

# HEADING THE WRONG WAY

Education landscape  
in India





2023

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## Education landscape in India

Public education is an indispensable part of any state system that operates on the principle of 'equity'. There is no alternative to the same. Regrettably, with weakening 'public', 'private education' has developed a strong foothold in India. With the magnitude of inequality so severe that post Covid the top 10% of the riches amass 77% of the total national wealth (Oxfam, 2023), it is unimaginable for the majority of population to afford and hence access private education. The seeping-in privatization is widening the inequity in the society. The state that seems to be more accepting of the private is slowly receding from its prime responsibility of quality service delivery of education to all.

This brief highlights this widening gap by looking at some of the crucial indicators. It has to be noted that these indicators are the enablers which make the delivery of quality education possible. Multiple theories prove that there is a positive correlation between these indicators and the learning outcomes of the students. One can refer to the recently published ASER report to observe the trends around learning outcomes of students in these states. There is a heavy investment required both, material and human to deliver quality education. This brief presents the status of some of the most crucial indicators for quality education in laymen terms.

**ROHIT NEMA**







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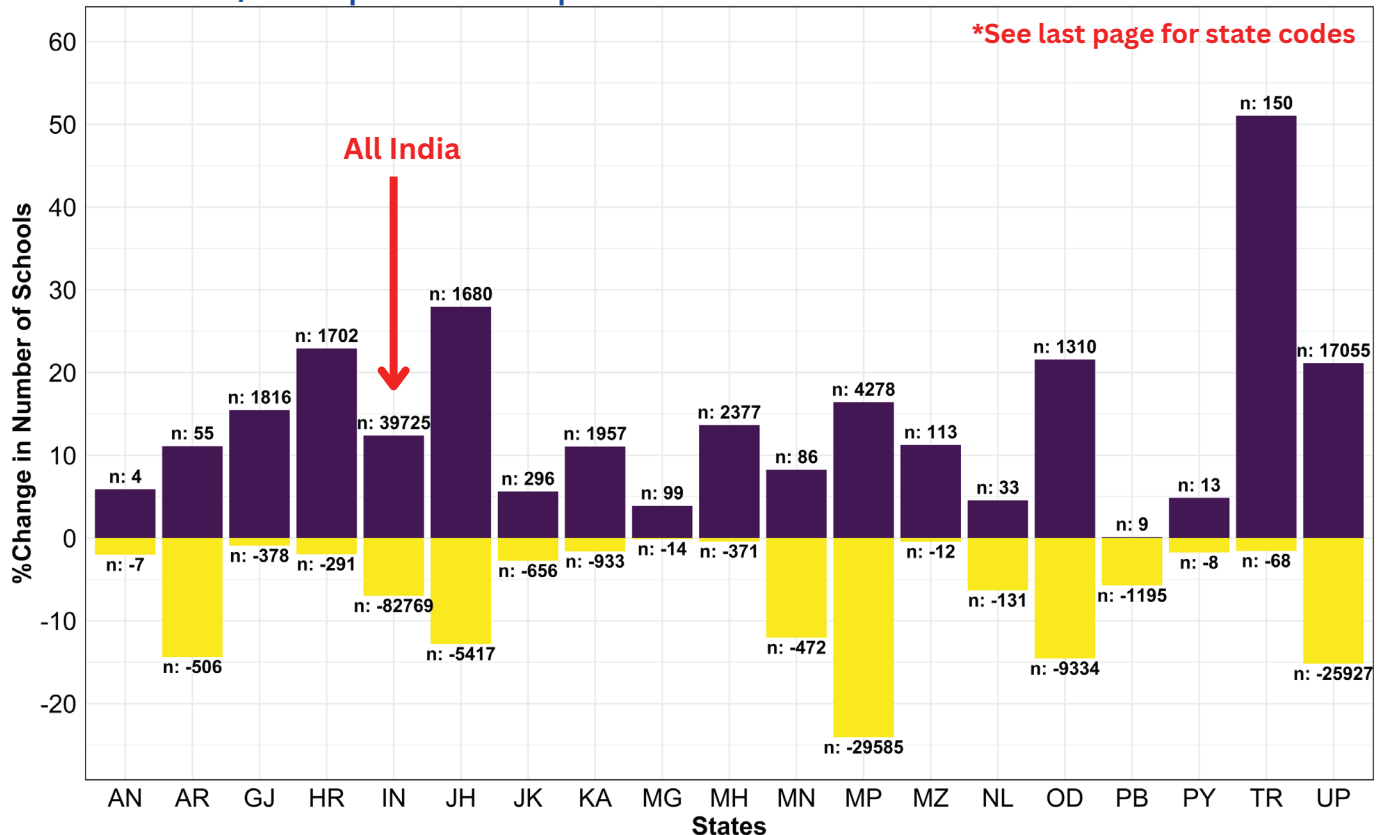
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# Shrinking Public Education

Since 2015, it has been observed that the government schools have significantly gone down in numbers, while the private schools have increased to a large extent (Fig 1).

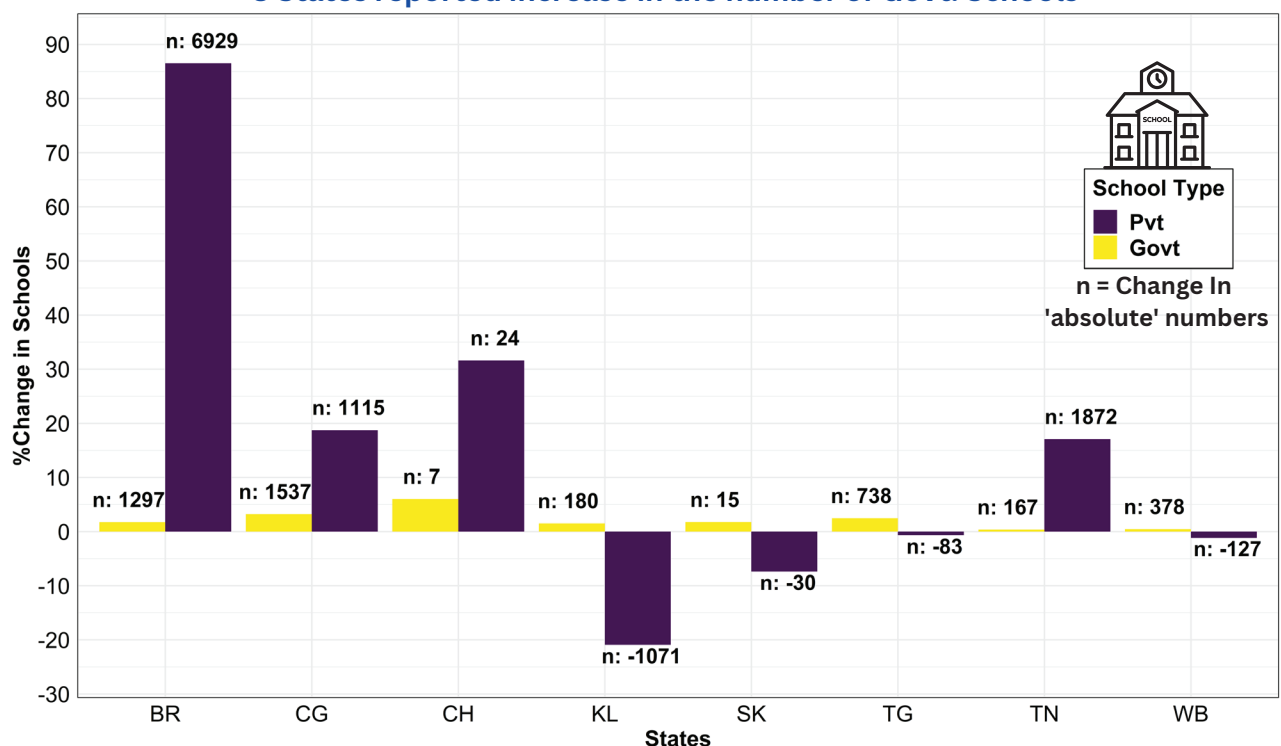
**18<sup>1</sup> states/UTs reported the drop in the number of Govt. Schools while increase in Pvt.**



**Fig 1: %Change in the number of Govt. and Pvt. Schools from 2015-16 to 2021-22**

Equally concerning are the 7 states, including Delhi and Rajasthan, which observe the shrinkage in both, government and private schools. Hence bringing down the overall education delivery capacity. Even though, the situation is abysmal, some of the states proved to be a ray of hope in the same period (Fig 2).

**8 States reported increase in the number of Govt. Schools**



**Fig 2: %Change in the number of Govt. and Pvt. Schools from 2015-16 to 2021-22**

## Consolidation Despite Rising Demand

The drop in number of Govt. Schools seen as high as -12%

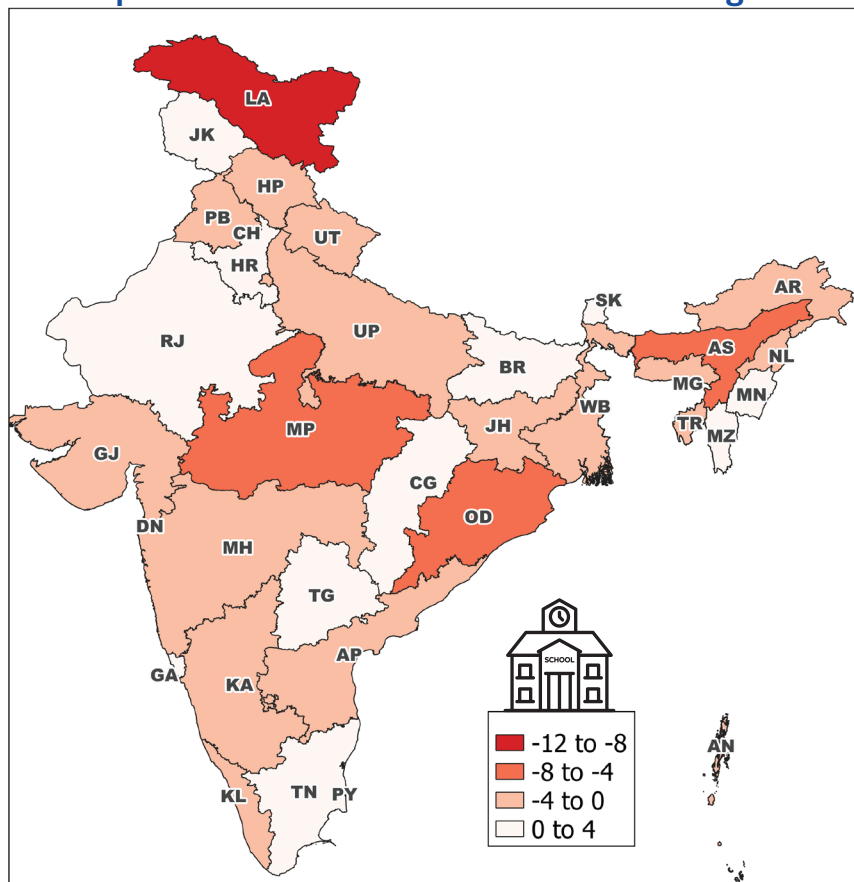


Fig 3: %Change in the number of Govt. Schools from 2019-20 to 2021-22

The increase in enrolments in Govt. Schools seen as high as 22%

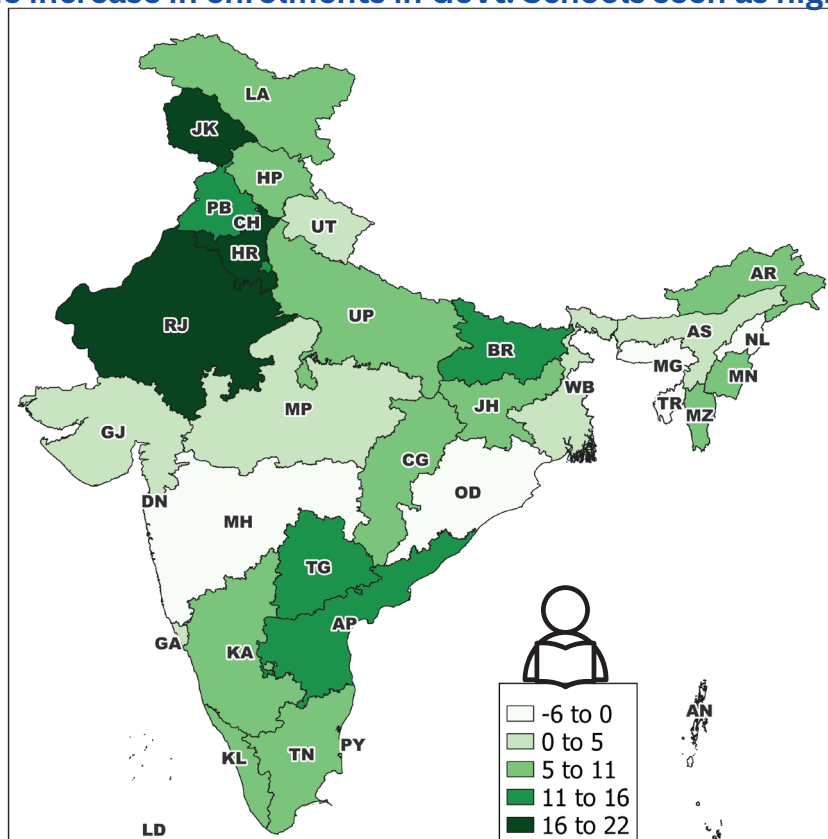


Fig 4: %Change in the number of Enrolments in Govt. Schools from 2019-20 to 2021-22

In comparison to 2019-20 (pre-covid year) with 2021-22 (post-covid year), the **drop** in the number of **government** schools has been observed to be as grave as **-12%** in some states? Some of the states which showed a positive shift are only in the range of 0-4% (Fig 3). Majority of the states/UTs are at least dropped by 4% in government school numbers. The '**All India**' drop is **government schools** founded to be **-1.06%** which is **around 12000 schools** while the **private** as **-1.77%**, resulting in **overall** drop of **-1.2%**. This shows that we are observing a **decline in overall education capacity**, with **both the sectors failing in compensating** for the other during this period.

What is more alarming is the fact that while the overall schools' have gone down significantly, the **enrolment in government schools** has **gone up massively** in the post-covid period. Some of the states observe the increase in **enrolment to be as high as 22%** (Fig 4). The government schools in '**All India**' observe an increase of **7.5%** in enrolment which is around **1.17 crores**. This poses a question especially after covid where we are seeing a trend reversal in enrolments from private to government, what is the rationale for closing down & consolidation of the government schools? What is happening to Pupil to teacher ratio (PTR)? How reduction in the overall number classrooms helping the increased enrolment?

Around the same time (pre vs post-covid), barring Ladakh and Meghalaya, **all states/UTs observed a drop in enrolment in private schools** (Fig 5). The 'All India' drop is seen to be **-10.7%** While acknowledging the closure of many private schools during covid, however still being in-proportionate to enrolment drop, this highlights the inequality factor in the diverse population of India and reiterates unaffordability of private education for masses. There is no alternative to public education for majority of India.

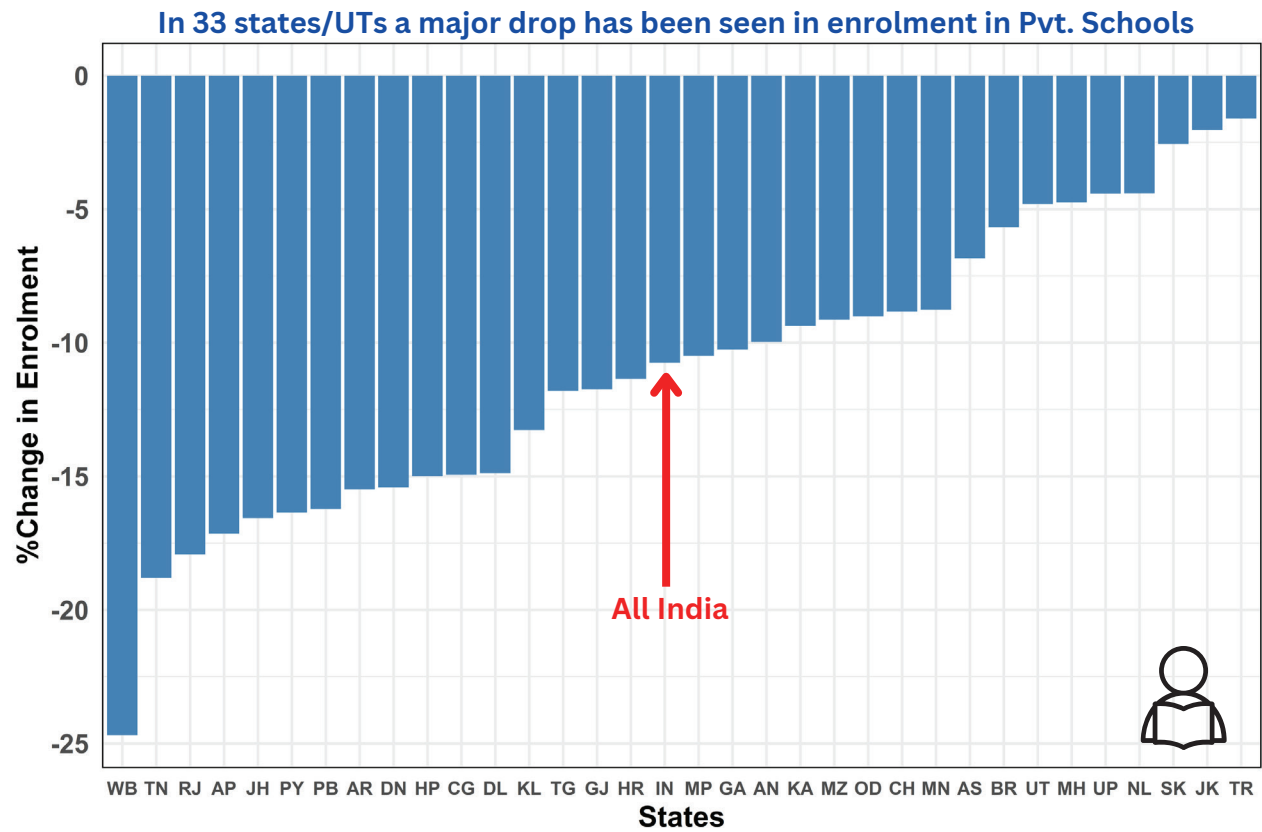


Fig 5: %Change in Enrolment in Pvt. Schools from 2019-20 to 2021-22

## Teacher Quality and Adequacy

The deficit teachers are more than 50% in some of the states

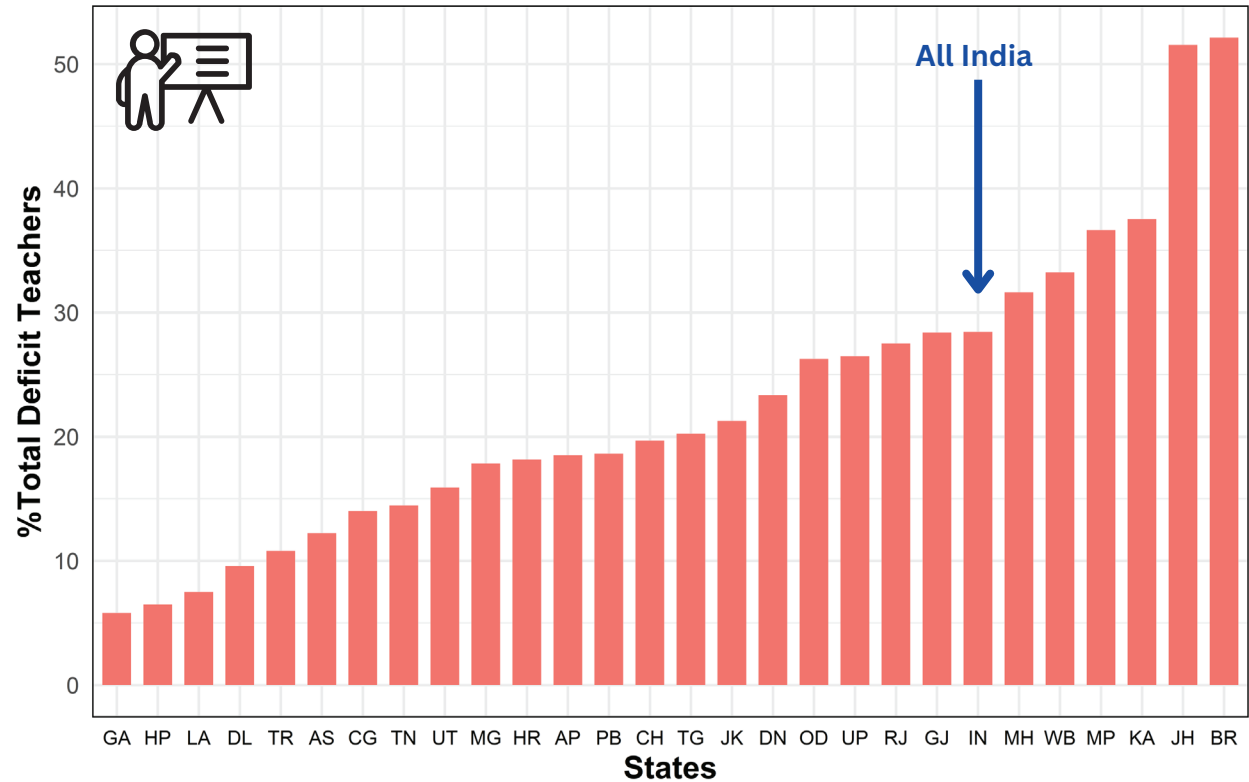


Fig 6: %Deficit Teachers across all grades in Govt. Schools 2021-22

It has to be noted that it is not just the closing down of the government schools that is becoming a phenomenon, alongside, the other old problems of poor PTR, untrained and unqualified teachers, inadequate provisioning etc., are equally getting affected. The **deficit teachers** are calculated as the **difference** of the **total requirement of teachers** (dependent on enrolment) in a school and the **total number of working teachers**. There are **27 states/UTs** in India which observe the **deficit** in number of teachers in government schools in the year 2021-22 (Fig 6). The **'All India'** figure presents a huge deficit of around **28% in government schools** during the same period. The teachers include subject teachers, head-teachers, and part-time teachers. In the states like Bihar and Jharkhand, the deficit is **almost double** the number of working teachers in the states. Forget quality education, how are we ensuring basic education then? Despite the murkiness, there are **9 states/UTs (NL, SK, LD, AN, MZ, MN, AR, KL)** which happened to become inspiring examples of maintaining the required teachers' proportion to the extent that they **observe surplus teachers** in 2021-22. This shows their preparedness for growing enrollment in the public school system. Other states can learn from the practices of these high performing states.

If one traces this negligence from 2015-16, one will observe that the situation has worsened. There is a steep drop observed in the **total number of government teachers in 6 years** (Fig 7). The figures have been calculated by **subtracting the total number of government teachers in each state in 2015-16 from those in 2021-22**. States are not filling the vacancies, even the reassessment of the sanctioned posts is not being carried out diligently. RTE has laid down norms for the requirement of teachers based on the enrolment numbers in the elementary schools. There are guidelines by NCERT and SSA for the Pupil to Teacher ratios across secondary classes. However, they are being ignored. This is resulting into classes without any teachers. The brunt of which is being felt by the children.

#### India observes 86968 lesser teachers in govt schools in 2021-22 than 2015-16

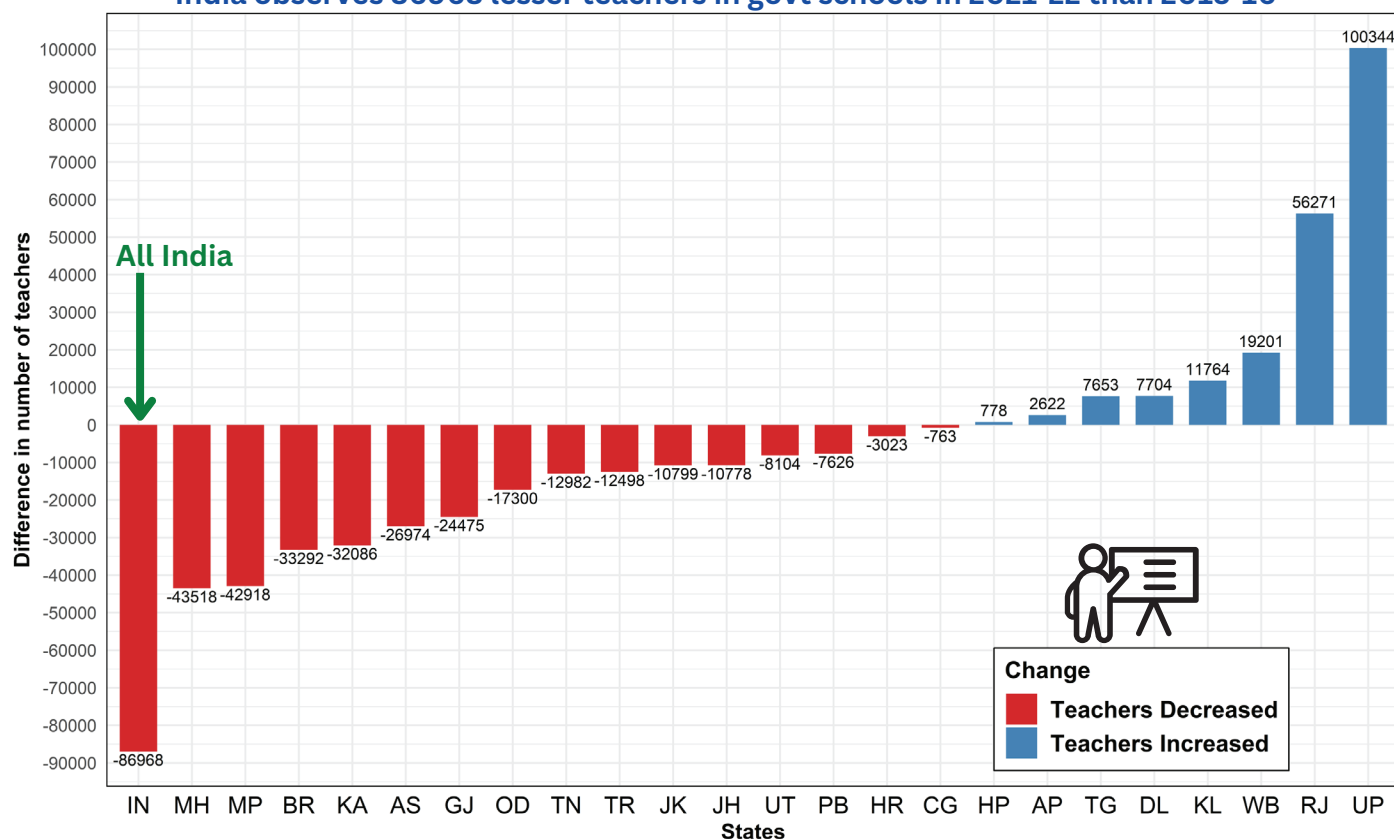


Fig 7: Change<sup>3</sup> in Total number of teachers in Govt. schools from 2015-16 to 2021-22



UDISE+ reports the **unqualified teachers** as the ones who have **not received** any **professional qualification** as diploma certificate, or Bachelor of Elementary Education (B.El.Ed.), or Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.), or Master of Education (M.Ed), or any other professional qualification. This is an important marker in understanding that the teacher who is teaching the students has basic minimum qualification or not. Ideally, no unqualified teacher should teach the students. Despite the fact, both the government and the private schools have reported unqualified teachers in the year 2021-22 (Table 1). It should be observed that **private schools** in **12 states** have reported **more than 30%** unqualified teachers. The '**All India**' figures for the **government schools** lies in the range of **1-10%** and that of **private** ones in the range **11-20%**. In other words, the **private schools** have almost **double** the number of **unqualified teachers** than the **government schools**. Both the deficit teachers and the unqualified teachers make the schools non-compliant as per the RTE norms. Then, how are these schools being regulated by the state? Are there no repercussions to not adhering to the norms? Are parents aware of these numbers?

#### 12 States report more than 30% of unqualified teachers teaching in Pvt. Schools

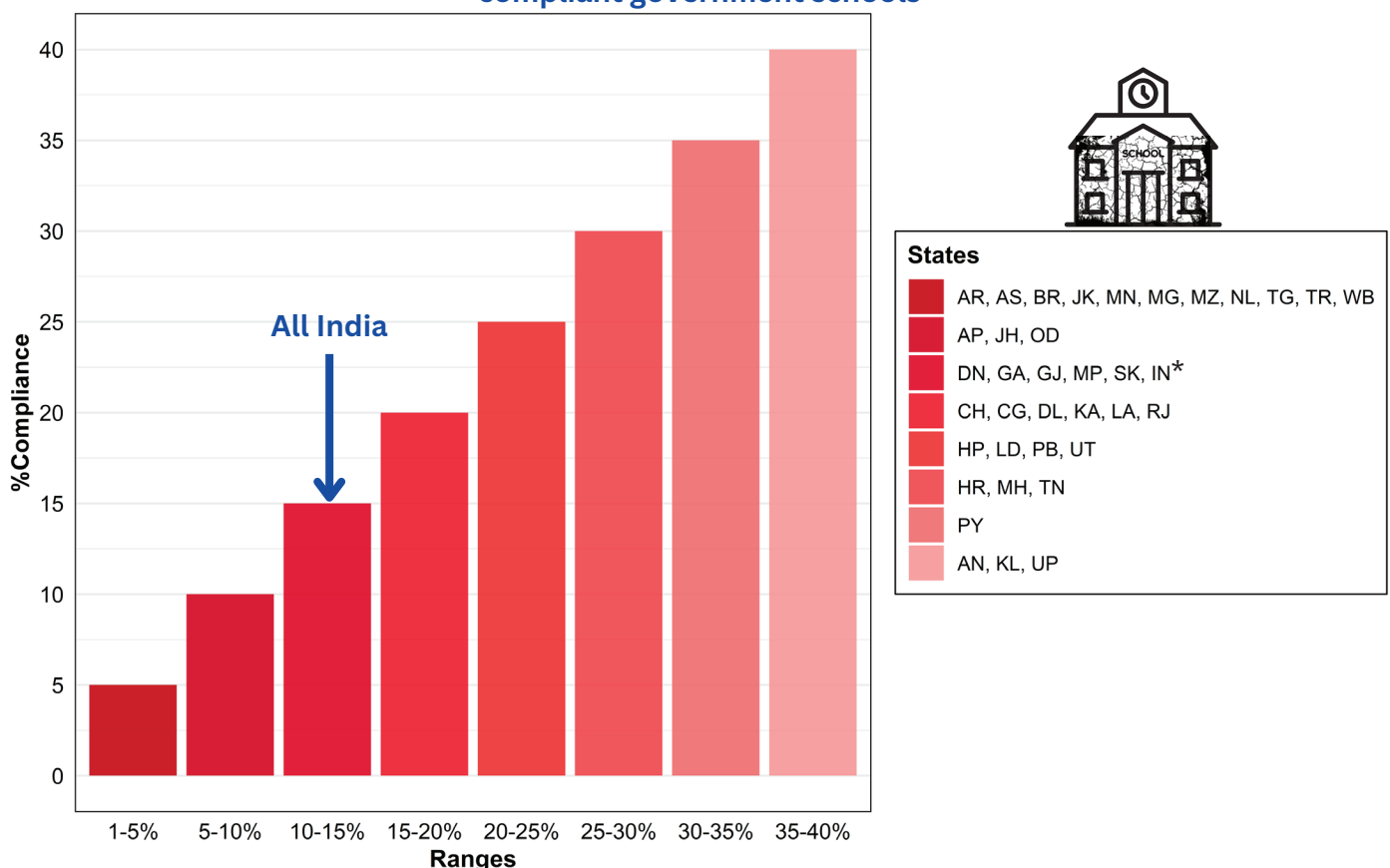
Ranges	Government		Private	
	States	Count	States	Count
1-10%	AP, AR, BR, CH, CG, GA, GJ, HR, HP, JK, JH, KA, KL, MP, MH, MZ, OD, PY, PB, RJ, TN, TG, UP, UT, WB, IN*	25	AP, CH, GA, GJ, HR, HP, KA, KL, MH, PY, TN	11
11-20%	LA, MN, SK	3	OD, PB, RJ, TG, UT, IN*	5
21-30%	AS, NL, TR	3	CG, JH, MP, UP	4
31-40%	MG	1	AR, BR, LA, MN, MZ, TR, WB	7
41-50%	-	-	JK, SK	2
51-60%	-	-	AS, MG, NL	3
No unqualified	AN, DL	2	AN, DL	2

Table 1: %Unqualified Teachers in Govt. vs Pvt. Schools 2021-22

# The Dilapidating Infrastructure

The RTE infrastructure norms lay down certain guidelines for what facilities should be there in a school. In Fig 8, such parameters have been considered to check how many government schools are compliant. The **8 parameters** include - school building, separate room for headmaster, separate girls' and boys' toilets, availability of functional drinking water facilities, availability of library, availability of playground, boundary wall, and adequate number of classrooms. The numbers found to be unnerving. There **isn't a single state** in India that has **more than 40% RTE compliant government schools**. There are **around 11 states** which report the **compliance in the range 1-5%** only. Around **95%** of the government schools are **non-compliant** on RTE infrastructure norms in these states, with '**All India**' figure finding itself in the range of **10-15%**. Where should the poor go? The private education is unaffordable and the government one is getting inadequate on so many parameters.

**Even the torch bearer states like Kerala have less than 40% infrastructure wise compliant government schools**



**Fig 8: %Infrastructure wise RTE Compliant Schools 2021-22**

This has lot to do with poor provisioning of funds for the public education. The 6% of the GDP allotment to education is still an unrealized dream. Rather the numbers have been hovering around 3% since many years now. Even with the highest budget allocation ever in budget 2023 for education, the share in GDP remained unmoved at 2.9%. The poorer states need the maximum support and funding from central share. However, without unlearning the usual allocation habits, the picture is not going to change much.

# The Gaps that Covid-19 Highlights

The impact of covid on education has been devastating. It exposed the limitations in the system. Even though the cases have gone down, and the world has much better measures to counter it, the learnt practices are required to be practiced even now. The digital divide was a prominent limitation that we all have observed, especially in the rural spaces. Around **23 states/UTs** in India have **less than 40%** of the government schools with internet access and at least a **single** desktop/laptop/tablet available (Table 2). The '**All India**' numbers are in the range of only **0-20%**. Even in the basic infrastructural facility like **handwash**, we still stand in the range of **60-80%** in '**All India**'. These figures warn us how ugly the things can again turn out in case there is another outbreak of virus. We are still nowhere close to prepared to provide barrier free continuous education to our children.

**Around 60% schools in 23 states do not have internet access and even 1 computer**

Range	Computer Facilities	Tot	Handwash Facilities	Tot	Internet Availability	Tot
0-20%	AR,AS,BR,JK,M P,MN,MG,MZ,O D,TG,UP,WB, IN*	12	-	-	AR,AS,BR,KA, MP,MN,MG,MZ ,OD,TG,TR,UP, UT,WB, IN*	14
20-40%	AP,CG,HP,JH,K A,LA,NL,RJ,TN, TR,UT	11	AR,MG	2	AN,CG,HR,HP, JK,JH,MH,SK,T N	9
40-60%	AN,GA	2	NL	1	AP,DN,GA,LA, NL,PB,RJ	7
60-80%	MH	1	LA, MZ, IN*	2	-	-
80-100%	CH,DN,DL,GJ, HR,KL,LD,PY,P B,SK	10	AN,AP,AS,BR, CH,CG,DN,DL, GA,GJ,HR,HP, JK,JH,KA,KL,L D,MP,MH,MN, OD,PY,PB,RJ, SK,TN,TG,TR, UP,UT,WB	31	CH,DL,GJ,KL,L D,PY	6

**Table 2: %Number of Govt. Schools having at least 1 computer, Handwash Facilities, and Internet Availability in 2021-22**



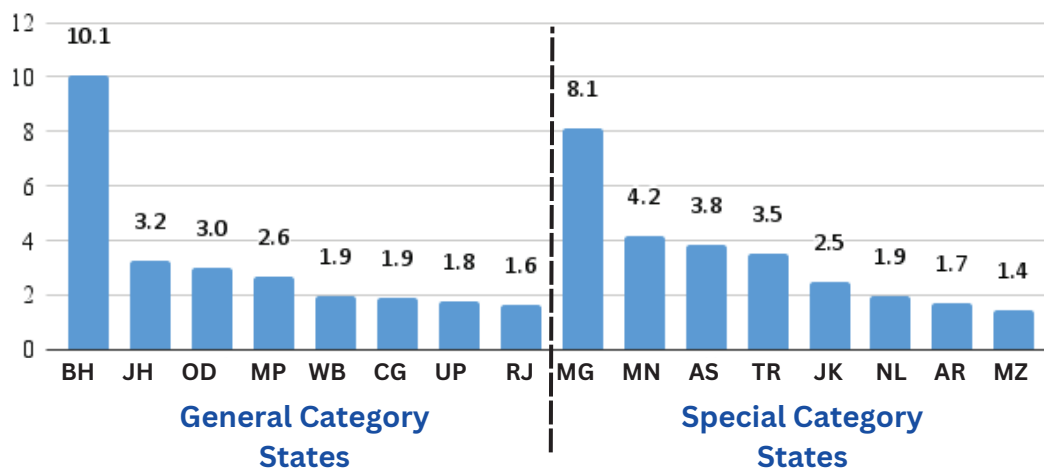
# Time to Act



It is imperative to work on seven fronts -

1. Re-evaluate the policy on school consolidation. Expansion of government schools must ensure equitable access to public schools for all children at the elementary level.
2. Central to the project of universalisation with quality is the recruitment of well-trained and quality teachers in government and private schools.
3. Ensure time bound implementation for RTE compliance for all schools.
4. Along with RTE implementation it is needed to restore trust by improving school administration making government schools properly functional. Without this effort to better manage government schools the improvements will not bear fruit
5. Ensure regulation of private schools.
6. Invest in digital infrastructure creation in line with the public aims of education.
7. And to ensure all the above points, allocation on education needs to be increased manifold. Recent research estimates the gap between the required allocation and actual expenditure for elementary education alone is above 1.4% of GDP. The gaps are distributed unequally across states (Fig. 9).

## **States like Bihar need almost 10% of additional spending on education to achieve full RTE implementation**



**Fig 9: Additional Requirement as % GSDP 2015-16**

\*Source: Bose S, Ghosh P, Sardana A, p.97, 2020

## State codes

Code	State	Code	State	Code	State	Code	State
AN	A & N Islands	GA	Goa	LD	Lakshadweep	PB	Punjab
AP	Andhra Pradesh	GJ	Gujarat	MP	Madhya Pradesh	RJ	Rajasthan
AR	Arunachal Pradesh	HR	Haryana	MH	Maharashtra	SK	Sikkim
AS	Assam	HP	Himachal Pradesh	MN	Manipur	TN	Tamil Nadu
BR	Bihar	JK	Jammu & Kashmir	MG	Meghalaya	TG	Telangana
CH	Chandigarh	JH	Jharkhand	MZ	Mizoram	TR	Tripura
CG	Chhattisgarh	KA	Karnataka	NL	Nagaland	UP	Uttar Pradesh
DN	Dadar and Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu	KL	Kerala	OD	Odisha	UT	Uttarakhand
DL	Delhi	LA	Ladakh	PY	Puducherry	WB	West Bengal

\*For **All India** figures, refer to code 'IN'

### Notes

1. Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu has not been considered as it has been merged into a single Union Territory only after July 2019.
2. The fall in the number of schools in case of Madhya Pradesh includes the school consolidation that has been happening since 2019 under CM RISE programme.
3. The states/UTs LA, NL, MG, PY, AN, GA, AR, CH, SK, MZ, and MN are not shown in the graph to improve the legibility.
4. All the government schools mentioned in the graphs in this brief include the government aided schools as well.
5. The government schools do not include the schools managed by central government - Central School, Ministry of Labour, Jawahar Navodaya Vidhyalaya, Sainik School, Railway School, Central Tibetan School
6. The entire micro data has been taken from UDISE+ website.
7. The number of deficit teachers have been calculated through the difference of Required teacher and Actual teachers in any state. For this, RTE norms for elementary schools have been followed. For secondary CBSE guidelines have been followed. For pre-primary, NCERT guidelines have been followed.
8. The data files for different tables can be accessed here - <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1SW7AiJOsjLEWwBMR-RA4omCB1iaYi32f?usp=sharing>

### References

Bose, S., Ghosh, P., & Sardana, A. (2020). *RTE and the Resource Requirements: The Way Forward*. Eklavya Foundation.

Christensen, M. B., Hallum, C., Maitland, A., Parrinello, Q., Putaturo, C., Abed, D., Brown, C., Kamande, A., Lawson, M., & Ruiz, S. (2023). *Survival of the Richest: How we must tax the super-rich now to fight inequality*. Oxfam. <https://doi.org/10.21201/2023.621477>

*\*Disclaimer: The views presented in this brief are of the author alone. Rohit Nema is a final year master's student of Public Policy and Governance at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. He is working as a research intern under the mentorship of Sukanya Bose.*

## NOTE







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