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Kendriya Vidyalaya Model is a Blueprint for Quality Public Schooling

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To harness India's demographic dividend, strategic investment in education is essential. The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan shows how decentralised management can deliver quality schooling. With targeted support and funding, this model can be further strengthened and expanded nationwide.

Work on the Public Report on Secondary Education, which is in progress at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress in New Delhi over the last few months, takes us to schools and other educational institutions frequently. These visits highlight a crucial challenge: how can India guarantee every 14- to 21-year-old comprehensive human development, which includes quality education, vocational and life-skills training, accessible health and nutrition services, and active civic engagement?

A more inclusive and prosperous society, and the realisation of our demographic potential, hinges on our ability to provide quality human development opportunities for everyone, enabling them to live happy, healthy, dignified, and productive lives. The challenge is daunting given that the access to learning is uneven among vulnerable social groups, girls, and differently abled children. Geographically, we must bear in mind that more children are born in underdeveloped regions where the likelihood of school education being below par is more likely.

Kendriya Vidyalayas are integrated schools offering education from Classes I to XII. While they are now trying to introduce pre-school classes, no additional resources have been promised to support this expansion.

It is in this context that we decided to visit schools of all types, including the better endowed schools under the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS), which primarily cater for children of central government employees. With a per child spend of Rs 65,000 per annum, the Kendriya Vidyalaya schools have decent physical infrastructure, zero teacher vacancies (contractual appointments are made for short durations by school management committees till regular teachers are appointed), and a Vidyalaya Vikas Nidhi – school development fund – collected from students for the maintenance of schools. Kendriya Vidyalayas are in general reasonably well run, constraints notwithstanding.

Kendriya Vidyalayas are permitted to receive contributions – such as donations of materials, equipment, services, or volunteer time – through the Vidyanjali portal, which is an initiative of the education ministry. Their principals are posted based on performance. Teacher transfers occur in accordance with a well-laid out policy that is fair and transparent. There are five centres for excellence that oversee the professional development of teachers and other employees in the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan system. One fourth of the seats in each Kendriya Vidyalaya are reserved for children from disadvantaged groups, as mandated by the Right to Education Act. Kendriya Vidyalayas are integrated schools offering education from Classes I to XII. While they are now trying to introduce pre-school classes, no additional resources have been promised to support this expansion.

With the National Education Policy 2020, a new scheme called PM SHRI Schools was launched. PM SHRI schools are envisioned to be exemplar schools that meet the demands of the 21st century. In four phases so far, 12,079 schools have been selected under PM SHRI, of which 7,410 are secondary/senior secondary schools. Of these, 1,489 are Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalaya Schools. There are a total of 2.94 lakh secondary and senior secondary schools in the country. So, coverage under the PM SHRI Schools scheme has been very small.

Senior secondary schools, such as Kendriya Vidyalayas with a large number of students, receive more than Rs 1 crore over a three-year period. PM SHRI schools are expected to emerge as exemplar schools in their regions that will mentor other schools to enhance their quality. The detailed [PM SHRI Schools: Framework on School Transformation](#) lays down the pedagogic principles for a renaissance of school education in India in accordance with the National Education Policy 2020.

We visited Kendriya Vidyalayas and other schools that had made extensive use of PM SHRI resources to transform their pedagogical processes, infrastructure, and maintenance, demonstrating a quest for excellence. PM SHRI funds to 884 Kendriya Vidyalayas has been transformational for these schools and shows a possible pathway to building a credible public system of school education.

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Even in well-endowed Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalaya Schools, the PM SHRI grants have really made a difference, bringing out the gross under-funding of regular secondary and senior secondary schools. Accountability Initiative analyses for the period 2015–16 to 2018–19 indicated a low spend of Rs 11,935 per student in Bihar, Rs 17,557 in West Bengal, and Rs 27,195 in Madhya Pradesh. Sikkim and the North-Eastern states and Himachal Pradesh had a higher per student spend while Tamil Nadu spent Rs 44,855 per student. These numbers bring out how states with a larger number of youth and a higher fertility rate than the national replacement level are also the states that are spending less per student on school education. PM SHRI initiatives are not very effective in schools that lack the necessary teachers or infrastructure.

A closer analysis of the performance of Kendriya Vidyalayas brings out the following points for emulation by state government schools.

First, School Management Committees must have the ability to maintain schools and ensure there are zero teacher vacancies. Vacancies can be temporarily filled up by appointing trained teachers for a short duration from a panel at the school level. A formal teacher recruitment drive by a designated agency can be an annual feature to fill up vacancies. Teachers in all subjects must be provided for, including for vocational courses, music, and physical instruction. The sanction of teacher posts should be need based and fully transparent, while the norms must provide for an adequate number of them.

Schools need counsellors as adolescents in today's world are more difficult to discipline and mentor. With the challenges of drugs and drinking in many places, senior secondary schools need a far greater connect with the community through institutions such as school management committees and parent teacher associations. A deeper engagement with parents is already under way in Kendriya Vidyalayas: those with expertise in their fields are encouraged to interact with children to expose them to the world of work.

Second, every state needs a dedicated agency to implement Building as Learning Aid (BaLA) for systematic school infrastructure planning and eliminate ad hoc repairs or piecemeal construction. BaLA uses school architecture – walls, floors, staircases – as interactive learning tools, making spaces child-friendly and inclusive. All upgrades and new buildings must follow a comprehensive School Development Plan, ensuring maintenance and unified standards.

Third, schools should receive salary and maintenance funds based on their actual needs at the beginning of the year. This will allow them to plan their activities effectively. Further, the autonomy of schools must always be respected.

Fourth, a system of letting the school development fund make use of all the money collected for school improvement needs to be followed. Empowering school committees to use untied funds within a broad expenditure framework is the only way of guaranteeing better maintenance.

Support for teachers' professional development should stem from a rigorous academic process. Crucially, this process must maintain the high quality of teacher training institutions and their faculty.

Fifth, PM SHRI-like resources for pedagogic innovations should be available on scale to a very large number of schools for early results. It may be too late for a demographic dividend if we do not make appropriate interventions in time. Basic learning conditions must be created in all schools for PM SHRI-like interventions to take off on a larger scale.

Sixth, support for teachers' professional development should stem from a rigorous academic process. Crucially, this process must maintain the high quality of teacher training institutions and their faculty. Further, we should aim for schools to become centres of excellence in various subjects, keeping in mind that recognising excellence is important for motivating teachers.

Seventh, to improve teacher transfers, every state should adopt transparent, school-focused processes similar to the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan system. They must also consider exploring the direct appointment of teachers to specific schools.

Eighth, and perhaps the most important, is the academic supervision that plays a crucial role in upholding the consistency and quality of education across a network of schools. Rooted in the principles of holistic development of students along with academic excellence, the process in the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan involves strategic planning, systemic monitoring, and thoughtful evaluation of the teaching and learning environments. This academic supervision framework is designed to empower educators and is based on

constructive feedback and recognising excellence.

To ensure uniformity across all schools, the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan has instituted a three-tier system of supervision, at the headquarters, region, and school level. At headquarters, the academic performance is monitored by centralised data and broad policy interventions undertaken in line with NEP 2020. Every state needs to set up its own academic supervision system that improves learning outcomes.

The lesson from the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan is that even well-endowed schools like Kendriya Vidyalayas needed financial support for pedagogic innovations and learner-centric initiatives under the PM SHRI Schools scheme. The centre and states need to provide more financial resources for school education, with even more governance reforms on the lines of Kendriya Vidyalayas.

To capitalise on our demographic dividend, we must invest wisely in education. The Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan demonstrates effective decentralised management and quality improvement, further strengthened by the PM SHRI School scheme's focus and funding. Our aim must be to build strong public school systems through collaborative efforts.

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