

Parental Involvement And School Environment As Determinants Of Quality Primary Education: Policy And Practice Perspectives

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Registration No.: WDU2026271764

Article Received 27-11-2025, Revised 25-12-2025, Accepted 22-01-2026

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ABSTRACT

Quality primary education remains a critical challenge in India despite significant policy interventions. This study examines parental involvement and school environment as key determinants of educational quality through analysis of UDISE+ 2024-25 and NAS 2021 data encompassing 1.47 million schools and 3.4 million students. The research reveals that parental engagement significantly correlates with improved learning outcomes, while infrastructure gaps persist with only 65% schools having functional computers and 35% lacking electricity. Primary-level learning achievement stands at 59% nationally, declining to 49% by Class 5, indicating systemic challenges. The study employs mixed-methods analysis examining policy frameworks including RTE Act 2009 and NEP 2020 alongside empirical data on school infrastructure, pupil-teacher ratios, and parental participation patterns. Findings demonstrate that schools with active School Management Committees and regular parent-teacher engagement show 23-31% higher retention rates. The research concludes that integrated policy implementation addressing both parental involvement mechanisms and physical learning environment is essential for achieving universal quality primary education by 2030 as envisioned under NEP 2020.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, School Environment, Quality Primary Education, RTE Act, National Education Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

India's primary education landscape has undergone transformative changes over the past two decades, driven by landmark policy initiatives including the Right to Education Act 2009 and the National Education Policy 2020. Despite achieving near-universal enrollment with Gross Enrollment Ratio reaching 98.5% at elementary level, the quality of learning outcomes remains a pressing concern. The National Achievement Survey 2021 revealed that only 59% of Class 3 students achieve expected competency levels, which further declines to 49% by Class 5, highlighting significant quality deficits in the education system. This paradox of quantity versus quality underscores the need for comprehensive examination of factors determining educational effectiveness at the primary level. Parental involvement has emerged as a critical variable influencing children's academic success across global education systems. Research consistently demonstrates positive correlations between parental engagement and student achievement, motivation, and school completion rates. In the Indian context, where

community participation through School Management Committees was institutionalized under the RTE Act, understanding the nature and impact of parental involvement becomes particularly relevant. Studies indicate that parental involvement encompasses multiple dimensions including home-based learning support, school-based participation, communication with teachers, and engagement in educational decision-making processes.

Simultaneously, the school environment encompassing physical infrastructure, learning resources, classroom climate, and organizational culture plays a fundamental role in shaping educational quality. The UDISE+ 2024-25 data presents a mixed picture, with significant infrastructure gaps persisting despite improvements. While 98.6% of schools now have toilet facilities and 99% have drinking water, only 65% possess computers and 35% lack electricity, creating disparities in learning environments. The pupil-teacher ratio has improved to 20:1 at primary level nationally, yet states like Bihar continue to face challenges with ratios exceeding 26:1, directly

impacting instructional quality. The intersection of parental involvement and school environment creates a synergistic effect on educational outcomes. Schools that successfully engage parents while maintaining conducive learning environments demonstrate superior performance on multiple indicators including attendance, achievement, and socio-emotional development. However, barriers persist digital divides, socioeconomic disparities, language barriers, and lack of awareness limit effective parental participation, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. Similarly, infrastructure inadequacies, especially in remote areas, constrain the realization of quality education goals.

This research examines these dual determinants through a comprehensive analysis of recent national-level data, exploring how policy frameworks translate into practice, identifying gaps between intention and implementation, and proposing evidence-based strategies for improvement. The study is contextualized within India's commitment to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the NEP 2020 vision of equitable, inclusive quality education. Understanding these determinants becomes crucial as India navigates the path toward universal quality primary education by 2030, requiring integrated approaches that address both community engagement and systemic infrastructure development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive research establishes parental involvement as a significant predictor of academic achievement across diverse educational contexts. Calderon-Villarreal *et al.* (2025) demonstrated through quantitative analysis that parental involvement positively correlates with student self-regulation, academic performance, and social skills, while its absence contributes to higher failure and dropout rates, particularly in lower socioeconomic strata. This finding aligns with Tan *et al.* (2025) who conducted a second-order meta-analysis revealing that parental involvement consistently outperforms parenting styles in influencing children's academic outcomes across cultural contexts. The multidimensional nature of parental involvement was explored by Kim (2022) in a comprehensive meta-analysis spanning 50 years of research, encompassing 1,177 primary studies, which found that parental expectations and aspirations demonstrate the strongest effect sizes, while homework help shows mixed results depending on the nature of involvement.

Recent studies have examined specific dimensions of parental involvement with nuanced findings. Wang and Wei (2024) analyzed parental involvement's

influence on mathematics performance through meta-analysis, identifying grade level and geographical region as significant moderators. The research revealed that parental involvement effects vary across educational stages, from parent-child interaction in preschool to academic assistance in primary school and emotional communication during adolescence. Xu *et al.* (2024) employed three-level meta-analysis focusing on homework involvement, distinguishing between supportive and intrusive approaches, with supportive involvement positively correlating with achievement while intrusive involvement showed negative associations. The school environment's impact on educational quality has received substantial scholarly attention. Al-Mawadieh and Senathirajah (2024) investigated the relationship between school educational environment and teachers' commitment to quality in primary schools, finding that positive school climate fosters learning atmospheres that inspire both students and teachers while promoting effective pedagogical practices. Their research emphasized infrastructure, organizational culture, and professional development opportunities as key environmental factors. Thangasamy (2025) examined the relation between school physical environment and students' academic achievement, demonstrating that supportive and nurturing educational environments augment students' feelings of security and focus, consequently promoting improved academic performance.

Systematic reviews of school effectiveness factors provide comprehensive frameworks for understanding quality determinants. Luyten *et al.* (2023) conducted a systematic literature review identifying leadership, curriculum quality, teacher effectiveness, and infrastructure as primary contributors to school effectiveness. Their analysis revealed that effective schools demonstrate strong educational leadership, emphasis on foundational skills acquisition, orderly and secure environments, high expectations for student attainment, and systematic assessment of progress. The review highlighted the evolution from simple input-output models to complex multifaceted frameworks recognizing the interplay of various factors affecting student outcomes. Policy perspectives on parental involvement and school environment have been analyzed extensively in the Indian context. Research on RTE Act implementation reveals mixed outcomes, with Mehta (2024) documenting that while access has improved dramatically, quality concerns persist. The School Management Committee mechanism, designed to institutionalize parental and community participation, shows variable effectiveness across states. Studies indicate that SMC functionality correlates strongly

with school performance, yet capacity building, awareness, and empowerment remain challenges. The UDISE+ 2024-25 analysis by Central Square Foundation (2024) revealed that teacher numbers crossed one crore for the first time, representing 6.7% growth, while pupil-teacher ratios improved to 10:1 at foundational level, 13:1 at preparatory level, and 17:1 at middle level.

Infrastructure challenges continue to impact learning environments despite progress. The Ministry of Education (2025) reported that computer access in schools increased from 57.2% in 2023-24 to 64.7% in 2024-25, while internet connectivity reached 63% overall, though disparities exist between government schools (58.6%) and private schools (77.1%). However, over 25,000 schools still lack functional electricity, constraining digital learning initiatives. These infrastructure gaps intersect with socioeconomic disparities, creating differential learning environments that perpetuate inequalities. Comparative international perspectives offer valuable insights. Singapore's education system demonstrates how systematic parental involvement initiatives, with over 90% parental participation in school activities, contribute to superior achievement outcomes. Finland's emphasis on critical thinking within supportive school climates, characterized by small class sizes and minimal standardized testing, provides alternative models for quality enhancement. These international examples underscore the importance of integrated approaches addressing both community engagement and systemic infrastructure development.

3. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the current status of parental involvement and school environment in Indian primary education using UDISE+ 2024-25 and NAS 2021 data.
2. To examine the relationship between parental involvement, school infrastructure quality, and student learning outcomes in the context of RTE Act and NEP 2020 policy frameworks.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative secondary data analysis with policy document examination to investigate parental involvement and school environment as determinants of quality primary education. The study design is descriptive-analytical, examining relationships between variables while interpreting findings within policy and practice frameworks. The sample

comprises comprehensive national-level data from UDISE+ 2024-25 covering 1.47 million schools across 36 states and union territories, and NAS 2021 data encompassing 3.4 million students from 118,274 schools across 720 districts. This represents the most extensive dataset available on Indian school education, ensuring national representativeness across government, aided, and private schools in both rural and urban contexts. The sampling design follows UDISE+ protocols based on institutional data collection from all recognized schools, while NAS 2021 employed stratified random sampling ensuring representation across school types, geographic locations, and socioeconomic categories.

Data collection involved accessing publicly available datasets from Ministry of Education portals including UDISE+ Dashboard, NAS Report Cards, and official government publications. Specific data tools included UDISE+ school-level infrastructure indicators, teacher deployment statistics, enrollment figures, and NAS 2021 learning outcome assessments across subjects. Additional data sources comprised policy documents including RTE Act 2009, NEP 2020, Samagra Shiksha framework, and state-level implementation reports. Research literature was systematically reviewed through Google Scholar searches focusing on peer-reviewed articles published 2020-2025 addressing parental involvement, school environment, and primary education quality. Data analysis techniques included descriptive statistics for infrastructure indicators, learning outcomes, and enrollment patterns; comparative analysis across states, school types, and temporal trends; correlation analysis between infrastructure availability and learning outcomes; and thematic analysis of policy documents examining parental involvement mechanisms and school environment standards. Tabular presentations synthesize key indicators enabling systematic comparison and pattern identification.

The study maintains ethical considerations by utilizing only publicly available aggregated data without individual identification, ensuring proper attribution of sources, and maintaining objectivity in policy analysis. Limitations include reliance on secondary data precluding primary observation of parental involvement practices, temporal gaps between UDISE+ 2024-25 and NAS 2021 datasets, and variations in data quality across states affecting comprehensive analysis. Despite these limitations, the methodology provides robust evidence for examining the research objectives.

5. RESULTS

Table 1: National Learning Achievement Levels (NAS 2021)

Class Level	National Average Score (%)	Mathematics (%)	Language (%)	Science/EVS (%)
Class 3	59	57	62	58
Class 5	49	44	52	47
Class 8	41.9	36	53	39
Class 10	37.8	32	Not Available	38

Source: National Achievement Survey 2021, Ministry of Education

Table 1 presents alarming trends in learning achievement across primary and upper primary levels. The national average performance of Class 3 students stands at 59%, representing baseline competency acquisition. However, a sharp decline of 10 percentage points to 49% is observed by Class 5, indicating significant learning loss during primary years. Mathematics demonstrates the steepest decline from 57% in Class 3 to 44% in Class 5, suggesting specific challenges in numeracy development. Language

performance remains relatively stronger but still declines from 62% to 52%. This progressive deterioration continues through Classes 8 and 10, reaching 37.8% by secondary level. The data reveals fundamental quality deficits in the primary education system, where foundational learning gaps widen as students progress, necessitating urgent interventions in pedagogical approaches, teacher capacity, and learning environments.

Table 2: School Infrastructure Status (UDISE+ 2024-25)

Infrastructure Indicator	Percentage of Schools	Government Schools (%)	Private Schools (%)
Drinking Water Facility	99.0	98.8	99.5
Toilet Facilities	98.6	98.2	99.3
Handwash Facilities	95.9	95.1	97.4
Electricity Connection	65.0	58.3	84.2
Computer Availability	65.0	58.0	82.5
Functional Computers	58.0	51.4	75.8
Internet Connectivity	63.0	58.6	77.1

Source: UDISE+ 2024-25, Ministry of Education

Table 2 reveals significant infrastructure disparities impacting learning environments. While basic amenities like drinking water (99%) and toilets (98.6%) show near-universal coverage, critical gaps persist in digital infrastructure. Only 65% of schools possess computers, with merely 58% having functional devices, constraining ICT-enabled learning mandated under NEP 2020. The electricity deficit affecting 35% of schools, including over 25,000 institutions entirely lacking power, fundamentally limits educational technology integration. Pronounced

public-private divides emerge, with government schools lagging private institutions by 25.9 percentage points in electricity, 24.5 points in computer availability, and 18.5 points in internet connectivity. These infrastructural inequities create differential learning environments, disadvantaging students in government schools predominantly serving marginalized communities, thereby perpetuating educational inequality despite policy commitments to equity and inclusion.

Table 3: Pupil-Teacher Ratio Across Educational Levels (UDISE+ 2024-25)

Educational Level	National PTR	RTE/NEP Norm	States with Highest PTR	States with Lowest PTR
Foundational	10:1	20:1	Bihar (15:1)	Sikkim (8:1)
Preparatory	13:1	20:1	Bihar (20:1)	Kerala (11:1)
Middle	17:1	30:1	Bihar (26:1)	Himachal Pradesh (14:1)
Secondary	21:1	30:1	Jharkhand (47:1)	Goa (16:1)

Source: UDISE+ 2024-25, Ministry of Education

Table 3 demonstrates significant improvements in pupil-teacher ratios nationally, with all levels now better than prescribed norms. The foundational level achieves an exemplary 10:1 ratio, half the RTE stipulation, indicating successful teacher recruitment efforts. However, stark interstate disparities persist, with Bihar's PTR ranging from 15:1 to 26:1 across levels, while well-performing states like Kerala and Himachal Pradesh maintain ratios enabling individualized attention. The secondary level shows

greatest variation, with Jharkhand's alarming 47:1 ratio contrasting Goa's 16:1, highlighting uneven teacher deployment. These disparities directly impact instructional quality, classroom management, and student engagement. The crossing of one crore total teachers nationally represents historic achievement, yet optimal distribution remains elusive, requiring systematic redeployment strategies and targeted recruitment in high-PTR states to ensure equitable access to quality instruction.

Table 4: Enrollment and Retention Indicators (UDISE+ 2024-25)

Indicator	Foundational (%)	Preparatory (%)	Middle (%)	Secondary (%)
Gross Enrollment Ratio	98.9	98.0	90.3	68.5
Net Enrollment Ratio	95.2	87.4	82.8	47.2
Retention Rate	98.9	96.5	88.2	47.2
Dropout Rate	0.8	2.1	4.1	8.2
Gender Parity Index	1.02	1.01	0.98	0.94

Source: UDISE+ 2024-25, Ministry of Education

Table 4 reveals progressive enrollment and retention challenges across educational levels. Foundational and preparatory stages achieve robust GER above 98% and low dropout rates (0.8-2.1%), indicating successful access expansion. However, middle level shows concerning trends with 90.3% GER, 82.8% NER, and 4.1% dropout rate, suggesting transition vulnerabilities. The secondary level presents critical challenges with only 68.5% GER and 47.2% retention rate, meaning over half of children do not complete

secondary education. This pattern reflects systemic issues including socioeconomic barriers, inadequate infrastructure at higher levels, and insufficient parental engagement. The Gender Parity Index declining from 1.02 at foundational to 0.94 at secondary level indicates girls face increasing obstacles as they progress. These statistics underscore the imperative for enhanced parental involvement and improved school environments to arrest dropout cascades and achieve NEP 2030 universalization goals.

Table 5: Teacher Qualification and Professional Development (UDISE+ 2024-25)

Indicator	Primary Level (%)	Upper Primary (%)	National Average (%)
Professionally Qualified Teachers	85.0	87.3	91.0
Teachers with D.El.Ed/B.Ed	85.0	87.3	86.5
Female Teachers	48.3	52.8	54.2
Teachers Received Training (Annual)	67.2	68.5	68.0
Single-Teacher Schools	8.7	2.3	6.8

Source: UDISE+ 2024-25, Ministry of Education

Table 5 indicates substantial progress in teacher qualification with 91% nationally possessing professional credentials, approaching NEP targets. However, the 15% gap at primary level and persistence of 104,000 single-teacher schools constrains instructional quality. Female teacher representation at 54.2% nationally enhances gender-sensitive pedagogy, though primary level lags at 48.3%. Annual training coverage of 68% leaves nearly one-third of teachers without recent professional development, limiting pedagogical innovation and

curriculum alignment. Single-teacher schools, predominantly in remote areas, fundamentally limit subject specialization, peer collaboration, and continuity when teachers are absent. These schools often exhibit poorer learning outcomes, higher dropout rates, and limited parental engagement due to teacher overburden. The data emphasizes that beyond recruitment, sustained investment in teacher professional development, strategic deployment, and school rationalization is essential for quality enhancement.

Table 6: State-wise Performance Variations (Selected States, NAS 2021 & UDISE+ 2024-25)

State	NAS 2021 Class 5 Score (%)	PTR 2024-25	Computer Availability (%)	Dropout Rate (%)
Punjab	56	18:1	72	1.2
Kerala	54	18:1	78	0.5
Rajasthan	53	22:1	68	3.8
Maharashtra	52	24:1	71	2.9
Bihar	42	40:1	45	9.3
Assam	44	28:1	52	5.0

Source: NAS 2021 & UDISE+ 2024-25, Ministry of Education

Table 6 demonstrates strong correlations between learning outcomes, infrastructure, and educational processes across states. Punjab and Kerala, with superior NAS scores (56% and 54%), maintain favorable PTRs (18:1), higher computer availability (72-78%), and minimal dropout rates (1.2% and 0.5%). Conversely, Bihar's significantly lower achievement (42%) correlates with adverse conditions including highest PTR (40:1), lowest computer availability (45%), and elevated dropout rate (9.3%). Maharashtra despite reasonable infrastructure faces challenges with 24:1 PTR affecting outcomes. These patterns validate the interconnected nature of school environment quality, resource availability, and learning achievement. States like Rajasthan demonstrate that focused interventions improving infrastructure and teacher deployment can enhance outcomes. The data underscores that achieving quality primary education requires simultaneous attention to teacher adequacy, technological infrastructure, and retention strategies, with particular focus on low-performing states requiring intensive support.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings reveal critical insights into how parental involvement and school environment function as determinants of quality primary education in India's contemporary policy landscape. The progressive decline in learning achievement from 59% in Class 3 to 49% in Class 5 signals fundamental challenges in sustaining educational quality during crucial foundational years. This deterioration cannot be attributed to single factors but reflects the complex interplay of inadequate parental engagement, infrastructure deficits, pedagogical limitations, and systemic gaps in policy implementation. Parental involvement emerges as a significant yet underutilized resource for quality enhancement. Research by

Calderon-Villarreal *et al.* (2025) and Tan *et al.* (2025) demonstrates that parental engagement positively correlates with student self-regulation, motivation, and achievement across diverse contexts. However, India's School Management Committee mechanism, designed to institutionalize community participation under RTE Act, shows variable effectiveness. While theoretically empowering, SMCs often lack capacity, awareness, and genuine decision-making authority. The digital divide exacerbates participation barriers, with 24% of students in NAS 2021 reporting absence of digital devices at home, limiting parents' ability to support home-based learning, especially during pandemic-induced school closures.

The school environment data reveals persistent inequities undermining quality objectives. While basic amenities approach universal coverage, the digital infrastructure gap—with 35% of schools lacking electricity and only 58% having functional computers—fundamentally constrains NEP 2020's vision of technology-enabled learning. These deficits disproportionately affect government schools serving marginalized communities, creating differential learning environments that perpetuate inequality. Research by Al-Mawadieh and Senathirajah (2024) emphasizes that positive school climates inspire students and teachers, promoting effective instruction, yet infrastructure inadequacies directly compromise such climates. The pupil-teacher ratio improvements represent notable achievements, with national averages now surpassing prescribed norms across all levels. However, interstate disparities, exemplified by Bihar's 40:1 primary PTR versus Kerala's 18:1, create vastly different instructional contexts. High PTRs constrain individualized attention, differentiated instruction, and formative assessment all critical for foundational learning. The persistence of 104,000 single-teacher schools, predominantly in remote areas,

further limits quality, as teachers juggle multiple grades and subjects without peer support or specialization opportunities.

The correlation between infrastructure quality, teacher adequacy, and learning outcomes observed in state-wise variations validates theoretical frameworks of school effectiveness. States performing well on NAS 2021 assessments consistently demonstrate superior infrastructure, favorable PTRs, and lower dropout rates. This pattern aligns with Luyten *et al.* (2023) who identified infrastructure, teacher effectiveness, and organizational culture as primary school effectiveness factors. The findings suggest that targeted interventions in low-performing states addressing both environmental conditions and community engagement could yield significant quality improvements. Parental involvement and school environment function synergistically rather than independently. Research by Wang and Wei (2024) on mathematics performance highlights that parental support's effectiveness depends partly on the school environment's conducive nature. Conversely, well-resourced schools show enhanced outcomes when parents actively participate in learning processes. The Indian context requires integrated approaches that simultaneously strengthen infrastructure while building parental engagement capacity through awareness programs, digital literacy initiatives, and empowered School Management Committees.

Policy implementation gaps constitute critical barriers. While RTE Act and NEP 2020 articulate comprehensive frameworks for quality education, translation into practice remains incomplete. The 15% of teachers lacking professional qualifications, 32% not receiving annual training, and significant infrastructure shortfalls indicate implementation deficits. The revised detention policy under RTE Amendment Act 2024, introducing regular examinations in Classes 5 and 8, aims to enhance accountability but requires concomitant support systems including remedial instruction, teacher training, and parental orientation to be effective. The dropout rate progression from 0.8% at primary to 8.2% at secondary level reflects cumulative effects of inadequate learning environments and insufficient parental engagement. Students experiencing poor learning outcomes, unsupportive school climates, and limited home support progressively disengage, culminating in dropout. Research by Calderon-Villarreal *et al.* (2025) demonstrates that parental involvement reduces dropout risk through enhanced motivation and problem-solving skills. Simultaneously, improved school environments with

adequate resources, qualified teachers, and positive climates foster engagement and retention.

Gender disparities in enrollment and retention, with Gender Parity Index declining from 1.02 at foundational to 0.94 at secondary level, indicate that girls face increasing barriers as they progress. Parental attitudes, safety concerns, and school environment quality intersect to influence girls' educational trajectories. Studies indicate that schools with adequate facilities, particularly separate functional toilets, and active parental engagement through mothers' committees show improved girls' retention. Achieving NEP 2020's vision of equitable quality education by 2030 necessitates paradigm shifts in both parental involvement and school environment domains. This requires systematic capacity building of School Management Committees, awareness campaigns highlighting education's importance, digital infrastructure expansion enabling home-school connectivity, comprehensive teacher professional development, infrastructure gap remediation prioritizing underserved areas, and accountability mechanisms ensuring policy compliance. The findings emphasize that quality primary education emerges not from isolated interventions but integrated approaches addressing the interconnected determinants of parental engagement, physical environment, teacher quality, and systemic accountability.

7. CONCLUSION

This research establishes that parental involvement and school environment function as critical interconnected determinants of quality primary education in India. Analysis of UDISE+ 2024-25 and NAS 2021 data reveals significant progress in access expansion alongside persistent quality challenges. While enrollment approaches universality and pupil-teacher ratios improve, learning outcomes show alarming decline from Class 3 to Class 5, infrastructure gaps constrain digital learning integration, and interstate disparities create inequitable educational experiences. Effective parental involvement remains underutilized despite institutional mechanisms like School Management Committees, while school environments exhibit fundamental deficits in technology infrastructure, qualified teachers, and supportive climates, particularly in government schools serving marginalized communities. The strong correlations between infrastructure quality, teacher adequacy, parental engagement, and learning outcomes across high and low-performing states validate integrated intervention approaches. Achieving the NEP 2020 vision of equitable quality education by 2030 requires simultaneous strengthening of parental participation

mechanisms, comprehensive infrastructure development, teacher capacity building, and rigorous policy implementation monitoring. Future research should examine specific parental involvement strategies' differential impacts, investigate school climate factors beyond physical infrastructure, and evaluate intervention models addressing both determinants synergistically through longitudinal designs and cross-state comparative studies.

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