

# Why Government Schools are Merged in Haryana

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## Abstract

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*Increasing the outreach of Government Schools (GSs) has always been an agenda of welfare governments, but the issue of their quality was relegated to the background. Hence, Private schools have become the first choice of most parents. To improve teacher-pupil ratio, as many as 12 State governments in India have tried to implement the policy of school 'Closures and Mergers' since 2013. Notwithstanding, quality deterioration continued. But State of Delhi since 2014 has adopted different model and its GSs outperformed private schools in 2020–21. Haryana has also preferred the policy of closures and mergers of its adjoining schools with lesser number of students. To comment on this policy, the author has studied the trend in number of schools since 1966 and status of students enrolled by social category in government and private schools at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.*

*The analysis has thrown up that the number of private schools in Haryana surpassed GSs around the year 2010 –11 except the primary ones. Students' enrolment is fast decreasing especially at the level of primary Government schools which are 87 per cent in numbers but student enrolment is 45 per cent only. Hence, most of the schools identified for closures are the primary schools. Teachers' Unions are opposing, but policy does not appear against the interest of students. However, the policy alone will not succeed in improving the quality of education. Government has to improve the monitoring policy and teachers' training and exposure. Government employees may be motivated to send their children to government schools by giving grace marks for admission to higher institutes and government services.*

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### **INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM**

It has been brought out by various surveys and studies that the students of private schools have higher test scores than those of government schools (UNESCO, 2022; Goyal S., 2009; Fench and Kingdon, 2010; Murlidharan, 2013; Singh, 2015; and Kumar and Kumar 2021).

Besides, private schools provide better environment of security, co-curricular activities, programmes for admission in higher institutions and job placement, hence, private schools are the first choice for all parents (Kumar and Kumar 2020), and as per Global Education Monitoring Report 2022 (op cit); 86 per cent of the children belonging to the economically weaker section are enrolled in private schools.

During 2010–11 to 2015–16, the enrolment in Government Schools across 20 Indian states fell by 13 million while private schools acquired 17.5 million new students; in fact, this trend is visible from 2005 as per DISE data of Government Schools (Kingdon, 2017).

Increasing the outreach of Government Schools (GSs) has always been an agenda of welfare state governments but the issue of their quality was relegated to their background after well-off families of leaders, businessmen, and service personnels including school teachers have adopted private schools as the normal study mode for their children. Education policies and legislations were ignoring this trend but the new

state government of Delhi in 2014, has made quality of Government Schools as their political plank. Due to focused attention of the State in the last seven years, Delhi GSs outperformed private schools in 2020–21 with a 90.68 pass percentage against 88.35 percent in the private institutions (Hindustan Times, 2021). Now the quality of government schools is emerging as an election agenda in state elections especially in North India.

The poor quality of teaching in GSs has been attributed in most of the studies (op cit as above) to the shortage of teachers, poor transfer policies, lackluster monitoring and dominance of students of deprived parents, etc. To address some of these problems, as many as 12 state governments have tried to implement the policy of school 'Closures and Mergers' after its initiation in 2013 by Government of Gujarat (Rao et al., 2017). It resulted in closure or mergers of 80647 schools. But its implementation was detrimental to the disadvantageous groups living in seclusion and remote areas (op cit). Government of Haryana (GOH) has also adopted this policy of rationalising the number of its schools in 2022 (Siwatch, IE). As per the policy, firstly, 105 High and Senior Secondary (HSS) schools with 25 or less students in Classes 9 to 12 and Middle schools with 20 or less students in Classes 6–8 are being merged with nearby GSs within 3 kms. Secondly, schools of different grades or girls in the same building, and others within one km will be merged in making a single

unit with one head only. Separate girls' schools are being merged with the nearby co-education schools and all new schools will be opened as co-education schools only.

This policy of merger will free large number of teachers and a lot of government infrastructure. However, the policy of merger has not gone down well with opposition political parties and teachers' unions. Both are making usual plea that it will adversely affect the enrolment of students of poor families. Though distance criterion of 1 to 3 kms is an antidote against this objection, twelve unions were worried about their reduced recruitment and promotion whereas government is worried about unprecedented hike in expenditure per pupil in GSs due to reduced students per class and highly salaried teachers.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER**

Broad objective of the paper is to critically comment on the rationality of State's merger policy of government schools in Haryana. To peep into the genesis of the problem, the historical trend of number of different categories of schools, viz., HSS, Middle, Primary and Girls is examined to reveal the fallacy of the policy. The present enrolment status of students vis-à-vis their share in number of schools is worked in different type of schools. It may provide some basis for closures and mergers of government schools. Further, social category-wise enrolment in schools of different managements is worked

out, which may indicate reasons for deteriorating quality of teaching and decreasing access of the poor to employment opportunities.

### **Data Source**

The number of schools of different grades by type of management was taken from the website of Ministry of Education, Government of India. It was the latest for the year 2021-22. The historical number of schools since 1966 in Haryana was collected from various statistical abstracts of the State. The abstracts publish the number of government, non-government and girls' schools but the students enrolled and teachers are not given separately and only their combined numbers for schools of different managements are given. It may be perhaps to disguise the shortage of students and teachers in government schools. However, the students' enrolment by social categories and schools of different managements was available from the website of the department of school, education, and Haryana. It was available district-wise for Classes I to XII which was aggregated for Primary, Middle and High and Senior Secondary schools classes at state level.

### **Status of Government Schools in Haryana in Comparison to Neighbouring States**

All over India, there are three broad categories of schools, viz., primary including pre-primary and Balwary (Class I to V), Middle (VI-VIII) and High (IX-X) and Senior Secondary

(XI–XII) schools. All schools are managed by State government, Local Governments, Trust or Societies with aid from government and private entities and individuals without any aid. There are Central schools too in some places. We have clubbed schools of State or Centre and local governments' and aided ones as government schools and those without any aid as private ones. The number of government and private schools for broad categories of classes is given in Table 1 for Haryana and its neighboring States. The data is taken from the report of Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), 2021–22(GoI).

Table 1(in last row) shows that Government Schools (GSs) at all India levels in 2021–22 account for about

85, 67 and 55 per cent of the Primary, Middle and High and Higher Secondary (HHS) schools respectively. Among the six northern states in Haryana, the government schools are about 87, 41 and 38 per cent of the total. Haryana has a lower share of GSs except in case of middle and primary schools in Delhi. It indicates that the increase in private schools of the middle and HHS levels is higher in Haryana compared to its neighbouring states. Overall, private schools have the maximum share in Delhi followed by Haryana and Punjab while Himachal Pradesh and, Jammu and Kashmir have the minimum share of private schools. The higher private schools (PSs) in Delhi, Haryana and Punjab may be due to urban areas around Delhi, Gurugram and Chandigarh. Urban people may

**Table 1**  
**Number of Schools by Management (2021–22)**

States	High or Secondary			Middle or Upper Primary			Pre or Primary Schools			Total		
	Govt.	Private	Govt. %	Govt.	Private	Govt. %	Govt.	Private	Govt. %	Govt.	Private	Govt. %
Haryana	3375	5416	38.39	2435	3438	41.46	8655	1241	87.46	14465	10085	58.92
Himachal Pradesh	2885	1401	67.31	1952	725	72.92	10563	522	95.29	15400	2648	85.33
Jammu and Kashmir	2588	1828	58.61	7612	1953	79.58	12974	1850	87.52	23174	5631	80.45
Punjab	4286	5235	45.02	2541	2101	54.74	12880	656	95.15	19707	7992	71.15
Rajasthan	15669	15746	49.88	19498	16486	54.19	33781	5202	86.66	68948	37434	64.81
Delhi	1369	902	60.28	39	787	4.72	1671	923	64.42	3079	2612	54.10
Sub-total	30172	30528	49.71	34077	25490	57.21	80524	10394	88.57	144773	66402	68.56
All India	161130	131720	55.02	293550	142215	67.36	650146	110314	85.49	1104826	384249	74.20

Source: Report of UDISE, 2021–22, GoI and Haryana Data from its Statistical Abstract 2021–22

have a higher capacity to pay the higher fees of private schools. However, to comment on the policy of closing or merging GSs in Haryana, their long-term trend is analysed ahead.

### **Trend in Government Schools in Haryana**

Haryana became a separate state from Punjab in 1966 and the number of schools since its origin is given in Table 2 to bring out the policy-focus of its various governments.

On the basis of Table 2, the trends are discussed for the different categories of schools taken together as well. In total, the share of government schools has continuously dwindled from about 94 per cent in 1966–67 to 92 per cent in 1990–91, 73 per cent in 2000–01 and 60 per cent in 2010–11

and thereafter. The steepest increase in private schools was during the 1990 to 2000 decadal period. The trends in different categories are discussed below.

### **High and Higher Secondary Schools**

Rows 2nd and 3rd of Table 2 shows that both government and private HSS schools have continuously increased till 1990–91, but thereafter, the increase in the private schools is much higher. The GSs in this category accounted for about 74 per cent in 1966–67, 83 per cent in 1990–91, 63 per cent in 2000–01 and then continuously declined to about 38 per cent in 2019–20. The trend is depicted in Fig. 1. The increase in both government and private HSS

**Table 2**  
**Number of Recognised Schools in Haryana**

Year	1966–67	70–71	80–81	90–91	2000–01	10–11	13–14	18–19	19–20	21–22
High or SSS-Govt.	440	785	1226	1944	2620	3167	3212	3307	3348	3375
High or SSS-Private	157	190	247	412	1518	3816	4158	5001	5227	5416
% of Govt. Schools	73.70	80.51	83.23	82.51	63.32	45.35	43.58	39.81	39.04	38.39
Middle-Govt.	704	715	1062	1249	1211	2331	2443	2438	2401	2435
Middle-Private	31	45	59	150	676	1152	1943	3235	3303	3448
% of Govt Schools	95.78	94.08	94.74	89.28	64.18	66.93	55.70	42.98	42.09	41.39
Primary-Govt.	4344	4204	4896	4969	8650	9360	9292	8747	8688	8655
Primary-Private	105	70	65	167	2390	4644	957	1225	1240	1241
% of Govt. Schools	97.64	98.36	98.69	96.75	78.35	66.84	90.66	87.72	87.51	87.46
Total-Govt.	5488	5704	7184	8162	12481	14858	14947	14492	14437	14465
Private	293	305	371	729	4584	9612	7058	9461	9770	10085
% Govt. School	94.93	94.92	95.09	91.80	73.14	60.72	67.93	60.50	59.64	61.35

Source: Statistical Abstracts of Haryana for various Years.

**Table 3**  
**Girls' Schools in Haryana**

Year or category	1966-67	70-71*	80-81	90-91	2000-01	10-11	14-15	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
Primary	257	230	223	738	1659	1377	1077	1018	1001	988	991
Middle	106	115	131	168	181	287	303	296	280	282	305
H or Sr.Sec.	109	150	245	355	536	568	496	526	535	540	540

Source: Statistical Abstracts of Haryana

schools was the steepest during 1990–2010. It may be due to the highest increases in number of girls in HSS schools during 1990–2000 (Table-3). Thereafter, the number of government HSS is almost stagnant and private schools surpassed them in 2010–11. The trend in girls' schools in Haryana is depicted in Fig. 2.

#### **Middle or Upper Primary Schools**

Rows 4th and 5th in Table 2 show that government middle schools dominated till 2013–14 but the private schools surpassed them thereafter. The increase in middle schools was the steepest during 2000 to 2010–11. It may also be due to almost doubling girls' middle school in this decade. Thereafter, the increase in government middle schools has moderated and these were surpassed by private schools in 2018–19 (Fig. 1).

#### **Primary Schools**

The 6th and 7th rows in Table 2 show that the share of government-primary schools was 98 per cent in 1966–67 which almost continued till 1990–91. But their share dwindled by

20 percentage points to 78 per cent in 2000–01 despite steep increases in both government (especially girls') and private schools. Share of government primary schools further decreased to 66 per cent in 2010–11. Thereafter, share of government Primary Schools witnessed high swings due to ad hoc policy decisions. Over, the responsibility of universal primary education has been taken by State Government with separate girls' schools.

Overall, the period 1990–91 to 2010–11 witnessed an aggressive increase in separate girls' schools without corresponding increases in teachers and other facilities. It was not only a regressive policy but also created the shortage of teachers, infrastructure and even adequate number of students in government schools. It may have deteriorated the quality of teaching in government schools, resulting shifting of students to private schools. Hence, the private HSS and middle schools have surpassed government schools in 2010–11 and 2016–17, respectively. Though, the state is still responsible for primary education.

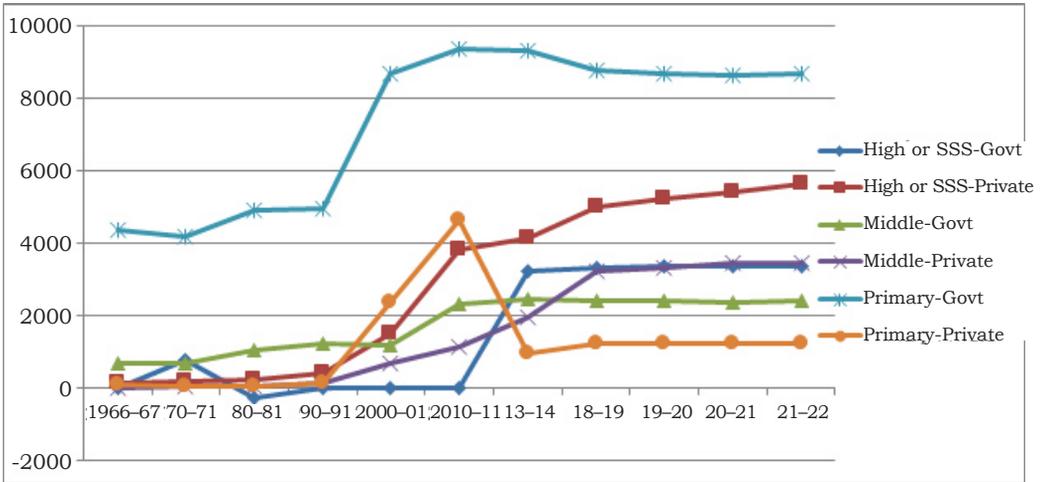


Fig. 1: Trend Primary, Middle and High or SSS schools in Haryana

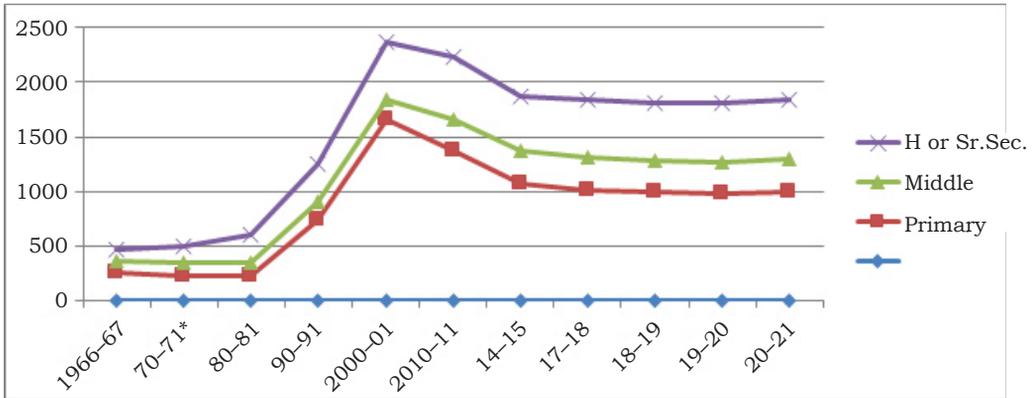


Fig. 2: Number of Girls' Schools in Haryana

**Enrolment of Students in the Schools of Different Management**

It is not the number of schools only, but enrolment of students in schools of different categories may reveal the reasons for merger of government schools. The statistical abstract of the State is not publishing this data separately in schools of different managements, so we had to club it out from the district level data given

in the Saksham Portal of Department of School Education. The enrolment of students as on 1 November 2021 by type of Management and Social Category is given in Table 4.

Table 4 shows that the total students in government schools of Classes I-XII are 49.26 per cent as against about 60 per cent of their numbers. Whereas, students in private schools are 49.39 per cent as against 40 per cent their numbers.

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of Students of Classes I–XII by Management and Social Category**

<b>Social Category</b>	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Aided</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Total</b>
General	2475261	28.20	2.26	70.35	100.80
SC	1183429	79.63	1.71	19.25	100.59
OBC A and B	1498745	60.07	1.99	38.59	100.65
Total	5157440	49.26	2.05	49.39	100.71

\*Source: Dept. of School Education Haryana, Status as on 1 November 2021

The remaining 1.35 per cent of students are in the govt aided schools. Social category-wise, shares of General, SC and OBC students are 28, 80 and 60 per cent in government schools and the remaining 72, 20 and 40 per cent of students of these respective social categories are in private and aided schools. Thus, the Government schools are the schools of the poor. Moreover, class-wise students' enrolment in government schools is continuously decreasing and thus increasing cost per pupil. As the necessity of closing or merging is reported more about government primary and middle schools, hence the situation in different category schools is discussed ahead.

### **Enrolment in High and Higher Secondary Schools**

The student enrolment in government high and HSS schools is 51.44 per cent as against their 39.04 per cent numbers. Most of the HSS schools have a reasonable number of students and only few high schools have less than 10 students with nearby schools, within 3 km (Tribune, 18 August 2022). In this category of schools; General, SC and OBC students are about 30, 83 and 60 per cent while their respective share in private schools is about 68, 15, and 38 per cent. The remaining 2 per cent of the students are in government aided schools (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
**Students' Enrolment in Government, Government-aided and Private High and HSS Schools**

<b>Social Category</b>	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>Of the Total Students in</b>		
		<b>Government</b>	<b>Aided</b>	<b>Private</b>
General	708461	29.57	2.27	68.15
SC	372069	82.70	1.70	15.59
OBC A and B	442243	60.15	2.37	37.48
Total	1522776	51.44	2.16	46.40

Source: As in Table 4

### **Enrolment in Middle or Upper Primary Schools**

Social category-wise students in government middle schools are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that students in Government middle schools are about 45 per cent as against their number of 42 per cent. Social category-wise, the share of General, SC and OBC students in govt-middle schools is about 24, 77 and 44 per cent. Here again, most of the students in GSs are from poor communities. Moreover, many middle schools have fewer students. Government of Haryana has identified 97 middle schools with less than 20 students and had nearby schools

available within 3 km, and six middle schools having less than 10 students but no nearby school within 3 kms (Tribune, op cit.).

### **Enrolment in Primary Schools**

The students' enrolment in primary schools by the managements and social categories is given in Table 7 as on 1 November 2021.

The students primary in government schools are about 50 per cent as against their number of about 88 per cent. Social category wise, share of General, SC and OBC in government primary schools is about 30, 79 and 63 per cent. Thus in this category too, most of the students are from

**Table 6**  
**Students in Government, Government-Aided and Private Middle Schools**

Social Category	Total	Of the Total Students in		
		Government	Aided	Private
General	669964	24.30	1.36	74.34
SC	309404	77.55	1.13	21.32
OBC A and B	396721	55.16	1.24	43.61
Total	1376090	45.17	1.27	53.56

Source: As in Table 4

**Table 7**  
**Distribution of Students in Government, Government-Aided and Private Primary Schools**

Social Category	Total	Government	Aided	Private
General	1096836	29.69	0.98	69.33
SC	501956	78.63	0.69	20.68
OBC A and B	659781	62.96	0.73	36.32
Total	2258574	50.28	0.84	48.87

Source: As in Table 4

poor families. The average number of students per primary school works out to 129 and it is reported that 1016 of them have less than 25 students (op cit., Tribune).

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the following conclusions are made based on the analysis of schools of different grades and enrolment students by social categories in Haryana.

First, the private schools have overtaken the Government schools around the year 2010–11 except the primary ones. Average student enrolment is higher in private schools than in the Government schools in 2021. The enrolment per class in most Government schools is so low that it is unviable to provide an adequate number of teachers. The above situation of dwindling number of students in government schools especially at primary level may have compelled the state government to bring the policy of merger and closure. It will be mainly applicable to its primary schools. To implement it smoothly; State government may consider giving transport facility to the poor families

to avoid dropout of their students. Second, placing all schools within 1 km under one head, merging middle and primary schools with less than 25 students and aligning girls' schools with nearby co-education schools may free a large number of teachers and infrastructure. Teacher unions may oppose the policy but it does not appear against the interest of the students.

However, the merger or closer policy alone will not succeed in improving the quality of education which is a prime concern. In this regard, the Government has to improve the monitoring policy with an incentive to good-performing teachers and schools. These incentives can be sponsoring teachers' training along with exposure visits to good schools in India and abroad. It is good to involve district officers in monitoring the learning enhancement in GSs. But its success may be apprehensive until better off parents including government employees and teachers may be motivated to send their children to government schools. It can be made attractive if grace marks are given to students of government schools in admission to higher institutes and selection in government services.

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