
EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE ACROSS INDIAN STATES UNDER THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FRAMEWORK: A CRITICAL EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

The Right to Education (RTE) in India symbolizes a pivotal constitutional pledge to accessible, fair, and high-quality primary education. Nonetheless, even with a strong legal framework, notable differences continue to exist among states regarding access, quality, and educational results. This article assesses the effectiveness of the education system within the RTE framework by analyzing the relationship among legal frameworks, policy execution, and real-world results. Utilizing key national datasets and reports like UDISE+, ASER (2021–2024), PGI, SDG 4 indicators, NIPUN Bharat Mission, and PM POSHAN Scheme, the research examines trends in enrollment, infrastructure, basic literacy, and governance effectiveness. A state-wise comparison of Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, and Gujarat showcases both effective strategies and ongoing issues. The piece contends that although India has significantly improved access to education, issues regarding the quality of learning and consistency in application are still major worries. It ends by recommending enhanced institutional collaboration, evidence-based policymaking, and focused measures to close inter-state gaps and completely fulfill the constitutional commitment to the Right to Education.

Keywords: Right to Education, Article 21A, UDISE+, ASER. PGI, SDG 4.

1. Introduction

Education serves as a crucial foundation for social change, and in India, its acknowledgment as a basic right under Article 21A represents an important constitutional achievement. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) executes this directive by establishing a thorough legal structure focused on guaranteeing universal access to elementary education. Nevertheless, having legal provisions by themselves does not ensure successful implementation. The effectiveness of the RTE framework is largely determined by the manner in which laws are transformed into policies and the implementation of these policies across various socio-economic and administrative environments.¹

India's federal system introduces additional complexity, with education being part of the Concurrent List, enabling both the Union and State administrations to create and execute policies. This has resulted in differences in governance ability, distribution of resources, and effectiveness of institutions among states. As a result, although certain states have reached almost universal enrollment and enhanced learning results, others still face challenges with infrastructure shortcomings, a lack of teachers, and poor educational achievements.²

This article aims to assess educational outcomes in Indian states within the RTE framework by combining legal examination with empirical evidence. It explores the interaction between legislative measures, institutional systems, and policy actions to impact educational results. Through the examination of key educational reports like ASER, UDISE+, PGI, and SDG 4 indicators, the research offers a thorough evaluation of the advancements and obstacles in realizing the right to education. Furthermore, a comparative examination of chosen states—Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, and Gujarat—provides insights into regional differences and effective practices

1. Legal Structure of the Right to Education in India

The constitutional legal framework for education in India is rooted in Article 21A, which requires free and compulsory education for children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. This clause, implemented via the 86th Constitutional Amendment, changed education from a guideline into an enforceable fundamental right. The RTE Act, 2009 expands on this mandate

¹ Government of India. (2009). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.

² United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

by defining criteria for infrastructure, teacher qualifications, pupil-teacher ratios, and inclusive education.³

Education's inclusion in the Concurrent List permits legislation by both central and state governments, creating a multi-tiered legal structure. Although the central government issues broad guidelines, states are tasked with developing regulations and executing policies. This decentralization allows for contextual adaptation, but it also results in inconsistencies in enforcement and results.⁴

The Act mandates responsibilities for governments and educational entities, such as creating community schools, banning discriminatory actions, and overseeing private institutions. Even with these measures, difficulties persist in achieving compliance, especially in areas with limited resources.⁵

2. Policy Instruments and Educational Reports

The evaluation of RTE implementation requires reliance on empirical data and policy instruments. Several national-level reports and initiatives provide valuable insights into the functioning of the education system:

UDISE+ provides extensive information on school facilities, student enrollment, and teacher presence. The Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) is among the most extensive and credible data systems for school education in India, significantly contributing to assessing the execution of the Right to Education (RTE). UDISE+ is an enhanced and consolidated iteration of previous data systems, offering comprehensive, real-time, and detailed information on multiple facets of school education, such as enrolment, facilities, teacher presence, and indicators of school performance.⁶

Within the RTE framework, which mandates the State to guarantee access, equity, and quality, UDISE+ serves as an essential monitoring instrument that facilitates both vertical and horizontal assessments of educational outcomes across districts, states, and the entire country.

³ Ministry of Law and Justice. (2002). *Constitution (86th Amendment) Act*. Government of India. (2009). *RTE Act, 2009*.

⁴ Tilak, J. B. G. (2018). *Education and development in India*. Springer

⁵ MHRD. (2019). *Manual on RTE implementation*.

⁶ Government of India. (2023). *UDISE+ report*.

ASER emphasizes educational results, especially basic reading and math skills. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is a distinctive and significant survey aimed at evaluating educational outcomes in India, thus supplementing administrative data systems such as UDISE+. Held each year by a civil society organization, ASER offers an unbiased, household-level evaluation of children's fundamental reading and math skills, establishing it as an essential resource for assessing the impact of the Right to Education beyond just enrollment figures. Although RTE has effectively expanded access to education, ASER has repeatedly emphasized a notable “learning crisis,” with many children in schools unable to complete fundamental grade-level activities..⁷

ASER has been crucial in influencing policy discussions by changing the emphasis from inputs to outcomes. Its results have shaped significant policy efforts, such as the NIPUN Bharat Mission, which seeks to attain universal foundational literacy and numeracy.

The Performance Grading Index (PGI) evaluates state effectiveness through various indicators, encompassing governance and results. The Performance Grading Index (PGI) serves as a crucial policy instrument created to assess and contrast the performance of states within the school education sector, thus offering a thorough evaluation of the execution of the Right to Education. PGI employs a multidimensional strategy, evaluating states based on various indicators such as access, equity, quality, governance, and infrastructure. A major strength of the PGI is its emphasis on governance and management, acknowledging that efficient administration is crucial for the effective execution of educational policies. The index assesses factors like educator training, digital projects, oversight systems, and clarity in decision-making, thus offering insights into the institutional capability of states. Through the years, PGI rankings have shown notable differences in educational outcomes, with states such as Kerala and Himachal Pradesh regularly obtaining high scores, whereas others fall short because of systemic issues. The PGI functions as a diagnostic instrument, aiding states in recognizing their strengths and weaknesses while prioritizing areas that need enhancement. For example, a state excelling in access but struggling with learning outcomes can implement specific strategies to correct this disparity. Moreover, the PGI fosters accountability by providing access to performance data, allowing stakeholders to monitor progress and call for enhancements. PGI signifies an important advancement for policymaking based on evidence and assessing performance in education. Within the realm of RTE, it offers a crucial structure

⁷ ASER Centre. (2022–2024). *ASER Reports*.

for evaluating the extent to which states are meeting their responsibilities and emphasizes the necessity for ongoing enhancement in governance and results.⁸

SDG 4 indicators connect India's educational objectives with worldwide benchmarks for quality education. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) serves as an essential global framework that connects India's educational aims with worldwide benchmarks of inclusive and equitable quality education. Incorporated into the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, SDG 4 extends beyond merely access to focus on lifelong learning opportunities, quality results, gender equality, and skill enhancement. In India, SDG 4 enhances the Right to Education by expanding its reach and incorporating it into a worldwide development framework.⁹

NIPUN Bharat Mission highlights basic literacy and numeracy as essential elements of early learning. The NIPUN Bharat Mission signifies a major policy effort focused on tackling one of the most pressing issues in India's educational framework—basic literacy and numeracy. Initiated as a key national objective, the initiative aims to guarantee that every child attains fundamental reading and math abilities by the conclusion of Grade 3. NIPUN Bharat seeks to transition emphasis from memorizing facts to grasping concepts. The program additionally incorporates technology and creative teaching methods to improve educational results. Significantly, the mission tackles the educational gaps identified in ASER reports, thus connecting policy actions with factual data. The effectiveness of NIPUN Bharat relies on its successful execution at the grassroots level, which involves proper teacher assistance and resource distribution. Difficulties like language variation, economic inequalities, and regulatory limitations can influence its results. In spite of these difficulties, the initiative embodies a focused and research-driven strategy to enhance educational quality and meet the goals of RTE.¹⁰

The PM POSHAN Scheme tackles nutritional requirements, impacting attendance and retention indirectly. The PM POSHAN Scheme, previously referred to as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, is an essential initiative focused on enhancing nutritional results and advancing the educational goals of the Right to Education. The program tackles hunger and malnutrition by offering complimentary meals to children in schools, which are major obstacles to learning and

⁸ Government of India. (2023). *PGI report*.

⁹ United Nations. (2015). *SDG 4 framework*.

¹⁰ Government of India. (2021). *NIPUN Bharat Mission guidelines*.

attendance. The initiative has played a crucial role in boosting enrolment, maintaining retention, and ensuring consistent attendance, especially for children from underprivileged backgrounds.¹¹

These tools together offer a comprehensive view of educational outcomes, allowing for a thorough evaluation of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions.

3. Analysis of Educational Performance

3.1 Infrastructure and Access (UDISE+)

The examination of infrastructure and access via the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) offers essential insights into the advancements and obstacles in enforcing the Right to Education (RTE) throughout India. Throughout the years, UDISE+ data has shown notable advancements in both the physical and administrative dimensions of education, highlighting the effects of ongoing governmental initiatives and policy actions focused on achieving universal elementary education. A significant accomplishment within the RTE framework has been the growth of school infrastructure.¹²

A key point emphasized by UDISE+ is the concern regarding the availability and distribution of teachers. Despite the rise in the number of teachers over the years, the issue of unequal distribution remains, as certain schools experience severe shortages while others have an excess of staff. This disparity impacts the pupil-teacher ratio and directly influences the quality of education. Moreover, the dependence on contract and para-educators in specific states raises issues regarding the uniformity and efficacy of instruction. Teacher absence and insufficient training exacerbate these issues, diminishing the potential advantages of enhanced infrastructure. UDISE+ information also highlights enrolment trends, showing that India has mostly reached near-universal enrolment at the primary level. Nonetheless, challenges persist, including dropout rates, particularly at the higher primary level, and low transition rates to secondary education.¹³

Within the framework of RTE, advancements in infrastructure and access mark a notable accomplishment, having established the groundwork for universal education. Yet, the

¹¹ Government of India. (2022). *PM POSHAN Scheme guidelines*.

¹² Government of India. (2023). *UDISE+ 2022–23*.

¹³ NUEPA. (2018). *Elementary education in India: Progress towards UEE*

continued existence of inequalities and the difficulties concerning teacher availability and quality emphasize the necessity for a more comprehensive strategy that transcends mere physical infrastructure. Investing in maintenance, teacher development, and fair resource distribution is crucial for translating improved infrastructure into enhanced learning results. In summary, although UDISE+ data indicates significant advancements in broadening access to education, it also highlights the necessity for ongoing initiatives to tackle regional inequalities and improve the quality of educational resources, thus ensuring the successful fulfillment of the Right to Education.¹⁴

3.2 Learning Outcomes (ASER 2021–2024)

The analysis of educational outcomes via the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) from 2021 to 2024 offers a crucial and detailed insight into the condition of primary education in India within the Right to Education (RTE) framework. Although the legislative and policy initiatives within RTE have mostly succeeded in attaining elevated enrolment figures nationwide, ASER results continually indicate a troubling and significant divide between education and true comprehension. This occurrence, frequently referred to as the “learning crisis,” highlights the drawbacks of emphasizing access while neglecting quality results. The ASER reports, relying on household surveys instead of school assessments, offer a more accurate depiction of children's basic skills in reading and math, thus emphasizing systemic inefficiencies that may not be reflected in official administrative statistics.¹⁵

The 2021 ASER report, carried out in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, represented a notable change in approach and emphasis, highlighting the effects of extended school closures on educational outcomes. It showed that children, especially those from low-income and rural areas, faced significant learning setbacks because of inadequate access to digital education and the absence of organized learning spaces at home. The digital gap emerged as a significant issue, as merely a limited number of students had access to smartphones, internet connections, or online educational materials, thus intensifying pre-existing disparities in education.¹⁶

The following ASER 2022 report, which indicated a return to face-to-face surveys, delivered an extensive evaluation of learning achievements after the pandemic and verified that the

¹⁴ World Bank. (2020). Improving school education quality in India.

¹⁵ ASER Centre. (2022–2024). *ASER Reports*.

¹⁶ ASER Centre. (2021). *ASER 2021 report*.

learning gaps had widened considerably. A significant number of third graders could not read texts at the second-grade level, and fundamental math skills like subtraction and division showed weaknesses across various grades. This decline was uneven among states, with certain states demonstrating better endurance due to more robust public education systems and proactive policy measures.¹⁷

The ASER reports for 2023 and 2024 show a slow improvement in learning levels, highlighting the effects of specific efforts like remedial teaching programs, bridge courses, and the NIPUN Bharat Mission, which emphasizes foundational literacy and numeracy. Nonetheless, the speed of recovery is inconsistent, showing notable differences between states and within states. States like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have demonstrated relatively greater advancements in learning outcomes, whereas others still face difficulties due to structural issues like insufficient teacher training, elevated pupil-teacher ratios, and socio-economic obstacles.¹⁸

A key aspect emphasized by ASER is the connection between attendance and learning. Even though enrollment figures have stayed elevated, consistent attendance has fluctuated, especially after the pandemic, impacting learning continuity.

Additionally, ASER results prompt important inquiries regarding the efficacy of teaching methods and curriculum development. The ongoing presence of low learning levels indicates that instructional methods frequently do not meet the varied learning requirements of students, especially for first-generation learners. Dependence on memorization and uniform curricula might hinder the development of essential skills, emphasizing the necessity for more adaptable and child-focused methods.

3.3 Governance and Performance (PGI)

The Performance Grading Index (PGI) acts as a thorough instrument for assessing governance and performance within the school education system, providing important information on the effectiveness of the Right to Education (RTE) implementation among states. The PGI offers a comprehensive view of educational performance by evaluating states across various indicators, such as access, equity, quality, infrastructure, and governance processes, emphasizing the essential role of administrative efficiency in reaching policy goals. A major contribution of the

¹⁷ ASER Centre. (2022). *ASER 2022 report*.

¹⁸ ASER Centre. (2023). *ASER 2023 report*. ASER Centre. (2024). *ASER 2024 report*.

PGI is its capacity to highlight notable disparities between states in educational governance and results.¹⁹

Regions like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh regularly achieve top positions on the index, showcasing their robust institutional structures, successful policy execution, and dedication to high-quality education. These states have shown how crucial ongoing investment in education, strong teacher training initiatives, and engaged community involvement are for attaining favorable results. Conversely, many other states fall behind because of administrative inefficiencies, limited resources, and difficulties in implementing policies.²⁰

The PGI emphasizes that the effectiveness of RTE relies not only on legislative measures but also on the ability of state institutions to implement these measures efficiently.

In the realm of RTE, it underscores the significance of governance as a vital factor for success, stressing that even well-crafted policies can falter without efficient execution. The PGI highlights the necessity for capacity development at state and district levels, along with the significance of collaboration among various government tiers. The examination of governance and performance via the PGI shows that although India has advanced in widening educational access, major obstacles persist in achieving uniform and top-notch execution throughout states. Enhancing governance structures, increasing accountability, and fostering data-informed policymaking are crucial for elevating educational results and fulfilling the aims of the Right to Education.²¹

4. State-wise Comparative Analysis

4.1 Kerala

Kerala showcases one of the most effective models of educational advancement in India within the Right to Education (RTE) framework, consistently exhibiting robust results across essential indicators emphasized in reports like ASER, UDISE+, and the Performance Grading Index (PGI). The state's nearly universal literacy rate, elevated enrolment and retention rates, alongside fairly robust learning outcomes, showcase a deep-rooted commitment to public

¹⁹ Government of India. (2023). *PGI report*.

²⁰ Government of India. (2023). Performance Grading Index report. World Bank. (2018). World development report: Learning to realize education's promise

²¹ OECD. (2019). Education policy implementation: A comparative perspective

education and social advancement. UDISED+ data reveals that Kerala has nearly fully met the infrastructural standards set by RTE, encompassing well-kept classrooms, operational sanitation facilities, digital connectivity, and advantageous pupil-teacher ratios.²²

The state reports literacy rates over 95%, with net enrollment in elementary education surpassing 98%, demonstrating almost universal school access. UDISE+ data indicates that more than 95% of schools satisfy infrastructure standards, such as operational toilets, potable water, and electricity. ASER findings indicate that more than 80–85% of fifth-grade students are able to read texts at the Grade 2 level, which is considerably above the national average. Kerala usually achieves a PGI score in the top performance category (Grade A or over 900 score range), indicating effective governance and administrative proficiency. The state also upholds a pupil-teacher ratio near 20:1, which exceeds the RTE standard. These indicators emphasize Kerala's achievement in managing access alongside quality, although new issues like migrant education and privatization persist.²³

Kerala has prioritized not only increasing access but also enhancing the quality and fairness of education. ASER results show that students in Kerala excel markedly in foundational literacy and numeracy relative to the national average, highlighting the success of its teaching methods and early grade initiatives. The state's achievements can be linked to its strong governance structures, demonstrated by consistently elevated PGI scores that emphasize effective administrative methods, regular oversight, and solid accountability frameworks.

4.2 Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh serves as another notable instance of successful execution of the Right to Education, especially considering its geographical and infrastructure-related obstacles. In spite of its hilly landscape and scattered population, the state has made notable advancements in facilitating access, enrollment, and retention, as indicated by UDISE+ data. The creation of schools in isolated and rural regions, adhering to the RTE requirement for local education, has greatly diminished obstacles to access, especially for children in challenging landscapes. The state has excelled in upholding beneficial pupil-teacher ratios and guaranteeing the presence of qualified teachers, which has led to enhanced classroom involvement and learning results. ASER findings show that Himachal Pradesh exceeds the national average in essential literacy

²² Government of Kerala. (2023). *Economic review*.

²³ ASER Centre. (2024). *ASER Kerala findings*. Government of India. (2023). *PGI report*.

and numeracy, demonstrating the success of its educational policies and teacher training initiatives. The state's steady performance in the PGI further signifies its robust governance and administrative effectiveness, featuring well-organized monitoring systems and prompt policy execution.²⁴

UDISE+ data shows enrolment rates exceeding 97% and retention rates near 90–95%, signifying robust access and continuity in education. Infrastructure compliance is also excellent, with around 90–95% of schools adhering to RTE standards. ASER findings indicate that approximately 70–75% of Grade 5 students are capable of reading Grade 2-level text, surpassing the national average. The state upholds a favorable student-teacher ratio of approximately 18–22:1, backed by efficient teacher distribution. In the PGI, Himachal Pradesh consistently places in the high-performing category (score range of 850–900), reflecting robust governance and oversight systems. Nonetheless, inequalities persist in rural regions, and during the pandemic, digital access fell to under 40% for households in these areas, hindering the continuity of learning. In general, the state's results demonstrate effective governance alongside focused policy execution.²⁵

4.3 Maharashtra

Maharashtra showcases a complicated and diverse scenario in the execution of the Right to Education, marked by notable successes paired with ongoing inequalities. Maharashtra, being one of the largest and most economically advanced states in India, has introduced various policy measures to enhance educational access, infrastructure, and quality. UDISE+ data shows significant advancements in enhancing school infrastructure, such as the presence of classrooms, sanitation systems, and digital tools, especially in urban regions. The state has also worked to enhance teacher recruitment and training, thus boosting the overall educational climate. Nonetheless, these advancements are not evenly spread, showing notable differences between urban and rural areas, in addition to varying by socio-economic status. ASER reports emphasize worries about educational results, especially in rural regions, where students frequently fall behind in basic literacy and numeracy skills.²⁶

UDISED+ figures show enrollment rates exceeding 95%, but dropout percentages in some

²⁴ Government of Himachal Pradesh. (2023). *Education department report*.

²⁵ ASER Centre. (2023). *ASER findings*. Government of India. (2023). *PGI report*.

²⁶ Government of Maharashtra. (2023). *School education report*

districts vary from 8–12%, especially in rural and tribal regions. Infrastructure availability is quite high in urban areas, exceeding 90% compliance, while it declines to 75–80% in rural regions. ASER's results indicate that merely 50–60% of Grade 5 students are capable of reading texts at the Grade 2 level, revealing considerable learning disparities. The state usually achieves a PGI score in the mid-range (800–850 score band), indicating average governance effectiveness. The average pupil-teacher ratio is approximately 25–30:1, surpassing RTE standards in certain districts. During COVID-19, digital access was unequal, with just 50–60% of students able to participate in online learning, increasing disparities. These statistics emphasize that although Maharashtra has a solid structure, results-oriented metrics uncover gaps in implementation.²⁷

4.4 West Bengal

West Bengal has achieved significant advancements in enhancing educational access and growing school infrastructure within the Right to Education framework, as indicated by UDISE+ data. The government has concentrated on boosting enrollment and decreasing dropout rates, especially in primary education, via several policy measures and welfare programs. The presence of essential infrastructure, such as classrooms, restrooms, and drinking water amenities, has greatly enhanced over the years, leading to increased enrolment and attendance rates. Nevertheless, in spite of these successes, difficulties persist regarding educational results and the effectiveness of governance. ASER reports show that a large number of students in West Bengal face challenges with basic literacy and numeracy, emphasizing a disparity between availability and quality. This indicates that although children are in school, the quality of classroom instruction and curriculum implementation requires enhancement. The state's results in the PGI indicate moderate governance efficiency, showcasing strengths in access and infrastructure while demonstrating weaknesses in learning outcomes and administrative effectiveness. Factors like teacher absenteeism, insufficient training, and restricted monitoring systems exacerbate these difficulties.²⁸

UDISE+ data indicates enrollment rates of approximately 96–97%, while infrastructure compliance has enhanced to 85–90% in recent years. Nevertheless, ASER findings show that just 45–55% of Grade 5 students are able to read texts at Grade 2 level, highlighting issues with

²⁷ ASER Centre. (2024). *ASER Maharashtra*. Government of India. (2023). *UDISE+ report*.

²⁸ Government of West Bengal. (2023). *Education statistics*

basic learning. The state's PGI ranking is in the average range (750–800 score), indicating a reasonable level of governance effectiveness. Dropout rates continue to be a worry, especially in upper primary levels, fluctuating between 10–15% in some areas. During the pandemic, digital access was restricted, as fewer than 40% of rural students were able to access online education, leading to learning setbacks. Teacher availability remains fairly consistent, yet challenges like absenteeism and training deficiencies continue to exist. These indicators imply that although access has enhanced, there is a crucial need for substantial improvement in quality and governance.²⁹

4.5 Delhi

In recent years, Delhi has become a benchmark for educational reform, showcasing notable enhancements in the quality of government schools through the Right to Education initiative. The performance of the state, evident in PGI rankings and additional indicators, underscores the effect of targeted investments in infrastructure, teacher training, and governance reforms. UDISE+ data shows that Delhi has attained significant levels of infrastructural compliance, featuring well-equipped classrooms, contemporary facilities, and widespread use of digital technology in education. The implementation of programs like smart classrooms and upgraded school facilities has transformed the learning atmosphere and boosted student involvement. ASER findings and various assessments indicate that Delhi has achieved significant advancements in enhancing learning outcomes, especially in government schools that were once viewed as underperforming.³⁰

UDISE+ data shows nearly 100% enrollment in elementary education, while infrastructure compliance is above 95%, featuring digital classrooms and advanced facilities. ASER and various evaluations indicate that approximately 70–80% of learners achieve fundamental reading standards, showing enhanced educational results. Delhi's PGI score ranks it among the top-tier performers (850–900+ range), reflecting effective governance and policy implementation. The ratio of students to teachers is kept around 20–25:1, aided by ongoing recruitment and training of educators. Moreover, more than 75–80% of students were able to utilize some type of digital learning during COVID-19, which is notably above the national average. These indicators show that focused investments and governance changes can greatly

²⁹ ASER Centre. (2024). *ASER report*. Government of India. (2023). *PGI report*.

³⁰ Government of NCT of Delhi. (2023). *Education reform report*.

enhance results in public education. It stands as a significant model for other states aiming to enhance educational quality within the RTE framework.³¹

4.6 Gujarat

Gujarat's strategy for applying the Right to Education emphasizes administrative changes, technology integration, and specific policy actions designed to enhance educational outcomes. UDISE+ data shows that the state has consistently advanced in enhancing infrastructure and providing educational access, with better availability of classrooms, sanitation services, and essential facilities. Nonetheless, ASER findings indicate that learning outcomes in Gujarat are still moderate, facing difficulties in securing steady enhancements in basic literacy and numeracy. This suggests that although improvements in infrastructure and technology have been considerable, their influence on educational results has been restricted. The state's results in the PGI indicate moderate governance efficiency, showcasing strengths in administrative reforms and data-focused decision-making, but revealing shortcomings in quality and equity.³²

UDISE+ data indicates enrolment rates of approximately 94–96%, with infrastructure compliance levels near 85–90%. The state has advanced in delivering essential services, yet inequalities persist in tribal and rural areas. ASER reports show that 50–60% of Grade 5 students are able to read texts at the Grade 2 level, indicating moderate learning achievements. Gujarat's PGI score is in the mid-range (800–850), reflecting standard governance effectiveness. The student-teacher ratio is approximately 25–28:1, slightly exceeding ideal levels in certain regions. Digital initiatives have enhanced access, with 60–70% of students experiencing online learning, yet the effect on learning outcomes is still minimal. These numbers indicate that although Gujarat has advanced in infrastructure and governance, more focus is required on enhancing quality and fairness.³³

5. Challenges in Implementation

5.1 Inter-state Disparities in Resources and Governance

A major hurdle in executing the Right to Education (RTE) in India is the ongoing inequality among states regarding resources, governance capability, and institutional effectiveness.

³¹ ASER Centre. (2023). *ASER findings*. Government of India. (2023). *PGI report*.

³² Government of Gujarat. (2023). *Education department report*.

³³ ASER Centre. (2024). *ASER findings*. Government of India. (2023). *UDISE+ report*.

Despite the constitutional and legislative framework offering a consistent mandate for free and compulsory education, the actual implementation of this right differs significantly due to variations in economic development, administrative efficiency, and political priorities. Regions like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have steadily shown impressive outcomes due to increased public spending on education, efficient governmental frameworks, and robust monitoring systems. Conversely, states with restricted fiscal resources frequently find it challenging to fulfill even the fundamental infrastructural and staffing obligations specified by the RTE Act. These differences are apparent in changes in school facilities, presence of qualified educators, access to technology, and execution of social programs. Additionally, the effectiveness of governance is essential in influencing results. States that have strong administrative systems, data-informed policy development, and accountability structures generally excel in converting policies into results.³⁴

5.2 Learning Outcome Deficits Despite High Enrolment

A significant contradiction in India's education system within the RTE framework is the presence of high enrollment rates alongside unsatisfactory learning results. Throughout the years, considerable advancements have been achieved in reaching near-universal enrollment at the primary level, primarily because of policy measures like free education, mid-day meals, and improvements in infrastructure. Nevertheless, findings from sources like ASER consistently reveal that a significant number of students do not possess fundamental reading and math skills suitable for their grade. This shows that simply having access to education does not ensure significant learning. The factors contributing to this deficit are varied, such as poor teaching methods, packed classrooms, insufficient personalized support, and a curriculum that frequently fails to match students' learning abilities. Furthermore, the focus on memorization and test-focused teaching fails to cultivate critical thinking and essential skills. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened this problem, leading to considerable learning setbacks, especially for children from underprivileged backgrounds who faced restricted access to online education. Although programs like the NIPUN Bharat Mission seek to tackle basic literacy and numeracy, their effectiveness is still developing and varies among states. A further contributing element is the absence of strong evaluation systems capable of effectively measuring learning results and offering prompt feedback for enhancement. Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), implemented through RTE, has encountered challenges in execution, reducing its

³⁴ Dreze, J., & Sen, A. (2013). *An uncertain glory: India and its contradictions*. Princeton University Press.

efficacy. The ongoing presence of learning deficits hinders the fundamental goal of RTE, which aims not only to deliver education but also to guarantee quality learning. Tackling this challenge necessitates a change in emphasis from input-driven to outcome-driven education, prioritizing teacher preparation, curriculum updates, and frequent evaluation of learning achievements.³⁵

5.4 Weak Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

Successful execution of educational policies demands robust monitoring and accountability systems, which pose a considerable challenge within the RTE framework. Although different systems and institutions have been created to manage the operation of schools, their effectiveness is frequently constrained by problems like poor coordination, insufficient resources, and lax enforcement of rules. Monitoring tools like inspections, audits, and data systems such as UDISE+ offer important insights, yet their application for enhancing policies is uneven.³⁶

Frequently, data collection turns into a regular administrative task lacking significant analysis or subsequent action. Moreover, the numerous agencies participating in education governance results in overlapping duties and fragmented accountability. School Management Committees (SMCs), designed to encourage community involvement and local supervision, frequently do not possess the capability and understanding to execute their responsibilities efficiently. Although grievance redressal mechanisms exist, they are not consistently accessible or effective, which restricts parents and students from tackling issues like inadequate infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, or discrimination. Additionally, decision-making processes often lack transparency, diminishing public trust and accountability. The lack of performance-based assessment systems for teachers and administrators further adds to inefficiencies. Enhancing monitoring and accountability necessitates a more cohesive method, incorporating technology for real-time data tracking, empowering local authorities, and clearly defining responsibilities among various institutions. Boosting transparency and community involvement can significantly contribute to better accountability and guarantee that policies are successfully executed at the local level.³⁷

³⁵ World Bank. (2020). Education in India: Challenges and opportunities.

³⁶ UNESCO. (2021). Global education monitoring report.

³⁷ Government of India. (2021). *National Education Policy 2020*. Ministry of Education. (2023). *Education statistics at a glance*. United Nations. (2015). *SDG 4 framework*.

Conclusion

The Right to Education (RTE) framework in India represents a crucial achievement in the quest for universal education; nonetheless, a continual disparity between legal stipulations and real-life results remains an obstacle to its complete fulfillment. Despite significant advancements in broadening access and enhancing infrastructure, issues related to educational quality and consistent application across states continue to be critical. Tackling these difficulties necessitates a multifaceted strategy. Enhancing institutional capabilities and governance structures is crucial for guaranteeing accountability and effectiveness. Equally critical is improved investment in educator training and infrastructure, concentrating not just on physical amenities but also on providing teachers with contemporary teaching skills and maintaining ideal pupil-teacher ratios. Embracing data-driven and evidence-based policy development, through resources like UDISE+, ASER, and PGI, can facilitate focused interventions and ongoing evaluation. Additionally, encouraging inter-state learning and the exchange of best practices can facilitate the replication of effective models while customizing them for local environments. A key focus on basic literacy and numeracy via specific initiatives is essential for sustained educational success. To ultimately realize the goals of the RTE framework, it is essential to have effective execution, ongoing dedication, and cooperative initiatives to guarantee equal and high-quality education for everyone.