, States defined their neighborhood and new schools were provided according to the State RTE Rules. In cases where it was not possible or viable to open a school within the neighborhood e.g. small and scattered habitations, difficult terrain and unavailability of land etc. transport/escort facility work provided to children to enable them attend the near by school. Alternatively, residential facilities were also provided (mostly for children in the upper primary age group) to address issue of physical access. Residential facilities were also provided to facilitate access for children without adult protections living in urban areas.



Social access has come gradually into focus to address the issues of equity. Schools have been opened in areas that have concentration of marginalized communities like Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Muslims. The special scheme, called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) is implemented within the SSA to provide residential facility to dropped-out girls at upper primary level. Over 2500 KGBVs have been operational and the interventions has created enormous interest and demand. A substantial increase is observed in case of upper primary schools which were 3,85,883 in 2005-06, increased by almost 52 per cent (5,89,796) in 2013-14.

Secondary Level: Substantial progress has been achieved in terms of expansion of secondary schooling facilities. The major RMSA interventions that had a direct bearing on the expansion of schooling facilities and achieving the goal of universal access to secondary education include the following:

- Upgradation of existing schools and opening of new secondary schools: Since the commencement of the RMSA, a total of 11,599 new secondary schools were sanctioned. Of these, 10,082 (86.9 percent) schools have been made functional, with a total enrolment of 972,000. New secondary schools have been sanctioned in 30 States/UTs. The States which had received approval for opening more than 1,000 schools included Jharkhand (1,000), Tamil Nadu (1,096), Bihar (1,153), Chhattisgarh (1,357), Madhya Pradesh (1,428), and Uttar Pradesh (1,504).
- Construction of additional classrooms in existing schools: Up to 2014-15, sanctions were issued for construction of a total of 52,715 additional classrooms. Out of these, a total of 20,839 additional classrooms have been constructed. Construction of 16,774 is in progress³.

Higher Education: As mentioned earlier, GER may be used as a proxy indicator to measure access. As evident in the Graph 1 above, higher education GER was 12.4 per cent in 2006-07 which substantially increased to 21.1 in the year 2012-13⁴. Twelfth five year plan of the higher education suggest the following for expansion of higher education⁵:

- Expand access by scaling up capacity in existing institutions rather than increasing the number of institutions, with the exception of new institutions needed to address critical regional and social gaps.
- Create a system of institutional differentiation and distinctiveness to cater to a diverse body of students and the varied needs of employers.

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- Use of transformative potential of new technologies to improve quality, reduce costs, improve processes and efficiency and reach a larger body of students, while promoting efficient and transparent governance and raising the quality of teaching and research.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE): At present, ECCE is the responsibility of Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD). However, in some states,

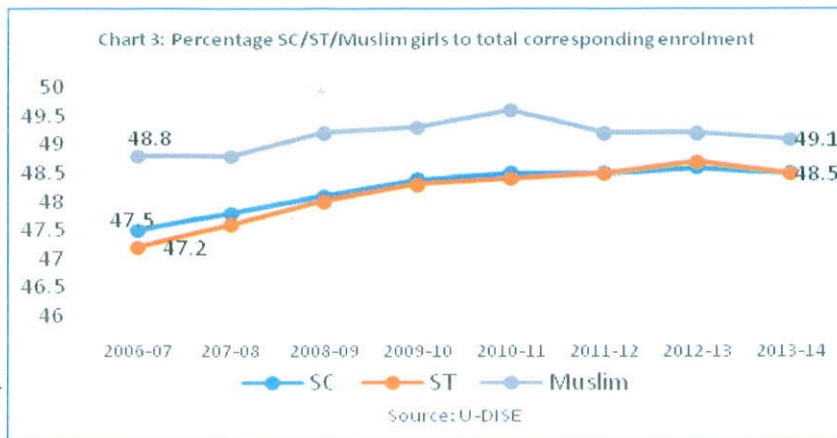
pre-school facility is being provided by Education Department by opening pre-primary wing in the primary schools. As per Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) data of 2013-14, about 49 per cent government primary schools have pre-primary or *Anganwadi* facility. Although number of schools having pre-primary facility is much smaller (one third) as compared to *Anganwadi* facility which is about two third of total facilities. It is noteworthy that U-DISE reports information only on those Pre-primary or *Anganwadis* facilities which are available within or adjacent to the primary school. In case, the pre-primary or *Anganwadi* facility is located outside (and not even adjacent) the primary school, but in the same habitation/village, it wouldn't be captured in the U-DISE data. The pre-primary and *Anganwadi* facilities in primary schools have been increasing year on year, for example, within primary schools where pre-primary facility was available in about 10.9 per cent and *Anganwadi* facility was available in about 29.3 per cent primary schools which increased to 15.8 per cent and 33.3 per cent in 2013-14 respectively.

Access & Enrolment of children belonging to disadvantaged communities and groups:

	per cent population share (Census 2001)	per cent enrolment share (DISE 2013-14)
SC	16 per cent	20 per cent
ST	8 per cent	11 per cent
Muslim	13 per cent	14 per cent

Source: U-DISE

The enrolment trends of socially marginalised groups indicate the improvement as far as equitable access to education is concerned. The DISE data for the year 2013-14 suggests that the percentage share in enrolment of SC, ST and Muslim children corresponds with their percentage



share in population. The details of percentage enrolment and population are given in Table 1.

Increase in the enrolment of girls was possible only with improvement in the enrolment of girls belonging to different social categories, particularly, SC, ST and Muslim⁶. Chart 3 presents the increase in enrolment of girls belonging to these social categories.

The share of SC, ST and Muslim students in enrolment corresponding to their share in enrolment does not mean that the marginalization of the communities does not pose a challenge to universal enrolment. Since SC and Muslims population have varying density at different places, therefore, despite a corresponding percentage share in enrolment many children belonging to these communities, still are out of school. Such a situation underlines the need for a greater focus on social access, equity and plurality besides quality improvement in the curricular and pedagogic practices.

Challenges:

Barriers to Access:

Majority of the out-of-school children belong to the disadvantaged communities: schedule castes, schedule tribes, Muslims, migrants, children with special needs, urban deprived children, working children, children in other difficult circumstances, for example, those living in difficult terrain, children from displaced families, and areas affected by civil strife. RTE Act casts

the responsibility of specifying and notifying the disadvantaged groups and weaker sections on the state governments. While discussing the issue of social access and equity, the tendency is to confine it to broad categories like SC, ST, Muslims, girls etc. One has to appreciate that even these are not homogenous groups. The social realities are far too complex and there are groups within these groups, which for different reasons are much more disadvantaged. In order to fully meet the goal of universal access the next phase of programme implementation will need to address barriers to access arising out of the following social and economic realities⁷:

Gender: Opportunity cost of girl's labour and early marriages continue to be serious challenges. This is aggravated by the fact of schools not being inclusive and safe spaces for girls. While schemes like KGBVs and NPEGEL have been successful, their reach has been limited in numbers. The larger education delivery system must respond to these barriers more effectively to retain the girls in the schooling system, after enrolment.

Caste: to address this barrier, intense micro planning at the SMC level is required. RTE Act has put in place a legal framework of prohibited and mandatory activities to deal with these barriers; nonetheless substantial work will have to be done at the stage of social and school mapping exercises at the village level. The change in mind sets of the education

delivery machinery about verbal references, assignment of work to children of different backgrounds and class room practices of equity is a serious challenge which teacher's training will have to address. The SSA Framework of Implementation has given an exhaustive list of exclusionary practices, and this will have to translate into actual behaviour patterns. Another challenge for this barrier would be setting up mechanisms of timely detection and quick redressal after the norms of behaviour are laid out.

Ethnicity and Language: varies from open discrimination to just differences in physical and cultural scenario between the school and home. Differences in school and home language can lead to children dropping out as the children do not understand and cannot participate in class room interaction. This can be an insurmountable barrier to access.

Disability: It is estimated that out of all CWSN, 34 per cent are out of school. The challenges for them are multiple - architectural barriers, inadequate provision of aids and appliances, resource support and curricular access.

Displacement: Displacement arising out of seasonal migration, natural calamities, civil strife etc. acutely affects children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections. Where displacement can be anticipated, for example through migration patterns, pre-emptive steps to establish seasonal hostels may be taken for schooling of children whose parents migrate during the social and school mapping exercise. Alternately, the receiving place may put them in Special Training with a view to future mainstreaming. The needs of children displaced on account of calamities - floods, earthquakes, civil strife etc. would need to be addressed in an appropriate manner.

Age: Over-age or never enrolled children face an access barrier arising from a sense of humiliation in sitting with younger children. The RTE Act provides for Special Training for these