

A Survey of Government Polices to Improve the Primary Education in Rajasthan

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Abstract: The main challenge confronting education strategies in Rajasthan is the education of the girl child, especially among Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Our analysis of primary education in Rajasthan attempts to identify key issues to strengthen initiatives for universalising literacy and ensuring quality education that could sustain a pro-poor pattern of growth. In this paper we are survey the government polices to improving the level of primary education like Non-Formal Education Program Shiksha Karmi Project Lok Jumbish Pariyojana Rajiv Gandhi Swarna Jayanti Pathshalas District Primary Education Programme and their effect of our primary education slandered.

Keywords: Primary education, Education system

I. Introduction

Rajasthan is characterised by sharp differences in terms of terrain, livelihood, dispersed patterns of settlement and social identity. Within the state, agriculture and animal husbandry are the major sources of livelihood, with no significant manufacturing industries or sectors. Distribution of income and assets is also highly uneven. Therefore, the task of ensuring that education is universalised and relevant for all sections of society is indeed formidable.

The main challenge confronting education strategies in Rajasthan is the education of the girl child, especially among Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Our analysis of primary education in Rajasthan attempts to identify key issues to strengthen initiatives for universalising literacy and ensuring quality education that could sustain a pro-poor pattern of growth.

The system of education in Rajasthan needs considerable reform in order to improve the access of marginalised groups (women especially girl children, *dalits*, migrants and nomadic people, etc.) to the educational infrastructure that has been put in place. Education reforms must make the system more relevant to the livelihood needs of people, and should enable them to exercise greater control over their lives.

The main points raised in this paper are:

- Decentralisation and people's participation is a must for the success of education interventions in Rajasthan, given the persistence of low achievements in education in spite of considerable investment in the expansion of education infrastructure. Participation should imply involvement of people and the government together in deciding the direction of and control over programmes.
- Rajasthan is at the crossroads as far as design and implementation of education interventions are concerned, with substantial resources flowing to the sector, both from the state's budget and internationally assisted programmes such as DPEP. However, situational analysis indicates that the literacy situation in Rajasthan is quite grim, with

many districts being among the most backward in the country in terms of literacy rates, and even more so in terms of female literacy.

- Learning from success stories and examples of best practice is a necessary component of a successful education strategy. Rajasthan has long been the crucible of experimentation with regard to school education. The lessons from programmes such as Non Formal Education, Shiksha Karmi, Lok Jumbish, etc., must be incorporated into the future education strategy of the state.

II. Historical Background

It may be instructive to consider the historical context of the development of modern education in Rajasthan in order to understand the persistence of gender and other forms of social bias, as well as conditions for change (increased participation by civil society, a spirit of social service, voluntarism and philanthropy).

2.1. Development of Primary Education in Rajasthan after Independence

The momentum for the expansion of education in Rajasthan was reinforced by the constitutional commitment to universalization of education, as spelt out in the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India.

The approach to education in the post-Independence era addressed the infrastructure lacuna of the earlier period, which was endemic especially in rural areas. While in 1949, at the time of the formation of the state, the total number of primary schools was 3,195 (2,864 for boys and 331 for girls), by 1981 was 23,125, and this grew to 39,335 by 1991. During the Eighth Plan period (1991 to 1996), the number of primary schools increased by 13 percent and upper primary schools by 32 percent, resulting in a total increase of 17 percent

Table 1: Primary Education Infrastructure in Rajasthan [8]

Year	No. of Primary Schools	No. of Upper Schools	Total
1991-92	30005	9330	39335
1992-93	31866	9802	41668
1993-94	33482	10028	43510
1994-95	32986	11235	44221
1995-96	33758	12276	46034

Source: NCTE (1998), "Teacher Education in Rajasthan", p. 6, New Delhi.

Between 1949 and 1961, enrolment increased by more than 400 percent.²⁴ By 1981, the total number of children enrolled was approximately 31.26 lakh, of which 69.11 percent belonged to the school going age cohort. ²⁵ The increase in enrolment during the Eighth Plan period was 35.71 percent both in primary and upper primary schools.

Table 2: Enrolment (in thousand) in Elementary Education in the decade 1985-86/1995-96[8]

Year	Pre-Primary & Primary (classes I to V)			Upper Primary (classes VI to VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1985-86	1984901	732766	2717667	1421939	493131	1915070
1986-87	3023265	1231066	4254331	930959	227703	1158662
1887-88	2111613	826014	2937627	1520446	528409	2048855
1988-89	2154222	885850	3040072	1550513	554789	2105302
1989-90	2159666	943263	3102929	1530426	560318	2090744
1990-91	2140183	944966	3085149	1549071	606318	2155389
1991-92	2182744	991976	3174720	1575151	631736	2206887
1992-93	2246982	1122063	3369045	1657590	725423	2383013
1993-94	2286026	1134054	3420080	1681072	743259	2424331
1994-95	2290640	1220199	3510839	1858457	859502	2717959
1995-96	2284362	1329375	3613737	2007238	1003932	3011170

Source : Government of Rajasthan (1996), "Statistical Abstract of Rajasthan 1996", Directorate of Economics and Statistics, page 65, Jaipur.

2.2. Institutional Mechanism of Primary Education in Rajasthan[10]

After half a century since its creation, Rajasthan has a large primary education infrastructure. About half a dozen special schemes and programmes to improve the quality of education and to reach the unreached and marginalised children are running in the state. In addition, private schools are fast making inroads even in rural areas, where hitherto they were restricted to urban and semi-urban belts of Rajasthan. The growth of private schools in rural areas can be attributed to a demand for education that government schools and other state sponsored educational institutions are not able to meet because of the irregularity of their set-up, the low level of teacher attendance and quality of teaching. There is still a gap between the need and demand for 'functional' schools and what is actually available to most children. The endeavour can be built upon experiences of rights-based educational interventions in other states. One of them is the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of Madhya Pradesh which, according to the Union Budget for 1999-2000, is being extended to other states. However, such interventions often tend to trade off quality for quantity and therefore educational planning should be sensitive to this issue.

Figure 1. provides an institutional map of the administrative structure for Primary Education in Rajasthan that is responsible, apart from other echelons of school education, for the formulation and implementation of the educational state policies on education, as well as the finance, administration and management of the primary school system.

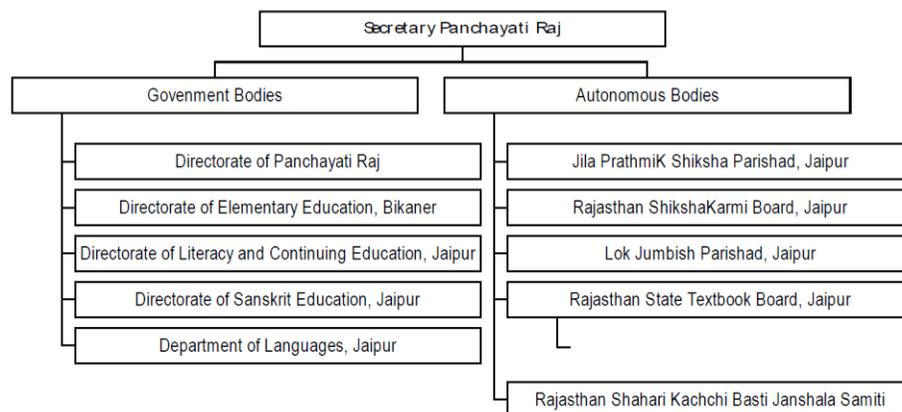


Fig. 1 - Administrative Structure of Primary Education[10]

In line with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Elementary Education in Rajasthan is now with the three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions, i.e. Zila Parishads at District level, Panchayat Samitis at the Block level, and Gram panchayats at the village level. The State has also constituted the Rajiv Gandhi Elementary Education and Literacy Mission to undertake progress in education in a mission mode. This Mission has been constituted with its Governing Council under the Chairperson ship of the Chief Minister of Rajasthan. The Secretary Panchayati Raj is the Mission Director to ensure co-ordination and achievement of the targets and goals of the Mission.

The system of accountability and planning is mostly a top down one, centralised in terms of programme management, design and implementation. The existing decentralised approach to planning is limited to sub-programmes for which the options opened to communities are limited by the criteria set by state planners.

The top-down approach, inherent in such administrative arrangements contrasts with the fact that as far back as 1959 Rajasthan had pioneered a decentralised approach in the management of schools by accepting the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee and providing for management of primary school by Panchayat Samitis

III. Initiatives aimed to Augment/ Supplement the formal Education System

The modern schooling system in India, developed at the expense of the indigenous systems, was neither designed to empower people, nor to aid them in shaping and fulfilling their aspirations. It was designed to mould some of the masses to suit the interests of the rulers of the day - an approach clearly laid out in Lord Macaulay's Minute on Education. Over time these aims became secondary but the structure had already acquired its own sanctity.

This system, termed as the formal schooling system, has not been able to tackle the issues of numbers, universal enrolment and retention, imparting quality education, and actualising acceptable achievement levels. This led the government to look for alternatives, which emerged from evaluation of the formal education system and were planned to counter the problems faced through lack of finances, incidence of non-attendance of children, irregularity of teachers, etc. In Rajasthan several major programmes have been introduced over the years to improve the formal education system, and/ or to facilitate access to education. These are:

- Non-Formal Education Programme
- Shiksha Karmi Project
- Lok Jumbish Pariyojana
- Rajiv Gandhi Swarna Jayanti Pathshalas
- District Primary Education Programme

3.1. The Non-Formal Education Programme.

The Non-Formal Education Programme (NFE)[6] was introduced as a flexible, low cost and manageable alternative to the formal education structure, which could not provide enough schools and teachers. People perceived NFE as a potent alternative. A rationale as well as a concept of non-formal education was developed. According to this concept, NFE was supposed to be free from the ills of the formal system, being flexible and sensitive to the children and their needs.

Though the formal system is continuously growing and schools are available in thousands of villages, still lakhs of school age children remain out of primary education. NFE programme was started in 1975 to reach these children. In 1998-99 there were 17,600 NFE centres run directly by the Government of Rajasthan and 2,686 centres by NGOs sanctioned by the Government of India. Children who successfully complete class five from NFE centres are eligible for admission to

class six in formal schools. In 1998-99 a total of 4.80 lakh children were enrolled in the programme - 2.07 lakh boys and 2.73 lakh girls. Districts with the highest enrolment of children in Non Formal Education centres in 1998/99 were Ganganagar (including Hanumangarh), Chittorgarh, Udaipur and Bhilwara.

3.2. The Shiksha Karmi Project[14]

The Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) was started in 1987-88 after a realisation that UPE would not be possible in 10-15% of the villages in Rajasthan due to teacher absenteeism alone. The aim of the programme is to provide primary education to children living in remote, hilly and inaccessible areas. In these areas, the project aims to revitalise and expand primary education through resolving the problems of:

- Teacher absenteeism (which is as high as 50-60%)
- Poor enrolment (25%) and high dropout rates, particularly of girls.

This will be achieved by actively involving the community through Village Education Committees and employing local people, with motivation and commitment, as para teachers also known as Shiksha Karmis. In order to facilitate women's participation, fourteen residential centres for women (Mahila Prashikshan Kendra) have been provided.

Two para teachers (one male and one female), identified by the community, are in charge of the primary school of the village after having received training at the initial stage (for 41-50 days) as well as training on regular basis. The training provided by NGOs and District Institutes of Educational Training (DIET) is to ensure that people with limited educational backgrounds (the minimum qualification for men is 8th grade and for women 5th grade) can teach up to 5th class. In addition, a Sahayogi is responsible for i dance and on-going training at the block level.

Every Shiksha Karmi is required to run evening schools (Prehar Pathshalas) in addition to the day schools to cater to children who are unable to attend schools during normal hours. Currently the project operates in 146 Panchayat Samitis of the State, running 2600 day schools, 4829 Prehar Shalas and 97 Angan Shalas. In these schools there are 6213 teachers and 2,16,084 students

3.3. Lok Jumbish Pariyojana [12]

This programme's goals are:

- Providing access to primary education to all children between 5 and 14 years of age.
- Striving to enrol children in regular schools, as far as possible, and in Sahaj Shiksha centres, wherever necessary.
- Ensuring that all enrolled children regularly attend school/ Sahaj Shiksha centres and complete primary education;
- Improving quality of education by emphasising active learning, child-centred processes and achievement of at least minimum levels of learning by all children;
- Creating necessary structures and processes to empower women, making education an instrument of women's equality;
- Ensuring equity in education to all members of the society;
- Modifying, if necessary, the content and processes of education to better relate it to the environment, people's culture as well as their living and working conditions;
- Effectively involving people in the planning and management of education. Lok Jumbish is innovative not only in its overarching aims of empowerment and participation,

but also in its attention to diverse components within the programme. Apart from school mapping and micro planning, at the community level there are women's groups, adolescent girls' forums, residential camps - both for girls and boys, a school health programme and a commitment to integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education.

This is very important in the light of the fact that, as Lok Jumbish acknowledges, it is difficult to involve communities in micro planning on a sustained basis as, while core teams and women's groups get involved in school mapping, the information produced is not shared with the wider community.

Along with the improvement in formal primary schools, under the Lok Jumbish umbrella the Sahaj Shiksha Pariyojana was introduced to provide educational opportunities to children who still remain out of the formal system. Sahaj Shiksha centres run for three hours a day and a minimum of 250 days in a year. In December 1997 there were 2326 such centres with 45,839 children enrolled, majority of whom were girls (31148).³⁸ The Sahaj Shiksha Programme is meant for out-of-school children in the 9-14 age group, but a significant number of children from the 6-9 age group also attend these centres.

3.4. Rajiv Gandhi Swarna Jayanti Pathshalas

The main objective of this scheme is to universalise access.

to education with the active involvement of the community. Further, communities residing in remote and inaccessible locations, in rough terrain and in sparsely populated areas, SC/ST girls are the priority groups for this scheme. The Rajiv Gandhi Swarna Jayanti Pathshalas scheme has been operating in areas/habitations where there were still no primary schools. The state government has decided to open 16000 RGSJPs in the whole state, on demand from the gram sabha or the ward sabhas.

The criteria of selection of habitations where to open these schools are:

- population of at least 200 people;
- 40 or more children in the age group of 6-11 years;
- no school in a radius of one kilometre.

However, in desert and tribal areas, as well as in Mewat, Magara and Dang regions, Rajsamand and Jhunjhunu districts, these schools can be opened also in habitations where the population is of only 150 people, and there are only 25 children in the said age group.

The village committee, which demands for the RGSJP centre, is responsible for the selection of teachers, called Shiksha Sahayogis, who should preferably belong to the local community. The minimum academic qualification required is Senior/Higher Secondary pass, but could be relaxed to 8th class pass in difficult areas. For their training the Shiksha Karmi training modules and infrastructure are used. The teachers' honorarium is Rs.1200 per month.

3.5. District Primary Education Programme[15,1]

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), launched in 1994, seeks to operationalize the objective of the World Bank Programme of Action of 1992, which envisaged district-specific projects tailored to the districts' specific needs and possibilities. Aiming to be an effective instrument in the universalization of elementary education, it targets districts with very low female literacy rates.

Its goals in the state are to:

- ensure access to primary schools (either formal or non-formal) to all children;
- reduce to less than 5 percent the existing differences in enrolment and dropout rates, as well as in learning achievements, between men and women and social classes.
- reduce overall dropout rates to less than 10 percent and raise achievement levels by at least 25 percent.

Although the programme will finance 909 new schools and the appointment of 4795 new Para teachers, its main focus is on quality of primary education in formal schools. Therefore, it finances in-service teacher training, development and introduction of improved teaching and learning materials, as well as improvements in the existing school facilities. In addition, the programme supports state education programmes, such as textbook development and publication, planning and management, research and evaluation

3.6. Mahila Samakhya [3]

Another externally-assisted programme with a specific focus on gender is Mahila Samakhya women's education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly women in socially and economically marginalised groups. It endeavours to create a learning environment where women can collectively affirm their potential, gain and strength

to demand information and knowledge, and move forward to change and take charge of their lives. Mahila Samakhya has reached the poor and marginal women who have been able to overcome social barriers and are addressing issues such as child marriage, child labour, and violence against women. A pool of aware women has been created through the Mahila Shikshan Kendras and there is an ever-increasing demand for literacy and education for their daughters and granddaughters. This has had a beneficial social impact like delaying the age of marriage of girls. The programme is currently implemented in over 9,000 villages in 53 districts spread over ten states.

3.7. Mid-Day Meal Scheme [7]

The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education commonly known as the Mid-day Meal programme was launched in 1995. It aims to give a boost to universalization of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance and simultaneously improving the nutritional status of students in primary classes. Under the scheme, cooked meals are served with calorie value equivalent to 100 gm of wheat or rice per student per school day. The number of children covered under the programme has risen from 33.4 million in about 3,22,000 schools in 1995-96 to 105.1 million students in 7,92,000 schools spread over 576 districts in 2000-01. It is targeted to cover 107.2 million children in 578 districts during 2001-02. Over 15 lakh tonnes of food grains were lifted for the scheme during 2000-01 compared to 14 lakh tonnes in 1999-2000. Currently, only six states - Gujarat, Kerala, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh (174 tribal blocks) and Madhya Pradesh - and the Union Territory of Pondicherry are providing hot cooked meals under the programme. In Delhi, ready-to eat food is being distributed. The remaining states/ Union Territories are distributing food grains (wheat/ rice). States like Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka were able to lift 95.7 per cent, 92.9 per cent, 87.8 per cent and 86.6 per cent of food grains respectively under the scheme in 2000-01 while some others such as Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Delhi lifted only 12.78 per cent, 25.17 per cent, 30.33 per cent and 33.98 per cent food grains respectively.

IV. Effect of Policies

School education system

S.No	Indicators	Unit	Status in the year	
			2001-02	2010-11
1	2	3		
1	Schools	Nos		
	Primary		51,289	49,210
	Upper Primary		21,217	55,980
2	Teachers in Schools	Nos		
	Primary		1,15,510	2,24,818
	Upper Primary		1,44,080	2,35,396
3	Enrollment	lacs		
	Primary		83.51 lac.	84.33 lac.
	Upper Primary		23.82 lac.	35.71 lac.

Total Enrolled in year 2011

Total Enrolled	124.87 lac
Pre Primary	4.83 lac
Primary	84.33 lac
Upper Primary	35.71 lac
PTR	27
PS	31
UPS	18
% of SC Enrollment in PS	20.66%
% of SC Enrollment in UPS	19.22%
% of ST Enrollment in PS	16.40%
% of ST Enrollment in UPS	13.42%

Comparitive position

S.N	Indicator	2001-02	2010-11
1	Literacy Rate Persons	60.40%	67.06%
2	Literacy Rate Female	43.90%	52.66%
3	Gender Gap (All)	16.97 %	8.22 %
4	Gender Gap (SC)	20.08%	8.38%
5	Gender Gap (ST)	22.08%	9.59%

V. Conclusion

No society can claim to be developed without educating its children. Education cannot also be selective and should not cater only to the interests of few communities who are economically and socially rich. Since independence the central and federal governments have been trying to provide education to all as enshrined in the constitution to provide universal and compulsory education to all children below the age of 14 years.

However, in Rajasthan the regular schooling system has been unable to provide primary education to the disadvantaged groups of the society, namely the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, women and communities in remote areas. Thus, alternative systems have been devised to fill the gap. These have been successful in providing some education and some functional schools where none were there. During all these year's lot of attention have been given on the quantitative expansion of education infrastructure ignoring the quality aspects of teaching and learning. Therefore, there is an urgent need for improvement of the quality of education, given the abysmally poor levels of learning as evident in studies carried out by various agencies in the primary schools.

The administrative and institutional structure of school education has been placed directly under the purview of *Panchayati Raj* since 1999. Until the local people and the local governance mechanisms are fully functional without any interference the vision of "quality education for all" will remain a distant dream. It would apt to quote here the thinking of our educational planners about the future vision of education in our country. India "Vision 2020" document states that successful population policy is directly linked to successful education policy. Success in raising literacy rates and school enrolment rates while, reducing drop-out rates, especially for girls, are closely correlated with the delayed onset of marriage and child birth, improved mortality for both mothers and children, and reduction in family size. In fact, a successful education policy forms the bedrock of all fields of national development- political, economic, technical, scientific, social, and environmental.

Girls' and women's education are manifested in a variety of ways, including increased income earning potential, ability to bargain for resources within the household, decision-making autonomy, control over their own fertility, and participation in public life. In particular, education increases girls' self-confidence, social and negotiation skills and earning power, and makes them less vulnerable to violence and ill health- all factors that exacerbate gender inequality and poverty.

Honest attempts should be made to provide compulsory education to all the children at least up to 14 years. No one should be made to suffer for want of educational opportunity and facilities. Decision-makers in education ministries should decide to support inclusive education strategies, they often want to know what costs will be involved and what results any investment should deliver.

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