

# Preprimary and Primary Education in India Challenges, Reforms and Significance of Primary Education

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## ABSTRACT

The primary education objectives include developing basic literacy and numeracy skills fostering socialization and nurturing love for learning. It aims to prepare students for further education and life long learning.

The near universalization of primary schooling is one of the great global achievements of past decades. In the early 1950s, 50% of primary school-aged children worldwide were out of school. Today, that figure stands at 11%

Still, the most marginalized children remain cut off from primary education – deprived of their right to develop foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) skills. An estimated 70% of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries are now unable to understand a simple written text.

In low-income countries, only two thirds of children are estimated to complete primary school. Inequitable access exists across other divides: Children living in emergency and fragile settings, including refugee children, have fewer chances to complete primary school. Gender also plays a role, as girls who grow up in poor households are more likely than their male peers to have never attended or to have dropped out of primary school.

Even for students in school, far too many are not learning the critical foundational skills (literacy and numeracy, but also digital and transferrable skills) they need to thrive.

Primary education forms the bedrock of development. It is in primary school that children learn foundational skills that prepare them for life, work and active citizenship. Quality education empowers children and young people, safeguards their health and well-being, and breaks cycles of poverty

**KEYWORDS:** Foundational Literacy And Numeracy (FLN), Quality Education, Preprimary Education, Primary Education, Modern Teaching Approaches

## Levels of schooling

Pre primary education of a child starts at the age 2-3 years Prenursery, 3 years Nursery, 4 years Lkg and, 5 to 6 years for Ukg

Primary education or elementary education lasts 8 years in India. Pupils aged 6 to 14 complete the following 2 stages:

Primary stage, grade I-V;

Upper primary stage, grade VI-VIII.

### **Pre-primary education**

The pre-primary stage is the foundation of children's knowledge, skills and behaviour. On completion of pre-primary education, the children are sent to the primary stage, but pre-primary education in India is not a fundamental right. In rural India, pre-primary schools are rarely available in small villages. But in cities and big towns, there are many established players in the pre-primary education sector. The demand for the preschools is growing considerably in the smaller towns and cities but still, only 1% of the population under age 6 is enrolled in preschool education.

**Play group (pre-nursery):** At playschools, children are exposed to a lot of basic learning activities that help them to get independent faster and develop their self-help qualities like eating food themselves, dressing up, and maintaining cleanliness. The age limit for admission into pre-nursery is 2 to 3 years. Anganwadi is government-funded free rural childcare & Mothercare nutrition and learning programme also incorporating the free Midday Meal Scheme.

**Nursery:** Nursery level activities help children unfold their talents, thus enabling them to sharpen their mental and physical abilities. The age limit for admission in nursery is 3 to 4 years.

**Lower Kindergarten:** It is also called the junior kindergarten (Jr. kg) stage. The age limit for admission in LKG is 4 to 5 years.

**Upper Kindergarten:** It is also called the senior kindergarten (Sr. kg) stage. The age limit for admission in UKG is 5 to 6 years.

LKG and UKG stages prepare and help children emotionally, mentally, socially and physically to grasp knowledge easily in the later stages of school and college life. A systematic process of preschool education is followed in India to impart knowledge in the best possible way for a better understanding of the young children. By following an easy and interesting curriculum, teachers strive hard to make the entire learning process enjoyable for the children.

### **Primary Education**

The primary education in India is divided into two parts, namely Lower Primary (Class I-V) and Upper Primary (Middle school, Class VI-VIII). The Indian government lays emphasis on primary education (Class I-VIII) also referred to as elementary education, to children aged 6 to 14 years old. Because education laws are given by the states, duration of primary school visit alters between the Indian states.

The Indian government has also banned child labour in order to ensure that the children do not enter unsafe working conditions.<sup>1</sup> However, both free education and the ban on child labour are difficult to enforce due to economic disparity and social conditions.

80% of all recognised schools at the elementary stage are government run or supported, making it the largest provider of education in the country. Figures released by the Indian government in 2011 show that there were 5,816,673 elementary school teachers in India. As of March 2012 there were 2,127,000 secondary school teachers in India.

Education has also been made free for children for 6 to 14 years of age or up to class VIII under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009. While school enrollment rates have increased, many children leave school with poor literacy and numeracy skills. ASER reported in 2019 that only 50% of fifth standard students in rural India could read a Standard II-level text, and only 29% of them could do basic division.

However, due to a shortage of resources and lack of political will, this system suffers from massive gaps including high pupil to teacher ratios, shortage of infrastructure and poor levels of teacher training. Some scholars have used the concept of "visibility" to explain why successive governments have underprioritised investments directed at raising the quality of teaching and education in India relative to investments in building more schools.

Building schools is more "visible" to the voting public and easily attributable to the government; training teachers to teach better and raising the quality of education is a more uncertain venture, the success of which is determined by factors outside the control of any one government. This incentivises governments to focus their resources on "visible" areas of intervention.

**There have been several efforts to enhance quality made by the government.:-**

The District Education Revitalisation Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalise primary education in India by reforming and vitalising the existing primary education system. 85% of the DERP was funded by the central government and the remaining 15% was funded by the states.

The DERP, which had opened 160,000 new schools including 84,000 alternative education schools delivering alternative education to approximately 3.5 million children, was also supported by UNICEF and other international programmes. "Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately – by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid"

In January 2016, Kerala became the 1st Indian state to achieve 100% primary education through its literacy programme Athulyam.

In primary education scheme has also shown a high gross enrolment ratio of 93–95% for the last three years in some states. Significant improvement in staffing and enrolment of girls has also been made as a part of this scheme.

The scheme for universalisation of Education for All is the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. While school enrolment rates have increased, the quality of education received by students remains low. The literature suggests that one of the biggest reasons for quality deficiencies in primary and secondary education is teacher absence and negligence.

In one popular study, the researchers made unannounced visits to 3700 schools in 20 major Indian states as found that three-quarters of the teachers were in attendance in the government primary schools that were inspected, only half of them were found teaching. where they found that, on average, 25% of government primary school teachers absent every day.

Primary schooling is the starting phase of education that lays the foundation for a child's learning journey. It is a crucial period where children develop fundamental skills, gain knowledge, and shape their overall growth.

### **Challenges in primary education in India**

India has achieved significant progress in recent decades regarding access to schooling and enrolment rates in primary education. Still, dropout rates and low levels of learning continue to be issued for state and central administrations. Nevertheless, primary school enrollment in India has been a success story, thanks mainly to different programs and drives to encourage participation even in rural areas.

In 2011, it was noted that there were 5,816,673 primary school teachers within the country. However, rural India faced significant problems such as a proper school structure, well-trained professional teachers, chairs and tables for students, washrooms, drinking water that has raised hygiene and safety concerns.

Over the years, the number of schools has multiplied, and India has surpassed China to have the most number of schools even though both countries have a similar population.

Many primary schools in India have fewer than 50 students enrolled. The majority of the schools in rural areas have fewer teachers managing more than the average number of students.

There is also a shortage of well-trained professional teachers in these areas, resulting in a higher dropout rate and students' lack of attendance.

Lack of good resources and infrastructure is also one of the concerns for distorted students to teachers in schools.

### **What is the Current Status of the Primary Schools in India?**

Improving learning will necessitate several changes, including increased teacher responsibility. According to school visits, teacher attendance in primary and middle schools is only 85%. Increasing the time teachers spend on-task and increasing their responsibility for student learning is also needed. Better assessments at each grade level and more effective monitoring and support systems are also required as part of this process. Overall, the public school system needs a more effective general administration system.

In India, about 20% of children who come in the age group of 6 to 14 are out of the enrollment ratio, and the children who have been enrolled are lack attendance in schools. According to an estimate, around 26% of children tend to drop out before standard 5. The state of affairs for primary education in India is grim in states like Rajasthan and Bihar.

### **What are the Obstacles Before Primary Education in India?**

There are many reasons for the ongoing situation in the Primary education in India and can be understood by addressing the obstacles:

In India, a large population lives below the poverty line, contributing primarily to the problem.

Many schools are yet to be made in the rural sector, and the schools available in the urban areas are sometimes a burden for the parents as the busy roads and traffic make the parents not risk their kids' lives.

The conditions of schools in rural areas are another example of the poor functioning of the primary sector.

The education system is another constraint to primary education in India. The education given to children or teenagers does not reflect the work environment. This is why parents prefer to send their children to be an apprentice under someone and learn a craft to make a living in the future.

Caste discrimination is another reason for the large deficit in the Primary education in India.

Allowance of child labour is another obstacle before primary education.

Teachers lack motivation and training.

Changes in the Primary Education System in India

The government has undertaken several measures to resolve the problems and enhance education received by students in primary school. The authorities started the District Education Revitalisation Programme (DERP) in 1994 to reform and vitalize existing Primary education in India.

India's central government-managed 85% of the DERP, while the respective states controlled the remaining 15%. It led to 1.6 lakh schools within the country, where 84,000 schools offered alternative education to 35 lakh students.

The authorities enacted the Right to Education(RTE) within India's constitution on the 4th of August 2009, which stressed the importance of providing free and compulsory education for children between 6 to 14.

Over time, the government incorporated several schemes such as:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is currently one of the largest initiatives in the educational sector in the world.

Midday meal scheme.

Schemes for infrastructure development for minority institutes.

Due to the lack of girls in schools, the government has also introduced various schemes as given below to encourage girl children to receive an education:

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

The national program for the education of girls at elementary education:

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya

The government took these steps and implemented them by both the government and various NGOs so that no child lacks the fundamental right to education.

## **Significance of primary education**

### **Building Fundamental Skills**

Children learn key skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and problem-solving during this time. These abilities serve as the foundation for future success.

### **General development**

Primary education promotes overall growth by developing cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and creative qualities. It encourages children to follow their interests, increases their confidence, and improves their critical thinking abilities.

**Socialization and Communication** Primary education develops social skills and effective communication via collaborative activities, group projects, and extracurricular commitments, allowing children to connect successfully with their classmates and the larger society.

### **Instilling Values**

Fundamental moral values such as respect, empathy, honesty, accountability, and collaboration are instilled in primary school. These principles aid in the development of ethical persons capable of navigating problems with integrity and compassion.

## **Objectives of primary education**

### **Individualised Learning**

We recognise that each kid is unique, with various talents and learning styles. Our primary education program is intended to meet the requirements of each individual student, ensuring that each student receives personalised attention and assistance.

### **Fostering Curiosity and Love for Learning**

We want to cultivate a love of learning in every kid. We inspire curiosity, discovery, and a lifelong hunger for knowledge by providing a vibrant and engaging atmosphere.

### **Cultivating Critical Thinking**

It is the main objective of primary education, which highlights critical thinking skills development, allowing students to analyse, evaluate, and solve issues on their own. It's leads to originality, innovation, creation, and the capacity to think out of the box

### **Encouraging Well-rounded Development**

Our primary school program incorporates academics, athletics, arts, and extracurricular activities. We believe in developing well-rounded individuals who can excel in various domains.

### **Conclusion**

#### **Primary education must be based on Student centric approaches and needs**

Primary education has evolved tremendously throughout time, switching from traditional structures to more modern and student-centred approaches. These modifications have led to various advantages for learners, teachers, and the overall learning experience. When comparing primary education before and after, the current approach is considered excellent.

Primary education has traditionally depended on memorising facts by heart and teacher-centred learning, which limits critical thinking and active involvement. The modern approach, on the other hand, focuses on student-centred learning, interactive approaches, and technological integration. It increases critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and overall growth.

The modern system prepares students for the challenges of today's world by providing them with the necessary skills and encouraging an appreciation of study. The modern primary education strategy provides a more effective and com learning experience for students by integrating innovation, personalised learning, and overall growth.

Teachers play an important part in today's primary education system. They act as educators, helping students on their learning journeys and offering special assistance. Integrated learning spaces and constant professional development opportunities enable instructors to use new teaching practices and. adapt to an ever-changing educational context.

We understand the need of primary education and believe that it is the foundation of personal development and achievement. With world-class infrastructure, we are dedicated to providing your kid with a loving and encouraging primary education experience. It sets the stage for further education and helps shape individuals into responsible citizens

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