

**Innovating India: Roadmap for 2019-24**  
**Elementary and Secondary Education in India**

**1. Identification of priority areas based on current educational status**

- a. Access to all stages of schooling for all children:** while enrolment indicators and other indicators of access have improved over the years, particularly at the elementary level, they remain low at the secondary and higher secondary stages, and for children from disadvantaged and minority communities, including children with special needs. Another major challenge is the decrease in the number of schools as a child progresses from the primary to the higher secondary stage. There is, therefore, a need for greater access to quality education, particularly for groups that are already disadvantaged, along with measures to ensure all children remain in school and successfully complete schooling.
- b. Ensuring physical facilities:** progress has been made in provision of physical facilities in the country. However, there is variation in the quality of facilities across stages of education, across regions and type of management, indicating a need for serious attention and investment. Considering this issue with the challenge of schools with poor enrolment, the process of school consolidation underway must be strengthened, with the focus of expansion being strengthening existing schools as opposed to building new ones, while ensuring equitable access.
- c. Recruitment and capacity building of teachers:** According to DISE data, as of 2015-16, there were about 8.08 million teachers among all schools, of which 1.1 million (13.6%) were contractual, comprising 14.26% of teachers in government schools. Among regular teachers, 82.41% and among contractual teachers, 67.02%, respectively, are professionally qualified. As of 2015, 30% vacancies were reported in some States, particularly in rural and tribal areas, with significant shortage of subject teachers at the upper primary and secondary school levels in core subjects. Data also reveals that the percentage of teachers who received in-service training decreased between 2014-15 and 2015-16. There is a clear need for regularizing the appointment of teachers, and investing in their professional development. While the discourse around the four-year pre-service teacher education programme is gaining momentum and must be sustained, there is a need to ensure alternative means of in-service professional development which can reach all teachers and be undertaken in a sustainable manner.
- d. Taking a holistic approach towards schooling:** school education cannot be separated into stages for the purposes of effecting improvement. One example of this approach is the neglect of early childhood education (ECE), which research reveals as a critical period wherein appropriate experiences, with a long lasting impact on development. Taking a holistic approach towards school education, this period must come within the ambit of educational policy, curriculum and pedagogy. This becomes even more critical given that the stage from 4-8 years must be treated as a single unit from the perspective of curricular and pedagogical continuity. At the same time, secondary education positively

impacts participation in both the workplace and in society. Therefore, ECE along with 12 years of schooling are imperative for all children.

- e. **Taking a systemic approach to improving educational processes:** another concern is the state of resource institutions like the DIETs, BRCs and CRCs, which are unable to fulfill their intended role of academic support to teachers due to issues like vacancies, and poor quality of infrastructure and learning resources; the impact of this neglect is seen in school classrooms. Some measures that can be taken are formulation of school standards and focus on leadership as initiation of institution building, and careful planning as critical to improving classroom processes, along with steps to ameliorate the concerns mentioned above.
- f. **Re-imagining vocational education:** review of implementation of vocational education reveals flaws in the conceptual framework and shortcomings in implementation. While vocational education remains a poor choice for all students and parents, all children must learn work-related skills and be exposed to various areas of work. It therefore makes sense that development of these critical skills be integrated across the curriculum without separation of general and vocational streams.
- g. **Improving learning outcomes:** while review of the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and Annual Status of Education (ASER) data over the years reveals a slight positive trend, on an average, performance across subjects is far from satisfactory. The average number of students who were able to give correct answers for any subject has ranged from 40% to 66% across grades and across NAS cycles, Given that learning outcomes are the end product of an entire ecosystem dedicated to supporting the quality of education, any improvement will be possible only through a holistic effort which engages the entire ecosystem. Hence, steps such as abolition of 'no detention policy' in order to improve learning outcomes are completely misplaced; and it is not based on sound research evidence either, which in fact is to the contrary.
- h. **Philanthropy as a complement and not supplement to government efforts:** there is adequate research evidence that the so-called 'private school advantage' is just a myth – there is no significant difference between the achievement of learners from private and public schools when 'out-of-school' effects are controlled for. Therefore, the focus must be on strengthening the public education system while allowing genuine philanthropists to contribute.

## **2. Policy for elementary and secondary education**

- a. The **Right to Education (RtE) must be extended to cover all children from ages 4 to 18 years**, given the criticality and long-term impact of learning experiences in the early years and the importance of secondary education for later success in life.
- b. **National and State Curriculum Frameworks for School Education** (from Early Childhood to Higher Secondary) must be developed once every ten years aligned to the values of the Constitution – democracy, equality, justice, secularism. Curriculum should

be flexible, broad and inclusive reflective of diverse local culture and knowledge, incorporating creative arts, crafts and oral expression, especially those rooted in indigenous knowledge and skill systems into the curriculum.

- a. Vocational Education must be an integral part of the secondary school curriculum with all students opting for both vocational and general subjects. While narrow 'skill training' without building general abilities like critical thinking, problem solving, working in teams or communication is of no use either to the individual student or to the community/economy, the general abilities are necessary for all students. Quality infrastructure, faculty and learning resources must be available for this, and 'streaming' should **not** be allowed till Grade 10; the latter can only become a cause for further inequity.
- b. Students must be offered a variety of learning experiences that help them meet their curricular goals without any 'hierarchy' of subjects. Music, sports, arts, drama must be an integral part of the curriculum, and vocational and general subjects must be accorded the same importance.
- c. **Re-structuring school stages** to assure continuity for the first few years of schooling must be done as follows: the first stage would be for 4-8 year olds (ECE to Grade 3), the second stage from Grades 4 to 8, and then the final stage from Grades 9 to 12.
- d. **Equitable physical access** to quality education at all stages must be assured for all children beginning with the ECE stage. This can be done through consolidating schools but keeping norms flexible to account for demographic, geographic or other considerations. Care must be taken that the first stage of school, namely for 4-8 year olds, must be close to habitations. Measures such as transport allowance, cycles, etc., must be provided to assure access for older children.
- e. **An inclusive and safe environment** must be assured in all schools with adequate barrier free infrastructure as per the law, safe and nutritious meals, health support, safe drinking water and functional toilets, adequate play spaces for sports and other activities. Guidelines and processes for ensuring physical and emotional safety in schools, including prevention of sexual abuse will be implemented across schools. Education related to sexual and reproductive health must be integrated into the curriculum.
- f. All children must **access the school curriculum in a safe and stimulating learning environment** through a variety of learning experiences. The home language must be the medium of instruction till Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8. A variety of materials beyond the textbook must be used; local resources and knowledge must be brought into the classroom, especially during the early years. 'Learning support programs' through the year for children who need help to cope with grade-level competencies must be planned carefully and implemented thoughtfully.
- g. **Quality learning resources** must be present in all schools – vibrant libraries and well equipped laboratories must be present in all schools and used for learning.
- h. **Teachers must be empowered** to design classroom pedagogy, choose curricular material and select assessment processes. Pedagogy must encourage active learning through school and classroom processes that facilitate dialogue, thinking and expression. The teacher must have autonomy to use a variety of modes and methods for assessment, with

- a focus on assessment for development through the use of continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE).
- i. **A full complement of teachers** must be present in every school – the pupil teacher ratio (PTR) must be calculated at the school level across subjects, especially in secondary school; for elementary schools, teachers for arts and sports must be recruited or shared across schools in close proximity in a structured manner.
  - j. **Teacher education**, both pre- and in-service, **must be overhauled**.
    - a. Universities must fully own and regulate teacher education institutions/programs with the four year teacher education programme after Grade 12 becoming the norm with specialization in subjects and stages of education: early childhood, elementary and secondary education.
    - b. District, block, and cluster-level institutions for teacher development must be strengthened with all vacancies filled on priority. In-service teacher development must be informed by analyses of teacher professional needs and implemented through different modes with resource persons selected on the basis of rigorous criteria.
    - c. A sustained, continuous, structured and long-term focus on the development of teacher educators is also critical.
  - k. **High-quality material for teachers and teacher educators in Indian languages** must be developed on priority.
  - l. **School-leaving examinations must be redesigned** to test for analytical ability, conceptual thinking, problem solving and creativity. Transparency in processes and validity and reliability must be ensured.
  - m. **Rigorous research on early childhood education, school education, teacher education and higher education** focusing on India's concerns and challenges must be undertaken to improve the content and processes of education
  - n. **Sampled learning assessments to check overall 'health' of the system must be conducted** and the findings utilized for systemic improvement.
  - o. **Teacher management must be overhauled**. Teacher requirements must be planned and reviewed once every ten years based on assessment of demand based on stages of education and subject requirements. Teacher placements must be rationalised to ensure appropriate school-level PTR with full complement of teachers in every school. Enrolment in teacher education, recruitment and transfers must be based on this rationalization.
  - p. **Standards for teachers, teacher educators**, applicable to both public and private institutions, must be evolved and a system of accreditation of teacher education institutes, and of licensure (a revised TET could be extended to all stages), certification and performance management evolved on the basis of these standards.
  - q. **Selection and professional development processes for those in school leadership positions** must be revamped with stability of tenure and processes for professional development.
  - r. **A vision, strategy and action plan** must be developed for all institutions, including schools, which would serve as the basis of monitoring performance.

- s. **Institutional performance** must be assessed every three years based on clearly articulated criteria. A **school quality assessment and accreditation system** must be put in place with a holistic 'institution building' approach (along the lines of *Shaala Siddhi*).
- t. **A framework for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships must be developed** with criteria for identifying philanthropic partners with genuine intent who have the capability to support the public system. The regulatory framework for both private and public schools must be the same, detailing academic and operational requirements for basic educational opportunities, keeping in mind the interests of children and parents, and holding schools accountable for fulfillment of these requirements.

### 3. Implementing the policy

- a. It is axiomatic that government expenditure on education is a necessary condition for improvement. However, according to the Economic Survey 2017-18, the share of education in total government expenditure has actually dropped from 11.6% to 10% in the period from 2012 to 2018.
- b. The government must commit to substantial increase in the amount committed to education – in addition to a one-time expenditure to ensure the goals of access, equity and quality are met, there must be a commitment from the Central and State governments to steadily increase the investment in education by about 1-2% each year in order to ensure recruitment of qualified persons as per norms across institutions, and to ensure improvement in educational processes through investment in facilities, learning resources, professional development, and so on.
- c. For optimal utilization, the entire cycle of planning, budgeting, sanctioning, utilization, tracking and feedback must be seen as one continuum. In addition, capacity building and empowerment of relevant personnel to use funds in a decentralized manner, along with inter-departmental linkages must be a priority.

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