

Highlights of Working paper

School Consolidation in Rajasthan: Implementation and Short Term Effects

About

In 2018, Accountability Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research studied school consolidation by Government of Rajasthan in 2014-15. Rajasthan was one of the first states in India to consolidate schools at scale. According to the Rajasthan Education Directorate, from 2014-15 till 2018-19 approximately 22,000 schools have been consolidated. However, for around 2,500 of these schools, consolidation was reversed (refer to page 5 of the Working Paper on www.accountabilityindia.in for details), putting the total number of consolidated schools at 19,500 till 2018-19.

Methodology

This paper uses two main data sources for analysis: 1. School-wise statistics available through the Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE). 2. Interviews with state government education department officials, and 3. Review of Rajasthan Government orders for school merger.

In order to understand changes in enrolment, infrastructure facilities and teacher availability, school specific indicators *before and after consolidation* were analysed. These indicators were also compared with statewide trends. The study covers:

- Schools for which consolidation orders were released between August and September 2014;
- Schools for which consolidation orders were released between June and September 2016.

For detailed methodology, kindly refer to page 9 of the Working Paper on www.accountabilityindia.in.



What does this study not capture?

- **Impact on learning outcomes:** Due to lack of data on school-specific learning outcomes in U-DISE, this study has not looked at the impact on school consolidation on learning levels of students after they were transferred to the new consolidated schools.
- **Compliance of Right to Education (RTE) norms regarding distance of school from neighbourhood:** Given the legal RTE mandate, it is important to explore whether consolidated schools are accessible to students, in terms of distance. However, we could not analyse this due to the lack of data on distance to schools for children in U-DISE.
- **Perspective of students and parents:** This study relies on secondary data and thus does not cover perspectives of stakeholders such as parents or students.

Findings

- Through consolidation, elementary schools were consolidated with other elementary schools or secondary schools. Therefore, consolidation contributed in the creation of model schools, especially *Adarsh* schools (grade 1-10 or 1-12).
- According to orders issued by the Rajasthan education department, there were two reasons to close schools: (1) inadequate enrolment in some schools and/or, (2) the existence of more than one primary or upper-primary school within the same revenue village or proximity of the schools to be consolidated.
- The schools selected for closure did not always follow the 'low enrolment' norm. Government orders in 2014 to 2016 do not define 'low enrolment'. However, some documents released in 2017 specifically mention that schools with enrolment less than 15 or 30 are to be consolidated. We found that for schools closed in 2014-15, 66 per cent schools had enrolment greater than 50 in 2013-14. It is likely that adjacent schools, even with high enrolment were consolidated.
 - Differences have also been observed across the two years of consolidation – 2014-15 and 2016-17. Average school enrolment was considerably larger for schools consolidated in 2014-15, as compared to those in 2016-17. Based on the sample number of schools analysed for this study, it was found that the average enrolment of primary schools closed was 78 in 2013-14, and 22 in 2015-16. It is possible that consolidation of elementary schools with other elementary schools was motivated by low enrolment to a greater extent, than consolidation with secondary schools.

- There was a greater decline in enrolment in consolidated schools compared to all government schools across the state. The decline in enrolment seems to be the highest for students with disability, followed by that of Schedule Caste (SC) and Schedule Tribe (ST) students.
 - For schools consolidated in 2014-15, there was a 7 per cent fall in enrolment in our sample. Across the state, this decline was only 1.4 per cent.
 - Between 2015-16 and 2016-17, while the enrolment across government schools in Rajasthan increased, enrolment for the consolidated schools declined by 3 per cent. Between 2013-14 and 2014-15, SC, ST, and Other Backward Classes (OBC) enrolment declined in consolidated schools by 6.8 per cent, 3.5 per cent, and 7.9 per cent, respectively. For the state, the decline was lower at 1.8 per cent for SC and OBC students, while the enrolment of ST students increased by 1 per cent. The trend is similar in 2016-17.
 - Even though the proportion of students with disability in the sample was small (around 1 per cent), this category has been affected most by consolidation. Across all government schools in Rajasthan, the enrolment of students with disability declined by 4 per cent between 2015-16 and 2016-17. In comparison, the rate of decline was much higher among consolidated schools at 22 per cent. Similar trends hold for schools consolidated in 2014-15.
- After consolidation, there has been an increase in the average number of teachers per school. All consolidated schools across both years had more than two teachers. The number of teachers per grade (TGR) has improved moderately. The improvement in TGR was visible to a greater extent for those elementary schools that were consolidated with secondary schools – in both 2014-15 and 2016-17.
- Overall, it was observed that students were transferred to other better-equipped schools after consolidation. They thus benefited from improved facilities such as a boundary wall, electricity connection, library, and playground.

About Consolidation

- Consolidation is the ‘closure’ of one or more schools and integration with another school.
 - All physical and human resources are transferred to the consolidated school including students and teachers;
 - The ‘closed’ school no longer exists as an independent administrative unit even as its building maybe present in some cases;
 - The ‘closed’ school is not identifiable by a unique U-DISE code.
- Why were schools consolidated? The aim was to use existing resources more efficiently. Several government officers mentioned the same, and the Samagra Shiksha Annual Work Plan and Budget mentions the use of consolidation for efficient resource utilisation. When schools with low enrolment, without dedicated teachers for each grade, are consolidated with larger schools, there can be an improvement in the availability of teachers for each grade. Similarly, better infrastructure facilities can be provided when smaller schools are consolidated into larger ones considering limited resources with state governments.

About Accountability Initiative:

Accountability Initiative is a research group which has worked since 2008 on strengthening transparency and accountability in governance. We have done this through evidence-based research on state capabilities and factors affecting efficient public services delivery in India. We are operational in 5 states - Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Our research studies have been multi-sectoral and include studies on budgets, governance processes, and public administration across social sectors like education, health and nutrition, and sanitation.

Our vision is to enable Responsive Governance. We believe this can be achieved if government institutions are designed in a transparent and accountable manner and are responsive to citizen demands, and an informed and mobilised citizenry which can draw upon these platforms. Our mission is to increase both through research and dialogue.

We are a part of the Centre for Policy Research, one of India’s leading public policy think tanks.

To download the Working Paper please visit:

www.accountabilityindia.in/publication/school-consolidation-in-rajasthan-implementation-and-short-term-effects/



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