

## **UNIVERSAL ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN INDIA: NEED FOR OPTIMIZING THE EDUCATION SERVICE SECTOR**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The importance of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) cannot be denied. But for a country like India with 1.2 billion people, it is not easy to achieve. Although the Government has committed itself several times to achieve this target, but it remains elusive so far. Due to Governmental efforts 96.3% children are enrolled in schools today but the retention rate and quality of education are matters of serious concern. The paper attempts to explore the reasons for poor outcome on retention and quality parameters and offers concrete and feasible solutions to fulfill the target by 2015 in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals.

There are about 200 million children in the age group of 6 to 14 years; naturally education is one of the largest service sectors in the country. By judicious policy intervention and effective implementation the Government can optimize the sector and reap demographic dividends.

**Key Words:** Elementary Education, Right to Education, Education Service Sector, Education Reforms

### **Introduction**

Education transforms the life of a person. It endows him not only knowledge, confidence, and self esteem but also acts as a powerful tool for reducing poverty and unemployment, improving health and nutritional standards and achieving a sustained human development led growth (World Bank, 2004). It was rightly observed by the National Education Commission set up in 1964 by the Indian Government that the destiny of a nation is shaped in her classrooms. All developed countries boast of an educated and literate population – their main asset. According to the 2011 Census, 74% of Indian population is literate whereas there is almost 100% literacy in

United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Sweden etc. India has a population of 1.2 billion people. With half the population under 25 and a national workforce that is expected to account for 25% of the global workforce in 2020, India is poised to become one of the world's most prolific talent providers. India believes it to be its demographic dividend. But unless this bulk is properly nurtured, dividends cannot accrue.

Education is one of the largest service sectors in India. Recently, elementary education has been made a fundamental right in India. There are more than 200 million children in the elementary level. No doubt, the sector is of huge dimension, but its performance till date is dismal to say the least. The present paper attempts to find out the Government's efforts in promoting universal elementary education (UEE) and the outcome of these efforts, explores the reasons of tardy progress and presents viable solutions in keeping with the exigencies of the time and uniqueness of the situation. A holistic approach to this human resource issue covering the political, economic, social and psychological dimensions has been adopted. For this recourse was taken to observation, interviews of the various players, and stakeholders involved in the system. Interviews were mainly non-formal, semi-structured and covered several regions. Materials from documentary sources especially the All India Educational Surveys published regularly by District Information System for Education (DISE) produced by the National University on Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) have served as useful inputs. Besides, the academic research by scholars and social scientists has provided valuable insights.

### **An Overview of the Efforts made so far by the Government**

When India became free in 1947, the literacy rate was 16%. (Govinda and Varghese, 1993:2) The government was therefore, aware of the need to pay attention to this sector. There were debates in the constituent assembly to make Right to Education a fundamental Right, but due to resource crunch it was thought to be unfeasible. This right therefore, was accommodated in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Art.45 of the Directive Principles which are non justiciable, sought to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to 14 years of age for ten years. Elementary education comprises primary (I to V) and upper Primary (VI-VIII) classes.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Five Year Development Plan (FYDP) focused almost solely on the creation of more schools. By the mid 1960s primary school provision was supplemented by alternative schooling arrangements for working children and those who had already dropped out of the formal system. (Little,2010:7). In 1964 National Commission on Education was set up for examining education across primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The National Policy on Education (NPE) emerged in 1968 but its implementation was slow. During the 1970s, the private school sector mushroomed. These proved to be very popular among the middle classes and among those who could pay. From then on, but with two exceptions the government school system began to cater to the children of the poorest in society. The exceptions were the Kendriya Vidyalayas (KVs) funded centrally for the children of the armed forces and the civil servants and the Navodaya Vidyalayas introduced after the 1986 NPE for talented students in rural areas.(Little:11). In 1976 the 42<sup>nd</sup> constitutional amendment moved education from state to concurrent list. This meant that the central government was expected to provide leadership, guidance and financial resources for education programs. The 1986 National Policy on Education was a major document addressing the imperatives of elementary education and continues to underpin education in India to the present day. The Ministry of Education was changed to the Ministry of Human Resource Development reflecting a broadening of the role of education. By 1986, more than 90% of the country's rural habitations had school facilities within a kilometer. A common 10+2+3 structure for education had been adopted in most states, a common curriculum scheme had been laid down, science and mathematics were included as compulsory subjects and work experience 'assigned a place of importance'.(GoI,1986a:2para1.6). The policy called for the removal of disparities in education and program for the education of girls and women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other educationally backward sections and areas, minorities, the handicapped etc.

After more than 40 years of planned development, many schools lacked basic amenities. To address this issue, 'Operation Blackboard' was launched in 1987(Jhingran, 2003). It had three main input components- rooms, teachers and teaching learning equipment. After 1986, funding for primary education gradually increased and reached the highest level among all the sectors of education (Srivastava, 2005). In 1990, India attended the World Conference on Education For All

at Jomtein, Thailand and committed itself along with 155 other countries to achieve universal primary education by 2000. Many programs were launched like the District Primary Education Program (DPEP), Mid Day Meals, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV) etc. The DPEP launched in 1994, established 160000 new schools including 84000 alternative education schools delivering alternative education to approximately 3.5 million children. A high gross enrollment ratio of 93 – 95% was achieved but still questions were raised about the overall quality. Mid day Meal program initiated in 1995, more formally known as the National Program of the Nutritional Support for primary Education (GoI,2002:28) seeks to provide all primary school children living in economically deprived areas with either a cooked meal or food rations at school each day In April 2000, World Education Forum was convened in Dakar, Senegal to review the achievements made after Jomtein..India realized it had a long way to go .Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Education for All was launched in 2001.The World Bank and UN augmented aid to promote education. SSA is operating as an umbrella structure which oversees all aspects of primary education provision in the country and is responsible for all quality improvements.(GoI,2002:30). It emphasizes community involvement also. It had also set 2007 as the deadline for providing primary education in India and 2010 as the deadline for providing useful and relevant elementary education to all children in the 6 to 14 age group. The issues of social inclusion, equity, gender parity were taken care of. Most of the money was expended on buildings and infrastructure, but targets remained elusive. From April 2010, Right to Education (RTE) Act came into force to expedite the governmental efforts. Now it is the obligation of the government to ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the six to fourteen age groups. ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. Now in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) India has to achieve Universal elementary education by 2015.This calls for herculean efforts.

### **Present Status of Elementary Education**

The outcome of the government policies and programs during the last 64 years will be clear from this account of the present status of elementary education. According to ASER 2010, 96.3%

children of the total of about 200 million are enrolled in schools. According to an estimate 24% drop out between standards I and V, another 24% dropout between standards VI and VIII and a further 12% fall off between standards IX and XII. Thus only 38% finish schools and only 12% go on to complete college(Shukla,2010) There are more than 1 million government schools and hundred thousand private schools to cater to the needs of school children. Nine out of ten schools are government funded. With improvement in the number of schools, facilities in school and enrolment, the dropout rate for cohort 2007-08 indicates an average rate of 8.2% in primary grades. A few states have almost achieved the goal of universal retention at primary level.

The status of a service sector comprises its quality component also. Our research findings as do several others identified this as the Achilles heel, where the situation is exceptionally bad. Most of the Class V students don't have the reading and numerical abilities of Class II students. (Bajpai and Goyal, 2004)

While indicators to measure the access, retention and internal efficiency of the educational system in terms of participation rate, accessibility, repetition rates, promotion rates, dropout rates and input-output ratio have been developed, but little information is available about the learners' achievement of cognitive and non-cognitive competencies. Under the no detention policy, a child is not even tested on the learning outcomes for many years after entering the school. The no detention policy prohibits the use of examinations in first few years of schooling. The RTE passed in 2009 has extended the no detention policy till Class VIII.

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2010, prepared by the NGO Pratham, and covering 0.7 million children in 14,000 villages across 522 districts, was released on January 14, 2011. It reported a substantial increase in school enrolment figures but no visible improvement in the quality of education. The learning outcomes remain very dismal, even declining in certain areas. Nationally there is not much change in reading levels as compared to last year. Nearly half the students in Class V cannot read even the Class II text (ASER, 2010).

**TABLE 1**  
**READING IN OWN LANGUAGE**  
**CLASS –WISE % CHILDREN BY READING LEVEL ALL SCHOOLS 2010**

Std.	Nothing	Letter	Word	Level1 (Std I Text)	Level 2 (Std II Text)	Total
I	34.0	41.1	17.0	4.4	3.4	100
II	12.1	32.4	32.4	13.9	9.1	100
III	6.0	18.8	29.6	25.7	20.0	100
IV	3.1	10.1	19.4	29.3	38.1	100
V	2.2	6.7	12.7	25.1	53.4	100
VI	1.3	4.0	7.6	19.7	67.5	100
VII	1.0	2.7	5.2	15.0	76.2	100
VIII	0.7	1.9	3.2	11.3	82.9	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>40.9</b>	<b>100</b>

**How to read this table:** Each cell shows the highest level of reading achieved by a child. For example, in Std III, 6% children cannot even read letters, 18.8% can read letters but not more, 29.6% can read words but not Std I text or higher, 25.7% can read Std I text but not Std II level text, and 20.0% can read Std II level text. For each class, the total of all these exclusive categories is 100%.

Only 65% children of Class I can recognize numbers 1-9, down from 69.3% in 2009. The percentage of students in Class 3 who can solve two-digit subtraction problems has fallen from 39% in 2009 to 36.5% in 2010. The percentage of Class 5 children who can solve simple division problems has fallen from 38% in 2009 to 35.9% in 2010. Across the country, the ability of children to deal with elementary arithmetic has declined. A large percentage of middle school children struggled in their everyday dealings with numbers, such as reading a calendar, estimating volume or calculating area.

**TABLE 2**  
**ARITHMETIC**  
**CLASS –WISE % CHILDREN BY ARITHMETIC LEVEL ALL SCHOOLS 2010**

Std.	Nothing	Recognize Numbers 1-9	Recognize Numbers 10-99	Subtract	Divide	Total
I	34.2	42.1	18.2	3.4	2.1	100
II	12.1	34.9	36.0	12.8	4.3	100
III	5.6	21.0	36.9	27.0	9.4	100
IV	2.9	11.9	27.8	35.6	21.8	100

V	2.1	7.8	19.8	34.4	35.9	100
VI	1.2	4.5	14.1	30.8	49.3	100
VII	1.0	3.2	11.5	26.5	57.8	100
VIII	0.7	2.2	8.8	21.0	67.4	100
TOTAL	8.2	17.2	22.4	23.7	28.6	100

**How to read this table:** Each cell shows the highest level of arithmetic achieved by a child. For example, in Std. III, 5.6% children cannot even recognize numbers 1-9, 21.0% can recognize numbers up to 10 but not more, 36.9% can recognize numbers up to 100 but cannot do subtraction, 27% can do subtraction but not division, and 9.4% can do division. For each class, the total of all these exclusive categories is 100%.

The latest ASER report on the status of infrastructure in schools where millions of dollars have been spent is also not very rosy. Rated on seven infrastructure parameters they are required to meet under the RTE Act, only 3% schools were found satisfactory on all The parameters included buildings including classrooms and a boundary wall, drinking water, toilets, girls' toilets, teaching and learning material, libraries and the availability of mid-day meals. Only 53% of all schools surveyed across India were found compliant with the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR).

**Table 3**  
**Facilities Compared to RTE norms 2010**  
**% of Schools with**

<b>Building</b>	<b>Office/Store/Office cum Store</b>	<b>74.5</b>
	<b>Playground</b>	<b>62.1</b>
	<b>Boundary wall</b>	<b>52.2</b>
<b>Drinking Water</b>	<b>No facility for drinking water</b>	<b>17.4</b>
	<b>Facility but no drinking water available</b>	<b>10.5</b>
	<b>Drinking water available</b>	<b>72.2</b>
<b>Toilet</b>	<b>No toilet facility</b>	<b>10.1</b>
	<b>Facility but toilet not useable</b>	<b>38.8</b>

	<b>Toilet useable</b>	<b>51.1</b>
<b>Girls Toilets</b>	<b>% Schools with no separate provision for girls toilets</b>	<b>29.3</b>
	<b>Of schools with separate girls toilets, % schools where</b>	
	<b>Toilets locked</b>	<b>19.9</b>
	<b>Toilets not useable</b>	<b>14.0</b>
	<b>Toilets useable</b>	<b>36.8</b>
<b>TLM</b>	<b>Teaching learning material in Std 2</b>	<b>80.4</b>
	<b>Teaching learning material in Std 4</b>	<b>75.9</b>
<b>LIBRARY</b>	<b>No Library</b>	<b>36.9</b>
	<b>Library but no books being used by children on day of visit</b>	<b>24.4</b>
	<b>Library books being used by children on day of visit</b>	<b>38.7</b>
<b>MDM</b>	<b>Kitchen shed for cooking midday meal</b>	<b>81.3</b>
	<b>Midday meal served in school on day of visit</b>	<b>83.4</b>

**NOTE: School observations for ASER 2010 looked at TLM for Std. II and Std IV only**

Though RTE mandates all schools have drinking water facilities, nearly 30% schools don't have it while around 50% don't have usable toilets. While teacher absenteeism was almost 45% in the 13,000 schools visited, student absenteeism was almost half in these primary schools across the country.

UEE comprises four components- universal access, universal enrolment, universal retention and universal quality of education. While India has fared quite well in the first two, the challenge remains in augmenting the retention and quality component. The two main challenging issues are:

1. Reaching some 8 million children not yet enrolled and ensuring retention of all students till they complete their elementary education (Grade 8)
2. Ensuring quality education to students.

### **An Analytical Study of the System**

The picture that we get of the status of elementary education in India begs a set of questions:

1. Why is the performance of schools miserable, despite pumping in so much money by the government and foreign agencies?
2. Why has the government target of achieving UEE missed so many times?
3. Why is the quality of Government schools deteriorating by the day?



4. Why do government teachers remain demotivated despite impressive hike in their salaries?
5. Finally, what are the best alternatives to optimize this sector?

This paper attempts to answer these. The extant policies and their implementation account for the degeneration in the system. An analysis of the education ecosystem will answer most of the questions that arise about the poor performance of education sector. The main actors of this system are teachers, students, school management, parents and Human Resource Development Ministry or education department of the three levels of Government.

As noted earlier nine out of ten schools are government funded. The Government establishes/oversees these schools, appoints teachers, provides funds and now after the RTE it is its obligation to see that all children are enrolled and retained in schools and completes their elementary education. It also monitors the progress of schools. But all this is implemented in a shoddy manner and there is lot of corruption at every level especially in building infrastructure, appointments and transfers of teachers and monitoring. The government officials are interested in making money and there is hardly any interest and will to improve the quality of schools. There is large scale corruption in distribution of free uniforms, books and school bags to children. For instance, in the state of Uttar Pradesh even after two months since the new session started in July 2011, this stuff did not reach the schools. The children get further disinterested. There is mega corruption in the provision of mid day meals also. The money for it comes to the village headman, the Gram Pradhan. He uses a fraction of it and provides poor quality and insufficient food. No one has the courage to take him on or question him. False accounts are made and sent to the higher authorities and in most cases share from the ill begotten money also. Government policies focus more on quantity i.e. increasing the number of schools, teachers, classrooms, providing free meals and uniforms but it is reluctant to implement the various dimensions of the quality component. Proper mechanism to assess learning outcomes, monitoring students, teachers and school management are not in place. Although commendable work has been done by projects like District Information System for Education (DISE) and Child Tracking System (CTS) but adequate attention has not been paid to prerequisites like

sufficient power supply and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) infrastructure to make these functional on a large scale basis.

The teachers of Government schools are selected on the basis of marks obtained in 10+2, Graduation and B. Ed examinations and not by competitive exams. Most of those who are selected are boys and girls from middle class families living in cities. Since they are mostly the products of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools which are prevalent in city schools and which is more liberal in markings therefore, their marks outdo those who have passed from State Education Boards mostly prevalent in villages and small towns. The selected candidates are of marriageable age and their marital prospects soar because of permanent government jobs with good salaries and little work. They aspire to live in cities and get married in cities. But since the Government schools are mostly in small towns and villages, they get posted there. The hinterlands are not safe, and lack basic amenities, the teachers don't want to settle or live there so they keep trying for transfer to cities. But there are few government schools in cities. All this breeds corruption and there is political pressure for transfers. As a consequence, some practices evolve which suit everybody. The distribution of teachers in schools is lopsided. There are still some schools with only one teacher while there are also schools with more than ten teachers and less than fifty children. Interviews with teachers revealed that in such schools four teachers go on one day, four others on some other days, many don't go at all, give a part of their salary, e.g. Rs 5000 per month out of Rs 25,000 to the education department officials in charge of monitoring, the money is shared up to top levels and everybody is happy. Similarly bribes determine the transfers to convenient places. This system prevails in almost all the states. This unholy alliance vitiates the system

Generally speaking, teaching activity has been reduced to a minimum in terms of time and efforts. Inactive teachers were found engaged in a variety of pastimes such as sipping tea, reading comics, or eating peanuts, when they were not just sitting idle. It has become a way of life in the profession. (PROBE, 1999). Some scholars have emphasized the lack of motivation on the part of teachers. This has been ascribed to overcrowded classrooms, poor infrastructural facilities, unfilled vacancies, burden of nonacademic tasks, lack of adequate training to deal

with multi lingual and multi ability classes, increasing social class differences between teachers and the students of government schools. Other reasons have to do with the institutional context: lack of accountability and the absence of incentives for teachers to work well. (Govinda, 2005, Mooij.2008, Ramchandra.2005). Penalizing teachers for their absence by withholding their allowances or even suspension is possible but difficult in practice because teacher unions are strong and politically influential, (Kremer2006, Kingdon and Muzammil 2001). The RTE Act 2009 also absolves teachers of all accountability. Confronted with the prospect of a revolt within the nation's 5.5 million primary teachers' community, the Central government dropped a provision in the draft RTE Bill empowering school management committees to monitor teacher attendance with the discretion to penalize absenteeism.

The children of government schools mostly belong to the poorest section of society. The children are interested in playing and having the free meals. Many children eat the meals and go back. Researchers have identified so many reasons for children's drop out like poverty, care of siblings, work etc. coupled with these, poor quality of education is identified as another major reason for children 'not interested' to go to school. Studies show how the context of poverty and deprivation in poor households is characterized by amongst other things, instability, uncertainty, indebtedness, food insecurity, short term survival strategies, engagement of children in work and illiteracy in the family (Jha and Jhingran 2002, Subramanian 1999). Lack of access to toilets and running water reduce overall student attendance and disrupt learning process, as students have to go home to use these facilities.

The parents are mostly illiterate, don't understand the importance of education in many cases and feel tempted to send the children for work. The family income is less than Rs. 10, 000. They are working hard to make both ends meet. Quality of education sometimes hardly bothers them. They are not even aware of Village Education Committees (VECs). VECs consist of village government leaders, parents and teachers. Public participation on improving education is negligible (Banerjee, 2007). Studies point out that mother's education has a bigger effect on the probability of child enrolment in rural areas. (Ramchandra et al 2003, Duraiswami, 1998, Sipahimalini 1999)

### **Suggestions to optimize the Education Service Sector**

Over the last six decades, social scientists, education advocacy groups, academic experts have spent hours researching and pontificating about ways to reform this sector. They have come up with several suggestions like keeping parents on school boards, giving power to Parent- Teacher Associations, establishing Village Education Committees, awareness campaigns, public- private partnership, giving school vouchers to children to go to school of their choice etc.(Shah 2009, Banerjee 2007, Agarwal 2000). There has been some follow up action too but still the overall performance of this sector especially the quality component has shown little improvement. This paper suggests just two cogent solutions that can transform the education service sector and ensure not only its profitability but universality and quality as well.

### **Allowing ‘for profit’ schools**

The present education ecosystem is prone to corruption. Every player involved in it has become complacent, but all this spells doom for the nation and the people. There is need for lateral thinking and viable solutions to the whole mess. In this paper we aver that the prevailing system should exist i.e., elementary education should be mainly provided by the Government and the private schools established by the ‘not for profit’ trusts and societies. Along with these, it is suggested that another player be added to this ecosystem and that will be ‘for profit’ schools. Such experiments have been a huge success in telecom and banking sectors and there is no reason why it would not work in elementary education. ‘For profit’ schools will mainly be established by either the small motivated players or big corporate houses. The corporate sector after studying the market/demand will establish schools for different segments. There will be elite schools as well as small budget schools. The Government’s role should be only of a facilitator and regulator of these schools. The Government’s present policy requires:

Private schools can be run only by trusts/educational societies which are non-proprietary in nature. The management and control should not vest in a single person or a single family. The savings, if any, after meeting the expenditures of running the school, must

be utilized for further promotion of the school. No part of the savings (profits) may be dispersed to any individual (within the trust or outside). Sale of a school from one trust to another is not allowed.

This policy deters the private sector from education services. The education sector is deprived of the huge potential and innovative and entrepreneurial qualities of private players. The private sector has entered the non formal education sector like Pre Schools, coaching classes, vocational courses etc, and contributing a lot in quality education.

In the prevailing system the private sector is perennially on back foot because it makes profit surreptitiously, fudges the financial records and keeps bribing the public officials when they come for different types of inspections. The system is susceptible to corruption and hypocrisy. When 'for profit' schools are allowed there will be more competition resulting in better quality. People will have more choices and clandestine profit making would end.

Private institutions are typically perceived as hallmarks of quality education and given the demand; Indian education entrepreneurs are ready with massive expansion plans, which will provide thrust for the education sector to grow multifold. Researchers point out that private schools outperform government run schools on various measures of performance (Muralidharan 2007)

Studies by ASER 2010 show that private school enrolment has been continuously rising, increasing from 16.3% in 2005-06 to 24.3% in 2010 for all children in the 6-14 age group, with southern states leading the way.

Opening up education to for-profit entities should not be seen through an ideological lens. It is not a change of ideological stance from the Government as the ideal provider to that of not wanting a leading role for the Government and favoring the private sector as the panacea for everything. It is more a matter of pragmatism at this point of time to ensure we are able to address the national goal in a time-bound manner, through all means available.

Another argument against private delivery of education is that all the major developed countries in the West educated their children almost entirely through public schools and so we must do the same. But it has to be understood that all those countries had more homogenous and much smaller school-going populations to educate during their respective growth phases and more importantly they all had enough time to be able to gradually bring different sections of society under the ambit of public schooling over decades. Today in India, we face challenges and circumstances that are very different from what the developed countries faced then. We have a school-age population that is many times that of the developed countries and we want to educate all of the children within the next four years, going by our current target of achieving education for all by 2015 in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

### **Leveraging Technology**

Prudent use of technology can go a long way in ensuring success in UEE. Currently education in India has not taken advantage of the very things that the country is now famous for in the world. The penetration of digital media in the schools is less than 5%. There is urgent need to find out how this can be done in a mission mode. (Sinha, 2011)

E-governance can facilitate in improving transparency, speedy information dissemination, improving administration efficiency and public services in all the aspects of education. As a concept it is important that good governance should include all stakeholders such as school authorities, teachers, parents, children and even government bodies like CBSE. Instead of being just consultants, they should be part of active decision making process. In addition there should be an effective grievance redress mechanism in place. Technology can act as a great enabler by making it easier for all parties concerned to be able to have access to meaningful information. (Shukla2011) It can help in continuous monitoring, assessment and meaningful evaluation of the teacher and the pupil. Constant feedback to the persons concerned be it administrators, faculty, parents and students and appropriate timely control and correction mechanisms can be easily undertaken. It may also be possible to analyze the reasons of dropping out of the system while at the same time it can make the teachers more accountable. Add-on features like online testing tools can help appraise the performance level of students and that of teachers. It can send SMS or email message to parents if their children are absent at school, enhancing parent's involvement in

their children's schooling activities. Such a comprehensive and integrated system can also enable authorities to analyze the performance of the best performing institutes and compare it with other schools to identify the gaps. (Shukla, 2011)

The DISE report suggests that if resources are available, child-tracking is the only way through which drop-out, retention, survival and completion rates should be analyzed. A few states have designed their own formats and even developed monitoring software for the purpose. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can play the role of a driving tool to gear up the drive towards achieving Universal Elementary Education. NUEPA has created a comprehensive database on elementary education in India under one of its most prestigious projects, known as, District Information System for Education (**DISE**). The project covers both Primary and Upper Primary schools of all the districts of the country. DISE is supported by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and UNICEF. The National University has successfully developed School Report Cards of more than **1.3 million** Primary and Upper Primary schools. In addition to quantitative information, the Report Cards also provide qualitative information and a descriptive report about individual schools. And, all that can now be accessed with the Click of a Mouse. But judicious and optimum use of technology driven solution is possible only with adequate power supply, computer trained staff and proper ICT infrastructure, otherwise all efforts of the government will be in vain. Government need to work in these areas instead of opening more schools which function in a substandard manner. The target has to be achieved in four years, so optimization of the education service sector is vital. If education service sector improves, the race of the Indian juggernaut with 1.2 billion people will be trailblazing.

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