



TEACHERS AND TEACHING IN INDIA

CREATE INDIA POLICY BRIEF 5

JANUARY 2011



TEACHERS AND TEACHING IN INDIA

This policy brief provides an analysis of teachers and teaching learning processes in two states of India. Data was collected from 88 schools in three clusters in Madyha Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (Dindori, Rewa and Rajnandgaon) using CREATE's Community and School Survey (ComSS). This policy brief provides an analysis of that data and suggests some policy implications. While much progress and investment has been made in recent years, the analysis suggests that problems remain with teacher numbers, deployment and training. This policy brief was written by Madhumita Bandyopadhyay, S. Umabati and Benjamin Zeitlyn.

The Role of Teachers in Achieving Meaningful Access to Education

It is widely acknowledged that teachers have a pivotal role in the development of an inclusive education system. Availability of qualified, trained and highly motivated teachers is an important factor in ensuring meaningful access to education. According to Govinda and Varghese, "Teacher qualification and training coupled with a high morale and positive perception of the academic ability of the learners constitute a powerful set of factors determining the learning levels of the children" (Govinda and Varghese, 1993:10).

In view of this, many countries, including India, spend a large proportion of their education budgets on teachers' salaries and their professional development. The teaching and learning process faces challenges in situations such as single teacher and single class schools. The Seventh AIES (NCERT, 2005) shows that 15% of all primary schools in India are single teacher schools and around 12% of primary schools have a single-classroom (Mehta, 2010). 80% of primary schools have three teachers or less, though there are five grades in the primary cycle. This means that multigrade teaching is inevitable and must be factored in to policy making and planning. This policy brief explores issues related to teachers and

teaching using the data collected through the ComSS.

The three clusters covered in the CREATE study represent different socio-economic situations, with Rajnandgaon being the most developed, while Rewa and Dindori lag behind. Tribal groups make up a high proportion of the population of Dindori Cluster. CREATE's conceptual model includes a definition of meaningful access which defines it as access to education which results in (i) regular attendance (ii) progression (iii) learning; and (iv) appropriate access to post-primary education (Lewin, 2007). The clear concern is that without adequate deployment, attendance and training of teachers these elements of meaningful access will not be possible.

Policy Initiatives

The National Commission on Teachers (1983-85) observed: "To recruit teachers more scientifically, the desirable competencies of teachers should be listed on the basis of practical and applied research". It is argued that high proficiency in the teaching subject, good linguistic ability, efficiency in communication skills and love for children are some of the desirable qualities of a good teacher (Arora, 2002:93).

The National Policy on Education (1986) emphasised that: “The method of recruitment of teachers will be reorganised to ensure objectivity, merit and conformity with spatial and functional requirements”. Generally the desert, hill, tribal and remote areas have difficulty with recruitment and placement of teachers. In addition to recruitment, efficient deployment of teachers, teacher transfer and promotion are also important issues that impact on teacher availability and retention.

A task force was constituted by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) in 1999 to evolve eligibility criteria for the recruitment of teachers. The NCTE has already issued a notification relating to teachers’ qualifications. Despite this, recruitment of well-qualified teachers and retaining them in the teaching profession is a challenge. Nonetheless, in order to implement the RTE Act, efforts are to be made to meet this challenge. In the next section we provide a brief analysis of the ComSS data to provide some background about teachers in the three clusters.

Teachers’ Profile

Most of the schools in all these three clusters have two teachers and five grades. A large number of schools in Rewa and Dindori clusters are still single teacher schools as many of these are run under the AIE/EGS schemes. If teachers and pupils belong to the same social group and cultural background, this can result in a positive attitude towards students, which in turn can create a healthy classroom environment facilitating learning (Rawal and Kingdon, 2010).

Data collected in the three clusters suggests that while people from Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and general castes are in the majority in Rajnandgaon and Rewa districts, scheduled tribes are in the overwhelming majority in Dindori district. The pattern of social background of teachers follows the same pattern. In Rajnandgaon most teachers are from OBCs while in Dindori, the majority of teachers belong to the category of scheduled tribes (STs). In Rewa, most teachers are from the general castes category.

Provision of Teachers

The teacher is the central figure in organising and managing any school. Timely recruitment of teachers and their rational deployment in schools are core functions that every school system has to manage. The average pupil teacher ratios (column 4 in Table 1) at the district level appear to be satisfactory but the variations in PTR ranges within

each district indicate problems of very uneven teacher deployment (column 5 in Table 1).

Table 1: Enrolment, Teachers and Classrooms

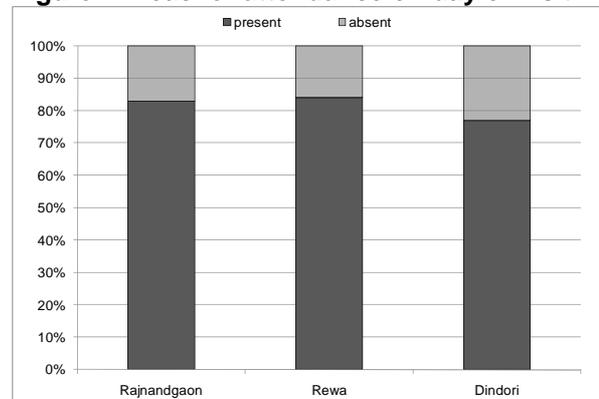
Districts	students	teachers	average PTR	PTR range
Rajnandgaon	4,734	136	35:1	13 - 132:1
Rewa	3,157	101	31:1	3 - 87:1
Dindori	1,737	52	34:1	12 - 75:1

Table 2: Teachers per school

	number of teachers						schools	teachers
	1	2	3	4	5	>5		
Rajnandgaon	0	9	7	4	2	7	29	136
Rewa	10	12	3	2	3	5	35	101
Dindori	8	10	2	1	0	2	24	52
Total	19	31	12	7	5	15	88	289

A large proportion of schools continue to be single teacher schools (Table 2). In fact, only a small number have all 5 teachers to teach all 5 primary classes. The more under-developed the cluster is the more single teacher and two teacher schools are to be found. Some small schools have too many teachers (one for every three students) while others are severely lacking (one teacher for 87 children). One government primary and middle school in Rewa has 7 teachers for its 11 students. In terms of the gender balance of teachers, 16 out of 35 schools in Rewa and 18 out of 23 schools in Dindori have no female teachers. In addition, all three clusters experience significant levels of teacher absenteeism with around 80% attendance on the day of the visit (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Teacher attendance on day of visit



The low motivation and lack of incentives for teachers to serve in remote rural areas are barriers

to the efficient deployment of teachers. So also is the lack of a proper database on the location and utilisation of teachers at the school level.

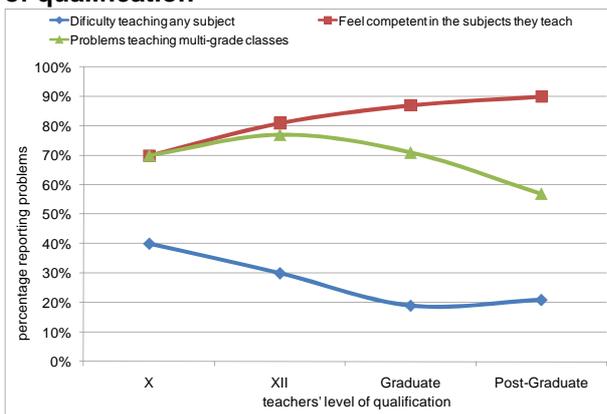
Academic and Professional Qualifications

The level of academic and professional qualification of teachers is another important factor that ensures effective learning in schools. The study suggests that the number of teachers with postgraduate qualifications is highest in Rajnandgaon district followed by Rewa. In Dindori district, the ratio of teachers with postgraduate qualifications to those with undergraduate qualifications is almost 50:50.

Despite high levels of academic qualification very large proportions of teachers are untrained. In Rajnandgaon cluster, around 25% of teachers were untrained. In Dindori cluster 67% of teachers were untrained (Govinda, 2008).

The majority of schools (90%) in Rajnandgaon have some trained teachers whereas in Dindori only 41% of schools have some trained teachers. However, even in Rajnandgaon there are a few schools where there is no trained teacher. According to the data, there are 21 schools (out of 30) of Rajnandgaon, 28 schools (out of 35) in Rewa and only 3 schools (out of 23) in Dindori where all teachers are trained. Figure 2 throws some light on the types of problems faced by teachers.

Figure 2: Problems faced by teachers by level of qualification



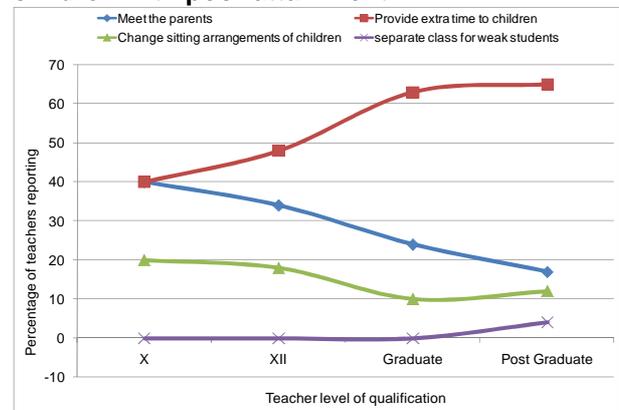
Poor subject mastery of teachers is a major concern, with large proportions of even very well qualified teachers reporting difficulty teaching any subject. The frequency with which difficulties were reported was twice as high amongst Grade 10 qualified teachers (40%) as amongst those with under graduate and postgraduate qualifications (20%). Some teachers reported that they didn't feel competent to teach the subject that they were

assigned to teach, although this proportion decreased with higher levels of qualification. Many had problems with multi-grade teaching, although this is a common phenomenon in most of the schools.

This is a disturbing situation especially when considered alongside levels of teacher absenteeism, poor attainment, grade repetition and drop out which are all substantial in these three clusters and which are discussed in other policy briefs. Together they result in many being "silently excluded".

The majority of teachers provide extra time to children with poor attainment. Post-graduate teachers reported doing this more than teachers with lower levels of qualification. Figure 3 shows that very few teachers meet parents to inform them about their child's poor performance, and that the higher the level of the teacher's qualification, the less likely that they are to meet the parents. Only 14% reported that they changed the seating arrangements to help improve the students' performance.

Figure 3: Special Care taken by teachers for children with poor attainment



Policy Recommendations

- Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs) must be maintained between 30 and 35:1 in all schools to ensure that averages do not conceal the schools with very high or low PTRs. The ratio of pupils to qualified teachers should also be increased so that all children have access to qualified teachers.
- A proper database on the number and status of teachers in schools must be kept in order to ensure the proper deployment of teachers, and to maintain equitable and efficient pupil teacher

ratios. More efficient regulation of teacher deployment will help to utilise the skills of teachers where they are most needed and make the most of government investment in teachers.

- Improved teacher management systems are needed with more transparent processes of recruitment, posting and promotion. Current strategies and programmes, such as those related to quality improvement and teacher education are quite insufficient and only cover a limited number of teachers.
- Incentives are needed to encourage high quality teachers to work in remote and rural areas. This could be in the form of allowances for serving in remote rural areas, provision of good accommodation and/or priority for promotion.
- There are a large number of single or two teacher schools. Multi-grade teaching is therefore a common necessity. Many teachers, even those with postgraduate qualifications face difficulties with multi-grade teaching. This problem is accentuated with untrained or poorly trained teachers. Multi grade teaching methods should be given a higher priority in teacher training. More attention and resources should be committed to ensuring the proper training of all teachers.
- In view of the poor subject mastery of teachers, professional development of teachers needs to include subject upgrading as well as pedagogic content knowledge. Teachers should be encouraged to receive further education to improve their subject knowledge.
- Higher academic and professional qualifications do not ensure that teachers actually attend school regularly or help children with poor attainment. There are no established practices for addressing the needs of children who have low achievement, attend irregularly and who repeat years and are at risk of drop out. It is essential that teachers have a toolkit of interventions designed to support those at risk of drop out for use within the school and within the family and the wider community.
- Schools need to be child friendly and child seeking and teachers' need to follow up those who show signs that lead to early drop out.

Selected References

- Arora, G. L. (2002) Teachers and their Teaching Need for New Perspectives, Ravi Books, Delhi.
- Govinda, R. and Varghese, N. V. (1993) Quality of primary schooling in India-A Case study of Madhya Pradesh, IIEP, UNESCO.
- Govinda, R. and Bandyopadhyay, M. (2008) Create, Access to Elementary Education in India Country Analytical Review, July, Pathways to Access, create-rpc.org.
- Govinda, R. (2008), School Quality and Phenomenon of Silent exclusion: Access, Equity and Participation, Paper presented in CREATE-RECOUP Seminar, December, in IIC, New Delhi.
- Lewin, K. 2007. Improving Access, Equity and Transitions in Education: Creating a Research Agenda CREATE Pathway to Access Research Monograph No. 1 Brighton University of Sussex
- Mehta, A.C. (2010) Elementary Education in India-Progress towards UEE, NUEPA, New-Delhi.
- NCERT (2005) National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education, National Council for Teacher Education, New-Delhi.
- Rawal, S. and Kingdon, G. (2010). Akin to my teacher: Does caste, religious or gender distance between student and teacher matter? Some evidence from India. DoQSS Working Paper No. 10-18, October, London: University of London. Available from: http://www.isid.ac.in/~pu/conference/dec_10_conf/Papers/ShenilaRawal.pdf (Accessed on December 5, 2010)
- Seshadri, C. (2002) Educating the Educators, Review of Primary Teacher Training in R. Govinda (ed.) India Education Report-A Profile of Basic Education, Oxford University Press, New-Delhi, 2002.



CREATE is a DFID-funded research programme consortia exploring issues of educational access, transitions and equity in South Africa, India, Bangladesh and Ghana. For more information go to: www.create-rpc.org