

Public education making inclusive

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Context:

A recent study by IIM Ahmedabad's Right to Education Resource Center confirmed that parents lack trust in government schools due to poor quality of education and prefer to admit their children into private schools even if that means spending significantly more on tuition and other fees.

Case study:

However, the Odisha government's revolutionary reforms in the State's public education sector through the Odisha Adarsha Vidyalayas (OAV), the 'Mo School' Abhiyan, and the 5T High School Transformation Programme are on their way to making government schools better than private schools in all parameters — infrastructure, affordability and quality.

English medium education:

1. Education World India School Rankings 2022-23 ranked the OAV in Polasara block of Ganjam district the 5th best school in the government run day school category, and two more OAVs among the top 10.
2. In order to address the struggle faced by students in securing admission to the Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV) schools after the first standard, the OAVs provide admission at the secondary stage.
3. Odisha's OAV model aims to bridge the rural urban gap by providing accessible, qualitative and affordable English Medium education. There are 315 English medium coed OAVs in all 314 blocks in rural and semi urban areas of Odisha as of now. They ensure representation for Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, and female students through reservations. This has led to a higher enrolment of female students compared to males.
4. Many vulnerable children who had been victims of child abuse, trafficking, child labour, and child marriage were rescued and prepared for the OAV entrance in 2021. OAVs also provide different types of coaching facilities to enable students to crack national level tests.
5. OAVs have promoted social equity by providing a level playing field to students from rural and poor socioeconomic backgrounds. To address pedagogical gaps, the OAV model focuses on continuous teacher education programmes and maintains a teacher pupil ratio of 1:25.
6. It has also leveraged digital technology to enhance the accountability and transparency of the system. The Enterprise Resource Planning system and OAV Sangathan website help track the academic and nonacademic progress of each child alongside monitoring the performance of each school, enabling timely strategic interventions.
7. Plans are afoot to transform the OAVs into scientifically upgraded Centres of Excellence

(CoEs) to foster an ecosystem of innovation and inquiry driven learning.

The alumni connect:

1. In 2017, Odisha launched the Mo School Abhiyan, a one-of-its-kind initiative that strives to motivate and mobilise the alumni community to contribute towards revamping the government schools in Odisha.
2. Founded on five pillars — connect, collaborate, contribute, create and celebrate — the programme connects the schools with alumni from various fields and promotes alumni mentorship for the students. School Adoption Programme (SAP), under the above programme, enables the alumni to make financial contributions to the schools adopted by them.

High school transformation:

1. The 5T High School Transformation Programme is rooted in the 5T concept of transparency, technology, teamwork, and timeliness leading to transformation. Launched in 2021, the programme focuses on the adoption of educational technology, in the form of smart and digital classrooms, e-libraries, modern science laboratories, improved sanitation facilities, and sports facilities in all high schools.
2. The programme also caters to the needs of specially abled children. It provides assistive devices and tailored teaching learning materials for students with autism, cerebral palsy, and intellectual disabilities.
3. The government has also launched campaigns like 'Mo School Hockey Clubs' and 'Football for All', thus enabling holistic development of students' personalities.
4. This proactive approach to transforming the education system has led to an unprecedented shift in enrolment patterns. In 2019-20, private schools had 16 lakh students; in 2021-22, this number dwindled to 14.6 lakhs. Currently, 81% of students in the State are studying in government schools.

Conclusion:

The interventions by the Odisha government have ensured that education is treated as a public good in essence and spirit and have created a strong legacy of an education model founded on equality and excellence. This model can be followed at the national level.

