

School Consolidation in Rajasthan for Improvement of Enrolment Density and overall Quality of Education

Summary:

The state of Rajasthan implemented a school consolidation exercise for improving the overall enrolment density, efficiency of operations and overall competitiveness of government schools for elementary schools between 2011-12 and 2017-18. The state also had instances of multiple primary or upper primary schools existing in the same revenue village resulting in poor enrolment density. The total number of government elementary schools was over 77,833 in 2011-12 and 78,870 in 2012-13 during the initiation of the school consolidation initiative. This reduced to 66,753 government elementary schools by 2017-18.

Objectives and Rationale:

The state of Rajasthan experienced a decline in enrolment in elementary government schools from 130 million in FY12 to 119 million in FY15. While the state had over 78,870 government elementary schools, nearly 56 percent (class 1 to 5) were standalone elementary schools and 28 percent were standalone elementary schools (class 1 to 8). As a result, students had to shift schools at grades 5 or 8 to continue consecutive years of education. This affected transition rates and drop-out rates in government schools in grades 5 and 8 at elementary levels. Further, it was also observed that several revenue villages had more than one primary or upper primary schools, resulting in schools with lower enrolment density.

Due to the presence of a large number of small elementary schools, each Block Elementary Education Officer managed nearly 275 schools across 30 to 40 Gram Panchayats. This resulted in challenges in monitoring of the schools by the BEEOs. In addition, government schools had only 0.65 teachers per grade, resulting in multi-grade teaching. Nearly 18 percent of the elementary schools were single teacher schools as of 2012-13, with nearly 32 percent of standalone primary schools being single teacher schools. Apart from teaching resources, other requisite infrastructure such as boundary walls, ramps, electricity, libraries and playgrounds were absent in a significant share of schools. Nearly 43 percent schools did not have library facilities, 62 percent did not have playgrounds and 64 percent did not have electricity. The number of secondary and higher secondary schools was also not commensurate to the number of elementary schools which resulted in lower transition rates from elementary to secondary education. In order to address these key issues, the Government of Rajasthan undertook initiatives such as Adarsh schools, State Initiative for Quality Education (SIQE) as well as consolidation of government schools to improve the overall efficiency and monitoring systems in elementary education

Key Stakeholders:

The key stakeholders involved were as follows:

1. Rajasthan Education Department
2. State Education Directorates: Directorate of Elementary Education and Directorate of Secondary Education
3. Block Education Officers and District Education Officers

Implementation Strategy:

The school consolidation initiative was of three types:

- a. Consolidation of elementary schools with other elementary schools
- b. Consolidation of elementary schools with secondary schools
- c. Consolidation of secondary schools with other secondary schools

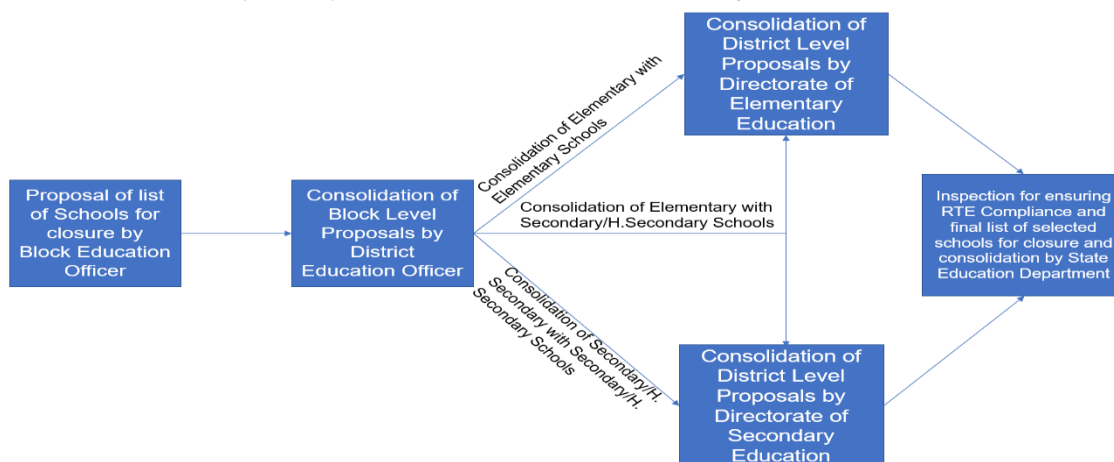
The implementation strategy is as described below:

The main criteria ensured during selection of schools was based on instances of low enrolment density of less than 15 to 30, with at least two such primary or upper primary schools existing in the same revenue village

The school consolidation exercise was coupled with the set-up of Adarsh schools (composite secondary and higher secondary government schools offering class 1 to 10/12), such that the primary or upper primary schools could combined be combined into composite schools with secondary and higher secondary grades. The principal of each Adarsh school designated at the Panchayat Elementary Education Officer (PEEO) for managing all the elementary schools within the Gram Panchayat.

The overall implementation process is as described below:

Resource Utilization: The entire school consolidation initiative was undertaken by the Directorate of Elementary Education and Directorate of Secondary Education. The physical and soft infrastructure resources of the closed schools were transferred to the consolidated schools. The teachers from the closed schools were also transferred to the consolidated schools. This helped improve overall resource efficiency



Impact:

As a result of the school consolidation initiative, the total number of elementary government schools reduced from nearly 78,870 in 2012-13 to 66,753 in 2017-18. Coupled with other initiatives such as Adarsh schools (for creation of composite secondary and senior secondary school in each Gram Panchayat) as well as SIQE (State Initiative for Quality Education), the overall transition rates improved. Transition rate from primary to upper primary improved from 90 percent in 2012-13 to 95 percent in 2017-18. Similarly, transition from upper primary to secondary improved from 90 percent in 2012-13 to 93 percent by 2017-18. In addition, the total number of schools to be managed by the BEEO reduced to 165 by 2017-18 from 275 in 2012-13. Overall, the performance of Rajasthan in NAS 2017 in elementary education was better than majority of states across subjects. The state was

also able to increase enrolment in government elementary schools from 59.4 lakhs in 2014-15 to 61.7 lakhs in 2017-18.

Overall, with regards to hard and soft infrastructure, the school consolidation initiative increased the availability of playgrounds, electricity, boundary walls and libraries. The overall number of teachers per school and pupil teacher ratio also improved. Teacher grade ratio improved resulting in a reduction in instances of multi-grade teaching in the consolidated schools.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learnt:

The school consolidation undertaken in Rajasthan involved decision making by block, district and state education functionaries. The perspectives of the school principals and teachers were not analyzed. In addition, it was crucial to ensure that the school consolidation exercise did not result in exclusion of socio-cultural groups due to increase in school distance

Replicability and Sustainability:

The school consolidation exercise was undertaken in two phases in Rajasthan- in 2014-15 and in 2016-17, indicating potential for replicability and sustainability. However, it is crucial to ensure suitable provisions to ensure access such as through transportation facilities. Further, it is critical to ensure that the consolidation does not alienate or reduce participation across all socio-economic groups.