



# **Common School System & Right to Education**

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## Present Status of Schooling and Quality Education in Bihar with context to CSS and RTE

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### Abstract

*School Education is an important component of development of any country as school is the miniature of the society. In Bihar, there are 71,484 government schools imparting elementary education. Ever since the introduction of the Right to Education Act, majority of schools did not fulfilled the infrastructural norms required under the Right to Education Act (2009). In the last three years, a substantial number of children were enrolled and brought back to school. As a result, we have 230 million in schools today.*

### Key Words

• School Education, • CSS, • RTE, • Quality Education

### Introduction

The appreciation of the importance of education and educational practices in Bihar date back to the period of Gautam Buddha and Mahavir in the 5th century BC. During that period, the Buddhist and Jainist education started in parallel with the traditional Vedic education. The Buddhist education was based on the Ashtangic (eight-fold) Path, and its distinguishing features were : the introduction of a new curriculum, Pali & Prakrit, combining day schools with residential education and education through the medium of the language of the people. No doubt, both the Buddhists and the Jains used education to spread the teachings of their masters. However, their educational systems were not confined to religious and spiritual themes but were also closely related to life. A very important feature of these educational systems was that the door of education was open to all. During the time of Ashoka, there is evidence of widespread practice of education in the Magadh Empire. It is significant that as many as four Ashoka pillars, containing the engraving of the Emperor's message to the people, were erected at short distances in

Magadh. This shows that a good section of the population was able to read and write. It was also during the time of Ashoka that the beginning of the establishment of the Nalanda University in the form of the Nalanda Vihar was made. Subsequently three Universities flourished in Bihar : the Nalanda University itself, and universities of Vikramshila and Udantpuri, both of them established in the 8th century by the Pal Dynasty King, Dharmapala. The existence of these universities indicated that there would have been in their hinterlands institutions of elementary education from where they drew their students (C55C, 2008).

Bihar has 37 administrative districts with a total population of 10.38 crore of which 11.3 percent are urban population, 15.9 percent SC population, 1.3 percent ST population and 16.53 percent Muslim population. According to census 2001, the literacy rate of Bihar is 61.8 percent. Male literacy is 71.2 and female literacy rate is 51.5 percent. During one and half a decade many programmes were launched to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in Bihar. But it appears that no serious effort was made in the implementation of these programmes. For example Bihar Education Project (BEP) was launched in 1991 with the express purpose of bringing about quantitative and qualitative improvement in the elementary system of Bihar. The total project outlay for BEP is Rs.3600 million of which a substantial amount has already been spent. The DPEP launched in 1994 aimed at providing all children with access to primary education through district specific planning with emphasis on decentralized management and community mobilization. The SSA which subsumed all the previous efforts and started some new program has set a target to achieve universal primary education by the year 2007.

In spite of the above efforts Bihar has the lowest literacy rate in the country. Today Bihar has over 2.7 million children who do not go to school. In Bihar, 60 percent of children drop out of school at the primary level and around 75 percent at elementary level. The proportion is higher for girls and disadvantaged groups of children.

### **Types of School In Bihar**

In Bihar, elementary school education is divided into primary and upper primary school. The primary school ranges from class I to V where as upper primary school ranges from class VI to VIII. But the schools having class I to VIII is known as elementary schools. In Bihar, the elementary school is also known as middle school. Though Bihar has tried to follow the national policy recommendation on the breakup of 10 years of schooling comprising 5 year of primary, 3 years of upper primary followed by 2 year of secondary education, the position regarding the location of the Plus-Two still remains confusing.

The Madarsa Board Act was passed in 1921. Later, in 1980 another Act was passed superceding the 1921 Act. Among the Madarsas there are government aided ones numbering 1119, the Vitta-Rahit ones numbering 2459 and the so-called Azad Madarsas whose number is 55 not exactly known. Different sources have cited different numbers for the Azad Madarsas, but a figure of 4000 seems to be close to the mark. The 1119 aided Madarsas have some 8756 teaching and non-teaching staff members. The total government grant to them in 2006 was Rs.37 crores. In addition to it, a grant of Rs.25 lakhs was given for running the Board. Some 1.75 lakh students took the exams under the Madarsa Board

in 2006. The Madarsas do not expect nor do they receive any government assistance, and are completely outside the purview of the Government. They have been established by All India or All-Bihar Muslim institutions like Devbandi, Barailavi, Nadavi, Imarate Sharia and Edare Sharia.

The other category of government supported schools are Sanskrit Vidyalayas, 529 in number, Madarsas, numbering 1,119 and Buniyadi Vidyalayas, numbering 391. In addition, the Department of Welfare of the Government of Bihar runs 73 residential schools for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Special schools for children with disabilities are also being run and managed by this Department. The Sanskrit Vidyalayas and Madarsas are under the control and management of Bihar Sanskrit Shiksha Board and Bihar Madarsas Shiksha Board respectively, established under separate Acts.

Apart from these schools there are 391 basic schools based on the basic education policies of Mahatma Gandhi. The establishment of the Buniyadi Vidyalayas started in 1938 in Bihar. The Bihar Basic Education Board was constituted in 1939 and within a few years a number of Vidyalayas were built, with a concentration in an area called Brindavan in the Champaran District. The Buniyadi Vidyalayas run classes from grade I to grade VII. They are spread all over the State. But some 5-10 years after independence, they came to be neglected. The neglect became almost complete from the beginning of the 1970s when private primary and middle schools were taken over by the government. The Buniyadi Vidyalayas were earlier run by the Bihar Basic Education Board which had its own curriculum. The Board continues to exist, but only on paper. The teachers of these schools continue to have separate recruitment and cadre rules. However, the curriculum as prescribed in other government schools has been extended to these schools.

### Physical Facilities

In Bihar, there are 71,484 schools imparting elementary education, out of which 92.09 percent schools are government schools and about 0.06 percent are tribal schools. There are average 3 class rooms in primary schools and 5 classrooms in elementary schools. There are average 57 students are reading in a classroom. 12.30 percent primary schools are single teacher schools. Over 88 percent primary and 92 percent elementary schools have water facility (DISE Flash Statistics, 2013-14).

In Bihar, majority of the schools have not fulfilled the infrastructural norms after the three years of implementation of RTE Act, 2009. Majority of the schools have missed implementing two to three norms like kitchen sheds, ramps, and pupil-teacher ratio, which schools say are difficult to follow practically. The RTE requires classrooms to be at least 400 square feet, but most schools have only 300 to 350 square feet.

In Bihar, In India, there are 71, 484 elementary schools. Total enrolment in primary schools is 1, 40, 31, 263; whereas the total enrolment upper primary school is 52, 61, 688. Out of total enrolment at elementary level 50 percent were girls. Gender Parity Index (GPI) at primary level is 0.99 where as at upper primary level the GPI is 1.01. Out of total enrolment, 19 percent of them are SC, 2 percent ST and 15 percent Muslim enrolment.

Annual average drop-out rate at primary level is 15.3. All India student classroom ratios (SCR) are 29 where as in Bihar SCR is still 65. Over 94 percent schools have drinking water facility; 70 percent schools have girls' toilet facility; 59 percent schools equipped with ramp; 33 percent schools have their own playground; 53 percent have their own boundary wall; and 51 percent schools have their own kitchen shed (MHRD, 2014).

### **Classroom Process**

The study of BEP districts reveals that Lecturing was the most preferred way of teaching in schools. Similarly keeping the learners engaged by giving some kind of assignment was equally prevalent. Use of blackboard during teaching was also prevalent. Interestingly, leaving learners to read certain part of the book or recite poem was the next most popular way of engaging learners. This took place without any guidance of the teacher concerned in most of the cases.

Any kind of demonstration or telling stories or life related examples for explaining concepts were quite infrequent. Activities were rarely seen taking place in the classes. Teachers wasted lot of time without doing anything worth related to teaching learning.

In most of the schools time tables were not prepared. In very few instances teachers were found possessing a lesson plan. From what teachers transacted in the classrooms it was quite clear that most of the classroom transactions lacked any prior planning or preparation on the part of the teachers. Nearly half of the teachers delivered lectures around certain topics with some sort of planning. This may be due to high familiarity with the topics which they taught many times. They could plan their deliberations on the spot. Nearly two third classes started abruptly without explaining the background or linking with previous knowledge of learners. In nearly one third of classes, lessons were initiated, presented and closed well.

### **Teachers**

According to MHRD report on RTE, there are 3, 46, 415 elementary teachers in Bihar. These teachers are working in primary and elementary schools. The pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) is 1:53 where as student-classroom ratio (SCR) is 65.

In order to bring the PTR to 1:40, the Government of Bihar has recruited 2.36 lakh teachers in elementary schools. The recruitment was done in a decentralized manner with the active involvement of over 9000 recruiting units, such as 8545 Gram Panchayats for primary school teachers, 534 Panchayats Samitis for middle school teachers. In first phase, the state government has recruited 1.24 lakh primary and middle school teachers and 0.12 lakh secondary school teachers.

Although appointment of teachers on this massive scale will improve the teacher-school ratio in Bihar at par with national ratio, but the poor consolidated salary structure (Rs.9000/-, 10, 000/-and 11, 000/-per month for elementary, secondary & Sr. Secondary teachers) may lead to diversion of teachers in works other than school teaching as the salary structure is quite insufficient to support teachers' normal necessities for life.

### **School Administration**

In Bihar, the system of schooling consists of eight years of compulsory elementary education (I-VIII), two years of secondary (IX-X) and two years of senior secondary (XI-XII) education. There is no defined scheme for pre-school education, although teachers maintain record called Bal Panji for students who are below six years of age and already in school. The eight years of elementary education has been divided into five years of primary and three years of upper primary for the age groups 6-11 and 11-14 years respectively.

### **Set-up at Secretariat Level**

In Bihar, elementary education is under the charge of Department of Education, Government of Bihar. The Principle Secretary is the head of the department.

### **Set-Up at Directorate Level**

The Directorate of Education is headed by Director. Who is assisted by a hierarchy of subordinate Directors such as Joint Directors, Deputy and Assistant Directors. The Directorate is responsible for overall planning and implementation of various programs at all levels of education including administration, higher education, secondary education, research & training, primary education, adult & non-formal education, (youth welfare, sports, culture education), technical education etc.

### **Directorate of Primary Education**

The Directorate of Primary Education is headed by a Director who is assisted by Deputy and Assistant Directors. This Directorate is concerned with pre-primary and primary education, teacher's training including pre-service and in-service for primary school teachers, DIET and DPEP.

### **Set-Up at Division, District and Block Level**

For the smooth supervision and support to the school system the division is divided into district, District into educational blocks and blocks into educational areas. The elementary education is under the charge of Regional Deputy Director of Education (RDDE) at division level. RDDE is responsible for the planning, implementation, and supervision of all the educational schemes, District Education (DEO) is the in-charge of elementary (primary and upper primary education) and secondary education at district level. There are five District Programme Officer (DPOs) working under the direct supervision of DEO. Block Education Officer (BEO) is the in charge of block level educational administration.

### **School Curriculum**

Bihar government has revised its school course curriculum on CBSE pattern which is implemented from 2007. The new format would include yoga, art education, work

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experience and health education. The curriculum of grade I and II consisted of language (Mother tongue and English) and Mathematics where as that of grade III to V consisted of Language, Mathematics and Environmental Science (EVS). In addition to these subjects the students of grade VI and VII has to study Science and Social Studies. But the curriculum components of grade VIII consisted of Language (Mother tongue, English and a third language English/Urdu) Science, Social Studies, Mathematics, SUPW and Health and Hygiene.

### **Medlum of Instruction**

Although there are various Hindi based dialects spoken in Bihar. Maithili has already been included in the 8th schedule of constitution and Bhojpuri is in the process of inclusion. But Hindi is the school language throughout Bihar and broadly considered as mother tongue.

### **Teaching of English**

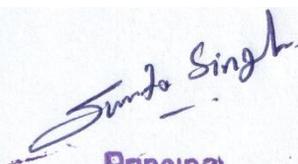
Before taking up the new CBSE curriculum English was not taught at elementary level in Bihar. Now English is a compulsory subject from the grade I.

### **Academic Session**

Normal academic session in the schools of Bihar was from January to December. Now the session will be from April to March.

### **Elementary Teacher Education Programme**

In Bihar, there are 38 District Institute of Education and Training (DIETs), 23 Primary Teacher Education Colleges (PTECs) and 8 Block Institutes of Education and Research (BIETs) that is presently running two years regular teacher training programme: Diploma in Elementary Education (D. El. Ed.). Between 1994 and 1999 around 30,000 primary teachers were recruited. Most of them were untrained teachers. The responsibility of their training was given to various DIETs for which one year compact training package was developed by the SCERT. The curriculum consisted of four theory papers and five practical papers. Theory papers included papers on Education in emerging Indian society, Educational Psychology, Educational problems and school management in the context of Bihar and Content & methodologies. The practical papers included papers on Practice teaching, SUPW, Fine arts and music, Health & physical education and Community life. The marks weightage for theory was 600 and for practical 400. There was provision for 25 percent weightage for internal evaluation in theory and 50 percent in practical. This curriculum is still followed by some private training colleges for two years programme of primary teacher training. But the state government and the examination body have raised questions on the validity of the compact curriculum developed for one year in-service training to be used for two years programme.



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The earlier developed curriculum consisted of seven theory papers namely-Theory of Education and History, Educational Psychology, School Management and Community life, Adapted curriculum (class I to VI), Hindi (Pragat Hindi for Hindi speaking students and Rashtra Bhasha for non-Hindi speaking students) and study of regional language. The curriculum contained five practical papers namely-Crafts, Practice teaching, community life and extension services, Physical training and Arts and Music. In 2006-07, the SCERT has prepared curriculum for two years Diploma in Education (D.Ed.) course to provide elementary teacher training. Bihar government has reached an understanding with IGNOU for providing in-service teacher training to untrained primary teachers through open mode. Total 40,000 primary teachers were trained through ODL mode of IGNOU.

### **Elementary Teachers Empowerment Programmes**

The entire process of teacher empowerment depends on its sensitivity to changing needs of the society and inclusion of pedagogical innovations. Pre-service teacher education needs to be supplemented with regular in-service programmes in order to keep the teacher professionally up to date. The launching of in-service Ujala training on massive scale is said to water shade in the history of BEP. It is well conceived, planned and implemented. Bihar Education Project (BEP) began its exercise in empowerment of primary teachers with a 21 day in-service training package. During the course of its implementation, a visiting appraisal mission pointed out a number of deficiencies such as trainer centered training, focus on theoretical knowledge, lack of activities, little follow-up at the field level and failure in developing a team spirit. The appraisal led to the improvement in the initial training module. Two training modules, Ujala I (1998) and Ujala II (1999) with specific focus on Multi Grade Situations, were developed. Ujala I concentrated on providing skills to teachers to effectively handle grade 1 and 2 classrooms. Ujala II was developed to respond to the teachers' needs for handling grades 3, 4 and 5. The major thrust was up-gradation of skills for effective teaching in core subjects and to some extent other areas of curriculum. Child psychology and integrated education were some important issues introduced in this package. All primary teachers of the state have already been imparted in-service training through Ujala I and II. After Ujala II training teachers felt the need of solving the problems emerging from the subject matter of different subjects. After its demands, Utkarsh (2001), a five day subject specific training module was prepared which focus on the hard points of language mathematics and environmental science for class III & V. Those teachers who had been trained in Ujala II were trained in Utkarsh for subject specific training. Over 80,000 Panchayat Shiksha Mitras (PSMs) now called Panchayat Shikshak were also provided in-service training by the BEP through 30 days training module Prerna (2002).

Now the BEP has developed a new five day training module called Ujala III (2006). Through this new module BEP intends to impart in-service training to teachers who teach at upper primary (grade 6 to 8) level. Besides teaching of Language, Mathematics and EVS the issues undertaken in this module are integrated education, sensitivity to girls' education, continuous evaluation, understanding changing behaviour of adolescents and ICT. In-service training through this module is currently in process.

Another new module 'Samarth' (2006)-three day teachers training module is also developed by BEP to sensitize elementary school teachers towards Children with Special

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Needs (CWSN). It is exclusively concentrated upon Inclusive Education (IE). The issues undertaken in this module are : concept of IE, need of its training, sensitization, types and levels of disability, causes of disability, IEP, teaching techniques, rules and regulation towards I.E.

Apart from these in-service training modules, the state government has also developed Bodhi-Samvad-I and Bodhi Samvad-II module for sensitization of elementary school teachers. Four days 'Pallav' training module is meant for class teacher of Class-I and II.

### **Training Support system**

In order to provide in-service training to all primary teachers of the state an elaborate support mechanism was developed. It would be appropriate to present here a brief outline of the support mechanism developed for in-service training to primary and upper primary teachers. At the apex level, the State Level Office (SLO), SCERT, State Resource Group (SRG) consisting of experts in teacher education, a large number of teachers and pedagogues worked together to develop the training modules. The implementation is largely the responsibility of the District Level Office (DLO) of the project, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and the District Education Office. All the districts of the project are divided in educational blocks and each of the blocks has been provided with a Block Resource Centre(BRC), with self-sufficient facilities for training. Teachers from each block are identified and trained to function as Resource Persons (Trainees). Local Block Education Extension Officer (BEEEO) or Area Education Officer (AEO) is designated as coordinator of the BRC (BRCC). The batches of 35-40 teachers drawn for 12-16 physically contiguous schools who undergo training together form a school identified as Cluster Resource Centre (CRC). The same group selects one of the teachers as coordinator (CRCC).

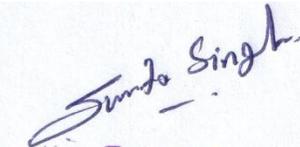
### **Training at BRC**

It was intended to offer 10-day training to each of the teacher every year. The idea was to impart various phases of Ujala modules (I, II & III) alternately till a different demand emerged from the teachers. All the districts have been able to achieve over 90 percent of training target. So far in all the districts the newly recruited teachers will be the new target for in-service Ujala training at various BRCs.

### **Recurrent One Day Monthly Training at CRC**

CRCs may be singled out as the most crucial mechanism in translating the training inputs in classroom transactions and institutionalizing the pedagogical reform processes started by recurrent Ujala training. The qualities of activities in CRC, the contributions that teacher makes and the continuity of the process combined together give a fair indication of teacher's practices in classrooms. In other words, CRC may be viewed as a mirror of quality of classroom transactions.

Realizing that a 10 day exposure in a year may not be enough to achieve the desired transformation, provisions for one day recurrent monthly training at CRC were strategically planned. The same trainers/resource persons who had trained these teachers

  
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were to offer academic help to these training sessions. It was expected that this arrangement would provide opportunities to teachers to address the missing links of annual training besides opening up new vistas of self-sufficiency in academic trouble shooting at the local level itself.

### **New Initiative for Universal and Equitable School Education**

Bihar has taken the lead in starting the process of adopting uniform educational system and has constituted a Common School System Commission (CSSC) to look into its long-term implementation. The three member commission set up in August 2006 is to submit a report within nine months. The CSS aimed at providing uniform education without discrimination based on one's economic condition to all boys and girls. No other state has taken such effort till date. The terms of reference of the commission would be the recommendations of the Education Commission (1966) that coined the concept of neighbourhood schools for equitable quality education to all children.

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