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Infrastructure in Schools in India

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Abstract:

Infrastructure in schools in India varies widely depending on factors such as location (urban or rural), government funding, and the socioeconomic status of the community. The term infrastructure is comprehensive and there are number of aspects that are included in it. TThe Government of India has implemented various policies and initiatives to improve school infrastructure across the country. Overall, while there have been efforts to improve school infrastructure in India through government initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), challenges persist, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Addressing these challenges requires continued investment in infrastructure development, maintenance, and accessibility to ensure that all students have access to safe and conducive learning environments. Education is integral to the development of every community and culture.

Key words: Infrastructure, government initiatives, SSA, RTE, RMSA, Funding.



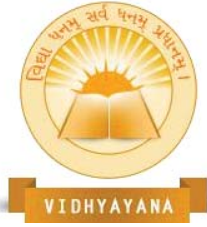
Preface:

Infrastructure in schools in India varies widely depending on factors such as location (urban or rural), government funding, and the socioeconomic status of the community. The term infrastructure is comprehensive and there are number of aspects that are included in it. These include, playgrounds, library facilities, laboratories, computer centres, technology, machinery, tools, equipment and so forth. (Radhika Kapur 2019). The Government of India has implemented various policies and initiatives to improve school infrastructure across the country. Overall, while there have been efforts to improve school infrastructure in India through government initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), challenges persist, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Addressing these challenges requires continued investment in infrastructure development, maintenance, and accessibility to ensure that all students have access to safe and conducive learning environments. Education is integral to the development of every community and culture. The RTE Act stipulates that every school should have a playground, a fence or a boundary wall, a library, and drinking water facilities. The compliance also requires school infrastructure to include keeping the building and classrooms in proper condition, with functioning toilets, meals, electricity, qualified teachers, desks, and chairs. With government funding and private-sector contributions (through CSR), taking the vision of education for all forward is no longer a far-fetched dream.

Common features of school infrastructure in India

Here are some common features of school infrastructure in India:

- 1. Classrooms:** Many schools have basic classrooms with desks or benches for students and a blackboard for teaching. However, the condition of classrooms can vary significantly, with some schools having well-maintained facilities while others may lack proper lighting, ventilation, or seating arrangements.
- 2. Buildings:** School buildings range from simple structures to more modern buildings with multiple floors and amenities. In urban areas, schools may have concrete buildings, while in



rural areas, schools may be housed in temporary or makeshift structures such as mud huts or tents.

3. Toilets: Access to clean and functional toilets is a significant issue in many schools, particularly in rural areas. While efforts have been made to improve toilet facilities under initiatives like the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, many schools still lack adequate toilet facilities, especially for girls.

4. Drinking Water Facilities: Access to clean drinking water is essential for students' health and well-being. Many schools have water sources such as hand pumps or taps, but the quality and availability of drinking water can vary, particularly in remote or underserved areas.

5. Playgrounds and Sports Facilities: Some schools have playgrounds or sports facilities where students can engage in physical activities and sports. However, the size and quality of playgrounds can vary, and many schools lack proper sports equipment and facilities.

6. Library and Computer Labs: While some schools have libraries and computer labs, access to these facilities may be limited, especially in rural or underprivileged areas. Schools with limited resources may lack books, computers, or internet connectivity.

7. Accessibility: Accessibility for students with disabilities is an important aspect of school infrastructure. Many schools lack ramps, handrails, or other accommodations to support students with mobility impairments, making it difficult for them to access classrooms and facilities.

8. Safety and Security: School safety and security measures vary, with some schools having boundary walls, security guards, and safety protocols in place, while others may lack these features, leaving students vulnerable to safety risks.

Policies and initiatives by The Government of India

The Government of India has implemented various policies and initiatives to improve school infrastructure across the country. While there isn't a single comprehensive "school infrastructure policy" per se, several programs and schemes have been launched to address



different aspects of school infrastructure. Here are some key policies and initiatives related to school infrastructure in India:

- I. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA):** SSA is one of the largest flagship programs aimed at universalizing elementary education in India. One of its key objectives is to improve school infrastructure by providing funds for the construction and repair of school buildings, toilets, drinking water facilities, and other amenities. SSA also focuses on making schools more accessible and inclusive, particularly for children with disabilities.
- II. **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA):** RMSA is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at enhancing access to secondary education and improving its quality. It includes provisions for upgrading and modernizing school infrastructure at the secondary level, including the construction of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and sports facilities.
- III. **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan:** Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan is an integrated scheme for school education launched in 2018, which subsumes SSA, RMSA, and other schemes. It focuses on improving the quality of education and holistic development of students, including through the provision of adequate infrastructure and learning resources.
- IV. **Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan:** Launched as part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, this initiative aims to ensure that all schools in India have access to clean and functional toilets, separate toilets for boys and girls, and adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management. The program emphasizes the importance of sanitation and hygiene in schools to promote a healthy learning environment.
- V. **Midday Meal Scheme:** While primarily focused on providing nutritious meals to school children, the Midday Meal Scheme also plays a role in improving school infrastructure by providing funds for kitchen sheds, storage facilities, and dining areas. Proper infrastructure is necessary for the effective implementation of the scheme and ensuring the safety and hygiene of meal preparation and consumption.
- VI. **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of creating vibrant and conducive learning environments in schools, including through



the development of infrastructure such as libraries, science laboratories, and sports facilities. It calls for the integration of technology in education and the creation of digital infrastructure to support digital learning initiatives.

These policies and initiatives reflect the government's commitment to improving school infrastructure as a means of enhancing the quality of education and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities for all children in India. Education is one of the basic needs for humans. Education can be one way for people to achieve their goals (Akareem & Hossain, 2012). They address various aspects of infrastructure development, including physical infrastructure, sanitation facilities, digital infrastructure, and inclusive amenities, with the goal of creating safe, inclusive, and conducive learning environments in schools across the country.

Challenges to improving school infrastructure in India

Improving school infrastructure in India faces several challenges, hindering the delivery of quality education and creating conducive learning environments. School as educational institution is basically established as a means for the teaching and learning process (Akhiero, 2011). Some of the key challenges include:

- 1. Inadequate Funding:** Insufficient funding for education, particularly for infrastructure development, is a significant challenge. Limited budget allocations may result in delays or inadequate implementation of infrastructure projects, leading to substandard facilities in many schools.
- 2. Regional Disparities:** There are significant disparities in school infrastructure between urban and rural areas, as well as across different states and regions. Schools in rural and remote areas often lack basic amenities such as proper buildings, electricity, water supply, and sanitation facilities.
- 3. Poor Quality of Infrastructure:** Even where infrastructure exists, the quality may be poor. Many schools have inadequate or unsafe buildings, overcrowded classrooms, lack of



furniture, and poorly maintained facilities. This compromises the safety, comfort, and overall learning environment for students and teachers.

4. **Lack of Maintenance:** Maintenance of school infrastructure is often neglected due to resource constraints and administrative challenges. Without proper upkeep, infrastructure deteriorates over time, leading to further deterioration in quality and safety.
5. **Accessibility Issues:** Many schools lack basic accessibility features for students with disabilities, such as ramps, handrails, accessible toilets, and braille signage. The lack of accessible infrastructure prevents children with disabilities from fully participating in educational activities and accessing school facilities.
6. **Sanitation and Hygiene:** Access to clean and functional toilets, handwashing facilities, and clean drinking water is a critical issue in many schools. Poor sanitation and hygiene facilities not only affect students' health and well-being but also contribute to absenteeism and dropout rates, particularly among girls.
7. **Digital Divide:** The digital divide exacerbates disparities in educational infrastructure, with many schools lacking access to technology, internet connectivity, and digital learning resources. This limits opportunities for students to develop digital literacy skills and access quality educational content.
8. **Climate Vulnerability:** Schools in disaster-prone areas face additional challenges related to climate vulnerability. Inadequate infrastructure resilience to natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and earthquakes poses risks to the safety and continuity of education for students and staff.
9. **Land Acquisition and Legal Issues:** Land acquisition for school construction can be a lengthy and complex process, especially in urban areas where land availability is limited and prices are high. Legal challenges, disputes, and bureaucratic hurdles can further delay infrastructure projects.



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Conclusion:

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from government agencies, policymakers, educators, communities, and other stakeholders. Strategies to improve school infrastructure include increasing funding for education, prioritizing equity and inclusivity, enhancing maintenance mechanisms, investing in digital infrastructure, promoting sustainable and climate-resilient designs, and streamlining regulatory processes for infrastructure development. By addressing these challenges, India can create safe, inclusive, and conducive learning environments that support the holistic development of all children.



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