

**An Analysis of the progress of school education in India,
under *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*.**

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by

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Contents

List of illustrations	3
Abstract	5
Acknowledgement	6
Declaration	7
Intellectual Property Statements	8
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	9
Chapter 2: Literature Review	11
2.1. Education and economic development	11
2.2. Problems of School education in developing countries.....	12
2.3. Why India	15
2.3.1. School education programme in India	16
2.4. Research questions	20
Chapter 3: Methodology and data analysis	21
3.1. Research questions	21
3.2. Analytical framework	21
3.3. Aims and Objectives.....	22
3.4. Data Sources	22
3.5. Concepts.....	23
Chapter 4: Progress of School Education in India	24
4.1. Literacy rate In India	24
4.2. Progress in Universal Enrolment.....	26
4.2.1: Enrolment.....	26
4.2.2: School Infrastructure	28
4.3. Progress in Universal Retention-the second goal.	32
4.3.1. Dropout and school completion	32
4.4. Progress in ensuring quality education.....	35
4.4.1. School facilities.....	35
4.4.2: Teacher Recruitment and Training	36
4.4.3. Learning achievements	41
4.5. Cost of schooling	45
4.6. Consolidated facts.....	50
Chapter 5: Why deprivation?	52
5.1. Caste and schooling processes.....	52

5.2. Poverty as a cause of deprivation.	54
5.3. Quality of Education as a cause of educational deprivation.....	57
5.4. Concluding discussion	60
Chapter 6: Conclusion	61
6.1 The three goals.....	61
6.2. Educational attainments among socially disadvantaged groups.....	62
6.3. Areas for improvements	63
References.....	64
Annexure.....	71
Word count -----	14908

List of illustrations

List of Tables			Page
Table	4.1.1	: Rural and urban gender literacy rate in India	25
Table	4.1.2	: Social group wise literacy rate	26
Table	4.2.1	: Number of primary and upper primary schools in India	29
Table	4.2.2	Percentages of households by distance to school having	30
		primary, middle and secondary education level in rural and urban India	
Table	4.2.3	Percentages of households of different MPCE decile class in	30
		rural and urban areas with distance less than 2km to school having primary/middle/secondary level class	
Table	4.2.4	: Percentages of schools by management	31
Table	4.2.5	: Percentage of school attendance by management	32
Table	4.3.1.1	: Social group wise school dropout rate in India	34
Table	4.4.2.1.1	: Percentages of permanent and contract teachers	37
Table	4.4.2.3.1	: Percentages of single teacher schools and enrolment	39
Table	4.4.2.3.2	: Percentage of single teacher schools in selected states of India,	40
Table	4.4.2.4	: Absence rate among teachers	41
Table	4.4.3.1.1	: Percentages of children by class and reading level, all school	42
Table	4.4.3.1.2	: Percentages of children by class and arithmetic level, all school	43
Table	4.4.3.1.3	: Learning achievements in government and private schools	44
Table	4.4.3.2.1	: Learning achievements (mean percentages score by social groups	45
Table	4.5.1	: Percentages of students receiving educational incentives	47
Table	4.5.2	: Major components of private expenditure	47
Table	4.5.3	: Average annual expenditure per student (in INR)	49
Table	4.5.4	: Major reasons for dropout	50
Table	4.6.1	: Consolidated facts	51
Table	5.2.1	: Percentages of BPL and cohort survival rate	54
Annexure	1	: Number of schools per 100'000 population	71
Annexure	2	: Retention rate at primary level	72
Annexure	3	: Scheduled outlining norms and standards for a schools	73

	List of Figures	Page
Figure	4.1.1 : Gender wise literacy rate	24
Figure	4.2.1.1 : Out of School Children	26
Figure	4.2.1.2 : Gender wise Net School enrolment ration in India	27
Figure	4.2.1.3 : Never enrolled children in 6-12 age group in different social groups in India	27
Figure	4.3.1.1 : Gender Wise Primary School Completion Rate	32
Figure	4.3.1.2 : Dropout rate (Class I-X)	34
Figure	4.4.1 : Percentages of school having infrastructure	35
Figure	4.4.2.2.1 : Pupil Teacher ratio in India	38

Abbreviations

ASER	Annual status of education report
BPL	Below Poverty Line
DPEP	District Primary education Programme
MPCE	Monthly per Capita Expenditure
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
Probe	Public report on basic education in India
SSA	Sarva Siksha Abhiyan
SC	Scheduled caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration

Abstract

India committed itself to achieve universal retention at elementary level by the 2010 through an education for all programme called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* in 2001. The present study is an attempt to analyse the achievements of the programme. It finds that availability of school infrastructure and enrolments are no longer major problems, while, school completion rate and learning skills are not encouraging. Children, particularly from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups have lower learning skills and high dropout rate. Though the programme promises to offer free education, parents regularly have to spend a part of their income to send their children to schools. Further, quality of education in government schools need improvements. Students from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe are lagging behind because of poor quality of education imparted in schools and socio-economic reasons.

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Declaration

'No portion of the work referred to in to the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning'.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Providing basic education has been one of the common public policies in most countries since World War II, for illiteracy and ignorance not only prevents an individual's growth but also that of a society. Economists and policy makers across the world emphasised the need to universalise basic education long time back. However, many countries, particularly countries with low income have fared poorly in ensuring basic education for all. The declaration of Millennium Development Goals was yet again another call to bring an end to mass illiteracy and ignorance. It was observed that towards the end of the 1990s only around 40 % of the students enrolled in primary schools were able to graduate to post primary level. In fact, at the beginning of the new millennium publicly funded education programmes among developing countries suffered on many accounts like, lack of school infrastructure and trained teachers. Problems such as poor access or lack of access to schools and absence of teachers were paramount in most developing countries. Those who had to suffer from such a state of affairs in public education were mostly the poorer families who could not purchase an alternative form of education.

India, the second most populous country has been successful in the recent past in reducing poverty levels and investing more in public services like education and health. At the same time India is also home to more than 300 million people living below poverty line. India's record in providing basic education to all has also been subject to many drawbacks, although it made a constitutional commitment to provide free education to all long back in 1950. Realising the urgent need to ensure school education to all India launched a special programme in 2001 called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) to universalise basic education which was different from previous other programmes on many fronts. Both the Central and state governments pledged to support SSA financially through a partnership. The programme targeted to pay special attention to take the programme to the socially marginalised communities and to remote areas, and aimed at ensuring universal enrolment by 2007 and universal retention by 2010.

Various studies on the progress of school education in India have highlighted the positive development of the programme, like near universal enrolment, yet there are many areas in which the programme did not achieve success. One of the important drawbacks has been the exclusion of socially and economic backward communities like the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) from educational attainments. The present study is an attempt to analyse the progress of the school education programme in India in the last one decade from 2001-2010. The analysis focuses on the three goals of the programme, and it is based on secondary data available from various published sources. While analysing the focus was to show what progress was made in making school education inclusive. Based on the findings from the analysis, the discussion addresses the question of inclusion which is limited to socio economic groups only. The progress of SCs and STs on most parameters, analysed here, lag behind the national average. The SCs and STs, who have remained socially and economically excluded in India due to age old norms and beliefs, have also not benefited from the programme. In addressing the question why do the SCs and STs lag behind others, the study tries to find the answer from past studies.

The next chapter presents the literature related to the field of study. It discusses the importance of education in the paradigm of development and points out the common problems of education that most developing countries have suffered from. The chapter also discusses the findings of various studies on school education programme in India and then outlines the research questions based on the literature review. Methods adopted to answer the questions are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 and 5 discuss the research questions using secondary data and literature from previous studies. The progress made during the last one decade is analysed. While Chapter 4 discusses achievements of the programme particularly for the three goals that the programme wanted to achieve by 2010, the fifth chapter investigates the questions why some communities were left out from the progress made. While discussing the questions areas in which education policy needs to focus have been mentioned. The last chapter summarises the findings of the study and points out the areas for improvements.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the role of education in economic development, additionally, the problems of education in developing countries are also discussed. It also outlines why one should focus on India and outlines the findings of different studies on the progress of school education in India and the justification for the present study and research questions are given.

2.1. Education and economic development

“There is in our time no well-educated literate population that is poor; there is no illiterate population that is other than poor.”

- John Kenneth Galbraith

This message by the economist John Kenneth Galbraith underlines the importance of education in the efforts to uplift the lives of the poor in any society. Investment in school education is seen by modern states as an important input for economic development. The issues of education have attracted the attention of economists for its potential role to provide opportunities to individuals and societies to improve the standard of life of millions of people living in a state of ignorance and deprivation in developing countries. The importance of education in the paradigm of economic development can be traced back to the works of Schultz (1961) who opines that human capital has a major role in helping an economy move out of poverty, he further observes that education increases the abilities of individuals to fight against economic inequalities (ibid,1975). Many economists have focussed on the effects of education on the macro economy. For example, Lucas (1988) has shown in his model that formation of human capital is an important step to achieve economic growth to move out of poverty. Furthermore, Benhabib and Spiegel in a cross country estimates of physical and human capital find that a nation’s human capital stock has positive role in the growth rate of total factor productivity. At the same time the effects of education at individual level also have been a subject of discussion. Sen (1999) states that an illiterate and ignorant individual lives in a state of deprivation. Glewwe (2002) states

that the effects of education on individuals are many, as schooling process have an impact on the cognitive skills of an individual. Depending upon the kind of cognitive skills gained in school, the effects of education can be felt in many fields like health, marriage, fertility and migration. For example, Oliver (1999) has shown that in determining fertility, years of schooling are statistically strong and it negatively affect fertility. The effects of mothers' education on child health are also very well documented in literature. Psacharopoulos (1994) argues that private and social return to investment in education in developing countries is higher. Cleland and Ginneken (1988) argue that education changes the health seeking behaviour of a mother; further it helps to reduce gender biases in upbringing of children. Glewwe (2002) points out that schooling process help a woman fight traditional norms and belief and seek modern health care. Given that education promotes economic growth and ensures many benefits to an individual, many countries implement policies that seek to increase educational attainments. Economists like Hanushek (1995) and Sen (1999) demand that developing countries prioritise investment policies in education.

Policy makers have also prioritised the need to include education as an important instrument of social change. Education, a major agent of social change, has been one of the commonly accepted means of increasing the standard of life of people across the globe. More than 150 countries have pledged to provide basic education to all under Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs stipulates that by 2015, boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling in all parts of the world. The rationale for providing universal primary education is based on the argument that mass education increases the supply of educated human resource, enhance economic growth, reduce social injustice and regional inequalities and increase social equity (Chimombo, 2005). The declaration of Millennium Development Goals calls for increased focus to universalise primary education.

2.2. Problems of School education in developing countries

The expansion of school education programme received global attention soon after World War II as countries across the globe realised the need to have an educated population to accelerate economic development. As new schools were built and more children were enrolled in schools, it was doubted if the quantitative expansion of

schools also ensured quality education in developing countries, since such countries lacked the necessary resources to substantially ensure quality education (Fuller, 1986). Lockheed, (1993) points out that schooling facilities and processes in developing countries differ considerably from developed countries, and students share a resource scarce learning environment. In fact the problems of education in developing countries are many. Glewwe (2002) opines that despite remarkable progress in enrolling children in schools a substantial portion of children in developing countries do not attend any schools. The quality of school education, particularly in developing countries, is observed to be low. Many studies have pointed at the lower level of academic achievements in developing countries. For example, Heyneman and Loxley (1983) have shown that compared with the children from high income countries, those from low income countries learn less even if they spend the same amount of time in schools.

Lockheed and Verspoor (1991,p.11) point out that primary education helps an economy in two ways first by producing a 'literate and numerate population' helping individuals and families solve problems faced in their lives and secondly, by being the foundation on which 'further education is built', however, education systems in developing countries fail to meet these two objectives. Studies across the globe have pointed out at the need to improve school education in developing countries, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia where there is mass deprivation of education. According to the latest UNESCO data 61 million children of primary school age group were out of schools in 2010. Lockheed and Levin (1993) argue that problems of providing quality education to all are related to participation, effectiveness, and resources. They argue that it is a matter of principle that most developing countries guarantee primary education to children of 6 to 11 years; however they fail to meet the goal, for example, a common problem is fewer students completing primary education. Many developing countries face common problems in ensuring basic education to all, such as, dysfunctional schools, poor response from community, unaffordable access, and poor technical quality. Lockheed (1993) points out that students of high income countries at primary level have access to modern facilities, learning time of 900 hours a year, \$52 a year of non-capital material input and well-trained teachers; in comparison,

the students of low income countries have only 500 hours of learning a year, \$ 1.7 a year of non-capital material input, and a less qualified teachers.

Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) state that although children in developing countries, do get enrolled in schools, not all of them manage to complete basic education. They point out that less than 60% of children who get enrolled in school in low-income countries, and around 70% of those in lower-middle-income countries progress to the last year of primary school. Lower completion rate in primary schooling is a result of the of dropouts rates caused by poor academic achievements and a high rate of repetition (ibid).

Another problem of school education in developing countries is the high degree of absence of teachers from schools and employment of untrained and contract teachers. The availability of qualified and trained teachers in developing counties is very important, particularly for students from low income families (Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, 2005). They point out that good teachers can reduce the gap in learning achievements across income groups; however, the shortages of financial resources have compelled many countries, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, to find alternative ways to employ teachers (Bourdon, Frolich, and Michaelowa, 2007). The state of teacher quality and problems related to teachers raised a question about the quality of teaching in primary schools (ibid) as Fehrler, Michaelowa and Wechtler (2008) suggest that education programme should focus on recruiting quality teachers and not on quantity, further, they advocate that where the period of formal education and teachers command over the subject are correlated longer education for teachers increases student learning. Studies in the 1980s have demonstrated that a better education and training of teachers enhances the achievements of students (Heyneman and Loxley, 1983).

Huisman and Smits (2009), examining school enrolment data of over 220,000 children in 340 districts of 30 countries around the world, have found that socioeconomic features of a family play a major role in determining a child's enrolment in school. Their findings suggest that a child's enrolment possibility increases when the child's parents are educated, the household is wealthier and if the father has a high income. The

educating and income are found to be important. If the father is educated beyond secondary education, the likelihood of children of both sex to attend school increases by 300 per cent. Further, the education of mothers' was also found to be a facilitating factor in increasing the chances of enrolment. They have found that children of educated mothers were more likely to be enrolled in schools than those of uneducated mothers.

Distance from a school is one of the important factors affecting the primary school enrolment and attendance. The proximity of a school is key issue for primary school-age children. It is a common observation that accessing schools in urban areas is relatively easy compared to rural areas; hence urban children are more likely to attend school than rural children, since schools are readily available in urban areas (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991, p.146,). Therefore the challenges are more in rural and remote areas.

Rural areas very often lack educational institutions. Schools are not easily accessible when children have to cover a long distance to reach school. In such cases the child has to go walking, or families have to invest in transportation or make any other alternatives like arranging housing facilities with relatives. The location of a school in a distant place is particularly discouraging for female children as they are expected to assist in household activities, such as cooking and cleaning. Furthermore, families may consider the safety and chastity questions, if the school is far away, particularly for female children before sending them to school (Jones, 2008).

2.3. Why India

We have seen that studies across the world suggest that the status of education in developing suffer on many accounts. A common problem is the lower level of academic learning and school completion rate. Given that skills attained through schooling process are vital to an individual's ability to fight poverty and ignorance, it is compelling to look at the various aspects of schooling processes in India where a large share of world's population live on less than USD 2 a day. India occupies an important place in the world economy because of the size of its economy and market. India is also home

to one of the largest poorest population in the world. According to the World Bank data in 2010 around 30% of India's population live below poverty line. However in the recent past India's economic growth has attracted the attention of economists and policy makers for the success of its economic growth.

The growth of Indian economy in the last two decades saw the per capita income of India increased little more than four times from USD 332, to 1489 (at current USD). In fact, in the recent past India's economic growth success has seen poverty levels decline from 37.2% in 2004-5 to 29.8% in 2009-10 (World Bank, 2012). The government have invested in healthcare, education, infrastructure in rural areas, and insurance. One of the recent developments is the reduction in illiteracy in India. India's literacy rate in the last two decades has increased from 61.29 in 1991 to 79.31% in 2011. Much credit for the positive development is attributed to the universal education programme called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*, a flagship programme of the government of India started in 2001 to ensure elementary education for all. The investment in school education programme is one of the biggest in the world. Given that not all who get enrolled in schools in developing countries are able to complete schooling, it will be interesting to know what has been the progress of the school education programme in India, where a large part of world's poor live.

2.3.1. School education programme in India

Ensuring primary education for all has been one of the major concerns of government of India ever since India became independent. It is worth recalling that Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India in his famous speech of 'tryst with destiny' on the eve of India's independence, cautioned all that the road ahead for India was full of challenges for fighting 'poverty, ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity' (Guardian, 2007). Therefore, the first independent government in India prioritised the need to provide education to all and made a constitutional commitment by directing the state to achieve the goal by 1960. However the failure to meet the goal has made the government reiterate its promise to universalise education in almost all the five year plans.

The government of India, at the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, agreed to ensure universal primary education by 2000, however, the state of education even today is far from desirable, as according to the Census of India , 2011, around 24 % of the population is illiterate. The failure of successive governments to meet this target saw the launch of special programme in 2001, called *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Education for all). Before 2001 various programs and schemes like, Operation Black Board to meet the need of physical infrastructure, District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) on primary education, *Shiksha Karmi* Project on teacher absenteeism, *Lok Jumbish* Project for girl education were initiated.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was initiated in the year 2001 with a view to providing primary education for all children in the age group of 6-14 by the year 2007 and eight years of schooling by 2010. The programme was based on the recommendations of the state education minister conference in 1998 (Kainth, 2006). The programme aimed at three other major objectives; first, to remove all gaps in gender and social categories at primary level by 2007 and at elementary level by 2010, secondly, to achieve universal retention, and thirdly to improve the quality of elementary education. The mission statement of the programme reads that;

“the programme seeks to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. Existing schools with inadequate teacher strength are provided with additional teachers, while the capacity of existing teachers is being strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching-learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at a cluster, block and district level. SSA seeks to provide quality elementary education including life skills. SSA has a special focus on girl's education and children with special needs. SSA also seeks to provide computer education to bridge the digital divide” (Government of India, 2012).

The intervention of the programme included creation of new schools and other schooling facilities such as toilets and drinking water, recruiting and training of teachers, support for text books. This programme is considered to be one of the largest in the world, supported financially by domestic resources, supplemented partly by the

European Commission, International Development Association of the World Bank, and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom.

SSA was different from previous other efforts as Banerji and Mukharjee (2008) observe, first, it covered all the states of India, secondly, both the central and state governments decided to work on a commonly agreed framework, thirdly, special district education societies were set up to support the financial needs of the programme, fourthly, School Management Committees with community participation were made part of the programme to ensure accountability. Under the programme a clear time frame, for ensuring primary education to the 6-14 age group by 2010 was set through a partnership with centre, state and local governments (Jha, 2007).

In fact, just before the deadline of the programme, the government of India in 2009 enacted the Right to Education Act. The act is seen as an important milestone in India's endeavour to ensure access to education for all. Although there are gaps in the Act (for details, see Jha and Parvati, 2010), the Act reaffirmed the need to provide quality education to all (see annexure 3 for components of quality). The Act is an attempt to ensure a common standard in schools across India. It is common that in most developing countries the public services suffer from problems of monitoring and effective implementation (World Bank, 2004), education in is also not an exception in India.

Studies discussing the problems and gaps in the public funded education programme in Indian. ASER-Pratham (various years), Kingdon (2007), Jha (2007), Banerji and Mukherjee (2008) point out the positive and negative developments in the school education programme of India. Kingdon (2007) points out that reasonable progress was made in making primary education accessible by all. The study points out several positives developments under the programme like near universal enrolment and increase in literacy rate which are encouraging. However some neglected areas are also highlighted. The attendance rate is low particularly in northern states, further there are inter-state differences in school enrolment rate, there is gender inequality in accessing education, participation in secondary school education is unequally distributed, and thirdly, quality of education needs to be increased since learning achievements are very

low in primary and secondary level, fourthly the facilities in school are very poor and teacher absenteeism is very high. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), published by Pratham, a leading non-government organisation, pointed out that the quality of education in most government schools is poor (ASER, 2012).

The study of Dostie and Jayaraman(2006) has found that in rural India individual household' socio- economic features played an important role in determining the enrolment of children. Their findings suggest that parent's education particularly that of a mother's, increases the chances of a girl's enrolment in school. Further they also argue that having livestock is a hindrance to enrolment, and village roads also play a major role in having children in school. Huisman, Rani, Smits (2010) using data for 70,000 children from 437 districts in 26 states of India also find that socio-economic factors such as, paternal education, mother education, family income are major factors in determining the enrolment in rural areas. Kurosaki et al (2006) also find that parent's education is important in reducing child labour and increasing school enrolment, and economically sound families are more likely to send their children to school. They also find that the mother's education is important for both boys and girls; however the fathers' education is significant for boys only.

Banerji and Mukharji (2008) highlight the positive effects of SSA on enrolment and expansion of school infrastructure under SSA. They also note that recruitment and teacher training have increased between 2002 and 2006; however they point out also that there is still room for improvement in those areas. In fact, they emphasized that SSA should focus on ensuring quality of education. They identified three areas for SSA to focus; reducing dropout rates and increasing retention, improving learning outcomes, and guaranteeing finance from state and centre. They also point out the need to give special focus to isolated and backward areas and to communities historically neglected where expansion of quantity and quality of education is needed.

Dreze and Kingdon(2001) examining the determinates of school participation in India from household survey observes that it is less likely that children from scheduled caste and scheduled tribe will go to school, which may be linked to social discrimination in schooling system since they observed disadvantages among these groups even after

controlling for parental motivation. Another study by Jha (2007) concludes that although India has achieved considerable progress since independence, due to lack of education a large section of the society stay in a state of deprivation. This, for the author, represents 'among the gravest failures of India's post-independence development strategy' (Jha, 2007, p.101).

2.4. Research questions

As is evident from the discussion that although school education programme in India has succeeded in enrolling students from all communities not all of them are able to complete the basic education, particularly those from SCs and ST communities. Therefore, the present study aims to address the following questions:

1. Why did some communities fail to get benefited through SSA?
2. What are the gaps in public policy to make school education more inclusive and deliver quality education?

The chapter outlines the framework within which the research questions are addressed. The epistemological stand the study has taken is also stated here; additionally it also clarifies basic terms used in the study.

3.1. Research questions

The dissertation addresses the following two questions in Indian context.

- Why did some communities fail to get benefited through SSA?
- What are the areas for improvements to make school education more inclusive and deliver quality education?

3.2. Analytical framework

The study, in answering the questions, takes into consideration all the three aims of the programme, and examines if the aims are met. It also examines if SSA has been successful in taking the benefits of the programme to the socially disadvantaged groups in course of the progress of the programme. The three aims that SSA are; first, to remove all gaps in gender and social categories elementary level by 2010, secondly, to achieve universal retention, and thirdly to improve the quality of elementary education. Since SSA covers education of children of age 6-14, the discussion and analysis focus on students of the target age group in different classes, and reference is also made to high school level to capture the transition from elementary to secondary level. Additionally, reference to intra-state differences in progress is also made, occasionally to point out that the disparities also exist regionally. However, since the difference in progress was found to be noticeable among different socio-economic groups, and at the national level the progress under SSA seems to be improving, much of the discussion and analysis focus on the disparities in socio-economic groups in India.

The dissertation analyses the progress made on each component of SSA in ensuring equitable access, quality education, and the efforts to achieve universal retention. The programme aimed at providing equitable access by building schools in remote places

and by making elementary education free, while to improve quality and achieve universal retention infrastructure facilities like drinking water, toilets, free supply of uniform, books and stationery, and recruiting teachers to reduce pupil teacher ratio and to increase the availability of teachers in remote areas were undertaken. The study reports the progress of each component and consolidates the findings at the end of the analysis, and based on the facts it makes an attempt to explain why such a pattern has been observed. Findings and arguments of other studies, examining similar form of disparities are referred to answer the first question. At the same time, while analysing the data the areas for improvements are also pointed out, which form the basis for answering the second questions.

3.3. Aims and Objectives

Aim: The aim of the dissertation is to analyse the achievements of the programme.

Objectives: In line with the goals of the programme, the dissertation has the following objectives;

- To understand the extent to which students from different communities complete elementary education.
- To analyse the quality of school education in India.

3.4. Data Sources

The research questions that dissertation addresses demands an explanation of qualitative and quantitative aspect of the progress the school education programme. Published data from various sources and findings of other studies have been the major source of the analyses. Data from secondary sources are used to analyse what progress has been made under the flagship programme while the findings and arguments of previous other studies are referred to answer the research question. Time series data is used as per availability. The study has relied on secondary data from, Census of India 2011, India Human Development Survey, 2004 -05, World Bank, Ministry of Human Resource Development, NUEPA, NSSO and 7th All India education survey, NCERT.

3.5. Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the study is that it does not have any primary data to corroborate the findings from the secondary sources. Secondly, the study focuses on SCs and STs only and does not cover the issues related to disabled people and gender discrimination. As there was not much difference in primary school completion rate and enrolment between boys and girls, discussion related to gender is not given focus. While issues related to disabled people are beyond the scope of the study.

3.5. Concepts

It is necessary that the meaning of the terms in the research questions are clarified as the analysis and discussion are based on those terms. The terms are interpreted within the aims of SSA.

Benefits: a student will be assumed to have benefited from the programme if she/he has completed schooling in a government school up to the age 14 and has the required learning skill of the grade to which she/he belongs.

Quality education: it refers to the measures taken to increase the school retention and improve academic achievements levels of students which include measures like recruiting and training teachers, increasing infrastructure facilities, reducing pupil teacher ratio, supplying freely books and stationery available.

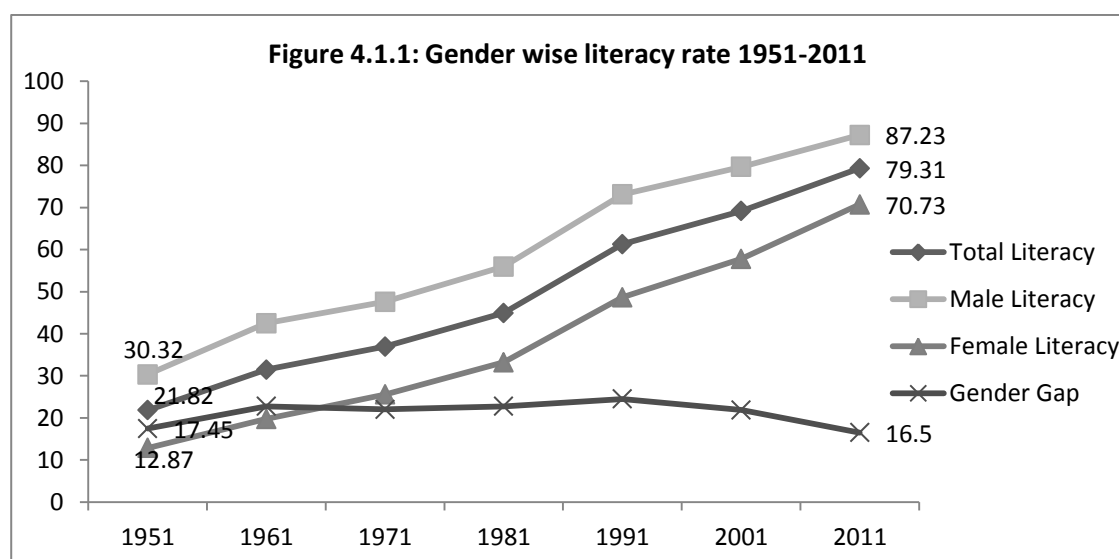
Community: it refers to different caste groups in India, like Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and higher caste.

Chapter 4: Progress of School Education in India

This chapter examines the progress of the programmes in meeting the three goals of SSA. For each goal progress in different indicators are analysed. While analysing the progress, the gaps in implementations of the programme are also identified. At the end of the discussion a consolidated fact sheet for different social groups for relevant indicators in a tabular form is generated to know the overall picture of the programme with respect to the three different goals.

4.1. Literacy rate In India

One of the key targets of SSA was to provide primary education for all children in the age group of 6-14 by the year 2007 and eight years of schooling by 2010. It is important to note here that the literacy rate of India in 1951 was very low at 21.82 per cent. India's attempt to achieve universal education started with its constitutional commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age 14 by 1960, yet in 2011 only 79.11 % of its population was literate. However, substantial progress was made in the last two decades (1990-2010) as far as literacy is concerned.



Source: Census of India 2011

Figure 4.1.1 shows the progress of gender-wise literacy rate in India in the last seven censuses. As we compare the gender-wise progress in different decades a significant degree of change can be observed in the last two decades. As per the Census data of

India in 2011, around 87 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women in India are literate. At the same time a close look at the data reveals that gender difference over a period of time in getting reduced, although the gap continues to exist. Table.4.1.1 shows the statistics related to gender wise rural urban literacy rate. The improvement in the last decade in female literacy rate is more than that of male in both rural and urban areas.

Table 4.1.1: Rural urban gender literacy rate ,India

	2001			2011		
	India	Rural	Urban	India	Rural	Urban
Male	75.3	70.7	86.3	82.1	78.6	89.7
Female	53.7	46.1	72.9	65.5	58.8	79.9

Source: Census of India, 2011.

It is also obvious that rural literacy rate continues to remain low, and female literacy rate also continues to lag behind from that of male in both rural and urban areas.

At the same time the literacy rate of Scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) also has lagged behind. Table 4.1.2 shows that the social backward communities

Table 4.1.2:Social group wise literacy rate

	Male	Female
High Caste Hindu	91	74
Other Backward castes	80	57
Scheduled Caste	72	50
Scheduled Tribe	66	44
All India	79	58

Source: Indian Human Development Survey, 2004-5.

like the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are behind the national average and the literacy rate for high caste Hindu community is the best among all the social groups. Such disparity in achieving literacy rate calls for closer examination of the schooling

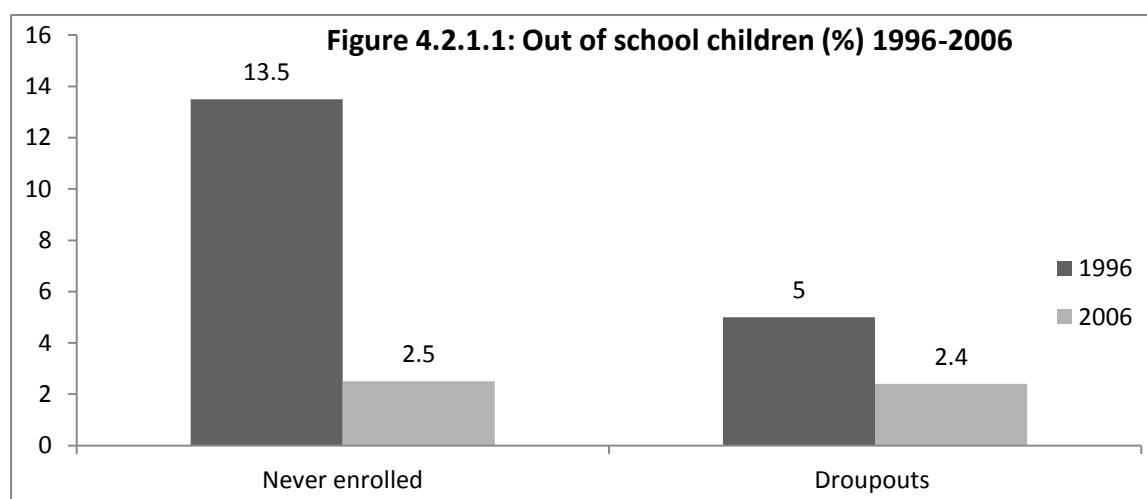
process. The next section will discuss and analyse the progress made in ensuring school education to all.

4.2. Progress in Universal Enrolment

One of the objectives of the school education programme, SSA, was to achieve universal enrolment. This section examines if SSA was successful in meeting its first goal.

4.2.1: Enrolment

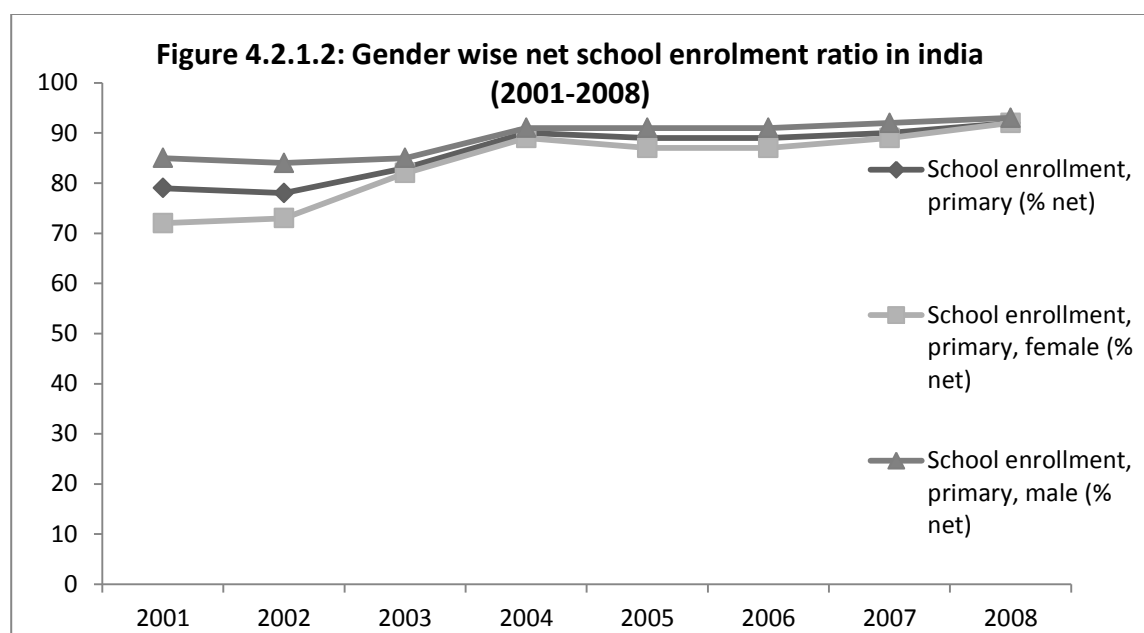
One of the few policies which have received global attention is the need to ensure primary school enrolment. The inclusion of primary schooling as an element of measure of the social economic development among poor countries by the World Bank has prioritised the policy of schooling in many countries. At the beginning of this millennium many developing countries were lagging behind on school enrolment. The situation in India in the last ten years has improved. The findings of De, et al. (2011) in Probe states, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, and Rajasthan a, where in 1996 PROBE Team(1990) conducted survey, point out that there is decrease in the number of children who were never enrolled in schools. Figure.4.2.2.1 shows the fraction of never-enrolled children and dropouts in the 6-12 age groups in 1996 and 2006. The figure suggests that the percentage of never enrolled



Source: De, et al. 2011

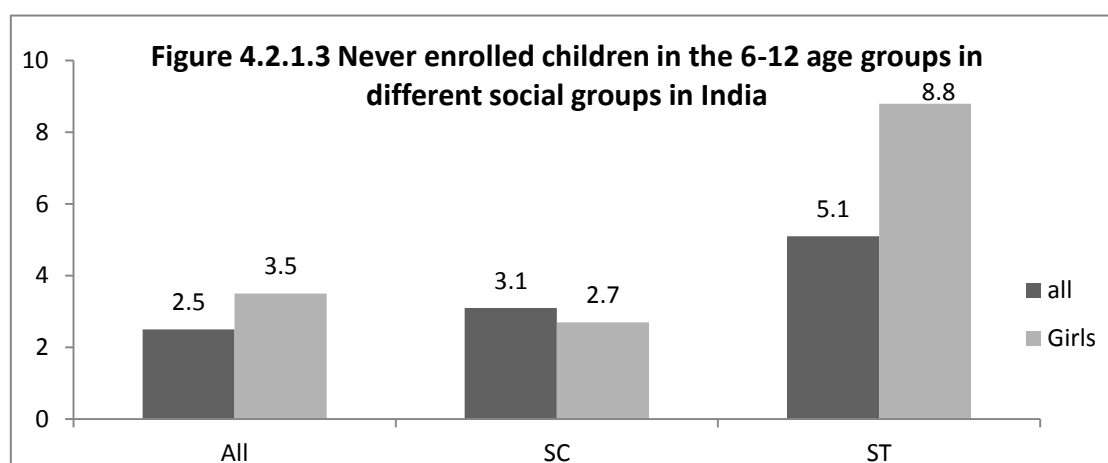
children has declined from 13.5 % in 1996 to 2.5% in 2006. The decline in the number of children out of school is much due to increased girls' enrolment (De, et al. 2011). ASER (2010) findings point out that in rural area the percentage of children in the 6-14 age groups never enrolled in 2010 is 3.5 %, which was 6.6% in 2005. Figure 4.2.1.2

shows the improvement in school enrolment in primary schools in India from 2001 to 2008.



Source: World Bank, 2012.

The figure, based on World Bank data, reveals that India has made a substantial progress in enrolling children in schools. At the beginning of the millennium the net enrolment for India stood at 79% and it increased to 93% in 2011. The net enrolment achieved is encouraging as it is approaching 100 per cent. At the same time the gender gap in net enrolment has also got reduced, the trend is encouraging. It is indeed



Source: De, et al. 2011.

heartening to note that the net female enrolment ratio is approaching that of the boys and promising to reach the target of 100%.

Although the achievement in school enrolment is promising it is important to look at the progress made in enrolling of children of all social groups, particularly those of the marginalised. Figure 4.2.1.3 shows the proportion of never enrolled children in the 6-12 year age groups in different social groups in India. It is evident that 2.5% of the overall children were never enrolled in school. The percentage is higher for the marginalised groups like SC and ST as 3.1% children among the SCs and 5.1% children among the STs have never been enrolled in the schools.

PROBE Team (1999) found that majority of parents expressed their interest in providing education to their children. Nearly 98 per cent of parents considered education to be important for their boys, while 89 per cent supported girls' education. These findings were very important in the backdrop of general opinion that parental lack of interest in education was one of the key reasons for large number of out of school children (De, et al, 2011).

The recent increase in enrolment in school across India is a result of various efforts put by the government. De, et al. (2011) mention that in Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and earlier efforts under District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) contributed to the positive development. The report highlights that policies like establishing new schools in remote areas, special effort for increasing enrolment at the start of academic year, progresses in school infrastructure, midday meal service, have helped in attracting children to school. Government funded school meals is one of the policies many countries like, Bangladesh, India, Jamaica, Brazil, Swaziland have initiated to encourage school attendance (Vermeersch and Kremer, 2004).

4.2.2: School Infrastructure

Availability of schools is an important element in ensuring access to school for all children. With the availability of schools in the neighbourhood, access to school improves. Hence construction of schools in large numbers is obviously a necessary step in ensuring equitable access and ensuring universal enrolment. It is to be emphasised that particularly in rural areas and for girls, location of the school is vital for attendance. Tilak (1996) has noted that closeness of school works as an important influencing factor for children mostly at primary and upper primary level. The

government of India In 1985 pointed out that lack of adequate numbers of school was one of the constraints in getting children to school. Hence, massive expansion of school was under taken in SSA to make school available in all parts of India.

The growth in the number of schools under the programme is indeed noticeable. The progress in construction of school in India is shown in the Table 4.2.1. The National Policy on Education 1986 has outlined that schools should be established in large numbers in all parts of India so that schools become accessible to all.

Table 4.2.1: Number of primary and upper primary school in India (in '000)

Year	Primary	Upper Primary
1990-91	560.9	151.5
2000-01	638.7	206.3
2009-10	823.1	367.7

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development

In 2010 the number of school stands at 0.823 million for primary school and 0.367 million for upper primary schools. It is noteworthy to mention here that in 2000 the number of primary school in India was around 0.638 million. In the last two decades around 0.2 million primary schools have been constructed.

The number of primary schools per one lakh (100,000) population in India in 2001 was 62.2 which improved to 71.1 by 2005. However the figure varies widely among states (see annexure 1 for details). The government policy stipulates that a village with minimum of 300 populations is entitled to a primary school building. Table 4.2.2 shows that the availability of primary schools in most part of the country has improved in both in rural and urban areas. Most primary schools, little more than 90%, are located within 1 km distance from households.

Table 4.2.2: Percentage of households by distance to school having primary, middle and secondary educational level in rural and urban India

Sector	Level	Less than 1km	Between 1 to 2 km	Between 2km to 3km	Between 3km to 5 km	More than 5 km
Rural	Primary	91.7	6.50	1.20	0.02	0.01
	Middle	61.6	17.1	12.2	5.80	3.10
	Secondary	30.7	16.6	19.7	15.8	17.1
Urban	Primary	92.3	6.70	0.09	0.01	0.00
	Middle	82.5	14.1	2.50	0.07	0.02
	Secondary	68.6	22.1	5.60	2.50	1.00

Source: NSSO, 2010.

There is hardly any difference between rural and urban areas in primary school availability. It is a good achievement in ensuring equitable access to all social-economic groups. Analysis of availability of school to various income groups (Table 4.2.3) also shows that access to primary schools across all income groups is good, both in rural and urban areas, as more than 95% in all income groups have access to primary schools within a 2 km range.

Table 4.2.3: Percentages of households of different MPCE decile class in rural and urban areas with distance less than 2 km. to school having primary/middle /secondary level classes.

Decile class (%) of MPCE	Rural			Urban		
	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Primary	Middle	Secondary
0-10	98.2	72.4	38.8	98.8	93.1	84.3
10-20	98.4	74.8	41	98.7	94.6	87.5
20-30	98.7	76.1	42.1	99.4	96.8	90.3
30-40	98.4	77.7	43.5	99.1	96.2	88.4
40-50	98.9	78.5	44.4	99.5	97.2	91
50-60	98.6	79.3	46.9	99.1	97.5	90.9
60-70	98.5	79.3	47.2	99	97.4	91.6
70-80	98.2	80.5	49.4	99.2	97.4	92.4
80-90	97.8	81.5	52.2	99	97.3	92.8
90-100	97.5	82.7	58.5	98.2	96.6	93.4

Source: NSSO, 2010.

However, a close examination of the data reveals that it is only in primary schools that there is equitable access both in rural and urban areas, as we move from primary to post primary and secondary school one can find that the rural areas and households in the lower decile have less and less access within their neighbourhood. The location of a school, as we discussed earlier, is crucial to attendance, particularly to female children. Furthermore, the location of a school in a distant place increases the private school expenditure as a household has to invest time and money to send a child to school. There is a need to make post primary schools and secondary schools accessible to all.

It necessary here to examine the progress of school infrastructure to know if the efforts of the government or private bodies have led to the growth of number of schools in India. According to the data of DISE (District Information System for Education) of NUEPA, the percentage of government school to total school has declined over the last ten years, indicating that the growth in the numbers of school is more in the private schools. Table 4.2.4 reveals that the share of private schools has increased from 11.75% in 2003 to 19.42 % in 2010 while the percentage of the government schools has declined to 80.37% in 2010 from 86.05% in 2003. De, et al. (2011) point out the percentages of villages having private school has also increased in the last one decade.

Table 4.2.4: Percentage of schools by management

School type	2003	2010
Government school %	86.05	80.37
Private schools %	11.75	19.42

Source: NUEPA(various years)

It is necessary to point out here that attending private schools involves a question of affordability, as the cost of schooling is incurred by the household. The poor with

Table 4.2.5 Percentage of school attendance by management

	Rural	Urban	Total
Primary			
Government	81.4	39.6	72.5
Private	18.2	59.1	26.8
Middle/Post Primary			
Government	78.3	44.2	69.9
Private	21.3	54.8	29.6

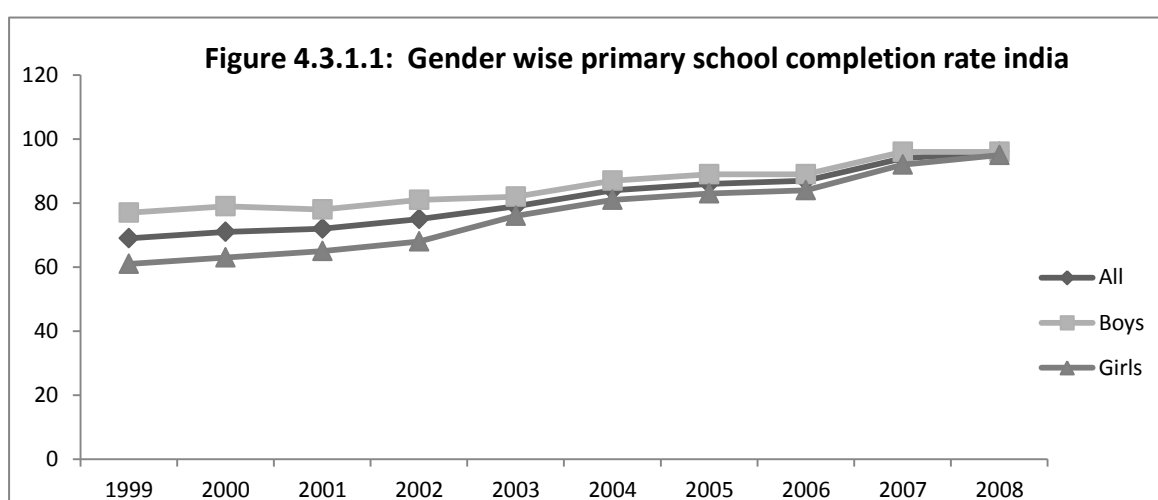
Source: Adapted from NSSO, 2010.

limited resources send their children to government schools. It is very clear from Table 4.2.5 that majority of students in rural areas attend government schools while in urban areas most of the students attend private schools. However, the national average suggests that around 72% of those enrolled attend government schools at primary level and around 70% in post primary level.

4.3. Progress in Universal Retention-the second goal.

The second goal of SSA was to achieve universal retention. This section analyses the progress made through the programme in retaining all the students enrolled in elementary school.

4.3.1. Dropout and school completion

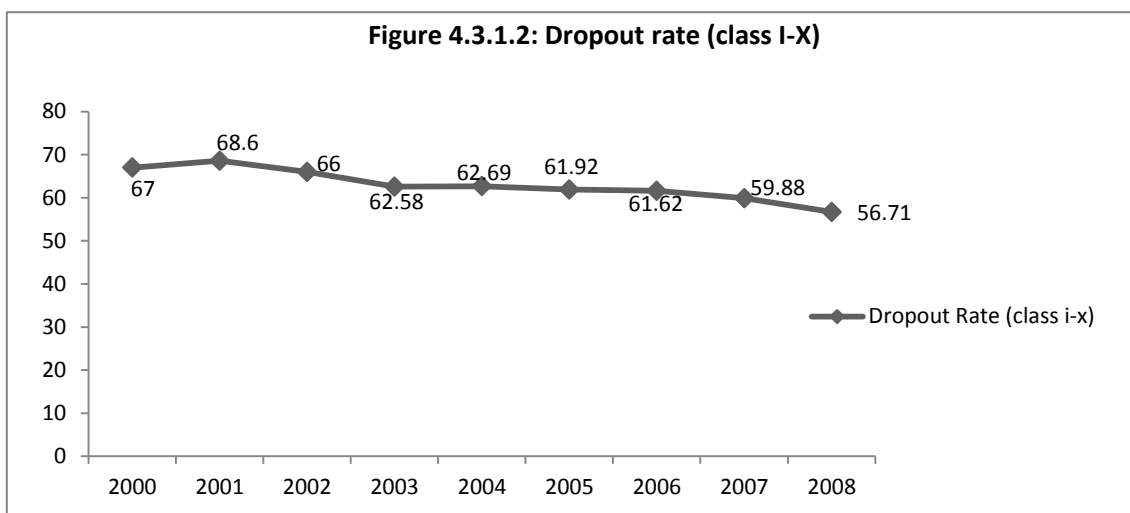


Source: World Bank, 2012.

Although considerable progress has been made in enrolling school children, yet, basic school completion has remained a cause of concern. Merely ensuring enrolment in schools does not necessarily mean that a child will graduate from the school. It is important to note that India's secondary school education enrolment is not very encouraging. According to the World Bank data in 2010 the gross secondary school enrolment in India is 63 % indicating that more than two third students enrolled in primary schools are not able to graduate to secondary level. This is lower than many developing countries in the Latin America and East Asia. The situation is discouraging for girls and backward communities in India (Siddhu, 2011). If universal primary education is to be achieved it is important that school dropout rate is reduced. Moreover, Venkatanatayana (2009) points out that dropout and grade repetition leads to waste of resources and increase social cost. Early dropout from school makes a person less skilled and less employable; further, the resources for education are not put to best use.

In India the primary school completion rate over the last ten years has improved. Figure.4.3.1.1 shows the progress made in India with regard to primary school completion. The figure suggests that primary school completion rate for all in 1999 was as low as 69%, while it was 61% for girls and 77% for boys. Over the last ten years the school completion rate, at national level, has improved. However this needs to be examined against the policy changes made in graduation of primary schooling. Venkatanatayana (2009) points out that the policy of non-detention stipulates that a student is promoted to next grade if attendance of the student is satisfactory. It means that all those who meet a satisfactory level of attendance are prompted to the next grade; implying that students are prompted to next level, even if they have not achieved the necessary skill for the next level (although grade repetition is also a problem). However, such policy has adversely affected the post basic/middle and secondary school completion rate as students without the required skills enter higher level of grade and find it difficult to continue in higher level of learning environment (the learning achievements of students are discussed separately).

It is important to note that early dropout from school means less skilled labour market. Figure.4.3.1.2 shows the school dropout rate in India from primary school to high



Source: Ministry of Human Resource 2012

school. In 2000 the dropout rate was as high as 67%. It is obvious that the dropout rate has fallen from 67% in 2000 to 56.71% in 2008. It means that that only around 40 % of those who enter primary school could actually complete secondary school in India. Table 4.3.1.1 shows school dropout rate in India according to grade and social group for the year 2007-8.

Table 4.3.1.1: Social group wise school dropout rate in India, 2008									
Category	Classes I-V			Classes I-VIII			Classes I-X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
India	25.7	24.41	25.09	43.72	41.34	42.68	56.55	57.33	56.71
SC	34.37	24.52	30.09	53.56	51.12	52.47	68.05	67.9	68.42
ST	31.03	31.68	31.34	62.62	62.31	62.48	76.02	77.97	76.85

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2012.

A common observation in the table is that for both the marginalised communities, SCs and STs, the dropout rates are higher than the national average. The dropout rate also increases as we progress from primary to upper-primary and to high school indicating that more and more student's dropout from school as they progress from primary school to high school. It is evident that only about little more than 40 % of those who enter primary school go on to complete high school. Furthermore, it is alarming to note

that by the time students from SC and ST communities reach high school around two third of them drop out. Given that the communities are marginalised and traditionally lack access to education, special focus needs to be given to increase the retention of children from these communities. However, since the dropout rate is still high, attention should focus now on the reduction of number of children dropping out with special focus to be given to retain girls, and children from minority communities.

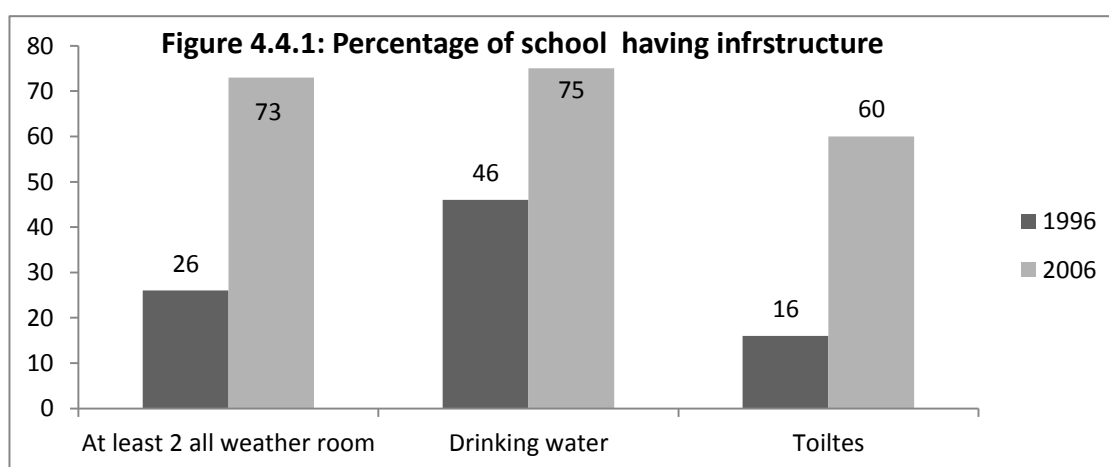
4.4. Progress in ensuring quality education.

The third objective of SSA was to ensure quality education to all by 2010. To provide quality education, SSA made provision to recruit more teachers, supply of books and stationery was made free, and infrastructure facilities in school were improved. This section analyses if SSA could ensure quality education to all.

No doubt that the construction of school buildings is a necessary step towards reducing gaps in physical access to schools, what is however, also vital is the range of facilities provided in a school. Several studies have found that better infrastructure in a school increases the attendance of students and reduce teacher absenteeism (for example, Branham, 2004). Facilities in schools like toilets, drinking water, playground, class room, are important as they contribute towards increasing attendance and creating a better school environment, lack of infrastructure in school works as a demotivating factor for both teachers and students (Kremer, et al., 2005).

4.4.1. School facilities

Although the availability of school infrastructure has increased over the last one



Source. De, et al. (2011)

decade, it is necessary that we examine the data closely to find out if facilities like drinking water and toilets have improved or not. The Seventh All India Educational Survey (NCERT, 2006) conducted across India has found that more than around 2.4% of schools were functioning without any school buildings, around 1000 in tents and 28,000 in *kutcha* buildings. The functioning of these schools is dependent of weather conditions. Schools without any buildings are closed on rainy days and shivering cold conditions, which reduce the number of teaching days.

The PROBE Team (1999) found that the school facilities in the Probe states of India were in miserable condition. De, et al. (2009) have however have pointed out that the situation has improved. Figure 4.4.1 points out the improvements in school infrastructure facilities. It is evidence that a little less than three-fourth of school had at least two all-weather rooms in 2006, compared to 26% in 1996. Improvement in drinking water facilities was also observed by 2006. In 1996 only 46 % of the schools had drinking water facilities which improved to 75% by 2006. Availability of toilet facilities also became better. In 1996 only 16% of the schools had toilets compared to 60% in 2006. Although the situation has improved, there is still gap. Various anecdotal accounts and case studies (for example, De, et al., 2011) have revealed that many schools are run without any school building and minimum basic facilities like toilet and drinking water. In many cases although toilets were constructed but the majority of them were found to be defunct (ibid).

4.4.2: Teacher Recruitment and Training

One of the important inputs in ensuring quality education is the quality of teachers. Teachers play important role in facilitating learning for children. Kingdon and Sipahimalani-rao (2010) point out that with the increased focus on universalisation of education in India from the 1990s, the demand for teachers rose up and the pupil teacher ratio increased from 35.6 to 50.2 in the year 2000. As primary school enrolment increased and construction of schools in remote areas was undertaken many states were faced with serious shortages of teachers. In fact, the National Committee of State Education Ministers in 1999 recommended that to reduce the financial burden and to meet the immediate need of teachers contract teachers be employed (Govinda and Josephine, 2005). Further, the lack of resources among state

governments has been one of the important factors which compelled almost all states to employ contract teachers (ibid). De, et al. (2011) highlight that over a period of time from 1996 to 2006 the situation of teacher employment in India has changed. In 1996, a substantial portion the teachers were government employees but by 2006 many states have recruited contract teachers. Local village committee or school management committee were authorised to appoint and employ contract teachers to schools. The monthly income of these contract teachers is less than that of the regular teachers and they are employed mostly on a fixed contract term for one year. Very often these teachers lack professional training.

4.4.2.1: Contract and Untrained Teachers

This policy of employing untrained and contract teachers has received a mixed response. Those who support the policy argue that employment of contract teachers has reduced pupil-teacher ratios, single teacher schools, cost of education and increased teachers' accountability; while those who are against the policy claim that it has created two groups of teachers doing the same kind of work but being differently paid, further, quality of teaching is also doubted as many of the contract teachers did not have professional training (Kingdon and Sipahimalani-rao, 2010).

Table.4.4.2.1.1: Percentage of permanent and contract teachers

Background		Permanent Teachers%	Contract Teachers%	All Teachers %
Gender	Female	30	53	37
Social Back Ground	General Caste	43	35	40
	OBC	38	39	38
	SC/ST	18	24	21
	Non-Hindu	1	2	1
Education	Class 12 and less	41	45	42
	Graduate/Post Graduate	59	55	58
Training	Diploma education/JBT/CT	56	18	40
	Degree Training(B.Ed.)	27	11	21
	Only in service training	8	37	20
	No Training	9	34	19

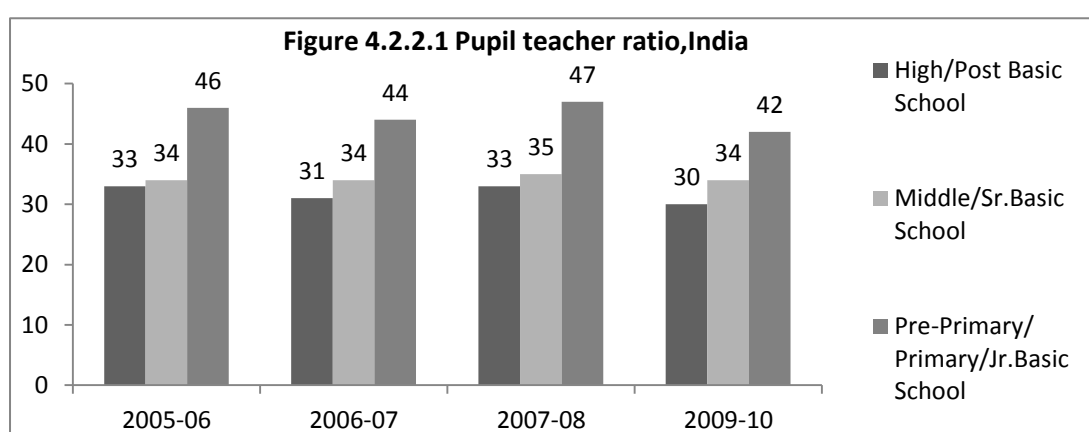
Note: JBT-Junior Basic Training: CT- Certification Training

Source: De, et al.(2011)

The findings of De, et al. (2011) with regard to contract teachers reveal the state of employment of teachers in India. The data from the survey disclose that there is not much difference between the contract teachers and permanent teachers as far as education is concerned. Among the permanent teachers 41% had education up to higher secondary or less, while 45% of the contract teachers had the same education. Further, a large portion of the contract teachers, as well as that of permanent teachers (55% and 59% respectively) are university graduates and post graduates. However, one striking difference between the contract teacher and permanent teachers is the extent of training received. The data reveal that 83% of the permanent teachers and only 29% of the contract teachers are trained. Clearly there is a need to focus on training the recruited teachers.

4.4.2.2. Pupil Teacher ratio

It is also necessary that we examine if there has been considerable changes to the pupil



Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development (various years).

teacher ratio due to the change in teacher employment policy, and also because the pupil teacher ratio is an important component in ensuring quality education. Learning of a child is very much dependent on the time a student devotes to learning and a teacher engages in teaching (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991). Most developing countries try to increase the student teacher class room interaction by reducing the pupil teacher ratio. It is important to note that class size is particularly important for the socially disadvantaged groups. Robinson (p.85, 1990) states 'students who are economically disadvantaged or from some ethnic minorities perform better academically in smaller class'. Blatchford and Mortimore (1994) point out that when the class size is reduced

the teacher and student engage more intensively in teaching and learning process. Figure 4.2.2.1 shows the pupil teacher ratio in India from 2005 to 2010. It is clear from the table that there is hardly any change in the pupil teacher ratio. In fact at primary school level the ratio is high. As is evident, the pupil teacher ratio is higher for primary school and there is hardly any change to the pupil teacher ratio even after employing untrained and contract teachers. De, et al.(2011) also state that engaging contract teacher has not resulted in any considerable change in pupil teacher ratio.

4.4.2.3. Single-Teacher Schools

Another problem that employment of contract and untrained teachers intended to address was the shortage of teachers. Table 4.4.2.3.1 shows the percentages of single-teacher schools and the percentages of enrolment in such single-teacher schools from 2003-2010. It is obvious from the data that there is a decrease in the single-teacher schools in the last one decade, however, still 8.86 % of all the schools and 11.8% of all primary school are single-teacher school. Further in such single-teacher schools 6.11% of primary school children are enrolled. In most single-teacher schools students get less time to interact with teachers which affect the leaning skills.

Table 4.4.2.3.1: Percentage of single teacher schools and enrolment 2003-10

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	Single teacher schools (%)							
All Schools	12.93	13.36	12.17	11.76	10.13	9.71	9.33	8.86
Primary Schools	-	-	-	-	13.73	13.25	12.26	11.8
	Enrolment in Single teacher schools (%)							
Primary Schools	11.75	12.58	8.39	8.16	6.84	6.41	6.05	6.11
All Schools	7.65	8.28	5.65	4.92	4.05	3.72	3.65	3.56

Source: NUEPA, various years.

Although the percentage of single-teacher school at national level is 8.86% for all

Table 4.4.2.3.2: Percentages of single-teacher schools in selected states of India

States	Primary only	Primary with upper Primary	Upper primary only
Arunachal Pradesh	63.98	7.50	-
Assam	33.31	0.41	0.14
Goa	31.20	1.09	-
Jammu & Kashmir	20.79	0.29	6.06
Karnataka	16.31	0.80	9.16
Madhya Pradesh	17.44	2.39	11.52
Maharashtra	14.21	0.30	1.30
Manipur	18.00	0.44	2.08
Meghalaya	18.05	0.76	0.34
Orissa	12.22	0.79	3.47
Rajasthan	31.42	2.51	7.28
Uttarakhand	19.85	2.48	4.98
All States	13.25	1.23	11.1

Source: NUEPA, 2012.

schools and 11.8% for primary schools, there are wide regional differences among states. Table 4.4.2.3.2 shows that in a few selected states, a considerable percentage of schools are single-teachers school, particularly in primary schools. States like Arunachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, Goa, and Assam have almost one third of primary schools as single-teacher schools, reflecting that engaging untrained teachers has not lead to reduction of single-teacher schools.

4.4.2.4: Teacher Absence

Teachers' absence is a common problem in many Indian schools. A study by Chaudhury et al., (2006) in Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru, and Uganda has found teacher absence to be high. The following table displays the teacher's absence rate in some selected states of India. It is evident from the table that a considerable portion of

teachers remain absent. On an average one each from four teachers in India is found to be absent: however, the figure differs across many states.

Table 4.4.2.3.3: Absence rate among teachers

State	Absence %	State	Absence %
Maharashtra	14.6	West Bengal	24.7
Gujarat	17.0	Andhra Pradesh	25.3
Madhya Pradesh	17.6	Uttar Pradesh	26.3
Kerala	21.2	Chhattisgarh	30.6
Himachal Pradesh	21.2	Uttaranchal	32.8
Tamil Nadu	21.3	Assam	33.8
Haryana	21.7	Punjab	34.4
Karnataka	21.7	Bihar	37.8
Orissa	23.4	Jharkhand	41.9
Rajasthan	23.7	Weighted Average	24.8

Source: Kremer, et al. 2005.

Kremer, et al. (2005) findings are based on unannounced site visits. The absence rate found in India ranged from 14.6 % in Maharashtra to 41.9% in Jharkhand. Such high degree of absence rate reduces class room engagement between teachers and students. It also means the curriculum students should have been taught remains untaught; as a result students get less time to learn from school hours, which affects the prospects of a child to progress to the next level of schooling. Although there is high incidence of teacher absence in schools, there are hardly any disciplinary actions taken against any teachers in India. Kremer et al. (2005) find that only one head of the school in 3000 public schools had sacked a teacher for being absent repeatedly. In the absence of disciplinary actions from higher authorities teachers do not hesitate to remain absent from schools.

4.4.3. Learning achievements

Although access and enrolment has increased over the last ten years period of time, the quality of education imparted in schools has hardly changed; for several studies have raised question about the quality of school education in India (for example, Kingdom, 2007). Given that what is learnt at school is vital to employment opportunities, the poor learning achievements at school becomes a hindrance to many

when they come out of school. Hanushek and Zhang (2006) have also demonstrated that the economic returns increase with better level of learning achievements.

4.4.3.1 Learning Achievements at all India level

The findings of successive annual reports of ASER-Pratham show that the learning achievements in most Indian school have remained very low. Pratham, a leading educational non-government organisation, carried out a survey on learning skills in 2005 and has been repeating the survey in every succeeding year.

Table 4.4.3.1.1: Percentage of children by class and reading level all school 2011

Standard	Nothing	Letter	Word	Level 1 (Standard 1 Text)	Level 2 (Standard 2 Text)	Total
I	38.4	39.4	15.3	3.9	3	100
II	16.6	34.6	28.3	11.8	8.7	100
III	8.5	22.9	28.4	21.5	18.8	100
IV	4.7	14.4	21.2	25.7	34.2	100
V	3.5	9.7	14.6	24.1	48.2	100
VI	1.7	5.8	9.3	20.5	62.8	100
VII	1.2	4	6.3	16.2	72.4	100
VIII	1	2.6	4.3	12.7	79.4	100
Total	10.4	17.8	16.6	16.9	38.3	100

Source: ASER, 2011.

The findings of the survey in 2011 are not encouraging as far as learning achievements in reading are concerned (Table 4.4.3.1.1). The report suggests that in 2011 around 52% of those who have completed standard V could not read the text of standard II, further around 20% in standard VIII also could not read the text of standard II. The inter-state comparison also reveal that children from standard III to V in some states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, only 47.8% and 44.2% could read the text of standard I. Data from ASER-Pratham 2006 to ASER-Pratham 2011 indicate that the situation is getting worse as the percentage of children in standard V not able to read has increased over a period of time from 47% in 2006 to 52 % in 2011.

The data for solving arithmetic problems too reveal grim learning achievements in schools. Table 4.4.3.1.2 shows that many students even in upper primary level lack basic mathematics skills like subtraction and division. For example, around 43 % students in standard VIII could not solve basic mathematics problems in division. The inter-state comparison reveals that the situation in some states like Assam, Bihar, Gujarat Jharkhand and Odisha is much worse. In Assam only 35.7% of the students in standard III to V could solve subtraction problems. The findings of NCERT (2006) also seem to confirm that learning achievements in many schools are low (Kingdon, 2007).

Table 4.4.3.1.2: Percentage of children by class and arithmetic level all school, 2011

Standard	Nothing	Recognise Number		Subtraction	Divide	Total
		1 to 9	11 to 99			
I	36.5	42.2	16.9	3.2	1.2	100
II	15	38.5	32.8	11	2.7	100
III	7.5	26.9	35.7	23.2	6.7	100
IV	3.8	17.2	30.6	32.3	16.1	100
V	2.9	12	24.1	33.5	27.6	100
VI	1.6	7.4	18.8	32.8	39.4	100
VII	1.3	5	15.4	30	48.3	100
VIII	1.1	3.4	12.5	26.3	56.8	100
Total	9.5	20.3	23.8	23.4	22.9	100

Source: ASER, 2011.

At the same time a comparison with private schools discloses that the learning achievements of students who are enrolled in private schools are higher than those of enrolled in government schools.

De, et al. (2011) in their survey of 284 government schools and 84 private schools in Probe states point out that learning achievements in reading, writing, comprehending, and in basic mathematics in private schools are better off than those in government school.

Table 4.4.3.1.3: Learning achievements in government and private schools

Percentage of children in 4-5 class who could:	Government	Private
Read	80	98
Comprehend, write one-word replies	71	92
Read fluently	37	78
Add	81	92
Add, with carry-over	67	87
Subtract	64	81
Divide by 5	45	57

Source: De, et al. 2011.

Table 4.4.3.1.3 shows the findings of the survey. The survey has found that one fifth of students in class 4 to 5 in government schools could read at all, while only 37% could read without any difficulties. The percentages for the same criteria for private school were 98% and 78% respectively. At the same time skills of students in mathematics in private schools are better than those in government schools. While almost all (92%) in private schools could solve simple addition problems in mathematics, around one fifth in government schools could not solve such problems. When it comes to solving mathematical problems of little higher level of difficulties, such as division by five and carry-over addition, there too private school students are much ahead of those in government schools.

4.4.3.2. Learning achievements among backward communities.

As we have seen that the learning achievements in most government schools is very poor, it can be assumed that the same will be true for students belonging to all the backward communities since most of them get enrolled in government schools. It is to be emphasised here that data covering the learning achievements exclusively for socially backward communities is not available, hence, the data presented here are from two World Bank studies by Goyal (2007a&b) in the states of Rajasthan and Orissa.

Table 4.4.3.2.1 Learning achievements (Mean Percentage scores by Social Groups)

	Orissa			Rajasthan		
	Read	Word Meaning	Mathematics	Read	Word Meaning	Mathematics
Social group	Grade IV					
Higher caste	44.51	51.19	39.48	42.61	54.25	42.28
SC	29.78	36.07	27.29	40.05	53.75	38.60
ST	32.07	39.05	26.32	48.14	56.46	46.24
OBC	37.91	42.02	34.21	48.24	57.35	46.86
Social group	Grade V					
Higher caste	54.09	58.83	47.43	51.68	60.95	49.46
SC	41.99	43.91	36.29	46.91	59.50	43.49
ST	41.50	47.52	35.72	54.71	62.28	52.77
OBC	46.79	50.03	42.17	57.51	63.44	55.72

Source: Goyal,2007a&b.

Table.4.4.3.2.1 shows the percentages scores students from different social groups achieved in the test conducted in the studies. The table displays that the students from backward communities in both Orissa and Rajasthan have lower scores in all the three areas of test, i.e. reading, word meaning tests, mathematics. It is clear that same schooling processes have different results for the socially backward communities. As discussed earlier, lower learning abilities affect the prospects of progressing to the next level of education and the employability of a person. Therefore, lower learning achievements call for further analysis to understand why socially and backward communities lag behind the rest of the nation, which is examined in Chapter 5.

4.5. Cost of schooling

Given the prime importance of school education in the paradigm of human development, almost every country provides free elementary education to its citizens

so that children from every income group have equal opportunity to get educated. As mentioned earlier, soon after gaining independence from its colonial rulers it was felt by eminent members of the Indian parliament that school education was a basic necessity for the state to ensure a better future to its citizens. The directive principle of constitution of India (article 45) promises that school education for 6 to 14 years age group will be *free* and compulsory. However one of the major reasons for early dropout from school, found in the 64th round of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in 2007-8, was financial constraints(Table,4.5.4), which is examined here.

The failure of the Indian state to achieve at least universal elementary education has raised many concerns on the public expenditure on education. One of such many concerns is the increasing private expenditure that households incur to send their children to school. In fact the private household expenditure is one of the major hurdles for poor families to send their children to schools.

Tilak (2002) argues that free education does not exist in India. He further argues that households, including those from lower socio-economic groups like Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, have to set aside a substantial part of their income for providing education to their children enrolled even in government schools which is expected to be free. Households regularly incur some expenditure like, transportation, uniforms, books and other stationery.

It is worth mentioning here that data on household expenditure on education is not widely available, therefore, many reports and studies focus on the public expenditure on education. The National Sample Survey rounds collect data on employment and unemployment and on household expenditure on education. Occasionally data on education are also collected which are available on rural and urban areas only. The latest survey on education was 64th round in 2007-8. Though the constitutional provision promises free education, however, not all those who are enrolled in school have access to free education.

Table 4.5.1 : Percentages of students receiving educational incentives

	National average	Rural	Urban
Scholarship/stipend	14	17	6
Free/subsidised books	51	58	29
Free/subsidised stationery	7	8	5
Concession in transport fare.	4.6	4.6	4.6
Mid-day meals from government	Primary level 67%	Post-basic level 29%	

Source: NSSO,2010

Table.4.5.1 shows that only mid-day meal is availed to a substantial portion of children in schools. Provision like scholarship, which reduces the opportunity cost and private household expenditure, is only received by 14% at national level, while in rural areas 17% of the students have access to such provisions, and only 6% of students in urban areas have access to financial assistance from government. Free books and stationery are not accessed equally by the rural and urban students.

As a considerable percentages of students both in rural and urban areas do not have access to subsidised books and stationery, many families have to incur a major part of their income on these items (see Table 4.5.2). De, et al. (2011) confirms this in their findings. Their findings, based on the expenditure reported by the parents of randomly selected 226 boys, and 168 in the Probe states, suggest that 39% of the private household expenditure is spent on books and stationery.

Table 4.5.2: Major Components of Private Expenditure*(in %)

	Rural	Urban
Tuition fee	25	40
Examination and other fees	15	15
Books and stationery	25	15
Uniform	12	6
Transport	8	8
Private coaching	10	13

*including general, technical and vocational education

Source: NSSO, 2010.

Findings from the 64th round of NSSO on major components of private expenditure is presented in Table 4.5.2. The table shows that tuition fee is a major component of private household expenditure on education both in urban and rural areas. Further, expenditure on books and stationery also constitute a major part of the expenditure. It is clear that private household expenditure in urban areas is more than that of rural areas.

Since families have to incur private expenditure it is necessary to know how much is spent on each child. Table 4.5.3 shows the private expenditure that households incur in rural and urban areas in sending their children to schools. The table shows that on an average in India a household spends Rs.1413 (equivalent to USD35) annually for sending a child to school, while a household in rural area spends Rs. 826 (equivalent to USD 20) annually for one year of primary education. The figures however, vary widely for urban areas where the annual expenditure is Rs.3626 (equivalent to USD 88). Given that around 30% of India's population live on less than USD 2 a day, obviously it will be difficult to invest on the schooling of a child. It is also evident that households in urban areas incur much higher amount on education than rural households.

The expenditure increases as the level of education goes up and the gap between the rural and urban expenditure also decreases. It is important to mention here that the expenditure shown here is for a single child. Total expenditure per family depends on the number of children the household has in school. Poor families with more than one child eligible for going to school would find it difficult to afford the cost. In such a situation early dropout from school is inevitable.

Table 4.5.3: Average annual expenditure per Student (in INR)

Level of education	Rural			Urban			Rural + Urban		
	NSSO 64 th Round								
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Primary	741	897	826	3458	3764	3626	1308	1501	1413
Post-Primary	1289	1434	1370	3893	4587	4264	1959	2193	2088
High school/Hr. sec	2803	3166	3019	6721	7615	7212	4140	4503	4351
	NSSO 52 nd Round								
Primary	286	305	297	1092	1197	1149	494	507	501
Post-Primary	641	640	640	1456	1590	1529	933	904	915
High school/Hr. sec	1156	1192	1180	2136	2288	2219	1619	1552	1577

Source: NSSO, 2010.

At the same time one can also find differences in the expenditure for boys and girls. Expenditure for boys is higher than that for girls. The data also show that a household's private annual expenditure has increased at least three fold times between the 52nd round of NSSO and 64th Round of NSSO.

Since the data from 64th round of NSSO suggest that private expenditure has increased and school education is not free at all, it is necessary to know if the cost of schooling is a major hindrance in universalization of education. The findings of the survey on causes of early dropout from school are also presented in Table 4.5.4. The table shows the different reasons for early dropout from schools.

Table 4.5.4: Major Reasons for dropout (in %)

Financial Constraints	21
Child not interested in studies	20
Unable to cope up or failure in studies	10
Completed desired level or class	10
Parents not interested	9

Source: NSSO, 2010.

The NSSO data mentions five major reasons for early dropout or discontinuity in education, and one of the major reasons is the cost that families incur in sending their children to school. The school education though is free; families have to spend regularly on many items like private coaching, transportation which are not part of the public expenditure. Further, proportion of children seeking private coaching has increased over the last one decade due to poor quality of education imparted in government schools (Tilak, 2009). Since learning achievements in most government schools are poor, families interested in educating their children, have to send their children to private coaching centres. ASER (2011) finds that 23% of children in government schools attend paid coaching centres.

4.6. Consolidated facts

From the analysis of data it is necessary to look at the consolidated facts of the programme. The table following presents few comparative indicators for different social groups. Indicators were chosen for their importance in meeting the three goal of SSA. For example, the social group wise never enrolled children indicator represents if the programme has been successful in achieving universal enrolment. Emphasis must be given to two indicators, namely, dropout rate and academic learning, for they represents if the programme has been successful in ensuring quality education and sensitive to the special needs of the socially disadvantaged groups or not.

Table 4.6.1: Consolidated facts

Indicators	SC	ST	Higher caste
Literacy Rate	1	1	3
Never enrolled children	1	1	3
Dropout rate	1	1	3
Academic learning	1	1	3

1=below national average, 2=national average, 3=above national average

Source: own calculation

It is clear from the table that on the selected four indicators both the SC and ST communities have lagged behind the national average, while comparatively higher caste group has better achievements. It is necessary that we examine why these groups have lower educational attainments. Although the analysis has shown that there is wide disparity in the social group wise progress, however the reasons for such development have not been convincingly found out. It is important to reemphasise here that from the analysis it has emerged that cost of schooling is also a hindrance for school completion as it was found to be one of the five reasons for school dropout. Since financial difficulties is a major cause one can easily jump to the conclusion that poverty is a cause; however it is difficult to arrive at this conclusion since Govida and Bandyopadhyay (2010) argues that exclusion is a process.

Moreover, two other equally important reasons are 'child not interested in studies' and 'unable to cope up or failure in studies' which seem to be non-financial in nature. Explanation for this kind of discrimination is not available in the quantitative data. Therefore, there is need to look at the schooling processes to know why the progress has not been inclusive as Dreze and Kingdon (2001) suggest the disadvantages of SC and ST may be linked to schooling system.

Chapter 5: Why deprivation?

This chapter builds from the findings of Chapter 4 and explains why disparities in educational attainments among lower caste groups exist in India. The chapter examines if poverty is a cause for educational deprivation and explores other possible reasons for poor educational attainments among lower caste groups.

The data presented in the previous chapter have shown in details the progress of school education programme in India in the last decade. The findings from the data are mixed. There are positive developments like increase in enrolment and availability of school infrastructure. However, in rural areas and in government schools the learning environment has deteriorated given that students from grade V are not able to read and write the text of grade II and solve simple arithmetic problems like subtraction. At the same time it has also been pointed out that the progress of backward communities, like SCs and STs, is lagging behind that of the forward communities. The analysis however, is not able to address why there is negligence of the backward communities. Since the analysis on the progress is based on secondary data and no field based information was collected, therefore, the possible answers to the question 'why some communities are left out' is explored with the help of findings of previous studies carried out in India.

5.1. Caste and schooling processes

The school completion of children from poor families particularly from the marginalised communities like Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, who have remained backward for centuries, has a greater importance in a vast diverse country like India for the various effects that education creates which goes beyond the benefits of individuals. The caste based stratification of Indian society (for details see Gupta, 2001) has resulted in marginalisation, particularly of the lower caste. One of the important features of caste system is the deprivation of the lower caste from the sphere of learning (Nambissan and Sedwal, 2002). Norms and taboos of caste system in India prevented the untouchables from gaining access to traditional indigenous schools. Though, the British in the colonial period opened schools for all, however, only few of

those from the lower strata could gain access to education due to their 'favourable structural location' (Ibid, p.73). The constitution of India in its Article 45, recognising the age old socio-economic deprivation, although directed the state to make special care for the underprivileged, however, not much progress has been made in ensuring equity in education.

It is important to note here that according to the 1991 census data, after more than four decades of independence, the literacy rate for the SCs and STs stood at 37.41% and 29.6% respectively. This shows the general state of deprivation that the marginalised communities have been subject to. Data (see Table 4.3.1.1) show that school completion among the backward communities has remained abysmally low as dropout rates are higher for these groups. In 2008 only 32% and 23% of those students enrolled in primary schools from SCs and STs communities were able to complete high school. The primary school dropout rate is 30.09% and 31.34% for children from both SCs and ST communities respectively. At the same time the learning abilities among the students from these communities have also remained low both in private and government schools. The lower achievements of backward communities in education is often analysed within the paradigm of demand and supply which ignores the different social factors contributing to systematic inequalities in attaining education (Batra, 2009). Batra (2009) further argues that '...equal accessibility does not necessarily guarantee equitable availability of service to all children. Despite access, children may be left out of the schooling system because of different social factors' (ibid, p.104).

In analysing the backwardness of socially disadvantaged groups Bhatta (1998) identifies four major limitations in the framework of demand and supply. She points out that first 'education is not a homogeneous product', secondly in education there is hardly an equilibrium between supply and demand and there is absence of single price, thirdly the choice of education has social considerations, and fourthly decisions related to education are mostly taken by others (for example, a girl's education is affected by the decisions of her parents), which are ignored in the demand and supply paradigm. Moreover Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2010) and Dreze and Kingdon (2001) opine that the marginalisation of children has to be examined in schooling processes. Hence, there is

a need to critically look at various factors which contribute to the underachievement of students of underprivileged communities.

5.2. Poverty as a cause of deprivation.

As we have seen that financial constraint is one of the reasons for dropout and it is believed that the poor do not send their children to schools because of high opportunity cost. Many studies have argued that engaging children in household activities and child labour are two important reasons for children from poor families not able to complete school education (for example, Jensen and Nielsen, 1997). However, such statement needs further analysis, as there is a significant degree of variation in educational achievements among Indian states. Moreover, many countries (for example Sri Lanka) with comparable degree of poverty have better educational attainments than that of India. While within Indian states, a comparison of primary school retention rates in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan gives two different stories (see annexure 2). The achievements of Himachal Pradesh question the belief that poverty causes educational deprivation. Another successful example is the state of Kerala which has achieved higher literacy rate among Indian states. There was not much difference in the percentage of population living below poverty line in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan in 1993-94 as is evident from Table 5.2.1. However, there is considerable degree of difference in the cohort survival rate in primary school for both the states in 2007-8. The table shows that while in 1994 both the states had almost the same percentage of population living under poverty line; however, the state of Himachal Pradesh has progressed substantially towards achieving universal retention.

5.2.1: Percentage of BPL population and cohort survival Rate

	Himachal Pradesh	Rajasthan
% of Below Poverty Line Families(1993-94)	28.44	27.41
Cohort Survival Rate(2007-8)in Primary school	95.3	60.7
Literacy rate (2011)\$	83.78	67.06

Source: own calculation based on Census of India (2011) and Ministry of Human Resource Development (2012), \$= provisional

The cohort survival rate for Rajasthan in 2007-8 was 60.7% while in Himachal Pradesh it was 95.3, almost approaching universal retention. No doubt that poverty can be an important obstacle in accessing education because of direct and indirect cost implications; however, it will be naïve to claim that poverty is an adequate explanation for lower achievements in educational parameters, since the 64th round of NSSO found other reasons equally important, and also because parental motivation to send children to school is found to be high by Probe Team (1999). Hence, one has to look beyond the arguments based on poverty causing educational deprivation.

Several studies have shown that the amounts of time children are required to assist in household activities are insignificant. Jeejebhoy and Sumati (1989) as cited in Bhatti (1998) in a study in rural Maharashtra have shown that while children are often made to help in household activities, however not much time is spent on such activities, further they calculate that up to 10 years of age, on an average in a year, a boy devotes 19 days a year and a girl devotes 34 days a year for such activities, and in the age group of 10-14 years the number of working days goes up to 60 days for boys and 105 days for girls. In fact, Bhatti (1998) summing up all the evidence from various studies, conducted in rural India argue that there are shortcomings in the claim that children are deprived of education due to their role in assisting in household activities. She highlights the finding of various studies and argues that the financial contribution and amount of time spent on household activities of children in the primary school going age group is very negligible; secondly it is only when a child grows old that the financial contribution and amount of time devoted to household activities is significant to keep a child out of schools. Therefore, the claim that children working or assisting in household activities do not seem to be a major hindrance to getting educated.

Further, as mentioned earlier, another argument points out that child labour is also a major cause of large number of out of school children. While it is a fact that child labour does exist in India, however, the claim need to be qualified as several studies (for example, PROBE Team, 1999) have pointed out that parental motivation to send children is high even in remote places.

Mehrotra (1995) based on field information from three states of India, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala points out that while parents do employ their children for additional income, however, it is only after a child has dropped out from school that the child works as a labourer. At the same time, Dinesh (1988), based on the finding of a study in the state of Karnataka shows that substantial percentages of out of school children, 60% of boys and 43 % of girls, did not do any household activities. In an earlier work of Pandey and Talwar(1980) the findings of Dinesh (1988) were found to be similar, who pointed out that a major percentage of eligible school going children, around 80%, who were out of school, were found to be not doing any work. Since a considerable portion of enrolled children dropout at an early stage of schooling, while, as discussed earlier, the contribution of children in the primary school going age group to the income of a family is negligible, therefore, the argument that child labour is one of the causes of backwardness in education is found wanting.

As discussed in the previous chapter another important difficulty that parents have to face when they send their children to school is the private household expenditure like, private coaching fees, transportation, uniforms, and books and stationery. It is to be pointed out here that the constitution of India promises free education up to age 14. No doubt, that school education programme in letter promises to be free, whoever families have to incur such expenditure. Various studies (for example, Tilak, 1996) have shown that families spend a considerable part of their annual income for sending their children to school. An important finding of ASER 2011 has been the increased percentage of children attending paid private coaching, which increases the financial burden of parents. With the poor academic learning environment in schools, and the financial burden that families have to incur to send their children to school, possibilities of a child from a poor family to dropout from school at an early state increases. Moreover, data from NSSO 64th round suggests that a major cause of dropout is financial difficulties. No doubt children, whose parents cannot afford the cost of private coaching, transportation, uniform dropout at an early stage of schooling. Moreover benefits of free and compulsory education programme like free uniform, books and stationery, and midday meals also do not reach many students as was evident from the data. At one hand parents are made to believe that education will be

free, at the same time such facilities are not made available uniformly across the country. Naturally children whose parents can support their schooling continue their study and those whose parents have limited income dropout due to financial difficulties.

5.3. Quality of Education as a cause of educational deprivation.

Since poverty is very often understood to be one of the major bottlenecks for the poor to be educated, therefore, the efforts to increase the participation of all in education have focussed mostly in quantitative expansion of schools. Hence, the school education programme has focussed on making available schools particularly in rural and remote places. No doubt, that the mass expansion of school is a necessary step to ensure equitable access, however, the expansion of schools with such a rapid speed has raised question about the quality of education. Furthermore, while it is true that lack of schools within accessible area can be a hindrance to school participation, however, the mere expansion of facilities does not necessarily ensure school participation. It is to be emphasised here that along with a large number of school, minimum standard needs to be ensured to impart quality education to ensure universal retention. Bhatti (1998) points out factors such as, (1) school infrastructure like, building, classroom, teaching aids, drinking water and toilet facilities, (2) availability of teacher and their motivation, and (3) better management of schools are the important determinant of ensuring quality education.

In the analysis of data we have seen that a considerable progress has been made in recruiting teachers, making classroom, teaching aids, and toilets and drinking water facilities available, however, the distribution of such facilities across states is not uniform; furthermore, an important element of schooling, that is, teachers are not regular in teaching and a large number of untrained teachers have been employed. Such a situation not only hinders the availability of quality education but represents a complete lack of commitment to fight the problems of poverty and mass ignorance. PROBE Team (1999) has pointed out that the dropout and retention in school are the outcome of teaching quality and managements of school.

The recruitment of untrained teachers and the high rate of absence of teachers from school negatively affect the learning abilities of children. The lower learning achievements among children reflect the seriousness of teaching processes at schools. Students without teachers, as is the case in many single teacher-schools and schools where teachers remain absent frequently, hardly get the opportunity to interact with teachers and learn from classroom engagement. Lower learning abilities at an early stage affect prospects of a child to progress to next level of schooling. The findings from the data have revealed that not all who complete primary schooling are able to read, write and solve simple arithmetic problems. In fact, in some case students in grade eight are not able to solve basic arithmetic problems like division and subtraction. No doubt the 64th round survey of NSSO finds the second and third most important reasons for dropout to be 'child not interested in studies' and 'not being able to cope up with studies'. Schools, without an adequate number of teachers and lack of proper management of human resource, discourage a child to progress to the next level. As we have seen the programme has hardly focussed on improving the accountability of teachers, as teachers continue to remain absent from schools, nor has it emphasised on recruiting trained teachers. The recruitment of untrained and contractual teachers is based on the assumption that job insecurity increases efficiency (Tilak, 2009), however such a move is seen by many as misplaced, as Kumar, et al. (2001) argues that employment of untrained and part-time teachers have led to weakening and total failure of primary education structure, as is evident from lower level of learning achievements. Further, the absence rate among part-time and contractual teachers is not different from those of regular teachers, which shows that employing part-time and untrained teachers has not resulted in increased accountability. Rather, it has deteriorated the teaching environment at schools.

Another feature which needs examination is the difference related to the processes of teaching and learning in government schools, where the majority of students from poor families are enrolled, for different social groups, particularly to lower castes as Sedwal and Kamat (2008) have pointed out that caste, has been a major barrier to many lower caste communities in gaining access to school. Further, they argue that the problems of ensuring equity in education have not been addressed sufficiently by the programme as

the educational status of socially marginalised communities like SCs and STs have remained behind the national average. Sharma and Tripathi (1988), in a study among government school teachers in Uttar Pradesh, found that while students from higher caste were appreciated for their success and the teachers refrained from blaming those who did not succeed, however, the students from scheduled castes were held responsible for their failures and not appreciated for their success. Such biased ways of treatment of student from lower castes show that teachers attribute success and failure differently to different caste groups

Moreover, Kumar (1983) has highlighted the prejudices that the students from SC and ST communities' face in class room teaching. He points out that in the messages from the content of teaching is not very encouraging for the students from minority communities. The image that the curriculum creates for the students of backward communities makes them feel and believe that they belong to a group of underachievers. For example, blind-belief, superstition and the practice of black magic, the symbols of backwardness, are often attributed to various tribal groups in school texts. As a result a student from a tribal community would continue to feel that they indeed belong to a backward community and they will have less academic achievements. Moreover, various anecdotal evidences (for example Murthy, 2003) suggest that the practice of untouchability, (like separate dine, seating arrangements) in schools make the students belonging to lower caste feel inferior to the rest of the class.

Kumar (1983) examining the curriculum of classes IV, V and VI in government schools of Madhaya Pradesh, could not find a character that the local SCs could identify themselves with. As the messages from curriculum that students get exposed in class room play important role in shaping their thinking (Nambissaan, 1996), additionally Sedwal and Kamat (2008) opine that there is absence of the positive representation of the socially disadvantaged communities in the school curriculum, there is need to examine the school curriculum. The school programmes do not cover the struggle of the marginalised communities for equity and justice, as a result students from such communities feel left out.

5.4. Concluding discussion

The analysis finds that multiple factors are responsible for lower educational attainments among the socially disadvantaged groups. The compulsion to spend from household income to sponsor a child's education suggest that school education is not free, hence, the parents of children belonging SCs and STs communities , might be finding it difficult to fund their children's education. Further, the falling learning environment in government schools lowers the chances of a child to at least complete elementary education. At the same time schooling processes and school curriculum do not create conducive environment for children from socially disadvantaged groups to take interest in school education.

The study aimed at analysing the achievements of India's universal education programme, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, which wanted to achieve education for all by 2010. The study, using secondary data from published sources, focuses on the three important goals of the programme and analyses to what extent the goals have been met, while analysing the data it was observed that school education among SCs and STs needs to be improved. Furthermore, it explores the reasons for backwardness in some communities from previous studies.

6.1 The three goals

The findings from the analysis of data suggest that the achievements of SSA are mixed in nature.

There is an increase in the school enrolment across India for both boys in girls and the trend is encouraging as the net school enrolment ratio is nearing 100%. The increase in enrolment can be attributed to the creation of school infrastructure in the last decade. Between 2002 and 2010 around 0.2 million schools have been established. At the same time the percentage of private schools to total school has increased indicating that the growth in the number of schools is due to the growth in private schools. Further it is good to note that almost all households of all income groups have equal access to primary schools, however, in the urban areas access to post-primary and secondary school is better than rural areas.

The goal to achieve universal retention falls short of the target, as around 60 % of students are able to complete elementary schooling. However there is decrease in the dropout rate, at the same time, socially backward communities like SCs and STs have higher dropout rate.

The quality of education in government school continues to suffer. The massive expansion of school education programme did not keep pace with recruiting trained and professional teachers. A large portion of the newly recruited teachers are untrained and are employed on a contract basis. However such a move has not reduced

the pupil teacher ratio and single teacher schools. In some states like Arunachal Pradesh, a considerable percentage of schools are single teacher schools. Employment of untrained and contract teachers have not resulted in the reduction in absence rate among teachers. In some states, such as Jharkhand and Punjab the absence rates are as high as 41.9% and 34.4% respectively.

Learning achievements in most government schools have deteriorated. Learning skills in reading, writing and solving basic mathematics problems are poor among students of government schools. Students in private schools learn much better than those in government schools. Learning achievements among backward communities are also lower than those of forward communities.

6.2. Educational attainments among socially disadvantaged groups.

Though, the analysis has revealed that the socially disadvantaged groups are lagging behind the national average on educational attainments, the reasons for backwardness of groups were explored from other studies.

The analysis suggests that multiple factors are accountable for the lower educational attainments of the socially disadvantaged groups. Though, poverty is an important hindrance to school completion, it is not a sufficient cause as some states in India are approaching near universal retention level. It was also found that out of school children do not contribute significantly to the household activities and income of a family at an early state. It is only in the 10-14 year age groups that the contribution of an out-of-school child is significant in household activities and income.

At the same time, provisions of free education do not reach many, and families have to incur a considerable amount of their income on school uniform, examination and other fees, books and stationery, etc., private expenditure seems to be a hindrance to school completion. Learning achievements at schools are very low. Absence of teachers from schools is a major drawback of the programme which had not been addressed.

Further, examination of literature also reveals that the prejudices of caste system negatively affect the educational attainment of socially marginalised communities.

There is a need to present a positive image of such communities in the school curriculum. Teachers in school also need to be sensitive to these issues.

6.3. Areas for improvements

The focus must now be on ensuring uniform standard of education across India, as access to school is no more an issue. At the same time, attention must be given to make post-primary schools available adequately particularly in rural areas, so that students can continue their education.

One of the important areas of SSA which has not been adequately addressed is the high rate of absence. Monitoring of teachers need to be strengthened. Teachers remaining absent must be penalised. Further research must be carried out to know what can be done to reduce teachers' absence from schools. Additionally, all the untrained teachers must be provided in service training.

The lower level of school completion rate among the socially disadvantaged groups calls for special attention. Possibilities of offering rewards on school completion to students from socially disadvantaged communities must be explored to discourage dropout. School curriculum, must include the achievements of these communities. Additionally, teachers' training should also focus on the need to be sensitive to the issues of caste.

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Annexure

Annexure 1

Number of Schools per 100'000 population						
	1990-91		2000-01		2005-06	
	Primary	Upper Primary	Primary	Upper Primary	Primary	Upper Primary
Andhra Pradesh	73.3	9.2	73.8	12.9	78.1	21.1
Assam	128.8	25.4	124.8	30.1	107.9	29.2
Bihar	61.7	15.2	48.6	12.4	44.8	12.5
Gujarat	31.9	41.4	30.8	41.8	30.7	42.5
Haryana	29.9	8	52.2	9	52.6	10.1
Himachal Pradesh	145.5	21.3	172.9	28.1	177.2	35
Jammu and Kashmir	112.9	30.1	107.8	34.6	113.4	39.9
Karnataka	52.3	36.3	42.3	52.4	48.5	48.8
Kerala	23.3	10	21.2	9.3	20.9	9.3
Madhya Pradesh	101	21.1	107.2	32.5	151.1	54.1
Maharashtra	49.6	23.9	43.6	25	41	25.9
Manipur	175.6	37.7	107.7	30.6	113.4	36.9
Meghalaya	234.5	39	203.2	45.1	242.8	73
Nagaland	106.5	28.2	75	23.6	73.5	23.2
Odissa	126.4	29.7	114.7	31.4	120	41.7
Punjab	61	7	53.8	10.4	52.6	9.9
Rajasthan	68.7	19.6	61.9	28.9	93.3	43.7
Sikkim	125.6	30	92.7	23.9	121.9	33
Tamil Nadu	53.7	10.1	50.1	9.2	52.2	11.1
Tripura	75.6	15.8	65.2	13.4	53.4	30.1
Uttar Pradesh	55	10.5	56.1	12.7	73.7	20.9
West Bengal	74.7	6.1	65.3	3	60.5	2.3
All India	66	17.3	62.2	20.1	71.1	25.5

Source: Based on Ministry of Human Resource Development , Government of India

Annexure 2

Retention Rate (%) at Primary level: 2008-9

State	Education Cycle	Retention rate				
		2006-7	2007-8	2008-9		
				Total	Boys	Girls
Andhra Pradesh	I-V	72.03	85.34	83.99	83.51	84.48
Arunachal Pradesh	-	-	-	60.54	57.64	63.94
Assam	I-V	71.87	86.2	93.26	92.18	94.37
Bihar	I-V	44.16	53.4	56.09	56.09	56.1
Chhattisgarh	I-V	69.35	69.52	69.87	69.8	69.94
D&N Haveli	I-IV	-	-	85.54	93.88	77.99
Goa	I-IV	-	-	90.69	79.92	105.68
Gujarat	I-IV	83.66	84.52	82.83	83.05	82.39
Haryana	I-V	72.37	96.35	-	-	-
Himachal Pradesh	I-V	93.84	94.64	94.52	94.81	94.2
J&K	-	-	-	79.83	78.3	81.59
Jharkhand	I-V	71.28	77.8	71.35	71.04	71.68
Karnataka	I-IV	91.94	75.73	86.77	86.14	87.44
Kerala	I-IV	98.66	99	-	-	-
Madhya Pradesh	I-V	95.31	94.3	75.14	73.75	76.64
Maharashtra	I-IV	83.98	98.53	88.82	88.57	89.11
Meghalaya	I-IV	57.11	50.08	57.18	55.52	58.87
Mizoram	I-IV	78.13	71.16	69.71	70.66	68.71
Nagaland	I-V	-	63.42	54.64	53.59	55.77
Orissa	I-IV	71.74	77.44	80.65	79.53	81.85
Punjab	-	-	-	80.44	78.59	82.74
Rajasthan	I-V	50.14	61.76	60.21	62.57	57.57
Sikkim	I-V	-	63.72	64.78	58.33	72.01
Tamil Nadu	I-V	93.67	100	97.05	97.02	97.08
Tripura	I-V	-	75.21	73.46	71.79	75.3
Uttar Pradesh	I-V	74.48	74.37	73.95	70.94	77.26
Uttarakhand	I-V	59.07	73.06	75.95	75.39	76.54
West Bengal	I-IV	-	51.88	58.15	57.52	58.81
All States	-	70.26	73.71	74.92	74.04	75.83

Source: NUEPA, Flash statistics.

Annexure 3: Schedule Outlining Norms and Standards for a School

Item	Norms and Standards
1 Number of teachers	30:1 (for class I-V) 35:1 (for class VI-VIII) At least three subject teachers (for class VI-VIII)
2 Building	1 classroom per teacher 1 office-cum-store for headmaster Separate toilets Drinking water Kitchen for mid-day meal preparation Playground Boundary wall
3 Minimum number of working days in an academic year	200 working days (for class I-V) 220 working days (for class VI-VIII)
4 Minimum number of working hours per week for a teacher	45 teaching including preparation hours
5 Teaching/learning equipment	Provided to each class
6 Library Provided to each school	Provided to each school
7 Play material, games, sports equipment	Provided to each class

Source: Jha and Parvati, 2010.