

# PM SHRI

## Transforming India's Education Landscape through Excellence and Innovation

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### **Abstract**

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*Indian education system is evolving throughout its journey since independence. Over the period, landmark initiatives taken up by the Government become the benchmark for many developing countries. However, some issues and challenges still persists that need to be addressed. The paper critically examines the existing structure of India's education system, focusing on its key challenge to achieve equitable and quality education. Constraints that hamper effective functioning and achievement of desired outcomes, such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortage, outdated curricula, rote learning methods and regional disparities in access to education are explored in detail. Despite continuous efforts to reform the system taken up from time-to-time, like policy interventions and expansion of educational coverage, many challenges persist, particularly in ensuring student engagement, fostering critical thinking and bridging the digital divide. This paper aims to understand the systemic bottlenecks that hindered the holistic development of students, and hastened the progress toward achieving desired goals and targeted outcomes. While the need for comprehensive reforms, which paved the way for new policy frameworks like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the path breaking initiative like PM SHRI (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India) standing up to the challenges posed in 21st century challenges, such as infrastructure*

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*gaps, digital divides, and disparities in learning outcomes across rural and urban areas. This paper highlights how PM SHRI schools are set to redefine the learning experience through modern pedagogical approaches, eco-friendly infrastructure and a stronger emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Additionally, the paper evaluates the programme's potential to foster holistic development, integrate skill-based education and promote equity by enhancing access to quality education for underserved communities aligning with the national goals of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020*

**Keywords:** PM SHRI Schools, National Education Policy 2020, Inclusive Education, Holistic Development, Socio-economic Inequalities, Learning Outcomes.

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## INTRODUCTION

India, now the world's most populous nation with over 1.4 billion inhabitants, is a tapestry of diverse religions, castes, races and ethnicities. Far from hindering its progress, this diversity has been a cornerstone of India's socio-cultural and economic development. The country is increasingly recognised as one of the world's fastest emerging superpowers, with its policymakers and leaders consistently striving to secure national interests while upholding India's image as a '*Vishwa-Guru*' or world teacher, guiding global progress towards a better future.

Since gaining independence with a population of merely 340 million, India has witnessed a remarkable demographic expansion. This growth has been accompanied by commensurate increases in resources, human capital, (Gross Domestic Product) GDP, per capita income, and significant improvements in the education system and infrastructure.

To address the educational needs of a diverse and burgeoning population, a landmark shift occurred in 1976 with the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment placed 'Education' under the Concurrent List, empowering both the Parliament and State Assemblies to legislate on educational matters. This marked a historic departure from the British-era practice of education being solely a State subject, ushering in a new era in India's educational landscape (Constitution of India).

The Ministry of Education in India delegated the responsibility for school-age education to its Department of School Education and Literacy. This department oversees the educational journey of students from ages 6 to 18, with a primary focus on school-based learning. A significant milestone in Indian education policy came with the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009. This legislation established elementary education as a fundamental right for children between 6 and 14 years old, encompassing education up to

the Class VIII. Under this act, the Government bears the responsibility of ensuring that all eligible children have access to elementary education (RTE Act, 2009).

The educational structure continues beyond elementary level with secondary education, which spans from Class IX to XII. This phase caters to students in the 14 to 18 age bracket, completing the full spectrum of school education under the department's purview.

In the 77 years since gaining independence, India has cultivated one of the world's most extensive and diverse educational ecosystems. With an impressive 1.5 million schools, the country stands among the global leaders in educational institutions (Centre for Civil Society: 2022).

### **DIVERSE SCHOOL TYPES**

India's school system reflects its rich cultural heritage, offering a wide array of educational options which includes:

1. Religious schools: Including *Madarsas* and Christian schools
2. Government schools: The backbone of the public education system
3. Gender-specific institutions: Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalayas and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)
4. Tribal schools: Eklavya Model Residential Schools in tribal regions
5. State-controlled schools: Managed by individual state governments

6. Central government schools:

- (i) Kendriya Vidyalayas: Catering to children of transferable central government employees
- (ii) Navodaya Vidyalayas: Full-time residential schools in rural areas, focusing on talented students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- (iii) Private schools: Offering varied curricula and teaching methodologies
- (iv) National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) for distance learning and
- (v) Autonomous schools: Woodstock School, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education Puducherry, Patha Bhavan and Ananda Marga Gurukula

### **School Ownership and Enrolment**

A. Mathur and P. Narang (2022) reported in the Centre for Civil Society Report that out of 1.5 million schools, 68.7 per cent of the schools are government-managed schools and private schools represent 31.3 per cent of the total schools, with a whopping total student enrolment of over 26.5 crore (265 million), catering the students of a diverse background encompassing various geographical regions, multiple religions, diverse cultures and wide range of socio-cultural and economic backgrounds.

This vast and varied educational landscape continues to evolve. Each

year, with new enrolments across the country's 15 lakh schools, India's educational ecosystem grows more complex and nuanced, reflecting the nation's dynamic social fabric.

### **The Dynamic Evolution of India's Education Landscape**

Evolution is an inherently dynamic and ceaseless process, with development, change and reformation as its constant companions. This principle holds true across all sectors, including education, where emerging issues and concerns necessitate timely policy reforms. India's education policy has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past few decades. The education system of our country evolved as per the 1986 policy and Plan of Action of 1992, till the NEP 2020 was launched on July 29 2022 to address the upcoming challenges in the worldwide changing scenario of education.

### **THE LPG ERA: A CATALYST FOR CHANGE**

The period following 1991 marked India's entry into the era of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG). This paradigm shift had profound implications for the education sector which saw:

- (i) The emergence of private schools reshaping the Indian education system.
- (ii) These institutions addressed many shortcomings of public schools, which often struggled

due to resource constraints and inadequate funding. (Kusha A. and Marie L.)

### **The Private School Revolution**

This evolution demonstrates the education sector's responsiveness to broader economic and social changes, highlighting the dynamic nature of India's educational landscape. Private schools introduced several features, including enhanced infrastructure, integration of technology in education, safer learning environments, updated modern curricula, English as the primary medium of instruction and tried implementing innovative pedagogical approaches. These advancements provided Indian students with new educational experiences previously unavailable to them, marking a significant leap forward in the quality and diversity of educational offerings in the country.

In a more recent trend of last 8 years, there has been a significant rise in the enrolment of new students in private schools comparative to public schools-which led to the closure of a significant number of public schools. With the current trend of parents abandoning and ghosting public schools, it became increasingly difficult to fund public schools and maintain their quality. Due to this increasing inclination towards private schools, States like Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh alone witnessed the closure of around 24,000 public schools in 2015-16 (Kingdon, 2020).

This trend is indicative of increasing intrusion and dominance of private schools in the area of school education and the increasing aspirations in light of emerging education, scenario constantly nudge students and parents towards private schools.

### ***The Private School Phenomenon: Bridging Aspirations and Reality in Indian Education***

The proliferation of private schools in India has created a distinct divide between educational aspirations and practical realities. This divide fundamentally reshaped the landscape of education and parental choices in the country.

Private institutions vie with each other by offering—enhanced curricula and course offerings, safer learning environments, superior infrastructure, state-of-the-art facilities, advanced ICT tools for teaching and regularly updated teaching-learning materials.

### ***The Cost Factor***

The improvements come at a premium, with private schools generally charging higher fees than their public counterparts. This is particularly unregulated and despite the higher costs, private schools have emerged as the preferred choice for parents. This trend persists even among middle and lower-middle-class families who struggle to afford the fees of these schools. Parents are increasingly opting private schools for their children and the rising per

capita income, resulting in better living standards has intensified this trend.

This shift in preference of schools may be attributed to societal pressure, peer influence, family expectations and personal aspirations of parents which often compel parents to prioritise private education, even at significantly higher financial cost.

### ***Societal Implications***

This transition reflects a broader change in Indian society, where education is increasingly seen as a crucial investment in a child's future. It also highlights the growing disparity between public and private educational offerings, raising questions about equitable access to quality education across socio-economic strata. (Hill, Samson and Dasgupta (2011),

The 21st century has brought forth numerous challenges, underscoring the long-felt need for a comprehensive revision of our education system. A revamped education policy became essential to equip students with critical 21st century skills necessary to compete globally. After carefully addressing the shortcomings of the previous system and considering India's diverse educational needs, policymakers introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This policy aims to make the education system more adaptive by incorporating vocational and practical subjects, reforming assessment mechanisms, and fostering holistic

student development. It also emphasises experiential learning, integrates vocational education into the school curriculum and offers students personalised pathways for career advancement.

### **NEED OF PM SHRI SCHOOLS**

Despite a considerable budget allocation and increased spending on education sector and implementing various unique initiatives, such as Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Mid-day meal (MDM), PM Poshan, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Samagra Shiksha, Eklavya Schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalayas (KGBVs), Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), Kendriya Vidyalaya Samiti (KVS) and many other initiatives over the years, which have significantly contributed in improving and enriching the quality of education in India, there was the need to offer a fresh perspective for showcasing the features of NEP-2020, and recommendations of NEP-2020 in a positive light. Thus, keeping in mind the challenges faced earlier, Department of School Education, Ministry of Education (GoI) has envisaged and introduced PM SHRI scheme in September 2022 (PM SHRI School Framework–Pt.1) to set up the best schools all across India who will showcase the implementation of NEP-2020 and make them exemplar schools and in-turn inspire other schools in their vicinity over a period of time. In its first phase, 14,500 schools managed by Central Government,

State, UT Government or local bodies will be covered to provide a safe and stimulating learning environment where each student feels welcomed and cared for, where latest teaching and learning experiences are offered, with good physical infrastructure, best ICT practices, updated libraries, innovative pedagogical practices and appropriate resources essential for learning are available to all. These schools are chosen to provide the quality education and ensure holistic development of all the students. Learning outcome of each student will be tracked and students will be nurtured holistically with rounded personality equipped with 21st century skills of communication, collaboration and critical thinking.

Considering the needs of 21st century, the NEP-2020 underscores the importance of quality education for all students with its ripple effect on them to think critically to solve problems competently and act creatively. To truly embody this goal, it is imperative to foster an understanding of the principles of NEP, adapt practical recommendations outlined in it and subsequent national document, namely, the National Curriculum Framework-School Education (NCF-SE) 2023 and cultivate an experiential learning environment through innovative pedagogical methods.

### **Objectives of the Scheme**

The scheme was launched with an objective to address all above

mentioned challenges and envision an upgrade in Indian schools to provide high-quality education, focusing on modern teaching methods, infrastructure and student outcomes. It seeks to establish model schools that can serve as reference points for other institutions in terms of facilities, curriculum and pedagogy. It also aims to ensure that schools provide equitable access to education, especially in underserved areas. These schools will aim to nurture students in becoming productive and contributing citizens for building a more responsive, multi-cultured as envisaged in NEP-2020.

However, in pursuit of recognising their role as an agent of change under the light of NEP-2020 and NCF-SE 2023 recommendations, it is pertinent to provide an orientation by experts to the teachers and school leaders of these schools. Thus, for achieving this feat, the scheme has another distinctive provision to provide them with opportunities to get guidance and training by various experts, and an exposure to state of art facilities across the nation in the multiple institutes of repute. It is also planned to give them access to a wide range of educational resources, including textbooks, videos and interactive exercises. They will have access to enriched content knowledge and pedagogy through exposure, experiments and exercises. School leaders will be equipped with better and improved academic cum administrative tools,

better guidance related to inclusive practices and gender equity, latest pedagogical leadership compatible to the needs of 21st century, which will enhance and boost their morale and confidence, and motivate them to apply their learning into making their schools exemplary institutions in their vicinity.

### **Scope of PM SHRI Scheme**

#### ***For Schools***

By becoming the beneficiary of this scheme, schools will be able to transform by upgrading their infrastructure, which includes new classrooms, libraries, establishment of latest science labs and sports facilities, which can create a better learning and creative environment. There is also a provision to receive support for integrating modern technology, such as digital classrooms, smart boards and e-learning tools, which can enhance teaching and learning experiences, and have access to a revised and modernised curriculum that aligns with current educational standards, and needs.

With the integration of technology and modern pedagogical practices in everyday schooling, learning can be fun, and more interactive and engaging for students. Enhanced infrastructure and modern education facilities may support a wider range of co-curricular activities, promoting holistic development of the students. Further, improved infrastructure

often includes better sanitation, safety measures and accessible facilities, contributing to a more inclusive environment in which every student feel welcomed and safe inside the school premises, which is actually a serious concern for Indian parents across the country.

Apart from this, adoption of sustainable practices and energy-efficient infrastructure can create a healthier, and more eco-friendly school environment. And, schools that excel under the scheme may achieve model status in the future, and serve as a role model and benchmarks for others, and may gain nationwide recognition for the quality of education provided.

### ***For Teachers***

Teachers are the integral part of a school system and core of this scheme, hence, the scheme is designed to address the inequalities and concern faced by our school teachers so far, while performing their expected roles and functions. The scheme addresses multifaceted areas, such as time to time orientation by various experts and key resource persons on the issues related to everyday teaching, capacity building workshops by eminent institutes of education, taking care of continuous professional development of teachers where they will get the opportunities for ongoing professional development and exposure to new educational practices, and more. Also they will receive training in modern teaching methods, classroom management

and the integration of technology, enhancing their professional skills. They will gain access to modern educational tools and resources, such as interactive whiteboards and educational software, which can aid in effective classroom transaction. Also, they will get the access to the updated teaching-learning material, such as updated textbooks, digital content and teaching aids that can make lesson planning and execution more effective.

The scheme aims to provide improved and ethical working conditions for teachers and teacher educators and to equip them with better facilities which can create a more conducive working environment for teachers, reducing physical strain and improving overall job satisfaction which will ultimately reflect in their teaching methods. It is an established fact, that if a person enjoys their work then the output is far greater in comparison to restricted and overloaded working conditions. It also has provisions to provide enhanced administrative support and resources that help in reducing teachers' workload and administrative burdens.

The scheme provides opportunities of collaboration with other teachers and academicians of other schools or institutions sharing their best practices, experiences and resources. This will lead to the teachers' access to mentorship and support from experienced educators and administrators in their respective

subject. Such opportunities will help in their professional growth, career advancement and recognition for excellence in teaching that will ultimately going to contribute in the scheme's success. Greater involvement in curriculum development and educational innovation can empower teachers, and increase their motivation and commitment towards teaching more than ever. The scheme also has potential of providing incentives or rewards for teachers and schools that achieve notable improvements in the area of education. Such kind of recognition and awards for outstanding performances can contribute additionally to the schemes' outcome and as well as help in boosting the teachers' morale.

### **FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS OF PM SHRI SCHEME**

Existing school education system faced numerous challenges in terms of infrastructure, integration of various forms of pedagogical practices, experiential learning approaches of teachers and lack of hands on experience over the best practices in their field, safety measures in school premises, challenges in school leadership and mentorship, management strategies for effective management of funds and resources, updated curriculum, modern 360 degree assessment tools, emphasis on beneficiaries satisfaction and lack of community participation, proper guidance on inclusive and

special education were lacking in the former system, and thus, all these shortcomings were analysed and discussed upon, and in an effort to eliminate them hence, became the resting pillars of this scheme viz:

#### **1. Pillar–Access to Infrastructure — Adequacy, Functionality, Aesthetics and Safety:**

PM SHRI schools aim to create an inclusive learning environment accessible to all students, ensuring safety, inclusivity and effectiveness. This involves upgrading existing schools establishing new ones in underserved areas, and providing safe transportation, especially for girls, along with hostel facilities to ensure access to quality education for all.

#### **2. Pillar–Human Resources and School Leadership:**

Given the evolving nature of education, it's crucial to continually upgrade teachers in the latest curriculum, teaching methods and assessments. The major focus of this pillar is to enable PM SHRI schools to support teachers through subject-specific training and development programmes to enhance their effectiveness. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of strong school leadership for improving educational quality.

#### **3. Pillar–Management, Monitoring and Governance:**

Effective management, monitoring and governance systems are pre-requisite for assessing the impact of school transformations.

This pillar emphasises the need for robust systems to evaluate the alignment with existing schemes, resource management and overall effectiveness of PM SHRI schools.

**4. Pillar–Beneficiary Satisfaction:**

The quality of PM SHRI schools should be evaluated based on the satisfaction and effectiveness of various stakeholders involved in the education system, including principals, teachers, students, parents and the community. This pillar provides guidelines to ensure their roles and responsibilities converge effectively for school transformation.

**5. Pillar–Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment:**

The focus of PM SHRI schools' curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation processes is to empower students with autonomy and purpose, emphasising the development of skills over rote learning. The goal is to promote interactive teaching, and enjoyable, creative, collaborative and exploratory classrooms experiences.

**6. Pillar–Inclusive Practices and Gender Equity:**

PM SHRI schools strives to create physically and psychologically safe learning environment for all students, which significantly impact their motivation and attitudes. This pillar aims to ensure excellence in inclusive practices and gender equity within PM SHRI schools. (PM SHRI Schools Framework Pt.1).

**IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

Maximum two schools (one Elementary and one Secondary or Senior Secondary) are to be selected per block or Urban Local Body (ULB) with upper limit of 14500 across India. Elementary schools (Grade 1–5 or 1–8) and Secondary or Senior Secondary Schools (Grade 1–10, 1–12, 6–10 or 6–12) managed by Centre, State, UT Governments or local self-governments having Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE)+ code would be considered to become the beneficiary of this scheme. The selection of schools under the scheme will be done through challenge mode wherein Schools will compete for support in order to become exemplar schools. Selection would be done through a three-stage process with definite time lines. The three stages are as follows:

- (i) Stage 1: States and UTs would sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with centre laying down the commitments for supporting these schools for achieving specified quality assurance as PM SHRI schools.
- (ii) Stage 2: A pool of schools that are eligible to be selected as PM SHRI Schools would be identified based on prescribed minimum benchmark through UDISE+ data.
- (iii) Stage 3: Only the schools from the above eligible pool of schools would compete based on the challenge method for fulfilling

certain criteria. Fulfillment of conditions would be certified by States, UTs, KVS and NVS through physical inspection (PM SHRI Schools Framework Pt.2)

These schools are developed to provide the quality education and ensure holistic development of all the students. These schools will have best modern facilities. Saturation Model is being adopted to provide the facilities, such as smart classrooms, computer labs, integrated science labs, vocational labs and skill labs, atal tinkering labs, etc., in these schools. Learning Outcome of each student is tracked and students are being developed to have well rounded personality with 21st Century skill of communication, collaboration and critical thinking. A School Quality Assessment Framework (SQAF) is developed specifically for this scheme indicating level of proficiency to be achieved by each school. The scheme also has a comprehensive robust ICT-based tracking, monitoring and evaluation mechanism to monitor the quality.

### **Achievements so Far**

1. **Infrastructure Upgradation:** So far, 10,077 schools are covered under this scheme across India as on 30.09.2024 which may be seen in the map\*. They have been benefited from improved infrastructure, and now have tech-equipped classrooms, libraries and science labs, which is at par with some highly reputed private schools. All these facilities are built with learner-centric approach to provide them the best in class infrastructure for their learning growth (Ministry of Education's data as on 30.09.2024).
2. **Curriculum Enhancement:** The scheme has encouraged these schools to adopt modern and relevant curricula based on NEP-2020 and NCF-SE (2023), including the integration of modern educational classroom technology, and innovative teaching methods and pedagogy. The curriculum is now learner-centric with focus on 360 degree holistic development of the student which will prepare and equip them with tools, and will be helpful for them to navigate their professional career ahead of school life.
3. **Professional Development:** It is the first of kind programme where teachers from participating schools have been receiving professional training from time to time, for their academic growth which will ultimately contribute and reflect in their teaching practices. In the next phase of PM SHRI programme, the teachers of PM SHRI schools along with the Principals and Head teachers will participate in a 5 days long exposure visits to Central Universities, and premier higher educational and

professional institutes of India within their respective State and UT boundaries or in their nearby States as per the availability of such institutes or universities in the region. These exposure visits will help them to know the world beyond their classrooms. It is

an initiative to familiarise them with the state of art facilities, technological advancements and innovations in these institutes. They are also getting the opportunity to interact with subject-specific faculty members of these institutions and will



Fig. 1: Map of India representing distribution of PM SHRI Schools across the country

\*Source: Created by Authors Prof. Sharad Sinha and Dr. Abhishek Singh on the basis of data provided by Department. of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education.

share their experiences through which they can prepare, motivate, mobilise the future generations back in the school for the future ahead their school life. This is going to be one of a kind initiative in terms of teacher training which no other and previous government has ever initiated or even thought about this.

### **CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF PM SHRI SCHEME**

When a new scheme is launched, it takes inspirations from the hurdles and issues of earlier schemes but over the course of its implementation, the following factors usually hampers the true functioning of the scheme, which could be structural and may not be applicable to the diverse situations in various states of the country or various nature of schools. Some of these factors are sustainability, budgetary constraints, uniformity in implementation, etc., as discussed below:

1. **Sustainability:** Ensuring the long-term sustainability of improvements made under the PM SHRI scheme is another significant challenge. As the scheme is only approved for a period of 5 years which is up to 2026–27 and beyond that, it is said in the scheme that States and UTs then has to maintain and sustain their own development through their own resources. This may prove a challenging task for some of the states as central

government is not sanctioning funds to some states due to political indifferences under its Samagra Shiksha scheme due to which many states in India are not been able to clear the salary backlog of their school staffs, and on top of that to maintain and sustain the quality and standard of PM SHRI schools may prove a challenging task, and over the time these schools may return to their original position in absence of adequate care and resources.

2. **Budgetary constraint:** One of the primary limitations of the PM SHRI scheme is the challenge of ensuring adequate and sustained funding. Transforming schools into role models of excellence requires substantial investment in infrastructure, teaching resources and technology. However, given the vast number of more than 1 lakh higher secondary and senior secondary public schools in India and the limited budgetary allocations of just ₹ 27,360 crore for a period of 5 years to cover only 14,500 schools, is just seems a prolong vision which is hard to achieve with that kind of budget. Selection of the schools is a key factor for over a period of time. Additionally, delay in distribution of funds and resources can lead to disparities between regions and states, undermining the scheme's goal of uniform quality improvement across the country.
3. **Rigid structure of scheme:** The scheme does not allow schools

administrators to purchase any item outside the purview of Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal and sometimes that item is easily available in the open market, and on the lower price than GeM, which lead to rise in unspent balance with schools that would be surrendered at the end of financial year. Training of school administrators in procurement process from GeM portal may be provided by the experts in these agencies or scheme should be made flexible in terms of procurement of school and lab equipment's from open market. The scheme has another provision that school leaders will organise an interaction meet once in a year where a team of experts from institutions of repute may be called upon to share their best practices which may be beneficial for them in terms of improving overall performance of the teachers and leaders. For this, each school has a separate fund provision of ₹ 5 lakh per year and in many cases, the school leaders have no idea on whom to call, and where to call and in order to utilise the funds, experts are just randomly called for hurried utilisation of funds before stipulated time. This is another area which needs attention so that the school leaders can optimise this activity to the fullest.

4. **Uniformity in Implementation:** The successful implementation of any scheme heavily depends

on the efficient and effective implementation of its policies at the ground level. However, India's diversified and vast educational landscape presents numerous challenges, including varying layers of administrative delays in fund, and different interpretations of policy guidelines at the central, state and regional levels, which lead to creates inconsistency and hamper efficient rollout of the scheme.

### CONCLUSION

Various centrally sponsored schemes have been game changers in the past. Any new scheme in education, it is of a common observation that they are aimed to improve the quality of education looks on the failure and drawbacks of the earlier schemes. Working on them, the schemes are developed that minimises the risks of potential failures of a particular scheme. India has continuously made efforts and considerable developments in the past for improving the quality of schools and school education. This continuous monitoring and financial support by Government has gradually improved the school education landscape of India.

It is an established fact that providing financial support and establishing proper tools for assessment can always improve a programme irrespective of its area and field. This fact is also proven by the United Nation's Education

and Employability Report which was published in 2022 which states that, “India has made considerable improvements in access to quality education, increasing elementary school enrolment and reducing the number of out-of-school children. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) programme and the implementation of the landmark Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 has ensured access to education. There is near-universal enrolment in primary education and almost all children in rural areas now have access to a primary school within a one kilometre radius. The number of out-of-school children has decreased from approximately eight million in 2009 to just over six million in 2014” (UN Report, 2022).

The adult literacy rate increased from 61 per cent in 2001 to 74 per cent in 2018. In 2011, rates were 60 per cent for Scheduled Castes and 52 per cent for Scheduled Tribes. In 2015, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the primary level stood at 99 per cent (98 per cent for boys and 100 per cent for girls) and in Upper Primary level 93 per cent (89 per cent for boys and 97 per cent for girls) and the annual dropout rate at primary level was around 21 per cent with a slight advantage for girls (UN Report, 2022).

Given the diversity of India’s educational landscape, a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective. Decentralising the implementation of

the scheme and more involvement of local authorities, school management committees, and community members can ensure that the unique needs of each region are met. Building strong partnerships with the community can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the schools, which can lead to better maintenance of infrastructure, increased accountability, and enhanced student attendance and participation. Regular communication and consultation with stakeholders can also help in identifying local challenges and co-creating solutions that are tailored to specific contexts. This localised approach allows for better adaptation of the scheme’s components to suit specific cultural, geographical, and socio-economic contexts, thereby increasing its relevance and effectiveness.

To ensure the successful implementation of the PM SHRI scheme, a comprehensive set of strategies are needed over the course of its implementation for upgradation and transformation of existing schools into models of excellence with a focus on overcoming potential challenges. A critical factor for the success of the PM SHRI scheme is the availability of sufficient and sustained funding. The government should ensure the timely release of funds to these schools in each phase of the scheme for their infrastructure upgrades, teacher training, and purchasing of teaching-learning materials. Additionally, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

options could be explored to supplement Government funding, and bring in additional expertise and innovation. This would help in bridging financial gaps and ensuring consistent support for the scheme.

Post NEP-2020, the PM SHRI initiative is a significant benchmark in India's journey to achieve educational excellence and equity. "Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man" (Swami Vivekananda), and this scheme embodies this philosophy by aiming to unlock the potential in every student through holistic development, modern infrastructure and innovative pedagogy.

While many challenges, such as funding sustainability, implementation hassles arising due to diversity, need to be addressed, the scheme's comprehensive framework resting on six robust pillars offers

a promising pathway to transform select Government schools into centres of excellence. These schools are poised to become lighthouses of quality education, demonstrating how the vision of NEP 2020 can be effectively implemented at the ground level.

As India marches ahead in its educational journey, the success of PM SHRI schools will not just be measured by improved infrastructure or learning outcomes, but by making education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, as per the needs of 21st century, and of course, enjoyable, making them capable to inspire and guide other schools in their vicinity, thereby creating a multiplier effect that could potentially revolutionise the entire public education system in India.

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- . Pt-3 – SCHOOL QUALITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK ACCESSED ON 12.09.2024 VIA [HTTPS://DSEL.EDUCATION.GOV.IN/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/PART3\\_PMSHRI.PDF](https://dseleducation.gov.in/sites/default/files/part3_pms shri.pdf)
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