RACE IAS

Systemic Transformation of School Education- The SATH-E Experience

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About SATH- E:

- Project SATH-E, 'Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital-Education', was launched in 2017 to identify and build three 'role mod.d mainstream islands of excellence across the country to facilitate qualitative and quantitative transformation of learning outcomes.
- The project puts the states in the driver's seat to transform education.

BACKGROUND:

- India has the largest school footprint in the world with about 15 lakh schools having total enrolment of over 26 crore students.
- Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2019 analysis showed that over 60% Grade I students struggle to do an oral word problem involving 1-digit addition.
- Further, only 50% children in Grade III can read Grade I level text, implying that nearly half of all students in Grade III are at least two years behind their grade-level.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes Foundational Literacy & Numeracy or FLN (i.e., the ability to read & write, and perform basic numeric operations), as an indispensable prerequisite for all future schooling and lifelong learning.

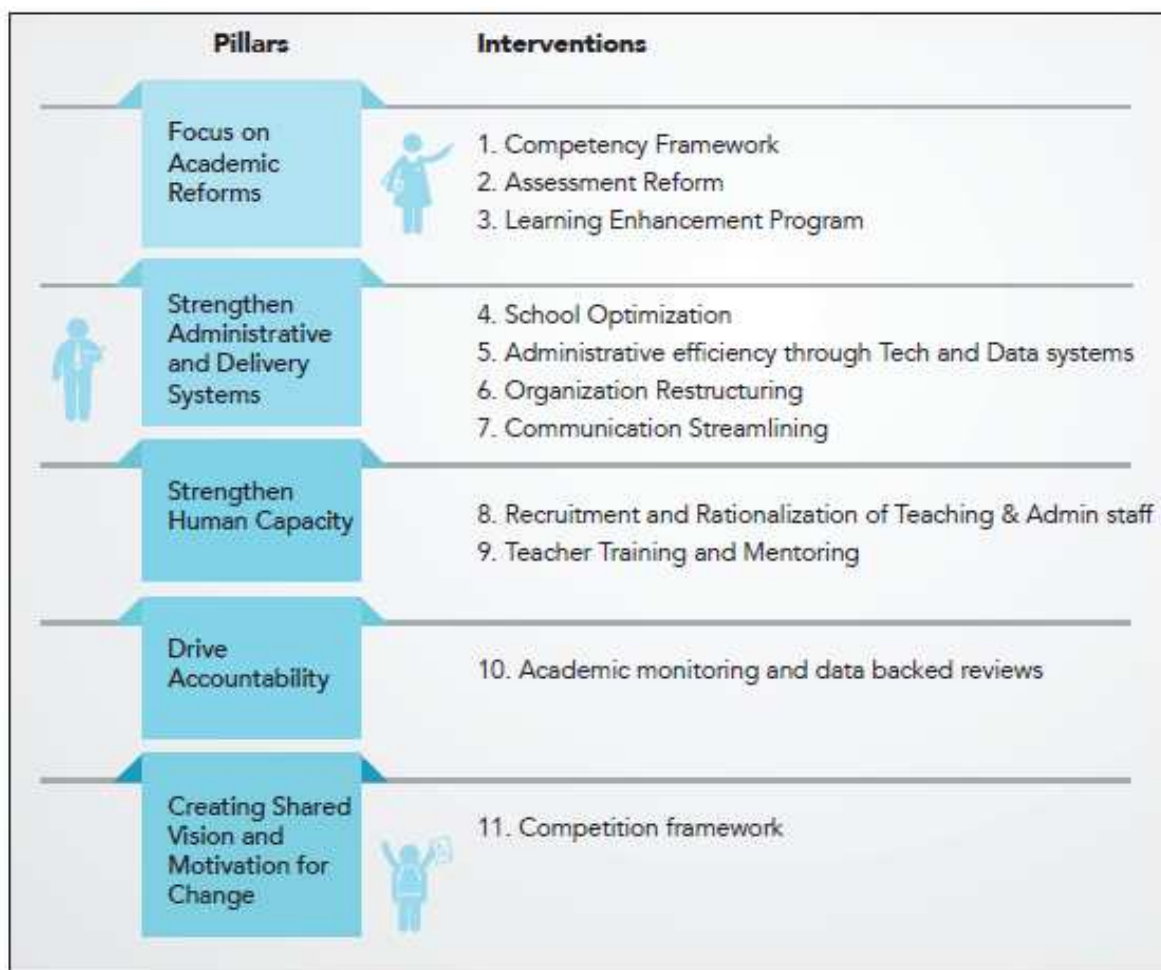Exhibit 2.1: Framework for systemic transformation of education
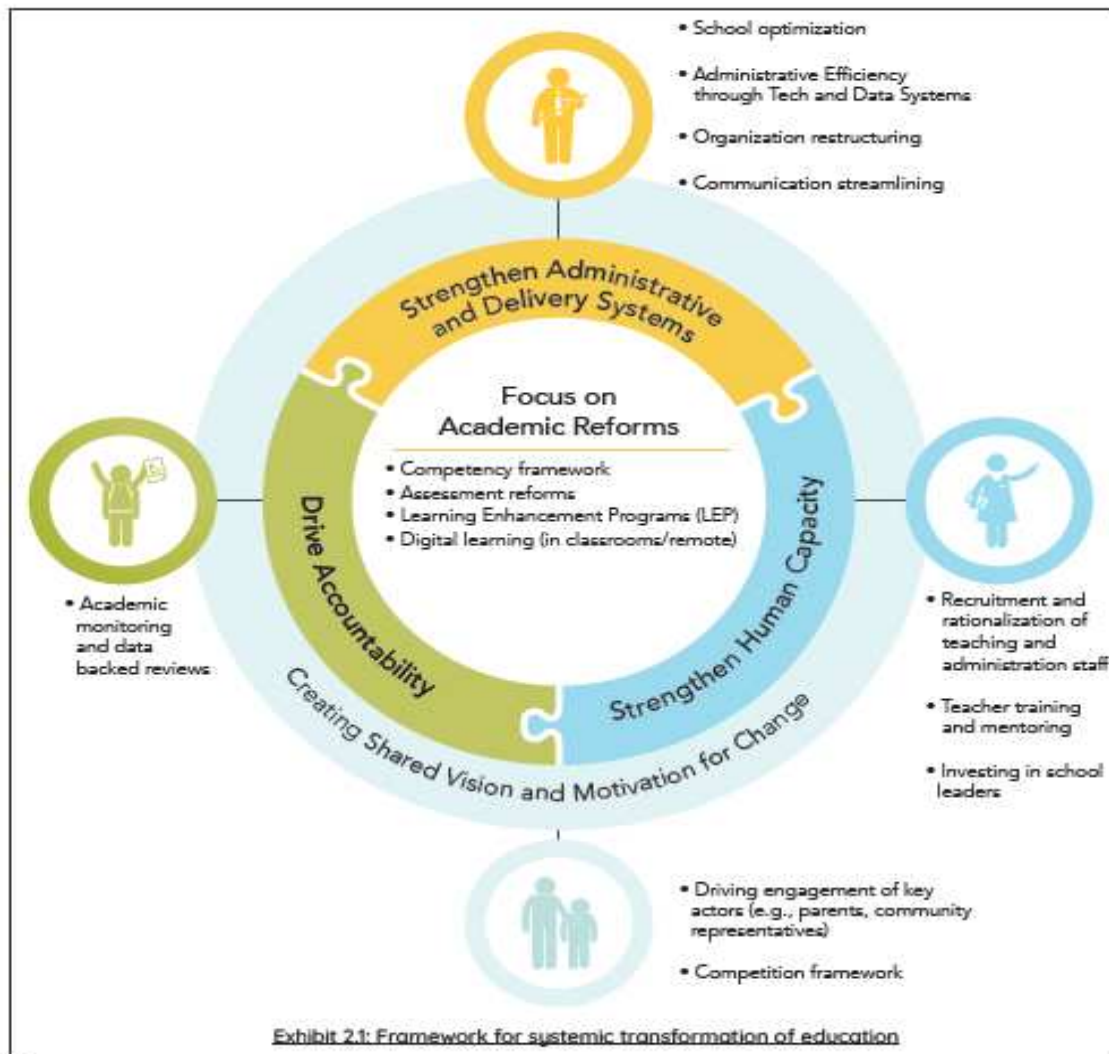
Major Recommendations:

The report has given recommendations in five key areas, i.e, focus on academic reforms, strengthening human capacity, strengthening administrative systems, driving accountability and creating a shared vision for change.

- **Focus on academic reforms:**
- Institutionalizing a competency-based approach, i.e., shifting focus from 'completion of syllabus' to !!'delivery of competencies'.
- Creation of questions that are designed to test competencies and not learning capacity, and deployment !!of tech systems that enable real-time/ near real-time tracking and visualization of granular student performance data.
- Implementing Learning Enhancement Programs that provide additional and specialized support to !!children behind grade level or with learning disabilities.

- Digital learning strategies that not only address the challenges of the pandemic, but also strengthen !!learning through a blended model (physical and digital) to enable more effective classroom teaching.

- **Strengthen administrative and delivery systems:**

- School optimization, to move away from 11 lakh sub-scale schools to a more efficient 6.5 lakh schools !!at a country level.

- Restructure organizations with integrated departments, requisite staff, and skills as opposed to !!understaffed departments operating in silos.

- Administrative efficiency through technology and data systems, necessitating the need to move away !!from time consuming, paper-based data collection and weak, inaccurate Management Information System (MIS) to building a robust Education Management Information System (E-MIS) with supporting technology.

- **Strengthen human capacity:**

- Investing in model centers of excellence (or leader /exemplar schools) demonstrating highest academic !!and administrative quality.

- Recruitment and rationalization of teaching staff to improve teacher availability; also, moving to tech-!!enabled recruitment and annual rationalization processes.

- Delivering frequent, need-based teacher training on subject and pedagogy through a blended, yearlong !!delivery model as opposed to one-size-fits-all approach delivered in 1-2 in-person sessions in a year is essential.

	Pillars	Interventions
	Focus on Academic Reforms	1. Competency Framework 2. Assessment Reform 3. Learning Enhancement Program
	Strengthen Administrative and Delivery Systems	4. School Optimization 5. Administrative efficiency through Tech and Data systems 6. Organization Restructuring 7. Communication Streamlining
	Strengthen Human Capacity	8. Recruitment and Rationalization of Teaching & Admin staff 9. Teacher Training and Mentoring
	Drive Accountability	10. Academic monitoring and data backed reviews
	Creating Shared Vision and Motivation for Change	11. Competition framework

- **Drive accountability:**
  - ➢ There is a need to move to a system where there is a strong focus on developing tools and collecting !!data on academic elements during school visits in alignment with defined parameters and learning competency frameworks.

- **Creating a shared vision and motivation for change:**
  - ➢ Increasing community engagement and strengthening school management committees through !!greater empowerment and incentives to participate (e.g., involvement in key decisions and matters of the schools), and creating a reward and recognition program for schools, teachers, officers, blocks, and districts to ensure they are motivated to achieve their targets and excel (e.g., certification programs).

CHALLENGES:

- Currently, the focus of schools is largely on completion of syllabus and learning for exams. There is a need to shift from rote-based learning to

competency and learning outcome-based learning, especially for Grades 1-3 where foundational learning is taking place.

- Of the nearly 1.1 million government schools in India, 400,000 have fewer than 50 students, and 110,000 have less than 20 students. These sub-scale schools suffer from a host of challenges – at most two teachers, leading to multi-grade teaching and a lack of subject-specific expertise and focus; lack of dedicated Principals as well as facilities such as playgrounds, boundary walls or libraries.

- Over 17% of teaching positions in government schools are currently vacant with highest absolute vacancies in Bihar (2.7 lakh), followed by Uttar Pradesh (2.1 lakh), and highest percentage vacancies in Sikkim (57.5%), followed by Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

- There is also a large demand supply mismatch in some States, which implies that it would take several years to fill vacancies based on current capacity.

- Professional growth and monetary benefits for government employees are not directly linked to performance and thus there is no real incentive for them to orient towards achieving results such as delivery of quality education, timely provision of hygienic mid-day meals, etc.

- As per a report by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) only 19% of a teacher's annual school hours are spent on teaching activities with remaining time spent on non-teaching activities such as election duties, data collection, mid-day meal distribution, district/ block education office paperwork and inefficient HR processes like transfers, leave applications, etc. thus diverting the teacher's academic focus.

SUGGESTIONS:

- There is a need for a comprehensive strategy that combines elements of both Academic and Governance reforms, to ensure systemic and sustained progress towards improving learning outcomes of students.

- Successful systemic transformation requires a well-laid out roadmap with pre-defined targets, the alignment of all stakeholders around a unified vision, efficient communication channels, a culture driven by data-based accountability and a continuous process of capacity building across all levels.

- Implement Learning Enhancement Programs that provide additional and specialized support to children behind grade level or with learning disabilities.

- Creating awareness regarding the use and adoption of the LOF (Learning Outcome Framework) is an important step.

- Besides official communication from the department to schools, directly reaching out to teachers through trainings, teacher WhatsApp groups or social media pages allows an opportunity to convey the need and merits of the exercise and creates momentum in the system.

WAY AHEAD:

- Remedial measures are essential to decrease the learning gap, but it is not a long-term solution. States need to implement remediation in campaign mode for 4-5 years to bring all children to grade level. It also suggested the need to simplify the assessment process and the need for learning enhancement programs.