

## Chapter 3

### An Overview of Inequality in Primary Education in Bihar

Yuko Tsujita

**Abstract:** This chapter provides an overview of educational achievements and challenges in Bihar, one of the India's backward states. There still exists disparity in educational opportunities between Bihar and India as a whole, and across socio-economic, gender, location among other factors within Bihar. Nevertheless, overall access to school has slowly increased over the years, however, unequal opportunity in access to an equitable quality of education remains. The recent government teacher policy, as well as the mushrooming of private schooling, would further lead to a hierarchy of schools, exacerbate socio-economic opportunities and intensify the socio-economic status quo for future generations.

**Keywords:** Primary education, Bihar, India

#### 1. Introduction

Economic growth in recent years has not substantially benefited the socio-economically weaker section in India and poverty reduction seems to have slowed down. Education, primary education in particular, is perceived to play a pivotal role in poverty alleviation. Improving access to primary education is likely to affect equality of a wide range of opportunities in the course of one's life.

“Education for All” efforts in India have intensified since the 1990s. External aid, especially World Bank loans to primary education, significantly increased in the 1990s by the implementation of “Adjustment with a Human Face” under economic liberalization in 1991. There has been more political and constitutional commitment to elementary education in recent years. Nevertheless, “Education for All” is still an uncompleted task, since approximately 17% of children aged 5 to 14 are still out of the

school, and 36% of the total population of India are illiterate in 2004/05 (NSSO, 2006). The overall picture of education in India implies that educational opportunities and attainment for the socially and economically weaker sections are much lower than for the affluent sections of the population.

Lack of primary education in India is particularly serious due to insufficient government commitment ( Basu, 1995; Drèze and Sen, 1995 ) , low levels of budget allocation ( Tan and Mignat, 1992; Drèze and Sen, 1995 ) , the general public's weak monitoring of education and indifference to education in general, and primary education in particular (Drèze and Gazedar, 1996 ) and restricted use of fiscal transfers from the central government. Basic education provision has been largely ignored by some state governments, especially in the Hindi-speaking northern states. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear in recent years that the *de facto* privatization of education, reflected in the growing number of private schools and children in those schools, has become prominent in a large number of states, including educationally backward states.

There are several comprehensive overviews of the progress and challenges of primary education in India (For example, Govinda, 2002; Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2008; Kingdon, 2007). This chapter will focus mainly on one of the educationally backward states, Bihar, due to the following two reasons. Firstly, each state has a different formal schooling system in the federal democratic framework, although both centre and state governments are responsible for providing education, as education has been in the concurrent list in the Constitution of India since 1976. The education system includes schooling years within the national framework of ten years, schooling age, examination system, curriculum including English education, the extent of decentralization, all matters related to teachers, textbooks and private schools, among others. One year schooling can mean something very different across countries (Breton, 2004). Likewise, schooling in different states of India takes place in somewhat different socio-economic contexts. Focusing on one educationally backward state will deeper insight into educational opportunities and constraints by considering a specific socio-economic context, particularly low level of social and economic development. Secondary, it is also important for the whole country to raise the level of education in educationally backward states. Bihar, with the estimated population of 97.2 million in 2007/08, is considered one of the backward states in the country in terms of socio-economic development. The state's per capita annual income, Rs. 5,772 in 2004/05, is the lowest in major states in India, only a quarter of national average (Government of Bihar, 2008a). Nearly 90% of the population resides in the rural areas

and the head count poverty ratio in the rural area is 42.1%, the highest among the major states, while the national figure is 28.3%<sup>1</sup>. 46.3 percent of population in the state is estimated to be illiterates in 2004/05 (NSSO, 2006). Education, not only has intrinsic value, but also has instrumental value to gain higher earnings and economic growth. Bihar's educational progress would play a key role in the economic development of the state to catch up with the rest of India. "Education for All" in Bihar would be also important in the government's recent strategy of "inclusive growth" in India as a whole.

This chapter aims to provide an overview of inequality in primary education in Bihar. The structure of this chapter is as follows: Section 2 will give a statistical overview on inequality in educational access, Section 3 will outline the current primary educational strategy to redress inequality, Section 4 will discuss education finance, Section 5 will argue some issues related to education equity and Section 6 will summarise the major findings.

It is noted that the tentative findings and field observation from the IDE-ADRI survey on inequality in Bihar villages in 2008/09 will be used in this chapter. They are a preliminary result of the survey from Rohtas district (16 villages), one of the five surveyed districts. Rohtas is one of the most advanced districts in terms of socio-economic development in Bihar<sup>2</sup>. The figures are likely to be better than the average for the entire state of Bihar.

## **2. Disparities in Educational Opportunities and Attainment**

### **2.1 Equity of Educational Issues in Policies and Legal Framework<sup>3</sup>**

The Constitution of India in 1950 declared "the State shall endeavor to provide, within a period of 10 years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education to all children till they complete the age of 14 years". In the early

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<sup>1</sup> These figures in National Sample Survey (2004/05) are based on uniform recall period consumption in which the consumer expenditure for all the items are collected from 30 day recall period. The head count ratios by mixed recall period, in which the consumer expenditure for five non-food items from 365 day recall period are, 32.9% in rural Bihar and 21.8% in rural India respectively.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the literacy rate in Rohtas district is 61.3%, the second highest after Patna district (62.9%). The district's per capita annual income is ranked sixth (Rs. 7, 138 at 1999/00 price) among 38 districts (Government of Bihar, 2008a). The district is located in relatively higher agricultural production area in Bihar, called the "Rice Bowl of Bihar".

<sup>3</sup> This section is benefitted largely from Government of Bihar, 2007.

years of independent India, higher and technical education was given priority in accordance with Prime Minister Nehru's development policy. The efforts to achieve free and compulsory education remained merely as policy directives to the state.

National education policy in India, at least rhetorically, seems to be concerned about equality. The Kothari Commission perceived the objective of education to be the attainment of equality. The National Policy on Education, 1968, based on the recommendation of Kothari Commission, includes equalization of educational opportunity and adopts the Common School System. The National Policy on Education, 1986 (as modified 1992), states,

In our national perception, education is essential for all...The new policy will lay special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity (*sic.*) by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far (Government of India, 1998, pp.4-7 ).

In the 1980s and 90s, active civil society groups demanded the incorporation of the right to education as a fundamental right in the Constitution. As a result, the Constitutional Amendment in 2002 added new article 21A "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age 6 to 14 years in such manner as the state may, *by law*, determine". Free and compulsory education would be now a legally enforceable issue if it could be legislated. The bill to provide free and compulsory education from 6 to 14 years old, however, has not passed by Parliament yet as of the end of 2008 at national level<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, "compulsory education" still cannot penalize non-enrollment in school.

In Bihar, the Common School System Commission was formed in 2006 to universalize school education up to grade 10. According to Kothari Commission, 1968, common school system means "providing education of an equitable quality to all

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<sup>4</sup> There are mainly two reasons why the Right to Education Bill, 2005 is delayed to be legislated. One reason is a strong lobbying by private schools, which, in the draft bill, have to offer 25% of seats to the weaker section for free. The other reason is that state governments will have to financially commit to enroll every school age child. Central Advisory Board of Education estimated that it costs additionally 1.1 % to 1.5% of GDP per annum from 2006/07 to 2011/12 to implement the Right to Education Bill. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2008, in which main contents are not very different from the Right to Education Bill, 2005, was introduced in the National Upper House (*Rajya Sabha*) in 2008.

children irrespective of their caste, creed, community, language, gender, economic conditions, social status and physical or mental ability”. The Commission submitted the report in 2007 with norms and standards of education, and financial implications, and recommended the Right to Education and Common School System (Equality, Excellence and Social Justice) Bill, 2007 (See Government of Bihar, 2007). The bill has not been legislated yet.

## **2.2 Education in Bihar: Statistical Profile**

To a certain extent, there have been legal and policy reform endeavours to promote equitable educational opportunities in India and Bihar. This section will examine to what extent these reforms have been translated into progress in educational access and achievements in Bihar. Education deprivation is caused not merely by poverty, but also by other related factors. These factors in the case of India might be closely related to gender, caste, the quality of learning and facilities in schools, labour market opportunities and so on.

It is noted that the structure of school education in Bihar is 5-year-primary, 3-year-upper primary and 2-year-secondary within the national framework of 10-year education<sup>5</sup>. Age of admission to grade 1 is officially 6 years old. The structure of school education, however, does not match the grades which schools offer. There are 13 different types of schools in terms of grades (ibid., p. 50)<sup>6</sup>. In the IDE-ADRI survey, there are primary and upper primary schools, which offer grades 1-5, 1-6, 1-7 and 1-8.

It is widely acknowledged that educational statistics, based on school surveys, are often over- reported in India. Tilak and Varghese (1983) estimated that government statistics on school enrollment overestimated around at 25%. Statistics on private schooling are likely to be underestimated, since government statistics generally do not count unrecognised schools. Acknowledging these deficiencies, this section will highlight the difference between India and Bihar, and within Bihar.

### **2.2.1 School Attendance**

Table 1 shows school attendance ratio among children aged 6-10 and 11-14 years in

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<sup>5</sup> Schooling years in Bihar changed in 1977 from 11 +2 to 10 + 2 + 3, based on the recommendation of the Kothari Commission (Government of Bihar, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> 13 school types are as follows; A. Grade 1-5, B. Grade 1-7, C. Grade 1-8, D. Grade 6-7, E. Grade 6-8 F. Grade 9-10 G. Grade 6-12, H. Grade 7-12, I. Grade 7- 10, J. Grade 8-12, K. Grade 8-10, L. Grade 9-10, M. Grade 11-12 (Government of Bihar, 2007).

Bihar and India, based on three rounds of National Family Health Survey in 1990s and 2000s. It is clear there still exists a gap in attendance between Bihar and India on average, regardless of area and gender. The attendance disparity has improved in the rural area, while it has deteriorated in the urban area, particularly among boys aged 6 to 10. This might be something wrong in the surveys or computation errors, due to the fact that the school attendance ratios among the aged 5 to 14 in National Sample Survey in 2004/05 have increased in comparison with figures in 1993/94. At the same time the deterioration can be explained by an increase in the marginalized groups in the urban area where some of the middle- and upper- socio-economic class households have a choice of sending their children to school outside the state. The declining trend of attendance in the urban area need to be further investigated.

Table 1 School Attendance (%)

		Male			
		Urban		Rural	
Age	Year	Bihar	All India	Bihar	All India
6-10	1993	83.0	86.2	57.0	71.4
	1998/99	81.0	91.7	68.0	83.2
	2005/06	65.7	87.6	64.6	83.6
11-14	1993	86.2	84.2	64.9	73.4
	1998/99	78.6	85.1	71.6	78.5
	2005/06	78.6	82.8	72.9	78.6
		Female			
		Urban		Rural	
Age	Year	Bihar	All India	Bihar	All India
6-10	1993	69.3	81.8	34.0	55.0
	1998/99	72.1	89.1	53.0	75.1
	2005/06	65.5	88.3	55.4	78.5
11-14	1993	65.6	75.7	33.0	47.9
	1998/99	78.2	82.8	48.7	61.6
	2005/06	74.2	80.8	52.2	66.4

Note: If any person has been in school at anytime during the surveyed year, he or she is defined as "attended".

Source: International Institute for Population Sciences, various years.

Access to school differs across religious groups. Muslims, who made up 16.5% of the total population in Bihar in the 2001 Census, are less likely to send their children to school. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in primary school in 2006 is 75.0% for General Caste, 72.2% for Scheduled Caste and 51.3% for Muslims, even the state government recognize some *Madrasa* as a part of formal schooling (Government of

Bihar, 2007, p. 46)<sup>7</sup>.

School enrolment (6-12 year) by caste and per capita consumption quintile in the Uttar Pradesh/Bihar Living Conditions Survey in 1998 shows that 96.6% of the upper/middle caste households in the top 20% wealthiest quintile send their male children to school, while only 30.3% of scheduled caste and tribe households send girl children in the bottom 20% poorest quintile (cited in Parker and Kozel, 2007). Although this statistics are a decade old, disparity in school attendance among different caste groups is expected to remain to certain extent till now.

Gender discrimination in education remains in Bihar. The male literacy rate in the 2001 Census is 59.7% and the female is 31.1%. The number of girls per 100 boys in classes is 70 in Grade 1-5 and 58 in Grade 6-8 (MHRD, 2007). As Table 2 shows, only 13.1% of the girls who registered in school at Grade 1 can survive to Grade 8. In particular, a substantial dropout is found from Grade 1 to Grade 2 and Grade 5 to 6. The girls' transition rate from Grade 5 to 6 in Bihar is much lower than that in India. This implies a lack of upper primary schools where girls can attend. Only 26% of schools in Bihar offer a complete circle of elementary school 1 - 8 (Calculated from Government of Bihar, 2007).

Table 2 Survival Rates for Elementary Grades (2005/06)

		Primary					Upper Primary		
Bihar	Rural	100	68.8	60.2	52.9	44.6	25.6	19.5	14.0
	Urban	100	82.2	60.2	72.7	73.1	54.3	47.2	44.9
	Boys	100	69.8	62.8	56.2	49.8	30.4	23.7	17.6
	Girls	100	67.7	59.0	46.4	41.6	23.1	17.6	13.1
India	Rural	100	82.9	77.9	72.4	66.2	51.0	44.5	32.5
	Urban	100	88.6	86.7	83.7	86.2	82.0	76.2	60.5
	Boys	100	83.6	79.4	74.4	70.7	58.0	51.5	38.9
	Girls	100	84.0	79.2	74.0	68.2	53.7	47.5	34.9

Source: Ghosh and Kumar (undated). Original sources are DISE 2005/06 and Bihar Education Project Council.

The gaps of school attendance between rural-urban and male-female in Bihar still exists, however, they have slowly narrowed down over the years. Interestingly, the

<sup>7</sup> Gross Enrollment Ratio in primary school is percentage of enrolled children in primary school to the estimated children's population in the primary school age children.

percentage of male students absent on the day of the visit to school is higher than that of female students in 11 out of 15 schools in the IDE-ADRI survey<sup>8</sup>. These figures are based just on one visit to school, but interaction with teachers and villagers during the field survey confirmed that the attendance ratio is often higher for female students in rural Bihar. Male children are expected to contribute to farm activities, which prevent boys from attending classes, especially in harvest seasons.

Absenteeism is likely to affect repetition, dropout and learning outcome. The repetition rates are 7.2 percentage point higher in Bihar than India. Although more than 70% attendance and taking the year-end exam is necessary for promotion to the next schooling grade, automatic promotion policy is the common practice at school level in order to motivate children for learning and implicitly to mitigate financial burden on states and households. The repetition, therefore, occurs basically when a student did not turn up at the year-end exam and attended the same grade again during the next academic year. It is noted that the repetition rates in 2004-05 at primary school level are not very different across gender; 13.1% for boys and 14.1% for girls in Bihar (Ghosh and Kumar, undated, p. 26).

Table 3 Repetition and Dropout Rates in Elementary Education (2005-2006, %)

	Primary (I-V)		Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	
	Bihar	India	Bihar	India
Repetition Rates	13.5	6.3	NA	NA
Drop-out Rates				
All Children	51.6	29.0	74.7	50.8
SC	54.8	34.2	81.8	57.3
ST	60.8	42.3	76.2	65.9

Source: Same as Table 2.

The dropout ratios among general castes, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) students in Bihar also are much higher than those for each corresponding category of caste students in India as a whole (Table 3). What is worse, the difference of dropout ratio between Bihar and India is higher than that of attendance ratio. Male dropout ratio is slightly higher than that of female. The survival rates (Table 2) show more detailed processes of dropout. The difference of survival ratios at Grade 1- 2 and Grade 5-6 between India and Bihar is distinct, particularly in the rural areas. In rural Bihar, only 14% of school-enrolled children can complete elementary education (Grade

<sup>8</sup> The similar trend, irrespective of school type (private or government schools), is found by the survey in rural Madhya Pradesh (See Govinda, 2008).



8), while that of 37% compete grade 8 in India.

In Bihar, the most popular reasons why children (6-17 years) do not attend school are disinterest in studies (36% for male and 21% for female), followed by unaffordable cost of education (17.9% for male and 18.3% for female), according to National Family Health Survey (2004/05). This implies learning environment does not motivate children to continue studying. Moreover, some incentive programmes, such as scholarships, free textbooks and stationary and mid-day meals are not financially enough for some households to send their children by considering direct and opportunity costs.

It is obvious that there are differences in access to education between India and Bihar. The catching-up process with other states has been slow, especially in terms of improving school enrollment and reducing dropout. Within Bihar, socio-economic conditions, such as caste, religion, wealth, gender, etc., affect school attendance. The reason why children do not attend school is disinterest in studies and schooling costs. Disinterest might come from their leaning environment. The next section will look at school infrastructure.

### **2.2.2 School Facilities**

The number of primary schools has grown in Bihar from 20,260 in 1946/47 (Government of Bihar, 2007) to 49,868 in 2007/08 (NUEPA, 2009). In particular, the recent growth of school facility has been fast. In 11 out of 15 villages in Rohtas district, access to school or up gradation of school is one of the three most important reasons why villagers feel that the village is better off than it was 10 years ago. In 2002, the percentage of habitants which has a primary school within one kilometer was 87% in India, and 90% in Bihar and which has upper primary schools within three kilometer was 78% in India and 85% in Bihar in 2002 (NCERT, 2005). Bihar is better than the national average, because the population density of Bihar at 880 persons per sq km is much higher than 324 persons per sq km in India (ADRI, 2008). The ratio of primary schools to upper primary schools is, however, 3.7, while the national average is 2.4, when the number of upper primary schools for every two primary schools is the national norm. The low transition rate from grade 5 to 6 in Bihar can be reflected by less availability of upper primary school.

Table 4 shows various school facilities in primary schools. It is clear that Bihar is much less equipped with infrastructure, particularly girls' toilets and kitchen sheds. Furthermore, the percentage of having electricity and furniture for all students (primary to senior secondary schools) is only 3.6% and 7.7%, respectively (Government of Bihar,

2008a). In the IDE-ADRI survey, only 1 out of 16 schools in Rohtas district has electricity. Even that particular village has maximum power for five hours per day in the best months. Almost all the schools raised lack of infrastructure and/or inadequate number of teachers as the main problems which schools face.

Table 4 Facilities in Primary Schools (in 2007/08)

	India	Bihar
Total No. of Schools	805,667	49,868
Percentage of Schools which has		
Drinking Water	84.8	75.2
Common Toilet	58.6	36.7
Girls Toilet	42.0	15.3
Kitchen Shed	41.4	9.6
Computer	11.6	0.6
Average No. of Class room	3.0	1.9

Source: NUEPA (2009).

Average students-class ratio is 97 in Bihar in comparison with 37 in India (NUEPA, 2009). It is found in the IDE-ADRI survey that only 5 out of 16 schools have classrooms for every grade. Classes are over-crowded in a typical village school, even if not all the enrolled students turn up. Lack of infrastructure is likely to affect teaching and students' learning outcome.

### 2.2.3. Teachers

It is acknowledged that an adequate number of trained teachers plays an important role in education development (See for example, Govinda and Bandyopadhyay, 2008). The number of teachers per primary school is 3.7 in Bihar, which is more than 3.0 at national average. However, pupil-teacher ratio is 54 and 59 in primary and upper primary schools respectively, while the same ratio is 39 and 31 at national average in 2007/08 (NUEPA, 2009). It shows that the number of teachers has to catch up with the rapidly growing number of schools and children at school age.

The number of female teachers, which is regarded as making a positive impact on attendance of female students in South Asia (Watkins, 2000). In Bihar, 50% of teacher positions is reserved for females. In 2002, the percentage of female teachers in primary school was 22.0% when all India figure was 66.0% (NCERT, 2005). At the same time, the percentage of schools with female teachers has increased to 79.1% in Bihar, which is more than the national average 72.9% (NUEPA, 2009). In the IDE-ADRI Survey, the

percentage of female teachers is 46.0% and 87.5% of schools have female teachers. The government notice in 2006 to appoint 2.6 lakhs para- elementary and secondary school teachers in the entire vacancy posts, and 50% reservation policy for female teachers might have increased the number of teachers, female teachers in particular, rapidly since 2006.

#### 2.2.4. Learning Achievement

An adverse school environment, as well as an inadequate quality and quantity of teachers are likely to affect learning outcome. Pratham, an educational NGO, carries out learning achievement tests in rural India. In Bihar, learning levels at Grade 1 and 2 are lower than the national average, however, leaning achievement performance is better than grade 3 to 5 (Table 5). The exam pass rates of 96.5% for boys and 96.4% for girls at Grade 5, are slightly better than the national average: 95.4% for boys and 95.4% for girls respectively (NUEPA, 2009). The pass with 60% marks rates, however, are much less in Bihar: 38.6% for boys and 38.4% for girls in comparison with 48.7% for boys and 48.8% at national level (ibid.). Since an automatic promotion policy has been adopted by the government, it would not be an unimportant matter if students do learn as long as they attend. The government policy is heavily access-oriented and less concerned about quality of education for all.

Table 5 Learning Achievement in the Rural Areas (%)

	Class 1-2 Learning Level % of children (Grade 1-2) who can		Class 3-4 Learning Levels % of children (Grade 3-5) who can			
	read letter, words or more	recognise numbers 1-9 & more	read level 1 (Class 1 text) or more	do subtration or more	tell time of both clocks	do currency tasks
Bihar	68.2	70.0	67.7	62.2	52.3	75.4
India	75.4	75.7	66.6	54.9	46.9	73.1

Source: Pratham (2009).

#### 2.2.5. Type of Schools

It is often pointed out that the number of private schools in India has been mushrooming in recent years. The share of government schools to total number of schools is 91.2% (40,601 schools) in primary and 81.9% (9,681 schools) in upper primary levels (Government of Bihar, 2007). In terms of enrolment out of total enrolment in 2002 (Table 6), 99% of students in primary schools in Bihar still attend

government schools (NCERT, 2005). It is noted, however, the number of private-school-going-children is underestimated, since official surveys cover only government and recognized private school. There are quite a few unrecognized private schools, especially in the urban area (See for example Tooley and Dixon, 2007). In IDE-ADRI survey, only a few survey villages in Rohtas District remains as they have only government-primary-school going children. The recent rapid growth of private schools in the rural areas is expected.

Table 6 Share of Government School going children (Class I-V) in total enrolment

	Rural				Urban			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
	India	Bihar	India	Bihar	India	Bihar	India	Bihar
1986	92.0	98.9	90.4	98.5	54.9	89.9	56.5	86.6
1993	92.9	99.1	93.0	98.6	59.2	87.3	63.1	87.4
2002	89.8	99.7	92.0	99.6	52.0	93.9	57.1	94.4

Source: National Council of Educational Research and Training, *various years*.

There could be various reasons why private-school-going children increased. On the demand side, increasing demand for English-medium education, increasing disposable income among the economically middle- and upper-class households, bad perception about government schools in terms of school facilities and quality of learning, among others. On the supply side, the government needs the participation of the private sector so as to meet the goal of “education for all”.

Previous surveys in Bihar (for example, Jabbi and Rajyalakshmi, 2001; Karan and Pushpendra, 2006; NUEPA, 2009) showed that private schools are better in terms of facilities and teachers. Teachers in private schools are often untrained but they are more likely to come to school regularly and paid less than government schools. There are two different ways of examining quality of education (Watkins, 2000). One is relative effectiveness approach, in which determines how much a student’s leaning outcome can be explained by various aspects of school input. In this approach, private schools are reported to be relatively effective (See for example Muralidhrana and Kremer, 2006). The other approach to examine quality of education is to focus on process within the school, such as teacher-students relationships, teacher’s attitude and so on which cannot be transformed to variables easily. Some qualitative approaches revealed the process of leaning in village schools in a detailed way (See for example, Sarangapani, 2003).

### **3. Current Education Programmes**

Educational statistics show that there still exist differences in educational access across socio-economic, gender, region etc. This section will describe two main primary education programmes, i.e. *Sarva Shiksha Abiyaan* and Mid-Day meals, to redress the educational disparity in Bihar. Both programmes are Centrally Sponsored Schemes, that means central government sets the uniform guidelines to all the states.

#### **3.1 *Sarva Shiksha Abiyaan***

With the acceleration of “education for all” efforts, central government initiated large scale intervention in the 1990s, namely District Primary Education Programme, funded by the World Bank. Subsequently, *Sarva Shiksha Abiyaan (SSA)*, launched in 2000/01, is India’s flagship programme to universalize primary education by 2010. In Bihar, it has been implemented by the Bihar Education Project Council, a state government agency. Characteristic of the SSA is community ownership of education, which involves members from *Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti* (a body of parents), women’s groups and *Panchyats*. According to central government guidelines, each state has to meet the specified norms in 21 areas of interventions, such as school facility, class room, text books, teachers, civil work, and so on. There has not been a rigorous nation-wide analysis of SSA to my knowledge. Some studies argued that the SSA needs to focus on improving schools’ quality of infrastructure and teaching standards in government schools (Das, 2007) and tackling gaps in gender aspects (Kaith, 2006).

#### **3.2 Mid-Day Meals**

Mid-day meals (MDM) was launched in 1995 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. It was, however, a Supreme Court order in 2001, which paved the way to achieve a near universal programme. Each state government provides cooked mid-day meals in all government and government-aided primary and upper primary schools, Education Guarantee Scheme schools and Alternative, Innovative Education Centre, and recognized *Madrassas* and *Maktabs* as of the end of 2008. Central government guidelines set the minimum calories, protein and micro-nutrient for primary and upper primary students respectively. The objectives of MDM are to improve school enrolment, attendance and retention, to enhance children’s nutrition and to promote social equity, i.e. all children, regardless of their castes, eat together. Dréze and Goyal (2003) argued that MDM have a huge potential to improve school attendance, meet children’s

nutritional requirements and enhance social equity, although they admitted there are some flaws and regional differences in MDM,

In Bihar, MDM was launched in January 2005. At school level, *Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti* (VSS), a body of parent, which is attached to every school, is basically responsible for implementing MDM. VSS appoint cooks, procure the ingredients for menu and so on. Grains, mainly rice, are brought from the nearest FCI godown by a PDS dealer. Government funds are transferred to a joint bank account of the head teacher and a VSS chairperson. In the IDE-ADRI survey, although only seven schools have kitchen sheds, all survey schools somehow manage to provide MDM either regularly (10 schools) or mostly (6 schools). There are three different reasons why six schools could not provide meals regularly. Three schools said funds were not released on time, two schools answered that grains did not come on time and one school said the quality of grains was too bad to cook. Even among the regularly implemented schools, the low quality of rice and often-delayed fund release, are said to be as a matter of concern.

In the IDE-ADRI survey, teachers we talked to often pointed out that MDM disrupted teaching and increased teachers' burden. Some teachers also opined that students lost concentration on studies while the cooking process was going on. These are mainly attributable to lack of adequate infrastructure in school, shortage of human resources including cooks and other staff, and logistics problems. In our filed observation, where VSS plays an active role in the operation and management of MDM, it seems to be better run than in other schools. When our full data is available, why some schools implement better than others and the impact of MDM on school attendance, children's nutrition and social equity, can be examined.

#### **4. Financing Primary Education in Bihar**

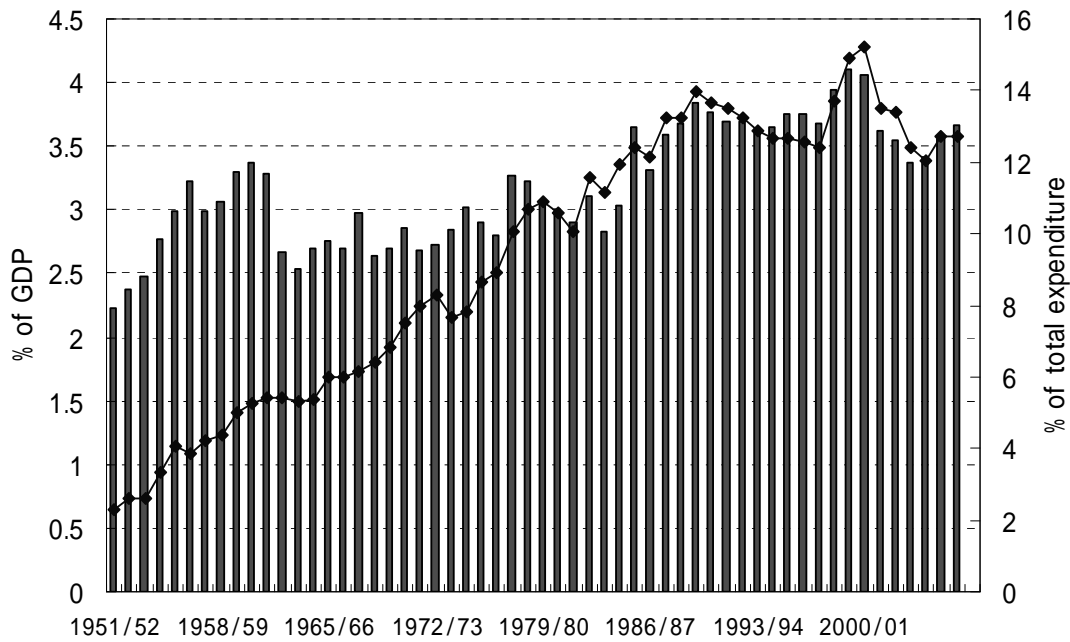
There are two major on-going nation-wide primary education programmes, SSA and MDM, in recent years. It is necessary to find if the programmes are supported by public finance, and if and how their budgets are distributed. This section will examine public finance in education from top to bottom level of funding flows, i.e. Government of India, followed by Government of Bihar, districts and panchayat/schools (See Annex I).

##### **4.1 Central Expenditures**

The target of public expenditure on education (combined central and state

governments) has been 6% of GDP since the National Policy of Education 1968. The target has never been achieved. Educational expenditures gradually increased, and roughly leveled off around 3.5%- 4.0% of GDP since the late 1980s (Figure 1). The percentage of education expenditure to the total expenditure has also increased to more than 12% since the late 1980s.

Figure 1 Total Education Expenditure (1950/51-2006/07)



Note: The line indicates % of GDP and bar graphs show % of total expenditure.

Source: MHRD website.

There have been some major changes in financing primary education in India since the 1990s. Firstly, external aid has begun to inflow<sup>9</sup>. Table 7 shows the plan expenditures on elementary education from the first to ninth 5- year plan. It is clear that there was a massive increase on elementary education in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly by the central government. External aid was only 8.6 crores during the seventh 5-year plan and it increased to 613.6 crores in the eighth 5-year plan (MHRD, 2005). The central government's share of plan expenditure has increased to more than

<sup>9</sup> It is pointed out that the government of India has been unresponsive to primary level educational loans till structural adjustment programmes' country economic memorandum was signed in 1991(Guhan, 1995; Jones, 1992).

40% in the total plan expenditure in the 1990s (Tsujita, 2005) and exceeded that of states in the ninth and tenth 5-year plans (Table 7). It implies that central government increasingly play a strategic and policy making role in primary education, such as through implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes, transferring central government fund directly to implementing agencies by bypassing state government, and planning allocation of resources to district, while state governments are largely responsible for non-plan expenditures that supplement 5-year plan programmes, including wages and salaries for teachers.

Secondly, the transfer of external assistance from central to state governments changed recently to keep the original terms and conditions after the recommendation of Twelfth Finance Commission (Finance Commission, 2004). It used to be transferred as 70% loans and 30% grants to the general category states including Bihar, irrespective of original terms and conditions. Social services, including primary education, which were often soft loans or grants in an assistance portfolio, were required to pay an additional burden in comparison with the original terms and conditions to help sustain the relatively larger share of high cost loans such as for infrastructure projects.

Thirdly, *Prambhik Shiksha Kosh* was set up by the central government in 2004/05 with the revenue of education cess. 2% cess on central taxes to fund primary education has been imposed. This non-lapsable fund is to finance two major elementary education programmes *Sarva Shiksha Abiyaan* and Mid-Day Meal as supplementary budget expenditures on these programmes<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Tilak (2008), however, argued that these two major education programmes are actually financed largely by *Prambhik Shiksha Kosh*.



Table 7 Plan Expenditures on Elementary Education (Rs in crores)

Five Year Plan	Centre	States	Total	
1st	1951-56	12.50 (35.93)	74.53 (64.15)	87.03 (57.56)
2nd	1956-61	-	-	95.00 (18.68)
3rd	1961-66	-	-	201.00 (34.13)
4th	1969-74	0.52 (0.26)	213.13 (38.74)	374.23 (50.07)
5th	1974-79	2.49 (0.80)	345.41 (41.37)	591.28 (51.71)
6th	1980-85	72.40 (11.65)	768.99 (38.50)	841.39 (32.13)
7th	1985-90	658.49 (22.66)	2190.92 (46.35)	2849.41 (37.33)
8th	1992-97	-	-	4006.55 (60.55)
9th	1997-02	14523.29 (65.73)	11584.13 (48.97)	26107.42 (57.06)

Notes:

- 1) 4th & 5th central plan expenditures are combined primary and secondary education.
- 2) Parents shows the percentage of elementary education to total educational plan expenditures in centre, states and combined respectively.

Source: MHRD (2005).

## 4.2 State Level Expenditures

The budgetary commitment to primary education in the centre should be transferred to states, particularly educationally backward states such as Bihar. This section will outline the state government expenditures.

### 4.2.1 Brief Overview of Public Finance in Bihar

Fiscal deficits worsened in the 1990s in state governments and further deteriorated in the late 1990s by following the recommendation of the Fifth Pay Commission. The fiscal deficit as percentage of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in Bihar reached 7.2% in 1999/00 (Finance Commission, 2000). Per employee salary expenditure increased by 61.6% and salary related expenditures adsorbed 77.3% of revenue expenditures in Bihar in 2002/03 (Finance Commission, 2004).

Central government enacted the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, which forces central government to bring down the revenue deficit to zero and gross fiscal deficit to 3% of GDP by 2008/09. Similarly, FRBM Act was passed by Bihar state legislature in 2006. Gross fiscal deficit has reduced to 6.5% of GSDP in 2003/04 to 3.03% to GSDP in 2007/08, mainly by reducing capital expenditure in the expenditure side. According to the Debt Consolidation and Relief Facility (DCRF) based on the recommendation of Twelfth Finance Commission, if a state can achieve a zero revenue deficit by 2008/09, the facility of having repayments due from 2005/06 to 2009/10 on central loans contracted by the end of 2003/04, will be eligible for debt written-off. Moreover, a scheme of debt waiver based on fiscal performance, is linked to the reduction of revenue deficits of states. The base year in debt written-off arrangement is set in 2004/05 when fiscal deficit in Bihar is only 1.7%. In that year, development expenditure was very low, because both National Lower House (*Lok Sabha*) and assembly election were held, which led to lower development expenditures under the model code of conduct during the election year. Bihar was not granted for debt waiver in 2005/06 and 2006/07, because fiscal deficit exceeded the level of 2004/05. Nevertheless, under these fiscal constraints, state governments including Bihar, has disincentive to expand development expenditures. Per capita development expenditure in 2007/08 is Rs. 4,207 in all states and Rs. 2,184 in Bihar respectively (Government of Bihar, 2008b). What is worse, this gap between national average and Bihar has widened over the recent years.

#### **4.2.2 Education Expenditure in the State of Bihar<sup>11</sup>**

Education expenditure shares more than 60% of the total social sector expenditures in Bihar. However, average per capita education expenditure in 1998/99-2000/01 is Rs. 311.1 in Bihar, which is much less than that in states such as Rs. 730.9 in Maharashtra (Finance Commission, 2004). Education expenditure in Bihar increased in the late 1990s not by a large inflow of external aid in the central government but by civil servants' salary hike based on the recommendation of Fifth Pay Commission. In the early 2000s, salary components in education expenditure decreased from 64.2% in 2002/03 to 46.0% in 2007/08, by freezing fresh recruitment of permanent teachers as discussed above.

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<sup>11</sup> This section is written based on statistics from Reserve Bank of India (*Finances of State Government, State Finances: A Study of State Budgets, Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy* 2008), and MHRD (Analysis of Budgeted Expenditures on Education).

The long-term trend (1950/51-2005/06) of percentage of elementary education expenditures in the total education expenditure has leveled off around at 60%<sup>12</sup>. However, the proportion of expenditure on primary education to Net State Domestic Product has declined 5.9% in 1999/00 to 3.7% in 2005/06. Primary education expenditure at 1999/00 price decreased 2722.8 crores to 2244.8 crores over the same period. The fiscal constraints seem to have negatively affected education expenditure.

Due to the financial constraints, the state has increasingly relied on Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) and taken a low cost strategy to expansion of education facilities by recruiting para-teachers and setting up non-formal educational centres. Under CSS, each state has to contribute to matching fund to central government's financial assistance. For example, *Sarva Shiksha Abiyan* is one of the CSSs, under which the financing share of central government has changed 85% during the ninth 5-year plan, 75% during the tenth 5-year plan to 50% in a gradual process during the eleventh 5-year plan. SSA funds from central government released to the Bihar Education Project Council in two installments in a year: the first installment in April and the second installment in September only if state government contributes its matching share to the Bihar Education Project Council (Jha et al. 2008). Utilisation of allocated fund, i.e. the percentage of expenditure against approved outlay, increased 13.4% in 2001/02 to 68.0% in 2007/08<sup>13</sup>. The gender specified component of plan is, however, lower utilized (Government of Bihar, 2008a).

The Finance Commission provides grants to states, including education. In the Twelfth Finance Commission, equalization grants for education including intending to spend on state's matching fund of SSA, worth 2278.8 crores for five years, was allocated to Bihar, as one of the states which had been unable to allocate a minimum percentage of the total revenue expenditure to education. However, the allocated amounts were withheld in 2007/08 and 2008/09 because Bihar did not meet the condition of the release of the grants, i.e. non-plan revenue expenditure should not be less than the projected normal expenditure of that year. As a result, the state government contributed only 84% of its matching fund as per centre's release in 2007/08.

MDM is also one of the CSSs, implemented by Human Resource Development Department in the state government<sup>14</sup>. As of 2008/09, central government will assist

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<sup>12</sup> It is noted that Bihar was bifurcated into Bihar and Jharkhand on 15 November 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Bihar Education Project Council website (<http://www.bsppssa.org/awpb/awpb.htm>).

<sup>14</sup> Budget figures are obtained from the websites of Ministry of Human Resource Development in Government of India

with a part of the costs of grains, transportation of grains from the nearest FCI godown to schools, cooking costs, costs for kitchen device, construction fees for kitchen and so on. MDM also required the state to match funding. In the 2005/06 budget on MDM, the state's share was approximately 40%. The state's actual expenditure (Rs. 12,608 lakhs) is 90% of allocation (Rs. 13,933 lakhs). As was discussed in the section 3.2., the delayed release of funds and lower amount of transfer are of great concern at school/*Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti* level. In terms of grains, the utilization of rice allocated has gradually increased from 57.0% in 2004/05 to 59.0% in 2005/06 and 72.0% in 2006/07<sup>15</sup>. The ratio of off-take to allocation at national level was 76.7% for rice and 76.9% for wheat in 2005/06. The under-utilization of fund and grains seems to have affected MDM implementation at school level.

#### **4.2.3 District Expenditures**

Bihar consists of 38 districts. There is a wide disparity in economic and social indicators across districts in the State. For example, per capita annual income in Bihar varies from Rs. 31,441 in Patna district to Rs. 3,636 in Sheohar district (Government of Bihar, 2008a). According to the Census of India, the literacy rates in 2001 were 73.3% for males and 50.8% for females in Patna district, while the corresponding figures in Kishanganj district are 52.7% and 18.6% respectively. Patna district, where Patna, the capital city of Bihar, is located, is more developed than other districts, according to socio-economic indicators. It is clear from Table 8 that the allocation of public expenditure on primary education is heavily concentrated only to Patna district. Per capita primary education expenditures in Patna district were 7 and 9 times more than those of the entire state in the last two years. The distribution patten of public finance within the state is favorable for educationally forward areas. Financially reaching the unreached remains as an important issue.

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(<http://education.nic.in/Elementary/elementary.asp9>) and Department of Human Resource Development in Government of Bihar (<http://www.educationbihar.in/>).

<sup>15</sup> In the first two year of MDM, the Government of Bihar lifted wheat. However, there has not been any wheat off-take since 2006/07. At school level, we found in the field survey that the weekly menu consists only of rice.

Table 8 District Wise Per Capita Expenditure on Primary Education (in Rs.)

	2005/06	2006/07
Patna district	2020.77	3037.06
37 districts excluding Patna district	184.70	181.97
Bihar	300.86	344.26

Source: Calculated from Government of Bihar (2008a).

#### 4.2.4 *Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti* and School Level Expenditures

Till 1976 when all the primary and middle schools, including private schools, corporate schools run by Tata Iron and Steel Company, schools managed by district Boards, municipal boards, *Zilla Parishad*, Patna Municipal Corporation and so on, were taken over by the states, there had been local communities which ran and monitored neighbourhood schools closely (Government of Bihar, 2007; Karan and Pushpendra, 2006). Community participation had not been encouraged till *Vidyalaya Shiksha Samiti* (VSS), a body of parents, was revived in the 1990s under the promotion of decentralization, including the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to the Constitution.

VSSs are involved in SSA and MDM<sup>16</sup>. In SSA, planning is made at national, state, district, block and village/school level. Under SSA, a wide range of funds are available for primary and upper primary schools, including school grant (for VSS) at Rs. 2,000 per year per school for non-functional equipment, teacher grant Rs. 500 per year per teacher, among others. The percentage of government schools receiving school development and teacher grants are 91.4% and 78.7% respectively for India, and 60.5% and 68.1% for Bihar (NUEPA, 2009). The IDE-ADRI survey found that the fund is not uniformly distributed at school level. The school development grant was received by 15 schools out of 16 schools. The range in receipt amounts to from Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 2,000 per school per annum. All schools in the IDE-ADRI survey received teacher grant, however, one school had only half the amount of what they were entitled to grant. Jha et al. (2008) further argued that the utilization of SSA funds for maintenance and repair grants to schools, school grants, teachers' grants is higher than utilization for strengthening of delivery system in the long run, such as teacher's training, interventions for out of school children, etc..

VSS/Schools in association with Panchayats are responsible for providing free text

<sup>16</sup> According to the Bihar VSS Act, 2000, VSS consists of 9 parents, 3 non-parents, 2 members nominated by the *Gram Panchayat* and school headmaster. At least 5 members should be mothers and either the Secretary or the President should be woman. All are elected by *Aam Sabha* (Government of Bihar, 2007).

books at an upper ceiling Rs.150 per child per annum for girls and Scheduled Caste/Tribe students, scholarship for SC students and uniforms subsidy for girls. In the IDE-ADRI survey in Rohtas district, uniforms are required in 6 out of 16 schools. Girl students after the 6<sup>th</sup> grade are eligible to receive cash for uniforms. Out of six schools, one school did not receive any cash from the government and therefore did not distribute any amount for uniforms and one school provided Rs. 1,000 per student per annum, which is more than the norm. Furthermore, two schools distribute only to those who were in 6<sup>th</sup> grade but not 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Girls in grade 7 and 8 in two schools received Rs. 700 annually when the schools did not ask them to wear uniform.

The IDE-ADRI survey the scholarships are distributed more widely. SC students are eligible for scholarship at Rs. 180 from grades 2 to 4 and Rs. 360 from grade 5 to 8. Except in one school, scholarships are distributed for students, however, four out of fifteen schools gave less than the eligible amount of money at grade 5.

The overall implementation of distribution of funds at school level is patchy. The school-based survey can only find if they are distributed. Household or individual survey will be followed in 2009/10 to find if the subsidy target is right, if the fund is released on time, how incentives have affected attendance and so on.

#### **4.2.5 Household Expenditures**

The National Account Statistics (2008) shows that private expenditure on education services to total consumption expenditure at constant prices, has increased from 1.9% in 1999/00 to 2.6% in 2006/07. In Bihar, percentage of household expenditure to government expenditure is 50.7%, according to National Sample Survey in 2001/02. The household share of educational expenditure seems to have increased gradually.

It is well-known that primary schooling is not free. Though there are direct and opportunity costs on education, this section will only describe direct costs. Since the IDE-ADRI survey has not carried out a household survey yet, some previous surveys in Bihar are summarised. Jabbi and Rajyalakshmi (2001) found that the highest allocation of primary education is spent on private tuition and hostels in their survey of four villages in Bhojpur district in the mid-1990s. The UNICEF survey in 1999/00 (Karan and Pushpendra, 2004) showed difference across urban and rural areas. Average monthly household expenditure on elementary education in Bihar is Rs. 63.2 in the rural and Rs. 104.5 in the urban areas for primary school level and Rs. 111.8 in the rural areas and Rs. 152.5 in the urban areas for upper primary school level. The expenditure across different social group is also clear. In the urban areas of Bihar, the average annual cost

of education is Rs. 951.7 for Scheduled Castes, Rs. 1,360.0 for Other Backward Classes and Rs. 1,708.2 for Other Castes (i.e. upper castes). The large difference on education expenditure is also found between private- and government-school-going children. The average annual cost of schooling in a private school per child (Rs. 1872.5) is 1.75 times more than that in government schools (Rs.681.3) (ibid). This difference is likely to be wider in recent years according to our interviews in big cities like Patna and Bhagalpur<sup>17</sup>.

The percentage distribution of total cost of elementary (primary and upper primary) education by item in the UNICEF survey (ibid.) is 23.5% for uniforms, followed by 19.2% for fees, 14.8% for books, 13.8% for stationery and 11.8% for footwear. Since most of the highest expenditure items are partly or wholly subsidized for some sections of students, as explained in the previous section, the change of distribution of educational items in the 2000s can be examined when the next round of IDE-ADRI survey will be carried out in 2009/10.

Under the financial constraints, the state adopted low cost strategy to expand education. It was also found that schools were delayed to receive grants and sometimes received lower amount of allocation, partly due to underutilization of funds and unequal distribution of educational budget.

## **5. Some issues in Equity in Education**

As discussed, disparity in schooling opportunities still exists in Bihar. Since government policy and programmes have oriented towards equitable access to education, little attention has been paid to quality of education. There are some critical issues related to equitable access to quality of education. This section will discuss para-teacher policy and the rise of private schools, which is likely to have a serious negative impact on equity in primary education in the long run.

### **5.1 Teachers<sup>18</sup>**

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<sup>17</sup> In both cities, tuition fees, with transportation, in English-medium private school is around Rs. 1,000 per child per month and that in elite private schools is around Rs. 3,000, according to our interview with villagers during the survey in 2008/09.

<sup>18</sup> In this section, para-teachers in India is used interchangeable with panchayat teachers in Bihar.

Schools cannot run without teachers. Teachers could play in an important role in improving children's attendance and learning. Teacher education, however, is one of the most neglected areas. In 1994, the state government abolished pre-service training for fresh teachers (Government of Bihar, 2007). Government of Bihar has basically suspended to recruit permanent teachers since 1999. As in many other states in India, low-cost education strategy was adopted in the 2000s by recruiting para- teachers (*Shiksha Mitra*). Para-teachers have been recruited by Panchayat in 2000/01<sup>19</sup>. These panchayat-teachers are given lower lump-sum payments with no pension entitlement and no claim for medical facilities.<sup>20</sup> They are trained for certain days when they are appointed and occasionally trained after they are deployed. Between 2001/02 and 04/05, not a single teacher was recruited in Bihar due to the court case on teacher appointment rule and election model code of conduct (Jha et al., 2008).

The proportion of para-teachers in all government schools in Bihar is 7.2% in 2007/08 (NUEPA, 2009). However, 60% percent of teachers in the surveyed school in the IDE-ADRI survey are para-teachers (i.e. panchayat teachers) in Rohtas district. There is only one school where no para-teacher is appointed, that was a single teacher school. Three out of sixteen schools consist of only para-teachers. Government statistics are likely to underestimate the number of para-teachers.

It is often criticized teacher absenteeism is high in India and even higher in Bihar (For example, Kremer et al. 2004). Even if they are at school, they might not be teaching (PROBE, 1999). They are under continuous criticism and the unsupportive attitude from every corner of society. The teaching profession has significantly lost its social status over the years (Batra, 2005). At the same time some sympathize with teachers who work under such school conditions as they have to manage a large number of students with limited resources and a wide range of miscellaneous non-teaching assignments, including school administration, elections, census, government surveys, mid-day meals among others (See for example, Government of Bihar, 2007; Kumar 2008). In 2006, the government issued orders to prevent engagement of teachers in non-teaching assignments or posts. Mid-Day meals were also to be removed from

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<sup>19</sup> Block Panchayat appoint teachers for upper-primary schools and gram panchayat appoint teachers for primary schools.

<sup>20</sup> Their monthly salary has been Rs. 1,500 till recently. In 2008/09, the monthly salary is Rs. 4,000 for the untrained and Rs. 5,000 for the trained. The minimum educational qualification of para-teacher is 12<sup>th</sup> pass. Despite the low remuneration, a *Mukhiya* (Panchayat head) in Kishanganj district in February 2009 told us there were 1,200 applications for two vacant teacher posts in that panchayat.



teachers' assignments by government decision<sup>21</sup>.

Govinda and Josephine (2004) explained why para-teachers are increasingly popular in different India states, as follows: 1) Government can reduce the salary expenditures and avoid teachers' managerial problems, 2) Panchayat members or village elites can appoint pra-teachers, even though they are less likely to send their own children to government schools, 3) Regular teachers can reduce their burden of assignments, 4) Private schools are convinced by their long-term practice of recruiting para-teachers, which is endorsed by government, and 5) The educated unemployment problem in the rural areas is partly solved.

In Bihar, the appointment target of 2.6 lakhs para- elementary and secondary school teachers was set in 2006, to fill all vacancies and to bring all children into elementary schools. Vacancy is often found in schools where no permanent teacher is willing to teach or new schools where the community is traditionally not served by any school. In 2006, the Government of Bihar also changed the transfer policy for school teachers to give teachers the option of choosing the place of posting. Para-teachers, as a result, are often needed in schools where children from the socio-economically weaker section of society attend. In the IDE-ADRI survey, two new schools are served only by para-teachers and they are also the only schools in the surveyed schools in Rohtas district where no student is provided with a desk and one of the schools runs classes in a community hall<sup>22</sup>. The hierarchy of schools, from some schools where permanent teachers want to teach, to schools where no permanent teacher wants to be posted, and untrained panchayat teachers are appointed to teach children from the socio-economically weaker section, would presumably become clearer.

Social distance between teachers and students in government schools is already regarded as one of the reasons why teachers do not understand their students. Discrimination against lower caste is ingrained in the consciousness of teachers (and students), reflecting pedagogical exchange in schools (Bhargava, 2003). Mooij (2008)

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<sup>21</sup> Although the Government of Bihar issued an order that teachers should not be involved in non-teaching assignments and posting, it is not implemented fully. In quite a large number of schools we visited, teachers are involved in the operation and management of MDM. We encountered a school in Rohtas district where one teacher is on annual deputation to local government to look after SSA (Interviews with school teachers in Vaishali, Rohtas, Bhagalpur and Kishanganj districts from Oct. 2008 to Feb. 2009).

<sup>22</sup> In Bhagalpur district, we also came across a new school, which gave classes in a community hall and was run only by para-teachers.

argued that government school teachers regard themselves as middle-class. They send their own children to private schools and at the same time they look down on government school education as second class education <sup>23</sup>. A concern is that the current teacher recruitment, deployment and training policy will lead to an increase in disparity of quality of learning within government schools in the long run.

## 5.2 The Rise of Private Schooling

In the previous section, the current teacher policy might lead to a hierarchy of schools within government schools. This section will argue some negative consequences from the mushrooming of private schools in recent years.

It is true that not only wealthy households but also even some *poor* households actually send, or at least willing to send, their children to private schools (for example, PROBE, 1999). It is, however, general that well-off households are more likely to send their children to private schools. Moreover, the UNICEF survey in seven Indian states in 1999/00 found that private schooling has a female and lower caste bias (Mehrotra, 2006). It showed that only 19.7% of Schedule Caste children in comparison to 50.1% of general caste children, and 33.3% of girls in comparison to 37.2% of boys, are enrolled in private schools in Bihar (Karan and Pushpendra, 2006). However, in the IDE-ADRI survey, the ratio of private primary-school-going boys is higher than that of girls only in 3 out of 12 villages where there is any primary-school-age-child attending private school. This will be further investigated in the IDE-ADRI household survey in 2009/10.

Among the younger generation, it is more difficult to find those who were educated in government schools and become “successful” in any socio-economic arena of life. “Most of the distinguished academics, civil servants and professionals who dominated the Indian intellectual and social scene during the last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century received their education in government or government-aided private schools which maintained more or less comparable quality and standards” (Government of Bihar, 2007, p. 33). As the quality standard of government schools has deteriorated over the years, middle- and upper- class households turn towards private schooling for their education.

Quite a few students in Bihar migrated outside the states to seek education (ADRI, undated). Those who migrated from Bihar in search of education are estimated to have

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<sup>23</sup> In the IDE-ADRI survey, one female teacher in every school is randomly selected and interviewed. According to the results from Rohtas district, 3 out of 7 female teachers, who have primary school age children, sent their own children to private school.

increased 77.2% between 1981 and 1999/00<sup>24</sup>. The upper echelon of society has a choice of schools where their children are educated, anywhere in India, while the lower echelon of society sends their children to the nearest village school without any choice. The disparity in access to quality of education remains or is even wider among schools, from elite private schools to government village schools. It is increasingly important which primary school, if not nursery, a child can attend, since it is likely to determine one's destiny for life. Hierarchization of schools would reinforce the status quo of inequality in access to quality of education from the very beginning of schooling, and, importantly, exacerbate inequality in life chances, such as employment. The average years of schooling would increase slowly, but if any child is educated half-baked in a local government primary school, (s)he will end up with unemployed or will not find a *good* job, under the current trend of sluggish employment growth, particularly jobs in the formal sector. Jeffery et al. (2004) found that Scheduled Caste households in Uttar Pradesh started to withhold education from their children over the decade, due to limited employment opportunities even after being educated.

It is argued that a rise of low cost private schooling will play a major role in filling the gap of "Education for All" (See for example, Tooley and Dixon, 2007). *The poor* can go to a private school, which is likely to be unrecognized and low-fee paying. The schools their children can attend are often far different from English-medium elite schools. Low-fee paying private schools might play a certain role in improving the overall educational access, but it does not necessarily help improving equitable access to quality of education. Disparity in access to quality of education would further widen in the future, unless any policy, such as common school system, is implemented as early as possible.

## **6. Conclusions**

There still exists disparity in access to primary education across socio-economic strata, gender and districts among others within Bihar. Under the financial constraints, the state adopted low cost strategy to expand education, such as employing panchayat teachers (i.e. para-teachers).

Education is often regarded as a means of overcoming multi-dimensional

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<sup>24</sup> The Census of India in 1981 showed 147, 645 migrants gave their last residence as Bihar. The National Sample Survey 1999/00 estimated that 261,700 persons migrated from Bihar in search of education (NSSO, 2001).

deprivation, but unequal opportunity in access to an equitable quality of education still remains and further exacerbate by the emergence of private schooling and deploying para-teachers where no permanent teacher wants to be posted to teach the socio-economically disadvantaged classes. The hierarchy of schools could reinforce not only inequality in education but also in equality in quite a few important opportunities, such as employment. In the long run, the current accelerated trend of hierarchisation of schools is likely to intensify the socio-economic status quo for future generations.

This chapter is confined to a basic review of previous surveys and literature. More detailed investigation will be made when all data are computed. Further field surveys and analysis are to be carried out by the next round of IDE-ADRI Household Survey on Inequality in Rural Bihar in 2009/10.

#### **[Acknowledgement]**

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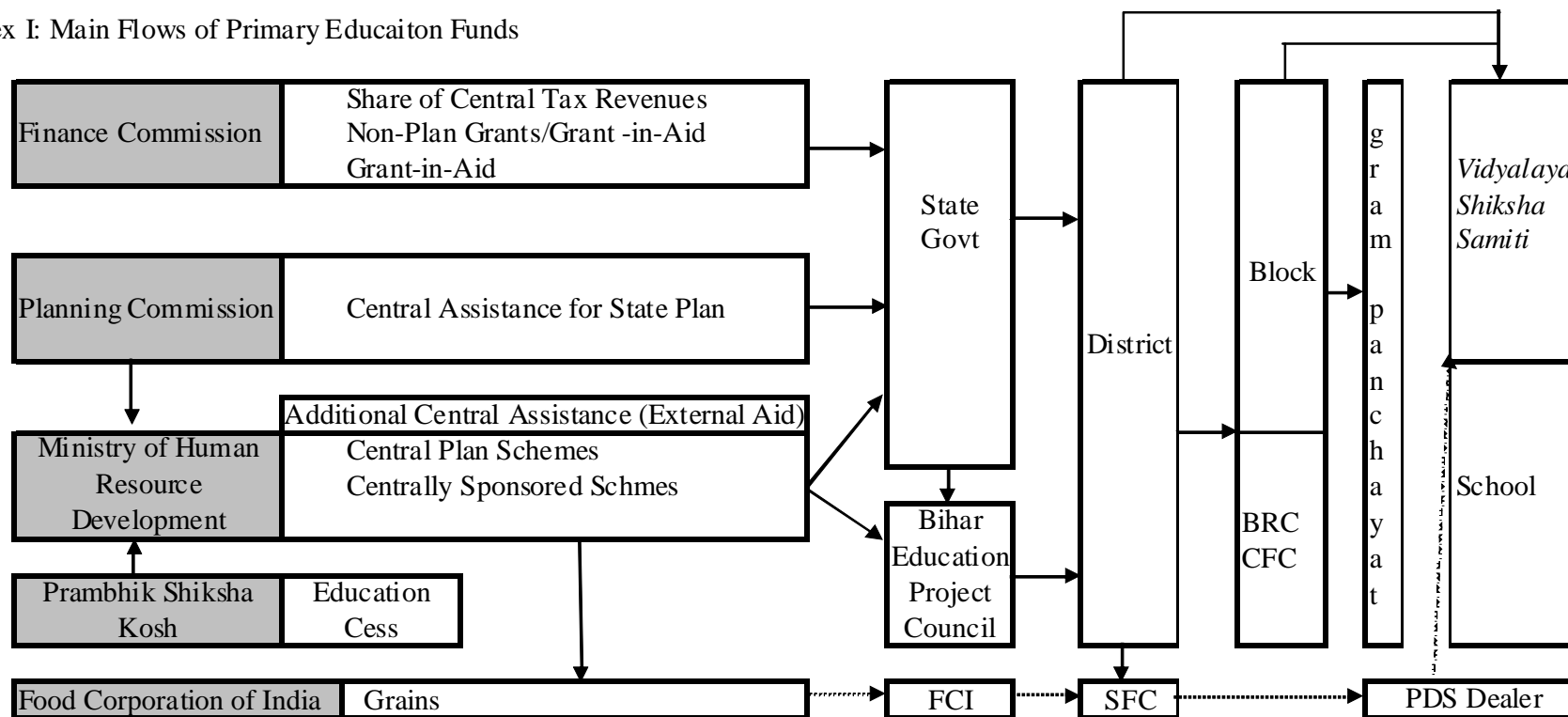
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Annex I: Main Flows of Primary Educaiton Funds



Notes:

- 1) This diagram shows flows of funds through Ministry of Human Resource Development. There are other flows of funds through other ministries/departments.
- 2) BRC, CRC and SFC stand for Block Resource Centre, Cluster Resource Centre and State Food Corporation respectively.

Source: Author.