Chapter 3

Access to Education

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This Chapter discusses the key educational indicators as well as the data integrity based on which the indicators have been worked out. Highlights of the audit findings are:

- Gross Enrolment Ratio in Secondary and Higher Secondary levels declined in the State compared to increase at the National level during 2022-23 over 2018-19, so did the Net Enrolment Rate compared to the National level, the reasons for which had not been analysed by the Department.
- Enrolment data, available in UDISE+ database, used for calculating Gross Enrolment Ratio, was not in agreement with that used for serving Mid-Day-Meals in schools, during 2018-23.
- The Transition rate from Secondary to Higher secondary level was less than the National rate in 2022-23 and the Transition rates in the said level of education had registered negative growth in 2022-23 as compared to 2018-19. Besides, the recorded Transition rate from Upper Primary to Secondary in 2018-19 for Bhadrak and Nuapada districts was more than 100 *per cent,* which was not possible.
- The Retention rate witnessed growth at Secondary level in the State but was less than the all-India growth rate. The Retention rate at Higher Secondary level was below the all-India rate, during 2022-23.
- During 2018-23, 1.50 lakh to 5.47 lakh children enrolled in Classes I to XI, discontinued education before reaching the immediate higher class and the percentage of dropout across the classes ranged from 3.12 to 7.26 *per cent*. Besides, 61,487 out of school children, between the age group of 6 to 18 years, had not been brought back into the school education system during 2018-23.

3.1 Comparative view on the indicators related to education

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) provides every child of the age of six to fourteen years, the right to free and compulsory education in a school till the completion of his or her elementary education. Enhancing access, retention, transition and reducing dropout are the expected outcomes of the Samagra Shiksha Scheme. Further, Paragraph 4.4.11 of the Samagra Shiksha Implementation Framework (SSIF) aims at 100 *per cent* retention of students from Pre-school to Senior Secondary level. Paragraph 3.1

of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 also aims to achieve the goal of 100 *per cent* Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Pre-school to Secondary level education, by 2030. The GER, Net Enrolment Rate (NER), Retention, Transition and Dropout rates are the key indicators of the educational status of the State.

3.1.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio

As per UDISE+ published by the Ministry of Education, Department of School Education and Literacy, Government of India (GoI), GER is the total enrolment in a particular level of school education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population of the official age group which corresponds to the given level of school education (example: GER Primary = Enrolment in Class I to V divided by projected population in the age group of 6 to 10 years). Thus, enrolment of children in schools and the corresponding official school age-wise population are the determining parameters to derive GER.

Rule 8 of the Odisha RTE Rules, 2010 read with Section 9 of the RTE Act, casts responsibility upon the local authority to maintain updated records of all children up to the age of fourteen years residing within its jurisdiction, through a household survey. Paragraphs 4.4.1 and 4.4.2 of the SSIF emphasise on carrying out survey on actual school-age population, maintaining data on enrolment, teachers, school infrastructure and establishing State specific norms and standards for managing school networks.

Audit noticed that all schools having active UDISE+ code uploaded enrolment figures for all classes into a web based national database *viz*., UDISE+, maintained by the Ministry of Education, GoI. Insofar as children's population is concerned, no survey was conducted by the State to determine age-wise population of school going children in the State. Instead, the population of the school going children, as projected by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA), Ministry of Education, GoI were used as base data for calculating different indicators. The GER across different levels of education in 2018-19 and 2022-23, as found in the UDISE+ database, is shown in ***Table 3.1*** and ***Chart 3.1***.

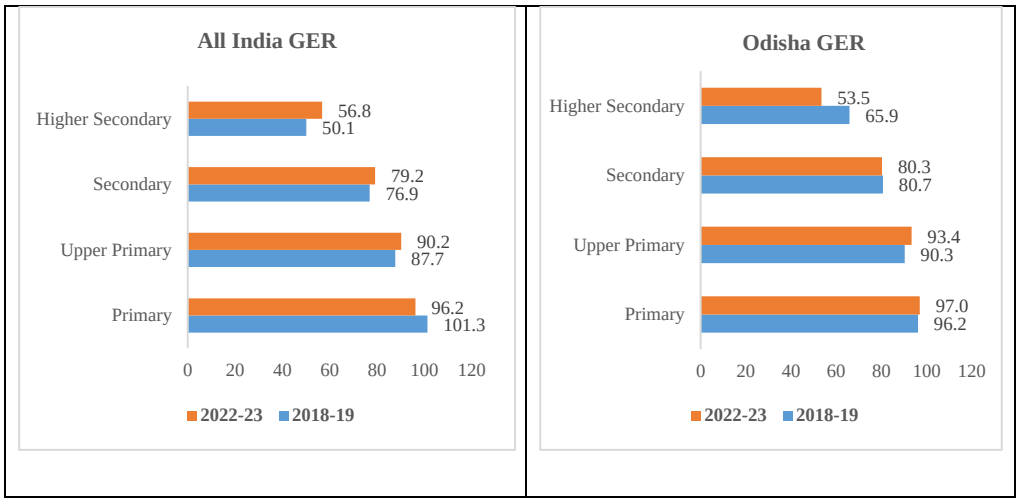
Table 3.1: GER at different levels of education

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	GER	Year		Rise/ decline (-)
		2018-19	2022-23	
Primary	All India	101.3	96.2	(-) 5.10
	Odisha	96.2	97.0	0.80
Upper Primary	All India	87.7	90.2	2.50
	Odisha	90.3	93.4	3.10
Secondary	All India	76.9	79.2	2.30
	Odisha	80.7	80.3	(-) 0.40
Higher Secondary	All India	50.1	56.8	6.70
	Odisha	65.9	53.5	(-) 12.40

(Source: UDISE+ database)

Chart 3.1: Chart showing GER at different levels of education at all India level and in Odisha



(Source: UDISE+ database)

The above figures indicated that improvement was noticed in the GER at Primary and Upper Primary levels in the State from 2018-19 to 2022-23. In the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels, GER declined as against growth at all India level, during the same period.

The GER in the six sampled districts is shown in ***Table 3.2***.

Table 3.2: GER of the six sampled districts in 2018-19 and 2022-23

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
2018-19						
Primary	98.72	105.18	105.51	99.15	99.54	95.76
Upper Primary	96.57	93.51	96.14	98.5	98.53	93.17
Secondary	96.76	72.51	73.59	113.62	75.54	89.23
Higher Secondary	89.58	64.92	66.53	96.69	73.09	82.42
2022-23						
Primary	102.26	98.47	103.18	81.81	102.94	77.87
Upper primary	100.18	83.62	90.57	80.28	98.12	81
Secondary	87.23	60.6	58.67	84.48	83.03	85.65
Higher secondary	50.65	29.87	23.02	45.59	72.96	74.12
Rise / decline (-)						
Primary	3.54	-6.71	-2.33	-17.34	3.40	-17.89
Upper Primary	3.61	-9.89	-5.57	-18.22	-0.41	-12.17
Secondary	-9.53	-11.91	-14.92	-29.14	7.49	-3.58
Higher Secondary	-38.93	-35.05	-43.51	-51.10	-0.13	-8.30

(Source: Data furnished by OSEPA)

As per the above-mentioned data, in the six sampled districts, growth in GER was achieved in two districts (Bhadrak and Sambalpur) at the Primary level. Further, at the Upper Primary level and Secondary levels, growth was achieved in one district each *i.e.* Bhadrak and Sambalpur, respectively. The decline in

GER was high across all the six sampled districts at Higher Secondary level, ranging from 0.13 *per cent* (Sambalpur) to 51.10 *per cent* (Nuapada).

On the credibility of GER data, Audit observed that the enrolment data fed by the schools into UDISE+ differed from the data reported by the same schools for accountal of Mid-Day Meals (MDM) by around 10,454 to 2,50,137 students (discussed in ***Paragraph 3.2.2***), raising doubts on the accuracy of the enrolment data. During 2018-21, the enrolment data for MDM reported by State Project Management Unit (SPMU) of PM POSHAN was higher than the enrolment data of OSEPA, while during 2021-23, the enrolment data of OSEPA was higher than the reported enrolment data for MDM. Further, as GER is the percentage of population of a certain age group enrolled in schools, collection of age group-wise population in the State is vital for determining GER accurately. However, OSEPA, without conducting any survey to ascertain age group-wise population, depended upon the age-wise child population projected by NIEPA for each year, to compute GER. Whenever NIEPA's projected child population figures were found to be less than the actual enrolment figure captured in the UDISE+, OSEPA added the Out of School children population to the actual enrolment figure and the total figure was taken as the projected children population of the State.

Thus, the procedure adopted by OSEPA to compute GER was erroneous to the extent that unreliable projected population figures had been adopted to compute GER for different levels of education. As such, the GER figures derived by OSEPA did not present an accurate picture.

Absence of effective measures to arrest dropout numbers of students, especially during transition from Upper Primary to Secondary and Secondary to Higher Secondary levels ***(Paragraph 3.1.4)*** as well as inadequate school infrastructure and facilities ***(Chapter 5)*** were some of the indicative reasons for decline in GER.

The Department accepted (October 2024) the fact that no household survey had been conducted to determine the GER, but did not provide assurance about taking remedial measures to rectify the existing faulty procedure. The Department also added that they had been conducting enrolment campaigns like Shiksha Sachetanata Ratha and Pravesh Utsav, as well as recruiting teachers and developing infrastructure to increase GER.

3.1.2 Net Enrolment Rate

As per the UDISE+, Net Enrolment Rate (NER) is the total number of pupils enrolled in a particular level of school education who are of the corresponding official age group, expressed as a percentage of the population of the official age group, which corresponds to the given level of school education (Example: NER primary = Children of age 6 to 10 years enrolled in Classes I to V divided by projected population in age group 6 to 10 years). The NER, at different levels of education, at the National level and State levels, as reported in the UDISE+, is shown in ***Table 3.3*** and ***Chart 3.2***.

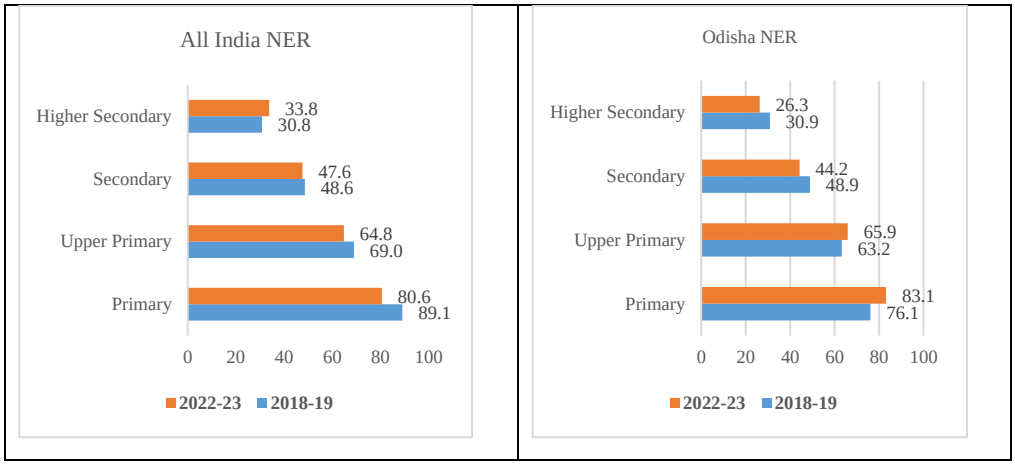
Table 3.3: Net Enrolment Rate at different levels of education in 2018-19 and 2022-23

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	NER	Year		Rise/ decline (-)
		2018-19	2022-23	
Primary	All India	89.1	80.6	(-) 8.50
	Odisha	76.1	83.1	7.00
Upper primary	All India	69.0	64.8	(-) 4.20
	Odisha	63.2	65.9	2.70
Secondary	All India	48.6	47.6	(-) 1.00
	Odisha	48.9	44.2	(-) 4.70
Higher Secondary	All India	30.8	33.8	3.00
	Odisha	30.9	26.3	(-) 4.60

(Source: UDISE+ database)

Chart 3.2: Chart showing NER at different levels of education at All India level and in Odisha



(Source: UDISE+ database)

From the above, NER of Odisha was lower than the National figure at Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. Further, decline in NER was noticed in the above two levels in the State in 2022-23 as compared to 2018-19.

The NER in the six sampled districts is shown in ***Table 3.4***.

Table 3.4: NER of the six sampled districts in 2018-19 and 2022-23

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
2018-19						
Primary	86.05	90.46	90.96	92.61	85.85	85.54
Upper Primary	81.66	97.96	94.88	94.01	86.51	85.73
Secondary	60.23	48.39	51.9	71.46	49.9	59.91
Higher Secondary	60.26	48.32	51.87	71.46	49.92	59.93
2022-23						
Primary	86.05	86.59	90.37	73.23	87.27	65.72
Upper Primary	69.01	63.3	67.75	60.84	66.7	55.67

Level of education	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
Secondary	47.01	35.72	34.88	43.38	43.69	43.9
Higher Secondary	20.75	17	12.89	21.64	37.06	34.69
Rise / decline (-)						
Primary	0.00	-3.87	-0.59	-19.38	1.42	-19.82
Upper Primary	-12.65	-34.66	-27.13	-33.17	-19.81	-30.06
Secondary	-13.22	-12.67	-17.02	-28.08	-6.21	-16.01
Higher Secondary	-39.51	-31.32	-38.98	-49.82	-12.86	-25.24

(Source: Data furnished by OSEPA)

Out of the six sampled districts, the NER declined in four districts (Koraput, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Sonepur), at all levels of education in 2022-23 as compared to 2018-19. Further, the NER at Higher Secondary level declined significantly in all the six districts during the same period. In two districts (Nuapada and Sonepur), the NER at Primary and Upper Primary levels was less than the State average, whereas in another three districts (Koraput, Nabarangpur and Nuapada), the NER at Secondary and Higher Secondary levels was less than the State average, during 2022-23.

The reasons for such decline in NER had not been analysed by OSEPA. However, ineffective measures to arrest the dropout of students during the transition from Upper primary to Secondary as well as inadequate school infrastructure and facilities were the indicative reasons for decline in NER, as discussed in succeeding paragraphs.

Audit, however, observed that the credibility of NER derived by OSEPA was as doubtful as the GER data (highlighted in ***Paragraph 3.1.1***). The two essential inputs for computation of NER are (i) total number of pupils enrolled in a level of education, belonging to the age-group of that level of school education and (ii) total child population of the State of that age-group. OSEPA had, however, not collected age-wise child population data, rather it had used the age-wise child population figure, projected by NIEPA. Thus, the methodology adopted by OSEPA to compute NER was erroneous and as such, the NER figures derived by OSEPA were not accurate.

The Department noted (October 2024) the observation of Audit and stated that age-wise actual child population would be assessed in future.

Recommendation 3.1

GER and NER, being the critical indicators of percentage of population enrolled in a particular level of education, should be assessed based on actual age-wise population, through household survey.

Recommendation 3.2

The reasons for decline in GER and NER should be clearly identified and corrective measures should be taken not only to arrest the decline, but also to improve GER and NER in order to ensure access to education for all.

3.1.3 Retention Rate

As per the UDISE+, Retention rate is the percentage of a cohort of pupils (or schools) enrolled in the first grade of a given level of education in a given academic year, who are expected to reach the last grade of the level. ***Table 3.5*** and ***Chart 3.3*** indicate the retention rate of all-India and Odisha, at different levels of school education.

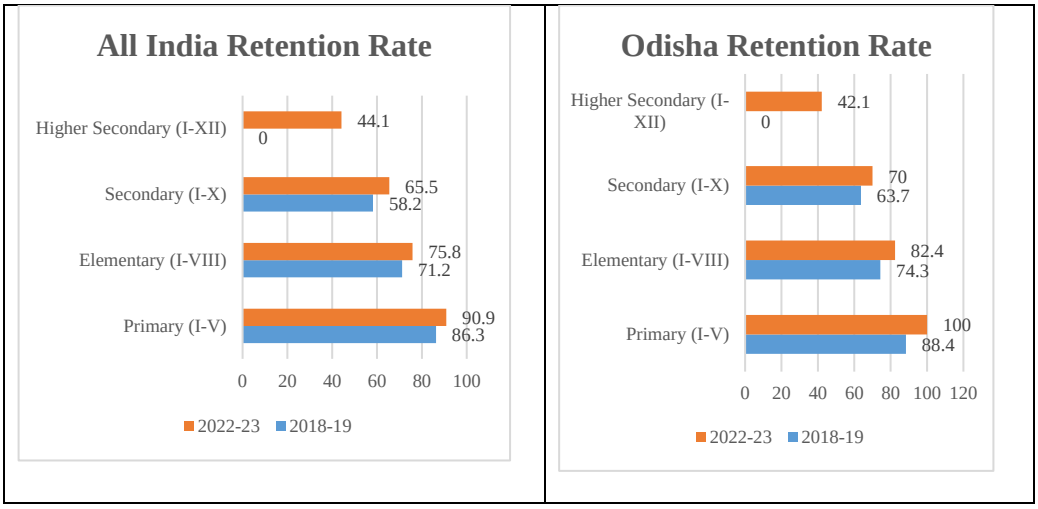
Table 3.5: Retention rate at different levels of education in 2018-19 and 2022-23

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	Retention Rate	Year		Rise/ decline (-)
		2018-19	2022-23	
Primary (I-V)	All India	86.3	90.9	4.60
	Odisha	88.4	100.0	11.60
Elementary (I-VIII)	All India	71.2	75.8	4.60
	Odisha	74.3	82.4	8.10
Secondary (I-X)	All India	58.2	65.5	7.30
	Odisha	63.7	70.0	6.30
Higher Secondary (I-XII)	All India	Data not available	44.1	---
	Odisha	Data not available	42.1	---

(Source: UDISE+ database)

Chart 3.3: Chart showing Retention rate at different levels of education in all India and Odisha during 2018-19 and 2022-23



(Source: UDISE+ database)

The above data indicated that the Retention rates in Primary, Elementary and Secondary levels of education were increasing both at the all-India and the State levels, during 2018-19 and 2022-23. However, the growth rate in the State was less than the all-India growth rate at Secondary level and the Retention rate at Higher Secondary level was below the all-India rate, during 2022-23.

The Retention rate in the six sampled districts is shown in ***Table 3.6***.

Table 3.6: Retention rate of each level of School Education of the sampled districts

(Figures represent percentage)

District	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
2018-19						
Primary (I-V)	98.24	93.73	96.90	97.40	93.64	95.83
Elementary (I-VIII)	99.27	91.52	88.79	98.67	91.75	95.37
Secondary (I-X)	98.09	91.61	94.66	94.14	91.05	93.15
2022-23						
Primary (I-V)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Elementary (I-VIII)	88.55	70.12	84.56	64.26	84.42	96.05
Secondary (I-X)	74.51	48.79	53.73	64.5	73.73	86.76
Rise / decline (-)						
Primary (I-V)	1.76	6.27	3.10	2.60	6.36	4.17
Elementary (I-VIII)	-10.72	-21.40	-4.23	-34.41	-7.33	0.68
Secondary (I-X)	-23.58	-42.82	-40.93	-29.64	-17.32	-6.39

(Source: Information furnished by OSEPA)

The above table indicates that there was decline in Retention rate at Elementary and Secondary levels in most of the sampled districts, despite overall increase shown in Retention rate at these levels in the State, during 2022-23 compared to 2018-19.

Audit observed that inadequate academic infrastructure and teaching facilities coupled with socio-economic problems were the indicative reasons for the decline in retention rates at Elementary and Secondary levels, as discussed in detail in ***Paragraph 3.1.5.2*** and ***Chapters 5 and 6*** of this Report.

3.1.4 Transition rate

As per the Result Framework Document for the SME Department, Transition rate is the proportion of pupils (students) at a given level of education in a given school year who get enrolled to the next higher level of education (*e.g.* Primary to Upper Primary or Upper Primary to Secondary) in the next year. Transition rate at all-India and State levels for different levels of education are shown in ***Table 3.7*** and ***Chart 3.4***.

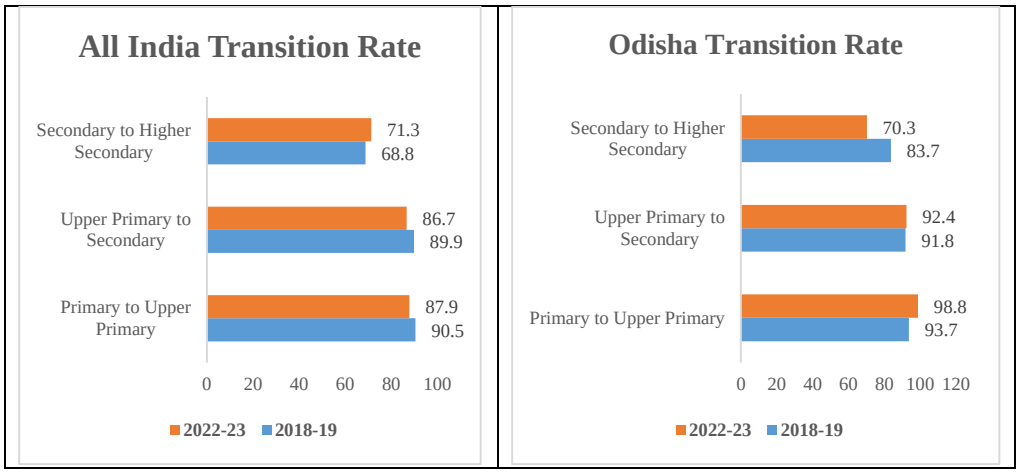
Table 3.7: Transition rate of different levels of education in 2018-19 and 2022-23

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	Transition Rate	Year		Rise / decline (-)
		2018-19	2022-23	
Primary to Upper Primary	All India	90.5	87.9	(-) 2.60
	Odisha	93.7	98.8	5.10
Upper Primary to Secondary	All India	89.9	86.7	(-) 3.20
	Odisha	91.8	92.4	0.60
Secondary to Higher Secondary	All India	68.8	71.3	2.50
	Odisha	83.7	70.3	(-) 13.40

(Source: UDISE+ database)

Chart 3.4: Chart showing Transition rate at different levels of education for all-India and Odisha



(Source: UDISE+ database)

It would be observed from the above that the Transition rates from Primary to Upper Primary and Upper Primary to Secondary levels registered growth in the State compared to decline at the National level during 2022-23 over 2018-19. However, Transition rate from Secondary to Higher Secondary level remained lower than the National average in 2022-23. Besides, the Transition rate in this level of education had also registered negative growth in 2022-23 as compared to 2018-19.

The Transition rate in Secondary to Higher Secondary was only 70.3, indicating that approximately thirty *per cent* of the students were not able to make the transition to higher classes, either due to dropping out of school or due to not qualifying for promotion to the next level.

The Transition Rates in the six sampled districts are shown in ***Table 3.8***.

Table 3.8: Transition rate of various levels of education in the sampled districts

(Figures represent percentage)

District	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
2018-19						
Primary to Upper Primary	97.08	87.95	90.39	95.63	92.24	92.42
Upper Primary to Secondary	101.04	85.73	73.98	102.95	90.96	99.28
Secondary to Higher Secondary	72.56	65.56	54.47	61.89	96.42	100.00
2022-23						
Primary to Upper Primary	100	96.23	98.73	96.94	100	99.91
Upper Primary to Secondary	96.87	82.96	76.08	88.67	90.93	98.09
Secondary to Higher Secondary	60.97	58.6	46.17	50.85	86.24	80.89
Rise / decline (-)						
Primary to Upper Primary	2.92	8.28	8.34	1.31	7.76	7.49

District	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
Upper Primary to Secondary	-4.17	-2.77	2.10	-14.28	-0.03	-1.19
Secondary to Higher Secondary	-11.59	-6.96	-8.30	-11.04	-10.18	-19.11

(Source: Data furnished by OSEPA)

It would be seen from the above table that the Transition rate in Upper Primary to Secondary in 2018-19 for Bhadrak and Nuapada districts was 101.04 and 102.95 *per cent* respectively, which was misleading as Transition rate cannot be more than 100 *per cent*. This is indicative of lack of proper maintenance and analysis of data by the OSEPA, which is vital for planning and policy formulation for improving school education.

In the six sampled districts, the Transition rate from Primary to Upper Primary level improved in 2022-23 over 2018-19. In case of transition from Upper Primary to Secondary level in four sampled districts (leaving aside Bhadrak and Nuapada on account of distorted data), the rate declined in three districts. A sharp decline was noticed in the Transition rate from Secondary to Higher Secondary education in all six districts. Besides, in three sampled districts (Koraput, Nabarangpur and Nuapada), the transition rate from Primary to Upper Primary was less than the State rate in 2022-23. Similarly, the rate was less than the State rate in 2022-23, for transition from Upper Primary to Secondary in four sampled districts (Koraput, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Sambalpur) and from Secondary to Higher Secondary in respect four sampled districts (Bhadrak, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Nuapada).

Audit attributed the lower Transition rates to inadequate quality of teaching due to lack of sufficient teaching staff, poor infrastructure and socio-economic reasons.

The Department did not offer (October 2024) any views, stating that the matter related to the Board of Secondary Education, Odisha. This response of the Department is not acceptable as it is responsible for development of school education in the State and NER is a critical indicator in that regard. Moreover, since BSE functions under the administrative supervision of the Department, the latter should have secured views of the BSE on the matter.

Recommendation 3.3

The reasons for drop in transition of students from secondary to Higher Secondary level should be identified, the higher secondary schooling facilities should be improved for smooth transition and the socio-economic issues should be addressed by introducing suitable interventions.

3.1.5 Dropout rate

As per UDISE+, the Dropout rate is the proportion of pupils from a cohort enrolled at a given level in a given school year, who are no longer enrolled at any grade in the following school year. Dropout rate at the State level as

compared to All India level for different levels of education is indicated in ***Table 3.9*** and ***Chart 3.5***.

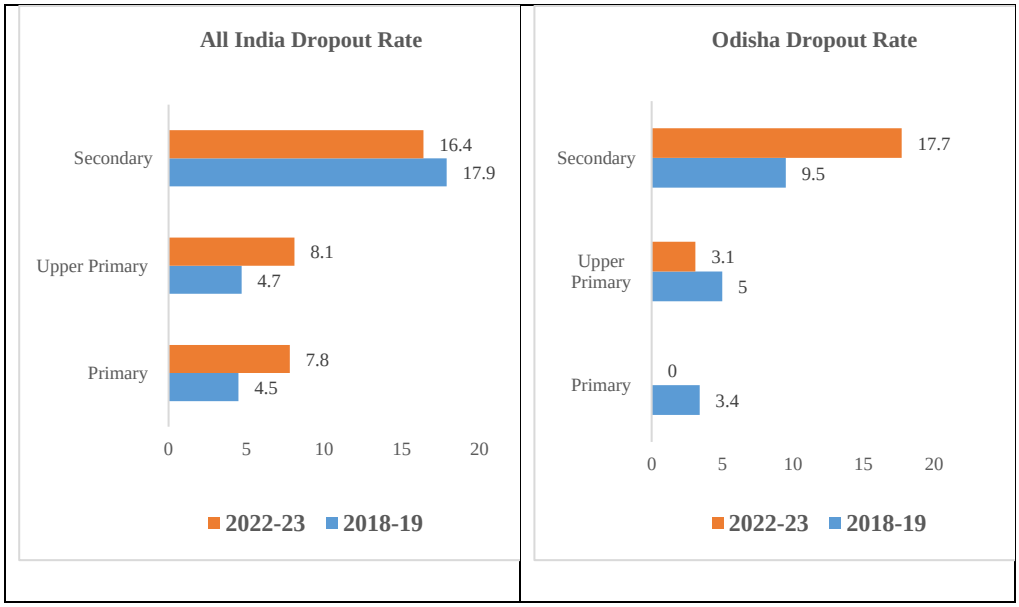
Table 3.9: Dropout rate at different levels of education

(Figures represent percentage)

Level of education	Dropout Rate	Year	
		2018-19	2022-23
Primary	All India	4.5	7.8
	Odisha	3.4	0
Upper Primary	All India	4.7	8.1
	Odisha	5.0	3.1
Secondary	All India	17.9	16.4
	Odisha	9.5	17.7
Higher Secondary	All India	Not available in UDISE+	
	Odisha	Not available in UDISE+	

(Source: UDISE+ database)

Chart 3.5: Chart showing dropout rate at different levels of education for All India and Odisha



(Source: UDISE+ database)

The above data indicated that in 2022-23, at secondary level, the State witnessed increased dropout rate at 17.7 *per cent*. Thus, the dropout rate in Secondary level increased by 86 *per cent* over 2018-19. Inadequate academic infrastructure and educational facilities coupled with socio-economic hardships were the indicative reasons for the higher percentage of dropouts in the State.

Audit noted that 1.50 lakh to 5.47 lakh children enrolled in Classes I to XI during 2018-23, discontinued education before reaching the next class *i.e*. Class II to Class XII. The percentage of dropout across the classes ranged from 3.12 to 7.26 *per cent*.

Audit analysed transition from Secondary to Higher Secondary *i.e*. results of Class X examinations for the academic years from 2018-19 to 2022-23, except 2020-21 (examination not held due to COVID-19) conducted by the Board of Secondary Education, Odisha. In these four years, of 23.61 lakh students

enrolled in Class X, 2.74 lakh (12 *per cent*) students did not appear in the Board examination.

The Dropout rate in the six sampled districts is shown in ***Table 3.10***.

Table 3.10: Dropout rate at different levels of education in the sampled districts

(Figures represent percentage)

District	Bhadrak	Koraput	Nabarangpur	Nuapada	Sambalpur	Sonepur
2018-19						
Primary	1.76	6.27	3.10	2.60	6.36	4.17
Upper Primary	0.73	8.48	11.21	1.33	8.25	4.63
Secondary	11.62	14.01	18.70	21.88	14.02	12.86
2022-23						
Primary	0	0	0	0.4	0	0
Upper Primary	1.5	5.9	7.9	6.3	3.8	0
Secondary	21.1	24.3	31.6	29.6	10.1	11.2
Rise / decline (-)						
Primary	-1.76	-6.27	-3.10	-2.20	-6.36	-4.17
Upper Primary	0.77	-2.58	-3.31	4.97	-4.45	-4.63
Secondary	9.48	10.29	12.90	7.72	-3.92	-1.66

(Source: Data furnished by OSEPA)

The above table shows that two sampled districts (Bhadrak and Nuapada) witnessed a rise in the dropout rate at Upper Primary level, whereas four districts (Bhadrak, Koraput, Nabarangpur and Nuapada) witnessed a sharp rise in Dropout rate at the Secondary level, during 2022-23 as compared to 2018-19.

The Department's reply (October 2024) was silent on the increase in dropout rate in Secondary level. It, however, stated that the dropout rate would turn out to be lesser, if enrolments in open schools, technical institutions, unregistered schools, correspondence courses, *etc*., are considered. It further added that as much as 1.40 lakh and 3.02 lakh students had been enrolled in 2022-23 and 2023-24, respectively, in such educational institutions. However, the Department did not indicate source of such enrolment figures, as the UDISE+ database was the only platform to record enrolments and such enrolments did not appear in UDISE+.

3.1.5.1 Dropout of children and the associated reasons

Audit conducted a beneficiary survey at 108 sampled schools in six districts, covering 608 children, who left schools at different stages of education during the period 2018-23. Audit found that out of the 608 children, 341 (56 *per cent*) children dropped out of education and the remaining 267 children had switched over to other schools. The survey covered gender-wise and social community-wise children, who had been dropped out from education. The results of survey are tabulated in ***Table 3.11***.

Table 3.11: Results of survey on dropout of children from school education

Classes	No. of children covered under the opinion survey						No. of children who discontinued education, out of the children surveyed						Category-wise number of children who discontinued education			Percentage of dropout children to children covered under the opinion survey
	Boys			Girls			Boys			Girls						
	ST	SC	Oth	ST	SC	Oth	ST	SC	Oth	ST	SC	Oth	ST	SC	Oth	
Primary	35	15	17	25	19	20	3	2	1	3	1	2	6	3	3	9
Upper Primary	44	20	40	29	18	32	22	6	9	17	6	8	39	12	17	37
Secondary	30	25	21	47	27	13	29	24	19	39	24	13	68	48	32	91
Higher Secondary	17	23	25	19	23	24	15	19	23	17	19	20	32	38	43	86
Total	**126**	**83**	**103**	**120**	**87**	**89**	**69**	**51**	**52**	**76**	**50**	**43**	**145**	**101**	**95**	**56**

(Source: Admission and attendance registers of the sampled schools and beneficiary survey)

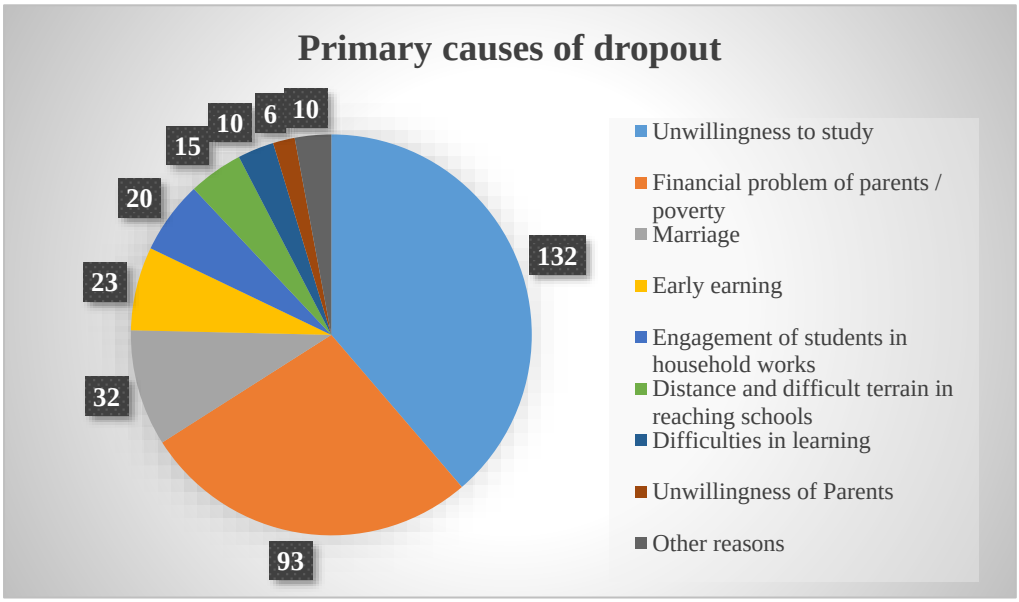
Based on the feedback from respondent parents/ relatives (239)/ villagers/ neighbours (17)/ dropout students (85), it was noted that there were a number of primary as well as associated causes of dropout/ discontinuation of education. These causes, although distinct, are not mutually exclusive and may not be taken in isolation. However, Audit categorised the causes into two categories - primary and accompanying causes to bring out a better understanding of the overall factors leading to dropout/discontinuation of education.

3.1.5.2 Reasons attributed by the respondents to the dropout

- ***Unwillingness to study:*** 132 out of 341 (39 *per cent*) respondents stated that the students dropped/ discontinued studies due to unwillingness to pursue education further.
- ***Financial problem of parents/ poverty:*** 93 out of 341 (27 *per cent*) respondents stated that the students dropped out of further education due to poverty/ financial problems of parents.
- ***Marriage:*** 32 out of 341 (nine *per cent*) respondents dropped/ discontinued studies due to marriage.
- ***Early earning***: 23 out of 341 (seven *per cent*) moved to other States/ places to earn a living and discontinued studies thereafter.
- ***Engagement of students in household works, assisting parents in agriculture and other works:*** 20 out of 341 (six *per cent*) respondents stated that they discontinued their studies due to engagement in household works and to assist parents in agriculture and other works.
- ***Distance and difficult terrain in reaching schools***: 15 out of 341 (four *per cent*) students dropped/ discontinued studies due to difficult terrain/ distance involved in reaching the school, leading to less interest towards studies.
- ***Difficulties in learning:*** 10 out of 341 (three *per cent*) respondents stated that the students discontinued studies due to learning difficulties.

- ***Unwillingness of Parents:*** Six out of 341 (two *per cent*) respondents stated that the students dropped/ discontinued studies due to unwillingness of their parents to continue with their education.
- ***Other reasons:*** 10 out of 341 (three *per cent*) respondents stated that the students dropped/ discontinued studies due to closure of school (06), continuous illness (03) and family problems (01).

Chart 3.6: Chart showing primary causes of dropout among children



(Source: Results of beneficiary survey conducted by Audit in test-checked schools)

3.1.5.3 Accompanying/associated causes

- ***Lack of parental guidance:*** Respondent parents/ relatives of 48 out of 341 (14 *per cent*) dropout students were of the view that children took their own decision and discontinued studies because of unwillingness to study and parents also failed to guide them properly.
- ***Poor Literacy level of parents:*** Respondent parents of 29 out of 341 (nine *per cent*) students who discontinued education were rural and illiterate and did not have an understanding of the need for continuing education.

The Department stated (October 2024) that a number of measures like Learning Recovery Plan, Learning Enhancement Programme, Multi Lingual Education Programme, awareness campaign, provision of residential hostels facilities, scholarships, free textbooks and uniforms had been initiated to reduce the dropout of students. However, despite the constructive measures taken up by the Department, causes of dropout rate, mostly socio-economic causes, still remained unaddressed.

Recommendation 3.4

Intervention programmes like awareness campaigns and counselling should be undertaken extensively to address high percentage of drop out of children. Also, measures for improvement in quality of education need to be taken.

3.2 Availability of schools

The SME Department notified (May 2018 and March 2020) a policy for Rationalisation of schools in the State with the broad objective of improving Pupil-Teacher Ratio, having better infrastructure facilities in consolidated schools, better academic environment with increased staff and larger peer groups of students. It aims to bring larger parent and community participation with better monitoring and utilisation of public resources.

As per the scheme of rationalisation, different schools located in the same campus or within 100 metres were to be merged to form a single institution. Government Elementary and Secondary schools having enrolment of less than or equal to 20 were to be merged in nearby schools, irrespective of distance. Rationalisation of schools, after a detailed analysis, had also been suggested by the Project Approval Board, Ministry of Education, while approving the Annual Work Plan and Budget, 2020-21 of OSEPA.

There were 68,717 schools (State Government and State Government aided: 61,022 and Privately managed and others[7]: 7,695) functioning in the State, as of March 2019. In pursuance of the scheme of rationalisation, 7,685 Government schools were merged with nearby Government schools. As of March 2023, total number of schools was 61,891 (State Government, State Government aided: 54,478 and Privately managed and others: 7,413), which included newly established schools as well as schools closed after the rationalisation exercise.

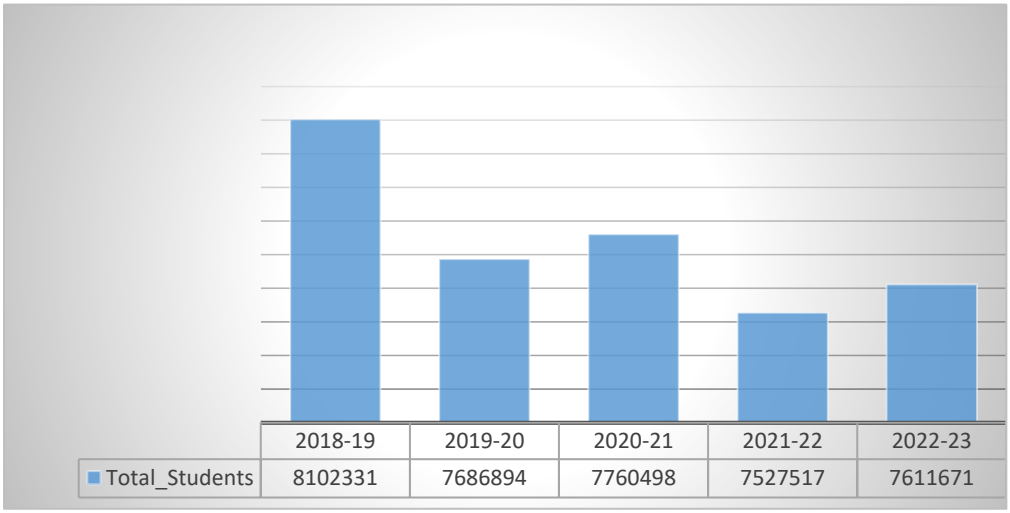
However, Audit observed that the objectives of rationalisation to improve Pupil-Teacher ratio, infrastructure facilities and enrolment of children had not been achieved, as discussed in ***Chapters 5*** and ***6*** of this Report and evident from the following paragraphs:

3.2.1 Decline in enrolment

As per the data furnished by OSEPA, number of students enrolled in Primary to Higher Secondary levels had declined from 81.02 lakh in 2018-19 to 76.12 lakh in 2022-23, as depicted in **Chart 3.7.**

[7] Privately managed schools, schools established by Government of India, Special schools, Madrasas, Schools established by trusts and other body corporates

Chart 3.7: Year-wise total number of students enrolled across all levels of school education from 2018-19 to 2022-23 in the State

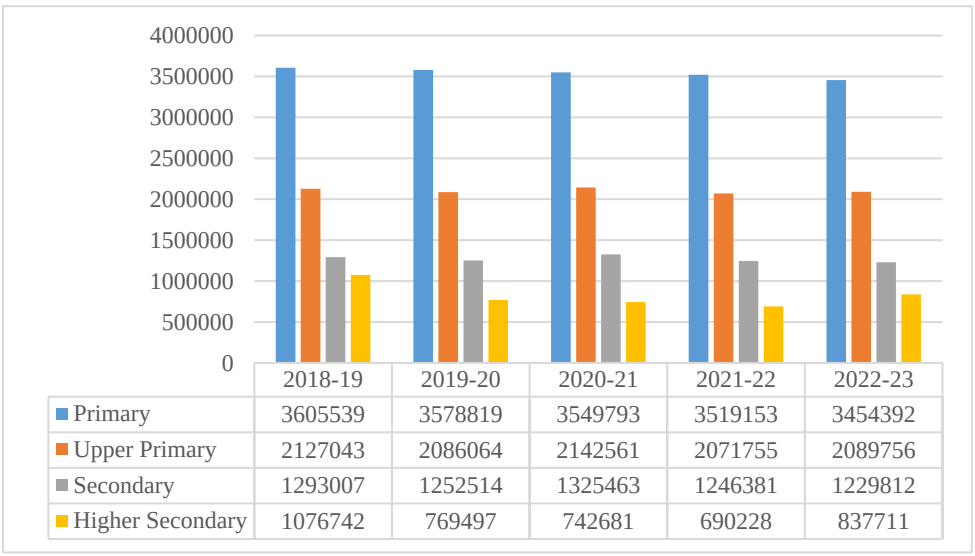


	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Total_Students	8102331	7686894	7760498	7527517	7611671

(Source: Information furnished by OSEPA)

Audit analysed the trend of enrolments at each level of education for the years from 2018-19 to 2022-23, which revealed that the enrolment had declined at all levels, as shown in the ***Chart 3.8***.

Chart 3.8: Enrolment of students from Primary to Higher Secondary levels during 2018-19 to 2022-23



	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Primary	3605539	3578819	3549793	3519153	3454392
Upper Primary	2127043	2086064	2142561	2071755	2089756
Secondary	1293007	1252514	1325463	1246381	1229812
Higher Secondary	1076742	769497	742681	690228	837711

(Source: Information furnished by OSEPA)

So far as enrolment of SC/ ST students is concerned, their enrolment had declined from 37.08 lakh in 2018-19 to 34.90 lakh in 2022-23. Likewise, the enrolment of girl students had fallen from 39.52 lakh in 2018-19 to 37.08 lakh in 2022-23.

Audit observed that implementation of Rationalisation Policy of Schools had not ensured improved enrolment by providing better educational environment and infrastructural facilities through merger of schools. Similarly, the Rationalisation policy of the SME Department had also failed in improving Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), as discussed in ***Chapter 6*** of this Report.

Even enrolment of socially vulnerable groups like SC/ ST or girls had decreased over the span of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23, as discussed in ***Paragraph 4.2.1*** of this Report. Meanwhile, the Orissa High Court on a writ[8] against Rationalisation of schools, set aside (4 May 2021) the notifications on Rationalisation of schools, issued by the SME Department.

The Department did not offer specific views on the declining enrolments.

3.2.2 Disparity in enrolment data between different entities of Government

Children enrolled in Classes I to VIII are covered under the PM POSHAN programme of the GoI and are provided MDM at schools. Audit collected the year-wise figures of students enrolled in the aforesaid classes during the years 2018-19 to 2022-23, from two agencies *viz*., OSEPA and the State Project Management Unit (SPMU) of PM POSHAN. The comparative data maintained by the two agencies are presented in ***Table 3.12***.

Table 3.12: Enrolment Data of children (Classes I to VIII) maintained by different agencies

Year	No. of children enrolled in Classes I to VIII		Difference	Percentage of difference
	As per OSEPA	As per PM POSHAN		
2018-19	45,91,520	48,41,657	(-)2,50,137	5.45
2019-20	44,53,735	46,41,593	(-)1,87,858	4.22
2020-21	44,37,112	45,13,758	(-)76,646	1.73
2021-22	45,00,044	44,28,963	(+)71,081	1.58
2022-23	45,04,532	44,94,078	(+)10,454	0.23

(Source: Data furnished by OSEPA and State Project Management Unit, PM POSHAN)

Audit observed that in none of the years from 2018-19 to 2022-23, the enrolment figures between the above-mentioned two Government agencies were in agreement and the difference ranged between 0.23 and 5.45 *per cent*. While in the initial three years the enrolment figures for MDM as per PM POSHAN were higher than the data maintained by OSEPA, in two subsequent years, the position was reverse.

While the accuracy of the enrolment data is vital for analysing performance against critical educational indicators, it is also crucial for devising necessary interventions. The disparity in enrolment data raises doubt about performance against key indicators and also impacts formulation of effective policy interventions.

[8] WPC 27401 of 2020

The Department did not offer any specific views on the discrepancies in enrolment data.

Recommendation 3.5

The fall in the enrolment numbers across different grades of school education should be analysed and corrective measures be taken.

3.3 Habitation-wise school mapping not done

As per Odisha RTE Rules, 2010, schools shall be established within a distance of one and three kilometres of the neighbourhood, for children of Classes I–V and VI–VIII, respectively. Paragraph 4.4.1 of SSIF suggests undertaking Geographical Information System based school mapping for establishing new schools and upgrading existing schools. This was to be done in adherence to the norms laid down by the State under the RTE Act and related norms for Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. Habitation-wise school mapping was to be done to ensure that all habitations had access to all levels of school education. Further, as per Paragraph 4.4.5 of SSIF, the neighbourhood norms notified by the State would be applicable for opening of new Secondary and Higher Secondary schools to provide universal access to quality education. In case of any State, which had not notified the neighbourhood norms for Secondary and Higher Secondary schools, the scheme provided support to children for access to Secondary schools within a distance of five kilometres and Higher Secondary schools within a distance of seven to ten kilometres of habitation, ensuring their viability (*i.e.*, ensuring adequate enrolment) and cost effectiveness. Paragraph 4.4.6 of SSIF stipulates providing transport/ escort facilities to children residing in remote habitations with sparse population, *etc*.

The total habitations, habitations served by Primary Schools, Upper Primary Schools and unviable habitations in the State, as of March 2019 and March 2023, are shown in ***Table 3.13*****.**

Table 3.13: Habitation-wise school mapping

Particulars	March 2019	March 2023
Total number of habitations	90,731	90,731
Primary schools		
Habitation unviable for opening school	2,981	2,981
Habitation covered with Primary Schools within 1 km	87,750	87,750
Habitation without Primary Schools within 1 km	0	0
Upper Primary schools		
Habitation unviable for opening school	2,010	2,010
Habitation covered with Upper Primary Schools within 3 km	88,721	88,721
Habitation without Upper Primary Schools within 3 km	0	0
Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools		
Habitation covered with Secondary schools and Higher secondary schools within a distance of 5 km and 7- 10 km	Habitation mapping not done	

(Source: Data furnished by OSEPA)

From ***Table 3.13***, it can be seen that the figures of March 2019 and those of March 2023 were exactly the same. On being asked by Audit, OSEPA stated that habitation-wise school mapping had not been conducted during 2018-19 to

2022-23 and was last done during the year 2014-15. In the absence of a fresh habitation mapping exercise, the present status of habitations and habitations not served with Primary and Upper Primary Schools could not be ascertained. Thus, there was a chance of the State not providing the universal access to education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years.

The State had neither notified the neighbourhood norms nor had it done habitation-wise school mapping to assess the need to establish Secondary and Higher Secondary school facilities. It had also not identified child population in the age group of 15 to 18 years of unviable habitations to ensure universal access to all levels of school education (March 2023). This may be an indicative reason for the dropout of children particularly during the transition from Upper Primary to Secondary and Secondary to Higher Secondary levels of education.

The Department stated (October 2024) that the geo-mapping of schools had been completed during 2024 to assess needs of schools for upgradation of Upper Primary to Secondary and Secondary to Higher Secondary schools, to ensure smooth transition of students at different levels.

3.3.1 Variation between the State and district habitation report

Audit compared habitation mapping reports with regard to coverage of habitations by Primary School and Upper Primary School, furnished by OSEPA and sampled districts. In case of four out of six sampled districts, Audit noticed differences in data, as shown in ***Table 3.14***.

Table 3.14: Variation in habitation mapping reports of State (OSEPA) and Districts

Particulars	Bhadrak		Koraput		Nuapada		Sambalpur	
	District	OSEPA	District	OSEPA	District	OSEPA	District	OSEPA
Total habitations	**2,520**	**2,520**	**3,058**	**3,946**	**2,228**	**2,340**	**2,816**	**2,278**
Habitation unviable for opening Primary School	0	8	0	272	56	105	41	140
Habitation unviable for opening Upper Primary School	0	0	0	277	35	50	41	71
Habitation viable for opening Primary School	2,520	2,512	3,058	3,674	2,172	2,235	2,775	2,138
Habitation viable for opening Upper Primary School	2,520	2,520	3,058	3,669	2,193	2,290	2,775	2,207
Habitation covered by Primary School within 1 km	2,520	2,512	2,544	3,674	2,172	2,235	2,676	2,138
Habitation not covered by Primary School within 1 km	0	0	514	0	0	0	99	0
Habitation covered by Upper Primary School within 3 km	2,520	2,520	2,737	3,669	2,193	2,290	2,745	2,207
Habitation not covered by Upper Primary School within 3 km	0	0	321	0	0	0	30	0

(Source: Information furnished by the DEO cum DPC of the districts and OSEPA)

It would be observed from ***Table 3.14*** that there were variations in the two sets of data maintained by the districts and OSEPA at the State level. While two districts (Koraput and Sambalpur) had reported about habitations not covered by Primary and Upper Primary schools, report of OSEPA stated that all

habitations of the districts had been covered by such schools. The habitation mappings are important for assessing the availability of schooling facilities and to ensure that all habitations had access to school education. As such, both the State and District level agencies should have proper and shared information for formulation of effective policy interventions. Implementation of Rationalisation policy without undertaking habitation mapping indicated that the policy of the State was not backed with well thought and prudent plans and strategies.

In view of such difference in data, Audit could not give assurance about the availability of Primary and Upper Primary schools in these districts, as per the norms laid down in the RTE Act. Due to lack of neighbourhood schools, lack of uniform access to education for all school going children cannot be ruled out.

The Department stated (October 2024) that Habitation/ School mapping had been conducted at Block level during 2014-15 and schooling facilities had been provided to the eligible habitations, as per the school mapping report. The Department, however, did not offer views on the discrepancies between State and District level habitation reports.

Recommendation 3.6

The habitation-wise school mapping should be done in a periodical manner and schooling facilities should be improved to meet the neighbourhood schooling norms.

3.3.2 Mainstreaming of 'Out of school' children

Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, GOI defined Out of School Children that a child of 6-14 years of age will be considered out of school, if he/she has never been enrolled in an elementary school or if after enrolment, he/she has been absent from school without prior intimation for a period of 45 days or more. Section 4 of the RTE Act, 2009 stipulates age-appropriate admission of a child above six years of age who has not been admitted in any school or though admitted, could not complete elementary education with special training so that they can be at par with other children. Further, Paragraph 1.3 of Manual of Financial Management and Procurement for Samagra Shiksha (FMP) and Paragraph 4.4.8 of SSIF stipulate support and bridge courses, special trainings and other incentives for age appropriate admission and mainstreaming of such children.

In the Annual Work Plan and Budget (2018-23) for Samagra Shiksha, Project Approval Board (PAB) had approved ` 5.01 crore for special training to Out of School Children (OoSC) to bring them into the fold of regular education, after imparting trainings by the existing teachers of the schools in residential and non-residential mode. The State had utilised only ` 2.05 crore (41 *per cent*) for the purpose. ***Table 3.15*** shows the OoSC of different age groups, identified and mainstreamed into education during 2018-23.

Table 3.15: Out of School children mainstreamed into education

Year	OoSC identified (never enrolled & dropout between the age group)		Children mainstreamed into education (*per cent*)		Target for special training to OoSC children	Trainings conducted for OoSc
	6-14	*15-18*	*6-14*	*15-18*		
2018-19	3,649	0	3,483 (95)	Not identified	1,563	1,397
2019-20	10,216	0	3,121 (31)	Not identified	3,147	1,660
2020-21	10,216	0	10,216 (100)	Not identified	1,943	1,943
2021-22	8,168	0	8,168 (100)	Not identified	708	708
2022-23	14,721	54,637	14,721 (100)	411 (0.75)	473	419
Total	**46,970**	**54,637**	**39,709**	**411**	**7,834**	**6,127**

(Source: Analysis of data furnished by OSEPA)

From the above table, it can be seen that the State had identified 46,970 OoSC between the age group of 6-14 years, comprising children who never enrolled in education and children who discontinued education during 2018-23. Out of these, 39,709 OoSC were shown as mainstreamed into education with a shortfall of 7,261 (15 *per cent*). However, while there were 3,649 OoSC in 2018-19, the OoSC increased to 14,721 in 2022-23, which is nearly 300 *per cent* increase over 2018-19.

Audit noted that the OoSC between the age group of 15-18 years had not been identified in any year except in 2022-23. Out of the 54,637 OoSC identified, only 411 (0.75 *per cent*) children had been mainstreamed into education, resulting in a gap of 54,226 OoSC for age-appropriate admission into education.

Thus, out of 1,01,607[9] OoSC identified (between the age group of 6-18 years) during 2018-23, only 40,120 OoSC were mainstreamed into education with a shortfall of 61,487 (61 *per cent*). Thus, the State failed to achieve the target of special training for the OoSC and was unable to bring all the OoSC into the fold of regular education.

Even the OoSC data of sampled districts (reported by OSEPA) has raised doubt over its reliability, since the dropout of children from Primary to Higher Secondary levels in the State ranged between 1.50 lakh and 5.47 lakh, during 2018-23. The DPCs of the sampled districts reported a shortfall in mainstreaming of 9,242 OoSC out of 13,285 identified during 2018-23, as shown in ***Table 3.16.***

Table 3.16: Out of school children mainstreamed into education in the sampled districts

Name of the District	2018-23		
	OoSC identified (6-14 years)	OoSC mainstreamed (6-14 years)	Shortfall
Bhadrak	43	27	16
Koraput	8,994	2,531	6,463
Nabarangpur	2,015	1,117	898

[9] 2018-23: OoSC (6-14 years) 46,970 + OoSC (15-18 years) 54,637 = 1,01,607

Name of the District	2018-23		
	OoSC identified (6-14 years)	OoSC mainstreamed (6-14 years)	Shortfall
Nuapada	2,066	341	1,725
Sambalpur	123	27	96
Sonepur	44	0	44
Total	**13,285**	**4,043**	**9,242**

(Source: Data furnished by DEO cum DPC of the sampled districts)

However, OSEPA informed that 11,399 OoSC had been identified during 2018-23, between the age group of 6-14 years in the six sampled districts, out of which 10,172 children were mainstreamed into education, resulting in a shortfall of 1,227 children. Therefore, a disparity can be observed between the report of OSEPA and the DPCs of the sampled districts, raising doubt over the reliability of the data maintained at different levels of implementation *i.e*. OSEPA and DPCs. Audit even noticed disparities between the data of OoSCs maintained by the DPCs and the District Social Welfare Officers (DSWOs) in the sampled districts, which further raised doubts over the reliability of the OoSC data.

This clearly establishes that the data maintained for OoSC by the State is unreliable and hence cannot be used for policy formulation. This is one of the key reasons of ineffectiveness of the policies adopted by the Department to bring the OoSC into the fold of regular education.

The Department did not offer any specific views on the matter of data discrepancy. It, however, stated that measures such as Learning Recovery Plan, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Learning Enhancement Programme had been undertaken to make child friendly learning environment and ensure retention of students in early grades.

Recommendation 3.7

The Department should ensure accurate data collection through surveys mandated under the RTE Act and Samagra Shiksha Scheme for effective policy formulation, so that Out of School Children can be identified and mainstreamed to fulfil the objective of Universal Education.