

Schemes and Programs Implemented for the School-Going Children by the Indian Government

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Abstract

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN (United Nations) General Assembly in 2015 represented a quantum leap in framing a development compact to stimulate cooperation and coherence across development efforts. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) focuses on “Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and promote lifelong learning process for all”. It is not only more ambitious but represents a different order of aspirations. In India, school education is structured well by a series of central government schemes that are designed to improve its accessibility, retention, nutrition, and the quality of learning among the school-going children. Education is breaking down all the disparities such as discrimination, gender inequality, and social background, as it enhances the education system with advancements and analyzing the coming years. The present paper has consolidated all the schemes and programs implemented for the school-going children that boost higher enrollment in schools, reduce school dropouts, improve the status of nutrition, and support the inclusion of children with disabilities (CwSN). The continued coordination in the government schemes and programs will be effective and essential to sustaining the gains for future generations.

Keywords: Central Government Schemes, India, School-going children, school dropouts, disparities, quality education, educational planning, policies, Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Schemes and Programs Implemented for the School-Going Children by the Indian Government Introduction

India's expanding population, rising energy needs, and deteriorating environment have made sustainable development a top priority. Sustainable development means “Development that preserves the ability of future generations to meet their needs”. A significant part of ensuring sustainable development in India is educational planning. It can empower individuals, raise awareness, and encourage sustainable behavior. Planning is done to ensure accessibility, equity, and high-quality education for all learners, regardless of their background, gender, disability, and social status. It breaks all disparities nationally and globally. India is placed 131st out of 189 nations on the Human Development Index (HDI), as stated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Education planning can help address such challenges by implementing sustainable practices and creating awareness about environmental issues.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN (United Nations) General Assembly in 2015 represented a quantum leap in framing a development compact to stimulate cooperation and integrated coherence development planning. Relative to the predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the seventeen SDGs and 169 targets are more ambitious, capacious, and challenging, which reflects a multidimensional view of development and one that requires multi-stakeholder coordination (Reimers, 2024). The confluence of crises and conflicts in many countries has impeded progress towards advancing the SDGs, which span food security, public health, education, environmental conservation, peace and security (Wang and Zhao, 2025). Education is very important for economic, political, and social transformation. In the twenty-first century, a population that is well-educated and equipped with relevant skills, attitudes, and knowledge is needed for the overall development of society (Monga, 2019). Education is a fundamental tool for personal development and national progress, and learning strategies are deliberate activities or techniques that individuals employ to facilitate the acquisition, retention, and application of knowledge and skills (Ahmadu and Eleanya, 2025).

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) aims to “Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and promote lifelong learning for all,” which is not only more ambitious but represents a different order of aspirations than the two educational aspirations of the Millennium Development Goals, and it includes one education goal (Universal Primary Education) and eliminating primary and secondary education as a target of the goal of promoting gender equality (Reimers, 2024). The Government Schemes are initiatives put forth by the government to raise everyone’s standard of living. The two main categories of government programs are central sector and centrally supported programs. The Indian Government provides social security and welfare programs to its citizens, which are co-funded by the National and State Governments (Kadam et al., 2024). Transformation towards sustainable development is an imperative for our collective future, encapsulating a profound shift in how societies operate, produce, and consume. It’s a journey of multifaceted change that encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The transformation demands innovative policies, technologies, and collaborations across sectors and borders (Akilanayaki, 2025). The education system in India has changed significantly over the years due to growing needs and demands. The level of education in India has improved, and many children are doing better through quality education, and this is because the government is trying to promote children through various programs that provide better facilities. (Kumari and Thakur, 2022).

After liberalization in India, the government gave more attention to providing better social sector development, and as a part of it, the Indian Government announced a large number of schemes and programs for various fields, and the development of education is a necessary condition for transforming the society from deprivation to development (Bhawariya, 2022). The standard of education in India has been getting better through quality education and this is because the government is trying to encourage children with the help of various schemes that provide better facilities (Monga, 2019). The government has implemented many schemes for the well-being of the students and to support quality education for the students.

Objectives

1. To understand the initiatives, policies, schemes, and programs framed by the Indian Government for school-going children.
2. To know the schemes and programs implemented by the Indian Government for the school-going children.

Literature Review

SDG4, within the extensive timeline of International educational objectives, illustrates how it rejuvenated the aspirations of the “Education for All” initiative that the MDGs had constrained. It contends that SDG4 has catalyzed tangible advancements in government initiatives, donor focus, global oversight, and academic planning, despite the existing benchmarks being insufficient. Ultimately, it argues that the rising global issues of warfare and violence, the deterioration of democracy, and the jeopardization of human rights necessitate a revision of SDG4 (Reimers 2024), and a study by Wang and Zhao 2025) provides a comprehensive bibliometric mapping of 21,076 SDG-related articles from 2003 to 2024, revealing the unequal distribution of research effort among

the Sustainable Development Goals. SDG4 (Quality Education), SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals) collectively account for only 3.79% of studies, and this demonstrates that research is significantly biased toward SDG13 (Climate Action), SDG3 (Good Health and Well-Being), and SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and the study suggests that future studies should focus on low-carbon multi-institutional collaboration, urban-rural planning made possible by remote sensing, and greater synergy among the understudied objectives

India's several welfare and development programs are poorly visible, which results in eligible residents missing out on time-bound advantages before they ever become aware of them. It contends that the main obstacle to acceptance is not the schemes, but rather the dispersed publicity at the local, state, and federal levels. In order to help citizens to frame more informed decisions, it suggests a single digital platform called "Indian Stratagems" that combines schemes and participation data (Kadam et al., 2024). The size of India's population is roughly 1.32 billion, and it emphasizes the importance of education to the country's economic, political, and social development. Teacher training programs and government programs are raising learning standards and improving school quality in quantifiable ways. It concludes that maintaining this development requires an awareness of both central school education programs and universalization of education programs (Monga, 2019). Public awareness is crucial to the success of sustainability-related government initiatives, and it contends that the state's developmental results may be hampered by low public awareness rather than just the schemes. Its goal is to find communication gaps in order to increase the outreach and, eventually, the impact of SDG-related initiatives (Akilanayaki, 2025). Central government financing programs are the main source of money in Indian Universities, which otherwise rely mostly on Government assistance. Budgetary data from UGC (University Grants Commission), IITs (Indian Institutes of Technology), and Deemed Universities from FY (Financial Year) 2022–2023 to 2024–2025 demonstrate that funding has increased steadily during these years. It suggests a complementary relationship between the two by connecting the increase in financing trend to the concurrent rise in the number of colleges and Universities (Sunena and Singh, 2025). The practical pedagogical topic of which teaching method best enhances secondary students' performance in Mathematics is addressed. Instead of depending on conjecture, it compared the results empirically and used a quasi-experimental design across five learning-strategy groups with 200 students (pre- and post-tests). It made the case that metacognitive learning techniques led to noticeably improved comprehension, which supports their broader use in schools (Ahmadu and Eleanya, 2025).

The urban Government schools implemented the universalization of education policy. It evaluates actual implementation rather than just policy purpose, based on structured interviews with 35 permanent teachers in Jamshedpur. It found that while there was excellent progress, more work is still required to completely realize the ideals of Universalization (Kumari and Thakur, 2022). Regarding the implications of SDG4 for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the study expanded the discussion beyond India. It highlighted specific problems and difficulties of HEIs encountered while putting SDG4 into practice, based on a synthesis of secondary research. It presented HEIs as active actors rather than passive beneficiaries of SDG policy and made the case for specific institutional reforms (Yong et al., 2024). Poverty, child marriage, and discrimination systematically prevented women from accessing school, and the study emphasized gender as a critical perspective. Government initiatives are effective for women and girls' enrolment, retention, and advancement at all educational levels. Its goal was to locate and evaluate various programs that are available to assist education for women and girls (Bhawariya, 2022). Higher Education is considered as the human capital engine that connects SDGs 4 (Quality Education), SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) with government policy and industrial sustainability. It demonstrated high-intensity policy combinations greatly enhanced university–industry alignment that made use of the panel data from 30 Chinese provinces between 2012 and 2023 and a two-way fixed-effects model. Additionally, it suggested that policy design should move toward integrated sustainable governance by arguing that this effect occurs through capital allocation, industry-education integration, and regional responsiveness, more powerfully in the marketed Eastern regions (Liu and Li 2026). The reviews are not confined to India alone but also worldwide, as the SDG goals focus on global goals and Vision.

Methodology

The paper is descriptive as its completely based on secondary data. The gathered information and data provided in the paper are from official government sources such as the Ministry of Education (MoE), UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Educational Plus) reports, Scheme Guidelines, Union Budget 2025-2026, Advocates for International Development (A4ID), Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (Create), and NITI Aayog (2026). The Schemes were identified thematically into six categories. The study relies on secondary data, and it does not measure the scheme outcomes or beneficiary awareness directly; instead, it provides a structured baseline on scheme implementation and impact at the school level.

Research Gap

These studies, Reimers (2024), Wang and Zhao (2025), Sunena and Singh (2025), and Liu and Li (2026), discussed educational, global, and funding policies towards education, whereas Monga (2019), Kumari and Thakur (2022), Kandam et al. (2024) examined and addressed the school system that tends to consolidate without the full spectrum of central schemes. Bhawariya (2022) and Akilanayaki (2022) brought up the gender gaps, respectively. The studies did not bring awareness of the latest schemes, namely PM SHRI, NIPUN Bharat Mission, Career Cards for CWsN(Children with Special Needs), Bharatiya Bhasha Summer Camp, and the 2026 SMC(School Management Committee) guidelines that have emerged since 2021. The present study understands the government policy interventions and gives extensive awareness of the schemes and programs implemented by the Indian Government.

Schemes Offered by the Central Government For School-Going Children

Political decision-making has influenced Indian education's infrastructure, curriculum, quality, and accessibility rather than just economic concerns. Political involvement has been a recurring, structural factor in the Indian education system through historical and current policy analysis. It implies that comprehending this political aspect is essential to comprehending the intricacies and ramifications of India's educational system (Lavanya 2014). To uplift the education system, the government has concentrated on the level of nutritional status, universal access and infrastructure, girl child, scholarship, disability and inclusion, quality, digital and teacher-learning initiatives to stimulate the quality in education through enrolment, ending school dropouts, retention, better teaching, teacher-student relationship, teacher training, encouraging the kids from rural areas to enrol in schools, class attendance, and imposing accessibility for disabled children.

1. Nutrition Schemes

- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), 1975:** For children aged under six years, pre-school education and supplemental nutrition are provided through Anganwadi centers along with the facility of health examinations and vaccinations in the centers. These preparations by ICDS contribute to school readiness in advance.
- **Mid-Day Meal Scheme (1995):** The program gives nutritional help to the primary school students by reducing hunger in the classrooms. After launching this program, enrollment in elementary and primary classes has increased, and in 2021, the program was renamed PM POSHAN.
- **PM POSHAN (2021-22 to 2025-2026):** The National Food Security Act of 2013 established a rights-based centrally sponsored scheme nationwide for children by providing free meals in government schools and government-aided schools. The meals are provided to children till class 8, and this scheme improves the nutritional level and attendance in schools.

2. Universal Access and Infrastructure

- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), 2001:** The program aimed at universal elementary education for children in the age group of 6-14years, and it focused on access, teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructure facilities.
- **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), 2009:** RMSA focused on raising the accessibility and standard of secondary education in government schools, and later it became a part of the Samagra Shiksha program.

- **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:** The act ensured that children between the age of 6 and 14 years will receive free and compulsory education, with a 25% reservation in schools for people hailing from economically disadvantaged groups in private schools.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (2018-2019):** India's Centre-state funding system is 60:40 for an integrated education system that covers pre-school education through senior secondary level of education, with the inclusion of teacher training, stipends, free textbooks and uniforms, supporting the children with disabilities.
- **NIPUN Bharat Mission, 2021:** Concentrates on achieving competency in foundational literacy and numeracy for classes 1-3 through play-based learning and digital resources.
- **PM SHRI (PM Schools for Rising India), 2022:** A centrally sponsored scheme with rupees 27,360 crore, and the main goal of this scheme is to develop over 14,500 model schools following NEP (National Education Policy) 2020 (smart classrooms, Atal Tinkering Labs, green infrastructure, and competency-based learner-centered teaching).

3. Girl Child- Focused Schemes

- **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), 2004:** The scheme was initiated for female children naïve to SC (Scheduled Caste), ST (Scheduled Tribes), OBC (Other Backward Class), minority, and economically disadvantaged households with the provision of continuous residential schooling.
- **National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (2008):** To reduce the secondary girl dropout rates, financial aid is offered to SC (Scheduled Caste) and ST (Scheduled Tribes) girl students who complete class 8 and enroll for class 9.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), 2015:** It uses financial incentives and also awareness initiatives to address the dropping of child sex ratio and supports girls' education and empowerment.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY), 2015:** This scheme is a high-interest savings plan with tax advantages for girls under the age of 10 years, and it can be redeemed for marriage purposes or education purposes at the age of 18 years. Across the Nation, about 4.1 crore accounts have been opened under this scheme.

4. Scholarship Schemes

- **National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship (NMMS), 2008:** Annually, this scheme provides rupees 12,000 to the deserving (meritorious) students from grade 9 to 12 whose family income doesn't exceed rupees 3,50,000. The students need to pass an examination conducted by the state after Class 8 to avail NMMS.
- **Pre- Matric Scholarship for Minorities:** The parents from minority communities are benefited through this scheme, as it reduces the cost of education and the parents do not have much educational spending to do for their kids.
- **Pre- Matric Scholarship for SC/ST/OBC students:** To reduce the dropout rates from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, financial assistance is provided for the students studying in class 9 and 10 as it encourages their secondary level of education.
- **National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST students:** The scheme is specially designed for tribal girls, particularly for pursuing their Higher Education (HE).
- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS):** Tribal children (class 6- 12) from rural areas receive free and quality residential education, and this is followed in 26 states, including those impacted by Left Wing Extremism, and this scheme is funded by Article 275(1).
- **PM- JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Nyaya Maha Abhiyan):** The allocated amount for the year 2025-2026 is rupees 494.22 crore for this scheme, and it supports access to education infrastructure for PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups).
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGU):** The budget allocated for this scheme by the government is rupees 526.48 crore (2025-2026). Instead of starting new programs from scratch, this massive, multi-ministry infrastructure and welfare "Saturation" drive aims to guarantee that every tribal- majority village and household actually receives the government programs and is benefitted with facilities like roads, housing, health centers, schools, electricity, and livelihood support for the ST community.

5. Disability and Inclusion

- **Support under Samagra Shiksha for Children with Disabilities (CwSN):** For Children with Special Needs (CwSN), beneficiaries are provided with support such as stipends, assistive devices, accessible infrastructure, and resource teachers.
- **Career Cards for Children with Special Needs (April, 2026):** This program enhances NEP (National Education Policy) 2020, inclusive job counselling for kids with exceptional needs.

6. Quality, Digital and Teacher-Related Initiatives

- **STARS (Strengthening Teaching – Learning and Results for States):** The project aim was to support the states to create and assess interventions that are associated with better educational outcomes and the transition from school to the workplace.
- **ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and Digital Initiatives / Smart Schools:** ICT refers to the tools and technologies that we enhance by making use of mobiles, internet, computers, software, networks, digital communication systems, and digital initiatives make use of the ICT provision to improve services that were traditionally manual or paper-based. In India, about 1,38,802 schools (UDISE, 2024-2025) have adopted ICT and Digital initiative systems.
- **National Professional Standards for Teachers and National Mission for Mentoring (NMM):** This scheme aims at the standardization and improvement of teacher quality across the Nation for maintaining professionalism and mentorship.
- **Bharatiya Bhasha Summer Camp (BBSC), May 2026:** Language plays a major role in communication and the learning process for school-going children. Nationwide, the program was launched to promote Indian language learning among the students.
- **School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines, May 2026:** The program was introduced to strengthen community participation in school governance, as it opens new paths for the education system and the school-going children.

Conclusion

The study has brought a wide spectrum of government schemes, interventions, programs, and policies imposed by the Government, particularly for the school-going children in India. It has increased the enrolment rate and nutrition levels. A decline in dropouts was seen, and CwSN students were identified and given special attention. India has created a comprehensive policy framework in accordance with SDG 4 by having significant coordination with the provision of “Education for all”. Irrespective of background, gender, poverty, and discrimination. The initiatives by the Government act as a hotspot in India, as it strengthens and empower the education system for betterment and quality for the upcoming generations.

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