

## Chapter-III

### Performance Audit

#### SCHOOL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

#### Quality of School Education in Punjab

##### 3.1 Introduction

Education plays a critical role in fostering social, economic and political transformation, acting as a pivotal tool for building an equitable society. Prior to 1976, education was solely the responsibility of the States. The Constitutional Amendment of 1976 included it in the Concurrent List, allowing both the Central and State Governments to legislate and formulate policies on education. This commitment was further reinforced by the National Policy on Education, introduced in 1986 and revised in 1992 and 2020, which gave utmost priority to create a progressive and inclusive education system and ensuring Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE)<sup>1</sup>.

According to Census of India, 2011, the literacy rate in Punjab was 75.80 *per cent* which surpassed the national average of 72.09 *per cent*. The male literacy rate stood at 80.04 *per cent* slightly below the national average of 80.80 *per cent*, while the female literacy rate in Punjab was 70.70 *per cent*, higher than the national average of 64.60 *per cent*.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, became operative with effect from 1 April 2010. The RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years in a neighborhood school till completion of elementary education. Free education means no child, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing the elementary education. Compulsory education casts an obligation on the Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the age group of six to fourteen years. In Punjab, the RTE Act has been implemented since October 2011.

The Government of India launched (March 2018) the Samagra Shiksha, an integrated and comprehensive flagship program extending from pre-school to class XII for the period from April 2018 to March 2020 with subsuming all

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<sup>1</sup> The thrust in elementary education emphasises (i) universal enrolment and universal retention of children upto 14 years of age; and (ii) a substantial improvement in the quality of education.

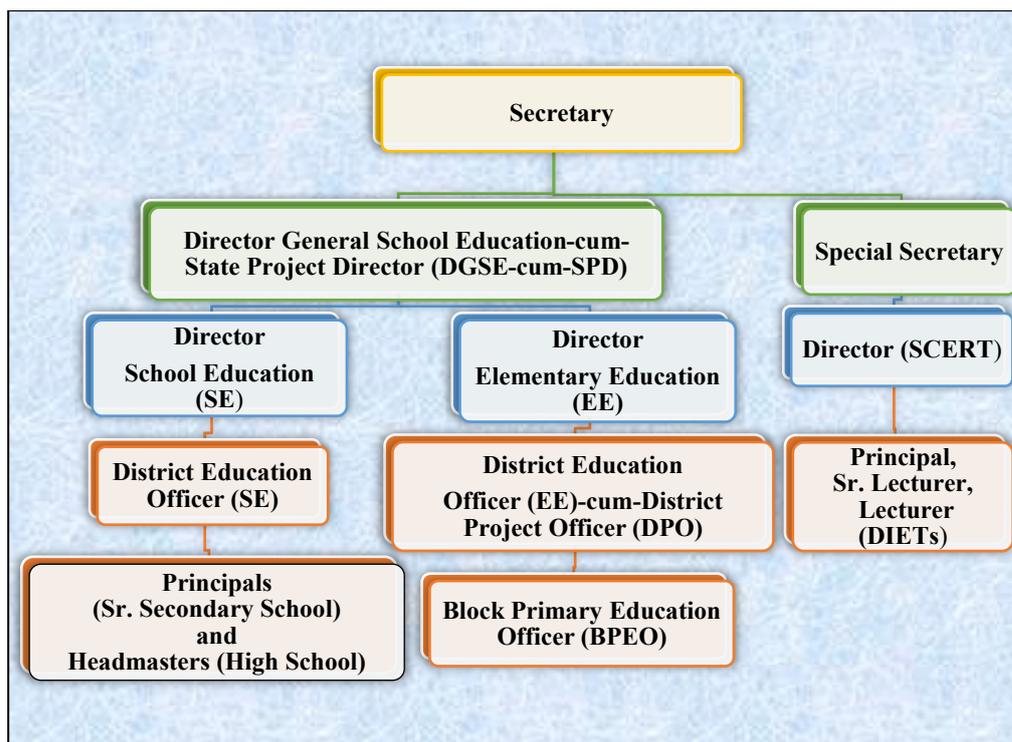
three<sup>2</sup> diverse schemes. The aim of Samagra Shiksha was to ensure access to quality education for all children, fostering an inclusive and equitable classroom environment that addressed diverse backgrounds, multilingual needs and varying academic abilities.

### 3.2 Organisational Structure

Department of School Education is headed by the Administrative Secretary and the responsibility to implement RTE Act/Rules was entrusted to Director General School Education-cum-State Project Director, at the State level. Whereas at district level, the RTE Act/Rules were being implemented by District Education Officer (DEO) designated as District Project Officer (DPO), at block level by Block Primary Education Officer (BPEO) and at School level by School Management Committee (SMC). SMC also monitors the working of the school, utilisation of grants and prepares a School Development Plan (SDP).

The organisational structure of the Department is given in **Chart 3.1**.

**Chart 3.1: Organisational Structure of the Department of School Education, Punjab**



Source: Annual Report (2021-22) of Samagra Shiksha, Punjab

<sup>2</sup> Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (since 2000-01), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (since 2009-10) and Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education (1987) are three major flagship school education development programmes launched by GoI and were implemented in partnership with the State Government.

### 3.3 Category-wise Number of Schools, Enrolment and Availability of Teachers

The category-wise number of schools, enrolment of students and number of teachers available in the State during the academic year 2022-23, based on the Unified District Information on School Education Plus<sup>3</sup> (UDISE+) data, are exhibited in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Category-wise number of schools, enrolment of students and number of teachers available during the academic year 2022-23**

Management Structure		Government Schools	In per cent	Government Aided Schools	In per cent	Other schools <sup>4</sup>	In per cent
No. of Schools	Primary (Upto 5th)	12,817	67.07	48	11.35	650	8.06
	Middle (Upto 8th)	2,535	13.26	36	8.51	2,060	25.56
	High (Upto 10th)	1,698	8.89	73	17.26	2,324	28.84
	Sr. Secondary (Upto 12th)	2,060	10.78	266	62.88	3,025	37.54
	<b>Total (A)</b>	<b>19,110</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8,059</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Enrolment	Primary (Upto 5th)	13,48,046	48.22	6,691	3.73	70,566	2.40
	Middle (Upto 8th)	1,38,181	4.94	5,269	2.93	2,82,553	9.61
	High (Upto 10th)	3,00,279	10.74	16,960	9.44	6,75,366	22.97
	Sr. Secondary (Upto 12th)	10,09,149	36.10	1,50,696	83.90	19,11,467	65.02
	<b>Total (B)</b>	<b>27,95,655</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>1,79,616</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>29,39,952</b>	<b>100.00</b>
No. of Teachers	Primary (Upto 5th)	49,115	40.99	164	3.59	4,118	2.96
	Middle (Upto 8th)	8,903	7.42	157	3.44	17,368	12.46
	High (Upto 10th)	17,087	14.26	427	9.35	32,702	23.48
	Sr. Secondary (Upto 12th)	44,728	37.33	3,818	83.62	85,113	61.10
	<b>Total (C)</b>	<b>1,19,833</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>4,566</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>1,39,301</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: UDISE+ data

### 3.4 Audit Objectives

The Performance Audit was conducted to assess:

- whether universal access to school education was available to all children as per RTE Act; and
- whether quality of education was ensured at all learning levels.

### 3.5 Audit Scope and Methodology

The Performance Audit, covering the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23, evaluated the effectiveness of school education in Punjab and the enforcement of the RTE Act, 2009. Audit focused on key areas such as quality education to students, pupil-teacher ratio, human resources, etc. under RTE Act.

<sup>3</sup> UDISE+ is one of the largest Management Information Systems initiated by Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education to collect school details about factors related to a school and its resources from all recognised schools imparting formal education from Pre-primary to Class XII.

<sup>4</sup> Other schools: Private Unaided (Recognised), Local body, Other Government managed schools, Partially Government Aided Schools, Schools of Social Welfare Department, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Sainik School and Madrasa (Recognised).

To cover these aspects, records of various entities, including the Office of the Director General of School Education (DGSE), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Director School Education (Elementary) and Punjab Education Development Board (PEDB), Adarsh Schools and Meritorious Schools were examined during the course of audit.

**(a) Selection of districts, blocks and schools**

Six<sup>5</sup> out of 23 districts were selected using a stratified random sampling method based on the total enrolment of students in Government Schools. Furthermore, 18 BPEOs (three from each district) and total 120 schools (17 Government Schools and 3 Government Aided Schools from each district) across various levels<sup>6</sup> were selected for audit under the chosen BPEOs.

**(b) Selection of months**

Five months, one from each year of the audit period (as detailed below), were selected on judgmental basis to scrutinise the grants received and utilised under various schemes.

Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Month (Quarter)	February 2019 (4 <sup>th</sup> quarter)	May 2019 (1 <sup>st</sup> quarter)	August 2020 (2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter)	November 2021 (3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter)	February 2023 (4 <sup>th</sup> quarter)

**(c) Beneficiary survey**

To gather valuable insights, a beneficiary survey was conducted using a judgmental sampling method. The survey included 10 students from Primary/Middle Schools and 20 students from High/Senior Secondary/Adarsh/Meritorious Schools. This approach ensured a comprehensive assessment of the program’s effectiveness.

Audit also incorporated the perspectives of teachers (up to 10 per school, based on availability) and members of SMCs through a survey questionnaire. Their inputs provided valuable insights into the program’s contribution to improving education quality, facilitating a well-rounded evaluation of its impact.

An entry conference was held (September 2023) with the Secretary, Department of School Education wherein the audit objectives, criteria, scope and methodology were discussed. Upon completion of audit, an exit conference was held (December 2024) with the Secretary, Department of School Education to discuss the audit findings. The replies of the State Government/Department received during exit conference and subsequently in January 2025, have been suitably incorporated in the report.

<sup>5</sup> (i) Amritsar; (ii) Barnala; (iii) Ferozepur; (iv) Jalandhar; (v) Sri Muktsar Sahib; and (vi) Patiala.

<sup>6</sup> Senior Secondary, High, Middle and Primary, preferably with pre-primary.

### 3.6 Audit Criteria

The findings of performance audit were benchmarked against the criteria derived from the following sources:

- Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and rules framed thereunder;
- Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha issued by GoI;
- Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B);
- Instructions, orders and policy guidelines issued by GoI and GoP.

### Audit Findings

### 3.7 Quality Education

Quality education is a comprehensive term that includes learners, teachers, teaching learning process, learning environment, curriculum, pedagogy, learning outcomes, assessment, etc.

Various inconsistencies in quality education noticed during the performance audit have been discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

#### 3.7.1 Planning

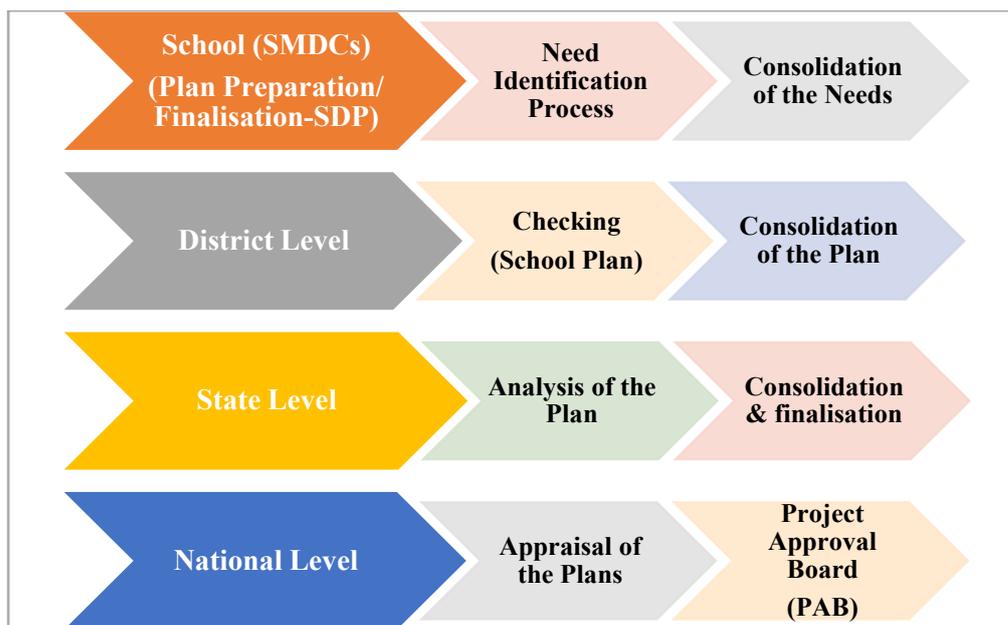
Planning may be termed as a continuous process that helps an organisation to reach a particular goal or objective in the shortest and the best possible way. Plans are not static. They look at progress of the previous years and adapt to change themselves to the current situation. Planning, therefore, helps to achieve better results within the limited resources. As per Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha, basic plan is to be generated at the school level through micro planning process where School Management Committees (SMC)/School Management and Development Committees (SMDC), Panchayati Raj Institution members and other stakeholders are involved.

The inconsistencies noticed in the planning process in school education during performance audit are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

##### 3.7.1.1 Non-preparation of School Development Plan

Section 22(1) of RTE Act and Paragraph 10.7.10 of Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha provide that every SMC shall prepare a School Development Plan (SDP). Further, Punjab RTE Rules, 2011 stipulate that SMCs shall prepare an School Development Plan (SDP) at least three months before the end of the financial year. The SDP shall encompass a 'Two Year Plan' comprising two annual sub-plans. The decentralised planning process is given in **Chart 3.2**.

**Chart 3.2: Decentralised planning process**



Source: Samagra Shiksha Framework for Implementation

During test-check of records of the selected schools of six test-checked districts, it was noticed (November 2023 - May 2024) that none of the Government Schools had prepared School Development Plans during 2018-19 to 2022-23 in line with the guidelines/provisions *ibid*. Rather, the District and State level authorities were preparing and consolidating/finalising the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWP&B) based on the component-wise data/requirement uploaded by the respective schools on UDISE+ portal of GoI, which, in turn, would have affected prioritisation in requirement of the schools.

In the exit conference, the Department stated (December 2024) that the matter would be taken up in the next Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting to make requisite changes in the UDISE+ portal for allowing schools to submit their specific/prioritised requirements.

### 3.7.2 State Council of Educational Research and Training

The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), notified in September 2012, is designated as the academic authority under the Model Rules of Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act). SCERT is responsible for preparing framework for school education and curriculum development, designing textbooks, teaching-learning materials and digital content for students and teachers, laying down evaluation procedures and monitoring the learning outcomes of students across all schools based on the Punjab Curriculum Framework 2013 (PCF 2013). Additionally, SCERT was tasked with creating guidelines for implementing Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE).

Further, Paragraph 6.1.3 (4) of Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha provides that SCERT is the nodal agency responsible for developing an Annual Training Calendar for both in-service<sup>7</sup> and pre-service<sup>8</sup> teachers, in collaboration with District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) and to ensure that training programs are aligned with quality standards and is effectively monitored through a Training Management System (TMS). SCERT is required to conduct ongoing professional development for faculty and teachers through workshops, seminars, and research collaborations. SCERT is also mandated to support research projects that focus on improving educational outcomes. Faculty members of SCERT must engage in research independently or collaboratively and present their findings at seminars and conferences.

### 3.7.2.1 Non-fulfilment of Mandatory Duties/Responsibilities by SCERT

Audit observed (April 2024) that SCERT did not undertake curriculum development, age-appropriate syllabus design, or the creation of learning materials aligned with PCF 2013 between 2018-19 and 2022-23, despite its mandate. While SCERT claimed involvement in the textbook revision process, no documentary evidence supported this assertion, as textbook printing and revisions were carried out by the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB). Additionally, SCERT did not establish a system for assessing and evaluating student learning achievements.

The Department attributed (January 2025) the reasons for failing to perform its mandatory duties to shortage of staff.

Thus, non-fulfilment of its core duties by SCERT would affect the quality of education, student learning outcomes, teacher training, and overall educational development in Punjab.

### 3.7.2.2 Shortage of Staff at SCERT and DIETs

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GoI) issued (April 2018) guidelines for strengthening of SCERTs and proposed an organisational structure across India as per the size of population in different States. The Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha specifies implementation of Model-I<sup>9</sup> organisational structure for the restructuring and strengthening of SCERT/DIETs.

The proposed structure for SCERT included 45 academic and 21 non-academic posts, covering Pre-school, Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary, and Senior Secondary education levels. It comprised five major divisions, each with

<sup>7</sup> In-Service Training: Training of teachers who are working in the Education Department.

<sup>8</sup> Pre-Service Training: Teacher preparation through courses like Diploma in Elementary Education.

<sup>9</sup> **For SCERTs**, Model-I is for those States which have population above one crore; and **For DIETs**, Model-I is for those States which have high percentage of enrolment in DIETs and very few Private Institutions running Diploma in Elementary Education courses.

designated departments and faculty positions. Similarly, the proposed DIET structure included 25 academic and 24 non-academic posts per DIET.

Additionally, the guidelines mandated that qualifications for all academic posts must align with National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) norms in both SCERTs/DIETs. States were given flexibility in adopting the recommended academic posts based on their specific needs, provided they obtained prior approval from MHRD.

Audit observed (November 2023) that the organisational structure prescribed by MHRD was not implemented in Punjab. Instead, in June 2021, GoP notified a revised organisational structure for SCERT and DIETs with fewer sanctioned academic and non-academic posts. This revision was made without obtaining prior approval from MHRD, as detailed in **Appendix 3.1** and **Table 3.2**.

**Table 3.2: Position of academic and non-academic posts for SCERT as of March 2023**

Post	Posts as per MHRD	Sanctioned by GoP	Person-in-Position (PIP) as on 31.03.2023	Shortage w.r.t. GoP (In per cent)
Academic	45	36	10	72.22
Non-academic	21	6	6	Nil

Source: Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha and Departmental data

**Table 3.2** shows that as of March 2023, as against 45 academic posts and 21 non-academic posts for SCERT as per the organisational structure prescribed by MHRD (GoI), GoP notified (April 2021) a different structure of 36 academic posts and 6 non-academic posts. Even as per the criteria of GoP, there was a shortage of 72 per cent in academic posts.

Furthermore, as per MHRD guidelines, 550 academic posts (25 per DIET for 22 DIETs) and 528 non-academic posts (24 per DIET for 22 DIETs) were to be sanctioned for DIETs. However, the Government of Punjab, through the notification *ibid*, sanctioned 324 academic and 44 non-academic posts, as detailed in **Appendix 3.2** and **Table 3.3**.

**Table 3.3: Position of academic and non-academic staff in DIETs as of March 2023**

Post	Posts as per MHRD	Sanctioned by GoP	Person in Position (PIP) as on 31.03.2023	Shortage w.r.t. GoP (In per cent)
Academic	550	324 <sup>10</sup>	39 <sup>11</sup>	87.96
Non-Academic	528	44	17	61.36

Source: Framework for implementation of Samagra Shiksha and Departmental data

<sup>10</sup> 22 Principals, 132 Lecturers, 148 Mentors and 22 Assistant Mentors.

<sup>11</sup> Principals and others.

**Table 3.3** shows that as of March 2023, there was shortage of 88 *per cent* for academic posts and 61 *per cent* for non-academic posts as per GoP criteria.

The acute shortage of staff as well as non-implementation of the MHRD guidelines especially for the academic staff adversely affected the working of SCERT/DIETs in line with the Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha, as discussed in the report.

The SCERT stated (January 2025) that proposal for restructuring of SCERT and DIETs as per Organisational Framework of Samagra Shiksha was under active consideration of the State Government.

### 3.7.2.3 Constitution of Various Committees by SCERT

With a view to strengthening and restructuring of SCERT, various committees were to be restructured/reconstituted<sup>12</sup> by the State Education Department; position thereof was as under:

- The Programme Advisory Committee mandated to oversee all programmes and activities of SCERT, promote innovation and coordination between DIETs, etc. had not been formed during the period covered under audit.
- As per guidelines, Research Committee was to be constituted to guide, review and approve institute's research programmes and activities, promotion of innovative research, coordination among institutions for collaborative research projects and to provide support to DIETs for conducting research. It was, however, noticed that though a Research Advisory Committee<sup>13</sup> had been formed (December 2024), the requisite Educational Research and Innovation Committee, as required under the guidelines *ibid*, was not constituted during the period covered under audit.

Furthermore, as against the requirement of holding two meetings by the Research Advisory Committee every year, only one meeting each in the years 2018-19 and 2021-22 was held during five years' period from 2018-19 to 2022-23.

Non-constitution and ineffective functioning of requisite committees despite availability of funds<sup>14</sup> with SCERT resulted in lack of strategic direction and oversight, as well as a concomitant impact on innovation and collaboration among educational institutions.

<sup>12</sup> As per Paragraph 6.1.4 (16) of Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha.

<sup>13</sup> The Committee's designated nomenclature is 'Research Committee'. However, the SCERT constituted it under the name 'Research Advisory Committee' comprised of 13 members.

<sup>14</sup> Against the availability of ₹ 95.00 lakh for PAC, funds amounting to ₹ 89.38 lakh remained unutilised with SCERT during 2018-2023. Similarly, against the availability of ₹ 54.00 lakh for RAC, funds amounting to ₹ 53.68 lakh remained unutilised with SCERT during 2018-2023.

The SCERT attributed (April 2024) the reasons for non-constitution of requisite committees to staff shortages, impact of COVID-19 pandemic, etc. Subsequently, the Department intimated (January 2025) that the Programme Advisory Committee had been constituted.

### **3.7.3 Retention Rates**

As per Section 3(1) of the RTE Act, every child in the age group of six to fourteen years shall have right to free and compulsory education in a neighborhood school till completion of elementary education. Further, according to Section 8(f) and Section 9(e) of the RTE Act, appropriate Government and local authorities are required to ensure that every child is not only admitted to but also completes elementary education. This mandate stresses the importance of consistent monitoring of attendance and completion of education.

Analysis (September 2023) of retention rates in different categories of schools as depicted in the Departmental appraisal/annual reports and requisite information obtained from the Department for the years 2018-19 to 2022-23 is detailed in **Table 3.4**.

**Table 3.4: Retention rates in different categories of schools during the period 2018-2023**

	<i>(In per cent)</i>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Higher Secondary</b>
2018-19	89.19	81.31	77.11	105.84
2019-20	91.21	94.84	85.72	91.13
2020-21	97.95	97.18	89.91	69.06
2021-22	101.55	86.86	77.69	63.81
2022-23	101.07	86.19	78.02	66.24

*Source: Departmental data*

*Note: The calculation was done based on overall enrolment, irrespective of fresh enrolments in grade five during the corresponding year. It is computed using the formula:*

*(Overall Enrolment in Grade 5 in year t+4 / Overall Enrolment in Grade 1 in year t) × 100.*

**Table 3.4** shows that while there have been improvements in retention rates at certain educational levels, inconsistencies persisted. At the elementary and secondary levels, rates fluctuated between 81 *per cent* and 97 *per cent*, and 77 *per cent* and 90 *per cent* respectively. Notably, there has been a significant decline at the higher secondary level, with retention rates decreasing from 106 *per cent* in 2018-19 to 66 *per cent* in 2022-23. This decline underscores the need for comprehensive strategies to enhance student retention across all levels of education. Further, the Department lacked the mechanism to analyse the reasons for decline in retention rates.

The Department attributed (January 2025) the lack of educational research on critical issues *viz.* enrolment, retention, achievement, gender parity, proficiency, dropouts, etc. to shortage of expert staff.

Thus, lack of research impedes the development of effective strategies to address declining retention rates, which are likely to lead to increased dropout rates, particularly at the secondary and higher secondary levels. Consequently, students face diminished educational opportunities, limited access to higher education, and adverse effects on their future employability prospects.

### 3.7.4 Teachers Training

#### 3.7.4.1 Non-preparation of In-service Annual Training Calendar

Paragraph 6.5.3 of Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha provides for preparation of a unified annual in-service teacher training calendar by SCERT for elementary as well as secondary teachers training to ensure delivery of quality training programmes. Further, Paragraph 6.1.4(7) of the guidelines *ibid* provides that every district is required to have a Training Management System (TMS) and maintain a Professional Development Record for teachers. This is necessary to consolidate and track various professional development activities at the Cluster, Block, District and State levels, all aimed at enhancing teacher training.

Audit observed (April 2024) that though various trainings were being imparted to the teachers, SCERT did not prepare the requisite annual training calendar for in-service teachers during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23. It was further noticed that neither TMS was developed nor were training records maintained at SCERT/DIETs.

The Department stated (January 2025) that annual training calendar was prepared based on approved funds under PAB and assured that records thereof would be maintained for now onwards. It was added that despite non-implementation of TMS, quality of teacher training was not compromised, as in-service teachers training was being conducted at State, district and block levels effectively.

The reply of Department was not in line with the Scheme guidelines *ibid*. The lack of documented training calendar undermines the systematic planning and coordination of teacher training programs across the State. Further, in the absence of a functional TMS and proper maintenance of professional development records, it is challenging to monitor, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of these training programs.

Thus, inability to implement the essential tools *ibid* despite availability of funds<sup>15</sup> compromises the effectiveness of teacher training programs, leads to

<sup>15</sup> Funds amounting to ₹ 16.07 crore (of ₹ 54.45 crore) was spent under the component 'In-service Teachers Training' during 2018-2023, thereby leaving an unspent amount of ₹ 38.38 crore with the Department.

inefficient resource utilisation, and diminishes the SCERT's capacity to support and develop educators, ultimately impacting the quality of education in the State.

#### **3.7.4.2 Non-imparting of Pre-service Training by DIETs**

As per Paragraph 6.2.3 of the Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha, DIET is designated as the nodal institution at the district level for conducting both pre-service and in-service teachers training up to Senior Secondary level.

Audit observed (December 2024) that three<sup>16</sup> DIETs (out of 17 DIETs<sup>17</sup>) did not impart pre-service training (Diploma in Elementary Education) to the aspired candidates during the period covered under audit.

The Department stated (January 2025) that recognition to conduct pre-service training in DIETs Moga and SBS Nagar was revoked by NCTE in the year 2007 due to lack of staff. The test-checked DIET, Ferozepur attributed the reasons for non-imparting of pre-service training to non-receipt of candidates' nominations from SCERT. Audit, however, confirmed from SCERT that they had sent list of nominated candidates to DIET Ferozepur.

Thus, inability of the DIETs to conduct pre-service training programs leads to a shortage of adequately trained teachers, thereby compromising the quality of education in the district. This deficiency particularly affects the foundational teaching capabilities of new educators, as they miss out on essential training designed to prepare them for effective classroom instruction.

#### **3.7.5 Shortage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Faculty and Non-functional Labs under ICT Scheme**

The Punjab ICT Education Society (PICTES) under Department of School Education was to administer compulsory computer education by providing course contents for the students of the Government Schools across the State.

The status of availability of ICT Labs and faculties in Government Schools with classes 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> during 2018-2023 is given in **Table 3.5**.

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<sup>16</sup> (i) Moga (2018-2023); (ii) SBS Nagar (2018-2023); and (iii) Ferozepur (2018-2021).

<sup>17</sup> Pre-service training was not being imparted in five newly built DIETs at Barnala, Fazilka, Tarn Taran, Pathankot and SAS Nagar, as requisite recognition to start pre-service training was awaited from NCTE.

**Table 3.5: Status of ICT Labs and faculties in Government Schools during 2018-2023**

Year	No. of Government Schools (6 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> classes)	No. of schools having ICT Lab (percentage)	No. of schools with functional ICT Labs (percentage)	No. of schools with non-functional ICT Labs	No. of ICT faculty
2018-19	6,271	5,507 (87.82)	4,226 (76.74)	1,281	6,775
2019-20	6,304	5,211 (82.66)	5,211 (100.00)	0	6,774
2020-21	6,301	6,209 (98.54)	6,209 (100.00)	0	6,599
2021-22	6,291	6,090 (96.80)	5,839 (95.88)	251	6,505
2022-23	6,293	6,102 (96.96)	5,798 (95.02)	304	6,540

Source: UDISE+ and departmental data

Audit observed (November 2023) from the data available on UDISE+ that ICT Labs were available in Government Schools (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> classes) ranging from 83 per cent to 99 per cent during 2018-2023. During the year 2022-23, in 304 schools (out of 6,102 schools), ICT Labs were not functional.

Audit analysis of data available on UDISE+ portal revealed that during the year 2022-23, ICT faculty was not available in 533 schools despite availability of ICT labs in these schools. This affected 91,640 students enrolled in Classes 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> in these schools during 2022-23, as detailed in **Appendix 3.3**.

The absence of ICT faculty in 533 high and senior secondary schools, despite the availability of ICT Labs, leads to an inequitable distribution of resources. Students, particularly in districts with higher numbers of schools lacking faculty (e.g., Ferozpur and Moga), are deprived of compulsory computer education, putting them at a disadvantage compared to their peers in schools with better faculty deployment. Thus, declining number of functional ICT Labs (2021-2023) and the unavailability of ICT faculty in many schools are likely to negatively affect student learning outcomes.

During physical inspection of ICT Labs in selected schools, Audit observed that:

- 253<sup>18</sup> desktops were non-functional in 28<sup>19</sup> out of 69<sup>20</sup> test-checked schools; and
- In four<sup>21</sup> schools, all 39 desktops were non-functional.

<sup>18</sup> Amritsar (80), Barnala (9), Ferozpur (18), Jalandhar (78), Sri Muktsar Sahib (40) and Patiala (28).

<sup>19</sup> Amritsar (8), Barnala (3), Ferozpur (2), Jalandhar (8), Sri Muktsar Sahib (4) and Patiala (3).

<sup>20</sup> Amritsar (11), Barnala (11), Jalandhar (12), Ferozpur (11), Sri Muktsar Sahib (13) and Patiala (11).

<sup>21</sup> Amritsar (3): GHS Dug Dogra, GHS Shaura, GMS Bhalaipur; and Patiala (1): GMS Salemur Jatan.

The Department stated (January 2025) that hardware of non-functional labs outlived its life and become obsolete, hence were not repairable. The process of budget provisioning required for replacement of obsolete hardware had been initiated. It was added that the Society had started deploying requisite ICT faculty in Government High and Sr. Secondary Schools.

### 3.7.6 Shortfall in Imparting Training to Out-of-School Children

Rule 3 of Punjab RTE Rules, 2011 prescribes that SMC or the Local Authority shall identify children requiring special training and organise such training based on specially designed curriculum and age specific learning material. After completion of training, the child shall be included in the age specific class and receive special attention to enable him to successfully integrate with the rest of the class. The duration of training shall be for a minimum period of three months and a maximum period not exceeding three years.

Details of funds allocated to DEOs for imparting special training to Out-of-School Children (OoSC), number of OoSC<sup>22</sup> identified, trained and brought into mainstream are given in **Table 3.6**.

**Table 3.6: Details of training to OoSC and expenditure incurred thereagainst during 2018-2023**

Year	No. of OoSC identified	Details of funds allocation		No. of OoSC to whom training was imparted	No. of OoSC brought into mainstream (In per cent)	Expenditure on trainings imparted (₹ in lakh)
		No. of OoSC	Funds allocated (₹ in lakh)			
2018-19	3,588	1,992	19.92	1,992	1,529 (77)	14.06
2019-20	4,145	3,855	134.93	3,855	2,428 (63)	87.97
2020-21	2,593	2,593	90.75	2,593	1,879 (72)	73.47
2021-22	3,807	1,641	73.85	1,641	1,277 (78)	54.19
2022-23	1,981	1,295	58.28	1,295	1,267 (98)	56.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,114</b>	<b>11,376</b>	<b>377.73</b>	<b>11,376</b>	<b>8,380 (74)</b>	<b>286.27</b>

Source: Information provided by DGSE, Punjab

**Table 3.6** shows that out of 16,114 OoSC identified by the Department, 11,376 OoSC (71 per cent) were imparted special training, of which only 8,380 OoSC (74 per cent) were brought into mainstream, despite unutilised funds of ₹ 0.91 crore with the Department during 2018-2023.

In the six selected districts, out of 5,272 OoSC identified by the Department, 4,153 OoSC (78.77 per cent) could be imparted special training despite unutilised funds of ₹ 0.14 crore (out of ₹ 1.35 crore) for the purpose with these districts. Of these, 4,119 OoSC (99 per cent) were brought into mainstream during 2018-2023.

There was no monitoring of OoSC at State as well as District level to check whether

<sup>22</sup> As per Section 4(1) of RTE Act 2009, where a child above six years of age has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete his or her elementary education, then he or she shall be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age.

these OoSC continued their education till completion of school education once mainstreamed into age-appropriate classes, despite the availability of funds. Thus, the Department lacked a mechanism to monitor the progress of mainstreamed OoSC and ensure their retention and completion of school education.

The Department stated (December 2024 and January 2025) that trained OoSC did not enroll in the mainstream due to personal reasons and attributed fund underutilisation to their mid-course dropout. It was added that to address the gap of mainstreaming, the Department was in the process of developing a robust monitoring mechanism which may provide real-time updates on the progress and retention of children.

### **3.7.7 Establishment and Operation of Adarsh Schools**

Punjab Education Development Board (PEDB) was established (1998) with a view to improve the quality of education in the State of Punjab and for improving infrastructural facilities and amenities in the schools including establishment of Adarsh School directly or through Public Private Partnership mode. The Board was also tasked with preparing an annual budget during the first week of February. Government of Punjab also framed (2012) guidelines for establishment of Adarsh School (Pre-Nursery to 12<sup>th</sup> class) in each Community Development Block apart from improving infrastructure and quality of education in existing Adarsh Schools.

Audit observed the following:

(i) PEDB was initially tasked with establishing 118 Adarsh Schools in the State under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode. However, only 26 schools were set up by 2014. As of March 2023, there were 24 Adarsh Schools being operated by PEDB under PPP mode. As many as 13 schools were being managed by five private partners and 11 schools were being run under a stop-gap arrangement by the concerned District Education Officer (Secondary Education) or Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM). Audit further observed that no new Adarsh schools were opened by the Board under PPP Mode since 2014. Also, funds of ₹ 6.40 crore in 2018-19 and ₹ 1.60 crore in 2020-21 remained unutilised which were released by State Government for the development works of Adarsh Schools.

The Department stated (January 2025) that Adarsh Schools were to be established in addition to already running Government Schools in State. Although Government floated Expression of Interest (2009) for 108 sites identified in the State, yet schools were functional only on 24 sites. In the absence of willing Private Partners, the Board was not able to run Adarsh Schools in all sites identified. As regard to non-utilisation of funds, it was stated (January 2025) that Bills amounting to ₹ 6.40 crore were not cleared by Treasury and ₹ 1.60 crore were not allotted in the revised budget. It was further stated that there was no proposal for opening any new Adarsh School under PPP

Mode. The reply of the Department was not satisfactory, as the Board did not take adequate measures to engage Private Partners as no Expression of Interest was floated after 2009, which reflected poor management and lack of intent in achieving the intended goal of establishing 118 Adarsh Schools in Punjab State. Further, reasons for non-clearance of bills by treasury and non-provision of funds were not furnished to Audit.

(ii) Neither any Board meeting was held during the financial years 2018-19 to 2022-23, despite a total allocation and utilisation of ₹ 384.78 crore for various PEDB activities nor were the annual income and expenditure statements prepared as envisaged in the Memorandum of PEDB.

The Department stated (January 2025) that PEDB was being allocated budget for PEDB activities through a State Scheme. Budget proposal was submitted to Planning Department through Finance Department (FD), Punjab and final budget was allotted by FD after discussions in various meetings. PEDB was in the process of inviting tenders for statutory audit of PEDB and Adarsh Schools. Income and Expenditure Statement for respective years would also be prepared by the statutory auditor.

(iii) In one<sup>23</sup> of the two test-checked Adarsh Schools, Audit observed that there were no teachers for Physics, Chemistry and Biology in the school during the period 2019-20 and 2022-23 despite having 31 students enrolled in 2019-20 and 48 students in 2022-23.

On being enquired as to how the students were imparted education during these years, the Principal stated (February 2025) that teachers of TGT and Science Laboratory Assistant having M.Sc. Chemistry degree imparted the education to these students. Thus, education provided by non-qualified teachers did not meet the criteria of guidelines for establishing an Adarsh School, which aims to deliver high-quality, comprehensive education in alignment with national standards.

Thus, inability to establish the targeted number of Adarsh Schools and non-utilisation of allocated funds for the development works of Adarsh Schools reflects ineffective project execution, undermining the Government's vision of providing quality education in underdeveloped areas. Further, absence of essential teaching staff for critical subjects (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) as seen in Adarsh School, Kaleke (Barnala District) significantly impacts the quality of education.

### **3.7.8 Society for Promotion of Quality Education for Poor and Meritorious Students of Punjab**

The Society for Promotion of Quality Education for Poor and Meritorious Students of Punjab (Meritorious Society) was established (2013) with the aim

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<sup>23</sup> Adarsh School, Kaleke in District Barnala.

of setting up Senior Secondary Schools across the State to provide quality education to exclusively poor meritorious students of Punjab. The Society is responsible for maintaining proper accounts and relevant records including an annual statement of accounts, which should contain all details regarding the Society's financial activities throughout the year. The funds of the Society come from various sources, including the Central and State Governments, fees, grants-in-aid, donations and other sources.

(i) Examination of records of the Meritorious Society showed that:

- The Society did not prepare the Administrative Report during the period of audit i.e. 2018-19 to 2022-23.
- No meeting of the Executive Committee was convened after June 2015.
- Financial Statements for the year 2020-21 to 2022-23 were not prepared.
- The Society only offers education in Commerce and Science streams in all 10 meritorious schools, depriving students interested in Arts from pursuing their preferred course of study.

The Society stated (January 2025) that the Administrative Report of the Society was prepared in the given format and sent to the Co-ordination Branch to be part of the Department's Administrative Report. The statutory audit of 10 Meritorious Schools and the Meritorious Society from 2020-21 to 2022-23 was ongoing which was likely to be completed. The decision for offering education in different streams was taken at the Government's level. As the primary focus of establishing Meritorious Schools in the State was to provide support to poor and meritorious students of Punjab to prepare them for competitive exams JEE/NEET/CLAT/CMA/CA/etc., these were largely based on commerce and science streams of studies. The Society, however, did not provide any documentary evidence in support of its reply.

(ii) Examination of records in four test-checked Meritorious Schools showed that:

- Despite the stipulations in the Society's Memorandum of Association, no vocational training was provided by all the four test-checked Meritorious Schools.

The Society stated (January 2025) that presently, there was no provision for imparting vocational education to students of Meritorious Schools. The main foci of Meritorious Schools were on providing quality education to the students and preparing them for competitive exams such as JEE/NEET/CA/etc. Vocational education was available in many of the nearby schools. The reply of the Society was not consistent with the Society's Memorandum of Association.

- In Patiala, SMC was constituted in December 2020, six years after the school's establishment. The SMC did not prepare SDP for 2021-22 or

2022-23. As a result, Audit could not assess whether school-level needs were communicated to the higher authorities.

The Society stated (January 2025) that the matter would be looked into and necessary action would be taken for preparation of SDP.

- No uniform grant was provided by Meritorious School, Jalandhar to 1,111 students enrolled during 2018-2022 (except 2020-21) due to non-receipt of funds from the Society. No reply was furnished by the Society (January 2025).

### 3.8 Human Resources Management

Section 25 of RTE Act stipulates that within three years from the date of commencement of this Act, appropriate Government and the local authority shall notify the sanctioned strength and ensure that Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) as specified in the Schedule is maintained in each school. Government of Punjab notified (August 2018) rationalisation policy for optimising resource distribution by reallocation of staff for efficiency and providing quality education.

Though the State notified (August 2018) the rationalisation policy for deployment of teachers, cases of irregular/non-deployment of teachers were noticed during audit, as discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

#### 3.8.1 Shortage of Teaching Staff in Schools

The status of sanctioned posts of teachers *vis-à-vis* persons-in-position (PIP) in Government Schools as of March 2023 is depicted in **Table 3.7**.

**Table 3.7: Sanctioned posts of teachers *vis-à-vis* PIP as of March 2023**

Sr. No	Name of post	Sanctioned Strength	Person-in-Position	Vacant	Vacant (Percentage)
<b>Primary Cadre (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> class)</b>					
1.	Head Teacher	7,736	6,850	886	11.45
2.	Elementary Teacher	32,511	30,973	1,538	4.73
<b>Total</b>		<b>40,247</b>	<b>37,823</b>	<b>2,424</b>	<b>6.02</b>
<b>Master Cadre/TGT (6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> class)</b>					
1.	Mathematics Teacher	8,620	8,442	178	2.06
2.	Science Teacher	10,873	10,654	219	2.01
3.	Social Studies Teacher	9,791	8,439	1,352	13.81
4.	English Teacher	6,258	6,177	81	1.29
5.	Punjabi Teacher	8,502	6,383	2,119	24.92
6.	Hindi Teacher	7,685	6,098	1,587	20.65
7.	Sanskrit Teacher	58	40	18	31.03
8.	Urdu Teacher	14	14	0	-
9.	Home Science Teacher	78	75	3	3.85

Sr. No	Name of post	Sanctioned Strength	Person-in-Position	Vacant	Vacant (Percentage)
10.	Music Teacher	55	50	5	9.09
11.	Agriculture Teacher	107	74	33	30.84
12.	Fine Arts Teacher	5	2	3	60.00
13.	Physical Education Teacher/DPE	3,825	1,547	2,278	59.56
<b>Total</b>		<b>55,871</b>	<b>47,995</b>	<b>7,876</b>	<b>14.10</b>
<b>Lecturer/PGT (11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> class)</b>					
1.	English	2,371	1,493	878	37.03
2.	Mathematics	908	714	194	21.37
3.	Punjabi	2,373	1,527	846	35.65
4.	Hindi	155	106	49	31.61
5.	Sanskrit	1	1	-	-
6.	Home Science	27	13	14	51.85
7.	Music	26	17	9	34.62
8.	Biology	692	449	243	35.12
9.	Chemistry	666	547	119	17.87
10.	Commerce	1,095	778	317	28.95
11.	Economics	1,015	777	238	23.45
12.	Fine Art	18	9	9	50.00
13.	Geography	251	201	50	19.92
14.	History	1,300	812	488	37.54
15.	Physical Education	719	480	239	33.24
16.	Physics	793	542	251	31.65
17.	Political Science	1,447	998	449	31.03
18.	Sociology	47	37	10	21.28
<b>Total</b>		<b>13,904</b>	<b>9,501</b>	<b>4,403</b>	<b>31.67</b>

Source: Departmental data

TGT: Trained Graduate Teacher; and PGT: Post Graduate Teacher

Audit noticed that as of March 2023, there was an acute shortage of teaching staff in schools of the State. **Table 3.7** shows that:

- Shortfall in Master cadre under different disciplines was up to 60 per cent whereas shortfall under Lecturer/PGT cadre was up to 52 per cent.
- There was an overall shortage of 32 per cent of Lecturers/PGTs for Classes 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>.

In December 2021, Director (Secondary Education) requested the Education Recruitment Board, Punjab to recruit 250 Arts and Crafts teachers and various lecturer posts. Though the Board notified (January 2022) a public notice on its

website for recruitment of arts and craft teachers and various lecturers<sup>24</sup>, the recruitment could not be made even after the lapse of 36 months (January 2025).

The Department stated (January 2025) that 34 teachers had been recruited in the year 2023-24 under primary cadre and the process of filling up the vacant posts through promotion was also going-on. It was added that recruitment of 8,358 teachers<sup>25</sup> was under consideration with the Department to fill the vacant posts in Government Schools of Punjab State.

Thus, shortfall in teaching staff and delays in recruitment resulted in insufficient number of teachers which would ultimately impact the quality of education in the Government Schools.

### 3.8.2 Shortage of Non-teaching Staff in Schools

The position of non-teaching staff in respect of Government High School (GHS) and Government Sr. Secondary School (GSSS) as of March 2023 is detailed in **Table 3.8**.

**Table 3.8: Position of non-teaching staff in GHSs and GSSSs as of March 2023**

Sr. No	No. of Schools	Name of the Post	Sanctioned Strength	Person-in-Position	Vacant	Vacant (In per cent)
1.	3,758	Sr. Lab Assistant/ Lab Assistant (SLA/LA)	2,307	1,487	820	35.54
2.		Clerk	3,969	1,782	2,187	55.10
3.		Librarian	1,742	818	924	53.04
4.		Watchmen/ Peon	12,886	2,418	10,468	81.24
5.		Accountant	Nil	42	-	-

Source: Departmental data

**Table 3.8** shows that shortfall in various posts of non-teaching staff in GHSs and GSSSs ranged between 35 per cent and 81 per cent as of March 2023. Audit observed that:

- In 278 schools, more than one SLA/LA was deployed while no LA/SLA was deployed in 2,754 schools.
- One SLA/LA was deployed in middle school viz. GMS Rasulpur (Taran Tarn) where no science lab was available.
- Staff sanctioned for Secondary and Sr. Secondary School was deployed in primary schools i.e., two clerks and three accountants were deployed in two primary schools<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>24</sup> Economics (18), Commerce (43), Mathematics (68), History (142) and Political Science (72).

<sup>25</sup> 2,364 for schools in border areas; and 5,994 for schools with adverse Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR).

<sup>26</sup> One Clerk and three Accountants were posted in GPS Qilla Tek Singh, district Gurdaspur; and one Clerk was posted in GPS Kherpur Hassanpur, district Patiala.

Audit observed in 52 test-checked schools that:

- No post of SLA/LA was sanctioned in 33 schools even though science labs were available in 26 out of 33 schools. In the remaining 19 schools, 27 SLAs/LAs were posted against the sanctioned posts of 37 SLAs/LAs, thereby leaving vacancy of 10 posts (27 per cent).
- Posts of Clerks were sanctioned in 46 schools only, wherein against 47 sanctioned posts, only 34 posts were filled, leaving vacancy of 13 Clerks (28 per cent).
- Post of Librarian was sanctioned in 21 schools only, wherein against the 30 sanctioned posts, only 19 posts were filled, leaving vacancy of 11 Librarians (37 per cent).

The Department stated (January 2025) that where non-teaching staff was required, posts had already been sanctioned according to number of students and requirement. It was added that shortage of SLAs/LAs was being met through promotion from Class-IV staff and from cases received for compassionate appointment.

### 3.8.3 Shortage of Vocational Education Teachers

National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) notified (December 2013) by Government of India provides for aligning vocationalisation of School Education with NQSF. This framework follows an outcomes-based approach, and each level is defined in terms of competencies levels that need to be achieved.

The position of vocational teachers under NSQF as of March 2023 is given in **Table 3.9**.

**Table 3.9: Details of trade-wise position of Vocational Education Teachers (VET) under NSQF as of March 2023**

Sr. No.	Name of trade	Minimum requirement of VET*	PIP	Shortage/ Excess (-)	Percentage Shortage
1.	Agriculture	109	108	1	0.92
2.	Apparel	112	112	-	-
3.	Automotive	41	19	22	53.66
4.	Beauty & Wellness	368	353	15	4.08
5.	Construction	82	42	40	48.78
6.	Healthcare	352	275	77	21.88
7.	IT/ITES	292	315	-23	-
8.	Physical Education	33	29	4	12.12
9.	Plumbing	75	74	1	1.33
10.	Power	8	8	-	-

Sr. No.	Name of trade	Minimum requirement of VET*	PIP	Shortage/ Excess (-)	Percentage Shortage
11.	Private Secretary	314	86	228	72.61
12.	Retail	157	314	-157	-
13.	Tourism & Hospitality	51	51	-	-

Source: Departmental data

\* Worked out taking into account one VET required in each school having respective trades.

**Table 3.9** shows acute shortages of VETs in various trades viz. Private Secretary (73 per cent); Automotive (54 per cent); Construction (49 per cent); and Healthcare (22 per cent). The substantial shortage of VETs would impact the quality of the vocational education, ultimately affecting both the workforce and industries that rely on skilled professionals.

The Department stated (February 2025) that gap between trainers-in-position and active schools would be minimised in future.

### 3.8.4 Pupil-Teacher Ratio in Schools

#### (i) Adverse PTR in primary schools

As per Schedule (U/S 19 and U/S 25/Part-II) of the RTE Act, norms for pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) for primary as well as upper primary schools have been fixed as under:

Class Level	No. of Students	Required number of teachers
Primary (I to V)	Up to 60 students	Two teachers
	61-90 students	Three teachers
	91-120 students	Four teachers
	121-200	Five teachers
	Above 150 students	Five plus one Head Teacher
	Above 200 students	PTR shall not exceed forty
Upper Primary (VI to VIII)	Per 35 students	One teacher
		One teacher each for Science and Mathematics, Social Studies and Language
	In schools where enrolment of students is above 100	One full time Head Teacher
		Part time instructor for Art Education, Health and Physical Education, and Work Education

Number of schools with adverse PTR at both the primary and upper primary levels as well as availability of surplus teachers in the school system over five academic years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 are detailed in **Table 3.10**.

Table 3.10: Schools with adverse PTR and surplus teachers

Year	Primary					Upper Primary				
	Total number of schools	Total primary schools with adverse PTR	Percent-age of schools with adverse PTR	Surplus teachers	Schools with surplus teachers	Total number of schools	Total No. of upper primary schools with adverse PTR	Percent-age of schools with adverse PTR	Surplus teachers	Schools with surplus teachers
2018-19	12,958	1,732	13.37	3,860	2,947	2,662	130	4.88	3,511	1,765
2019-20	12,935	617	4.77	7,460	4,860	2,658	20	0.75	3,149	1,765
2020-21	12,891	898	6.97	7,391	4,705	2,653	45	1.70	2,564	1,572
2021-22	12,817	3,612	28.18	7,764	4,574	2,500	525	21.00	1,912	1,299
2022-23	12,817	3,848	30.02	228	211	2,534	118	4.66	85	83

Source: Punjab Appraisal Reports and Departmental data

**Table 3.10** shows a fluctuating trend in adverse PTR, with a significant rise in Primary Schools from 7 per cent in 2020-21 to 30 per cent in 2022-23, and in Upper Primary Schools from 2 per cent in 2020-21 to 21 per cent in 2021-22. Despite the availability of surplus teachers, their distribution remained inefficient which resulted in continued instances of adverse PTR across the Schools.

Audit noticed that in 2020-21, the Department committed to GoI during discussion of minutes of meeting of PAB that to ensure availability of required number of teachers at elementary level (up to primary level), State would undertake a rationalisation exercise to adjust 7,371 surplus teachers as of March 2019. Audit further observed that during 2022-23, while discussing minutes of meeting of PAB, GoI again stressed that the State needed to analyse the school specific PTR in the process of rationalisation. However, Audit observed following irregularities in deployment of staff during the period 2018-2023, as discussed below:

- Even after implementation of rationalisation policy (August 2018), the number of schools with adverse PTR increased from 4.77 per cent during 2019-20 to 30.02 per cent in 2022-23.
- As of March 2023, no primary teacher was posted in 10 schools despite having students enrolled there ranging between 24 and 517 students (**Appendix 3.4**).

Thus, continued rise in adverse PTR at the primary level highlights the need for urgent intervention to ensure compliance with the norms under RTE Act and maintain educational quality.

The Department stated (January 2025) that teacher transfer policy was implemented every year and teachers were posted as per the number of students (i.e., PTR). Due to changing nature of PTR in each academic year, the vacancy position of teachers in school changed, hence, the Department shifted the

surplus posts to needy schools considering the existing PTR. It was added that recruitment of 5,994 teachers was also under process, in which only schools with adverse PTR would be given preference.

**(ii) Shortage of Special Educators**

As per Schedule (U/S 19 and U/S 25/Part-II) of the RTE Act, as amended in September 2022, norms for PTR for primary as well as upper primary schools for the pupils/students with disabilities enrolled were fixed as under:

Class level	Required number of Special Educators
Primary (I to V)	One teacher for every ten pupils with disabilities enrolled (1:10)
Upper Primary (VI to VIII)	One teacher for every fifteen pupils with disabilities enrolled (1:15)

Status of Children with Special Need (CWSN) students enrolled *vis-à-vis* Special Educators deployed in the State as well as in the selected districts during 2018-2023 is given in **Table 3.11**.

**Table 3.11: Status of CWSN students enrolled *vis-à-vis* Special Educators deployed in the State as well as in the selected districts during 2018-2023**

Year		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
State/ Districts	No. of CWSN	64542	60800	60553	61668	55932
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	369 (175:1)	365 (167:1)	365 (166:1)	365 (169:1)	359 (156:1)
Amritsar	No. of CWSN	3730	4089	3981	4188	3712
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	27 (138:1)	27 (151:1)	26 (153:1)	25 (168:1)	24 (155:1)
Barnala	No. of CWSN	841	866	948	1057	1072
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	6 (140:1)	6 (144:1)	6 (158:1)	6 (176:1)	6 (179:1)
Ferozepur	No. of CWSN	3351	3355	3319	3228	2863
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	19 (176:1)	19 (176:1)	19 (174:1)	19 (170:1)	19 (151:1)
Jalandhar	No. of CWSN	3796	3900	3810	3821	3368
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	23 (165:1)	23 (170:1)	23 (166:1)	21 (182:1)	20 (168:1)
Sri Muktsar Sahib	No. of CWSN	2125	2333	2427	2295	2296
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	11 (193:1)	11 (212:1)	11 (221:1)	11 (209:1)	12 (191:1)
Patiala	No. of CWSN	4592	4201	4043	4376	4110
	No. of Special Educators (Ratio)	24 (191:1)	24 (175:1)	24 (168:1)	24 (182:1)	24 (171:1)

Source: Information supplied by DGSE and test-checked districts

**Table 3.11** shows that PTR in respect of Special Educators ranged between 156:1 and 175:1 in the State, and in the selected districts, it ranged between

138:1 and 221:1 during the period 2018-2023, which was far above the PTR of 10:1 and 15:1, as per provisions *ibid* under RTE Act.

The Department did not furnish (January 2025) any specific reply regarding steps being taken to meet the shortfall of Special Educators.

Thus, acute shortage of Special Educators within the State would prevent them from offering the necessary individualised attention to CWSNs. This lack of support would prevent students with disabilities from keeping pace with their peers, further widening the learning gap.

### 3.8.5 Teacher-Classroom Ratio

In terms of Section 19 and Schedule to the RTE Act, there should be at least one classroom for every teacher and an office-cum-store-cum-Head teacher's room in a school.

The position of teacher-classroom ratio as per the data available on UDISE+ portal of GoI during the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23 is depicted in **Table 3.12**.

**Table 3.12: Teacher-Classroom Ratio during 2018-2023**

Year	Total number of Primary/Upper Primary Schools	No. of schools having teachers in excess of classrooms	Percentage
2018-19	14,167	3,721	26.27
2019-20	15,481	4,638	29.96
2020-21	15,470	4,361	28.19
2021-22	15,322	3,479	22.71
2022-23	15,352	4,029	26.24

Source: UDISE+ data

**Table 3.12** shows that schools ranging between 23 per cent and 30 per cent during the period 2018-2023 had to accommodate more than one teacher in a class which warranted addition of classrooms in the existing schools to comply with the norms prescribed under the Act.

The Department stated (January 2025) that efforts were being made to address the shortage of classrooms in Government Schools. During 2023-24 and 2024-25, approximately 4,500 new classrooms had been constructed and 500 classrooms had been renovated/furnished under various schemes<sup>27</sup>.

The fact remains that excess of teachers over classrooms results in the likelihood of sharing of classrooms by multiple teachers, leading to overcrowded learning environments. This not only violates the prescribed norms but may also hamper the quality of education.

<sup>27</sup> NABARD, SAMAGRA, EDS-56 and EDS-80.

### **3.9 Implementation of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation**

Section 29(2)(h) of the RTE Act mandates that academic authorities, while laying down curriculum and evaluation procedures, shall consider the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) of a child's understanding and their ability to apply knowledge.

Paragraph 5.5.2.7 of the Framework for Implementation of Samagra Shiksha stresses that CCE should be used as a strategy for assessment and to enhance a child's learning. Continuous evaluation provides ongoing feedback based on the child's participation in classroom activities, while comprehensive evaluation takes a holistic view of the child, beyond just academic subjects. CCE includes both formative assessments (such as classwork, homework, oral tests, quizzes, and projects) and summative assessments (in form of tests or exams).

The CCE framework under RTE Act applies to elementary education (Class I-VIII). However, GoP applied the CCE up to XII class.

#### **3.9.1 Non-monitoring of CCE Assessment**

The Director General of School Education (DGSE) issued (August 2015) instructions on the mechanism of monitoring of the evaluation of students under CCE conducted by teachers for Class I-VIII.

For ensuring quality assessment, the answer sheets of students from different performance levels<sup>28</sup> along with question papers shall be sent to the heads of the District Institute of Education and Trainings (DIET) for review.

Audit of records of test-checked DIETs<sup>29</sup> of six districts revealed that though the said instructions were issued to all concerned authorities for its compliance, no school was sending the answer sheets of the students to the concerned DIETs for their review to check the effective implementation of CCE resulting into non-monitoring of CCE evaluation process, as outlined in these instructions by the concerned DIETs.

The matter of non-monitoring of CCE assessment by DIETs (the district level implementing agency of SCERT) was taken up with the DGSE/SCERT (November 2024). In reply, the DGSE stated (January 2025) that instructions to constitute a committee for CCE assessments at school level were being issued annually and a dedicated CCE cell had been established at SCERT for ensuring implementation of CCE.

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<sup>28</sup> Answer sheets of the two students each from top, bottom and middle position of any one subject of any one class.

<sup>29</sup> DIETs at Nabha in Patiala, Verka in Amritsar, Rampur Lallian in Jalandhar, Sri Muktsar and Ferozepur.

Though the designated CCE cell was established in December 2024, the action taken by DGSE was not addressing the root cause of non-furnishing the answer sheets of students by the schools for review by the respective DIETs.

Thus, the monitoring system mandated to review and check the effective implementation of CCE was yet to be ensured.

### 3.10 Conclusion

The planning process in the School Education Department was inadequate. During 2018-19 to 2022-23, no Government school prepared a School Development Plan in line with the provisions under RTE Act, Samagra Shiksha Framework and Punjab RTE Rules 2011.

SCERT could not fulfil its mandate for curriculum development, age-appropriate syllabus design and learning material creation under PCF 2013. As of March 2023, there was a shortage of academic and non-academic staff in SCERT and DIETs as per organisational structure prescribed by MHRD, GOI. Additionally, SCERT did not prepare an annual training calendar for in-service teachers, nor was a Training Management System developed or training records maintained.

Only 71 *per cent* of identified Out-of-School Children (OoSC) received special training, and only 74 *per cent* of them were brought into the mainstream. Moreover, no monitoring/tracking system was in place to ensure whether the mainstreamed children have completed their school education.

Government schools faced a severe staff shortage. Shortfall in Master cadre under different disciplines ranged up to 60 *per cent* while the Lecturer/PGT cadre had 52 *per cent* shortfall, with an overall shortage of 32 *per cent* in Classes 11 and 12.

The pupil-teacher ratio was severely impacted due to persistent shortfall and non-recruitment of teachers in Government schools despite vacancy.

The monitoring system mandated to review and check the effective implementation of CCE was not ensured.

### 3.11 Recommendations

In light of the audit findings, the State Government may ensure:

- (i) *preparation of comprehensive School Development Plan in line with the provisions under RTE Act and Samagra Shiksha Framework;*
- (ii) *provision of requisite staff in SCERT and DIETs as per organisational structure prescribed by MHRD, GoI to enable these institutes to effectively fulfil their mandated responsibilities and enhance the quality of school education;*

- (iii) deployment of adequate teaching and non-teaching staff in schools for delivery of quality education;*
- (iv) pupil-teacher ratio as per RTE Act for quality education; and*
- (v) strengthening the monitoring of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation by ensuring that schools submit students' answer sheets for DIET review through CCE Cell.*

The matter was referred (November 2024) to the State Government; their reply was awaited (January 2025).