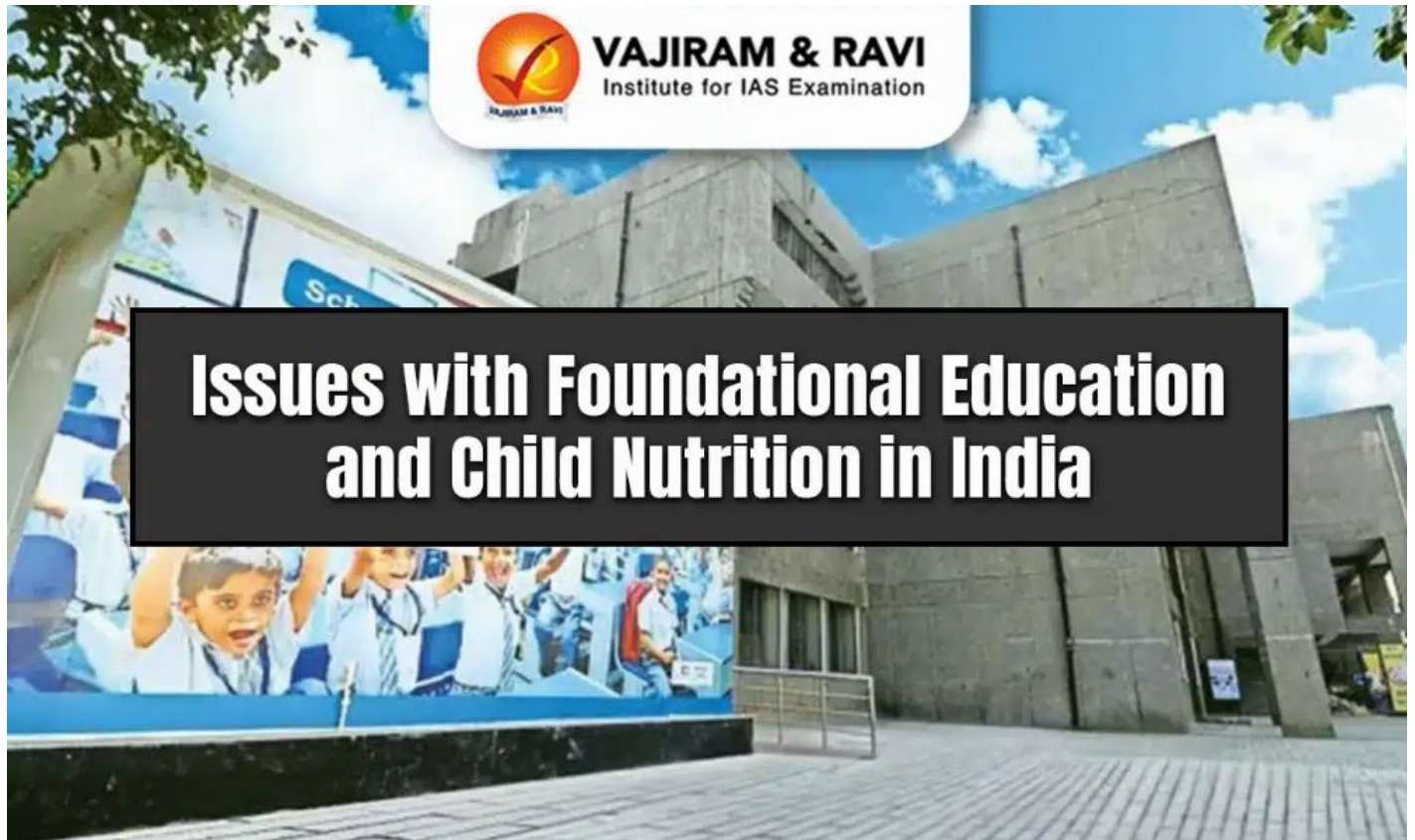


Decline in Government School Enrollment: A Wake-Up Call for Indian States

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Government School Enrollment in India Latest News

- The Union Ministry of Education (MoE) has asked multiple States to take “remedial steps” to reverse the trend of students choosing private schools over government schools.

Introduction

- The Union Ministry of Education has flagged a concerning trend in several Indian states where students are increasingly opting for private schools over government-run institutions.
- This shift, highlighted during recent Project Approval Board (PAB) meetings for the Samagra Shiksha scheme (2025-26), has prompted the Centre to urge states to identify the root causes and implement corrective measures.
- The issue underscores a growing challenge in India’s public education system, where aspirations for quality learning environments are prompting a move away from government institutions.

The Enrollment Decline: States and Figures

- According to **UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus)** 2023-24 data, the enrollment gap between government and private schools has widened across numerous states.
- **Telangana:**
 - Out of 42,901 schools, 70% are government schools, but they account for only 38.11% of enrollments, compared to 60.75% in private schools.
- **Uttarakhand:**
 - While 71.84% of schools are government-run, only 36.68% of students are enrolled in them, with unaided schools accounting for 54.39%.
- **Andhra Pradesh:**
 - The state has 73.32% government schools but only 46.33% enrollment in them. Private schools, with just 24.82% of the institutions, attract over 52% of the enrollment.
- **Tamil Nadu:**
 - Government schools comprise 64% of all schools but see only 37% enrollment. Private schools, despite being 21% of the total, account for 46% of student enrollment.
- **Kerala and Maharashtra:**
 - Both states reported declining enrollments in government and aided schools.
 - Maharashtra's enrollment dropped from 1.63 crore in 2018-19 to 1.50 crore in 2023-24, while Kerala saw a drop from 46.37 lakh in 2022-23 to 45.50 lakh in 2023-24.
- **Other Territories:**
 - Similar patterns were observed in Delhi, Ladakh, Puducherry, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu.

Government's Concerns and Response

- The Ministry of Education termed the trend "disturbing," especially in light of the significant financial investment made in government schools.
- School Education Secretary Sanjay Kumar emphasized that such enrollment shifts are occurring despite substantial expenditure under schemes like **Samagra Shiksha** and **PM POSHAN**.
- The ministry urged states to conduct a sincere and data-driven analysis to understand the reasons behind the exodus from government schools. Suggestions included:
 - **Identifying Structural Gaps:**
 - Many government schools lack competitive infrastructure, digital resources, and sufficient teaching staff, pushing parents toward private alternatives.
 - **Improving Public Perception:**
 - States were advised to focus on "government school branding" to enhance public trust and reverse enrollment trends.
 - **Using Data Smartly:**
 - While Kerala and Maharashtra defended their numbers by citing verification-led clean-ups, the Ministry wants better distinction between technical data corrections and actual educational shifts.
 - **Junior Class enrollment Dip:**

- A senior education official noted that the preference for private schools is particularly strong in early education stages, signalling the need for improving foundational literacy in government schools.

A Bigger Picture: Education Aspirations and Private School Surge

- The growing popularity of private schools highlights broader societal aspirations.
- Many families, even from low-income groups, believe private schools offer better English instruction, discipline, and exam preparedness.
- According to UDISE+ data, private school enrollment rose to over 9 crore (36%) of India's total 24.80 crore student population in 2023-24, up from 33% in 2022-23.
- Even though the pandemic disrupted traditional schooling, the preference for private education has bounced back.
- In fact, the share of private school enrollment in the pre-pandemic year 2019-20 was 37%, showing that the trend is not new but now gaining sharper momentum.

Way Forward: Recommendations for States

- To counter the drift toward private education and restore faith in public schooling, the following steps are being emphasized:
- **Upgrading Infrastructure:** Providing basic facilities such as clean toilets, digital classrooms, and safe campuses.
- **Teacher Training and Recruitment:** Investing in quality teacher education and reducing pupil-teacher ratios.
- **Outreach and Awareness Campaigns:** Building a positive narrative around government schools and highlighting success stories.
- **Leveraging Technology and Data:** Using tools like APAAR IDs for better tracking of student movement and ensuring accurate enrollment figures.
- **Community Participation:** Encouraging school management committees (SMCs) to engage more with parents and local bodies for holistic development.

Government School Enrollment in India FAQs

Q1. What trend has the Centre observed in school enrollments recently?

Ans. The Centre has observed a steady shift of students from government to private schools in many states.

Q2. Which states are facing the most significant enrollment decline in government schools?

Ans. States like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Uttarakhand, and Tamil Nadu have reported sharp drops.

Q3. What reasons did some states give for the drop in government school enrollment?

Ans. Kerala and Maharashtra cited Aadhaar-based data cleansing exercises for the decline.

Q4. What has the Ministry of Education recommended to reverse the trend?

Ans. The Ministry urged states to analyse the root causes, brand government schools, and improve infrastructure and teaching quality.

Q5. How has private school enrollment changed over the years?

Ans. Private school enrollment has risen to 36% in 2023–24, up from 33% the previous year.

Source: TH | IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/sharp-decline-in-government-school-enrolment-and-pm-poshan-coverage-raises-alarm/>

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