

# Emerging Demand of Para Teachers in India

## Abstract

Education has become a fundamental right through 83rd amendment of constitution in 2003 and enactment of „Right of children to free and Compulsory education Act 2009“. The centrally sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) , launched in 1994, had opened more than 160,000 new schools by 2005, including almost 84,000 alternative schools to ensure availability of formal schools within one kilometer radius as recommended in the Programme of Action 1992 of National policy on Education 1986. For this purpose a large number of primary teachers are required. Contractual teachers are the low cost non professional teachers. The demand of contract teachers is guided by a number of socio-economic-political factors. According to the report of the National Committee of State Education Ministers under the chairmanship of MHRD to develop structure and outline of implementing UEE in a mission mode, para teachers are suggested "for meeting the demand for teachers in a manner that state can afford..

**Keywords:** Universal Elementary Education, Millenium Development Goal, Para Teacher, Community Teacher, Economic Rent, Pupil-Teacher Ratio.

## Introduction

In the fast moving Indian economy where the service sector is whopping up its contribution strongly backed by a large stock of highly educated human capital, the aim of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) is indispensable to achieve for ensuring growth with equity. The World Bank has placed education at the forefront of its poverty-fighting mission since 1962, and is the largest external financier of education in the developing world. This is further supported by the slogan 'Education for all by 2015' raised by UNESCO and Millennium development goals of UNDP. In India the total population in the age group of 6-14 is 193 million as per the census report 2001 which is likely to be more after census 2011. This figure is remarkably large especially in the light of the fact that Primary Education has become a fundamental right through 83<sup>rd</sup> amendment of constitution in 2003 and enactment of 'Right of children to free and Compulsory education Act 2009'. The National Literacy Mission, launched in 1988, which was aimed at attaining a literacy rate of 75 per cent by 2007 and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (Total Literacy Campaign) , launched in 2001 to ensure that all children in the 6–14 year age-group attend school and complete eight years of schooling by 2010 , are the two mega projects of the government in this area. The Total Literacy Campaign is the principal strategy of the NLM for eradication of illiteracy. The centrally sponsored District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) , launched in 1994, had opened more than 160,000 new schools by 2005, including almost 84,000 alternative schools to ensure availability of formal schools within one kilometer radius as recommended in the Programme of Action 1992 of National policy on Education 1986. For this purpose a large number of primary teachers are required. Due to this fact and the uncompromising pressure of Structural adjustment programme initiated by the government of India in the beginning of 90's, the path of contractual appointment of primary teachers is adopted. According to the Tenth five year plan approach paper 'Steps would have to be initiated to fill up all the existing vacancies of the teachers, though in a time-bound manner, with defined responsibility to local bodies and communities, and to remove legal impediments in the recruitment of para-teacher.

According to Alec Fyfe (2007) "Contractual teacher (para teachers) are the teachers with low qualifications and are employed under less favorable terms than regular teacher. Their salaries tend to be considerably lower than civil service teachers from less than half to less



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than one quarter on an average and they rarely have the same employment and labor rights." Due to diverse policy orientations adopted by the developing nations for determining qualifications and service conditions of the contractual teachers, they are known by different names for e.g., volunteers, community teachers, community helpers, para teachers etc. Contractual teachers are the low cost non professional teachers. The demand of contract teachers is guided by a number of socio-economic-political factors. They are

1. To serve ethnic minority population where localities are more compatible to communicate.
2. To supply teachers in remotest areas of India where regular teachers resist to serve.
3. To improve pupil-teacher ratio that has reached to acute intolerable level in many primary single teacher schools. This is also an effort to meet the guidelines laid down under operation blackboard programme (1992).
4. To ensure availability of at least one teacher in primary schools where Village Pradhans pressurize local leaders.
5. To win the election by attracting a large section of educated unemployed youth who lure for a government job.
6. To provide a fast low cost solution under the pressure of SAP for attracting national goal of UEE and UNESCO's target of EFA.

#### Aim of the Study

1. To analyse the increase in demand of primary teachers.
2. To emphasize the roll of para teachers in Indian Primary Education.

The above factors clearly reveal the fact that the demand for primary teachers is urgent .It must also be seen in the light of the fact that India is a young nation i.e., the young population has a higher percentage in the total population. If we want to transform this population to a valuable human capital stock instead of a burden on the government ,quality of education and better employment opportunity need to be ensured. Moreover the quest for education as the fundamental right makes it inevitable. A number of studies conducted by the state, national and international agencies done on the quality of schooling in India laments upon low achievement level. How will it be possible to transform today's child into a dynamic human capital resource if their roots are weakened ? This is a major issue seriously concerning UNESCO not only in case of India but for most of the developing countries. According to the report of the National Committee of State Education Ministers under the chairmanship of MHRD to develop structure and outline of implementing UEE in a mission mode, para teachers are suggested "for meeting the demand for teachers in a manner that state can afford" (Contemporary Education Dialogue, 2002). State is finding it difficult to afford teachers to maintain adequate pupil-teacher ratio. The reason for increasingly appointing contractual teachers by the states is that this step enable state to become eligible to receive Central funds under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and it relieves them of incurring recurring expenditure

on those teachers. Vidya Upasak Yojana of Gujarat, Vidya Volunteer Scheme of Andhra Pradesh, Shiksha Mitra Scheme of U.P., Shiksha Karmi scheme of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh etc are the examples of such efforts. Therefore whether state or national government or international agency like World bank, all unanimously recommend the recruitment of para teachers. Though the main argument is essentially economic yet to increase the acceptability of this trend in the masses they extend some non-economic arguments too. Firstly, they say that para teachers are more regular and enthusiastic. Secondly, they are amongst the localities and thus can cater their needs more efficiently. In a all India World Bank study of government primary schools in India Kremer et al (2005) found that contract teachers were no more likely to be absent than regular teachers. In another study done by Duflo, Dupas and Kremer (2007) on the effect of contract status of teachers on education quality schools in Kenya, student performance as measured by test scores increased for students taught by a contract teacher. Table 1 shows the number of para teachers in main states of India. Females outnumber male para teachers in many states viz., Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Over all there are more than 2.16 lakh para teachers as on 30 Sept 2008. Considering the need it is likely to increase manyfolds.

**Table 1**  
**State Wise Number of Para Teachers in India**

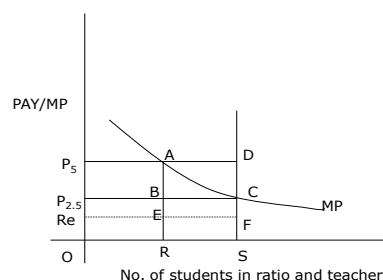
S. No.	States	Male	Female	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	26442	16474	42916
2	Arunachal Pradesh	611	223	834
3	Assam	625	298	923
4	Bihar	622	225	847
5	Gujarat	26041	29686	55727
6	Haryana	146	219	365
7	Himachal Pradesh	2048	1657	3705
8	Jammu & Kashmir	2929	1298	4227
9	Karnataka	1975	2893	4868
10	Kerala	52	137	189
11	Maharashtra	13101	10093	23254
12	Orissa	5947	3179	9126
13	Rajasthan	674	6946	7620
14	Tamil Nadu	3641	13188	16829
15	Uttar Pradesh	24164	15429	39593
16	Uttaranchal	1409	1095	2504
17	West Bengal	129	121	250
18	Delhi	230	522	752
19	India	141665	104784	216449

**Source** : District Information System for Education 2008-09.

The supply of young population who apply for contractual appointments is abundant even at a very low pay. In the light of this fact we can assume that the supply of youth opting for para teachers range

from highly elastic to perfectly elastic .The reason for such a high elasticity becomes clear when we look into the background and qualifications of a para teacher. The findings of the study done by DPEP in 1998 shows that before joining as para teacher most of them were unemployed and were doing odd jobs, working as casual labourers or working on farm. They were enthusiastic to utilise their educational competence .The para teachers programme is providing them opportunity to do so .All of them referred to their income as salary and not as honorarium and cherished the hope that they would be absorbed as regular teachers. In most of the cases the academic qualification required to become para teacher is higher secondary (equivalent to a regular teacher) while their salary ranges from 1/2 to 1/5 of a regular teacher. In case of remote areas this qualification is further relaxed to class VIII for male and V for female para teachers. A notable condition for becoming a para teacher is that he/ she must be a local resident. This implies that a large chunk of them comes from rural background. Since 3/4 of Indian population is in rural area, number of applicants increases exuberantly. From the demand and supply conditions described above it becomes clear that the government as a producer of primary education service has the opportunity to earn economic rent. Interestingly, government has not missed this opportunity and is in the mood to continue with this trend further .To induce economic analysis into this issue an effort is done to diagrammatically present this situation of earning rent .In the figure 1 number of students and teachers are shown on x axis to depict demand and supply respectively. MP curve is showing the present marginal productivity of primary teachers who are blamed to be insincere and irregular .Due to this reason the marginal productivity curve is drawn at less height .OS shows the present number of children in the age group of 6-14 showing the demand for primary education to be catered by the government only. OR is the number of primary teachers presently working in primary schools in India at the wage  $P_5$  decided by the government .PS is the number of para teachers employed (assuming all vacancies are filled) .The highest pay of para teachers is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the pay of regular teacher which is shown by the line drawn parallel at half the distance to  $P_5$  .Now the economic rent earned by the government amounts to ABC .Along with this rent ,government also avoid the loss equal to ADC which might have occurred if all vacancies are filled by regular appointment with full pay .If we take the case of local teachers appointed in remote areas who are paid up to 1/5 of the pay of regular teachers ,this rent increases further simultaneously. A dotted line is drawn parallel to . Thus total gain to the government is  $ABC+EBCF=AEDF$ .

**Rent Enjoyed By The Government**



**Fig- 1**

The trend of recruiting para teachers was started in Rajasthan in the 1980s when 'Shiksha karmis' were recruited from among the unemployed village youth to act as teachers in the local primary school under the auspices of a programme financially assisted by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). The 'Shiksha karmi' scheme received widespread attention in the wake of the District Primary Education Programme launched under World Bank guidance and assistance from several other donor agencies. Himachal Pradesh also adopted this policy in 1984. Subsequently other states adopted the same policy due to various economic and non economic reasons. The big shift came in 1997 with the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in Madhya Pradesh designed to address the issue of access. The idea behind the EGS was simple. The programme guaranteed a school within 90 days of receiving a written request from a panchayat. The community, represented by the panchayat, was expected to provide space (building, tent, hut etc) and also identify local people who could be interviewed for appointment as teachers. These teachers were paid a fixed salary and appointed for a year. The term was, subsequently, increased to three years. The panchayat formally appointed these "contract teachers" and also terminated their services for non-satisfactory performance. Encouraged by the initial successes, especially with respect to teacher availability onsite, the state government declared formal schoolteachers as a "dying cadre" and announced that all future appointments of teachers would only be on a contract basis. Several state governments adopted the EGS model. Rajasthan, for example, introduced Rajiv Gandhi Pathashala in 1998. West Bengal set up Shishu Shiksha Kendra, also in 1998. The Government of India legitimised this model through a central scheme for the establishment of "transitional schools". These new types of schools have now become an integral part of the Education for All (EFA) scheme – or the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

**Table 2**  
**Service Conditions of Para Teachers**

State	Honorarium	Appointing Agency	Duration
Andhra Pradesh	Rs. 1000/-	School Committee	10 Months
Gujarat	Rs 2500/-	District Education Committee	2 Years
Himachal Pradesh	Rs. 2500/-	District Primary Education Officer	1 Year
Madhya Pradesh	Rs. 2500/-	Block Panchayat	1 Year
Maharashtra	Rs 3000/-	Chief Executive officer of Zilla Parishad	1 Year
Rajasthan	Rs 1800/-	Shiksha karmi project officer	1 Year
Uttar Pradesh	Rs 2250/-	Village education committee	10 Months

**Source:** Dayaram (2002) cited in R Govinda and Y Josephine, NIEPA 2004

In table 2, Service conditions of para teachers are given for various states. The interstate variations are seen on many basis like appointing agency, Duration of service, honorarium, eligibility etc. In majority of states the eligibility of para teachers is senior secondary except for the Shiksha Karmi Project of Rajasthan where the qualification is as low as eight years of education. Pre-service training is not deemed necessary for these teachers, though Gujarat and Maharashtra are exceptions to this general trend as in both 'Vidhya Volunteers' are provided only seven days of induction level training, while the 'Shiksha Mitra', and Acharyaji' of Uttar Pradesh receive 30 days of induction training. The table shows that para teachers in Maharashtra are paid followed by other states. Here it is important to mention that the salaries of regular primary teachers have shown much hike after Sixth Pay Commission. There is immense pressure on government from the teacher unions to raise the honorarium. This pressure is likely to take some shape in the form of change in policies. It will be interesting to see how far government adjust to meet the demand of para teachers without disturbing the path of fiscal consolidation which is increasingly emphasized by Finance Commissions.

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