

RURAL EDUCATION- ANALYSING SCHEMES AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS: A CASE STUDY

Vidushi Purbay

Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer

DOI: 10.46609/IJSSER.2022.v07i06.020 URL: <https://doi.org/10.46609/IJSSER.2022.v07i06.020>

Received: 19 June 2022 / Accepted: 30 July 2022 / Published: 8 July 2022

Introduction

With over 315 million students in total, India has the largest number of students in the world.1 Such a large student demographic has made it imperative that our education system is affordable and accessible so that it can cater to all the social strata in the Indian Society.

To achieve this, government schemes have become instrumental in promoting and enhancing the quality and kind of education that is given to our students. With more than seventeen different schemes which come directly under the Department of School Education and Literacy, and many more which help our education system indirectly, there is for sure no lack of schemes but, there is a gap between policy and practice and high inefficiency. The paper's aims are; first, to analyze the effectiveness of the schemes which are implemented in Peh, highlighting the successes of these schemes in this particular rural setting and also the shortcoming; second to look into factors that hinder the educational participation of women and suggest reforms for the same. For these shortcomings, I will be suggesting solutions that I have gauged through my on-ground research along with taking precedent from successful educational schemes in other countries.

For the first section, I will be analyzing the following two government schemes:

- **The Mid-Day Meal Scheme and • No Detention Policy**

Besides this, certain sections of society remain historically and culturally deprived of the benefit of the educational system including women, the disabled, lower castes, tribes, minorities, etc. It is to highlight that school participation is a household decision in a rural context. Hence we must understand the factors within a rural household which may explain the decision of attending school and completing primary education, despite decades of intricate policies and programs. For

my second section, I would be identifying these obstacles.

Brief Village Profile

Peeh, a village in the Nagaur District of Rajasthan --like the majority of other Indian villages-- is a cluster of around 1,168 houses made of mud and/or bricks, and public spaces such as lanes, wells, temples, and mosques. The total geographical area of Peeh is 2649.06 hectares. Peeh has a total population of 6,620 people, out of which the male population is 3,390 while the female population is 3,230, with a total literacy rate of 57.67 %.

Gender inequalities in Peeh, as in (rural) India in general are pronounced. Even in 2022.

Women here occupy a low status, which is measured in terms of lower literacy levels and access to education, lower work participation and earnings, very low political participation, lower age at marriage, poor health and nutritional status, and high infant female mortality levels. The main occupation of girls and women living in Palanpur, like almost everywhere else in rural India is domestic work.

Primary Research

For my research, I visited the Secondary Government School. To avoid any bias, I randomly chose six students to converse with so that I could intricately understand how these schemes have helped them, and how effective they think the schemes are through their observations from seeing them implemented in their school. All six of them are currently graduating from the 11th grade and moving into their final year of schooling. In the table below is a brief profile of each of the six students.

Name	Stream	10th Board Results	Career Aspiration
Kanishk (Male)	Commerce	75% (Took the Hindi Medium Exams)	Business Management

Ankit (Male)	Commerce	47% (Took the English Medium Exams)	Business Management
Priyanka (Female)	Commerce	69% (Took the Hindi Medium Exams)	Law
Rehyan (Male)	Arts	78% (Took the English Medium Exams)	Public Policy
Arpita (Female)	Science	89% (Took the Hindi Medium Exams)	Medicine
Ganesh (Male)	Science	74% (Took the Hindi Medium Exams)	Engineering

- **The Mid Day Meal Scheme**

The Mid Day Meal Scheme is a scheme which guarantees a midday to all students going to government primary schools and government aided primary schools. Its main goals were to avoid classroom hunger, increase school enrolment, increase school attendance, improve socialization among castes, address malnutrition and empower women through employment. As per 2017 data, it served 9.78-crore children in 11.40-lakh schools and is the largest of its kind of project in the world.

Research

After my thorough conversations with the six students, I was able to gauge the actual effectiveness of the scheme. As all six of them had come under this scheme when they were in primary school, they were able to give me a good insight into the workings of the program throughout the years.

Successes of the Scheme

- All of them reported that the meals were given consistently, and that they
- were, on most days, satisfied by the quality of the food being served. In Peeh, it is at the present feeding at least 200 children one meal on all school days.
- During my conversation, I got to know that Kanishk's father and mother were working for the scheme, and were hired by the State government to cook the food at the local primary school. This shows that the program is also helping in employing the local population. Although the financial remuneration specified for these workers is Rs.1000 a month. Arpita's elder sister was also employed for this scheme and soon plans to use the skills gained here to
- work for a restaurant in Ajmer, the nearest town to Peeh. Hence the goal to empower women is also being fulfilled.
- Upon further insuring with Ankit, I also got to know that the Government had also provided the infrastructure for cooking these meals at the School itself. It was assured to know that the state government was following this per the scheme.
- All six of them also agreed with the fact that the scheme has helped in
- increasing the number of students going to school, by using healthy meal as an incentive.

Shortcomings of the Scheme

A major drawback of the entire scheme that they all felt should be addressed is that the program only caters to students till Class 8, and they felt that the scope of the scheme should be broadened to include all school going children and help with the alarming drop-out rates.

- Another drawback is that at least in Peeh Village, the ratio between the number of students to the number of kitchen helpers is not being followed following the scheme. The scheme and its implementers should ensure that the rules and procedures of the scheme should be followed.

- Lack of proper monitoring and supervision also hinders the smooth functioning of the scheme.
- Sometimes there is insufficient food which is due to corruption in the delivery of the ingredients as reported by Arpita's elder sister.
- A few of the parents did not want their children to eat the food which was prepared by people belonging to the SC/ST. Children also refused to sit and meal alongside the so-called "lower cast" children which led to unrest and fostered social discrimination going against one of the main goals of the scheme.

Recommendations

The scheme is supposed to work as per the guidelines which are the provision of reliability, quality, hygiene, transparency, and equity. The main issue we face is to bridge the gap between policy and practice and hence ensure strict measures for the proper implementation of this scheme. There should also be transparency in accounts, which should be open for public scrutiny; hence keeping corruption in check.

The focus of the Scheme should be on the quality and quantity of food served, not only its reach. I also believe that the scope of the scheme should be broadened so that it caters to all students who need it. Other associations like blind schools and orphanages or even some private schools if they are eligible should be able to reap the benefits of this scheme. Another change to the program should be the increase in financial remuneration provided to the employees of the scheme as the current remuneration is quite paltry for the kind of work these workers undertake.

We notice low participation from the SC students and workers solely due to the discrimination because orthodox norms continue to influence social behavior, hindering the functioning and implementation of contemporary policies. If not tackled, instances such as being given lesser quantities of food, being subjected to separate seating arrangements, being served last, not being allowed to serve the food, and being served food from a distance will negatively impact them socially and psychologically.

Hence along with proper interventions, proper administrative guidelines should be issued. The law should ban restrictions and promote the employment of people from socially excluded communities in the program. Even more importantly other practices such as separate seating arrangements should be banned. There should be a training of teachers and awareness generation workshops to make them aware of the ills of caste discrimination and its adverse consequences

which furthers our goal of broad-based growth.

- **No Detention Policy**

The no-detention policy in education (NDP) is a policy under the Right to Education Act, which deems that no student should be failed or barred from school until they complete their elementary education (classes 1-8).

Successes and Shortcomings of the Scheme

The NDP was implemented to remove the pressure of examinations on the younger students and help them develop skills that aid them to find sustainable employment even if they discontinue studying. Undoubtedly, students have cleared till class VIII but they face challenges when they enter class IX. It was a matter of grave concern that students have been promoted to higher classes without being able to read properly or gaining clarity in even the basic concepts. Due to no fear of detention, students, teachers, and parents have developed a lackadaisical attitude towards studies. On the other hand, teachers in the school have been lenient and are not bothered to give feedback to the students for any improvement and also do not make sufficient efforts to guide weak children.

While all the students feel that the scheme was effective in removing the exam pressure on the younger children, it has led to a drastic drop in the academic effort the children of the village were putting into their studies as they knew they were going to graduate to their next classes regardless of the results.

Since there are no positive or negative reinforcements for slacking in academics, it reduces motivation to take the formative education years seriously.

No Detention Policy Recommendations

What all the students felt, and even I believe, is that the policy should be scrapped by the government as soon as possible. Due to this program, our education system is producing a large number of students in schools but deteriorating the quality of the future of our nation. There have been discussions to eliminate this policy and the government should take this move into serious consideration and carry it out. If this continues children may not grasp the importance of studying hard and obtaining knowledge if there is no adequate grading and assessment system in place. A few drawbacks are that the academic performance of students in schools will suffer significantly, there will be a lower standard of education, casual attitude of students, and low

efforts from teachers. Since the system makes no distinction between an average student and a good one, it removes any incentive that a student would have to study harder, and hence The standard of education is negatively impacted because there is no consequence of poor learning.

DETERANTS OF EDUCATION

NOTE: Before stating the issues that hinder broad-based enrollment in educational institutions, I would provide a few underlying assumptions I made.

- It is assumed that schooling decisions are made by parents;
- The gender asymmetry prevailing in India is implicit;
- Perceived costs and benefits of education differ with respect to the level of education of the parents, i.e. illiterate parents are supposed to have a smaller perception of the benefits of education in comparison to the literate ones.
- Subjective parental valuation of costs and benefits are not considered as exogenous but endogenous since the schooling decisions are thought to be dependent on the ones done by the respective peercommunity
- Educational inputs (i.e. fees, books etc) are the same ones for every household.

1. Caste

If one were to specifically explore the education paradigm, it is worrying to note that a considerable portion of the Indian population continues to be deprived of opportunities to acquire formal and quality education. The caste of a child can be expected to act as a restraint to his/her access to (primary) education, especially if the pupil belongs to a 'scheduled caste'. The parents themselves have been victims of discrimination and don't want their children to suffer the same fate and hence sometimes decide not to send them to school but make them join in their line of work. This vicious cycle binds these people and prevents development. Sometimes they are outrightly denied the opportunity or even treated differently regardless of RTE and anti-discriminatory acts in place.

2. Religion

We see attributes vary simply because different communities, by virtue of differences in their norms, translated a given attribute endowment into different enrolment rates. Hence another

socio-cultural feature that might have an impact on education is religion. Of the major two religions coexisting in Palanpur, Hinduism, and Islam, we notice that the educational status and enrollment of Muslims are lower than the ones of Hindus. This artifact would be due to either the orthodox nature of Islam and its madrasa system of education or to the economic backwardness of Muslims living in rural communities. Muslim parents may also be reluctant to send their children to government funded schools owing to the existence of alternatives in community-based schooling (in the form of madrasas) and most particularly on account of the lack of Urdu language teaching in the formal system.

3. Parental education

Parental education can also be seen as a powerful predictor of school attendance among children. Indeed, it is expected that parents who are educated have a more enlightened attitude about education and then provide a more favorable environment for the education (of their children) in comparison to uneducated parents. Attendants on higher levels of education may have access to resources, such as income, time, energy, and community contacts, that allow for greater parental involvement in a child's education.

It is also reasonable to assume that the inter-generational same-sex impact will outweigh the inter-generational cross-sex effect, i.e., boys' education will be more responsive to the father's education and daughters' education will be more sensitive to the mother's education.

4. Gender Inequality

It is obvious that gender stereotypes particularly prevailing in the Indian society have some important consequences on female education. Nowadays, parental motivation for the son's education is high amongst all social groups but the situation is still really not the same concerning the daughter's education. Indeed, it clearly appears that the main reason for educating a boy is an economic one as they compare the perceived benefits. With respect to this viewpoint, educating a son will provide some economic returns, especially if the son is sufficiently well educated to get a 'good' regular job, insuring so parents to get financial assistance in their old age. On the opposite, investing in their daughter's education is seen as a pure loss since she will leave the family when she will get married and all the education investment will thus flow into her husband's family. This narrow point of view is what leads to parents seeing sons as 'assets' and girls as 'liabilities' in rural India.

Furthermore, in addition to the economic benefits of educating a son, some social benefits are likely to emerge. Education can certainly be viewed as raising a family's social position and self-

esteem. These are a few factors that fuel further inequality and denial of opportunity to women.

5. Poverty/Nature of Occupation

In many respects, land owning status can be seen as one of the main determinants of economic position [i.e. accurate way to measure the wealth of a household] in rural areas, and then, it can be expected that children from families with large land holdings would have better access to education than other ones, due to the common view that access to education and schooling achievements are positively correlated with the wealth of the parents /family/household. We also see that the pressure of poverty forces families to overwork their children with Fieldwork and hence we also observe high dropout rates, especially in harvest seasons. On the other hand, we notice people with adequate wealth see education as a means for securing better jobs as opposed to poor people making children work so as to earn more; it's the question of investing in future returns or present returns. Hence it is a determining factor when we talk about education.

The main occupation of households in rural India is also susceptible to affect the education situation. Some studies [e.g. Reddy Shiva & al, 1992] have indeed shown that non- agricultural households have a greater chance to send their children to schools compared to agricultural families. Within agricultural workers, the children of laborers are expected to be less likely to get enrolled in a school than the ones from cultivators, i.e. landowners. These suppositions will be transformed into household characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Education ought to be liberatory but the language of merit, ability, and hard work are notions shaped by class, gender, and caste in India. Hence it is up to us to rethink education. Carefully introspecting the issues faced by people in India we can see that all forms of oppression — casteism, patriarchy, heteronormativity — act as barriers for an egalitarian society for future generations. Hence, on a micro level, an anti-caste pedagogy would need to teach anti-caste movements, eliminate degrading punishment, encourage more listening and critique in and outside the classroom, and accept varied realities, among other things.

To address inclusive practice, concrete changes in legislative provisions, steps toward teacher sensitization and training, actions to improve government implementation, monitoring, and enforcement capacities, and increased funding for education are just a few of the steps that must be taken. Other NGOs and associations should raise awareness about the importance and need for education for all so as to rid these people of their stereotypes and choose the road towards development.

Additionally, local cultural expressions and understandings about inclusion must be accessed and respected to promote inclusion values, including creative use of the local culture to deconstruct the textbook, ensuring lessons reflect local priorities and have cultural relevance. Rural education is important not only for the enhancement of life quality of the rural community, but also for the overall progress and development of the country.

Reference

Varma, Subodh. "At 315 Million, India Has the Most Students in World - Times of India." *The Times of India*, India, 2 July 2014, [timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/At-315-million-India-has-the-most-students-in-world/](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/At-315-million-India-has-the-most-students-in-world/articleshow) articles how.