

Chapter VII

The Government's and Education in Bihar (2000-2010)

Introduction

For the Development of any state within the country, the development of the Health and Education sector is always necessary. It has been realised by scholars that 'Education is an important social resource and a means of reducing inequality in many other aspects of well-being among the members of the society. Education and knowledge thus act as catalysts in improving the quality of life' (Chakrabarty & Ghosh, 2000, p.2). It has also been recognised that 'In rural India access to education could act as a catalyst to change. Persons acquiring education could break through some of the social and cultural norms associated with certain occupations' (Unni, 2001, p.4). Unni in fact found that 'Educational attainment, even at very low levels, was a definite route out of poverty for the Scheduled Caste and Tribe households. Aided by the reservation policy, these communities were able to obtain salaried jobs and reap high returns to education' (ibid). Education develops or improves the capability of the individual. Bihar, as we all know is one of the poorest states among the major States in India. In the period (1998-99 to 2008-09) the annual growth rate of Bihar's per capita income had been just 3.77 per cent which was much below the national level. One may argue that in the beginning the two major challenges which the state faced were economic growth and human development. For human development the improvement in the education sector was essential. Since this is so in this chapter we focus on the policies of the two governments on improving the condition of this sector.

The Status of Education

Let us begin with the status of education in Bihar. As per the 2001 census the overall literacy rate in India was 64.8 percent while in Bihar it was 47.0 percent which was only a little higher than the National literacy rate in 1981. During 1991 and 2001, the

literacy rate in Bihar had increased by 9.3 percentage points (37.5 percent to 47.0 percent) which was a very low increase. If we see the literacy rate at the National level it was 64.8 percent in 2001 which was higher from 52.2 percent in 1991. It is to be pointed out here that during 2011 the literacy rate has considerably improved. It has increased to 63.8 percent which has shown highest decadal increase in literacy rates in Bihar. If we observe the literacy scenario in the State, it is seen that there is wide Gender disparities in literacy rates. As per the 2001 census the male and female literacy rates in Bihar were 60.3 percent and 33.6 percent respectively. Thus, there is a difference of 26.7 percent. And in 2011 male and female literacy had reached to 73.4 percent (male) and 53.3 percent (female). The Gender difference had been reduced to 20.1 percent (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.189). So, if we notice the decadal growth in female literacy rate in Bihar, it is seen that there has been a remarkable progress in female literacy rate (19.7 percent) in Bihar. Therefore, it can be said that awareness of social justice and the demand for education among the population has slightly increased.

Table: 7.1

Trend of literacy rates in India and Bihar

| Year | India | | | Bihar | | | Gender Gap | |
|------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|-------|------------|-------|
| | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total | India | Bihar |
| 1961 | 40.4 | 15.4 | 28.3 | 35.2 | 8.2 | 22.0 | 25.1 | 27.0 |
| 1971 | 46.0 | 22.0 | 34.5 | 35.8 | 10.2 | 23.2 | 24.0 | 25.5 |
| 1981 | 56.4 | 29.8 | 43.6 | 43.8 | 15.8 | 32.3 | 26.6 | 28.0 |
| 1991 | 64.1 | 39.3 | 52.2 | 52.5 | 22.9 | 37.5 | 24.8 | 29.6 |
| 2001 | 75.3 | 53.7 | 64.8 | 60.3 | 33.6 | 47.0 | 21.6 | 26.7 |
| 2011 | 82.1 | 65.5 | 74.0 | 73.4 | 53.3 | 63.8 | 16.6 | 20.1 |

Source: Department of Education, Government of Bihar

There are also intra-state disparities in literacy rates. As per the 2001 census districts, such as Patna (62.9 percent) and Kishanganj (31.1 percent) had recorded the highest and lowest literacy rates. But in 2011 the scenario was slightly different. We find that Rohtas (75.6 percent) and Purnia (52.5 percent) recorded the highest and lowest literacy rate in Bihar. The value of Gender Disparity in Literacy Rate (FDLR) in 2001 was different. Patna (144.3 percent) recorded the best, then Munger (147.5 percent) but in 2011 the value of Gender disparity in Literacy Rate in these two districts were reduced to Munger (122.3 percent) and Patna (126.1 per cent). And Supaul recorded the worst GDLR in both the years, 2001 (252.4 percent) and 2011 (153.9 percent) (GOB, Bihar Economic Survey, 2012-13, p.208). Besides, it is found that Kishanganj recorded the highest decadal increase in Literacy Rate (25.09 percent). It is a matter of surprise Kishanganj has recorded the highest decadal increase in literacy rate since the district has a high concentration of Muslims. So it cannot be said that the demand for education among the Muslims is much lower in the state (Ghosh & Rana, 2011, p.14).

The female literacy rate in the 38 districts of Bihar is not the same. We find also a wide variation in terms of female literacy rates in these districts. The highest FLR is in Munger (65.5 percent) and lowest in Saharsa and Madhepura (42.7 percent). So, it can be observed that 15 (fifteen) districts in Bihar where the female literacy rate is less than 50 percent. The demand for literacy among the disadvantaged sections of the society such as SCs, Muslims is very low and this is primarily because of poor educational infrastructure (Ghosh & Rana, 2011, p.15). It is also a noticeable fact that the rural and urban disparity in literacy rate has decreased between 2001 and 2011. As per 2001 census, the rural and urban literacy rate was 43.9 percent and 71.9 percent respectively which increased to 61.8 percent and 78.8 percent in 2011. So, the rural-urban disparities in the state decreased from 28.0 percent in 2001 to 17.0 percent in 2011 (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.190). As per 2011 census the overall literacy rate in Bihar was 63.8 percent. Bihar has recorded the highest decadal growth in literacy (2001-2011) rates among all the states in India (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.189). During the last decade (2001-2011) the spread of literacy has been faster in Bihar than all over India. Not only the literacy rate in Bihar has increased, the State also has

been able to reduce its Gender difference in literacy rates (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.189).

Expansion of Elementary Education: It is a known fact that a state's educational progress depends largely on the expansion of elementary education. In Bihar, the elementary education system had grown very gradually during the 1980's and 1990's (Ghosh, Rana, ADRI, 2011, p.15). There are some educational indicators which determine the status of education in the State such as literacy rate, enrolment ratio, drop out ratio rates and accessibility of education facility. The situation of elementary education largely depends on two crucial educational indices – high enrolment ratio (ER) and reduction in the drop-out rate. And these two indices are mostly influenced by the availability of educational infrastructure, such as schools, teachers etc. We have already discussed the literacy rate in Bihar. Let us see the condition of primary and secondary education in the State.

The Economic Survey of Bihar, 2011-12 shows that there are 42,307 Primary Schools and 25,958 upper Primary Schools in Bihar, taking the total number of elementary education schools to 70,640. The total enrolment in elementary Schools has increased at an annual rate of 8.2 percent during 2002-03 to 2009-10 (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.190).

In Bihar, the problem of children who were passing out of primary schools were that they were unable to get further admission in the upper primary due to non-availability of upper primary classes as well as long distance from their home. The problem remains even though the state government has taken measures by upgrading many primary schools to upper primary level during 2007-08 and 2008-09. During the period 2002-03 to 2009-10 the enrolment in upper primary classes had increased at an annual rate of 19.1 percent.

Table: 7.2**Total Enrolment in Primary and Upper Primary Level (2002-03 to 2009-10).**

| Year | Enrolment (in Lakh) | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| | All | | | SCs | | | STs | | |
| | Primary (I-V) | Upper Primary (VII-VIII) | Total (I-VIII) | Primary (I-V) | Upper Primary (VII-VIII) | Total (I-VIII) | Primary (I-V) | Upper Primary (VII-VIII) | Total (I-VIII) |
| 2002-03 | 92.28 | 11.70 | 103.97 | 15.52 | 1.37 | 16.89 | 0.96 | 0.09 | 1.05 |
| 2003-04 | 97.32 | 14.82 | 112.15 | 16.31 | 1.71 | 18.01 | 1.29 | 0.12 | 1.42 |
| 2004-05 | 109.17 | 19.36 | 128.53 | 18.03 | 2.37 | 20.40 | 1.22 | 0.17 | 1.39 |
| 2005-06 | 112.34 | 21.63 | 133.97 | 18.19 | 2.50 | 20.69 | 1.50 | 0.22 | 1.72 |
| 2006-07 | 125.27 | 25.62 | 150.89 | 22.12 | 3.37 | 25.49 | 2.28 | 0.28 | 2.57 |
| 2007-08 | 147.30 | 30.42 | 159.06 | 22.30 | 4.14 | 26.44 | 1.89 | 0.29 | 2.18 |
| 2008-09 | 132.01 | 35.22 | 167.23 | 22.48 | 4.91 | 27.39 | 1.49 | 0.30 | 1.79 |
| 2009-10 | 139.07 | 41.27 | 180.34 | 23.54 | 5.33 | 28.87 | 2.03 | 0.54 | 2.57 |
| CAGR | 6.6 | 19.1 | 8.2 | 6.6 | 22.1 | 8.5 | 9.6 | 25.3 | 11.5 |

Source: Department of Education, Government of Bihar.

So, it is seen that there has been improvement in the status of elementary education in Bihar. The enrolment of SCs and STs in Primary Education has also increased. It is very interesting to note that the enrolment of girls' students is increasing in comparison to the boys. It is seen that during 2002-03 to 2009-10 the enrolment of boys in Primary Schools has grown at an annual rate of 6.4 percent whereas for the girls', it is 6.8 percent (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p. 191). This disparity is much wider in the upper primary classes among the boys' and girls' in enrolment. The enrolment of girl students in the upper Primary level is much higher (23.7 percent) than the boys (17.9 percent). It is also seen among the disadvantages categories like SCs and STs.

Table: 7.3

Gender-wise Total Enrolment of Primary and Upper Primary Levels

| Year | Gender | Primary (in Lakh) | | | Upper Primary (in Lakh) | | |
|---------------------|--------|-------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | Total | SC | ST | Total | SC | ST |
| 2002-03 | Boys | 52.99 | 9.45 | 0.59 | 7.54 | 0.95 | 0.06 |
| | Girls | 39.29 | 6.06 | 0.37 | 4.16 | 0.42 | 0.03 |
| | Total | 92.29 | 15.52 | 0.96 | 11.70 | 1.37 | 0.09 |
| 2003-04 | Boys | 55.18 | 9.82 | 0.63 | 9.41 | 1.17 | 0.08 |
| | Girls | 42.14 | 6.48 | 0.41 | 5.42 | 0.54 | 0.04 |
| | Total | 97.32 | 16.31 | 1.04 | 14.82 | 1.71 | 0.12 |
| 2004-05 | Boys | 61.37 | 10.71 | 0.78 | 12.06 | 1.56 | 0.11 |
| | Girls | 47.80 | 7.32 | 0.63 | 7.30 | 0.80 | 0.06 |
| | Total | 109.16 | 18.03 | 1.31 | 19.36 | 2.37 | 0.17 |
| 2005-06 | Boys | 62.50 | 10.69 | 0.88 | 13.23 | 1.65 | 0.14 |
| | Girls | 49.83 | 7.50 | 0.61 | 8.41 | 0.86 | 0.08 |
| | Total | 112.34 | 18.19 | 1.50 | 21.63 | 2.50 | 0.22 |
| 2006-07 | Boys | 88.02 | 8.92 | 0.68 | 31.87 | 4.56 | 0.26 |
| | Girls | 37.47 | 6.04 | 0.43 | 21.80 | 2.67 | 0.15 |
| | Total | 125.49 | 14.97 | 1.10 | 53.67 | 7.22 | 0.42 |
| 2007-08 | Boys | 78.19 | 14.28 | 1.93 | 17.28 | 2.39 | 0.28 |
| | Girls | 68.11 | 11.52 | 1.62 | 13.06 | 1.56 | 0.20 |
| | Total | 146.30 | 25.81 | 3.55 | 30.34 | 3.94 | 0.48 |
| 2008-09 | Boys | 74.27 | 13.13 | 0.89 | 20.66 | 3.08 | 0.19 |
| | Girls | 57.74 | 9.35 | 0.60 | 14.56 | 1.83 | 0.12 |
| | Total | 132.01 | 22.49 | 0.50 | 35.22 | 4.92 | 0.31 |
| 2009-10 | Boys | 77.56 | 13.68 | 1.34 | 23.42 | 3.24 | 0.36 |
| | Girls | 61.52 | 9.85 | 0.73 | 17.85 | 2.09 | 0.18 |
| | Total | 139.08 | 23.54 | 2.03 | 41.27 | 5.33 | 0.54 |
| CAGR (Boys) | | 6.4 | 5.8 | 12.4 | 17.9 | 20.6 | 26.9 |
| CAGR (Girls) | | 6.8 | 7.9 | 12.2 | 23.7 | 27.5 | 29.7 |

Source: Department of Education, Government of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.192

There are a number of elementary education schools (both Primary and upper Primary). It has been increased at a double number of schools per one lakh population

from 60.2 in 2005-06 to 107.3 in 2008-09 within three years (Ghosh, Rana ADRI, 2011, p.16). Number of primary and upper primary schools had increased. The expansion of primary schools had increased from 51.7 thousand in 2005 –06 to 79.8 thousand in 2008 –09. And the upper primary school had increased from 2.1 thousand in 2005–06 to 20.8 thousands in 2008–09. The number of upper primary schools had increased at a doubling rate between, 2005 -2006 to 2010-11. It was found that the number of primary schools increased from about 38000 in 2004-05 to 41000 in 2010-11 and the number of government upper primary schools rose to over 25000 during 2010-11 from 11000 in 2004-05 (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.172).

Drop out Rates at all levels in Bihar: Now let us look at the dropout rates at primary, upper Primary, Secondary, Higher Secondary levels in Bihar. It will help us understand the situation of the elementary education system in Bihar. Though the State Government has improved the enrolment ratio in the State but the dropout rates among the students is a major problem in the state. Number of factors is responsible for the high dropout rates; such as inadequate school infrastructure, social disadvantage of the children, economic factors etc. Many of the families fail to send their children to school because of wage income, domestic work etc. So, the high enrolment ratio does not affect the status of education because of high drop-out rates. During 2001–02 the drop-out rates in primary, upper primary and secondary stages of education was 61.6 percent which was reduced to 42.5 percent in 2009–10. Nearly half of the students cannot get admission in standard V. The story does not end here. It continues in the upper primary levels also. Most of the students cannot reach to the upper primary level because of a number of reasons. During 2001–02 the total dropout rate at upper primary stage was very high and stood at 74.8 percent which has been reduced to 58.8 percent in 2009–10. It has also continued during secondary and higher secondary education.

Table: 7.4

Dropout Rates at Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels

| Year | Primary (I-V) | | | Upper Primary (I-VIII) | | |
|---------|-----------------|------|-------|--------------------------|------|-------|
| | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total |
| 2001-02 | 63.1 | 60.7 | 61.6 | NA | NA | 74.8 |
| 2002-03 | 62.4 | 62.1 | 58.2 | NA | NA | 74.9 |
| 2003-04 | 57.6 | 57.7 | 57.7 | NA | NA | 74.6 |
| 2004-05 | 48.6 | 53.4 | 51.6 | 73.3 | 71.3 | 72.1 |
| 2005-06 | 45.2 | 47.4 | 46.6 | 68.9 | 68.0 | 68.3 |
| 2006-07 | 45.7 | 46.4 | 46.1 | 60.1 | 62.8 | 61.8 |
| 2007-08 | 45.2 | 45.6 | 45.4 | 61.1 | 61.5 | 61.4 |
| 2008-09 | 44.6 | 45.1 | 45.0 | NA | NA | 60.3 |
| 2009-10 | 41.0 | 43.5 | 42.5 | 56.7 | 60.2 | 58.8 |
| Year | Secondary (I-X) | | | Higher Secondary (I-XII) | | |
| | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total |
| 2001-02 | NA | NA | 82.9 | NA | NA | NA |
| 2002-03 | NA | NA | 82.5 | NA | NA | NA |
| 2003-04 | NA | NA | 82.5 | NA | NA | NA |
| 2004-05 | 83.9 | 79.8 | 81.3 | 87.6 | 85.5 | 86.4 |
| 2005-06 | 83.8 | 79.7 | 81.3 | 86.3 | 84.6 | 85.2 |
| 2006-07 | 79.2 | 75.4 | 76.8 | 82.3 | 82.7 | 81.9 |
| 2007-08 | 75.6 | 72.6 | 73.7 | 83.7 | 82.0 | 82.6 |
| 2008-09 | NA | NA | 72.1 | 80.7 | 79.9 | 80.2 |
| 2009-10 | 67.0 | 69.9 | 68.8 | 73.4 | 76.3 | 75.2 |

Source: Department of Education, Government of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p. 193

Very low percentage of students those who enrol in standard I actually complete their secondary education as per the figures for 2009–10. It is also less in higher secondary education. They cannot complete their higher secondary education. The dropout rates of girl students were higher in the primary education level in 2005-

06 but during 2008–09 the dropout rate among the girl students came down in the primary, upper primary and secondary levels, still it is very high.¹State Government should have taken several initiatives to reduce the dropout rate. Special attention should be given to the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the society. Though the dropout rates of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes at the different stages of education are higher than the other students but it has come down in recent years. The dropout rate of students belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories has decreased during 2009–10. The girl Scheduled Castes student's dropout rate was higher than the boys at the secondary level from 2006–07 to 2008 –09 but during 2008 – 09 to 2009 –10 the dropout rate among SC girl students was lower than the boys. And it is also seen that the dropout rate of ST girl students was also lower than the boys at every level of education (GOB, Economic Survey, 2012-13, p.214).

¹ The Bihar Government had also claimed that from 2009-10 onwards, more than 33 lakh women have become literate through the implementation of Mukhyamantri Akshar Anchal Yojana. The decadal literacy rate among women has increased about 20 percent as per the 2011 census which was highest than the national average women literacy rate. Some other programmes such as, Mahadalit, Alsankyayak and Extremely Backward classes Akshar Anchal Yojana which was launched in 2013 and 9.69 lakh women at 26,126 centers have been benefited by these Yojanas. During the decade of 2001-2011, Bihar has witnessed great achievements in the literacy rate among the women and Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes. For this reason the State of Bihar has received National level award (See, Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2015, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d. & Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2010, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d.).

Table: 7.5**Dropout Rates (SC & ST) at Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary Levels.**

| Year | SC | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|------|-------|---------------|------|-------|-----------|------|-------|
| | Primary | | | Upper Primary | | | Secondary | | |
| | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total | Girls | Boys | Total |
| 2006-07 | 51.2 | 51.6 | 51.5 | 77.8 | 72.8 | 72.8 | 86.7 | 85.4 | 85.9 |
| 2007-08 | 51.0 | 53.3 | 52.4 | 70.3 | 71.8 | 71.2 | 86.0 | 83.0 | 84.1 |
| 2008-09 | 49.5 | 50.5 | 50.1 | 69.4 | 70.5 | 70.1 | 83.2 | 82.8 | 83.0 |
| 2009-10 | 49.7 | 50.9 | 50.4 | 69.8 | 72.7 | 71.6 | 80.7 | 81.4 | 81.1 |
| 2010-11 | 35.9 | 40.9 | 38.8 | 63.8 | 68.2 | 66.5 | 76.8 | 78.0 | 77.6 |
| Year | ST | | | | | | | | |
| 2006-07 | 32.4 | 35.7 | 34.5 | 61.6 | 79.8 | 66.9 | 81.9 | 83.8 | 83.0 |
| 2007-08 | 25.6 | 35.1 | 31.6 | 57.2 | 67.8 | 64.3 | 82.2 | 82.8 | 82.6 |
| 2008-09 | 29.2 | 30.9 | 30.3 | 55.8 | 65.0 | 61.9 | 75.9 | 79.6 | 78.4 |
| 2009-10 | 15.6 | 8.1 | 10.9 | 20.1 | 11.9 | 14.8 | 62.1 | 66.4 | 65.0 |
| 2010-11 | 19.8 | 31.6 | 27.1 | 46.1 | 56.5 | 52.6 | 66.8 | 70.9 | 69.5 |

Source: Department of Education, Government of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.194.

Expenditure on Education: The expenditure on education is very important for making improvements in the education sector. In 2001 –02 the share of expenditure on education in total expenditure on social services was 73.6 percent which was reduced to 49.7 percent in 2010–11. Although during the recent years the plan and non – plan expenditure on education has increased by more than double between 2007–08 and 2010–11 but the share of education in total budget has decreased from 20.4 percent in 2006 –07 to 15.8 percent in 2010 – 11. In 2010–11 the expenditure on education as percentage of the total budget was 15.8 percent which was increased to 16.8 percent in 2011 – 12. There was a huge increase in the elementary education budget from about Rs 5,600 crore in 2006-07 to over Rs 11,000 crore in 2010-11 (Singh & Stern, 2013, p.172). However, the total expenditure on education has increased during the recent years. So, it is clear that the state Government has made efforts for the progress of education in the state (GOB, Economic Survey, 2012-13, p.215).

Table: 7.6

Expenditure on Education in Bihar

| Year | Expenditure on Education (Rs. in Crore) | | | Expenditure on Education | |
|---------|--|----------|----------|-------------------------------------|---|
| | Plan | Non-Plan | Total | As percentage of total Budget | As percentage of Expenditure on Social Services |
| 2007-08 | 1046.26 | 4741.76 | 5788.02 | 18.3 | 54.3 |
| 2008-09 | 1565.52 | 5099.47 | 6664.99 | 17.9 | 51.7 |
| 2009-10 | 1585.02 | 5958.68 | 7543.70 | 17.6 | 52.7 |
| 2010-11 | 3356.97 | 4667.28 | 8024.25 | 15.8 | 49.7 |
| 2011-12 | 3499.41 | 6585.91 | 10085.32 | 16.8 | 51.6 |
| CAGR | 37.40 | 5.85 | 13.84 | -- | -- |

Source: Department of Education, Government of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2012-13, p.216.

Programmes: The Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) plays an important role for the improvement of elementary education. Through this programme the enrolment of the children and their retention has increased in the school. The scheme has also affected the nutrition status of the children and social equity. It is a central scheme but implemented by the state government. The Mid Day Meal Scheme programme was universalized in 2005 in all primary schools and also in the learning centre's. In 2007 it has been extended to upper primary classes and in 2008 it was universalized at the elementary level.

In 2008-09 in primary school the coverage of Mid Day Meal Scheme was 70.9 percent which decreased to 53.8 percent in 2009-10 and 54.7 percent in 2010-11. It leads to low level of enrolment in primary schools. In the upper primary schools, the situation was almost the same in 2008-09. The coverage of Mid Day Meal Scheme was 81.2 percent but during 2009-10 and 2010-11 it was reduced to 47.1 percent and 48.3 percent respectively.

Table: 7.7**Coverage of MDMS in Bihar (2008-09 to 2010-11)**

| Year | Class - I to V | | | Class – VI to VIII | | |
|---------|---------------------------|---|---------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| | Total Enrolment (in Lakh) | No. of Children Availing MDMS per day (in Lakh) | Coverage percentage | Total Enrolment (in Lakh) | No. of Children Availing MDMS per day (in Lakh) | Coverage percentage |
| 2008-09 | 138.70 | 98.27 | 70.9 | 38.8 | 31.51 | 81.2 |
| 2009-10 | 144.77 | 77.91 | 53.8 | 43.37 | 20.41 | 47.1 |
| 2010-11 | 144.77 | 79.19 | 54.7 | 43.37 | 20.94 | 48.3 |

Source: MDMS, Government of Bihar, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.196

The coverage of Mid-Day Meal Scheme is not being equally distributed in most of the districts in Bihar. There are wide district wise disparities in the coverage of Mid-Day Meal Scheme. Though the Mid-Day Meal Scheme increased the enrolment and retention in primary and upper primary level but in recent years from the survey on Mid-Day Meal Scheme it is seen that there are a number of problems in the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in primary and upper primary schools in Bihar. The problem includes irregular supplies of the midday meal in many of the schools, very low-quality food and so on (Ghosh, Rana, ADRI, 2011, p, 23). There are district wise differences in the coverage of Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Bihar. During 2010–11 at the primary level the low coverage districts were Khagaria (29.4 percent), Samastipur (31.6 percent) and Madhubani (32.8 percent) and the high coverage districts in the primary level were west Champaran (86.6 percent), Lakhsarai (84.7 percent) and Kaimur (81.9 percent). At the upper primary level, the low coverage districts were Sheikhpura (17.6 percent), Katihar (27.3 percent) and Patna (29.1 percent). In 2010–11 the high coverage districts at the upper primary level were Kaimur (96.8 percent), Madhubani (76.4 percent) and Arwal (72.4 percent) etc. (GOB, Economic Survey 2011–12, p.197). In recent years it has been noticed that the fund allocation by the Government for MDMS has increased. During 2008- 09 the total

allocation for MDMS has been increased from Rs.538.5 lakh to 11.00 crore in 2009 –10.² Under this the funds are also sanctioned for other incidental expenses such as staff salary including salaries for MIS coordinators and data entry operators, furniture, computers hardware and consumables and internal and external monitoring and evaluation. During 2008–09 and 2009–10, all sanctioned funds were totally utilized. The overall allocation of capacity building and training of the staff has not changed over these two years. The expenditure on staff salary was 32 percent in 2009–10.

Apart from these during 2005–06 the State Government introduced another incentive scheme for the development of elementary education. State government with its own resources has provided free text books, Scholarships for Scheduled caste/ tribal students and has also provided free uniform to all the students of class III to V and this is also continued for girl students in classes VI – VIII. This scheme helps the students most and it is widely implemented in the state (Ghosh & Rana, ADRI, 2011).

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

It is a flagship programme launched by the Central government to achieve the universalization of education in the country. The government introduced it in 2001–02 in Bihar in all the districts. And the Bihar Education Project Council (BEPC) has played a major role for implementing the SSA in the state. There are various objectives of SSA. Among them two main aims of the SSA were to acquire the goal of Universal Primary Education by 2007 and Universal Elementary Education by 2010. And also, to reduce all gender and social category gaps at primary stage and at Elementary Education level by

² The Government had also claimed that the State Government has targeted to provide meal to 98,02,783 lakh Boys and Girls in Class – I to V of State Government school, Government aided school, Madarasa, Makhtab Sanskrit school and also in special training centre. Through the Mid-day-meal programme the State Government has also tried to increase parents' participation of targeted class children. The Mid-day-meal are being provided daily in these schools from March, 2008. State Government has taken also initiatives for the daily monitoring of MDMS which is carried out by Interactive Voice Response System. If any problem arises related to the mid-day-meal, State Government will take necessary steps in this regard (See, Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2015, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d. & Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2010, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d.).

2007 and by 2010 were the second main objective of SSA (Kaushal & Patra, n.d. p.2). The other objectives of SSA are capacity building of teachers, providing average number of teachers and keeping teacher – student ratio at the desired level, developing school infrastructure and building Village Education Council (Village Education Committee) at the Gram Sansad (Village Council) level by providing (ensuring) community participation. The programme was implemented in the first year of the 11th plan on a cost sharing basis between central and State Governments in the ratio of 65:35 in 2007-08 and in the second year i.e. 2008–09 of the 11th plan the ratio was equal but during the recent years the funding pattern of SSA has undergone some changes, in 2009–10 the shares of central and state governments were 60:40 and 2010–11 it was 55:45 (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p.197).

It is through the Bihar Education Project Council the Government of Bihar has made a number of innovations for bringing the out of school children back to the schooling system. Such as Utthan Kendra's for children belonging to the Mahadalit categories, for Muslim children at the age of 6 – 10, Talimi Markaj, Utpreran Kendra for the children in the age group 11 – 14 years and to provide non- residential and residential bridge courses BEPC also made Maktab Madarsa Kendra for Muslim Children. Through the Utthan Kendra's BEPC had succeeded to reduce the number of the out of school children. Much progress was seen through the Maktab Madarsa Kendra's.³ State Government has increased a number of innovative learning centres for the reduction of out – of – school children in the schooling system. From the Economic Survey, GOB, 2010–11 it is observed that the state government has recently

³The Bihar Government also had claimed that the State of Bihar has succeeded to bring 23 lakh out of school children at the age group of 6 to 14 into schools. In 2005 the out of school children were in large number whereas in recent years, it has been reduced. It further claimed that under the 'Vidyalaya Chalo Kendra Programme' number of Programmes has been launched such as Prayas Kendra, Maktab Madarsa Kendra, Talimi Markaj Kendra, Utthan Kendra, Utpreran Kendra which has ensured that more children have been added to the mainstream of the education system in the State. These new innovations have been made for bringing the out of school children back to the schooling system. The state document further claimed Under 'Mukhyamantri Balika Poshak Yojana' scheme funds are distributed for purchasing of school uniforms among the boys and girls from classes I to III. Apart from this the free text books have also been provided to each and every student (See, Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2015, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d. & Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2010, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d.).

started the award in the name of Mukhya Mantri Samagra Shiksha Puraskar for school, Panchayat, blocks and districts having distinction of covering all out of school children and ensuring 80 percent attendance. The State government has allocated sufficient funds for the implementation of SSA programme. The funds are distributed among different components of the schooling system. The SSA fund is very carefully distributed among different heads like teacher's salary, teacher's training, distribution of free textbooks, community mobilization, teaching – learning equipment, resources centre's, research/ evaluation etc. Though the negative side is that that the utilization of SSA funds has declined from 61.3 percent in 2008– 09 to 50.3 percent in 2009–10 (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011-12, p. 198).

Higher Education

A state's economy depends on the status of higher education in a state. The role of higher education is very important for a growing economy in Bihar. In Bihar the higher education sector is divided into general and technical/professional colleges and universities. There were 20 universities in the state in 2011 which was 13 from 2008 onwards. So the apex institutions for higher education have increased. During 2011 there were 815 colleges in Bihar. Among these colleges 451 are government colleges, 97 local body colleges and 267 colleges of other types (GOB, Economic Survey, 2011–12, p. 200). Since 2007 the number of colleges has remained the same. A number of teacher training centres have been opened up for the improvement of quality education and skill development in the State. In 2011 there were 35 teachers training centres. The teacher training centers have been made for the expansion of elementary and secondary education in the state. Comparatively the number of institutions for technical education is very limited in Bihar. The state government has been allotted sufficient resources in the field of higher education. But the less number of government institutions are unable to fulfil the entire demand for higher education. For this reason, a number of private institutions have been set up in the state which imparts technical, medical and vocational education. During 2008–2009 there were 164 private institutions which increased to 252 in 2011. Bihar has tried to improve the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) sector and has laid more emphasis

on e-governance for increasing economic growth in the state. Several IT initiatives have been taken by the state government which includes e-Shakti, Jankari, Bihar Knowledge Centre etc (Singh & Stern, 2013, 337).

Let us come to the enrolment status in higher education in Bihar. It is a very noticeable fact that the share of female students in different streams like arts, science and commerce is low than the male students. And it continued in 2008–09. However, the highest enrolment is in courses from arts category. During 2008–09 the enrolment of female students in Arts has increased compared to previous years. The enrolment in Commerce stream has not increased even though the enrolment in other Institutes such as professional and vocation education increased (GOB, Economic Survey, 2010–11, p.225). But in engineering there was an increase in enrolment of male students with 37.78 percent, whereas, female students increased only by 20.56 per cent. Therefore, it can be said that there is a continuous gender gap in higher education in the state which the government had failed to address.

There was a 16.28 percent increase in enrolment in female SC students in 2008–09 in Arts as compared to 2007–08. But in commerce there was a decline of female SC students in the same period. Particularly there was a less numbers of enrolments of male SC students in higher education including engineering. In higher education number of female SC students has increased in Arts, Education and Polytechnic. In short, there was a considerable decrease in the enrolment of male SC students in Arts, engineering i.e. all courses of higher education whereas the enrolment of female SC students has increased in Arts, Education and Polytechnic (GOB, Economic Survey, 2010–11, p.225).

So it can be said that the overall enrolment of female students has increased in the courses of higher education especially in Arts. Besides, it is also seen that the share of female students is much lower in Science and in Commerce. But in Engineering and Polytechnic institutes the female enrolment is lower whereas the female enrolment is comparatively higher in medicine. From the above it is clear that there was a gender gap which existed in higher education in Bihar (GOB, Economic Survey, 2010–11, p.226). Though the literacy rate, enrolment ratio has increased in Bihar. Besides dropout rate has also decreased. In spite of these it is found that still the

literacy rate in the state lag behind the national average. It is also seen in female literacy rate in the state. In later years within the study period there was some improvement that has taken place in terms of educational indicators of enrolment, access, Dropout rate etc. As per the DISE (District Information System for Education) data the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary classes is 135.53 as against the 115.63 for all states (Patnaik, Journal of Social and Economic Studies, Jan – June 2012, p.93).

As per the Economic Survey 2011 we note that there was a reduction in the dropout rates of boys and girls between 2002 and 2009 at the primary, the upper primary and the Secondary levels. About 17 percentage points has been reduced at the primary level whereas at the upper primary and the secondary levels it was 15 and 11 percentage points (Journal of Social and Economic studies, Vol. XXI, No.2, 2011, p.132). At the primary level the dropout rate of children among SC households is higher than ST households. Besides dropout rate among ST households has increased to more than the state averages. Not only that drop-out rates are also higher among the lower backward castes and girls also. There are various reasons for dropouts from school which is as follows – household work, compulsion to earn money, the lack of interest in studies, social and cultural norms, migration of families. There are some other causes which are also responsible for dropout rate of children such as lack of access, failure in exams, non – flexibility in school timing, early marriage etc. Generally, girls leave the school due to household work and boys cannot complete their education because of their earning necessities or economic activities (Patnaik & Deshpande, 2011, p.132).

According to the DISE data, during the year 2006–07 it was seen that the majority of school imparting elementary education were operating in the rural areas. Majority of schools are government schools. It is seen that the number of primary and upper primary schools has increased due to the impact of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Under SSA it is also found that there is a significant progress in enrolment in the elementary schools. There are other incentives which are provided by the state government such as free text books, Uniform, Stationeries and free mid-day meal all these contributed to the school for better education system. Hence what we have noted is that SSA has created a huge demand for secondary education and

would take necessary actions for setting up of a large number of schools at that level (Patnaik, 2012, p.93).

The enrolment of students has increased. In spite of these non – enrolment in school existed and exists in Bihar. There are various reasons for the non – enrolment of students in schools in Bihar. The percentage of non – enrolment across different ages is higher in Bihar than the national average. There are three main reasons for non – enrolment in schools. They are; lack of interest among the parents; education is not considered necessary and financial constraints. As economic constraints seem to be the important reason for parents to keep away or withdraw children from school, so the State Government should emphasize more on other facilities such as free uniform, free books, mid-day meals etc. The State Government however has taken different initiatives for the improvement in the education system and ensures better enrolment and retention of children in schools (Journal of Social and Economic studies, VOL, XXI, NO.2. 2011, p. 134).

Schools in Bihar (in relation to population) when compared with national figures are less in numbers all in case of primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary level. For every 10000 population Bihar has 4.9 primary schools where as at the national level it is 6.3 as of September 2002. The unavailability of teachers and the teacher –pupil ratio is another constraint in the education system in Bihar. All the indicators of education are lower than that of the national level (Patnaik & Deshpande, Journal of Social and Economic Studies, VOL.XXI, NO.2, 2011,p. 135). Besides it has also been observed that as per the ASER (Annual Status of Education Report, 2012) report the learning outcome in Bihar is lower than the many other states.

As per the DISE data and CSS the infrastructure facilities is not satisfactory though DISE data reveals that the basic facilities such as common toilets, separate toilet for girls, drinking water facilities had improved during 2005–2006. But the commissions in its visit to some selected schools found that the picture was different. They found that in most of the schools there was inadequate toilet facilities or there were no toilet facilities. In one school in Patna which was visited by the commission did not even have a hand pump for drinking water for the school. In

several classes there were no blackboard and some good schools had no boundary walls. In most of the schools visited by the commission the presence of students was much less than 50 percent of those enrolled. Bihar still struggles to provide a good number of class rooms for each grade. According to the DISE data 2006-07 Bihar has a depressing figure of 2800 schools at primary schools and 15 upper primary schools without a class room. The commission's visit in some schools shows that two classes were held in the same room. In the capital city of Patna, it was seen that all the classes from I to V were taken in a single rectangular verandah under a roof which is made from straw or reeds. In several schools the post of the head teacher or Headmaster was still not filled. There were inadequate facilities in the secondary schools and also the existence of inadequate library facilities. DISE data has made a comparison between Kerala and Bihar. They had found that 83% of primary and 80% upper primary schools in Kerala have common toilet facilities whereas Bihar has toilet facilities in only 38% primary and 66% upper primary schools. It indicates that most of the schools of Kerala have common toilet facilities whereas in Bihar only 16.2% schools have girl's toilet facilities. This situation had affected the girls' and it can be held as one the reasons behind the lower participation of girls in the primary education in Bihar (Kaushal & Patra, DISE & CSSC, ADRI, 2007).

So, in order to strengthen the elementary education system in Bihar the new government had taken some serious steps in 2006-07. The new government which was formed in 2005 constituted a commission on Common Schooling System in August 2006. The main task of the commission was to prepare a plan action for implementing a common schooling system in the state which will ensure universalization of elementary education by 2012-13 (Ghosh & Rana, 2011. p.3). The commission submitted its report in June 2007. The commission recommended a number of norms and standard for quality education for all children and a system of teacher education in the state. The commission had also estimated the financial resources for the implementation of common schooling system. The recommendations which were provided by the common school system commission are as follows:

- i. There should be a uniform pattern of schooling in the state, with primary from grade I to V, middle from grade I to VIII and secondary including senior secondary from grade IX to XII.
- ii. At present the state government under the SarvaSikha Abhiyan has been providing books and stationery to girl, schedule caste and schedule Tribe students' up to the elementary level i.e. class VIII. The CSS has recommended that these be provided to all students upto class VIII.They have opined that books and stationery are a very necessary means of learning which are covered under the heading "free" education (according to Article 21A of the constitution of India, has to be provided to all children within the age group 6 – 14).
- iii. The CSS recommended supplying two sets of school uniforms to all school children in the age group 6–14 by the state government. As school uniforms makes a sense of identity of a particular school community.It is also to be mentioned here that in the poverty – stricken areas of the state, uniforms meet one of the minimum requirements for the children so that they can reach school in a presentable form side by side uniforms determines self-respect& confidence among the children. Uniforms should be prescribed by the Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti (V.S.S) for each school in consultation with parents and students. Government must be provided each V.S.S. a cash grant for the usage of uniforms at a reasonable rate per child per year.
- iv. Mid-day meal has become an essential part of the elementary school system in India as well as in all states. According to the CSS the mid – day meals created a massive distraction from teaching. Children are not concentrating on their studies rather than thinking about the meal. The CSS is of the opinion that most of the problems related to the mid – day – meal scheme can be solved by the adoption of suitable right measures. The problem related to mid-day meal Scheme are erratic supply of food grains, lack of storage facilities etc. For this reason, FCI supplies are to be lifted from the district go downs. As a result, there is a disruption in supply of mid-Day meals due to lack of adequate storage facilities. They

recommended that the mid-day meal should be cooked and served in the compound or the school. There must be a requirement of a shed within the school compound for cooking the mid – day meal. The state government should provide financial steps for the construction of the shed and for providing utensils for cooking & serving the meal. Besides, there is a need for additional storage space for at least a fortnight's supply. It was further observed that the coverage of MDMS is not full or only partial since about 28% Government and Government aided schools are not covered under MDMS (Patnaik, 2012, p.93).

The CSS recommended that the mid-day meal scheme should be in the hands of school community so that the barriers of caste, class and religion can be abolished. They do not favour private – public participation for providing mid – day meals not any commercialization of the scheme. The scheme should be extended up to class VIII. There is a provision of mid-day meal to students in classes I to V at present. But the CSS recommended that the scheme should be provided up to class VIII to remove discrimination among the children in the same school. The state government should provide to the student's nutritional supplement along with mid – day meal, which are cheaply available like banana, sweet potato etc.

The MDMS have become popular and a large number of children have participated in this scheme. The scheme plays an important role for the improvement of the enrolment rate of elementary education in the state. The improvement of the quality of the meal is very necessary so that more and more participation of children is possible. As per Article 21 A of the constitution to provide free & compulsory education to all children in the age group 6–14 is essential. So the CSS recommended that the government must ensure that the street children and the children employed as labour are also enrolled and retained in the schools for elementary education. So, child labour should be abolished.

The CSS recommended that Govt. should provide bicycles to all girl students in classes IX to XII who cannot reach school for long distance from their native. If it happens, it will help girl students a lot for ensuring higher level of attendance of girl students in school. It will create a sense of confidence and self-assurance among these

students. Bicycles should be provided to those girl students who have to travel for more than 3 kms. The state government has provided girls hostels in existing schools where there is adequate availability of land (CSSC, ADRI, 2007).

Though the state government accepted the recommendations of the commission but not completely, but the state government made a number of interventions for the improvement in the elementary education system. And the state government has provided bicycle to the girl students (Patnaik, 2012, p.95). There is a shortage of secondary schools. The state government should have taken initiatives for the improvement of the quality of secondary education.

There is another major problem which is very much crucial for poor literacy rates in Bihar i.e. poor rate of attendance in schools. Ghosh & Rana (2011) have noted that although the enrolment ratio increased but that does not mean they are regularly present in school. From the school records and household survey's it is found that about 70.75 per cent students have attended the schools. Though there has been some improvement in the rate of attendance in spite of these state government needs to work hard. The reasons behind poor rate of attendance are parental indifference, inadequate infrastructure, poor functioning of the MDMS etc. This was stated by the headmaster of the schools. However, to them the poor functioning of the MDMS is the main reason for the poor attendance of children. The headmaster's who are the very functionaries and responsible for the management of the scheme have admitted that the MDMS is very irregular (Ghosh & Rana, 2011, p.27). Although parents interviewed have mentioned that lack of interest of the child because of low quality of infrastructure in school, illness and the school authorities have also mentioned that the poor functioning of the MDMS is also the main reason for the poor attendance of students. Another important cause of poor attendance of students in school is child labor mostly for domestic work and sometimes for economic activities. Teachers should have taken the responsibility of these students such as motivational effort and make them aware about their poor attendance in school.

It has been found that from the colonial period there had been depressing literacy scenario in Bihar. But in recent years the state government with the

Collaboration of the Central Government has taken several initiatives for the development in the education sector particularly for promoting elementary education through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) which was launched in 2000–2001. It is more effective when the Mid – Day- Meal programme was universalized through the country including Bihar. In 2005 after the installation of new government in Bihar there had been some changes in the education sector. The JD (U) government had taken some serious efforts to strengthen elementary education in Bihar. It became true when the state government had constituted a commission on common schooling system in 2006 with the objective of preparing a plan of action for implementing a system that would ensure the universalization of elementary education by 2012–13 (Ghosh & Rana, 2011, p.72). The CSSC made some recommendations but the state government did not accept all the recommendations of CSSC because of inadequate financial resources. But during 2006–07 the state government had made some interventions in the state’s elementary education system.

The educational indicators such as access, enrolment, drop-out rate clearly shows that there has been some improvement in the years or period of our study. Though the education indicators in Bihar are very much low as compared to the national average. According to DISE data the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary classes is 135.53 as against the national average of 115.63 during 2009-10 and the GER for upper primary classes is 53.38% as compared to 75.80 for all states. Prabhat P. Ghosh & Kumar Rana in their article entitled ‘Elementary Education in Bihar Progress and Challenges’ have discussed about child enrolment in Bihar. They present a different picture. From the official records they have derived a conclusion that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for primary classes had increased from 92.1 in 2005-06 to 95.9 in 2008-09. It also increased in case of upper primary classes from 32.0 percent during 2005-06 to 92.7 percent during 2008-09. Their survey reveals that the overall enrolment ratio in elementary education is still very high-98.1 percent for all children (6-14 years) (Ghosh & Rana, ADRI, p.74). However it can be said that the estimate of dropout and enrolment with the national average was much less hence it was necessary for the state government to give more attention on enhancing enrolment

rate, check the dropout rate particularly among the girls and also to reduce the gender parity on all parameters of educational development.

During 2005-06 through the free uniform scheme the enrolment ratio increased and from a survey conducted by ADRI, it revealed that about 48.6 per cent students have benefitted from the scheme. The girl students benefitted more (62.3 percent) than the boy students (36.5 per cent). The government is unable to universalize the scheme due to lack of adequate funds. But the scheme to Ghosh & Rana has strengthened elementary education in Bihar (Ghosh & Rana, 2011, p.65). As we have already discussed earlier that there are four incentive schemes for the students in elementary schools in Bihar, they are Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), Free textbooks, Free Uniform and Scholarship. Nearly 70 percent of students at that time have benefitted from the two schemes i.e. mid-day meal scheme and free text books scheme. But during the recent years the MDMS has shown some decline. Some reasons for the declining scenario of the MDMS scheme are; irregular supply of mid-day meal and the poor quality of meals served. The state government should strengthen the monitoring mechanism for effective implementation of the scheme (Patnaik, 2012, p.93). But the other two schemes namely free uniform and scholarships have increased the regular attendance of the students in the schools.

So far as the school infrastructure is concerned the infrastructure facilities in the schools are not well constructed or are very inadequate in Bihar. It has been found that not less than one fifth of the buildings were not possessed or owned by the schools and an equal proportion of schools operate in non-waterproof buildings. Even some primary classes are held just under a tree not in a building. From the survey some shortages are found in elementary schools. They are:

- i) Lack of drinking water facilities
- ii) Without toilet
- iii) Without separate toilet facilities for girls
- iv) Without blackboards in the schools
- v) Without adequate kit.

It was found that even the classrooms for primary classes are not available. For that reason standard I and II almost everywhere share a single classroom. It is also to be

pointed out that there is no furniture in the classrooms. As a result, students have to sit on the dusty and uneven floor. The same problem is also found in case of upper primary schools. About one fourth of the upper primary schools do not have a boundary wall and one third of them cannot be safely locked. Some of the common facilities are also not available in upper primary schools such as without drinking water facilities within premises, without toilets for girls. The same problems are also seen in case of classrooms in upper primary school. Here also students of lower classes have share their classrooms.

A school cannot run without the teachers. For a successful functioning of the school, physical infrastructure is very necessary as well as teachers. But from the survey conducted by Ghosh & Rana on elementary education it is found that the strength of teaching personnel for the elementary schools in Bihar is very inadequate/limited. In a primary school the average number of teachers is 3.6 as against the average number of sanctioned posts of 5.4. Numbers of posts are still lying vacant (Ghosh & Rana, ADRI, 2011).

From 2006-07 the elementary education system in Bihar has been widened to a large extent. The number of teachers and schools has also increased. The state government decided to recruit 1.50 lakh additional teachers in elementary schools. During 2008-09 the state government had allotted 1.18 lakh teachers and their number increased from 2.05 lakh in 2005-06 to 3.23 lakh in 2008-09.⁴ During this period Bihar has witnessed huge demand for education. As a result, there has been some improvement among the marginalized sections of the population. They have become socially and politically empowered. Under the regime of JD (U) the educational system has resulted in the near universalization of enrolment of children in the age group of 6-14 years.

⁴The Government later on in a document claimed that the State Government has also succeeded to fill the vacant posts of teachers. Nearly 2.40 lakh teachers have been contractually appointed. About 1947 Librarians appointed. A sum of 20,241 teachers is contractually recruited in various subjects in Secondary schools (See, Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2005-2015, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d. & Government of Bihar, Marching Ahead, Agenda of Good Governance, 2010-2015, Government of Bihar, Patna, n.d).

Though Bihar had shown some appreciable achievements in the education sector in the period of our study and also in recent years, in spite of these the attendance of students in the school is still low and their learning achievements are much below the desired level. Some other problems, which are faced by the state happens to be shortage of teachers and inadequate physical infrastructure. Two institutional mechanisms- the Vidyalaya Shiksha Samity (VSS) and the Gram Panchayat (GP) which are responsible for monitoring the working of local elementary schools have now become dysfunctional. So it has been suggested that the state government should activate the VSSs and the GPs to lay stress on the educational challenges.

So from the above discussion and analyses it is seen that since 2000 and more particularly under the JD (U) government there has been some remarkable progress in the educational sector. The government once again was re-elected for another term. Thus it can be said that their constant effort to strengthen the elementary education has paid them political benefits as well. It was expected that the state government will take some further steps to improve the elementary schooling system in Bihar. In spite of these a number of challenges prevail. The existence of drop-out rate still is high at all stages particularly at the upper primary school level. The JD (U) government did try to reach all the marginal sections of the society but had not succeeded wholly. We note that the State government though have taken several other initiatives to reduce the drop-out rate despite this drop-out rate is still high in the state. So government needs to pay more attention to reduce the dropout rate at all levels of education in the state.