



DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

THE HINDU

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**Topic: GS2 : Dismal condition of
Rural Primary Education**



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Learning little : No Remarkable progress in Rural Primary Education

Context:-

- Recently released Annual Status of Education Report, Rural (2018) on assessment of how children are faring in schools in rural areas indicates,
 - Though there has been improvement in learning outcomes in primary education, however there is no remarkable progress from the base year of 2008.
 - Improvements in educational achievements are not broad-based.
 - In particular, higher primary (class VI to Class VIII) have not shown enough improvements.
- The report shows the prevalence of learning deficit and the poverty of basic reading and arithmetic skills among students in Indian schools.
- Hence India continues to stare at a crisis and hence need concerted efforts to be taken at the earliest.

Importance of the Assessment:-

- Assessment provide the quality of learning levels, which can be utilize by the administrator for better policy because of quality of learning level at early education is important due to -
 - The quality of the learning level bears directly on India's future workforce, its competitiveness and the economy.
 - India's demographic dividend depends on the learning level of students.
 - Since children at the higher primary level is closest to joining the labour market or the next level of education, they need adequate foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy.

Concerns:-

- **Reading Skills-** Though for the first time since India adopted RTE, reading abilities of Class V students in government schools have improved since 2016 but this improvement is dismal with the level of 2008.
 - While 53.1% of students in Class 5 in rural government schools could in 2008 read a text meant for Class 2, the corresponding figure for 2018 stood at 44.2%; for comparison, private schools scored 67.9% and 65.1% for the same test in those years.
- **Arithmetic Ability-** Arithmetic ability showed a similar trend of under-performance, although there has been a slight uptick since 2016: an improvement of about 1.5 percentage points in government schools and 1.8 percentage points in private institutions, among Class 5 students. Their basic mathematical abilities have started growing faster.
- **Underperformance of Hindi Heartland-** Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Kerala and Haryana did better on the arithmetic question with over 50% students clearing it, compared to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and even Karnataka, which scored below 20%.
- **Barrier to Learning-** A significant percentage of students were not even able to recognise letters appropriate for their class, highlighting a severe barrier to learning.
- **Upper Primary Learning Outcome-** The basic reading and mathematics abilities of children in Class VIII continue to slowly decline.
 - For instance, among Class VIII students attending government schools, the proportion that can read a Class II text has continued to decline from 83.6% a decade ago to 69% in 2018. The proportion is similar when it comes to mathematical abilities.

Suggestion:-

- **Institution of Review Mechanism-** Centre should institute a review mechanism involving all States both government and private institutions, covering elementary education and middle school.
 - Where a public consultation on activity-based learning outcomes, deficits in early childhood education, and innovations in better performing States can help.
- **Supportive Framework To RTE to cater children from different Background-** At present, children start learning in a variety of environments: from poorly equipped anganwadi centres to private nurseries.
 - As seen in the report, Private school students are believed to have better family background, both in economic and education front, which serves as a key differentiator.
 - The enactment of the Right to Education Act was followed by a welcome rise in enrolment, which now touches 96% as per ASER data.
 - Now next logical step is the need of empower it by providing it as a supportive framework to cater to learners from different backgrounds who often cannot rely on parental support or coaching.
- **Improvement in Curriculum-** There is concern that curricular expectations on literacy and numeracy have become too ambitious, requiring reform.
- **Innovate new Approaches And Incentivising Good outcomes-** One study in Andhra Pradesh indicated that bonus pay offered to teachers led to better student scores in an independently administered test in mathematics and language.

Way Ahead:-

- India has one of the youngest populations in an aging world. By 2020, the median age in India will be just 28, compared to 37 in China and the US, 45 in Western Europe, and 49 in Japan.
- To reap this demographic dividend India needs to take concerted efforts at the earliest to improve the learning level of students otherwise the demographic advantage will be turn as a liability.
- The solutions may lie in multiple approaches.
- What is beyond doubt is that governments need to play more proactive role and catalyse the their duty by India's children.