the Education Commission

Background Paper
The Learning Generation

India's Education Policy and Its Development Over Time

How Has Social Inequality Been Addressed?

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Research Paper

India's Education Policy and Its Development Over Time: How has Social Inequality been addressed?

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List of abbreviations

BBBP	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CPA	Central Plan Assistance
DISE	District Information System for Education
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
EBB	Educationally Backward Blocks
EGS	Education Guarantee Scheme
EMRS	Eklavya Model Residential Schools
FYP	Five-Year Plan
IDMI	Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutions
IHDS	India Human Development Survey
KGBV	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya
KV	Kendriya Vidyalaya
MCD	Minority Concentration Districts
MDM	Mid-Day Meal
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resources and Development
MLE	Multi-Lingual Education
MoMA	Ministry of Minority Affairs
MoTA	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
MYS	Mean Years of Schooling
NCDHR	National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights
NCPUL	National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NPE	National Policy on Education
NSDP	Net State Domestic Product
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
NV	Navodaya Vidyalaya
OBC	Other Backward Castes
OPEPA	Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority
PoA	Programme of Action
PROBE	Public Report on Basic Education
PTG	Primitive Tribal Groups
RMSA	Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan
SCA	Special Central Assistance
SCSP	Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan
SPQEM	Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan
TSP	Tribal Sub-Plan
U-DISE	Unified District Information System for Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Introduction

Even as the reach of education has expanded enormously in India in the last few decades, it has been accompanied by differential access and the continuing spectre of inequalities. This inequality could take various forms but the extent to which opportunities, access, and outcome are distributed across different sections of the population, broadly describes a measure of the inequality that exists. There are different causes of inequality in education – the most common being the consequence of inequality in income, wages and living standards. But, in addition, social parameters also affect access to education. While some of these, such as caste, tribe and religious minority affiliation, might have bases in economics as well, others such as gender run across economic and social categories. Needless to say, girls from lower caste or tribal communities, thus suffer the burden of multiple disadvantages.

While outcomes have dominated the discourse on education in recent years, in order to understand inequality more comprehensively, it is important to move beyond measuring inequality as the difference in the final outcomes and encompass the differences in equality of opportunity as well. The latter approach pays greater attention to the wider social, political and economic circumstances, which hinder individuals from accessing and competing at the same level. Various sets of contingencies affect the real opportunities people have, generating variations in the process of converting economic resources or social contexts into educational achievements. This approach follows the shift in twentieth century thought on inequality and justice, which made a distinction between "outcomes" (i.e., utility and welfare) and "opportunities" (i.e., primary goods; capabilities etc.).[2] The main arguments in this system of thought are that the **process** of acquiring outcomes must also be considered in determining justice (Dworkin, 1981) and that the process is dependent not only on initial endowments but on individual agency as well. This shift from a utilitarian approach, which focused on equality of outcomes to one that highlighted equality of opportunity as the basis for social justice marked a major shift in the philosophical traditions surrounding social policy. Not only did it give primacy to the "original position" (Rawls, 1971) it brought in the idea of individual responsibility, which had been the major criticism of anti-egalitarian thought. However, in recognizing the extent to which individuals are responsible for the outcomes they enjoy allowance must be made for the fact that outcomes may also be determined by factors beyond individual control. This is especially so for children, where inequalities experienced by them are predominantly due to their circumstance, and thus mostly beyond the pale of their agency. Primary and secondary education, for instance, take place when the person is still, arguably, below the age of consent, that is, the age at which children could be held at least partially responsible for the various choices they make (Paes de Barros et al 2009, Reomer 1998). In other words, the contribution of this tradition is to suggest that a just society could be achieved through ensuring equality of opportunity by providing "primary goods" (Rawls, 1971) or a set of "capabilities" (Sen, 1980) that would enable every citizen to achieve his/her life plan.

Following this approach, we examine the broad trends in education in India to unpack the implications for social policy with respect to the objective of equality of opportunity.

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[2] Rawls, 1971;Nozick, 1973; Roemer, 1998; Sen, 1980; Dworkin, 1981.

Brief Overview of Education Policy

It would be fair to say that Education Policy in India has had a somewhat chequered history. In fact the first articulation of policy on education goes back to 1835 and the commonly referred to 'Macaulay Minute' which advocated replacement of Indian forms of education with English education based on the idea that English education was a superior form that inculcated values responsible for making the English a superior race.[3] In other words it would help create "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect". It provided perhaps the opening argument in the debates on preserving indigenous cultures versus universal standardized education that continued for many years and are still a part of the discussions on education of marginalized communities. But even before these debates became centre stage, as many as eight "Commissions" were established from the mid nineteenth century to the early 1950s, to provide direction to different aspects of education.[4] These Commission reports make for interesting reading as no special consideration, or acknowledgment of claim either, is considered for the large proportion of population belonging to the social and economically weaker communities and for whom any policy on education should have been geared. How to bring education to those who for generations had been denied even basic access for reasons of social, economic or geographic exclusion, appears not to have been at the forefront of policy making for decades after 1947, despite the strong principles of social justice and welfare included in the Constitution of India that came into effect in 1950.

The Constitution of India is in fact, unequivocally committed to the idea of social justice and equality, especially equality of opportunity and status, for all citizens as well as to the responsibility of the State to preserve, protect and assure the rights of marginalised groups and the minorities. Equality of opportunity, while open to discussion, has been widely interpreted to include equality in the provision of education seen as a crucial factor in securing equality of status. The Constitutional underpinnings in the development of education policy thus have implications for the manner in which its delivery is conceptualized. While the idea of basic education as a public good is universally accepted due to the positive externalities its provision entails and due to the fact that the marginal costs of provision are low [non-rival property], the role of the State is particularly strong in cases where poverty and social exclusion make it difficult for sections of the population to access private provision.

Following the Constitutional imperatives, two National Policies on Education [NPE] have been enacted in India - in 1968 and in 1986. There has been no National Policy on Education since then, i.e. in the last thirty years. Not unsurprisingly, the policies from that period, while giving a boost to basic education, were based largely on the presumption of a lack of demand among the poor and marginalized. Hence, physical access was the focus in a bid to reach out to sections of the population that were perceived to be left out, but little thought was given to addressing the social causes that affected demand or to quality and learning outcomes either. Unfortunately, the increase in physical access was achieved at a

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[3] A precursor to the idea of "cultures of poverty" [Oscar Lewis, 1959] that is finding resonance in some of the most developments in the education sector.

[4] These were: i) Woods Dispatch of 1854, ii) Indian Education Commission [or Hunter Commission] of 1882; iii) University Commission, 1902; iv) Sadler Commission, 1917; v) Hartog Commission, 1929; vi) Sapru Commission, 1934; vii) Abbot-Woods Report, 1936-37; viii) Sargent Report [or the first CABE Report]; ix) University Commission or Radhakrishnan Report, 1948; x) Mudaliar Commission, 1952.

huge cost to quality,, underlying the elitist tendency in policy thinking, which sanctioned poor quality facilities for the poor and marginalized – the main beneficiaries of public education.

The NPE, 1986 [and its 1992 Programme of Action] however did move several steps ahead of its 1968 predecessor in terms of laying out some plans for achieving what was called "education for equality". Unfortunately, the interventions adopted, limited as they were in scope and design, did not have the desired impact, for the following reasons: a) They remained poorly financed and administered; b) Separate schools and hostels set up for excluded groups, such as tribal children, were of poor quality; c) Curricular reform remained mired in the older revisionist approach, failing to constructively reflect "tribal culture and minorities"; d) Teacher training was similarly constrained by conventional forms of pedagogy and unable to deal with issues of exclusion, gender disparity or communalism. Complex forms of diversity were sought to be straight jacketed into notions of national integration leading not to inclusion but further alienation.

In addition, instead of giving greater priority and resources to education, the government in fact took recourse to a range of cost-cutting, and quality diminishing measures such as setting up Education Guarantees Centres [EGCs] and appointing "para-teachers[5]" – both of which were not required to subscribe to any given norms of quality or training. Para teachers being under-qualified and under-paid had neither the capacity nor the incentive to perform the very challenging task of teaching children – many of them first generation learners. This led to a further diminishing of quality and an increase in the exodus away from public schools.

By the end of the century the spotlight on the poor human resource development in India was being starkly contrasted with its image as a "sleeping tiger" on the world's economic scene. Pressure was also building from within domestic boundaries to improve access and quality of basic education. The Dakar Conference [2000] and commitment to Education for All, led the Indian government to launch its most ambitious education programme – the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [SSA][6] in 2001. This was meant to be the vehicle that would take India towards fulfilling its Millennium Development Goal [MDG] of education as well. While SSA was launched with much fanfare and the policy rhetoric reflected its commitment to achieving universal education, the manner in which the policy was framed had fundamental flaws.

One, the SSA was designed as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme [CSS] administered through the modalities of a "society" parallel to the government's administrative structure. In other words at the level of the states, SSA Societies were established for purposes of routing SSA funds and running the programme with the help of a separate non-permanent cadre. As a result there exist two mechanisms for delivering basic education – the Education Directorate, which is responsible for maintaining the "permanent" education cadres [including the teachers], conducting inspections, some teacher trainings, Mid-day Meals, data collection,

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[5] The term "para teacher" covers a wide range of recruitment for teaching in schools and alternate learning centres. In a broad sense, any appointment that is a deviation from the past practice in that state is referred to as a para-teacher. This broadly refers to large numbers of teachers recruited by the community (though not always), at less than the regular teacher pay scale, for formal as well as alternate schools, to meet the demand for basic education within the limited financial resources available and in the shortest possible time. (*DPEP Calling*, Vol. VI, No.11, December 2000, Government of India, New Delhi)

[6] Loosely translated, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan refers to Campaign for Education for Universalizing Education.

disbursements [salaries, incentives, pensions] and the SSA, which is responsible for "programme implementation" and the so-called "academic" inputs [including some trainings]. This bifurcation has led not just to confusion in terms of responsibilities and more importantly accountabilities, it has also bred resentment between the two streams. For instance, there is little, if any, communication or coordination between the two cadres resulting sometimes in overlap of functions such as in teacher trainings which are conducted by both separately. Monitoring is also similarly done in parallel with no convergence. The Department conducts monitoring inspections, while SSA conducts Joint Review Missions [JRMs], with neither convergence nor clarity on the follow up of either of the two.

Two, the financial arrangements for SSA have also contributed to the less than optimal results seen in the sector. For one, funds come with extremely strict and inflexible financial norms determined centrally with no possibility of local inputs or reform. As a result, the ability to use funds based on need is severely reduced leading to the scenario of unspent funds in the face of massive need. This has repercussions on the planning process as well, which is meant to be de-centralized but in effect remains extremely centralized. Thus schools are able to provide little by way of inputs into the plans, as they get formulated at the district level and presented by State officials to the Central Government at the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in Delhi. The allocations made by MHRD are then distributed to districts, blocks, panchayats and schools in an arbitrary and non-transparent manner. Further, a delay in the disbursement of funds makes it difficult for schools to make the best use of them. Often they remain unspent leading to a reduction in allocations for the next year. Thus, while the funds and functionaries have been segregated by the introduction of SSA, the separation of functions is not clear. We will say more on the financial aspects in a later section.

Third, some of the norms specified by SSA defy rationality. In particular, the category of "Equity" in its list for financial allocations is worth mentioning. It is meant to increase equality of access to marginalized sections and carries with it an amount of Rs. 1 crore/district. However, it also carries a rider – that 50% of this amount may be spent on ICT alone![7] The other 50% tends to be under-utilized due to lack of innovative ideas emanating from the department. Thus, while on paper SSA has allocated a substantial amount for "equity", in reality it amounts to little. Other elements meant to have an impact on equity, such as gender coordinators, suffer from lack of appropriate trainings, resources and programme inputs that could make them effective agents in the roles conceived for them. It is extremely important that such design flaws be exposed and discussed in the public domain if actual reform in the manner in which education for all is being implemented is to change.

With research and the efforts of activists shedding light on specific issues affecting exclusion in education, the policy regime acknowledged the need for special efforts to reach the 'unreached'. However, these efforts took the form either of scattering incentives to 'motivate' parents to send children to school or parcelling out the responsibility for each group to different arms of the government machinery, such as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs or the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Besides fostering separatism in provision the low priority these Ministries and departments enjoyed in the allocation of resources meant that very limited resources were available for

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[7] Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Framework Document, 2011

their efforts leading to poor quality of services. The incentives on the other hand –limited and poorly administered as they were - could not compensate for the very poor quality of education provided in public schools. Thus as we will see further on, while they increased physical access to schooling for many, they did not improve the outcomes for children from excluded communities. Besides, the incentive schemes were targeted at only a limited section of the marginalized. Street and homeless children, children from migrant families, children of nomadic tribes, even children from minority communities were not extended incentives, as were SC and ST children. In fact the focus of inclusion was skewed towards SC/ ST children and the girl child.

It is no wonder then that this period thus saw a huge rise in the presence of private schools that mushroomed all over the country to take care of both the rise in demand as well as the exit from government schools. In many States this impetus was supported through subsidized land and other incentives to the private sector. It has correctly been argued that the rise in private provision has seriously diluted the idea of basic education as a public good. Sadly, it has not contributed to better quality of education either. In fact, poor government school quality that provides a benchmark of quality has ensured that the alternate private school is of only marginally better quality, if at all. The growth of the private sector, has also contributed to gender inequalities being perpetuated as typically only boys are sent to them while girls continue to be sent to the cheaper government facilities.

In a nutshell, the approach adopted by the State in dealing with the education of children from deprived and excluded sections of society has been segmented and led to the provision of sub-standard facilities for them. Instead of focusing on improving the quality of government schooling for all which would have provided children from all walks of life the "equality of opportunity" they needed to join the mainstream of social and economic life, the government followed a fractured and piecemeal approach with a disproportionate reliance on "incentives" to attract children from neglected sections of society into the fold of formal education. The development of hierarchies within the public school system with more resources being made available to "model" schools, such as the Kendriya Vidyalayas, relative to regular government schools coupled with the push towards privatization have added to more and different forms of exclusion and the perpetuation of a variety of inequalities in education. Its most ambitious education programme meant to achieve universalization of basic education -Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan [SSA]- has also been fraught with design flaws and implementation loopholes, leading to a less than desired impact. Since this programme affects the education of the marginalized the most the poor quality education it delivers adds to their burden of inequality.

To ostensibly address this neglect, in 2002, an Amendment to the Constitution (86[th]Amendment), made elementary education a fundamental right and shifted the obligation to provide education to State, making it legally binding on the State to provide 8 years of elementary education to all children in the age group 6-14 years. Consequently, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (henceforth RTE) was passed to give effect to the amendment and operationalize the fundamental right. The ramifications of this shift are enormous and will be discussed through the course of this paper. The most obvious implication relates to the requirement of ensuring every child is in school. This is a necessary condition, not just for the equality of opportunity that underlies the notion of education as a fundamental right, but also for equality and justice in general – both of which are Constitutional obligations as well. This final thrust that has been given

most recently in the form of the Right to Education Act unfortunately languishes for want of resources both financial and administrative.

Nevertheless, as we shall see further on, it did make a substantial dent in the physical access to schooling to all children and resulted in an increase in attendance for the marginalized children as well. The gaps that remain are largely in quality and outcomes, with some pockets of deprivation still evident among some sections of the population.

The Major Forms of Inequalities in Education

There are, as well acknowledged, several forms of inequality impinging on education. While this paper focuses on social inequalities or inequalities arising from social group differentiation, we will say a few words about the other major causes of inequality in education in India as well, before giving a detailed account of the trajectory of social inequalities, the manner of their manifestation in education the policy response and its impact.

1. Economic

Economic constraints have been an important consideration in the discourse on education of children from poor families. Poverty as an inhibiting factor in the educational achievement of children from deprived backgrounds has been corroborated with data from different sources. The empirical evidence that exists, such as the NSSO reports, that poorer children account for a higher percentage share of total never enrolled and dropout children as compared to those from better-off families. However, the manner in which economic constraints impact the education of children indicate a variety of different mechanisms. As noted by Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (NUEPA, 2011), in the Country Analytical Review, financial limitations have both a direct and an indirect impact on the education of children from poor households. The direct impact relates to factors within the domain of education, such as the direct costs of schooling –books, uniforms, stationery, transport, school fees and other inputs. These costs, where prohibitive, prevent parents from enrolling children in school or withdrawing them early on.

The indirect impact on the other hand, works through the opportunity costs of schooling, which are manifest in drawing children into the work force to supplement family incomes. (see Rajaram & Jayachandran, 2007; Hazarika & Bedi, 2006). While a section of children living in abject poverty might be engaged in full time child labour, others could be involved in assisting their parents in household chores or part-time work. Children, especially girls, it is found, play a crucial role in sustenance of low income families (Kabeer, Nambissan & Subrahmanian, 2003). Indeed, in such environments, formal education takes a backseat. The impact on school participation and outcomes in the latter are different as children may be enrolled but have to juggle household or outside work with school work. According to the 2011 Census, 22 percent of the children in the 5-19 years age group were not attending any educational institution and 11 per cent of all children in the same age group were part of the work force as marginal or main workers. While full-time child labour is associated with no schooling, "hidden" child labour in home-based work or household chores, which probably accounts for a much larger chunk of children from deprived backgrounds is yet to be rigorously evaluated for the impact it has on learning. In fact, there are currently two sets of opinions on this issue. One, that advocates an absolutist position on child work and takes the position that any child not in school is a child in labour [Sinha, MVF], and the other that

does not consider child 'work' with the same astonishment as child 'labour'. For the latter, the importance of keeping children around to do household work, sibling-care etc is not only immediate but also a natural part of the growing up process. For them, assuming a dichotomy of work versus education creates an artificial understanding of the trade-off between the two (Hazarika & Bedi, 2006). Taking the case of *adivasi* societies, Balagopalan (2003) points out that despite the everydayness of manual labour *adivasi* children are involved in, and its centrality to the subsistence livelihoods of their families, parents continue to show keenness in sending their children to school. Surprisingly, she adds, that it is "the 'failure' of their children in school, both to learn and to secure jobs even when they do manage to finish schooling, [which] requires them [as parents] to preserve the abilities and inclinations of their children towards manual labour" (ibid., p. 60). Such qualitative enquiries into the field of child work and the desirability of schooling are severely limited, and by their lack have reinforced the conclusion that child 'labour'- used interchangeably with 'work'- effectively displaces school education.

2. Spatial

a. The rural-urban divide

According to the 2011 Census, 6,08,087,578 children between the ages of 5-19 years, were not in school in rural areas wheras in the urban areas the figure is much lower at 21,034,095. Similarly attendance rates in rural populations are relatively lower as seen in Table 1 below. While the gaps (in excess of 10 percentage points) in 1999-2000 had narrowed considerably by 2011-12, differences still remain.

Table 1: Current attendance across rural and urban areas

Sector	6-14		6-11		12-14	
	1999-2000	2011-12	1999-2000	2011-12	1999-2000	2011-12
Rural	73.5	92.4	75.8	93.8	68.6	89.7
Urban	85.9	94.8	88	96.1	81.9	92.6
All India	76.4	93	78.6	94.4	71.9	90.5

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

b. Geographical isolation

Geographical isolation of children living in forested or desert areas or river islands and remote hills continues to be part of the 'last mile' problem in education. In addition to the topographical difficulties of providing adequate infrastructure in difficult terrains, the dispersed population in these parts makes it even harder to reach every child. Getting educated and trained teachers to accept postings (and attend regularly) in areas which are poorly serviced on all fronts is an added challenge. It is not surprising therefore to find teachers who do accept these positions spending more time trying to get transferred out than they do in classrooms.

c. Conflict zones

*A*nother form of spatial inequality that has emerged in more recent times relates to conflcit zones. Earlier this year, an official press release of the government of India shared a list of 106 districts in 10 states which have been declared affected by what is euphimistically called

"left-wing extremism" (LWE)[8] These are districts where conflict has accelerated to such an extent that extraordinary measures have been used by the government to combat violence and civil strife. In addition to these disricts Kashmir in the north and Manipur in the east are states entirely affected by conflict, where regular life is routinely disrupted. One of the first casualties of such situations are schools. In many states such as Chhatisgarh (one of the LWE affected states), schools have been commandeered for occupation by the armed forces sent in to handle the conflict. As a result, schools have stopped functioning in these areas. Where they are forced to open, children and teachers fear to go, continuing the virtual blockade. In Kashmir alone, schools have been shut since July of this year alone.

3. Social

As is well acknowledged, apart from the economic barriers, caste and community affiliations also affect school participation through several different pathways. Before getting into the details of the inequalities that exist and how the policies have attempted to tackle them, a brief background of the social groups is given below to provide the context to the inequalities that still prevail. The major social groups for which data are available are the General Castes [i.e. all other than the Dalits and the Tribals]; the Schedules Castes or Dalit , the Scheduled Tribes and the Muslims. The change in their literacy rates are given below as broad indicators of their current educational status.

Table 2: Literacy rates across the major social groups

Census Year	2001	2011
Total population	64.84	73.3
General [non-SC/ST]	68.8	76.5
Scheduled Castes	54.7	66.1
Scheduled Tribes	47.10	58.96
Muslims	59.12	68.53

Source: Census 2001, and 2011

A few words about data are in order here before we delve into what the numbers show. In India data on education is collected both at the school level as well as at the household level. Accordingly, the official source of school level data is the Unified District Information System for Education [U-DISE], which collects data from all schools and provides report cards up to the secondary stage for every state, district and school. Household level data is collected by the National Sample Survey Organization [NSSO], which conducts various rounds of surveys. In addition, the Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD] has also begun to conduct household surveys to enumerate the out-of school children.

This paper relies on data collected by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). As mentioned above, NSSO collects data through a variety of household surveys. We specifically use Employment-Unemployment surveys (1999-2000 and 2011-12 rounds) and surveys focusing on participation in education (2007-08 and 2014 rounds)[9].

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[8] http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136706

[9] These data are quite reliable and have been extensively used to explore a number of research areas. Some related examples are Desai & Kulkarni (2008), Basant (2012), Hnatkovska, Lahiri & Paul (2012, 2013), Agrawal (2013, 2014), Roy Chaudhuri (2015),

Background of Disadvantaged Social Groups in India

(a) Scheduled Castes

In India, the bulk of the population [80.5%][10], are divided on the basis of caste, which segregates people based on a hierarchy of occupations. This social hierarchy follows a broadly four-fold classification, with people who are excluded from this classification forming the so-called "untouchables" - later termed Scheduled caste (SC) by the government of India. While the official records still refer to the lowest castes as SCs, in other parlance this term has been replaced by Dalits. We shall use both interchangeably in this paper. The tribal population, termed Scheduled Tribes (ST), though not technically considered within the fold of Hinduism, are often clubbed with the SCs in official records and data, perhaps because their economic characteristics tend to be similar. It is not uncommon therefore to see SC/ST as one classification. In education, however, as seen above the STs have fared worse than the SCs.

According to the Census (2011), the total population of the Scheduled Castes (SC) in India is 201.4 million, which is 16.6 of the total population of the country[11]. The population of SCs varies from state to state, with nearly 60 per cent of the SC population residing in six states: Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Historically, SC communities have been systematically segregated from the rest of the mainstream and denied access to education, housing and land. Public places such as temples, wells for drinking water, restaurants, toilets, and many other civic facilities were also out of bounds for them (Alexander, 2003). This social discrimination has led to their oppression, poverty and divergence from mainstream society. As Panagariya and Moore (2013) found in 2011, 31.5% of the SC population and 45.3% of the ST population were living below the poverty line as compared to 15.5 percent of the "forward" castes. Similarly, Kabeer (2006), using National Sample Survey (NSS) data (2000) estimated that the SCs constitute 20 percent of the rural population, but 38 per cent of the poor. Furthermore, after holding a variety of individual and household characteristics constant such as education, occupation, age and gender of the head of the household, Kabeer noted that the SCs were still 19 percent more likely to be poor than the rest of the population. Similarly, Deshpande et. al. (2004) in their study observed that the density of poor is highest among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and that this has a strong historical genesis. Their study further indicated that 52.17 per cent of the Scheduled Caste population are below poverty line.

As far as education status is concerned, children aged 7-17 years of age, from other castes are 1.35 times more likely to have ever been to school than SC children. Similarly, children aged 11-17 years old from higher castes, are 1.33 times more likely to complete grade 5 than SC children after controlling for working status, number of children in the family, adult female and male education levels, urban/rural and also the standard of living index (Jenkins and Barr, 2006). Similarly Biradar & Jayasheela (2007) show that unequal distribution of education among social groups has an adverse impact through unequal access to better job options, meagre earnings, incidence of poverty and health hazards.

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[10]Census 2011. This figure refers to all those who are listed as belonging to the religious category of the Hindus.
[11]Registrar General, 2011

(b) Scheduled Tribes:

Scheduled Tribes are distinct from mainstream Indian society, with lifestyles, languages and cultural practices different from other communities of India. The numerous tribal groups in India, constitute 8.6% of the total population with a known population of 104.3 million, of which 11.3 percent and 2.8 percent were in rural and urban areas respectively (Census 2011). Their geographic specificity and dispersed and isolated residence cuts them off from accessing essential goods and services. Part of the tribal population consists of Denotified Tribes[12] , nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes as well as Particularly Vulnerable Tribes (PVTs), formerly known as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTG). However, these special categorisations have been negelcted from the purview of India's policymaking process. In fact, most of these tribes have not even been enumerated, and those that have, are classified under the umbrella term 'Scheduled Tribes', despite having quite distinct characteristic and needs. Even the 2011 Census did not consider counting them separately. Surprisingly, the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes which was established in 2006, also does not provide a list of these tribes.

(c) Muslims

Muslims constitute the largest minority community in India. According to the Census 2011, with 172 million people (14.2% of India's population) India has the third largest Muslim population in the world. The condition of Muslims in India is only slightly better than that of SCs and STs, and in urban areas, it is even worse. For instance, the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) data shows that 22.7% of India's total population was poor in 2004-05 (251 million people) of which the SC/STs taken together were the worst off (at 35%) but followed closely by Muslims at 31%. Similarly, the Sachar Committee Report (2006)[13], set up to study the socio-economic condition of Muslims found that, Muslim majority areas, had poor quality public services, including poor roads and transport services, less pucca houses, poor sewage and drainage and less than adequate water supply facilities. About 40% of large villages with a substantial Muslim concentration did not have any medical facilities.

The social status of Muslims in India has, over the years, become a serious issue. The downgrading of their religious affiliation has added a new dimension to the Muslim experience of exclusion. Incidences of aggression against Muslims have increased, and this has led to a culture of ghettoization among Muslims and self-enforced exclusion in some parts of the country (Gayer & Jaffrelot, 2012). The increasing marginalization of Muslims across different political and social 'spaces' including education and employment, has meant that a large proportion of Muslims face not just poverty but also the need to constantly negotiate their identity to claim their rightful entitlements under the Constitution. As we shall see further on, the social marginalization has consequences within schools as well, adding to their struggle to stay in the mainstream of economic and political life. Minority institutions, such as the Madarsas, by exclusion from the Right to education Act, have addded another blow to their claims to quality education.

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[12]Denotified Tribes are those tribes that had been listed under the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 in pre-independence India, passed by the British government. These tribes were declared habitual offenders and restrictions were placed on their movement. The law was repealed in 1952, on the basis of the Ayyangar Committee's recommendations, and the tribes were 'denotified'.

[13] Sacchar Committee Report (2006)

Gender inequality in India is manifest through a myriad of differential attitudes towards the two sexes. From an early age, boys and girls are expected to follow gender-appropriate norms - girls prepared to handle household chores and fulfil their duties as future wives and mothers, men to shoulder the responsibility of providing financial security for their families. These prescribed roles intersect with the long held belief among many Indian parents that the son(s) are the perpetrators of the family name, and daughters through patrilocal exogamy contributors to their affinal families. Investing in a girls' education, at least beyond a point, is thus still not universally considered good economics. Preference for a male child is prevalent throughout the country, even taking the form of sex selective abortions in many parts of north and central India[14].

Gender differences in expectations, roles, and responsibilities unsurprisingly translate into differential access to food, health, education, and employment opportunities. Women and adolescent girls are known to eat last, usually non-substantial quantities, after the male members of the household. Often condoned as a cultural practice in some contexts, it has a less than optimal effect on female health and nutrition, with spill over effects on the health and education of children as well. (Ramachandran, Jandhyala & Saihjee, 2003). Good health, meaningful education, and decent work often form a triad, with strong interdependencies. Differential access to these resources is framed not just by different perception of roles within a household but by external factors such as labour market discrimination against female workers as well. Together they shape the ways in which intra-household decisions about access to education are framed and rationalized quite differently for boys and girls.

1. How Social Identity affects Educational Access and Outcomes for the Scheduled Castes:

One of the factors widely believed to affect the performance and low mobility of SC children in education is the spectre of caste discrimination (Secada, 1989). This despite government programmes that selectively target aid to children from these communities. Dreze and Kingdon (2001), Borooah and Iyer (2005), Dostie and Jayaraman (2006) have also found that caste plays a major role in determining school enrolment and retention.

Historical process of discrimination and social exclusion of SCs have contributed to increasing the social distance between the home and the school. Thus, in addition to the physical access to schooling facilities, social identities impact access as well. Social access plays out in multiple and overlapping forms, where social identity is the central axis of exclusion. This section shall examine the social norms related to caste, which influence the access to quality elementary education by the marginalized castes.

Discrimination: Despite having almost comparable access to elementary education as that of other social group students, SC students frequently encounter overt and covert acts of discrimination, prejudice and rejection from teachers and fellow students. Commonly reported instances of cruel treatment include being told to sit separately from other students,

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[14] This is indicated by the skewed child sex ratio which is worst in states of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Gujarat, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (Census 2011 figures).

being called 'untouchable' or stupid, being beaten and caned for presumed infractions and so on (Drèze and Gazdar, 1997).

Costs of Schooling: There is also a stark correspondence between caste and school choice, in that children from higher castes and economically secure communities dominate private school enrolments, while children from lower castes and economically disadvantaged communities dominate enrolment in the government schools, leading to an implicit dichotomy in the education system whereby well-off families opt for high fee-paying, private schools while the not-so-well-off, of which the SCs are ahigh proportion, have little option but to send their children to government schools, which either charge no fees or charge very little but lag behind in infrastructural facilities and quality of education. According to the PROBE revisited household survey (2006), which was conducted in 5 states, 91% of SC students in the 6-12 years age group were found to be enrolled in government schools in the sample villages[15]. This situation has resulted in one district education official commenting that the public school system is slowly turning into a system for SC children only (Jha and Jhingran, 2005). The education sector in India has thus come to be characterized by 'hierarchies of access'[16] where the poorest and other deprived sections of society have to make do with substandard education in government schools, while private schools, which have seen an unprecedented increase over the years both in rural and urban areas, cater to the elite[17].

Aspiration levels: It is also believed that caste identity, through its effects on aspirations and achievements, has an impact on education participation as well. People belonging to the lower caste have traditionally experienced very limited social mobility due to caste-based opposition to their occupational mobility (Jefferey et al, 2002). This directly shapes their education aspirations. Dalit narratives have often viewed formal education as a means to acquire cultural capital previously absent (Ciotti, 2006). However, as Jeffery, Jeffery & Jeffery (2004) point out from their case study of Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, Dalit men have been unable to convert this cultural capital into 'respectable' jobs, signalling discrimination in the job market. This they claim leads to decreased investment in higher schooling among the Dalits. This is reflective of a dearth of "genuine social opportunity" (ibid., p. 982) available to disadvantaged groups like Dalits. In other words, their systematic exclusion from economic opportunities has had an adverse impact on education participation as well.

A similar situation arises in *adivasi* societies. As Balagopalan (2003) shows, parents continue to show keenness in sending their children to school, but it is "the 'failure' of their children in school, both to learn and to secure jobs even when they do manage to finish schooling, [which] requires them to preserve the abilities and inclinations of their children towards manual labour" (ibid., p. 60). Despite the manual labour *adivasi* children are involved in, and its centrality in the subsistence livelihoods of their families, education remains an important aspect of life, but conditions and expectations of economic mobility play a crucial role in deciding whether education merits investment.

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[15] Among the Scheduled Tribes, this figure was 93%, followed by children from OBC community at 77%.

[16] This term has been borrowed from Vimala Ramachandran (2004), who uses it in her study of gender and social equity in primary education in India.

[17] Even the 'low-fee' private schools which essentially came up as a response to the growing demand for private schooling by the poorest sections have also been criticized for their unaffordable fee structure, infrastructural deficits, and their inability in achieving equitableeducation for all (see, for example, Harma, 2011).

The possession of cultural capital in fact plays a crucial role in explaining many trends in education participation. The relative deprivation suffered by Dalits in terms of their cultural and community capital also shapes the processes by which children acquire cognitive outcomes. For example, Velaskar (1990) makes a controversial point on the cognitive deprivation that she argues is endemic to Dalits and other disadvantaged groups which might explain their lower educational status. The culturally and socially disadvantaged, she argues, "are 'inferior' cognitively, motivationally, physically and in terms of personality as a result of environments that are 'deprived' with regard to the amount and variety of sensory stimulation, verbal interactions and achievement orientation" they receive. (p. 135). She further notes that comparative studies of Brahmin and Scheduled Caste children (such as Sinha, 1982) have revealed the superiority of the former in terms of several abilities including aspiration levels.

The community-effect on education is visible in the work of Borooah (2012) too, who notes significant inter-group differences in test scores in reading, arithmetic and writing of school children in India aged 8–11 years. In particular, children belonging to the 'higher' social groups – Brahmins, high castes, Sikhs/Jains, and Christians – did significantly better than those from the 'lower' groups – the Dalits, Adivasis, OBCs and Muslims. In fact, after controlling for a number of parental, household and school-related factors, children from all the social groups appeared to be structurally disadvantaged, in some or all of the three competencies, relative to Brahmin children. However, this disadvantage was greatest for Muslim, Dalit, and Adivasi children (ibid.). Borooah & Iyer (2002) also find that, on average, the difference in enrolment rates between Hindu and Muslim boys (54%) and between Hindu and Muslim girls (52%), was due to the community effect[18]. Similar was the case between Hindu and Dalit boys (37%) and Hindu and Dalit girls (27%). The size of the community effect in turn depended on the non-community circumstances in which the children were placed i.e. the effects of father's literacy, mother's literacy, parental occupation and region of residence.

In fact, the association of oneself with a caste identity such as Dalit significantly impacts student achievements by lowering the self-confidence and expectations a Dalit has of himself/herself, as demonstrated by the work of Hoff & Pandey (2006) who argue that a history of discriminatory practices against Dalits and the continuing social perceptions about them impact behaviour in the most tangible ways. With the help of an experiment in solving mazes, where participants belonged to the Scheduled Caste category and high-castes, the revelation of one's caste identity was found to be robustly associated with a decline in performance of the lower caste participants, as opposed to when the caste identity was not publicly revealed and the lower caste performed just as well as the higher caste.

The experiences of Dalit children in schools also effects their attendance and chances of dropping out. While reliable quantitative data are not available related to the perception or levels of sensitivity of teachers to caste based discrimination, anecdotal evidence and certain smaller scale qualitative studies suggest that teaching practices in the classroom negatively affect SC children and result in another 'push' factor leading to dropping out from primary school (Ramachandran, 2004). Negative perceptions of teachers about Dalits and their caste background, and the association of purity/pollution with their caste identity often

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[18] The community effect has been understood as an expression of community norms such as those of religion (Hindu or Muslim) or caste (SC or non-SC).

manifests itself in the form of discriminatory practices in classrooms, peer relations and friendships, teacher attitudes, food cultures etc. making the school a difficult space to negotiate (Nambissan, 2009; Ramachandran, 2013). Despite the abolishment of untouchability, there have been several instances of both explicit and implicit abuse of Dalit children by school staff and teachers, such as differential access and use of school facilities including water and toilets, segregated seating arrangements in classrooms, non-participation in co-curricular activities; lack of recognition of their work or abilities and a denigration of their customs and mores. Further, Dalit children are expected to run errands and areassigned menial tasks such as sweeping and cleaning the classrooms – sometimes even the toilets. Jenkins (2009) noted that rate of teacher absenteeism was high when children were mainly from Dalit and tribal communities. The teachers typically look down upon the 'educability' of 'these' groups (Balagopalan& Subramanian, 2003); even if a good relationship with the children prevails, teachers do not strive for excellence but for 'minimum level' performance from poor marginalized children (Velaskar, 1990). Madan (2004)[19] calls this the 'hierarchy of dissemination' (p. 164); transactions in the classroom do not take place on an equal plane for everybody, and this becomes a disadvantage more often for children who do not find themselves in the teachers' good books. The social status teachers have imparted to themselves as a result of their educational qualifications,and the widening social gap between teachers and students, as noted by Majumdar & Mooij (2011), may give some insight into the reasons for teachers' attitudes towards these communities. For example, Balagopalan & Subramanian (2003) highlight that the state itself may have contributed to sanctioning upper-caste hegemony by giving control to teachers of crucial information such as scheme-related grants or development funds like scholarships, incentives etc. available to these communities.

2. How Social Identity affects Educational Access and Outcomes for the Scheduled Tribes

Despite efforts to bring tribal children into the fold of mainstream education, the representation of Adivasis in negative terms, outside the pale of progress, has meant that elementary education has only reinforced stereotypes and further marked the Adivasis in discriminatory terms (Kumar, 1989; Balagopalan & Subrahmanian, 2003). Even as they participate in formal education as students, teachers, parents, staff and school administrators, Adivasi people do not find Adivasi knowledge, ethos, traditions, histories and languages as a part of their educational experience. Teachers continue to regard Adivasi students as backward and uneducable and their parents as lacking in interest and commitment towards educating their children–notions that lead to discriminatory practices in the classroom and abuse by other students. Continued legacies of exclusion and 'invisibilisation' loom large on the discourse of inclusion of Adivasis in all forms of public life, including educational institutions (Veerbhadranaika, 2012).

Teacher deployment and training of teachers in tribal areas, and the recruitment of *adivasi* teachers, are important aspects that demand attention. In the states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Gujarat, and Rajasthan, para-teachers dominate the allocation of teachers to Adivasi areas (ibid.) Para-teachers are those who are employed on a temporary basis, and for whom the basic minimum education qualification for postings in remote areas is only higher secondary (class 12th). In most states, these teachers do not receive any pre-

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[19] Book chapter in Majumdar & Mooij (2011), *"Education and Inequality in India: A Classroom View"*

service training; where they do, it is often inadequate and there is no follow-up. Studies like Rawal & Kingdon (2010) and Chudgar & Sankar (2008) have shown the effects of having a teacher with similar demographic traits as the students on the latter's performance in school, yet recruitment of adivasi teachers, particularly adivasi female teachers remains low compared to other social groups.

Table 15 shows the profile of teachers employed in schools in 2014-15. The figures show that there are fewer ST male and female teachers at the primary and elementary level, as compared to other social groups, even though at the primary level ST teachers are higher than at the elementary level, except in urban areas where ST female teachers are higher at the elementary level.

Table 15: Elementary Teachers' profile, Rural & Urban (2014-15)

Social group	%age Male (rural)	%age Female (rural)	%age Male (urban)	%age Female (urban)
SC	13.4	10.9	10.2	8.2
ST	10.8	8.8	5.6	4.5
OBC	41.8	40.4	33.4	31.1

Source: Teacher-related indicators, DISE 2014-15

Data from DISE 2014-15 shows that even though states such as Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gujarat have recorded slightly higher proportions of Adivasi teachers, these states, particularly Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand face the problem of high teacher absenteeism, the absence of schools in remote settlements, and the absence of Adivasis in significant positions of administration and authority in the education department[20]. Data for Madhya Pradesh indicate low numbers of Adivasi teachers (13.3 per cent versus that of 21.1 per cent of Adivasis in the total population) and this is manifested across the districts of the state where schools are primarily manned by teachers from various castes[21]. Although a fair number of Adivasi teachers are employed by primary schools, their numbers reduce at the level of secondary and high schools, a trend which is also reflected in the national level data set.

In addition to the problem of employing trained teachers, teacher attendance is another hindrance as teachers resist their postings in isolated tribal areas.This is especially so, in some areas such as in the states of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, where recent disturbances due to so-called left-wing extremism has created a great deal of insecurity and fears of personal safety. On the one hand, teachers fear for their safety, and on the other, armed forces that have been deputed by the state to counter the insurgency, occupy the schools. The latter has made the situation particularly difficult for children, who find themselves in close proximity to armed personnel and their ammunition, when in school. This has contributed to many children dropping out.

Tribal dialects – the only language young children are familiar with during their early years – add another dimension to exclusion. Not only does this mean that teachers must be hired

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[20]Veerbhadranaika, Kumaran, Tukdeo, Vasavi (2012)
[21]Veerbhadranaika, Kumaran, Tukdeo, Vasavi (2012)

who speak in the mother tongue of the children, books and other teaching-learning material must also be provided[22]. The inadequacies on both counts have meant that children either do not enrol or drop out very quickly. Additionally, conversing in one's mother tongue is not seen as good behaviour. For example, in case reported from Madhya Pradesh, teachers explicitly derided students when they used their native tongue to communicate among themselves, forcing them to speak in Hindi - the dominant regional language – instead (Balagopalan, 2003). The push towards multilingual education (MLE) is one progressive step towards tackling language-based exclusion in schools[23]. Although not uniformly implemented across India, states such as Orissa and Andhra Pradesh have already started experimenting with mother tongue based MLE programmes. However, Mohanty (2006) notes that education in India is only superficially multilingual, and remains monolingual at an underlying level, as bilingual/multilingual education in the Indian context does not refer to the use of two or more languages as media of instruction, either simultaneously or successively. Rather, it refers to the use of two or more languages in education, usually as school subjects. He has labelled this as "nominal forms" of multilingual education.

Besides language, another alienating feature of the dominant education system is its privileging of text-based learning over work-related knowledge and skills. The exclusionary character of the education system in India is to a great extent founded on the artificially instituted dichotomy between work and knowledge, which seems to speak directly to tribal life-worlds of which manual labour is an integral part. Those who work with their hands and produce wealth are denied access to formal education while those who have access to formal education not only denigrate productive manual work but also lack the necessary skills for the same (National Focus Group paper, 2007).

3. How Social Identity affects Educational Access and Outcomes for the Muslims

As Basant (2012) argues, the Muslim community has suffered on account of its social identity, as the cause of backwardness in all spheres is assigned to the community itself. The increasing public focus on Muslim personal law and other socio-cultural characteristics has only added fuel to the fire, placing the source of disadvantage at the very centre of what it means to be Muslim. Further, self-perceptions about fairness tend to be quite low in the Muslim community, as shown in a study by Singh et al. (2009), which tries to understand the relationship between perceived justice/fairness in 5 different domains, i.e. social prestige, economic, educational, employment and political and self-esteem, collective self-esteem and social exclusion, among Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The research concludes that justice perceptions are determined by social contextual factors like religion and caste. The

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[22]The issue of generating and promoting texts and teaching-learning materials in Adivasi dialects and languages needs to be comprehensively reviewed. Trends indicate that Adivasis themselves may not fully appreciate or demand learning in their mother tongues, such as in the case of Soliga tribe in Karnataka. Schools where the language of teaching is English or a major regional language are thought of as better alternatives to schooling in mother tongue medium; the latter is considered unnecessary for further education in any major language (Mohanty, 2006).

[23]The three language formula was started in 1957 which recommended the use of a regional language or mother tongue as the first teaching language in school for 5 years, Hindi or any other Indian languageas the second language from 6th to 8th, and English as the third language subject from the third year. Despite several modifications since then, English became the most common second language subject in all the states, followed by either Hindi or Sanskrit as a third language subject. The Ramamurti Committee in 1990 gave some recognition to minority languages, but its recommendations have mostly remained untranslated into practice (Mohanty, 2006).

majority group (Hindus) have the highest perception of even justice, while different patterns are found in each of the five domains for the minority groups. Christians, for instance, perceived the situation as being fairer towards them, in the area of educational opportunities, than did Muslims (ibid.). This could be another reason why Muslim educational attainment remains low. A possible reason for the Christians having a better sense perception of educational justice could be the focus of the Christian community on basic education, in part due to the efforts of Missionaries working in the area of education. The community effect of Muslims is also alluded to in the work of Borooah and Iyer (2002) and Borooah (2012) who, respectively, note the low enrolment of Muslim boys and girls as compared to Hindus.

Differential access to Muslims to job opportunities, due to increasing social prejudices against them,also impacts the demand for schooling. While schooling is regarded both by Hindus and by Muslims as an instrument for securing a job, many Muslims believe their relative economic backwardness to be directly associated with their being excluded from jobs due to discriminatory practices in hiring (Borooah & Iyer, 2002; Basant, 2012). The belief that their sons will not get jobs may then lead Muslim parents to devalue the importance of education. This is evident from the employment pattern of Muslims, particularly lower caste Muslims, who are self-employed in relatively low income generating occupations, which do not require any specialized training or education, such as weaving, dyeing, bangle making, grave digging, laundrying ("dhobis") and so on (Narula, 2014). As stated in the Sachar Report (2006), Muslims hold a tiny 5.7 per cent of government jobs, much lower than their share in the population of 14.2% (Census 2011). In states with higher than national average Muslim population like West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh this ratio is less than a third of their population share, while in Maharashtra, it is less than one fifth.

Such perceptions, affect the education of Muslim girls, as well, since they are educated to a level that ensures their marriage - a few notches below the educational level of their prospective husband (Borooah & Iyer, 2002). Hasan & Menon (2004) find that as many as 26% educated Muslim women have illiterate husbands, which also indicates a high dropout rate for Muslim boys. That Muslim men limit their education and so do women, in response, was evident from the high positive correlation between the wife's education level and that of her husband's. The decision to educate women thus not only depends on their chances in the labour market i.e. their probability of getting a good job, but also on the social norms that dictate whether highly educated women are desirable as wives, or not. With hypergamy, the dominant social norm in this regard, the fear that highly educated girls may find it difficult to find spouses acts as a further spoiler to their education goals or aspirations. .

Jha & Jhingran (2005) further argue that among Muslim families, greater importance is attached to girls getting religious education which will be more relevant for them in their future roles as wives and mothers. Co-mingling with boys and the resultant fear of sexual harassment or abuse on the one hand and developing pre-marital relationships on the other is another detriment to Muslim girls' schooling (ibid.; Jeffery et al., 2007). However, it is important to bear in mind, that such perceptions and fears are not exclusive to the Muslim community. Women as upholders of religious and other traditions is a common motif in all societies as are thefears of sexual abuse or sexual libertarianism.

Can these factors explain the gap in education achievements between the Muslim children and the others? What role did policy play?

4. How Social Identity affects Educational Access and Outcomes for Girls

Attitudes towards education, particularly of the girl child, are reflective of the gender biases that are prevalent in society. Gender continues to be a deciding factor in school enrolment. From an early age, girls are encouraged to do household work and favour honourable domestication, and in conditions where labouring for daily sustenance is the responsibility of the entire family, they play an equally important role (see, for example, Bandopadhyay & Subrahmanian, 2008). Probably a reflection of parental beliefs about the gender division of labour, Kingdon (2001) argues that if a daughter is envisaged to be a housewife for most of her adult life, her enrolment in school can be sacrificed without the same hesitation as sacrificing a son's schooling. This may be further necessitated by mother's working or by poverty. That the returns to educating the girl child will not accrue to her natal family, i.e. through the practice of patrilocal exogamy, is another reason why her education is seen as not meriting investment (Jha & Jhingran, 2005). As they note, "the secondary status of women in all walks of life, and patriarchal practices and cultural beliefs which make people view girls as liabilities, contribute to the very casual treatment of girls' schooling" (ibid., p. 226). The non-availability of adequate secondary schooling facilities in nearby areas also impacts primary schooling outcomes, and while the former's impact on school enrolment and attendance of boys in the 6-7and 8-10 age group is significant, it is not so for girls (Mukhopadhyay & Sahoo, 2014), which should not be surprising since the economic benefits of reaching another level of education are likely to be reaped mostly by men.

Women belonging to marginalized groups such as SC, ST or minority communities like Muslims are thus thought to be doubly disadvantaged, due to the discrimination they face on account of their community identity and the gender norms that prevail in society. However, at least with respect to current attendance in schools, the double disadvantage hypothesis is valid only in the case of ST women, not other socio-religious categories[24], in that belonging to the SC or OBC category or Muslim does not make matters any worse for women in terms of access to education. Jha & Jhingran (2005) note that even though tribal societies are generally known for greater freedom for girls, yet, the notion of gender equality does not extend to participation of girls in schooling; it mainly remains confined to equal participation in work. This is also reflected in the difference between boys and girls in terms of enrolment, which is highest among tribal communities.

Another factor that has shown to have a significant impact on school enrolment is parents' education level, disaggregated further into the differential impact of fathers' and mother's education on young boys and girls. Dreze & Kingdon (1999) find strong evidence from their work in rural India that maternal education has a positive effect on a daughter's chances of completing primary school (also see Mukherjee & Das, 2008 for their work on parental education and incidence of child labour). Pal (2004) in her study of West Bengal found that mother's literacy significantly enhances the probability of school enrolment among girls but, it is insignificant for boys. Similarly father's education significantly encourages boys schooling only and does not have any perceptible impact on girls. Bandyopadhyay (2012) is her study of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh finds that though a high proportion of children whose

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[24] Refer to the present paper for a detailed analysis of the double-disadvantage hypothesis.

parents are illiterate are attending school, most of the out of school children (never enrolled or drop out) are also the children of illiterate parents. Azam & Bhatt (2012) in their study of intergenerational mobility in educational attainment in India since 1940s use father-son matched data to show that not only have there been significant improvements in the educational mobility across the two generations, these improvements can also be seen across different social groups, with some inter-state variations. The parental level of education may vary across these studies, but its overall impact- especially mothers' education- on enrolment and participation of girls in schools is an important point to be reiterated.

Lower economic returns to girls' education than to boys, noted by Kingdon (1998) & Kambhampati (2008), is another factor that results in the differential treatment of sons and daughters in education, controlling for family background (due to factors like occupation, marriage status, caste). In the early green revolution period, there were no direct economic returns in rural India to women's schooling because women were not involved in occupations where education was rewarded, even required (as cited in Kingdon, 2001). Vatta & Sato (2012) in their study of returns to education in the period from 1983 to 2009-10 find that these were significantly positive for male workers and were higher for primary and middle level of education. Further, wages of uneducated casual male wage workers in rural areas increased relatively faster than their educated counterparts (ibid.). The National Focus Group on gender and education (2006) sheds some light on how English language has become another marker for discrimination against girls in the context of employment. With globalisation, the demands for fluency in English have increased in the job market. More boys are being sent to private English schools, whereas girls continue to attend cheaper or free vernacular schools (ibid.). These results show a disintegrating link between education and labour market participation in rural areas, and the bias towards males. Even if returns to education were the same for both men and women, parents' preferential attitudes towards son's schooling may be compounded by the fact that returns to daughters' education may not accrue to them personally (Kingdon, 2001), a point already made earlier. However, as Jensen (2010) shows in his experiment with an intervention in employability in Delhi, girls' education indeed responds to changes in returns to education. With the awareness of availability of jobs for women in the BPO sector, investments in education of girls aged 5-15 years witnessed a positive trend without any offsetting impact on investment in boys' education (ibid.). Changes in returns to education for girls thus seem to have an ambiguous effect on girls' education, at least as long as social norms continue to dictate gender roles and responsibilities.

Indicators of Education Attainment across social groups

(i) Physical Access

Traditionally, physical access to schools was unevenly distributed across social groups - with SCs and even STs being at the lower end of the access ladder. In rural areas, SCs tend to be clustered in segregated habitations within villages. If the school is located in the central part of the village (or where higher castes reside), this presents a challenge for SC children in accessing the school. As the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE, 1999) found, "..children from one hamlet may be reluctant or unable to go to school in another hamlet due to caste tensions" (p. 10). The STs on the other hand, tend to be located in forested areas, where schools have yet to reach them universally. The Muslim community in India while not

segregated in the same way as the SCs and STs, tends to be found in concentrated pockets in urban areas and in Muslim concentration districts in a few states. As mentioned above, in these Muslim dominated areas, public services, including schools tend to be in short supply. This section thus aims to understand the dynamic of extending access to school for different groups which are vulnerable to exclusion from educational opportunities at the elementary stage and secondary stage.[25]

How does Physical Access to schools vary across social groups?

Table 3: Proportion of households with access to primary, upper primary and secondary levels of schooling across social groups

	Primary (within 1 km)		Upper Primary (within 3 kms)		Secondary school (within 5 kms)	
	1995-96	2014	2007-08	2014	2007-08	2014
Others	89.7	92.6	95.2	96.3	92.3	94.7
SCs	89.4	94.7	93.5	95	87.8	92
STs	86.2	92.4	83.7	89.7	72.9	80.5
Muslims	NA	92.8	93.8	96.1	89.1	92.9
Overall	89.6	93.6	93.3	95.4	87.3	91.4

Source: NSSO 52nd (1995-96), 64th (2007-08) and 71st (2014) rounds

Physical Access for Scheduled Castes

In 1995-96 (52nd Round of NSS), 90% of all habitations in the country had primary schooling facilities within a distance of 1 km. By 2007-08 (64th round), 92% of habitations had primary school within a distance of 1 km and by 2014-15 (71st round) around 94% of habitations had a primary school within a distance of 1 km. The percentage of habitations served by upper primary schools at a distance of up to 3 km was 93% in 2007-08, and around 95% by 2014 (Table 2). Similarly, the District Information System for Education (DISE)[26] also shows that the ratio of primary to upper primary schools in India stood at 2.41 in 2007-08, and had improved to 2.02 in 2014-15. This suggests that physical access to school has continued to improve over the years, although at a relatively slow pace. While, India has seen vast improvement in providing access to primary school, access to upper primary and especially secondary school is not yet near universal or equally distributed.

As far as SC households are concerned, the NSSO 64th Round (2007), showed that 93% of SC households[27] had access to upper primary school at distance of within 3 km and 88% had access to secondary school at distance of within 5 km as compared to 95 % and 92 %

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[25] The National Policies mentioned above envisaged a uniform pattern of school education, based on 12 years of schooling, across all states of India. School education was accordingly divided in to four parts, namely, primary (grades 1-5), upper primary (grades 6-8), secondary (9-10) and higher secondary (11-12). Of these twelve years of schooling, the first eight years are termed 'elementary education', and correspond broadly to the education period of 6-14 years of age, in line with the Constitutional commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years. At the operational level, elementary school is divided into two parts with five years of primary schooling (grades 1-5) followed by three years of upper primary or middle school (grades 6-8).

[26] The official data base of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

[27] NSS defines "Household" as a group of persons normally living together and taking food from a common kitchen will constitute a household.

for "other" social group. In 2014 (NSSO, 71ˢᵗ Round), 95 percent of SC households had access to an upper primary school within 3 km and 92 % had access to secondary school within 5 km from their habitation as compared to 96 % and 95 % for other social group households. Primary school is equally accessible to SC and other social groups as 92 percent of SC and Other social groups habitations had access to primary school within distance of 1 km from their household and access rose by around 3 percentage points for both SC and other social groups in the latter round. Thus parity in access to primary schools can be claimed for all social groups and a decline in inequality of physical access to upper primary and secondary school from 2007 to 2014.

The figure below shows how distance to primary, upper primary and secondary school varies across education levels as well as across caste in 2014.

Figure 1

Distance to School for Scheduled Caste children
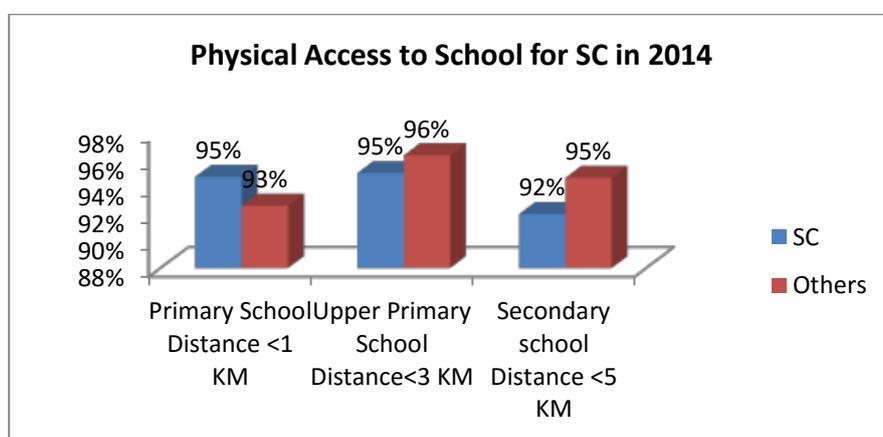

Physical Access for Scheduled Tribes

Tribal communities face many similar constraints as Dalits (or SCs) in their efforts to access education. Unlike other minority groups such as Dalits and Muslims, tribal groups are more geographically concentrated; and in some states their population share is close to zero. The social status of tribal communities also varies significantly by state. For instance, in the Northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya, Scheduled Tribes make up the overwhelming majority of the total population with their socio-economic status in these states being significantly better than in other parts of the country - a difference that is also reflected in their educational status and accomplishments. Of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the country more than 50% is concentrated in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand and Gujarat.

The spatial marginalization of the tribals adds another layer to their disadvantage. The term 'double disadvantage' has often been used to characterise the socio-economic and spatial marginalisation of Scheduled Tribes (Sujatha, 2002). Locational disadvantage, resulting from the concentration of tribal populations in areas that have yet to be brought into the fold of modern infrastructure implies that physical access to schools is the first problem faced by tribal children. Over the last few decades the Government of India has increased physical

access to schools manifold, but some populations, especially in the tribal belts, are still among the 'hardest to reach'. The figure below depicts th eproportion of ST and other habitations having access to primary, upper primary and secondary schools within the norms prescribed by the government. We see that though primary school was accessible to approximately 92 percentage of the tribal habitation in 2014 but secondary school was not as universally available. In addition to the locational difficulties, the specific educational needs of nomadic, pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities have also remained unaddressed by mainstream education policy, as mentioned before. For instance, the flexibility – in terms of admission criteria or provision of mobile schools - that would allow itinerant communities to have access across locations, is yet to be considered. This has meant that children belonging to such communities have not been able to enter the mainstream of education and remain among the most deprived educationally. But as mentioned before, specific data on these communities is not available to corroborate this assertion.

Figure 2

Distance to school for Scheduled Tribe children
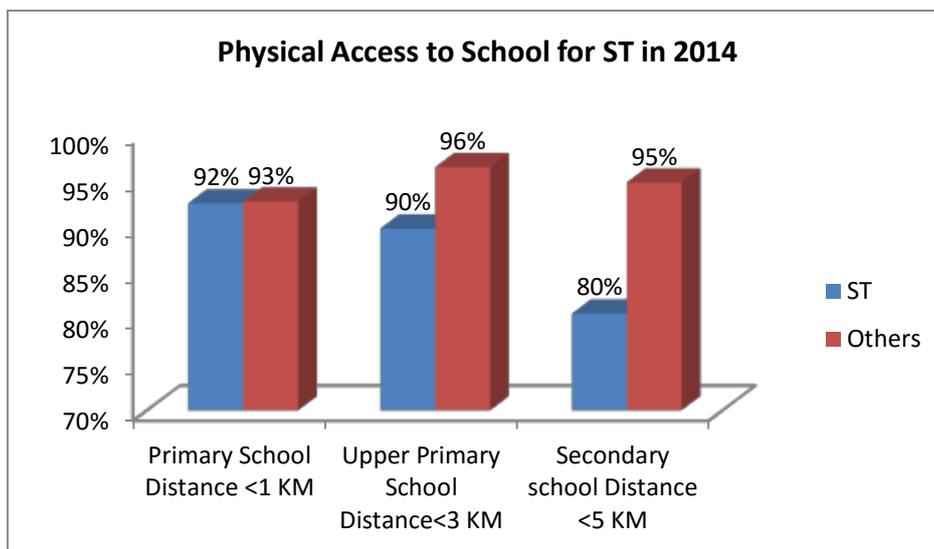
Physical Access for Muslims

The Sachar Committee (2006) found that, contrary to popular belief, Muslim parents are not averse to mainstream education or to send their children to affordable government schools. Using census 2001 data, the Committee noted that access to government schools was limited for Muslim children, with girls at the lower secondary level fidinding it difficult to avail of a facility within their easy reach. Using census data they noted a "clear and significant inverse correlation between the proportion of Muslim population and the availability of educational infrastructure in small villages". The report also highlighted that about one third of small villages with high concentration of Muslims did not have any educational institutions. On one hand, these figures point to a lack of infrastructural support in the educational policies of India towards Muslim concentrated areas, but on the other, they also shed light on the deeper processes and mechanisms of implicit discrimination against Muslims that govern such policy decisions. It can almost be avered that availability of schooling facilities has become a new marker for religion-based exclusion in India.

However, as Table 1 shows the physical access of schools (Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary) at the aggregate (National) level, between the year 2007 and 2014, showed a huge improvement for children of the Muslim community as well. In fact, by 2014 physical access is almost equal for both Muslim and children of "other religions".

Has physical access contributed to better attendance across social groups?

Table 3 above shows that access to primary school has been relatively equalized a across social groups, while access at the upper primary level was also relatively equal with the exception of STs who lagged behind, even though the differential had narrowed between 2007 and 2014. Similar trends are observed for secondary level of schooling as well. Thus, access to school continues to be an important concern for ST households. The next question is: has this equalization of access translated to better attendance for children across these groups? The next section examines the current attendance data from the NSS to answer this question.

(ii) Current Attendance

Current attendance status from the Employment and Unemployment Rounds of the NSS surveys refers to whether a person was attending any educational institution on the date of survey. This information has been collected for each member of the sampled household who is below 30 years of age.

Current attendance for age group 6-14 years increased from 76 per cent in 1999-2000 (55th Round, NSS) to 93 per cent in 2011-12 (68th Round NSS), thus showing an impressive increase of 17 percentage points in a period of about 12 years. Considerable progress is also observed for age-groups 6-11 and 12-14 years separately: from 79 percent in 1999-2000, to 94 percent in 2011-12, for the age-group 6-11 years and from a low 72 percent in 1999-2000 to 90 percent in the year 2011-12 for the age-group 12-14 years (Table 4).

Table 4: Overall current attendance by age

Age-group (Years)	1999-2000	2011-12
6-14	76.4	93.0
6-11	78.6	94.4
12-14	71.9	90.5

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

Large variations were observed in the current attendance status of children in the age-group 6-14 years across different states in 1999-2000 (Table 5). Only 10 states had at least 90 percent children currently attending school, while two states (Bihar and Jharkhand) had less than 60 percent children attending school. But by 2011-12, this variation had reduced dramatically. Of the 28 states for which data is available, 26 had at least 90 percent children attending school with the remaining two states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh not far behind (at 87% and 89% respectively). In other words, the period between 1999-2000 and 2011-12 has witnessed dramatic convergence in school attendance rates as well across Indian states[28].

Table 5: Current attendance across states for age-group 6-14 years

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[28] Similar trends are observed for age-groups 6-11 years and 12-14 years and hence not shown separately.

State	1999/00	2011/12	Change(1999-2011)
Kerala	97.7	99.5	1.8
Himachal Pradesh	95.9	98.9	3.0
Sikkim	94.3	99.7	5.4
Goa	92.6	97.8	5.1
Mizoram	92.6	99.0	6.4
Tripura	91.6	98.7	7.1
Nagaland	91.4	99.4	8.1
Manipur	91.1	98.2	7.1
Tamil Nadu	90.9	99.0	8.1
Uttaranchal	90.4	98.1	7.7
Maharashtra	89.0	96.9	8.0
Meghalaya	87.9	99.0	11.1
Punjab	86.8	95.8	9.0
Haryana	86.0	94.9	8.9
Jammu & Kashmir	84.7	95.1	10.4
Gujarat	81.2	94.4	13.2
Assam	80.0	95.7	15.7
Karnataka	79.9	95.4	15.5
Andhra Pradesh	76.9	95.9	19.0
Chhattisgarh	76.0	95.8	19.8
West Bengal	75.7	91.3	15.6
Orissa	73.4	94.8	21.4
Rajasthan	72.5	90.7	18.2
Uttar Pradesh	72.3	89.4	17.2
Madhya Pradesh	71.0	94.5	23.4
Arunachal Pradesh	70.1	91.7	21.7
Jharkhand	59.8	92.6	32.8
Bihar	53.3	87.0	33.7

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

Current attendance across social groups

Does the encouraging story of the preceding section translate across social groups as well? Unfortuntaely, here the picture gets a bit muddied, as we shall see below.

1. The Caste Divide:

Table 6: Current attendance among social groups, across age groups

	Others		SC		ST	
Age group	1999-00	2011-12	1999-00	2011-12	1999-00	2011-12
6-11	86	96.2	73.8	93.5	67.5	93.2
12-14	80.3	92.6	65.4	89.3	57.6	87.9
6-14	84	94.9	71.1	91.9	64.5	91.3

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

Table 7: Current attendance among Muslims, SCs and STs for the age group 6-14 years

	1999-2000	2011-12
SC	71.1	91.9
ST	64.5	91.3
Muslims	68.8	87.0

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

Current Attendance among Scheduled Castes (SCs)

In 1999-2000, only 73.8 percent of SC children in the age-group 6-11 years, and 65.4 percent in the age-group 12-14 years attended school. These figures were much lower compared to 'others' (Table 6). However, the next decade saw a significant increase for the age-group 6-11 years to 93.5 percent and for age group 12-14 years to 89.3 percent. This implies a narrowing of the gap between the SCs and 'Others'[29].

State-wise changes in current attendance of SCs

The horizontal axis in Figure 4 denotes the gap in proportion of 'other' and 'SC' children attending school, while the vertical axis denotes the change in the gap over the period 1999-2000 to 2011-12[30]. Union Territories (UTs) and the states where proportion of SCs was less than 8 percent have been omitted[31]. The gap in 1999-2000 was highest in Jharkhand, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh as these states lie farthest to the right on the horizontal axis. Importantly, the states which had higher gaps in 1999-2000 are the ones which have witnessed larger declines in the gaps over the period depicted in the figure. In a later section we will see how, if policy in these states or at the national level has contributed to the a narrowing of these and other gaps in the indicators for the various social groups. We are unable to look at policy impact for each indicator separately.

Figure 4:

Current attendance: 'Others' and Scheduled Castes for age-group 6-14 years, 1999-2000 and 2011-12

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[29] 'Others' are the relatively advantaged social group consisting of various castes, which do not belong to the category of Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes (details later). They are also referred to as *upper castes* or *forward castes*.

[30] Positive change implies that gap between 'other' and 'SC' children has widened over time, while negative change implies that gap has reduced.

[31] These states are Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Goa and Manipur. SCs constituted 20.6 percentage of population in 1991.

Current attendance gap for SC

Other states have been omitted
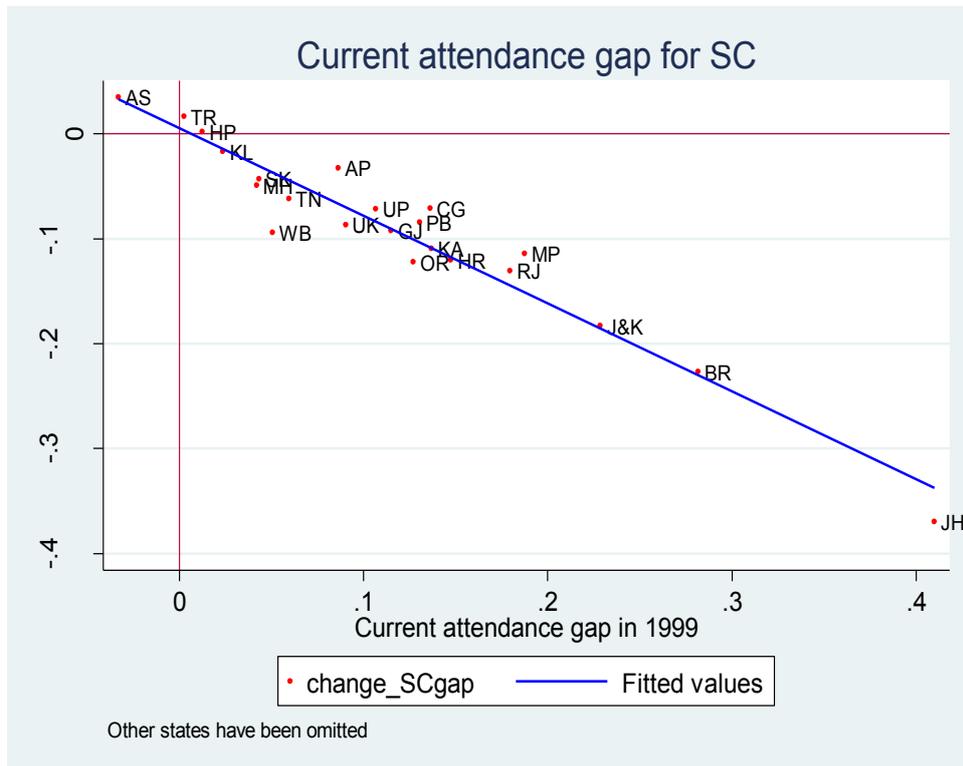
Current Attendance among Scheduled Tribes (STs)

Current attendance of ST children as compared to the children belonging to other social groups at different stages of education is shown in Tables 6 and 7. The Tables reveals that the gap between the STs and the rest (whether 'others' or SCs) was relatively higher in 1999-2000 than in 2011-12. By 2011-12, it had narrowed considerably, across all the age groups.

Figure 5, similar to the previous one, shows current attendance gap for age group 6-14 between 'others' and STs in year 1999-2000 on horizontal axis, and change in gap between 1999-2000 and 2011-12 on vertical axis. All UTs and the states where proportion of ST population was less than 2 percent and more than 90 percent have been omitted[32]. The figure indicates that on an average, the states where the gap was relatively larger are the ones which have seen largest declines in these gaps – similar to the narrative that emerged for the SCs. To give an example, Madhya Pradesh (bottom right in the figure) had the largest gap in 1999-2000, and also witnessed largest decline in the gap.
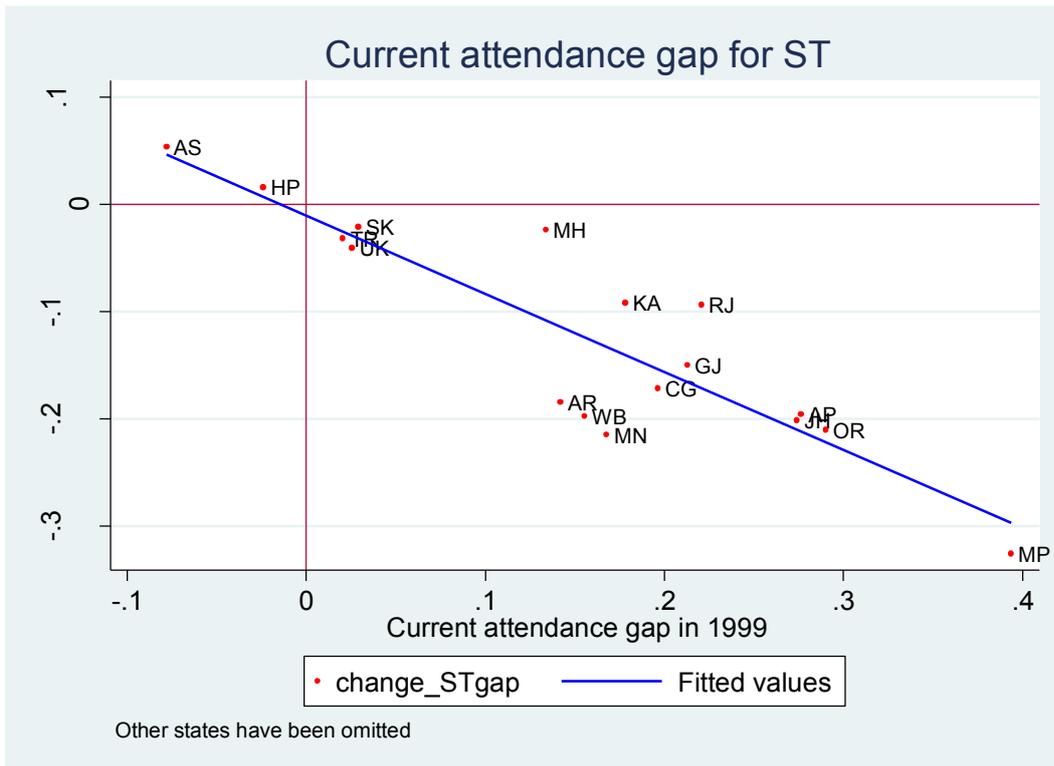
Figure 5:

Current attendance: 'Others' and Scheduled Tribes for age-group 6-14 years,

1999-2000 and 2011-12

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[32] These states include Bihar, Goa, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh (states with low fraction of ST population) and Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland (states where STs constitute more than 90 percent of population).

Current attendance gap for ST

Other states have been omitted

Current Attendance among Muslims

According to the Sachar Committee's findings, 25 per cent of Muslim children in the 6-14 years age-group either never went to school or else dropped out at some stage in 2004-05. More recent figures (NSS 68th round, 2011-12), show the percentage of never enrolled or dropout Muslim children aged 6-14 years actually fell to 13%. Other studies (Bhalotra and Zamora ,2010; Basant, 2012) also show that literacy rates among Muslims are lower than other socio-religious categories (SRC's) (except for the SCs and the STs) and have not increased fast enough to converge with literacy rates of high caste groups.

Table 7 shows that the current attendance for Muslims for age group 6-14 years in year 1999-2000. At 68.8 percent, it was even lower than that of SCs (71.1 percent). Only the STs had lowest level of attendance than Muslims. **But in 2011, Muslims had lowest level of current attendance amongst all social groups[33].** This is a significant, even somewhat surprising finding, with clear implications for policy towards Muslims thus far and in the future.

Figure 6 plots gap between children belonging to "other religion" and Muslims in year 1999-2000 on horizontal axis, and change in gap between 1999-2000 and 2011-12 on the vertical axis[34]. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Assam and Goa lie in quadrant I where the gap between "other religion" and Muslims in year 1999 was positive (Muslims had lower level of current attendance than "other religion") and these states witnessed a decline in this gap between 1999-200 and 2011-12. Uttaranchal, Goa and Assam are the states where the gap between "other religion" and Muslims reduced the most.

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[33] See Asadullah, Kambhampati & Lopez-Boo (2009) and Shariff (2013) for more details.
[34] States where Muslims were either in "Majority" or "negligible" as per census 2011, have been omitted from the analysis.

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Bihar and Karnataka lie in quadrant II where the gap between current attendance of "other religion" and Muslims in year 1999 was positive and this gap has increased further. Thus, progress made by Muslims in Bihar and Karnataka was less than progress by other religious group (mainly Hindus in Bihar and Karnataka) and thus inequality between "other religion" and Muslims further widened. Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Manipur lie in quadrant III where the gap between current attendance of "other religion" and Muslims in year 1999 was negative i.e. current attendance of Muslims were higher than those of other religion. Also in these states the negative gap between current attendance of "other religion" and Muslims increased further i.e. current attendance of "other religion" increased at higher rate than that of Muslims. In 2011, Current attendance of "other religion" was at par as that of Muslims in these states.

Despite this, it is interesting to note that in the same year (2011) the current attendance level of Muslims was higher than those of SCs and STs in many states, such as Bihar, U.P, and Rajasthan. This is particularly striking **for Bihar, where the progress made by Muslims has been less than that made by other social groups in the preceding decade.** This too is a significant finding, as Bihar is claimed as the state where social policies in education have had a positive impact.

<u>Figure 6:</u>

<u>Current attendance 'Non-Muslims' and Muslims for age-group 6-14 years, 1999-2000 and 2011-12</u>
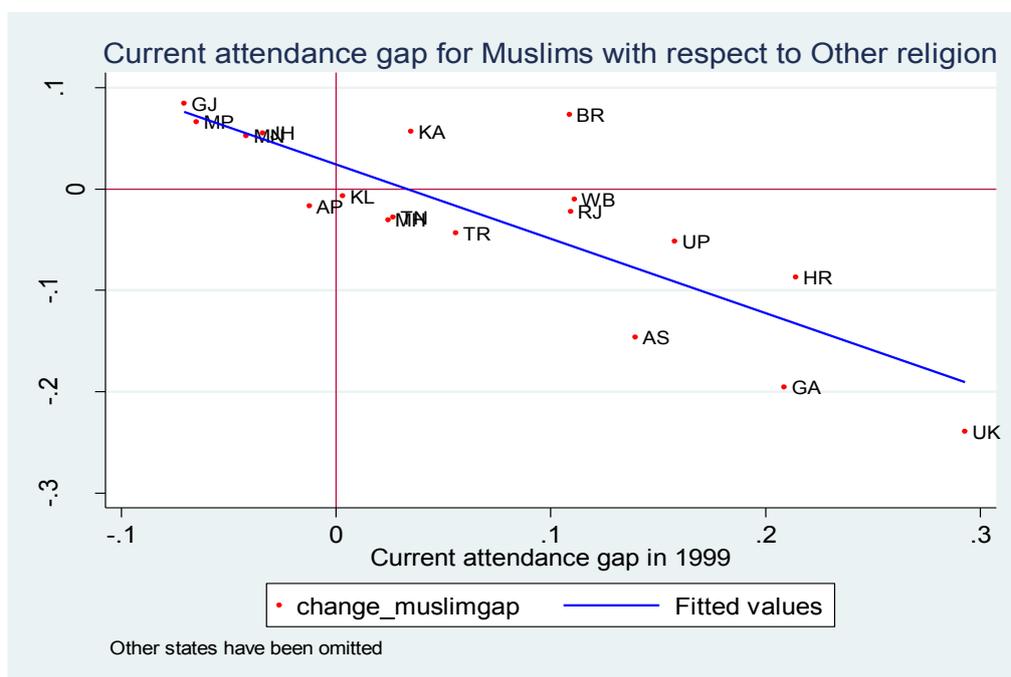
Current Attendance among girls
As Table 8 denotes, attendance levels for girls was much lower than that for boys (10 percentage points for the age-group 6-14 years) in 1999-2000. But by 2011-12, it had come down to lower than 2 percentage points. In fact, the gender gap in attendance has almost vanished as far as age-group 6-11 years is concerned.

Table 8: Current attendance among boys and girls

Age group	Male		Female	
	1999-00	2011-12	1999-00	2011-12
6-11	82.6	94.8	74.0	94.0
12-14	77.4	92.0	65.7	88.6
6-14	80.9	93.8	71.3	92.1

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

Gender Gap at the State level

Figure 7 below plots the gap between current attendance of males and females in year 1999-2000 on the horizontal axis, and change in the gap between 1999-2000 and 2011-12 on the vertical axis. Most of the states lie in the fourth quadrant where gap between current attendance of males and females was positive in year 1999 and this gap declined from 1999 to 2011. The fitted regression line shows that Rajasthan and Bihar had the highest gender gap of around 24 and 17 percentage points in year 1999 and these states witnessed the maximum decline, of around 19 and 15 percentage points.

Figure 7:

Current attendance – male and females for age-group 6-14 years, 1999-2000 and 2011-12

gap=current attendance for male- current attendance for female
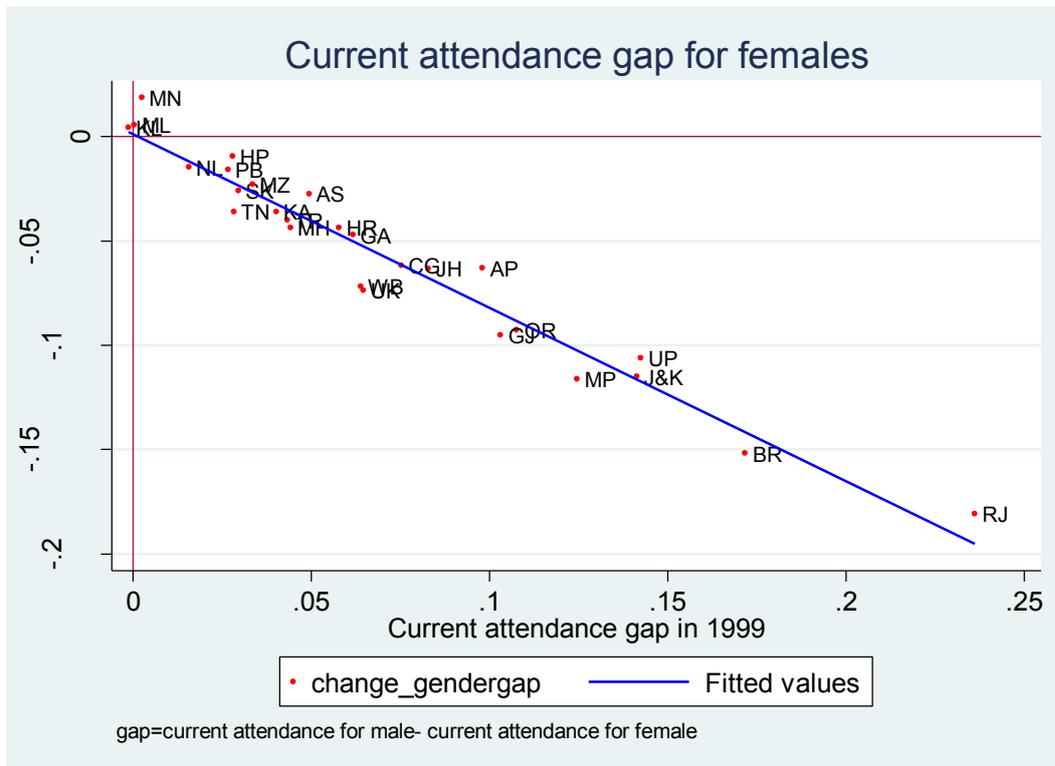
Going further, we compared gender differential across social and religion groups as well – specifically between 'others', SCs, STs and Muslims (see Table 9). The table reveals a number of important facts:

(i) In 1999-2000, attendance rates were lowest among ST girls, followed by SC girls and then Muslims.
(ii) The gap between 'other' girls and girls among SCs, STs and Muslims was high.
(iii) While the gender differential was quite high among all groups it was the least in 'others'.

By 2011-12, the situation had changed dramatically on all these fronts.

(i) Attendance rates among SC, ST and Muslim females had increased dramatically though the increase was largest (in terms of percentage points) for ST girls and the lowest for Muslim girls.
(ii) The lower pace of increase amongst Muslim girls has meant that **by 2011-12, Muslim girls have the lowest attendance rates of all social groups**[35].When compared to women from other faiths in India, the majority of Muslim women are among the most disadvantaged, least literate, most economically impoverished and politically marginalized sections of Indian society (Shinde, 2012).
(iii) Though the gender gap between male and female Muslims declined from 7.4 % in 1999 to 2.0 % in 2011, the absolute current attendance level for female or even male Muslims is abysmally low as compared to female and male of "other religion".

Table 9: Current attendance among male and female children among SCs, STs, Muslims and Others – Age group 6-14 years

	1999/00		2011/12	
	male	female	Male	Female
Others	86.7	81.1	95	94.7
SCs	76.8	64.8	92.9	90.8
STs	69.9	58.4	92.2	90.3
Muslims	72.4	65	87.9	86

Source: NSSO 55th (1999) and 68th (2011-12) rounds

Exploring gender and social group interactions

Caste and gender identities intersect to make the schooling of Dalit girls relatively more at risk than that of boys, leading to what has been called a 'double disadvantage'. Societal perceptions about what the appropriate roles and responsibilities of women should be result in weak parental demand for girls' education, and this cuts across class, caste, religion and location (see, De et al., 2005). Early marriage of girls, which is a predominant practice in many Dalit communities and in a few tribal groups as well, is another deterrent to girls' schooling (Jha & Jhingran, 2005). In a study of a village in Jaipur conducted by Nambissan (2009), Dalit girl respondents said that it was easier for them to obtain parental and extended family approval to go to school and carry on to higher levels of education if they had the company of other girls. Recent instances of increasing sexual violence against Dalit women,

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[35] Similar trend can be seen for Muslim boys as well.

and widespread caste discrimination in the spheres of education have raised serious concerns over the safety and security of adolescent Dalit girls[36]. Quantitative explorations into the gendered aspects of Dalit education also paint a similar picture. Nevertheless, the literacy statistics of the last decennial census [2011] offer significantly positive trends of social transformation for both males and females belonging to the Scheduled Castes. For instance, the male –female literacy differential declined from 11.95 percentages in 1999 to 2.11 percentage in 2011. The encouraging phenomenon of declining gender gap is visible in all states.

We now explore the 'double disadvantage' hypothesis, using regression analysis.

Our regression specification is:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (Gender) + \beta_2 (SC) + \beta_3 (ST) + \beta_4 (OBC) + \beta_5 (Muslim) + \beta_6 (gender*SC) + \beta_7 (gender*ST) + \beta_8 (gender*OBC) + \beta_9 (gender*Muslim) + Additional\ controls + \varepsilon$

The dependent variable is whether the child in age group 6-14 is attending school. Given that we have added dummy variables for gender (=1 if male), SC (=1 if SC), ST (=1 if ST). OBC (=1 if OBC) and Muslim (=1 if Muslim), the baseline category is girl-child from non-Muslim and non-(SC, ST, OBC) category (henceforth, *general*). 'β_1' captures difference in attendance rates between non-Muslim, non- (SC, ST, OBC) category boys and girls, while 'β_2', 'β_3', 'β_4'and 'β_5' capture difference in attendance rates between girls belonging to (SC/ST/Muslim) and the rest.

The existence and magnitude of double disadvantage for girls from SC, ST and Muslim households reflected in magnitude of the coefficients on interaction terms ('β_6' to'β_9'). If there is indeed 'double disadvantage', we would expect the interaction coefficients to be positive and statistically significant indicating that gap between boys and girls in these groups is larger than corresponding gap in *general* category. Additional controls include age of the child, education of the child's parents, household size, log of per capital expenditure (and its square), whether household stays in rural or urban area, and finally whether the household has access to primary, upper primary and secondary levels of education. For this analysis, we have utilised the 71st round data of NSS (2014)[37].

Results from the regression are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Does 'double disadvantage' hypothesis hold?
Evidence from NSS 71st round (2014)

Explanatory variables	Age-group	
	6-11	12-14
Gender (=1 if Male)	0.0105*	0.00680
	(0.00591)	(0.00624)

[36] Overview Report, National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (2006)
[37] Reason for using 71st round (2014) instead of 68th round (2011) is that the former is the more recent national dataset available which provides information on status of attendance of members of the sampled households. Further, 71st round, being education-specific round, also has information about access to primary, upper primary and secondary levels of schooling.

SC	-0.0197***	-0.0161**
	(0.00663)	(0.00683)
ST	-0.0171**	-0.0361***
	(0.00774)	(0.00996)
OBC	-0.0102**	-0.0101**
	(0.00430)	(0.00467)
MUSLIM	-0.0409***	-0.0563***
	(0.00618)	(0.00759)
Gender * SC	**-0.00267**	**-0.0109**
	(0.00770)	**(0.00933)**
Gender * ST	**-0.00299**	**0.00515**
	(0.00879)	**(0.00770)**
Gender * OBC	**-0.00256**	**0.00100**
	(0.00617)	**(0.00640)**
Gender * Muslim	**-0.00492**	**-0.00429**
	(0.00577)	**(0.00619)**
Age	0.0107***	-0.0158***
	(0.000829)	(0.00116)
Access to primary schooling	0.00596	0.00195
	(0.00478)	(0.00483)
Access to upper primary schooling	0.00579	-0.00423
	(0.00549)	(0.00501)
Access to secondary schooling	0.0157***	0.0138***
	(0.00436)	(0.00476)
Education of household head	0.00918***	0.0137***
	(0.000739)	(0.000793)
Household head is a female	0.0110***	-0.000711
	(0.00308)	(0.00375)
Square of log (Per capita expenditure)	-0.00108	0.00580*
	(0.00391)	(0.00343)
Log of household size	-0.0179***	-0.0171***
	(0.00290)	(0.00326)
Hh head is regular wage earner	0.00512	-0.000958
	(0.00322)	(0.00364)
Log (Per Capita expenditure)	0.0534	-0.0396
	(0.0542)	(0.0482)
Stays in rural area	-0.00677***	-0.00831***
	(0.00253)	(0.00271)
Observations	24,723	21,070

From the Table above, we find that none of the interaction terms are statistically significant and the magnitudes are small as well. This indicates that going by this data, double disadvantage in attendance is unlikely to be prevalent at the intersection of gender and disadvantaged social group. As this is a **counter-intuitive result**, it bears further

exploration. However, as we shall see perhaps the disadvantage shows up in other indicators more than in the attendance rates.

What about Quality and Learning Outcomes?

(i) Infrastructural Deficiencies and other Administrative Anomalies
Infrastructure Gaps
Rapid increase in access to school of the marginalised groups does not necessarily imply quality education for them. In fact, the rapid increase in the number of schools, teachers and students seems to be attributed, to a great extent, to an increase in single-room and single-teacher schools with inadequate physical and academic infrastructure (see Blum and Diwan, 2007). DISE (2013) data on qualitative indicators of schools shows that 13 % of the schools do not have girls toilet, 41 % do not have electricity, only 25 % schools have computers.

The changing status of infrastructure in elementary schools over the last decade is given in the table below. While it shows improvement in all respects, it also points to the fact that there is still a fair distance to be covered. The shortfalls in basic infrastrucure are a contributing factor to quality and have an indirect impact on learning levels as well. These deficiencies have acquired a more serious nature, as the standards and norms mandated by the RTE Act, 2009 are not being met, even 6 years after the Act came into force in 2010.The Stocktaking Report on RTE (2014-15)[38] notes that less than 10% of the schools in the country are compliant with all the norms and standards of the RTE Act, thereby defaulting on all the deadlines set by Parliament.

Table 9: Infrastructure Status of Elementary Schools [figures in %]

Indicators:	2005-06	2009-10	2014-15
Student classroom ratio	39	32	27
Schools with drinking water	83.1	92.6	96.1
Schools with Common toilet	52.4	54.3	-NA
Schools with Boys toilet	-NA	31.0	95.4
Schools with Girls toilet	37.4	58.8	87.1
Schools with Boundary wall	50.7	51.5	64.5
Schools with Ramp	17.1	47.1	77.4
Schools with Electricity	NA-	39.0	58.9
Schools with Computer	10.7	16.7	25.2

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[38] Status of Implementation of the Right to Education Act (2014-15), brought out as a civil society shadow report by the RTE Forum – a network of several civil society groups working on education. This is their 5th such Report.

Schools providing mid-day meal	NA-	87.5	96.9
Student teacher ratio- elementary level	36	32	25

Source: DISE-Elementary Education in India: Trends (2014-15)

Teacher shortages

What is perhaps of even greater concern is the large number of teacher vacancies. This is an area that needs to be addressed with some urgency. However, the financial implications being large, the government – both at the centre and the state level - appears to be dragging its feet. In 2013-14, **5.68 lakh** teacher positions were vacant (DISE 2013). In the absence of trained teachers, state governments are hiring untrained para teachers (education volunteers) leading to poor quality learning, besides violating the RTE Act, which requires all teachers to be trained and regularised. According to DISE 2013-14 data, 55.5% of teaching workforce comprises of para-teachers. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal are states where problem of teacher sshortages is the sharpest.

The percentage of female teachers at the primary level in rural areas at 42.73% is also lower than the required 50%, and much lower than in urban areas, which showed 72.1% female teachers. The overall percentage of female teachers (across all schools) in rural areas was considerably less than that in urban areas in 2014-14, 41.08% as against 66.67% respectively (DISE: Rural and Urban Analytical Reports, 2014-15).

Adminsitrative Vacancies

In a recent study of the frontline bureaucracy in 5 States, Bhatty & Saraf (2015) found several anomalies in the administrative structure responsible for delivering education. For instance, the vacancies at each level of the administration as shown in the Table below indicate the burden of responsibilities each official carries. In light of the surge in demand for education and the infrastructural difficulties faced, especially in rural areas, the pressure on governance is likely to tell on the quality of the service provided. In fact, as seen from Table 10 due to the shortage in staff, several officers have been officially given "dual charge".

Table 10: Vacancies in Sanctioned Positions at the BEO office

	Sanctioned positions	Filled positions	Vacancies as share of sanctioned posts)
HP	46	25	21 (46%)
Odisha	35	29	6 (17%)
Rajasthan	58	25	33 (57%)
Delhi	NR	NR	NR
Bangalore	34	32	2 (6%)

Source: Primary Data, 2014-15.[39]

Table 11: Average number of government schools each official is in-charge of

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[39] Bhatty, Kiran and Radhika Saraf (2015), "Does the Government's Monitoring of Schools Work: A Study of the Frontline Education Bureaucracy in India", CPR Working paper.

	CRC	BRC	BEO	DEO
HP	6	87	133	1766
Odisha	13	223	233	2586
Rajasthan	8	138	206	1399
Delhi	47	421	30	114
Bangalore	43	108	113	NA

Source: Primary Data, 204-15 from Bhatty and Saraf (2015)

Table 12: Dual Charge of Frontline Officials

Does the official hold any other charge? (Yes)	
DEO	71%
BEO	42%

Source: Primary Data, 2014-15 from Bhatty and Saraf (2015)

(ii) Learning Outcomes

Outcomes across social groups

The discussion so far suggests considerable progress in access to schooling and attendance levels – overall as well as across various population groups. Importantly, relatively disadvantaged groups have witnessed higher rates of growth and as a consequence, gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged have narrowed considerably. Of course, there are exceptions. Progress among the Muslims has been relatively slow as compared to the rest of the social groups. On the other hand, ST households still face challenges in accessing upper primary and more critically, secondary schooling.

What can we say about the learning outcomes?

There are no national datasets on learning outcome in the Indian context other than ASER, IHDS and NAS[40]. ASER is restricted to rural areas and does not provide information about the social group of the sampled child, and it has limited number of background characteristics. But it's major advantage is its relatively large sample size. On the other hand, IHDS provides information about several background characteristics, including social group of the sampled child.

Borooah (2012) utilizes 2004-05 round of IHDS to analyse differences in reading and math scores using multinomial logit estimation, and differences in writing scores through logit regression[41]. His analysis indicates that a child which has literate parents or which belongs to richer household or attends a private school or stays in urban area has higher probability of achieving higher score in reading, writing and math. There was no gender differential in

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[40] See http://ihds.info/ for more details on IHDS. See http://www.asercentre.org/ for more details on ASER survey and assessment tool.

[41] In case of reading test, zero score implies that the child can't read at all, 1 implies the child can read letters but no more, 2 implies the child can read words but no more, 3 implies the child can read para and a score of 4 implies the child can read story. In case of math test, zero score implies that the child can't even recognize the numbers, 1 implies the child can recognize the numbers but no more, 2 implies the child can perform simple subtraction while 3 implies the child can perform division. In assessing writing ability, a score of 1 was assigned if the child could write a simple sentence with two or fewer mistakes, and zero otherwise.

reading but boys were more likely to score better in math and writing[42]. He also finds that even after controlling for other characteristics of the sampled children and households, gap in likelihood of high scores was highest between the children belonging to SC, ST and Muslim households, and the rest. This indicates that access to schooling might have improved. **But gap in learning still remains**.

What does evidence from the National Achievement Survey show?

Raw data collected under National Achievement Survey (NAS) conducted by National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT), a government body, are not available in the public domain[43]. The results are available in a summary or at an aggregate level, which are disseminated through reports published by NCERT. NAS covers rural and urban areas, but does not include children enrolled in private unaided schools. It assesses students who are studying in grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 in the schools. Students in grade 3 are assessed in reading and mathematics. Students in grade 5 are assessed in reading, mathematics and environmental studies. For grade 8, assessments in science and social science replace environmental studies. Students in grade 10 are assessed on English, one of the modern Indian languages, mathematics, social sciences, and sciences.

Results suggest that there is no difference in learning outcomes between boys and girls irrespective of grades and subjects in which they are assessed. In fact, girls are reported to be performing better in grade 8 reading, and grade 10 English and modern Indian language. As far as social groups are concerned, students belonging to *general* or 'other' category outperform rest of the social groups – SC, ST and OBCs (other backward castes). **In almost all grade-subject combinations, ST students are reported to be performing worst, while in some instances, SC and ST students are at the bottom.**

What explains the variation in Learning Levels?

In the section that follows, we have attempted to update the results by utilising 2011-12 round of IHDS. We have used identical estimation method and variables as done in Borooah (2012). The results are shown in Table 13.

We find that i) parental education, ii) household income and iii) private schooling continue to be positively associated with higher scores. But staying in an urban area doesn't seem to matter in the 2011-12 round.

Association between social groups and learning outcomes continue to persist with gap between STs, Muslims on one hand, and Brahmins on the other being the largest. Interestingly though, SC children are lagging behind in reading and not in mathematics. These results are preliminary, and further investigations are needed to confirm the results and explore the reasons.

Table 13: Marginal probabilities from multinomial logit model estimates for Math

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[42] This is not very surprising. See chapter 3 of World Development Report, 2012.
[43]See http://www.ncert.nic.in/programmes/NAS/NAS.html for more details on NAS.

Variable	Highest Score: Math Base probability: 0.143284			Lowest Score: Math Base probability: 0.091		
	Marginal Probability	Std. Err.	P>z	Marginal Probability	Std. Err.	P>z
Literate_father	0.010	0.013	0.42	-0.011	0.007	0.10
Literate_mother	0.025	0.010	0.01	-0.037	0.007	0.00
Father_matric	0.039	0.009	0.00	-0.039	0.009	0.00
Mother_matric	0.034	0.011	0.00	-0.002	0.014	0.91
POOR	-0.005	0.011	0.66	0.022	0.006	0.00
ASSETS	0.005	0.001	0.00	-0.004	0.001	0.00
gov_sch	-0.073	0.010	0.00	0.071	0.008	0.00
oth_sch	-0.020	0.017	0.23	0.025	0.017	0.14
Hindi	-0.026	0.014	0.08	0.049	0.015	0.00
otherlanguage	0.006	0.045	0.89	0.020	0.030	0.51
English	-0.019	0.014	0.19	0.005	0.017	0.76
school_hrs	0.000	0.001	0.94	0.001	0.000	0.01
homework_hrs	0.004	0.001	0.00	-0.004	0.001	0.00
tution_hrs	0.001	0.001	0.06	0.000	0.001	0.82
days_absent	-0.006	0.002	0.00	0.004	0.001	0.01
sq_days_absent	0.000	0.000	0.03	0.000	0.000	0.67
Grade	0.051	0.003	0.00	-0.031	0.002	0.00
Age	0.219	0.075	0.00	-0.235	0.055	0.00
sq_age	-0.011	0.004	0.01	0.012	0.003	0.00
Girl	-0.022	0.008	0.00	0.019	0.006	0.00
URBAN2011	-0.003	0.009	0.77	-0.013	0.008	0.10
North	0.026	0.011	0.02	-0.030	0.010	0.00
East	0.014	0.017	0.41	-0.020	0.017	0.25
West	-0.164	0.019	0.00	0.024	0.017	0.17
South	-0.128	0.016	0.00	-0.032	0.018	0.07
high_caste	0.007	0.017	0.68	0.001	0.022	0.96
OBC	**0.005**	**0.016**	**0.78**	**0.017**	**0.019**	**0.38**
SC	**-0.005**	**0.017**	**0.77**	**0.027**	**0.020**	**0.17**
ST	**-0.059**	**0.023**	**0.01**	**0.034**	**0.021**	**0.10**
Muslim	**-0.045**	**0.019**	**0.02**	**0.030**	**0.020**	**0.14**
sikh_jain_christian	-0.013	0.030	0.66	-0.034	0.063	0.59

Table 14: Marginal probabilities from multinomial logit model estimates for reading

Variable	Highest Score: Reading Base probability: 0.376			Lowest Score: Reading Base probability: 0.045		
	Marginal Probability	Std. Err.	P>z	Marginal Probability	Std. Err.	P>z

Literate_father	0.027	0.014	0.04	-0.018	0.007	0.01
Literate_mother	0.049	0.012	0.00	-0.026	0.008	0.00
Father_matric	0.049	0.012	0.00	-0.038	0.011	0.00
Mother_matric	0.025	0.015	0.09	0.014	0.017	0.41
POOR	-0.033	0.012	0.01	0.030	0.006	0.00
ASSETS	0.008	0.001	0.00	-0.005	0.001	0.00
gov_sch	-0.119	0.012	0.00	0.060	0.009	0.00
oth_sch	-0.074	0.022	0.00	0.028	0.018	0.12
Hindi	0.008	0.019	0.67	0.001	0.016	0.96
Other language	-0.184	0.065	0.01	0.053	0.027	0.05
English	-0.025	0.019	0.19	-0.056	0.020	0.01
school_hrs	0.000	0.001	0.84	0.000	0.000	0.84
homework_hrs	0.002	0.001	0.03	-0.002	0.001	0.00
tution_hrs	0.001	0.001	0.34	-0.001	0.001	0.18
days_absent	-0.007	0.002	0.00	0.007	0.001	0.00
sq_days_absent	0.000	0.000	0.17	0.000	0.000	0.01
grade	0.071	0.004	0.00	-0.031	0.002	0.00
age	0.049	0.088	0.58	-0.104	0.058	0.07
sq_age	-0.002	0.005	0.74	0.005	0.003	0.09
girl	0.003	0.009	0.74	0.002	0.006	0.77
URBAN2011	0.002	0.012	0.85	0.005	0.009	0.58
North	-0.063	0.015	0.00	0.016	0.010	0.13
East	-0.024	0.022	0.27	-0.057	0.019	0.00
West	-0.213	0.022	0.00	-0.013	0.019	0.47
South	-0.284	0.020	0.00	-0.032	0.018	0.08
high_caste	-0.042	0.024	0.08	-0.042	0.024	0.07
OBC	**-0.027**	**0.023**	**0.23**	**-0.026**	**0.020**	**0.21**
SC	**-0.058**	**0.023**	**0.01**	**-0.008**	**0.020**	**0.68**
ST	**-0.066**	**0.028**	**0.02**	**-0.010**	**0.021**	**0.63**
Muslim	**-0.082**	**0.025**	**0.00**	**0.000**	**0.021**	**1.00**
sikh_jain_christian	0.025	0.041	0.54	-0.001	0.050	0.98

1. The Policy Response for Scheduled Castes

Article 46 of the Constitution states that, "the State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation". Several steps have been taken by policy makers to uplift the status of poor and marginalised groups for instance affirmative action, free education, incentive based education and making schools physically accessible.

Some policies refer to SC and ST together, since both communities face a similar set of constraints when it comes to accessing quality education. Access - both physical and social- plagues both SC and ST, albeit in different forms and through varied mechanisms. In such a case, SC and ST have been clubbed as a single category, although wherever possible, the two have been mentioned separately.

i) At the National level:

At the Central level, the Ministry of Human Resources and Development has various pre and post matric scholarship schemes for students belonging to the economically weaker sections, with additional monetary benefits provided to children belonging to marginalized social groups like SCs, STs and Muslims by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Minority Affairs, respectively. The amount of the scholarship schemes, however, varies from state to state.

Affirmative action at the National level has also taken the form of reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs in "elite" government schools such as the Navodaya Vidyalaya (NVs) and the Kendriya Vidyalayas. In the former, children belonging to SCs and ST are provided seats in proportion to their population in the concerned district, provided that no such reservation is less than the national average of 22.5 per cent (15 per cent for SCs and 7.50 per cent for STs) and a maximum of 50 per cent for both the categories (SCs & STs) taken together. Moreover 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent seats are reserved for SCs and STs respectively in fresh admissions in Kendriya Vidhayalas (KVs). No tuition fee is charged from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students up to class XII, in either of these schools. SC/ST students are also given concession in admission fees to the extent of Rs.450/- for Secondary Courses and Rs.525/- for Senior Secondary Courses in National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)[44]. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme titled "Scheme for Strengthening of Boarding and Hostel facilities for Girl Students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools" a grant of Rs. 10,000/- per annum per girl boarder and one time non-recurring grant of Rs. 3,000/- per boarder to voluntary organizations for running hostels for girl students of secondary and higher secondary schools has been provided for.[45] This intervention has created space for SC and ST children in better quality government schools. However, it affects only a small percentage of all SC or ST children.

Another National level intervention directed at SC children followed the Supreme Court of India ruling in 2004 that preference should be given to Dalits, tribals and women for the preparation and distribution of mid day meals [MDM] in schools, has had little impact on reducing caste based inequalities in schools. Not all schools actually adhere to the Supreme Court's ruling; in fact, it has been met with active resistance in many areas. For example, in a study done by Samson, Noronha & De (2007) in Delhi, it was found that Dalits, STs, women and parents of children in several schools did not get preference in appointment as cooks and helpers. Sinha (2008), who conducted a social audit of the MDM scheme in a few districts of Andhra Pradesh, also found that caste-based discrimination generally took the form of upper caste children not eating food cooked by lower caste cooks. The pratice of making lower caste children sit separately during the serving of the meal, was not as commonly noticed in this study area. Simialrly, in a study done under the aegis of the Centre for Equity Studies several instances of parental resistance to the appointment of Scheduled Caste cooks was noted. For example in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan, Scheduled Caste cooks were largely employed in schools with no upper-caste children (Drèze and Goyal, 2003). Thus, while the SC ruling is a progressive step in the direction of affirmative action for

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[44]The NIOS is a national board that administers examinations for Secondary and Senior Secondary examinations of open schools
[45]http://mhrd.gov.in/hi/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Scheme_Girls_hostel.pdf

disadvantaged groups, these studies have highlighted its limited acceptance and the difficulty in implementing such a judicial intervention.

Finally, the RTE Act under clause 12 1(c) has also provided for children from socially and economically deprived backgrounds to avail of 25% seats in the incoming class of all private un-aided schools.

ii) State level Variations in Policies for Scheduled Castes

Scholarships

An exploratory analysis of inter-state variations in education policies aimed at SC population and their implementation produces a mixed picture. For instance, the state of Bihar, which has displayed a marked improvement in the educational indicators of Dalits, seems to have achieved this largely through non-specific, general policies [46], whereas the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh which have a significant proportion of tribal population and have performed relatively better in educating ST children, have had success with a targeted approach. Several state governments have responded to the needs of these communities by improving physical access to schooling facilities, along with providing financial assistance to the families in the form of scholarships.

Hostel Facilities

The scheme for hostels for SC boys and girls was introduced as an incentive for SC students to continue their education through to higher education. It was put in place in the 3rd Five Year Plan [1961-66] when it catered only to girl students, and was extended to boys from 1990. The scheme was revised in 2008 and named Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhtrawas Yojana. The stated objective of the scheme is "to enable and encourage students belonging to scheduled castes to attain quality education". The location criteria for such hostels is based on concentration of SC population of 20% and more, where adequate hostel facilities do not already exist. Other criteria include coverage of areas having low SC female literacy and middle and higher secondary levels of education. While in general a limited number of hostels have been set up under this scheme - a total of 985 from 2006-07 to 2013-14[47]- states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, which have very low literacy levels amongst SC females and high rural-urban gap in female literacy rate, and thus should have been priority states, have failed to meet their targets (George, 2010). George (2010) also notes a gap in allocation of resources under the revised scheme across rural and urban areas. The states where SC females studying in the middle level of education in rural and urban areas are the highest, are not the states which have received the highest allocation of funds As per NSS 61st round (2004-05), the proportion of SC females, aged 15 to 30 years in the middle level of education in the rural areas was the highest in Punjab, followed by Tamil Nadu, Tripura, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Karnataka; in urban areas, it was highest in Punjab followed by Maharashtra, Haryana, Tripura, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand. However, from 2005-06 to 2008-09, states that were sanctioned the highest number of hostels for SC girls were Orissa (221), West Bengal (100),

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[46]The schemes introduced in the SCSP in Bihar are an important marker of this. For example, in 2012-13 & 2013-14, the only SC specific scheme allocatedSCSP funds is the UtthanKendras for Mahadalit children, but this has had a drastic reduction in funding in the 2013-14 budget.For details, refer to Mangubhai (2013) and the Demands No. 21, Education Department, Bihar Budget 2012-13 & 2013-14: Plan Expenditure Details.

[47] Source: Annual Reports of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2008-09) and (2014-15).

Andhra Pradesh (98), and Madhya Pradesh (24). Similar mismatches are found in the allocation for boys' hostel as well. **The scheme has thus not adequately reached the beneficiaries.**

Education Guarantee Scheme

The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), initiated in 1992 with an aim to increase decentralization of government functioning, is another scheme that has had significant impact on education participation of marginalized communities, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Specifically addressing the issue of access, the EGS guarantees a school within 90 days of receiving a written request from a Panchayat [local government]. As Ramachandran (2004) notes, between 1997 and 2000, a staggering 26,571 EGS Schools were created (42% of them in tribal areas) catering to 12,33,052 children (47% girls and 44% being tribal children) - out of which 91 per cent of children were from SC, ST and other socially disadvantaged communities[48].Together with the adult literacy campaign- *Padna Badna Andolan* in 1999, the EGS helped in raising the GER at primary level of SC from 97.9 to 102.2 per cent, of ST from 94.3 to 100.3 per cent and of other social groups from 90.2 to 101.7 per cent, in the period of 2000-01 to 2002-03 (Lok Sampark Abhiyan, 2002-03, GoMP). From a a survey of 31 districts in MP, Gopalakrishnan & Sharma (1998), show that 63.1% of EGS schools were established in tribal areas, thereby contributing to equity in the spread of primary education. Further, the scheme has also ensured academic equivalence for many students by merging the curriculum and textbooks of EGS with the government primary schools.

Bihar is another such state which has made commendable progress with the SC community, at a much higher rate than even Muslims who have seen a marked improvement in Bihar as compared to other states[49]. This is a surprising finding, and worthy of further examination, since Muslims constitute 16.5% of the population of Bihar, more than the national average, higher than the SC population in Bihar (Census, 2011). While Bihar's interventions in education have consisted largely of generalized schemes, as evident from its Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) outlays, targeted programmes of the education department for minority students are limited to pre and post matric scholarships. Like Madhya Pradesh, Bihar has also benefitted from successful decentralized education planning under the Bihar Education Project and the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) during the 1990s, but sustained benefits have not been realized by Muslims as they have by other social groups. This is evident from the change in current attendance between 1999-00 and 2011-12, witnessed by the Muslims in the 6-14 age group, which was only 28%, as compared to 37% for SCs.

Policy response for the Scheduled Tribes

Ashram Schools and Hostels

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[48] This has also been a critique of EGS schools, that they have become "second track schooling facilities" that reproduce social inequalities rather than reduce them (see, Leclercq, 2003).
[49]The percentage of Muslim enrolment at the elementary level in Bihar has decreased only marginally from 14.73% in 2011-12 to 14.55% in 2012-13 (DISE data).

The establishment of Ashram schools in Tribal Sub-Plan areas and the scheme for construction of hostels for ST boys and girls by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs[50] are important examples of targeted policies that address the issue of low enrolment among ST children. Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) established in Odisha and in other states like Andhra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, also provide good quality education to "meritorious" ST children. These are part of the larger residential school movement that aims to reduce gaps in education among different groups by ensuring ease of access to children in remote and isolated areas. The maximum number of residential schools has been established in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. Among them, Uttar Pradesh boasts of the highest number of ashram schools- both government and non-government- at 2,428, followed by Orissa which has 2,298, and Madhya Pradesh has 2,046. The enrolment in elementary classes of ashram schools is highest in the state of Orissa- a total of 358,476 students are enrolled in government ashram schools and 144,347 in non-government ones. In Uttar Pradesh, the combined figure for enrolment is 318,772 and in Madhya Pradesh it is 180,703[51]. Figure 3 (gap between ST and others in States) shows that Madhya Pradesh, Orissa had lower current attendance for STs (55 and 49 percentage) and highest inequality gap between current attendance of STs and others (29 and 39 percentage points) in 1990-91, but these states witnessed highest improvement in current attendance for STs and also largest decline in inequality between STs and other social groups.Though Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of Ashram schools, ST Population in Uttar Pradesh is negligible (Census, 2011). It thus raises the question of purpose and utilisation of Ashram schools in U.P. Andhra Pradesh also has a high number of tribal schools, but in comparison to other states, low enrolment levels and high dropout rates were found to be two salient features of the tribal schools in the state (Naidu, 1999, as cited in Kamat & Sedwal, 2008).

Many parents are keen to enrol their children into ashram schools as they provid free clothing and boarding, and also a stable learning environment to children whose parents migrate from one place to another in search of labour (Jha &Jhingran, 2002). However, considering the poor quality of teaching and infrastructure, and the distance of Ashram schools from the community and habitats of the Scheduled Tribes, many families are also hesitant to send their children far away (Sujatha, 2002).

Studies that have looked at the functioning and the efficiency of ashram schools, have found that most ashram schools suffer from gross infrastructural handicaps and are not bereft of pedagogical and structural stagnation. For instance, in a study of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa, Jojo (2013) when analysing the infrastructural facilities in certain ashram schools, hostel facilities and staffing situation, notes that "the overall impression is decrepit" (p. 384). Among other aspects such as quality of food, co-curricular activities, language barriers etc., health and hygiene emerges as a serious concern, a fact that is often pointed out by newspaper reports on the prevalence of increasing deaths in these schools. Some schools located in relief camps and forests left-wing extremist violence affected areas have been frequented by insurgent groups. In fact, the teachers said that living in the forest effectively means being caught in the crossfire between the police and extremists. These

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[50]The Scheme provides for the construction of new hostels and extension of existing hostel buildings for the middle, secondary, college and university levels of education.
[51]Source: CBPS and others- Residential School Report (2015)

areas are so remote that it is difficult for higher officials in the education and tribal welfare department to visit the schools (ibid.).

Another factor noted in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, is the presence of pictures and garlanded idols of Hindu gods and goddesses adorning the walls of the hostel rooms of the students, pointing towards the gradual Hinduisation of the tribal students that happens in the name of mainstreaming. Tribal culture, customs and traditions were observed to have taken a backseat. Veerbhadranaika et al (2012) also find a total lack of innovative pedagogy in Ashram schools that could help in retaining the positive ethos of the tribal culture and simultaneously create space for the tribal children to be able to relate to the larger world.

The scheme for construction of ST hostels is another step in the direction of ensuring that ST children are able to complete their schooling without locational barriers coming in their way. It is a centrally sponsored scheme that covers the entire ST population in the country and is not area-specific. It provides for the construction of new hostels and extension of existing hostel buildings for the middle, secondary, college and university levels of education. The hostels under the scheme have been proposed to be sanctioned as far as possible as a part of the established educational institutions or in the close vicinity of such institutions/ Vocational Training Centres (MoTA annual report, 2014-15). However, a look at the state-wise releases of funds and the number of hostels sanctioned from 2012-13 to 2014-15 indicates that the allocation has been quite haphazard. For most states the data is not available. For others, the largest allocation of funds was made to Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa in 2012-13, but in 2014-15, while funds to Madhya Pradesh were considerably reduced and increased allocations were made to Kerala and Maharashtra, no amount was released to the states of Rajasthan and Orissa. Despite this trend, Madhya Pradesh records the highest number of ST hostels sanctioned since 2012-13, followed by Rajasthan and Tripura. Surprisingly, no hostels have been sanctioned in Orissa-which has a large percentage of ST population- over the three years[52].

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)
The situation is not very different with regards to Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS). Established majorly in Orissa and in other states like Andhra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, EMRS were established with the objective to provide good quality education to meritorious ST children. Together, ashram schools and EMRS form a part of the larger residential school movement that aims to reduce gaps in education among different groups by ensuring ease of access to all children. Mukhopadhyay's (2005) review of eight Eklavya Model Residential Schools in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Rajasthan and West Bengal indicates that there was little or no localisation with attention to neither content nor teaching learning approaches or to the management of the institutions. As with other government schools, the EMRS were sites for routinized teaching-learning in the conventional classroom methods, but with inadequately trained teachers and poorly paid or part-time principals (as cited in CBPS Report, 2015).

Multi-lingual Education (MLE)
Apart from its success with ashram schools, Orissa has also implemented two crucial programmes for ST children - mother tongue based multilingual education, and

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[52]Source: Annex 8A, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Annual Report (2014-15)

establishment of seasonal hostels[53] for children belonging to migratory families. The MLE programme, as part of innovative schemes under SSA, is currently being implemented in 14 districts. This has played out well in conjunction with the MDM scheme in Orissa for two reasons: firstly, children understand what teachers say in the class and, secondly, they get some hot food to eat (working group report on 12th FYP, MHRD, 2011). Seasonal hostels have also been setup in certain districts which have been identified as high-migration prone, to provide uninterrupted learning to students, such as in Bargarh, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Mayurbhanj and Nuapada (source districts), Cuttack, Balasore and Khurda (destination districts). According to School and Mass Education department of Government of Orissa, in 2014-15, as many as 204 seasonal hostels have been opened retaining 7,643 children of migrant families, residential at source and non-residential at destination for the continuance of their education[54].

Andhra Pradesh is another state that experimented with MLE for its tribal population to overcome the language barrier in schools. The programme was implemented for grade 1 children in a 1000 selected schools in 2004. With the first batch of children moving up to grade 5 in 2008, the Andhra Pradesh programme now covers all children from grades 1–5 in the selected schools (Mohanty et al., undated). Studies evaluating the MLE programme in both the states – AP and Orissa- found better classroom achievement of children in the MLE schools in all of the tribal languages – 8 tribal languages in AP and 10 in Orissa - at the end of grade 1 compared to their Telugu and Oriya medium (single majority/dominant language) counterparts. The MLE schools also reported better attendance and participation of children, greater teacher satisfaction, positive parental feedback and community involvement (ibid.).

Curricula and instruction in Adivasi languages was another area of policy thrust. However, in reality, the rights of Adivasis to a culturally embedded education (including language) have not been realised. The fact that the content, orientation, curricula, syllabi and texts are all primarily from the dominant society testifies to this failure.

Scholarships

Schemes such as pre and post matric scholarships for ST students have also been part of the government's response to tackle financial constraints faced by the community. The objective of both the schemes is to allow ST students to make a smooth transition from elementary to secondary education, and then later to higher secondary. Eligibility of students for these schemes depends on their annual family income; only those children whose annual family income is less than the mentioned threshold are eligible for the benefits. The monetary component acts as motivation for students to perform better in school. The amount for pre matric scholarships is Rs.150/- per month for day scholars and Rs.350/- per month for hostellers, for a period of 10 months in a year, whereas the amount for the post matric scholarship varies from Rs. 230 per month to Rs. 1200 per month.

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[53]The scheme for setting up seasonal hostels has been adopted by the Odisha Primary Education Programme Authority (OPEPA) under SSA in 2012. These hostels function for 7-9 months in a year, depending upon the intensity of migration in the districts where they are set up.
[54](http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/Orissa-to-retain-9800-kids-in-seasonal-hostels/article7217390.ece).

Policy Response for the Muslims

Policy responses to the educational status of Muslims in India that are worthy of a special mention are those which have effectively been interventionist in their approach towards Muslim religious institutions. The Muslim community is probably the only community whose 'backwardness' is ascribed to the religion itself, with its cultural and religious characteristics debunked in the name of modernization. While SCs and STs enter public discussion through limited nomenclatures such as discrimination and exclusion, the discourse on Muslims more often than not focuses on religious tendencies that are seen as antagonistic to modern society. Even though other communities also have distinct 'religious practices, which could be described as 'traditional' for lack of a better word. The increasing focus on Islam and the presumed backwardness it brings with it is a phenomenon with greater political motivation than analytical rigour. In fact, idiosyncracies can be found in all religious or social communities including the majority communities. But these must be recognized as such and not taken to define the whole. It is unfortunate, that in india, as in the rest of the world increasingly, the outliers among the Muslim population are tending to define the community in totality. It is a tendency that must be guarded against. Having said that, it is equally important to recognize regressive practices in all social groupings and seek to address them in the larger interests of social justice. For instance, gender discrimination – to the extent it exists within the Muslim community as well– must be fought and efforts made to reach out to Muslim girls to draw them into the fold of mainstream education.

Focus on Minority Institutions

This tendency of treating the Muslim community in a somewhat "separate" way has led to policies within government that have in some way sought to keep them apart as well. In education, this has translated into a focus on "modernising" Madarsas as they are accepted as the "appropriate" (even desirable) educational institutions for Muslims. This idea requires serious re-visiting. The government's policy of modernisation of Madrasas, is spelled out in its Madrasa Modernisation Programme started during the 10th FYP (2002-07). Such policy measures tend to position Muslims on the opposite side of formal secular education. Further, the policy fails to adequately explain how an attempt towards equalizing opportunities for educationally backward minorities can be made by introducing reforms in religious institutions such as madrasas and *maktabs* (Jhingran, 2006), which are centres of religious learning usually financed through charitable donations and vary across regions in their curriculum, teaching methods and most importantly their purpose[55].

This focus on madarsas is probably based on the wrongful assumption that most Muslim children are enrolled in madrasas or *maktabs*, and therefore the need to modernize them.But the Sachar Committee (2006) found that only 4% of all enrolled Muslim children go to madrasas; while 66% go to government schools and 30% to private. According to DISE (2011-12), 24.75 lakh children were enrolled in madrasas, both recognised and unrecognized, constituting only 9.7% of Muslim children enrolled in school. In all probability it is only those Muslims who cannot afford secular education or happen to live in areas where

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[55]For example, the Barelwis and Deobandis- followers of two different schools of thought in Islam- give greater importance to Arabic Literature, and jurisprudence and logic, respectively. This lack of uniformity is also evident in that many courses that madrasas offer use different durations in different parts of the country, thus perpetuating a regional divide in addition to an intra-community one as well. Further, while most madrasas have increasingly adopted a 'mixed' curriculum including subjects like English and elementary Mathematics, the memorization of the Quran continues to be the sole objective of some.

the State, has failed to provide schools that children are sent to madrasas[56]. The NSS 71st round (2014) points out that 83.5% of total Muslims children of age group 6-14 years are currently attending primary level classes or above in regular secular schools. These statistics challenge the belief that madrasas act as a substitute for school education. Minority Education Institutions are a Constitution guarantee, laid out in Article 30 of the Constitution – allowing minorities to set up their own educational institutions - it did not mean for it to become the only option for minority children.

A key question then would be: what has been the government's role in improving education of Muslim children through the public school sector, in which the majority of Muslims study? Unfortunately, government schools in India are plagued with several ineffeciencies such as poor infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, inappropriate teaching methodology, lack of teaching in the vernacular, in addition to issues of corporal punishment and discrimination (Soni, 2010).

Increasing Access to Government Schools

In the last decade however education of Muslims has received much attention, especailly as part of the Prime Minister's 15-point Programme implemented in 2006 for the welfare of minorities. Among other issues, it aims at improving access to school education through opening of elementary schools in localities where a substantial population of the minority community lives, under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) and other government schemes. But as NSSO (66th Round, 2007-08) shows, even though social disparities between various socio-religious communities-groups in terms of access to primary schools are no longer significant, in rural areas access of Muslim children to upper primary schools is considerably less than that of other communities. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) had noted that a large number of Muslim dominated pockets in urban areas do not have a school, and in rural areas too there are Muslim habitations with no government schools within a radius of 3km. Unfortunately, the Standing Committee Report of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities' Education that was released in 2013 has made a similar observation. This is particularly disturbing as this lack of access is also a violation of the legal requirement under the RTE Act, which requires that a primary school be available to every child within a radius of 1 km and a upper primary school within 3 km.

The 15-point programme also aims to strengthen the Madrasa Modernization Programme via the Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas (SPQEM) and Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutions (IDMI), as well as scholarships for minority students. Further, several exemptions have been granted by [National Institute of Open Schooling] NIOS, such as, reputed Madarsas even if not affiliated with the State Madarsa Board can be granted accreditation subject to certain conditions. The accredited Madrasas and Maktabs have been exempted from paying Rs. 5000/- as accreditation fee. The infrastructural norms for accreditation have also been relaxed. To operationalise the SPQEM, full exemption of fees is granted to Muslim students enrolled through Madrasas into the NIOS courses. Under the SPQEM, madrasas/maktabs/ Darul-uloom can opt to become accredited study centres with the NIOS for offering Secondary/Senior Secondary level programmes. Madrasas which have been in existence for at least three years and registered under Central or State

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[56] http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/madrasa-myths/232788

Governments Acts or Madrasa Board or with Wakf Boards or NIOS are eligible to apply for assistance under this programme

The coverage of the SSA has also been concurrently extended to recognize volunteering madrasas/maktabs supported under SSA as well as those other volunteering Madrasas/Maktabs which may not be registered or recognized but supported under SSA interventions. For madrasas, SPQEM and IDMI are the two most crucial schemes that seek to bring both qualitative and quantitative improvements in madrasas. On one hand, the main objective of SPQEM is to integrate the students of madrasas with the formal education system through systematic reforms in madrasa education and linking it with national institutes of education such as the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), vocational training etc. On the other, the IDMI focuses on strengthening school infrastructure in minority institutions located in districts, blocks and towns having a minority population above 20%.

Support to Minority Concentrated Districts [MCDs]

In order to enhance participation of minorities in the national education system, various other initiatives have also been undertaken. For instance, the SSA has identified 88 Muslim concentrated districts in the country wherein Rs. 8,29,220.28 lakhs (11%) of the total allocations under SSA for 2013-14 has been approved for these 88 Special Focus Districts.

Shariff (2013) however notes that the allocations for the much-publicised Minority Concentration Districts [MCDs] aggregated to a total of Rs. 37,800 crore until March 2011. Yet even this "meagre" allocation was underutilised. Only Rs. 856 crore [which is 22.8 per cent of central allocation] had reached the districts. Much lower amount was found to have percolated further down . Close to the end of the 11th Plan period, just about 3.46 per cent of all allocated funds had reached the intended beneficiaries either at the level of individual or communities or geographic areas [ibid.].

Further, while expenditure on SPQEM has exceeded the planned outlay laid down in the 11th FYP period, with an actual expenditure of Rs. 379 crore, as against Rs. 325 crore - the same is not the case with IDMI, for which the expenditure has been Rs. 75 crores as against Rs. 125 crores (Standing Committee Report, 2013). The pattern of expenditure is also a reflection of the government's priorities. Thus the introduction of curriculum reforms, teacher training, and propagation of state madrasa boards has become of prime importance, and improving physical facilities and educational infrastructure of existing madrasas only secondary. The Sachar Committee recommended that academic equivalency be provided to madrasa students so that they can make a smooth transition to institutes of higher education, yet this aspect of madrasa reforms has received little attention[57].

The final nail in the coffin of the government's approach towards madrasas has been that its continued attempts to tackle the Muslim educational situation seem to have hit a controversial road block. In keeping madrasas and other minority institutions outside of the purview of RTE Act, it seems to have chosen to uphold minority rights over fundamental rights. While madrasas have previously been the subject of several government sponsored

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[57] Granting CBSE equivalency to madrasa courses is an alternate way of approaching madrasas reforms, giving due credit to religious systems instead of displacing, or dismantling, them. However, at the present, most madrasas are affiliated to institutes like Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi and Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh for few select courses, and not other central universities.

programmes, their exemption from what has been termed a landmark Act in ensuring quality of education has left some unanswered questions about the state's role in furthering social justice and its approach towards social inequality. It is difficult for one to understand why the MMP or the IDMI could not have been merged with the provisions of the RTE, which could ensure a 'justifiable' minimum standard of infrastructure and other related norms for existing as well as new madrasas. For now, it fails to reflect an equal opportunity stance by the government, no matter how well intended this decision may be. As Shariff (2013) has argued Muslim exclusion can only be addressed through institutional reforms targetted at government schools and not via "pro-Muslim policy statements and even Muslim focused programmes".

The role played by Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vikas [KGBVs][58] in educating Muslim girls has not been adequate either, even 10 years after the start of the 15-Point Programme. The Residential Schooling Strategies Report (2015) adds that though the representation of educationally backward communities like SC, ST and OBCs is high in KGBVs, the representation of Muslims, although an educationally backward group, remains an area of concern. According to the Sachar Committee Report (2006), "the abysmally low representation of Muslim suggests that the benefits of entitlements meant for the backward classes are yet to reach them." According to the National Evaluation Report on KGBV (2013), in all the KGBVs established till 2013, Muslims constitute only 7.5% of the total enrolment, way below their reprsentation in the populaion. The Standing Committee Report (2013) further points out that only 517 out of a total of 3439 KGBVs have been operationalized in rural and urban areas of Muslim concentration. Muslim enrolment even in KGBVs set up in Muslim concentrated areas from 2004-2013 has been 25.03%[59], and only 454 KGBVs out of the total 3439 have enrolment of more than 20% Muslim children.

Financial assistance through scholarships is another mechanism through which the government has pushed enrolment and retention of poor Muslim children in public schools. In addition to the national merit cum means scholarship run by the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD), the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) also runs pre and post matric scholarship schemes for Muslim students belonging to economically weak families, whose annual income is less than Rs. 1 lac. According to the MoMA Annual Report (2014-15), the actual expenditure on both the schemes (revised estimates) has been at least equal to the budgetary allocation (budget estimates), if not more. This is a positive indication of the government's continued support to provide financial assistance to Muslim students. However, the rate of post-matric scholarship for Muslim students, for reasons unexplained, was lower than that for SCs (Standing Committee Report, 2013).

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[58] KGBVs are residential schools with boarding facilities at the elementary level, set up with the objective of making education feasible and accessible to girls belonging to SC, ST, OBC or minority community, and families below the poverty line, in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) of the country. EBBs are defined as those areas where the female literacy rate is below the national average and the gender gap in literacy rate is higher than the national average.

[59] According to the MHRD Annual report (2014-15), this figure is 21.8%. Muslim concentrated areas have been taken to be those with 20% or more Muslim population. Surprisingly, in these areas, enrolment of SC and OBC children in KGBVs is still higher than that of Muslims- 30.2% and 28.4% respectively (Source: National Evaluation Report on KGBV, 2013). A recommendation by the Standing Committee Report (2013) has been that KGBVs be opened in all districts where population of religious minority is more than 10%.

Promoting Urdu as mother tongue

Although Muslims in India are not victims of language barriers as much as tribal communities, the use of Urdu as a common language contributes to the cultural capital possessed by Muslims. From a mere conversational language to a medium of instruction in various arts such as poetry, literature, Quran education etc., Urdu has penetrated deep into the lives of Muslims, and has become an important mechanism by which members of the community relate to each other. Many Muslims would like to see education take place in Urdu, their mother tongue but few schools accommodate this. Taking cognizance of this fact, the Department for Higher Education has established a National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL) which advises Government of India on issues connected with Urdu Language. It is also responsible for establishing and running study centres, for example in computer applications, which provide technical education to Urdu speaking boys and girls. NCPUL also acts as a catalyst for publishing Urdu books, undertaking academic projects, conducting national/international seminars etc., in addition to running Urdu correspondence courses. The appointment of Urdu language teachers is another important focus area that has received recent government attention. Under the Centrally sponsored scheme of financial assistance for Appointment of Language Teachers, 100% financial assistance is provided for appointment of Urdu Teachers and Grant of honorarium to the existing Urdu teachers. The criteria for granting financial assistance to Urdu teachers is 25% of the population be Urdu speaking in that locality. However, the "honorarium" amount of Rs. 1,000 per month is too low leadig to a short supply. In general though there is a lack of primary schools offering education in Urdu medium even in areas where there is large number of students whose mother tongue is Urdu (Standing Committee Report, 2013). Karnataka and Maharashtra are two States which are much better equipped with Urdu medium schools at the elementary level. Karnataka has the additional feature of concurrent facilities for English medium as well in a good number of schools (Shinde & John, 2012).

Policy Response for Girls

Reducing gender gaps in school enrolment has been one of the most important goals for international education policy over the past decade, and has been enshrined as one of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. In India, while considerable progress has been made in reducing gender gaps in primary schooling, there continue to be significant gaps in secondary schooling, with a noticeable increase in adolescent years (Muralidharan & Prakash, 2013).

Policies to improve female education attainment in developing countries have focused on both increasing the immediate benefits of schooling to families as well as on reducing the costs of attending school. The most prominent category of demand-side interventions have been conditional cash transfers (CCT's) to households for keeping girls enrolled in school. An example of such CCT is the *Ladli* scheme inaugurated by the Delhi government in 2008. The scheme envisages a payment in the name of a girl child annually, which is kept as a fixed deposit which can then be collected with interest when the girl reaches 18 years of age. The girl must be in school throughout the period of the scheme, and is eligible to cash benefits after completing certain levels of schooling. *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* (BBBP) is another recent initiative of the central government which aims to tackle the dual problems of gender biased sex selection, and post birth discrimination against girls in education. Launched in 2015, the initiative has been started in 100 selected districts across the country having an adverse child sex ratio. BBBP has two major components; first, a mass

communication campaign that aims at ensuring girls are born, nurtured and educated without discrimination to become empowered citizens, and second, multi-sectoral interventions in the selected districts for the implementation of BBBP[60].

Incentives to school going students such as scholarships, free textbooks and uniforms, hot meals under the MDM scheme etc. also have a positive impact on enrolment and retention, and this is especially true for girls. Afridi (2010) in her study on school participation in a rural area in Madhya Pradesh found that the cooked meals program significantly improved the attendance rates, particularly of girls in lower grades (see also, Afridi, Barooah & Somanathan, 2010). Manimagala (2012) evaluates the impact of public programs on schooling outcomes by examining its influence on household family behaviour. Initiatives like the School Development Grant, Teaching Learning Material Grant, free textbooks, uniforms and stationery, and attendance scholarships for the age groups 5-9 and 10-14 (primary and upper primary sections) were looked at. It was found that, for both age groups, textbooks, uniforms and stationary items given to girls exert a positive and significant influence on the enrolment rates of children. The 'Cycle Programme' initiated by the Bihar government in 2006 is another intervention that aimed to increase school access for girls. The programme provided all girls who enrolled in grade 9 with funds to buy a bicycle to make it easier to access schools. Muralidharan & Prakash (2013) in their impact analysis of the scheme in Bihar, found that being exposed to the Cycle program increased girls' age-appropriate enrolment in secondary school by 30% and also reduced the gender gap in age-appropriate secondary school enrolment by 40%. Further, increases in enrolment mostly took place in villages where the nearest secondary school was further away, suggesting that the mechanism for program impact was the reduction in the time and safety cost of school attendance made possible by the bicycle. Dropouts among girls declined to one million from about 2.5 million in 2006[61]. The success of the programme has resulted in the scheme being extended to girl students in classes 3rd, 4th and 5th as well from 2009 onwards.

Residential schooling facilitieslike the KGBV have been setup to provide upper primary educational facilities for girls belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minority communities and families below the poverty line in Educationally Backward Blocks, or where the female literacy rate is below the national average. Out of a total of 3609 KGBVs established till 2013, 544 have been setup in Muslim concentrated districts, 319 in SC concentrated, and 508 in ST concentrated districts[62]. The National Evaluation Report on KGBVs (2013) notes that while girl child enrolment has gone up from the previous evaluation period i.e. 2008, the outreach togirl children with special needs was fairly limited, with the exception of Bihar. There continues to be confusion regarding the target group to be admitted and norms regarding enrolment. For example, out of school and never enrolled girl children were not being targeted, as many states seemed to believe programme was for any SC, ST, OBC, Minority and BPL girls in the surrounding areas. This also led to the problem of artificial dropouts- girls were being withdrawn from school for one year to make them eligible for enrolling in KGBVs. In the absence of structural linkages with RMSA in most states, the transition to secondary education has not been very smooth. Girls who have completed class 8th continue to occupy KGBVs, making it difficult for new girls in

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[60] Source: http://wcd.nic.in/BBBPScheme/About_BBBP_Scheme.pdf
[61] http://www.livemint.com/Politics/RdR7pU68EgxGHa3Ap8c8IO/Bihar8217s-virtuous-cycle.html
[62] SC and ST concentrated districts have been identified as those with 25% and above SC and ST population respectively. Data source: National Evaluation Report on KGBVs (2013).

the prescribed age group to be enrolled[63]. Safety and security of these adolescent girls, as well as nutrition and sanitation, are other important areas that have received little attention. Many KGBVs visited had male staff members living inside or had unrestricted access to the hostel and even to the rooms occupied by the students (ibid.), whereas some have even had instances of sexual abuse (Sayed et al., 2007).In addition to non-compliance with RTE norms and standards in many KGBVs, students complained of persistent hunger and inadequacy of food. Further, Bandopadhyay and Subramanian (2008) point that little is known about the impact of participation in these schools, not just on girls' learning and empowerment, but also on the end result- "it is unclear whether these girls go on to complete formal schooling" (p. 14).

Balagopalan (2010) notes that through KGBVs, the state's response to 'gender disparities' in education has largely been within a reading of 'cultural and familial practices in India', so that it signals a 'progressive effort' on their part. Cultural norms such as early marriage for girls, and household duties as the primary duty have been overemphasized as reasons behind why girls do not go to schools, and seclusion-based responses- of which KGBV is a good example- have thus come up which effectively distances the child from household factors that hold her back. Such an attempt "camouflages the performative function of the neoliberal State's provision of poor quality schooling through producing these spaces as inherently liberating, and as an act whose promised effect only time will reveal" (ibid., p. 299-300). Empirical research on why girls leave school points to multiple reasons including poor quality schools, absence of female teachers, the lack of separate toilet facilities, distance between home and school and concerns for their safety (ibid.). More recently, there is increasing recognition that communities' access to basic resources – including drinking water and renewable sources of fuel – can cause girls, who are often responsible for the time-consuming task of collecting these, to drop out of school (Bandopadhyay and Subramanian, 2008). These factors, however, are not alluded to when residential schemes like KGBVs are discussed.

The role played by female teachers in improving learning outcomes of girls in school is another important mechanism which needs to be considered while deliberating on gender inequalities in education. The notion that classroom dynamics between teachers and students make a substantive contribution to the demographic gaps in achievement has wide currency and there is also now a growing literature that demographic interactions between students and teachers also matter (Dee, 2005; Karachiwalla, 2015). Muralidharan & Sheth (2013) in their study of Andhra Pradesh, notice a negative trend in girls' test scores in both mathematics and language as they advance through the five grades of primary school. However, female teachers were found to be more effective at reducing the gender gap in achievement than male teachers. Furthermore, boys performed regardless of the gender of their teacher, pointing to the relevance and significance of a policy of hiring more female teachers that girls are likely to benefit from without any offsetting effect on boys, thus increasing the overall educational performance (ibid.). Rawal & Kingdon (2010) in their study of rural Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have also shown that matching teacher and student characteristics such as gender, caste and religion exert a positive influence on students' achievement- via test scores- in a subject taught by the teacher.

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[63] This is true for KBGVs where it was found that admissions take place only in class 6th. Further admissions do not take place for any class in the following years until a cohort completes class 8th (Source: National Evaluation Report, 2013).

DISE (2014-15) gives us some figures of female teachers in rural and urban areas in India, which gives an idea about what, if any, lags have been in recruiting female teachers. In rural areas, the percentage of female teachers employed is least in the upper primary (31.14%), and upper primary with secondary (33.38%) sections. Inn urban areas, the situation is much better. While female teachers constitute more than half of the teacher population in all sections of schooling, their percentage is relatively lesser at the upper primary (53.79%), and upper primary with secondary and higher secondary (52.55%) sections.

The Role of Government Resources in Tackling Inequalities in Education[64]

Finally we take a separate look at the role of financial resources – both at the government and the private level – in reducing inequalities in the supply and the demand for education respectively. We will start with trends in government finances.

The trends over the last 25 years suggest nearly 80% of social sector spending including elementary education has come from the States' own budgets and not Central government allocations (The Hindu Businessline, 2015). Thus, a complete picture of expenditure on elementary education becomes clear only when both SSA (a Centrally sponsored scheme) and non-SSA expenditures are taken into account. Moreover, the 14th Finance Commission (2015) recommendations, which have led to an increase in Union taxes devolved to States from 32% to 42%, and a consequent decrease in funding through the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS), means that the **Centre's role in financing social sector is likely to continue to decline.** Will it be replaced by increased funding at the State level is a question that is yet to be answered. Current trends unfortunately do not present an encouraging picture. If they continue, we may see a revrsal of some of the gains made thus far, especially towards the reducing of gaps for the disadvantaged sections of the population.

Figure :
Allocations for SSA (Rs. Crore)
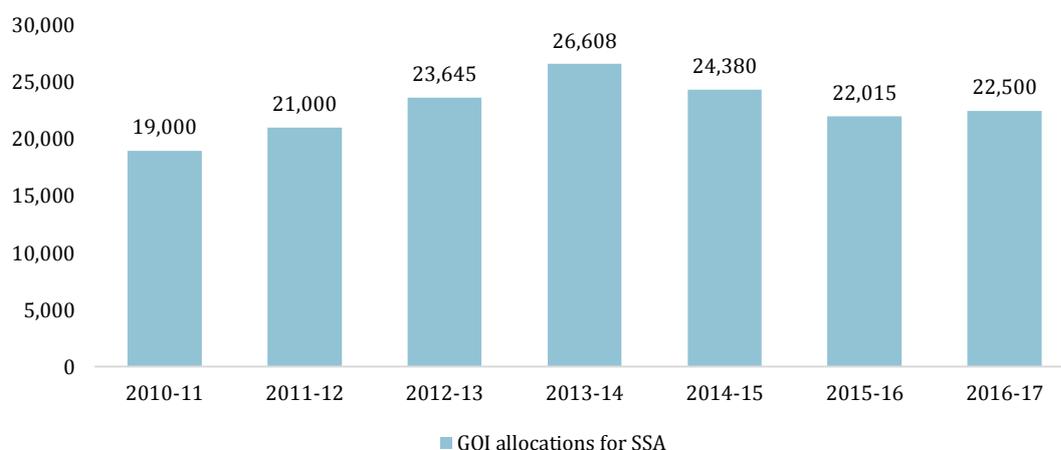
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[64] Dongre & Kapur (2016).

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Given below is the the last 3 years spending, where broad trends in total and per-student spending on elementary education across major States. It provides some indications of how the Centre could use its funds to best incentivise States to spend differently on elementary education.

Table 16 : Nominal and Real Expenditure on Elementary education, 2011-12 and 2014-15 (Rs. Crore)

| States | Nominal Expenditure | | % Change between 11-12 and 14-15 | Real Expenditure | | % Change between 11-12 and 14-15 |
	2011-12 (In Rs. Crores)	2014-15 (In Rs. Crores)		2011-12 (In Rs. Crores)	2014-15 (In Rs. Crores)	
Unified AP	8561	8439	-1*	8561	6990	-18
Bihar	9265	10771	16	9265	8311	-10
Chhattisgarh	4608	5642	22	4608	4778	4
Gujarat	8003	10547	32	8003	9223	15
Haryana	3805	5570	46	3805	4621	21
Himachal Pradesh	1883	2361	25	1883	2079	10
Jharkhand	3251	4107	26	3251	3542	9
Karnataka	7319	9021	23	7319	7303	0
Kerala	4062	5037	24	4062	4189	3
Madhya Pradesh	8244.5	10527	28	8244.5	8579	4
Maharashtra	15188	18317	21	15188	15585	3
Odisha	4688	5169	10	4688	4329	-8
Punjab	1662	2050	23	1662	1745	5
Rajasthan	8283.5	11519	39	8283.5	9636	16
Tamil Nadu	6357	10264	61	6357	8635	36
Uttarakhand	1870	2248	20	1870	1958	5
Uttar Pradesh	18126	25578	41	18126	20452	13
West Bengal	7897	8118	3	7897	NA	NA
Totals	123073	155285	26	115176**	121954**	6

Source: Collated from state budgets. *In 2014-15, actual expenditure for Andhra Pradesh were not available and thus revised estimates have been used. This could be the reason for a small decline in total elementary education expenditures. ** - Total excludes West Bengal.

From the Table 16 above and Table 17 below we find that:

i) While there has been a significant increase in ststes' spending in nominal terms, not much increase is indicated in *real* terms.

ii) There is a consistent decline in spending as a proportion of the gross domestic product

iii) In terms of per student expenditure, however, significant variations are found across states. In other words there is less convergence across states and the state differentials in expenditures continue.

Table 17: Per Student Expenditures 2011-12 and 2014-15
(including students in government and aided schools)

States	Nominal Expenditure			Real Expenditure		
	2011-12	2014-15	% Change	2011-12	2014-15	% Change
Unified AP	13010	14087	8	13010	11668	-10
Bihar	4535	5298	17	4535	4088	-10
Chhattisgarh	11987	16151	35	11987	13677	14
Gujarat	13036	17106	31	13036	14959	15
Haryana	17315	27163	57	17315	22535	30
Himachal Pradesh	27290	39343	44	27290	34651	27
Jharkhand	5725	8020	40	5725	6916	21
Karnataka	12852	16914	32	12852	13694	7
Kerala	13858	19419	40	13858	16149	17
Madhya Pradesh	7951	11927	50	7951	9720	22
Maharashtra	11351	14712	30	11351	12518	10
Odisha	8055	9367	16	8055	7845	-3
Punjab	7246	9142	26	7246	7782	7
Rajasthan	11575	19391	68	11575	16220	40
Tamil Nadu	9823	16914	72	9823	14229	45
Uttarakhand	19268	26236	36	19268	22849	19
Uttar Pradesh	8354	13102	57	8354	10476	25
West Bengal	5939	7001	18	5939	NA	NA
Grand Total	8434	11523	37			

Source: Collated from state budget documents. Enrolment figures taken from (NUEPA, 2011) and (NUEPA, 2014). The proportions of private aided taken from (NUEPA, 2011) for 2011 and Reports generated from DISE Portal.

Note: Enrolments for Flash Statistics and State Report Cards in 2011 do not match. In order to get proportions of private aided, Flash Statistics have been used. Private aided numbers in Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan for 2014-15 were not available. However, they have been assumed to be around 0 as the proportions were less than 1% in 2011-12.

Specific Budgetary provisions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

While SC and ST continue to lag behind the general population in various socio-economic indicators due to multiple diverse and often intersectional reasons, the lack of economic support by the Central and state governments is another prominent factor determining and constraining the pace of change, as was identified by the 6th five-year plan of India (1980-85). The need for increased financial assistance was operationalized through the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), which were implemented to ensure that targeted benefits accrue directly to the SC and ST population. While the revised Guidelines (2006) for the implementation of SCSP/TSP expressly state that the flow of outlays and benefits from all the sectors of development in the Annual Plans of States/UTs and Central Ministries should at least be in proportion to their population both in physical and financial terms, analysis of budget documents presents a different picture. Studies undertaken by the National Council for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in 2014 and 2015, have shown how Central government allocations to SCSP and TSP have fallen significantly short of the mandate, and this trend has worsened over the years[65]. For instance, during 2013-14, actual allocation was only 9.92% for SCSP and 5.87% for TSP, whereas the population of SC and ST was 16.2% and 8.2% respectively. In 2014-15, these declined further to 8.79% and 5.63% for SCSP and TSP respectively. Subtracting the amount meant for MGNREGA within these two (which was a new programme added under the sub-plan that year)[66], the allocations for projects/interventions meant exclusively for SC and ST further falls down to 7.5% and 4.6%. In 2015-16, actual allocation stands at 6.6% and 4.3% to SCSP and TSP respectively[67].

Analysis done by the NCDHR for the last eight years, i.e., 2006-07 to 2014-15, shows that Dalits have been deprived of Rs 1,98,539.10 crore while *adivasis* (ST) have lost Rs 84,916.42 crore through under-allocation of funds in SCSP and TSP. Further, the allocation meant specifically for SC/ST women is even worse. In 2015-16, out of the total allocation of Rs 30,850 crores under the SCSP, the allocation for women specific schemes is a meagre Rs 73 crores—which amounts to 0.23 per cent only! The scenario is much the same when one looks at the Budget allocation under TSP — a paltry sum of Rs 40 crores i.e. 0.20 per cent! The only small streak of hope is the allocation of Rs 50 crores for SC Girls' Hostel.

While low allocations has been a problem on one hand, non-utilization of allocated funds under these sub-plans (Mangubhai, 2013), is another serious concern, as shown by a comparison of budget estimates and revised estimates. For instance, in 2014-15 alone, Rs 50,548 crore was allocated under the SCSP but only Rs 33,638 crore is provisionally estimated to have been spent. That means about a third of the funds were not spent. Similarly, Rs 32,387 crore was allocated for tribals under TSP but only Rs 20,536 crore was spent according to revised estimates. So, about 37% went unspent.

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[65]For the purposes of convenience, only Central government allocations have been referred to in the proceeding findings, except where mentioned otherwise. State-wise allocations can be found on the states' official information portals of the departments for welfare of SC and STs.

[66]The assumption is that SC and ST populations are likely to be the main beneficiaries under the MGNREGA scheme.

[67]The reduction in fund allocation from last year (2014-15) is reasoned on the grounds that the higher funds available to the State governments under the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission will be used to make up for the reduced allocations in the Central Budget. However, there is no guarantee that this expectation will be fulfilled.

The setting up of the Narendra Jadhav Task Force by the Central government in 2010 to review the SCSP and TSP guidelines and the recommendations given by it are progressive steps that reflect a sense of urgency on the part of the government to address these deficits. The recommendations call for preparation of separate budget statements for SCs and STs, and targeting the Central Plan Assistance (CPA) [68] for their welfare. To address the underutilization of resources, it recommended a Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources for SCs and another for STs. The classification of government departments/ministries into 4 separate categories, each allocating resources to SCSP and TSP in the suggested percentages was another progressive recommendation of the Task Force. Of the total ministries/department under consideration, 43 make up a non-obligatory category (Category 1)[69] under SCSP and TSP, and are exempt from making any allocations because of their *mostly* regulatory nature and the difficulty in quantifying the benefits to SCs and STs.

Nature of schemes under SC Support Programme (SCSP) and the Tribal Support Programme (TSP)

Whatever the allocations to SCSP and TSP may be, their efficient use is an altogether different concern. A cursory reading of the schemes implemented under SCSP and TSP shows that it is difficult to even understand where and how the provision of special allocation for SC and ST lies.

The Guidelines section (2006) clearly mention key sectors on which outlays should be utilized. Education receives a special mention, with provision of incentives, including scholarships at all levels and special programmes for girls education being specifically mentioned. Among the schemes suggested for the state/UTs, several relate to improving educational access to SC and ST, like opening of residential schools and educational complexes for both SC/ST and general populations, vocational training through establishment of ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes), among others.

A sectoral allocation of SCSP and TSP funds for 2013-14 shows that the highest proportion of these funds (68% for SCSP and 77% for TSP) has gone under the head of 'survival' which includes social services like Education; Art and Culture; Medical and Public Health; Women and Child Development; Water Supply and Sanitation. The second highest allocation has been to 'development', including Rural Development; Agriculture and Allied Services; Industry & Mineral; Science, Technology and Environment and Transport. Rest being 'protection' and 'participation' have received the least amounts.

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[68] The Central government provides financial support to the States in the form of Central Plan Assistance to meet the targets of the Five Year Plans which are drafted by the Planning Commission of India since 1951. Presently, the Centre provides Special Central Assistance (SCA) to both SCSP and to TSPtomitigate resource gaps for the implementation of development programmes for SCs and STs.

[69] Corporate Affairs, Civil Aviation, Coal, Steel, Petroleum & Natural Gas, Mines, and, Department of Chemicals and Petro Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals, Consumer Affairs, Economic Affairs, Financial Services, Expenditure, Heavy Industries, Public Enterprises Fertilizers, Ministries of Minority Affairs and Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Earth Sciences, Home Affairs, External Affairs, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension, Law and Justice, and Departments of Health Research; Scientific and Industrial Research; Atomic Energy, Space, Agricultural Research and Education, Ministries of Railways, Water Resources and Departments of Road Transport andHighways, Shipping, Telecommunications, Ministries of Culture, Information and Broadcasting, Planning, Statistics and Programme Implementation, Tourism, Urban Development, and Departments of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Biotechnology; Food & Public Distribution, Food Processing Industries and Posts.

In the Education Ministry (MHRD), however, the picture is more complicated, since the nature of most of the schemes or initiatives undetaken by them are more general and constitute notional, rather than real allocations. For instance, allocations under various schemes are assumed to be utilized for the benefit of SC/ST children. For example, an object-wise breakdown of SCSP and TSP allocations by the Department of School Education and Literacy shows a disproportionate allocation towards creation of capital assets like school infrastructure, and general grants in 2012-13 (according to 2012-13 budget estimates), where it is not possible to divide the funds spent into those that directly benefit SC/ST students and those that benefit others. The indivisibility of most of these programmes/schemes is cited as a good defence, but it diverts attention from the lack of new and innovative initiatives for SC and ST that plagues these departments. Real allocations which provide direct benefits to SC/ST individuals or families- such as pre and post matric SC/ST scholarships, and construction of boys and girls hostels- have been made largely by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which are anyway dedicated ministries for SC and STs. In case of other ministries, less than 1% of SCSP and TSP funds have been allocated for specially targeted schemes (in both years- 2012-13 and 2013-14).

There also exist state-level variations in the allocation of SCSP and TSP funds. For example, in Bihar, no TSP allocations have been made for school education, including under SSA or RMSA. Otherwise, SSA has seen a large increase in allocation under the SCSP in 2013-14 as compared to the two previous years, which might explain partly the improvement in educational indicators of SCs in Bihar over the years. In Jharkhand, on the other hand, SSA and RMSA continue to get allocated the largest education-related funds under SCSP/TSP in the state. While SSA has seen a steady increase in funding allocation under SCSP/TSP, same cannot be said for RMSA, reflective of lack of access to secondary education by SC/ST children in Jharkhand[70]. However, in both states, the only funds clearly demarcated for SC/ST children, as per 2012-13 Annual Work Plan & Budget for SSA, was for uniforms for SC/ST boys studying in classes 1-8 in government schools, signalling again the notional allocations made under the sub-plans.

Therefore, not only are budgetary allocations under SCSP and TSP severely inadequate, the schemes implemented are no guarantor that SC and STs will benefit from them. Coupled with a lack of convergence between different ministries on school education of SC and ST children, the future of these communities does not seem to be on a life-changing path.

Private Resources

The exit option

Given the situation with government resources, seen above, households are resorting more and more to private resources in quest of better education, or so they hope. It would appear that exit is almost the only option available - either to the private sector schools if they can be afforded or by dropping out altogether, if the costs of private education prohibit. As the tables below show, in the last 8 years itself the proportion of children enrolled in private schools has increased substantially, even in rural areas.

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[70] For both the states of Bihar and Jharkhand, the data presented is from 2011-12 to 2013-14 (Source: Mangubhai, 2013).

Table 18: % children aged 6-14 enrolled in private schools

Year	Boys	Girls	Overall
2006	20.2	17	18.7
2007	20.8	17.6	19.3
2008	24.6	20.3	22.6
2009	23.3	19.9	21.8
2010	25.5	21.7	23.7
2011	28	23	25.6
2012	31.5	25.2	28.3
2013	32.2	25.5	29
2014	34.5	26.9	30.8

Source: Trends over time, ASER[71]

Table 19: % children aged 6-14 enrolled in private schools - NSS

	2007-08			2014		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
Primary	18.6	60.4	27.4	27.7	69.1	38
Upper Primary	21.7	55.8	30.1	24.2	62	34

Source: 64th and 71st round, NSS

In fact the desire for better quality education is so high that in many instances, parents who cannot afford to shift their children to private schools take the "private tuitions" route. Table 20 below shows the large proportions across states that are now using tuitions to supplement learning in schools. It is not surprising that Bihar and West Bengal are among the states where this proportion is among the highest.

Table 20: % of students at elementary level attending private tuitions

State	% in private tuition	State	% in private tuition
J&K	29.39	**Assam**	11.52
Himachal Pradesh	4.66	**West Bengal**	75.03
Punjab	20.86	**Jharkhand**	30.7
Uttarakhand	15.64	**Odisha**	44.32
Haryana	12.28	**Chhattisgarh**	5.89
Rajasthan	5.2	**Madhya Pradesh**	12.48
Uttar Pradesh	11.24	**Gujarat**	16.64
Bihar	45.54	**Maharashtra**	21.17

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[71]http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%20TOT/fullasertrendsovertimereport.pdf

		Andhra Pradesh	9.17
Sikkim	7.08		
Arunachal Pradesh	5.3	**Karnataka**	13.19
Nagaland	2.51	**Goa**	19.49
Manipur	33.35	**Kerala**	24.25
Mizoram	1.72	**Tamil Nadu**	20.8
Tripura	79.85	**INDIA**	23.33
Meghalaya	4.24		

While data is not available for the distribution of private resources across social categories, research studies and anecdotal evidence on girls education, does suggest that private resources tend to be used disproportionately in favour of boys. Hence, the economically well-off families may choose to allocate education equally among all their children, but the economically weak may make differential allocations depending on a number of factors. For instance, Azam & Kingdon (2011) using the India Human Development Survey (2005) data have shown that the incidence of pro-male bias in enrolment was substantially higher in the 15-19 age group, while in the 10-14 age group, pro-male bias in education expenditure was observed in more states than the pro-male bias in enrolment[72]. The extent of pro-male gender bias in educational expenditure was substantially greater in rural than in urban areas, in which case sons are sent to fee-charging private schools and daughters to no-fee government schools (ibid.).

In Conclusion

Following the trajectory and impact of policies addressing social inequalities in education is not an easy task, especially in a country that is not just diverse in its social and economic structures, but also federal in its political organization. Thus national policies and state policies sometimes align and sometimes they do not, with uncertain effects. Often decisions are taken at higher levels that do not resonate at lower levels or do not have commensurate resources to implement in the manner intended. Hence, we have seen that many initiatives that are stated in policy documents either do not have the impact they were meant to or have unintended consequences. The complex interplay of social, economic, spatial and political forces – all of which impinge on the delivery of education in the classroom, makes implementation of education programmes that address all sections of a diverse and disparate population extremely difficult. It is important therefore, while recognizing the gains in physical access and current attendance, to also acknowledge that the tasks that remain will require shifts in policy thinking and implementation strategies to succeed. What has worked thus far, may not be sufficient or appropriate for overcoming the remaining hurdles – the last mile. The improvement in the relative education status of the Scheduled castes, for instance, is an example of the success of several targeted measures. Scholarships and other incentives and affirmative action, have undoubtedly made a difference. Similarly for girls – the incentives (scholarships, cycles), appointment of female teachers, hostel facilities have all helped to improve access and retention of girls in school. What remains is to identify why those left behind have been unable to take advantage of the incentives provided thus

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[72] See also, Kingdon (2005) and Pal (2004) for similar work on gender gaps in education.

far and address those specifc issues. That is likely to require a more decentralized approach – down to the Panchayat or village level – to understand and address. This speaks to the need for devolving decision making as well as resources to lower levels of government in order to enable them to address the remaining issues. Hence, moving forward greater decentralization is the second important general measure that needs to be considered more seriously.

Along with enrolment and retention, more focus also needs to be on eliminating gaps in learning outcomes - it might take various forms/ policies - more SC/ST/Muslim teachers, true multi-lingual education, changes in curriculum or development of more curricular and co-curricular material which children from disadvantaged section can relate to. A full review is beyond the scope of this paper

However, given that the most disadvantaged are overwhelmingly in government schools, improving educational service delivery in government schools is probably the most urgent and the most far-reaching strategy. An approach that is primarily focussed on the principle of 'universality' emerges as the need of the hour. This will clearly require a larger commitment of administrative and financial resources, and political commitment by the state than has been the case so far.

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