

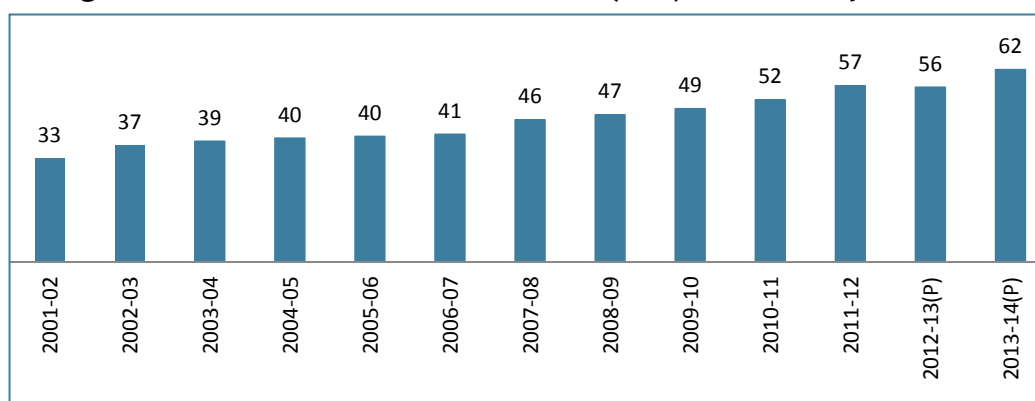
INEQUALITIES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION: A STUDY OF RASHTRIYA MADHYAMIK SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (RMSA)

Introduction

Secondary education is an important stage in the school education ladder as it equips students with skills important for higher education and the labour market. Besides helping students to choose different career avenues, secondary education has a far reaching effect in developing a clear understanding on various socio-economic and political issues. It helps in empowering the marginalised communities and strengthens democratic values (World Bank, 2005). However, in India, for the past several years, policy and financial priorities accorded have been more in favour of elementary education than to the secondary education. Now that India has achieved near universalisation of elementary education, it is important that it focusses on providing quality secondary education to its growing young population. With so many stakes on the secondary education it is important to have a holistic approach towards secondary education that ensures accessibility to quality secondary education for all and the necessary skills that match with the dynamic world of work.

India has achieved considerable growth at the level of secondary education with the Gross Enrolment ratio (GER)¹ increasing from 33 percent in 2001-02 to 62 percent in 2013-14 (P) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Trends in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at Secondary Education



Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, MHRD, 2014

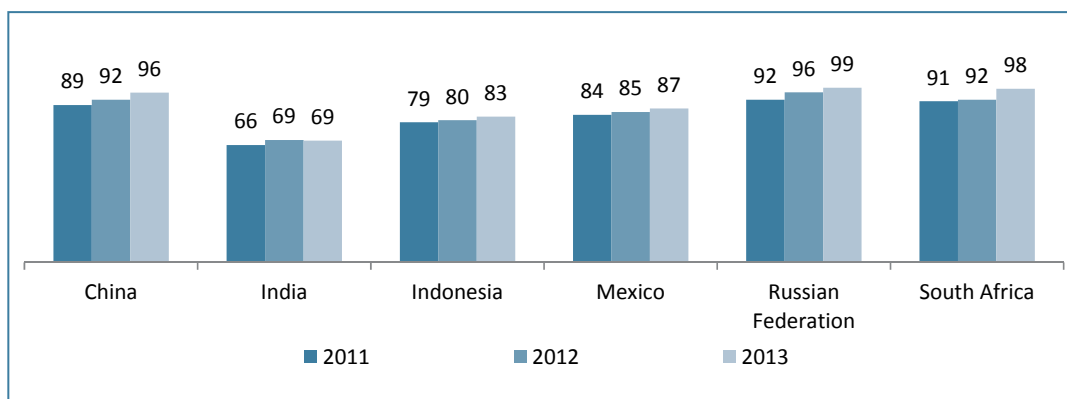
However, the picture looks dismal if the GER for India is compared with the other BRICSAM² countries. As can be seen in the Figure 2 given below, India still lags behind

¹ Total enrolment in secondary education (Grades IX-XII), regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official secondary school-age population (15 to 17+ years) in a given school-year.

² BRICSAM stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, Mexico and Indonesia

China, Russia and South Africa. While these three countries are about to achieve 100 percent GER, India stands far below, with a poor 69 percent GER at the secondary level.

Figure 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio at Secondary Level of Education (in Percent)



Source: UNESCO Database

Besides having a lower GER as compared to the other BRICSAM countries, the enrolment rates are also not uniform across regions and communities. There are stark differences in enrolment, educational facilities available in different states across the country and for children from the marginalised communities such as Schedule Castes (SCs), Schedule Tribes (STs), Muslims and girls.

To provide a thrust to secondary education and ensure equity at the level of secondary education, Government of India launched a flagship programme called Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) in March, 2009. The main objective of this programme is to enhance access to quality secondary education and address persistent inequality at the secondary level of education. The programme aims to provide universal access to secondary level education by 2017. As we approach the final year of the 12th five year plan; and the timeline for achieving the stated targets under RMSA, it is a good point in time to assess the role of the programme in bridging inequality at the secondary level of education.

In this Policy Brief we look at the performance of RMSA in two states, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh - one, a relatively poor and the other, a relatively better performing state in terms of educational achievement. For instance, as per the U-DISE (2014-15), the GER at the secondary level for Bihar is 31 while it is 100 for Himachal Pradesh in 2014-15. Similarly, there is a stark difference in the pupil-teacher ratio for both the states; it is 64 for Bihar and 17 for Himachal Pradesh. These differences in educational achievements stem, in part, from their different historical and socio-economic contexts which have shaped the scenario with respect to education in these states (Dreze, 1999). Furthermore, a World Bank study shows that focusing on a wide range of issues such as land reforms, infrastructure facilities, employment, health etc. helps in creating an inclusive environment. This has an enabling effect on human development indicator including education. A few decades' back educational indicators of both Himachal Pradesh and Bihar used to be similar; however, Himachal Pradesh has rationally used its resources in these areas thus improving access to school education. Bihar, which lags behind on many of these areas has a much unequal society thus affecting its educational indicators.

In this context, the objective of this Policy Brief is to understand how responsive the design of RMSA is towards bridging the gap in educational attainments among SCs, STs and girls and the rest of the population, and how far it addresses the challenges faced by these marginalised groups. Further, it also looks at the budgetary priorities of the Union and the state governments and assess whether the interventions designed under RMSA to address the problem of inequity in secondary education are backed by adequate budget. The analysis is based on secondary data sources such as data on school education by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development, U-DISE Flash statistics by National University of Educational Planning and Administration, Union and State budget documents.

Inequality at the Secondary Level: How are the states performing?

In India, classes IX and X are designated as the secondary levels (or lower secondary) and classes XI and XII as senior/higher secondary levels. The official age group for the secondary level is 14-16 years and for the higher secondary level it is 16-18 years. There are 12.4 crore children in the 14 to 18 years of age group, of which about 67 percent children attend educational institutes (Census, 2011). Educational indicators like enrolment rate, transition rate, etc. vary across communities and regions. After six years of implementing RMSA, secondary education is still a distant reality for the marginalised sections of the society such as SCs, STs, Muslims and girls; who are underrepresented in secondary education when compared to their respective shares in the total population.

Enrolment

In the last ten years, India has witnessed an increase in enrolment at the secondary education level. The enrolment numbers for the country increased from 2.8 crore in 2001 to 5.9 crore in 2013-14. However, these figures are not uniform across regions and different social groups. For example, at the national level, only 8.5 percent and 6.5 percent of the ST population are enrolled in secondary and senior secondary level respectively, which is the lowest among all the marginalised communities. A similar pattern of inequality can be seen at the level of states under study - Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. The difference in the proportion of enrolment of the SC/ST and Muslim children as compared to the General category is high in case of both Bihar and Himachal Pradesh (Table 1). One can see huge difference in the enrolment rates even for the General category between these two states. While the enrolment for the General category in Himachal Pradesh is 51.2 percent and 54 percent at the secondary and higher secondary level respectively, it is 18.3 percent and 28.2 percent respectively for Bihar (Table 1).

Table 1: Percentage Enrolment by Caste 2014-15

	SECONDARY				SENIOR SECONDARY			
	GENERAL	SC	ST	MUSLIM	GENERAL	SC	ST	MUSLIM
INDIA	28.3	18.7	8.5	10.0	33.0	17.6	6.5	8.4
BIHAR	18.3	14.6	1.4	11.5	28.2	12.7	1.7	10.9
HIMACHAL PRADESH	51.2	27.3	5.9	1.4	54.2	23.5	6.0	0.9

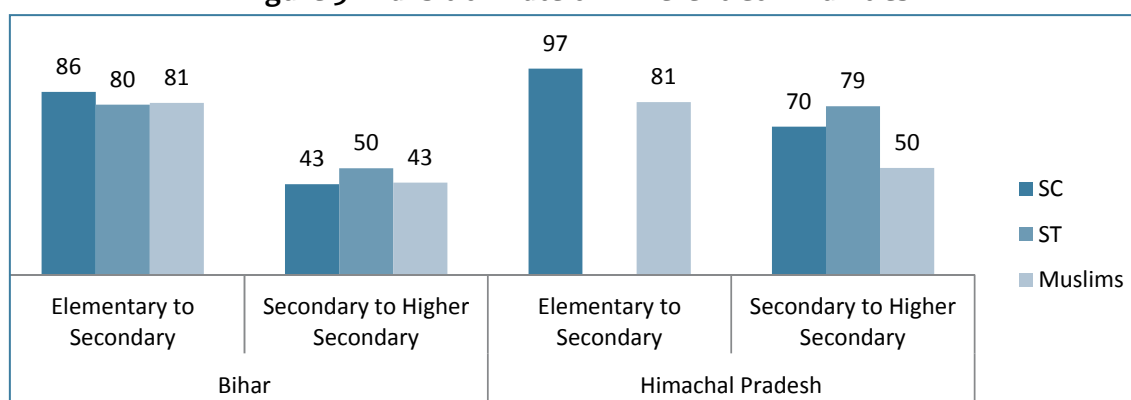
Source: U-DISE Secondary Education Flash Statistics 2014-15

Transition Rate³

Transition from elementary to the secondary level is an important and challenging stage of the school system. It is important because if this stage is not tackled properly, the whole idea of providing universal access to education fails (World Bank, 2005 and Siddhu, 2010). Though transition from elementary to secondary level is relatively better, it is problematic at the higher secondary level. As per the DISE data for the year 2014, the national transition rate from elementary to secondary level is fairly good at 92.6 percent but it drops drastically to 68.3 percent from secondary to the higher secondary level. This difference in transition stands true for both rural and urban areas and for different communities. One can see a huge gap in the transition rates from secondary to higher secondary level in both rural and urban areas (58.4 percent for rural areas and 87.9 percent for urban areas).

As is known, education, especially secondary education, helps in social and economic upward mobility and therefore it becomes important that students from economically and socially weaker sections complete their education. While the transition rate from elementary to secondary level for the children of marginalised communities is fairly good in both Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, there is a visible decline in the transition rate from secondary to higher secondary level in both the states (Figure 3). The transition rates at the higher secondary level for children from SC/ST and Muslim communities in Bihar are almost half of the transition rates from elementary to secondary level. For instance, for the SC students, the transition rate from secondary to higher secondary level is 43 percent while it is 86 percent for transition from elementary to secondary level. Similar pattern can be seen for students from the ST and Muslim communities in Bihar (Figure 3). While there is stark difference in transition rate at different levels of secondary education between these two states, there is not much difference in the transition rates among the three communities within the two levels of secondary education. In Himachal Pradesh, among the marginalised groups, children from the Muslim community have the lowest transition rate, both from elementary to secondary (81 percent) and from secondary to higher secondary (50 percent).

Figure 3: Transition Rate of Different Communities



Source: U-DISE Secondary Education Flash Statistics 2014-15

Note: The transition rate is for the year 2013-14; the data for the transition rate among STs from elementary to secondary level for Himachal Pradesh is not available

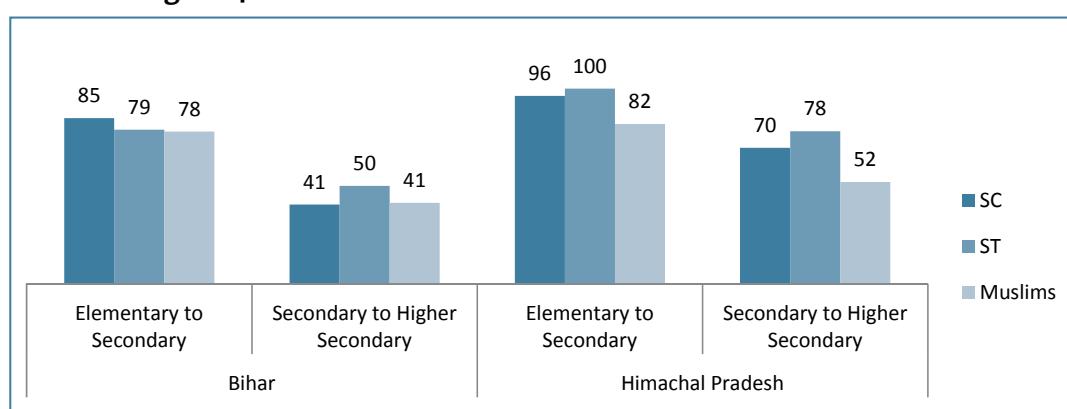
³ Transition Rate: Number of pupils admitted (new entrants) to the first grade of a higher level of education in a given year, expressed as a percentage of number of pupils enrolled in the final grade of the lower level of education (i.e. Grade V) in the previous year.

Literature shows that the possible reasons for drop in transition rate at different levels of secondary education are: high cost of education, lesser number of government schools, poor infrastructure facilities, poor teaching quality, inadequate number of teachers and inadequate career guidance (Linden, 2012; and Pailwar and Mahajan, 2005). Low interest in studies is another possible reason for low transition rates, especially among boys (Siddhu, 2010).

Other than the supply side issues there are some demand side concerns that affect the transition rate, especially that of the female students. Female students are the most deprived in accessing secondary education. According to the DISE 2014-15, the enrolment of girls at the secondary level for India is 47 percent as compared to 53 percent for the boys. Though the drop-out rate of both the boys and girls at the secondary level stands at 18 percent, it varies between the two states under study. Bihar, which has the lowest female literacy rate in the country (53.3 percent), has a female drop-out rate of 26 percent as compared to eight percent in the case of Himachal Pradesh.

Further, a look at the transition rate of girls from the different marginalised communities shows that there is a stark difference in the transition rates from the secondary to higher secondary level for the girls from the SC/ST and Muslim communities in Bihar (Figure 4). Though the transition rate of girls from the SC/ST and the Muslim communities in Himachal Pradesh at the higher secondary level is lower when compared to the transition rate from elementary to secondary level, it is better in comparison to Bihar. For instance, in Himachal Pradesh the transition rate of ST/SC and Muslim girls from elementary to secondary level varies between 80 to 100 percent, it then drops to 50 to 80 percent at the secondary to higher secondary level; it is still higher than the national average. In the case of Bihar, the transition rate of the girls from these three marginalised communities at the higher secondary level is way below the national average.

Figure 4: Transition Rate of Girls from Different Communities



Source: U-DISE Secondary Education Flash Statistics 2014-15

The reasons behind this drop in the transition rate from the secondary to higher secondary level of girls range from the absence of facilities such as clean toilets in schools to inadequate female teachers to the larger socio-economic and historical context of a place. The patriarchal outlook of Indian society that views girls as caregivers and not bread earners is one of the major reasons why parents do not invest in girls' education (Dubochet, 2013; Pailwar and Mahajan, 2005). Even if the parents are motivated to educate girls, they are concerned about the safety of girls and get demotivated in the

absence of female teachers at the secondary level (Jandhyala and Ramachandran, 2015; Sood, 2013).

Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan: Important Equity Interventions

As is known RMSA was introduced to bring equity in secondary education. Specific interventions have been stated in the RMSA guidelines to address the issue of low enrolment, low transition among the STs, SCs and girl children (Table 2). These strategies include better infrastructure facilities, availability of trained teachers, improved educational curriculum, imparting vocational skills etc.

Table 2: Strategies and Interventions under RMSA for Special Focus Group

Issue	Special Focus Group	Factors	Specific strategies
Low enrolment at secondary level	Girls and SC/ST/OBC/Minorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of school facilities • Distance to school less preference for girl's education • Early marriage & Sibling care • Gender and Caste discrimination • Poor economic conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up gradation of Upper Primary schools to secondary schools in SC/ST/Minority concentrated areas on priority basis. • Provision of Girl's toilets in secondary schools • Provision of Girls Hostels • Provision of transport facility • Provision of teachers in language subjects
High Dropout/ Low retention at secondary level	SC/ST/OBC/Minority & Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance of school from habitation • Inability to cope with syllabus • Poor Performance • Insensitive school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility of Girls Toilet • Girls hostel • Availability of Female teachers in school • Recruitment of tribal language teacher
Low level of Learning	SC/ST/OBC/Minority & Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor performance in Science and Mathematics • Poor Classroom transaction • Poor performance in examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of Curriculum • Training of teachers • Vocational skills

Source: RMSA Guidelines, MHRD, 2014

While scheme guidelines acknowledge the challenges faced by the marginalised communities in achieving secondary education, it is important to look at the status of these strategies in Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. Further, it is also important to look whether or not these specific strategies are backed by adequate budgetary allocations.

Accessibility and Quality of Secondary Education

Inequity is a cross-cutting issue that can be addressed through different strategies. It is important to understand the close connection between equity and quality. Quality in education can be ensured by focusing on a number of factors such as availability of schools that provides access, separate toilets for girls and boys, libraries, science laboratories, availability of teachers etc. In this part of the analysis we look into two aspects that ensure accessibility and better quality of secondary education which in turn helps in bridging the existing gaps at the level of secondary education.

Availability of schools

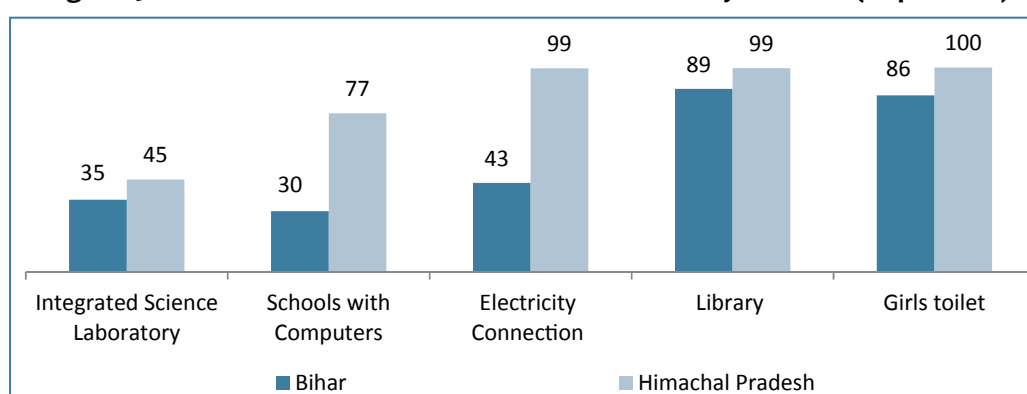
To improve access at the secondary level of education, RMSA mandates providing secondary school within a reasonable distance of every habitation (5 kilometre for secondary schools and 7 -10 kilometres for higher secondary schools). However as observed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource and Development (2015-16), out of the 1854 schools that were to be opened in the 12th five year plan period, 1075 schools were sanctioned from 2012-13 to 2014-15 of which only 30 schools are functional. Further, a detailed analysis of data shows a huge gap in the availability of secondary schools in proportion to the available elementary schools. For example, Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) in its Digital Gender Atlas for Advancing Girls Education reports that while there are 76,596 and 17,720 elementary schools in Bihar and Himachal Pradesh respectively; the number of secondary schools in both these states is much lower at 5,686 and 3,392 respectively⁴.

Other infrastructure facilities

While availability of schools is extremely important in ensuring access, other infrastructure facilities such as library, integrated laboratory, computer rooms, toilet blocks, drinking water facility, and girls' hostel in Educationally Backward Blocks (EBBs), art and craft room, etc. are also very important. While these facilities are basic for quality education, facilities like functioning girls' toilets play an important role in bridging the gender gap in secondary education.

India performs well with respect to providing separate toilets for boys and girls. As per the DISE 2014-15 data, 96 percent of the secondary schools in India have separate toilets for girls. A majority of schools in both Bihar and Himachal Pradesh have girls' toilets but Bihar is yet to achieve the 100 percent target (Figure 5). The DISE data does not provide information on functional toilets and therefore it is difficult to comment on the use of toilets. However, media reports and studies (ASER, 2015; CRY, 2013) show that there are gaps in both the availability and usage of toilets. In terms of usage of the toilets Bihar ranks second lowest in the country after West Bengal⁵, even though 86 percent of the schools in the state have toilet for girls.

Figure 5: Other Infrastructure Facilities in Secondary Schools (in percent)



Source: U-DISE Secondary Education Flash Statistics 2014-15

⁴ Digital Gender Atlas for Advancing Girls Education, available at http://103.7.128.243/atlas/state_profile.html,

⁵ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kolkata/bengal-tops-in-schools-with-dysfunctional-toilets/article6311072.ece>

When it comes to imparting secondary education to girls, issue of safety is one of the main concerns for most parents. In tribal areas, that are generally sparingly populated, long distances from the school to hamlets are a major challenge faced by students (Jindal, 2015). This largely affects the participation rate of the girl students. Providing girls hostel is a strategy stated under RMSA to improve the participation of girl students at the secondary level. To encourage girls from poor socio-economic background a centrally sponsored scheme for setting up 100 bedded girls' hostel has been initiated in the 3,479 EBBs of the country. However, the Parliamentary Standing Committee (2015-16) on Human Resource and Development finds gaps in the physical targets and their achievements. For instance, at the national level, out of the 2160 approved girls' hostel only 536 hostels are functional. Bihar, which has 530 EBBs, has registered slow progress in implementing this scheme. While construction of 18 girls' hostels has been completed and work for 97 hostels is in progress, none of the completed hostels are functional till date. Similarly in Himachal Pradesh which has five EBBs, five hostels have been approved but only two are functional (Planning and Approval Board, 2015).

Other than the aforementioned facilities that have a direct impact on participation at the secondary level, facilities such as library, science laboratories and computer rooms are crucial for imparting quality secondary education. While about 90 percent of the secondary schools in Bihar and Himachal Pradesh have a library, only 26 percent and 20 percent of the schools, respectively, have a librarian. To promote science at the secondary level of education RMSA aims to provide integrated science laboratories in secondary schools. However, Out of the total secondary schools in India, about 32 percent, 31.9 percent and 30 percent of schools have physics, chemistry and biology labs respectively. At the state level 35 percent of the schools in Bihar and 45 percent in Himachal Pradesh have an integrated science laboratory. To encourage students to pursue science, it is important to ensure the availability of basic infrastructure required for its teaching.

Technology has become an important part of the present education system, but unfortunately it is not accessible to all. There is a digital gap among children coming from different socio-economic and regional backgrounds. To bridge this divide RMSA has an ICT component that aims to equip students with computer knowledge. However, the government's intention to bridge this divide does not get reflected in its efforts - only 60 percent of the government schools in India have computers. A huge gap can be seen between Bihar and Himachal Pradesh when it comes to schools with computers (30 percent in Bihar and 77 percent in Himachal Pradesh). The inequality looks even more stark when we compare these government run schools with other government schools like Kendriya Vidyalaya (KVs), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNVs), etc. For instance, of the total 1125 KVs in India and abroad, about 98 percent of them have computer labs and almost 100 percent have internet connectivity⁶.

Inadequate availability of classrooms, dilapidated school buildings, ill equipped libraries and science laboratories, poor electricity coverage, etc. are major hurdles in achieving the stated objectives of RMSA. Report of the CABE Committee (2005) on Universalisation of Secondary Education has specified norms for the availability of infrastructure at the secondary level. The infrastructure norms range from classrooms (with LCD, electricity, etc.), to separate toilets for boys and girls and schools with playground

⁶ <http://kvsangathan.nic.in/ICTInfrastructure.aspx>

and gymnasium. The report states that, “The norms may appear immediately to be utopian. But Committee considers it to be the necessary utopia.” (p.29). Though the importance of good infrastructure for quality has been acknowledged time and again by the government, there are serious gaps in its efforts to achieve them.

Other than the functional bottlenecks that affect implementation, responsiveness of the budget towards specific strategies for the marginalised sections is important for the success of the programme. It is therefore important to look at the budgetary commitment both by the Union and the state governments towards these strategies.

Public Investment in Secondary Education

Public investment in education is one of the important factors that affect the quality of education. One of the reasons for India’s unsatisfactory performance at the secondary level is poor public spending on secondary education. Unlike the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, that mandates the government to provide free and compulsory elementary education to children from 6-14 years, there is no such legal obligation at the secondary level. In the absence of such a mandate, spending on secondary education is left solely at the discretion of the government.

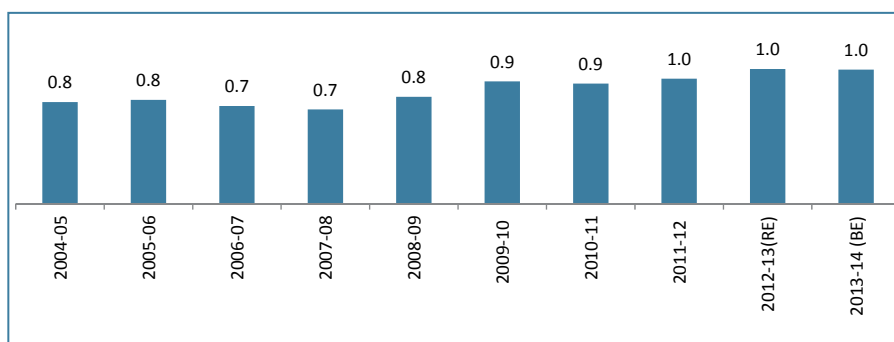
Budgetary Allocation on Secondary Education

Education in India, like many other developing countries (including the BRICS member countries), is a responsibility shared by both the national and the sub-national governments. For example, in Brazil both the federal and the state governments are responsible for financing education which is mandatory for fourteen years (from primary to upper secondary). Similarly, Russia has public provisioning for eleven years of mandatory education, encompassing primary to upper secondary level. This is mostly funded by regional governments (provinces), while the performance-oriented funds are provided by the Central government. In China, like in India, education till the elementary level (class I-VIII) is mandatory and the public educational expenditure is borne by the central, provincial as well as the county governments. Though the government in China spends at the secondary level as well, it is not mandated by any law. Likewise, South Africa too provides nine years of mandatory education; however it is only up to the lower secondary levels⁷.

Responsiveness towards the education sector is reflected in the share of government expenditure on education in a country’s GDP. The share of secondary education in India’s GDP has remained at less than one percent for most part of the last decade (Figure 6). Although, between 2009-10 and 2013-14(BE), there has been some increase in spending on secondary education reaching a little more than one percent of the GDP, the rise has been marginal.

⁷ http://www.nkibrics.ru/system/asset_docs/data/5568/7b19/6272/693b/d15e/0000/original/Pedro_Arruda_Session9.pdf?1432910617

Figure 6: Public Expenditure on Secondary Education in India as percentage of GDP



Source: Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education 2004-05 to 2006-07, 2007-08 to 2009-10 and 2008-09 to 2010-11, 2010-11 to 2012-13, 2011-12 to 2013-14 Planning and Monitoring Unit, Department of Higher Education, MHRD

The budgetary spending on secondary education in India has remained lower than most of the BRICS member countries except for Indonesia (Figure 7). Brazil has dedicated a substantial and growing budget to secondary education; South Africa and Mexico spend about 1.5 percent of their GDP on secondary education. Both China and Russia spend around 4 and 4.9 percent of GDP on education respectively, much higher than India. However, due to the absence of disaggregated data for elementary and secondary level, it is difficult to analyse their pattern of spending at the secondary level for these countries.

Figure 7: Public Expenditure on Secondary Education in BRICSAM Countries as percentage of GDP



Source: UNESCO Database

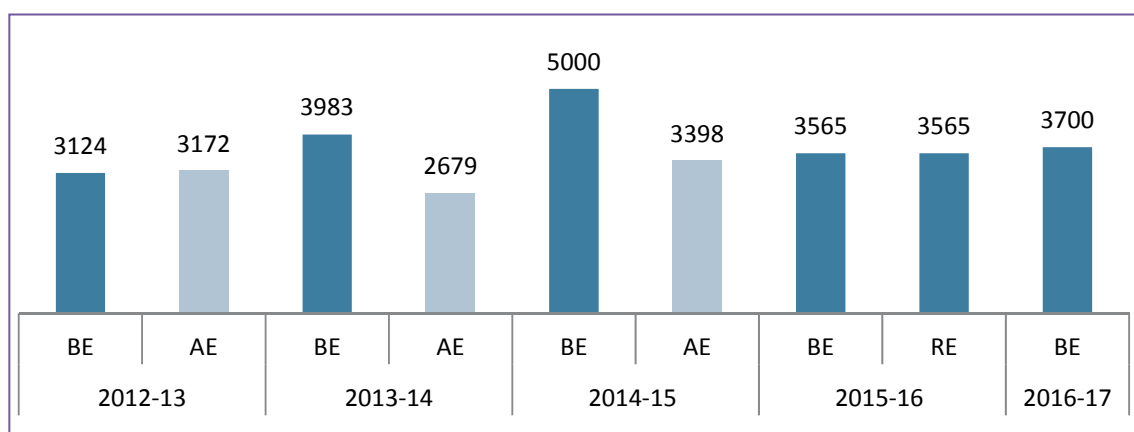
Given that in India, both the Union and the state governments allocate resources for the secondary education, we begin by looking at the overall quantum of resources earmarked for secondary education in general, and RMSA in particular, by the Union and the state governments of Bihar and Himachal Pradesh. The overall school education budget of the Union government as percentage of the total budget of the Ministry of Human Resource and Development is 44 percent, of which the share of elementary and secondary education is 78 percent and 21 percent respectively (2015-16 BE). Within secondary education RMSA is an important umbrella programme aimed at improving the access and quality of secondary education for reducing inequality at the level of secondary education. Thus, it can be expected that the budget for RMSA would form a sizeable proportion of the secondary education budget of the Union government.

However, the share of RMSA in the total secondary education budget of the Union government in the past four years varied from 35-40 percent.

Allocation and Distribution of Funds under RMSA

A gross budgetary support of Rs. 27,466 crore was indicated for the programme in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17). However till 2016-17 (BE), which is the last year of the 12th five year plan, only Rs 19372 crore has been allocated (which is 71 percent of the proposed budget), of which only Rs 9249 crore has been spent till 2014-15 (AE) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Budgetary Outlays of the Union Government for RMSA (in Rs. Crore)



Source: Union Budget, Expenditure Budget Volume II for various years

Note: AE= Actuals, RE= Revised expenditure, BE= Budget expenditure

RMSA is a centrally sponsored scheme (CSS) and therefore, both the Union and the States allocate resources for the programme. Based on the recommendations given by Sub Group of NITI Aayog on Restructuring of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the fund sharing pattern between the Centre and the States for the programme has been changed to 60:40 from 75:25; fund sharing for the North Eastern states and the hill states like Himachal Pradesh is 90:10.

This implies a greater responsibility on the states for funding the scheme. This, coupled with the greater flexibility accorded to the states in deciding their spending priorities, poses a question as to how well the states would be able to prioritise secondary education in their respective budgets. Analysis of the state budgets of Bihar and Himachal Pradesh shows that in addition to contributing towards RMSA, both the states have their own schemes for secondary education. To address the problem of inequities in secondary education both the states have dedicated schemes pertaining to scholarships, residential schools, and hostels for STs, SCs and girl children.

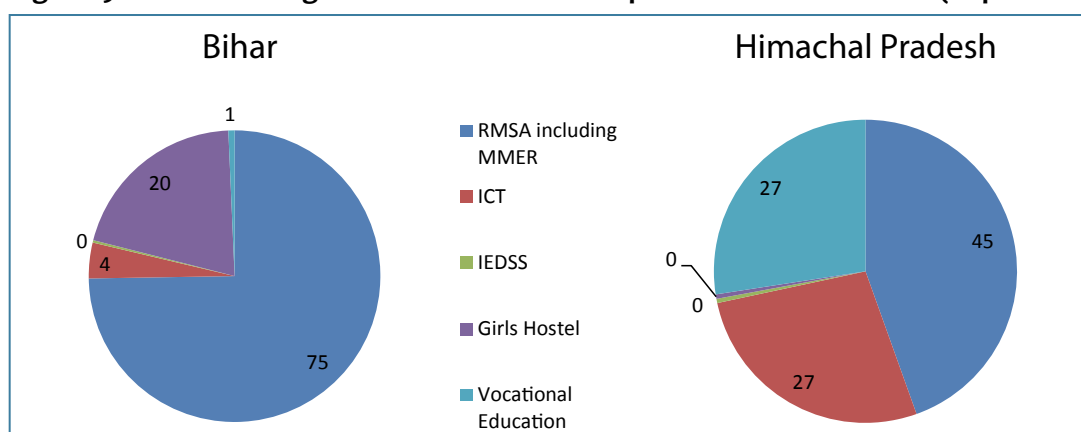
Since 2013-14, four independent programmes, viz., Information and Communication Technology in schools (ICT), Vocational Education (VE), Girls Hostels (GH) and Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS), were subsumed under the umbrella of RMSA. After the subsuming of the four schemes the budget outlay for the programme has increased from Rs 4525 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 6451 crore in 2015-16, with the large percentage of the approved outlay being mainly for civil works and teachers' salary. The schemes were merged under RMSA to achieve greater flexibility in utilisation

of funds and better utilisation of the funds. However, observations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource and Development and the Project Approval Board tell a different story.

Analysis of the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B) for the year 2015-16 shows that in both Himachal Pradesh and Bihar, out of the total budget for the umbrella RMSA, the highest share goes to RMSA including funds for Management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MMER)- 75 percent in Bihar and 45 percent in Himachal Pradesh. Although, Bihar shows a higher allocation as compared to Himachal Pradesh, it is due to carried over funds from previous years.

On looking at the distribution of budget for various schemes under RMSA, one finds that, IEDSS, the scheme for differently-abled children, has a negligible share in both the states (Figure 9). In Bihar due to lack of implementation of the IEDSS scheme by the state department, the Planning and Approval Board cancelled Rs 1.6 crore approved in 2009-10 under the scheme. Under the IEDSS, Bihar is yet to complete the construction of 38 resource rooms, while Himachal Pradesh has successfully implemented the strengthening of 12 block resource rooms.

Figure 9: Share of Budget within different components of RMSA Fund (in percent)



Source: PAB minutes, RMSA Portal, 2015-16

Note: Total allocation includes fresh allocation for 2015-16 and the spill over for previous years.

Further analysis of the AWP&B shows that Bihar has 98 percent of spill-over under the non-recurring head, reflecting poor implementation of civil works. Spill-overs are a cause of concern in both the states but large spill-overs in Bihar is a major concern as the infrastructure facilities in Bihar are poor compared to that in Himachal Pradesh. Moreover, educational indicators in Bihar are way below the national average unlike Himachal Pradesh which has better indicators at the secondary education level. Thus delay in implementation and low fund utilisation are likely to further aggravate the problem and have a disproportionately adverse impact on the educational indicators of the marginalised groups in Bihar.

There are specific budgetary strategies for the marginalised sections that ensure dedicated budget allocation for STs, SCs and girls. Analysis of these dedicated budget strategies would bring more clarity in understanding the budgetary support provided for addressing the challenges faced by the marginalised groups.

Budgets for the Marginalised Sections

Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) are budgetary strategies introduced in the 1970's to address the multiple developmental deficits confronting the Dalits and Adivasis. The idea was to channelise Plan funds from the budgets of the Central Ministries towards the development of the Dalits and Adivasis, at least in proportion to their share in the total population. The share of SCs was 16.6 percent and that of STs was 8.6 percent in total population as per the Census 2011. Hence, as per these strategies, the relevant ministries were supposed to earmark budgets from their respective plan outlays for the SCs and STs, such that the total earmarking by all the ministries as share of the total plan outlay of the Union Government amounts to at least 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent respectively for SCSP and TSP. Same approach was supposed to be followed by the states.

However, the implementation of these strategies remained poor and in 2010, a Task Force was constituted under the chairmanship of Shri Narendra Jadhav on Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and Schedule Caste Sub Plan (SCSP). The committee observed that it might not be possible for all the ministries to earmark allocations for the SCSP or TSP. Hence they recommended differential reporting by the ministries for earmarking allocations under SCSP and TSP, based on the mandate of that particular ministry. As per the recommendations given by the Narendra Jadhav Committee, the Department of School Education and Literacy were to allocate at least 10.7 percent of their plan outlay under TSP and 20 percent under SCSP, out of its Plan budget. Analysis of the Union budget data for the year 2015-16 reveals that the department is meeting the reporting requirements as put forward by the Narendra Jadhav Task force for both TSP and SCSP. (Table 3)

Table 3: Dedicated Budget for ST and SC for School Education and Literacy and RMSA (in Crore)

Heads	2014-15 (RE)			2015-16 (RE)			2016-17 (BE)		
	Total Plan outlay	Proportion reported in TSP	Proportion reported in SCSP	Total Plan outlay	Proportion reported in TSP	Proportion reported in SCSP	Total Plan outlay	Proportion reported in TSP	Proportion reported in SCSP
School Edu. & Literacy	43518	4796 (11%)	8793 (20%)	39039	4297 (11%)	7850 (20%)	40000	4277 (11%)	8014 (20%)
RMSA	3480	374 (11%)	705 (20%)	3565	379 (11%)	695 (19%)	3700	396 (11%)	740 (20%)

Source: Statement 21 and Statement 21A, Expenditure Budget Volume I, and Expenditure Budget Volume II, Union Budget 2016-17, GoI

However, the question that needs to be looked at in greater detail is how and on what basis is this reporting happening, i.e. what is the rationale for reporting this specific percent of the department's total plan outlay in these statements. While there are specific strategies to address the challenges faced by the ST and SC students in accessing secondary education (as mentioned earlier), to form an informed judgement on whether these interventions are backed by adequate budget, it is important that we get intervention specific budget allocation. However, these statements or the detailed budget books of the Union and the state governments do not provide intervention specific details and therefore it is not possible to track budgets for these

respective interventions separately. Also, it is important to mention here that the recommendations of the Task Force are applicable to the department's budgets and not for specific schemes. Thus, in the absence of disaggregated budget data for SC/ST sensitive components, there is no benchmark to assess the adequacy of the budgets going for SCSP or TSP from RMSA.

Further, low participation of the girls at the secondary education level demands specific interventions so as to improve their educational attainments. There are certain disadvantages that girls face in accessing secondary education which need to be recognised by the department and addressed adequately in its policies and scheme guidelines. For example, societal norms which consider imparting education to girls as unimportant, absence of sanitation facilities for girls who have attained puberty and hence require proper facilities to ensure menstrual hygiene, etc. are some such disadvantages impeding the access to education for girls. To address these it is important that the department implements certain measures, as stated in the RMSA guidelines such as provision of separate toilets for girls, girl's hostels, community mobilisation, etc. Such gender responsive interventions should be backed by adequate budgets to facilitate their proper implementation.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), which the Union government started presenting from budget 2005-06, is divided under two heads i.e. Part A which covers schemes in which 100% provision is for women and Part B with schemes that have allocations for women. While Bihar started gender budgeting from the year 2008-09, Himachal Pradesh is yet to present this statement.

Since RMSA is not meant exclusively for girls, it is reported in Part B of the GBS for both the Union government as well as for Bihar. In both these cases 30 percent of the total scheme outlays is being reported in the GBS. Ideally, this reporting should capture the budgetary outlays for the gender responsive measures mentioned in RMSA. However, for both the Union Government as well as for Bihar, it is not clear as how this certain proportion of funds is being reported under the GBS. The disaggregated budget for the specific gender responsive components is not available in public domain. Another rationale for reporting 30 percent budgets for RMSA in GBS could be the enrolment data of girls at secondary level, however, the DISE data does not support this hypothesis for either Bihar or at the national level.

Poor implementation and low fund utilisation under RMSA are some of the major roadblocks in achieving the desired objectives stated under RMSA. These roadblocks arise out of many institutional and functional bottlenecks at the level of secondary education. Identifying these bottlenecks and working towards improving them can help in better implementation of the programme.

Bottlenecks in Implementing RMSA

Non-availability of teachers

Shortage of teachers at the secondary level is a major concern that affects the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) and has impact on various educational indicators. As per Model Table AWP&B 2014-15, there are 6, 22,060 sanctioned posts of teachers in Government secondary schools at the national level and only about 76 percent teachers are in position. The PTR at the national level for 2014-15 is 31 against the norm of 30:1 at the

secondary level; however, there are huge inter-state variations. The PTR for Bihar is as high as 75 while it is 17 for Himachal Pradesh. Bihar, which has one of the worst PTR in country, has significant vacancy of teachers; out of the total 44,209 teacher posts sanctioned in the state 35 percent of the posts are vacant. According to MHRD there is about 30-50 per cent vacancy in teacher's positions in Bihar, while it is less than 30 percent in Himachal Pradesh. In Bihar, under RMSA, 1,153 Head Masters and 6552 teacher positions have been approved by the PAB but only 33.7 percent have been deployed. However, Himachal Pradesh has addressed the issue of teacher shortage by deploying 163 Headmasters and 489 teachers through transfers and promotions in 163 upgraded schools under RMSA.

Recruiting female teachers is important to encourage girls' participation at the secondary level; it is also one of the objectives of RMSA. However, data shows that this objective is far from being met as the share of female teachers in the total available teachers is only about 21 percent in Bihar while it is 35 percent in Himachal Pradesh.

To provide a focused intervention in educationally backward districts, Special Focus Districts (SFDs) have been identified. These districts too face the problems of inadequate teachers at the secondary level. Bihar has eight SFDs - 7 minorities and one SC dominated. These eight SFDs have 309 new secondary schools but no teachers have been deployed in these schools. Similar is the case with schools located in Left Wing Extremist (LWE) Districts. Only 37.2 percent of the vacancy in teachers position have been filled in 674 schools located in LWE areas of Bihar (PAB minutes 2015-16).

High Student-Classroom Ratio

As is known, the classroom environment is a very important factor in determining quality teaching and learning. Crowded classrooms make it difficult for both the students and the teacher to concentrate, which in turn affect the learning outcomes. Though RMSA mandates constructing additional classrooms to strengthen the secondary education infrastructure, there is a stark difference between the Bihar and Himachal Pradesh in this aspect. As per the DISE (2014-15) data Bihar has a high student-classroom ratio of 95 as compared to national average of 47; however, Himachal Pradesh is much ahead of the national average with one classroom for 29 students.

Paucity of qualified and trained teachers

Trained and qualified teachers play an important role in providing quality education at the secondary level. Most of the children from the marginalised communities are first generation learners and require more guidance and support that only well-qualified teachers can provide. One of the reasons for the better performance of Himachal Pradesh at the secondary level can be explained by the number of qualified teachers in its schools. Himachal Pradesh has 95 percent qualified teachers while only 62 percent of the secondary school teachers in Bihar are professionally qualified.

Delays in Civil Work

Absence of quality infrastructure is a major reason for school drop-out, especially among girls. Yet, in both Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, the percentage of infrastructure facilities completed is as low as 10 percent. The progress in infrastructure work in Bihar is slow; out of the 1,153 new schools that were approved under RMSA only 24 percent of them

have been completed till date. The problem of delay in civil works is being pointed out by both the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource and Development and the PAB. Non-availability of land for sanctioned schools, delay in finalisation of tenders, delayed fund transfer from the State Treasury to the state implementing society or the department, etc. are some of the reasons given by the department for delay in civil works. Delay in civil work creates a mismatch between the demand and supply which leaves no choice for the students but to drop-out, go to private schools or receive substandard education.

Most of these issues can be linked to inadequacy of resources for secondary education, which adversely impacts the implementation of the programme. While this results in poor quality of secondary education in general, it further exacerbates the inequities in access to secondary education for the marginalised groups. In absence of basic facilities in government schools and lack of resources to finance the specific interventions for these groups, government's efforts to improve quality of and access to secondary education, fail to achieve the desired impact.

Concluding Remarks

India has achieved considerable success in secondary education but the picture continues to be dismal across regions and different social groups. The primary idea of RMSA is to provide access to quality secondary education, with a special focus on addressing existing inequities at the secondary education level. RMSA guidelines do acknowledge the challenges faced by the marginalised groups and provide strategies to address them. However, the budgetary allocation for RMSA and the implementation of the scheme is not very positive for achieving equity in secondary education. Poor implementation of schemes, unavailability of trained and qualified teachers, poor infrastructure and poor allocation of funds etc., have a cascading effect on inequality.

Analysis of the programme at the level of two states—Bihar and Himachal Pradesh - reveals a contrasting picture, with Himachal Pradesh performing better on almost all parameters. The overall priority accorded to RMSA in Himachal's budget has been higher than in Bihar, which has also translated into better implementation of the scheme in the state. Moreover, when looking specifically from the perspective of addressing inequities in secondary education, Himachal Pradesh is implementing the specific interventions for marginalised sections (as stated in RMSA guidelines) much better than Bihar. While Himachal Pradesh does not have a GBS yet, in terms of institutionalising interventions such as appointment of female teachers, ensuring separate girls' toilets in secondary schools, etc., it is performing much better than Bihar. At the same time, earmarking of funds under SCSP and TSP is being carried out by Himachal Pradesh, but not by Bihar. Thus, it is not possible to analyse the budgets going for addressing the needs of the SCs and STs in the state. The difference in the efforts made by these two states is also reflected in their education indicators, with Himachal Pradesh having better education indicators than Bihar.

In terms of the budgetary outlay for RMSA, although the expenditure for the scheme has increased over the years it is not sufficient given the large young population to be covered. To make a significant improvement in the secondary education, both the Union government and the states need to increase their allocations for RMSA. Since the Union Budget 2015-16, states are being devolved greater untied funds from the Union government resulting in more flexibility to states in deciding their spending priorities.

This should translate into adequate prioritisation of secondary education in general and RMSA in particular especially in states like Bihar with poor educational indicators.

To address the issue of inequality in secondary education it is important that all the schemes under RMSA are implemented timely and properly. Schemes like RMSA, which provides a holistic approach to secondary education, would not lead to desired results unless institutional bottlenecks that lead to poor fund utilisation and slow pace of implementation are addressed in time. It is only by addressing these challenges in a planned manner; equity at the secondary level of school education can be achieved.

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PUBLISHED BY:



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This programme is funded by the European Union

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