

# School Education

## Introduction

Reforms in school education are pivotal for creating an edifice on which a knowledge society can be structured. While India has witnessed significant progress in school education, the goal of universal access to elementary education has yet not been achieved. There are also wide disparities in access to school education between states, rural and urban areas, gender as well as different economic classes. In addition, issues of quality such as teacher training, curriculum, pedagogy, school infrastructure and learning outcomes need to be addressed on an immediate basis. There is also an urgent need to increase the resource allocation to school education.

## Current Scenario

**Literacy:** According to the 2001 Census, the literacy rate in India was 64.8 per cent and as per the NSS 61st Round Survey Report, the literacy rate was 67.3 per cent during 2004-05. Further, the gender gap in literacy is estimated to be roughly 20 per cent.

**Schools:** The number of primary schools in the country increased from 6.64 lakh in 2001-02 to 7.7 lakh in

2005-06. In the same period, the number of upper primary schools increased at a faster rate from 2.20 lakh to 2.9 lakh.

**Table 4: Number of schools (in lakh) 2005-06**

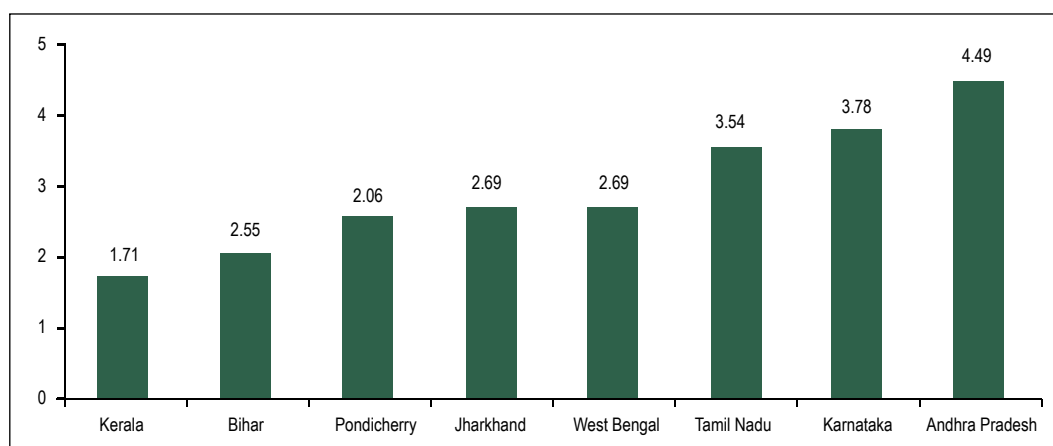
Primary	7.7
Upper primary	2.9
Secondary/Senior Secondary	1.6
Total	12.2

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2005-06, MHRD

**Enrolment:** The total enrolment at the primary stage has increased 7 times, from 19.2 million in 1950-51 to 130.8 million in 2004-05. In case of upper primary stage, it increased 17 times, from 3.1 million in 1950-51 to 51.2 million in 2004-05. The enrolment at the secondary/senior secondary increased by 25 times, from 1.5 million in 1950-51 to 37.1 million in 2004-05. However about 180 out of 581 districts in the DISE study (2004-05) reported a decline in primary enrolment.

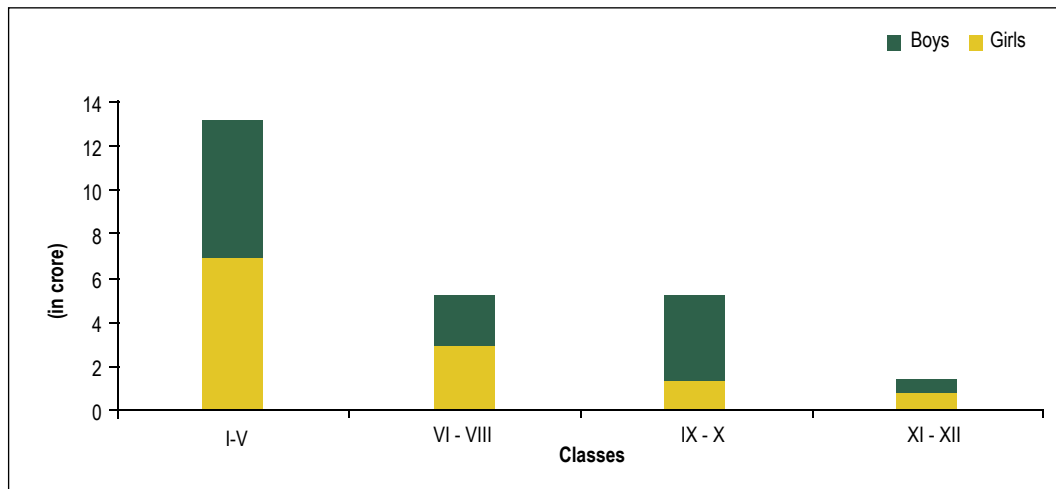
Enrolment rates are particularly low in Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, with overall enrolment rates below 80 per cent. There are wide rural-urban disparities,

**Figure 2: Number of schools per 1000 students in the relevant age group**



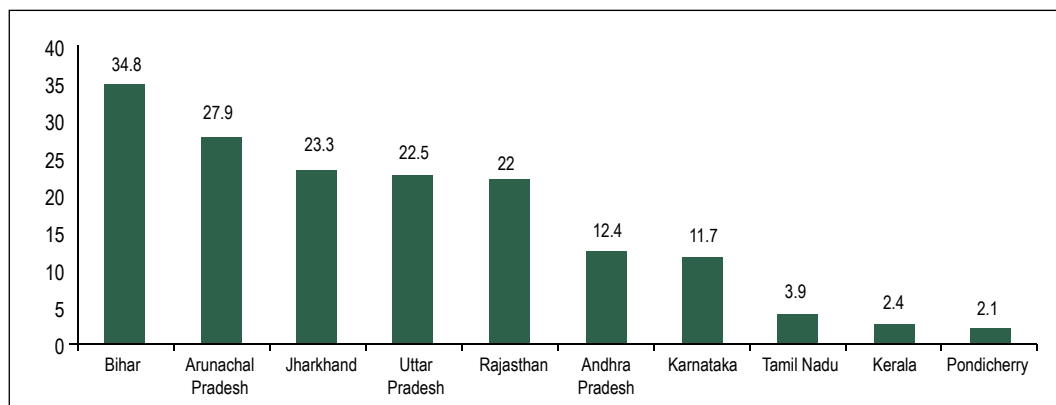
Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report NUEPA, 2005-06

**Figure 3: Stage wise enrolment (2005-06)**



Source: National Level Statistics 2005-06, MHRD

**Figure 4: Percentage of students in the relevant age-group not enrolled in school**



Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report, NUEPA, 2005-06

except in the Union Territories, North-eastern states, Kerala and to some extent Tamil Nadu. Gender disparities tend to be sharpest in states with low aggregate attendance rates.

The total Scheduled Castes enrolment at the primary (I-V), upper primary (VI-VIII) and secondary/senior secondary (IX-XII) stages of school education from 1980-81 to 2004-2005 increased by 2.25, 3.91 and 4.52 times respectively. The total Scheduled Tribes enrolment at the primary, upper primary and secondary/senior secondary stages of school education from 1980-81 to 2004-2005, increased by 2.94, 5.62 and 6.33 times respectively. Further, the average of 604 districts in 2005-06 indicates a gender parity index (GPI) of 0.92 in primary classes and 0.84 in case of enrolment in upper primary classes compared to 0.91 and 0.83 in 2004-05. In 2003-04, GPI in primary and upper primary enrolment was 0.90 and 0.82 respectively. The social composition of out of elementary school children indicates that 9.97 per cent of Muslim children, 9.54 per cent of STs, 8.17 per

cent of SCs and 6.97 per cent of OBC children were out of school and an overwhelming majority (68.7 per cent) was concentrated in five States viz. Bihar (23.6 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (22.2 per cent), West Bengal (9 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (8 per cent) and Rajasthan (5.9 per cent).

**Drop Outs:** The drop-out rates represent percentage of pupils who drop out from a given grade or level of education in a given school year. The rate of drop outs has decreased from 64.9 per cent in 1960-61 to 29.00 per cent in 2004-2005 in primary classes. The rate of dropout which was 78.3 per cent in 1960-61, has come down to 50.84 per cent in 2004-2005 in the upper primary classes. Similarly, the dropout rate which was 82.5 per cent in 1980-81, has decreased to 61.92 per cent in 2004-2005 in the secondary classes, implying an improvement in retention rates. The drop-out rates at primary levels for SCs (34.2 per cent) and STs (42.3 per cent) are substantially higher than the national average (29 per cent).

**Table 5: Number of teachers by type of schools and pupil:teacher ratio**

Type of School	No. of teachers (in lakh)	Percentage of trained teachers	Female teachers per 100 male teachers	Pupil teacher ratio
Primary	21.8	86	65	46
Upper primary	16.7	87	67	34
High schools	11.2	89	61	32
Higher/ Senior secondary	10.3	90	62	34

Source: National Level Statistics 2005-06, MHRD

**Teachers:** The total number of teachers in primary schools increased from 5.38 lakh in 1950-51 to 21.6 lakh in 2004-2005 i.e. by more than four times. However, the number of teachers is still not adequate to meet the needs of the burgeoning student population as is evident from the teacher pupil ratio.

During the year 1950-51 the pupil teacher ratio in primary schools was 1:24, in middle schools it was 1:20 and in higher/higher secondary schools, the pupil teacher ratio was 1:21. By 2004-2005 this ratio had increased to 1:46 in primary schools; 1:35 in upper primary schools and 1:33 in secondary/senior secondary schools. Though the number of educational institutions has considerably increased after Independence and also the number of teachers, the higher pupil teacher ratio indicates that the increase in enrolment at each level is comparatively more than the increase in number of teachers. The increased enrolment at various levels also underscores the need for opening of a greater number of educational institutions as well as employing more teachers for improving the quality of education.

*Teacher training programs:* Teacher training has been identified as a crucial input for quality school education. However, the status of teacher training in India is a matter of great concern. According to DISE data, only 33 per cent of the teachers received in-service training in 2005-06. In 2002, 65467 men and 67096 women enrolled into teacher training courses in India. There are at present, about 571 DIETs, and DRCs, 104 Colleges of Advanced Teaching and 31 Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education, for pre-service and in-service training, functioning in the country.

*Teacher Absenteeism:* Teacher absenteeism has been identified as a major impediment to improvement in quality of school education. The PROBE survey in 242 villages across 5 north Indian states found that in about half the schools, there was no teaching activity at the time of the investigators' visit. It is significant that this pattern

occurred even in cases where the school infrastructure (in terms of number of class rooms, teaching aids and even teacher-pupil ratio) was relatively good.

**Infrastructure:** There is a severe lack of basic infrastructure in schools in India. The PROBE (1999) survey, for instance, found the following with respect to government schools: (a) only a fourth of the sample schools had at least two teachers, two all-weather classrooms, and some teaching aids; (b) at the time of the investigator's visit, one-third of the headmasters were absent, one-third of the schools had a single teacher present, and about half of the schools had no teaching activity; (c) in many schools class students were systematically neglected. Similarly, the DISE survey found that only about 50 per cent of the schools had boundary walls, 33 per cent had electricity connections, and 52 per cent had playgrounds. These represent serious flaws in the schooling process.

**Management:** At present, government and local bodies own more than 90 per cent of the primary schools, 72 per cent of the upper primary schools and 39 per cent of the secondary schools. There are indications of a rise in the number of private unrecognised schools in India. According to the DISE Analytical Report as many as 63,411 and 1,26,110 schools in 2005-06 were being managed by the private aided and private unaided managements respectively. Together, they run a total of 1,89,521 schools (16.86 per cent). There is evidence to suggest that private schools are concentrated in areas where government funded schools are dysfunctional. Although the student profile of private schools is more economically advantaged, the rate of enrolment from poor families has also increased steadily. Findings from the MIMAP survey in India show that, of all school-enrolled children aged 5-10 years old living below the poverty line, 14.8 per cent attended private schools (8 per cent in rural and 36 per cent in urban India). The corresponding figures for ages 11-14

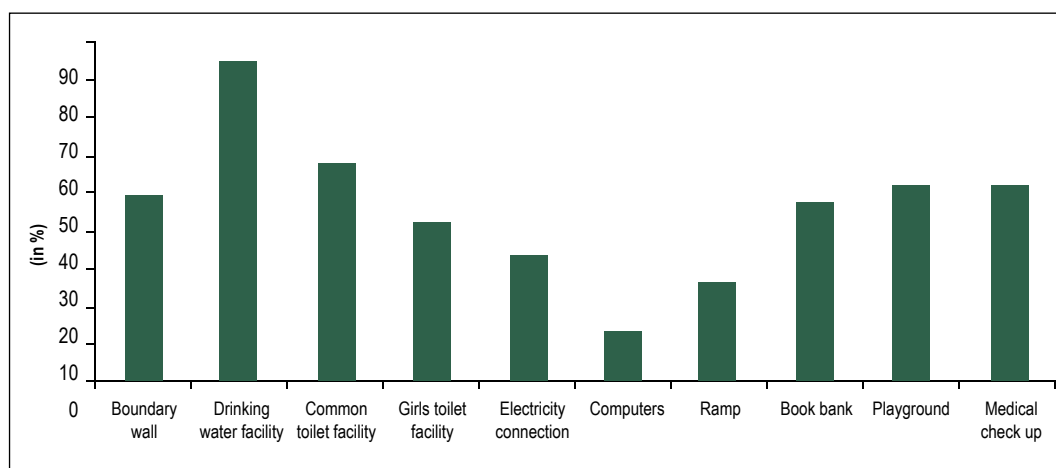
years and 15-17 years were 13.8 per cent and 7 per cent respectively (Pradhan and Subramaniam, 2000). Further, amongst the students from poor backgrounds in private schools, the majority are male.

**Curriculum, pedagogy and learning outcomes:** An all India study *Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)* conducted by PRATHAM in 2006 found the levels in arithmetic and reading amongst primary school children to be surprisingly low. Close to 35 per cent of children in the 7-14 age group could not read a simple paragraph (grade 1 level difficulty) and almost 60 per cent of children could not read a simple story (grade 2 level). In Government Schools, 49.6 per cent of classes II-IV could not subtract (level 1), and 77.8 per cent could not complete sums in division. In private schools, 37.9 could not subtract (level 1) and 66.7 per cent could not finish division sums (level 2).

The situation in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat (where the schools function and where all provision related indicators are good) are far worse than in Bihar and Chhattisgarh (where indicators like teacher-pupil ratio, drop out rates are extremely high, and there are fewer schooling facilities). The high failure rates, especially among the rural, economically weaker and socially deprived children, forces one to critically review the whole system of evaluation and examination.

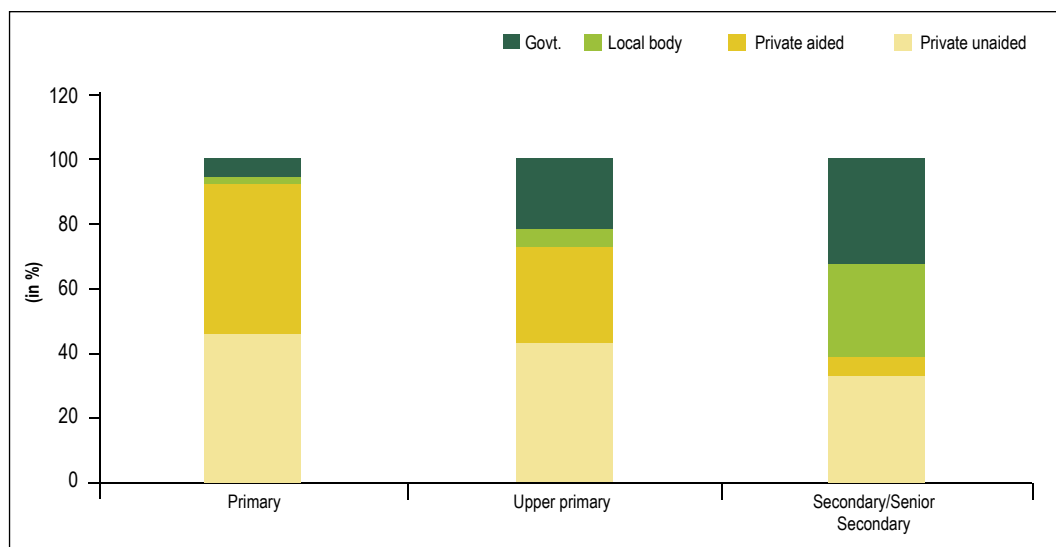
It is widely recognised that there is a need to shift focus from rote learning from textbooks to developing basic skills and the ability of students to apply their learning to real situations. Also creativity, problem-solving ability and encouragement for construction of knowledge based on students' own experiences needs to be promoted. Introducing accountability and developing other measures to improve teaching

**Figure 5: Percentage of schools with basic facilities**



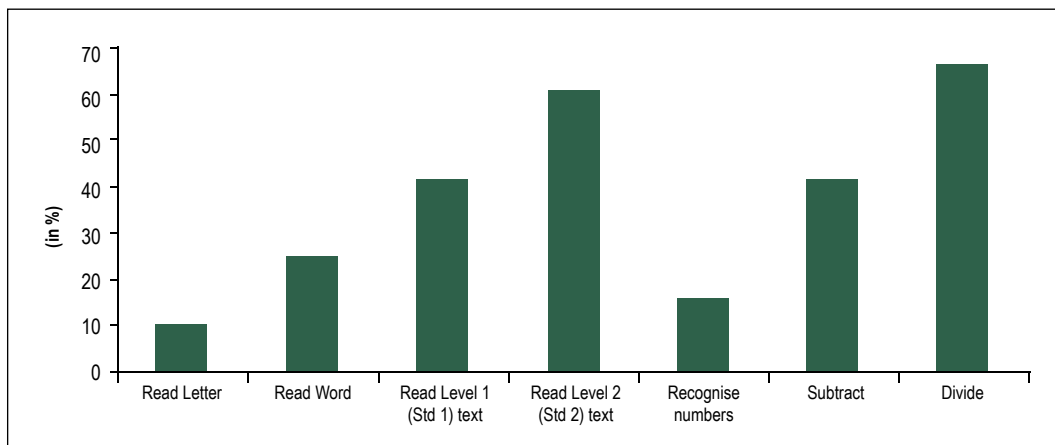
Source: Elementary Education in India, Analytical Report 2006-07

**Figure 6: Management-wise percentage of schools**



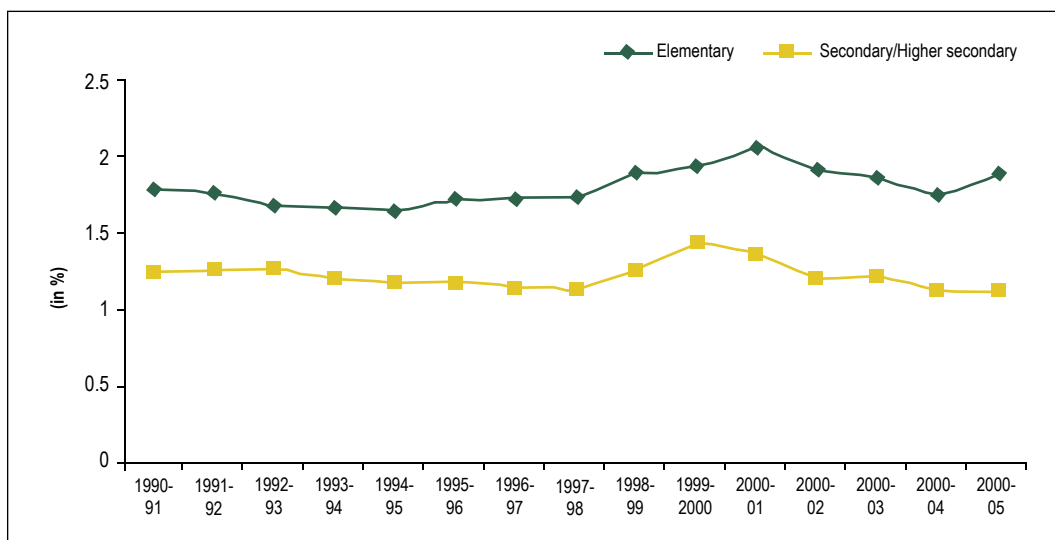
Source: National Level Statistics 2005-06, MHRD

**Figure 7: Percentage of children (Class I to VIII) who cannot**



Source: Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2006

**Figure 8: Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP**



Source: MHRD

quality at the primary level needs to be thought of. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 postulated that the examination system should be recast so as to ensure a method of assessment that is a valid and reliable measure of student development and a powerful instrument for improving teaching and learning be developed.

**Government funding:** The share of public expenditure on education has been declining steadily and was 3.5 per cent in 2004-05. The share of elementary education was Rs. 40,000 crores out of almost 100,000 crores allotted to education. This amount is insufficient to provide universal elementary education of eight years for every child in the age group 6 – 14 years. It is also less than

the proportion of GDP invested in education in many other developing countries. India's total expenditure on school education for the year 2005-06, elementary and secondary combined was around Rs. 78,661 crores, amounting to only 2.46 per cent of GDP. The Tenth Plan outlay for Elementary Education and Literacy was Rs. 30,000 crore. The actual expenditure has been Rs. 48,201 crore, out of which SSA (Rs. 28,077 crore) and MDM (Rs. 13,827 crore) account for 88 per cent. The graph below shows public expenditure on education from year 1992-93 to 2005-06 in 1993-94 constant prices. The percentage allocation for education was around 3.5 per cent of GDP until the late 1990s, rose to more than 4 per cent at the turn of the decade but has since declined to 3.75 per cent of GDP.