

Chapter 1

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“A child without education is like a bird without wings.” —Tibetan Proverb

Universal access to quality education is the key to economic growth, social justice and equality. Education opens up opportunities, empowers people with skills and knowledge and enhances efficiency and quality of life which, in turn, acts as the basis for sustained economic growth. Article 21-A of the Constitution of India guarantees, the Right to Education as a fundamental right. Accordingly, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, was enacted by the Parliament and made effective from April 2010. The Act entitles all children between the age of 6-14 years to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education.

The global education development agenda, reflected in Goal 4 (SDG-4) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by India in 2015, seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030. The Goal SDG 4.1 states, “by 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”. SDG 4.5 states, “by 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people and children in vulnerable situations”.

Successive Governments at the Centre have initiated a wide range of programmes/ schemes in association with the Governments of the States/ Union Territories for educational development. Centrally Sponsored Schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education (CSSTE) were the three major educational development programmes of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, implemented in partnership with States /UTs.

Under SSA, the Programme for Universalisation of Elementary Education (Grades I-VIII) was implemented in alignment with the provisions of the RTE Act to ensure universal access and retention, bridging gender and social gaps in education and enhancement of learning levels of children.

RMSA was introduced to enhance access to and improve the quality of secondary education (Grades IX and X with certain components for Grades IX to XII).

CSSTE aimed to provide infrastructural and institutional support to Government Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) for teachers’ education/ training. The common objectives of all the schemes were to enhance access through the expansion of quality school education; promote equity through inclusion of disadvantaged groups and weaker sections and improve the quality of education for all.

In April 2018, the Government of India (GoI) introduced Samagra Shiksha, an integrated Scheme for School Education, subsuming SSA, RMSA and CSST. Samagra Shiksha envisions inclusive and equitable quality education from Pre-school to Senior Secondary stages, in line with SDG 4 on education. The main outcomes of the Scheme are envisaged as universal access, equity and quality, promoting vocational education and strengthening TEIs. Samagra Shiksha Scheme aims to ensure that all children have access to equitable and inclusive classroom environment by taking care of their diverse background, multilingual needs and making them active participants in the learning process. It also aims at bridging social and gender gaps in school education by ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education.

1.1.1 Organisational structure of School and Mass Education Department

The School and Mass Education (SME) Department, headed by a Secretary is responsible for overall administration of Elementary, Secondary and Higher Secondary education in Odisha, with the assistance of the Directorate of Elementary Education, Directorate of Secondary Education and Directorate of Higher Secondary Education. The District Education Officers (DEOs) and Block Education Officers (BEOs) are the district and block level administrative units for management of school education in the State. The Directorate of Teacher Education and State Council of Education, Research and Training (SCERT) and the Text Book Production and Marketing (TBP&M) provide academic and resource support through improvement of syllabus, teachers' education, production and distribution of text books. Besides, other independent bodies/ authorities *i.e.* Odisha School Education Programme Authority¹ (OSEPA), Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya Sangathan (OAVS), Mo School, Board of Secondary Education (BSE) and Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) are functioning under the Department to regulate, control and develop school education in the State.

OSEPA acts as the nodal implementing agency for School Education programmes in Odisha. The functioning of the OSEPA is regulated by a Governing Body, headed by a President², responsible for issuing policy guidance. The Executive Committee (EC), responsible for implementation of schemes and programmes, entrusted to OSEPA for execution, is headed by the Chief Secretary, as the Chairperson and the Secretary of the SME Department as the Vice Chairperson. The State Project Director (SPD) is the Chief Executive of OSEPA, who is responsible for its day to day functioning. The field formation of OSEPA comprises of District Project Office in each district headed by the District Collector, supported by the DEOs, District Project Co-ordinators (DPCs) responsible for the implementation of programmes in their respective districts. At the Block level, the affairs are managed by BEOs and Block Resource Centre Coordinators (BRCCs).

1.1.2 Trends in expenditure on school education in the State

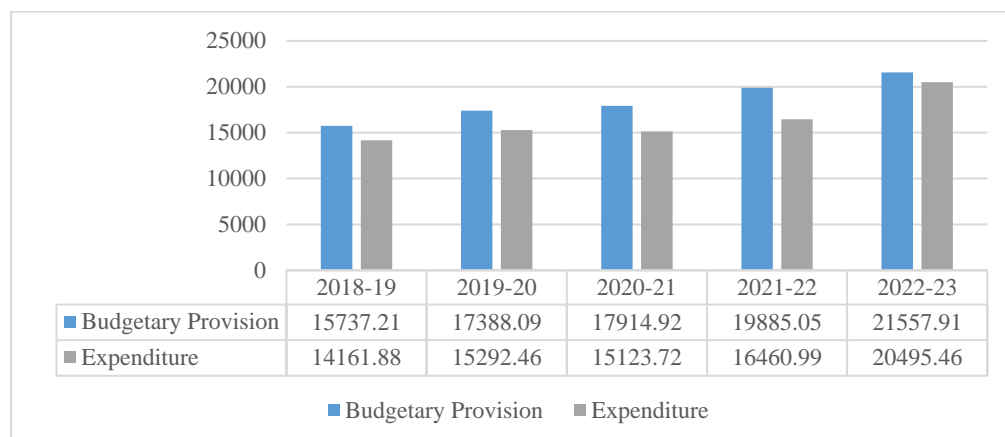
The budgetary provisions for the SME Department *vis-à-vis* actual expenditure in the FYs from 2018-19 to 2022-23, are presented in **Chart 1.1**.

¹ A registered society, functions under the administrative control of the SME Department

² Chief Minister, Odisha

Chart 1.1 Budgetary provision vis-a-vis actual expenditure

(Figures ₹ in crore)



(Source: Appropriation Accounts of respective years of the State and information furnished by SME Department, Government of Odisha)

Detailed analysis of the budget and expenditure of the SME Department has been discussed in **Chapter 2** (Planning and Financial Management) of this Report.

1.2 Audit objectives

The objectives of the Performance Audit were to analyse whether:

- the plan and interventions along with the measures towards implementation were effective in ensuring universal access to quality education.
- the learning environment including institutional infrastructure, learning resources, aid and interventions was adequate and effective in serving the quality educational and aspirational needs of the students.
- the monitoring and evaluation of varied aspects of implementation were effective in bringing timely corrective measures.

1.3 Audit criteria

The Performance Audit findings were benchmarked against criteria derived from the following sources:

- RTE Act 2009, Odisha RTE Rules, 2010
- Guidelines and Implementation Framework of RMSA and Samagra Shiksha, issued by GoI
- Manual of Financial Management and Procurement of Samagra Shiksha Scheme
- Annual Work Plan and Budgets of Samagra Shiksha
- National Education Policy, 2020
- Notifications of National Council of Teacher Education
- Orders and circulars issued by Government of India and Government of Odisha
- Odisha General Financial Rules, 1979 (corrected up to August 2000)

1.4 Scope and methodology of Audit

The Performance Audit was conducted between April 2023 and December 2023, covering the years from 2018-19 to 2022-23. The audit exercise involved examination of records/ database of the SME Department, OSEPA, SCERT, CHSE and BSE, at the State level. At the district level, Audit examined records of the DEOs, DPCs, District Welfare Officers (DWOs) and District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) of six districts, selected through stratified random sampling, on the basis of district-wise SC/ ST population and literacy level of each of the 30 districts of the State. From each of the sampled districts, two BEOs were selected, adopting similar methodology. Under each sampled BEO, nine schools, imparting primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary classes were selected on basis of random sampling. The sampled schools under each BEO included one private unaided school.

Table 1.1: Details of sampled districts, blocks and schools covered under audit

Sl. No.	Sampled District	Sampled Block	No. of schools
1	Bhadrak	1. Bhandaripokhari	Nine schools under each Block
		2. Bonth	
2	Koraput	3. Boipariguda	
		4. Semiliguda	
3	Nabarangpur	5. Kosagumuda	
		6. Nandahandi	
4	Nuapada	7. Komna	
		8. Nuapada	
5	Sambalpur	9. Bamra	
		10. Maneswar	
6	Subarnapur	11. Birmaharajpur	
		12. Ullunda	
Total	Total sampled districts - 6	Total sampled BEOs - 12	Total sampled schools - 108

Apart from examination of records, Audit conducted Joint Physical Inspection (JPI) of infrastructure, along with the officials of the sampled units concerned and obtained photographic as well as audio and video evidences, wherever required. In order to assess satisfaction level of the stakeholders and effectiveness of education imparted, Audit conducted beneficiary survey of 608 students/ parents and learning outcome test of 636 students.

The Audit objectives, criteria, scope and methodology of the Performance Audit were shared with the Commissioner-cum-Secretary, SME Department in an Entry Conference, held on 17 April 2023. The SME Department was requested several times for conduct of Exit Conference, but no response was received (February 2025). Replies of the Department, wherever received, have been incorporated appropriately in the Report.