

PM SHRI Schools in India: Implementation and Spatial Distribution in the Context of NEP 2020

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Abstract

The transformation of school education in India is central to achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and is aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). The PM SHRI Schools Scheme aims to develop model institutions that promote quality and inclusive education. The present study analyses the implementation and spatial distribution of PM SHRI Schools in India, adopting a descriptive approach based on secondary data and employing comparative and spatial analytical methods. The findings indicate that while the scheme has achieved substantial geographical expansion, it remains in a transitional phase, and its distribution is uneven, with greater concentration at the secondary and higher secondary levels and relatively limited focus on primary education. Furthermore, as the implementation is largely state-driven, variations are observed across regions. The study therefore highlights the need for balanced distribution, a stronger emphasis on foundational education, and improved centre–state coordination to ensure equitable and transformative educational outcomes.

Keywords: PM SHRI Schools, National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), SDG 4, Viksit Bharat, Spatial Distribution of PM SHRI Schools

1. Introduction

Education in India is increasingly recognised as a vital factor for building human capital and promoting inclusive growth. This is central to the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, which aims to create a developed, inclusive, and knowledge-driven nation. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 focuses on holistic, competency-based, and fair learning outcomes (MOE, 2020). Despite this shift in policy, the school education system still faces significant structural challenges. These include gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy, regional differences, and varying quality of infrastructure and teaching, as recent evidence shows (ASER Centre, 2022). On a global scale, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) stresses the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education. India's policy framework aligns with this goal, even though implementation gaps are still visible (UNESCO, 2016; UNESCO, 2021). In response, the PM SHRI Schools Scheme was introduced to implement NEP 2020 by developing selected schools into model institutions that feature improved infrastructure, innovative teaching methods, and digital learning (MOE, 2022). While the scheme shows strong policy intent to set scalable benchmarks for quality education, there is limited evidence regarding its spatial distribution, implementation patterns, and connection to broader policy goals. This study aims to examine the implementation and spatial distribution of PM SHRI Schools in India, focusing on identifying patterns, regional disparities, and their impact on achieving NEP 2020, SDG 4, and the vision of Viksit Bharat.

2. The Policy

This study is based on the connection between the PM SHRI Schools Scheme and the transformative vision laid out in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. PM SHRI schools serve as model institutions aimed at applying key principles like fairness, quality, accessibility, and holistic development in practice (Ministry of Education, 2020). The scheme revolves around six main pillars: I) Curriculum and Pedagogy, II) Access and Infrastructure, III) Human Resources and School Leadership, IV) Inclusive Practices, V) Governance and Management, and VI) Beneficiary Satisfaction. Together, these pillars shape the implementation process (Ministry of Education, 2022). Instead of viewing these pillars as separate

elements, this study uses them as a lens to explore how institutional capacity, teaching methods, and inclusivity relate to spatial distribution patterns. This approach allows for a grounded assessment of whether the scheme's implementation aligns with the priorities of NEP 2020, while also placing it within the broader goals of SDG 4 and the vision of Viksit Bharat, where education plays a key role in fair and sustainable development.

3. Research Objective

To examine the implementation pattern, spatial and regional distribution, and governance structure of the PM SHRI Schools Scheme in India, and to assess its alignment with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and SDG 4.

4. Research Methodology and Sources of Data

The study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the implementation and distribution of PM SHRI Schools in India (Creswell, 2014). It is based on secondary data drawn from the PM SHRI Dashboard (Ministry of Education), NEP 2020 documents, ASER 2022, and relevant UNESCO and SDG reports. The analysis uses basic statistical tools such as percentage distributions and comparative analysis to identify patterns and assess alignment with NEP 2020. The study also employs comparative spatial analysis to examine inter-state and regional disparities.

5. Number of PM SHRI Schools in different dimensions

The following sections analyses PM SHRI Schools across key dimensions, including overall coverage, level-wise distribution, governance structure, and spatial patterns. The data is presented in tabular form to enable comparison and to highlight trends in implementation and regional disparities in the context of NEP 2020.

Table-1: Distribution of PM SHRI schools under different dimensions

Dimension	Indicator	Number	Percentage (%)
Overall Coverage	Total PM SHRI Schools	13,091	-
	Total Districts Covered	776	-
	Total Blocks Covered	8,538	-
School Level Distribution	Primary Schools	1,311	10.01%
	Upper Primary Schools	3,152	24.07%
	Secondary Schools	3,220	24.61%
	Higher Secondary Schools	3,871	29.54%
Institution Types	KVS	913	6.98%
	NVS	620	4.74%
	NCERT	4	0.03%

Note: source: PM SHRI Dashboard Portal

The table highlights the broad coverage of the PM SHRI Schools Scheme, with 13,091 schools across 776 districts and 8,538 blocks, indicating significant spatial expansion; however, the level-wise distribution reveals a clear structural imbalance, with a higher concentration at the higher secondary (29.54%), secondary (24.61%), and upper primary (24.07%) levels compared to a minimal share at the primary level (10.01%). This pattern reflects a policy orientation toward improving post-foundational outcomes such as transition rates and board performance, but simultaneously indicates insufficient emphasis on foundational learning, a key priority under NEP 2020. The institutional composition further shows a predominantly state-led implementation, with limited participation of centrally governed institutions (KVS 6.98%, NVS (4.74%), NCERT 0.03%), pointing to a decentralized governance model where outcomes depend largely on state capacity, while central institutions function as quality benchmarks. Analytically, the data suggest a trade-off between expansion and educational balance, where

the focus on higher levels may produce short-term gains but risks weakening the foundational base required for long-term learning outcomes; therefore, from a policy perspective, a more balanced distribution, particularly strengthening primary education, is essential for effective alignment with NEP 2020 and for achieving sustainable educational transformation.

6. State-wise Distribution and District-Level Density of PM SHRI Schools in India

Table 2: State-wise Distribution and District-Level Density of PM SHRI Schools in India

S. No.	State	No. of Districts	No. of Blocks	Total No. of PM SHRI schools	% Share	Average Schools per district
1	Uttar Pradesh	75	1026	1888	15.09	25.17
2	Andhra Pradesh	26	779	982	7.85	37.77
3	Maharashtra	35	629	946	7.56	27.03
4	Madhya Pradesh	52	511	944	7.55	18.15
5	Bihar	38	611	904	7.23	23.79
6	Odisha	30	424	840	6.71	28
7	Telangana	33	641	832	6.65	25.21
8	Rajasthan	41	546	749	5.99	18.27
9	Karnataka	31	461	660	5.28	21.29
10	Gujarat	33	385	529	4.23	16.03
11	Assam	35	286	447	3.57	12.77
12	Punjab	23	248	419	3.35	18.22
13	Jharkhand	24	306	413	3.30	17.21
14	Chhattisgarh	33	270	393	3.14	11.91
15	Haryana	22	174	299	2.39	13.59
16	Uttarakhand	13	159	281	2.25	21.62
17	Himachal Pradesh	12	139	227	1.81	18.92
18	Manipur	16	78	132	1.06	8.25
19	Arunachal Pradesh	24	73	119	0.95	4.96
20	Tripura	8	67	94	0.75	11.75
21	Meghalaya	12	52	78	0.62	6.50
22	Nagaland	10	39	60	0.48	6.00
23	West Bengal	23	45	60	0.48	2.61
24	Sikkim	6	38	51	0.41	8.50
25	Kerala	14	35	47	0.38	3.36
26	Mizoram	11	31	45	0.36	4.09
27	Goa	2	18	35	0.28	17.50
28	Tamil Nadu	38	21	36	0.29	0.95
	Total			12510		

Note: Source: PM SHRI Dashboard Portal

The table presents the state-wise distribution of PM SHRI schools, revealing significant regional disparities in both coverage and implementation intensity. Larger and more populous states such as Uttar Pradesh (15.09%), Andhra Pradesh (7.85%), Maharashtra (7.56%), and Madhya Pradesh (7.55%) account for a substantial share of schools, indicating that demographic size and administrative scale are key determinants of allocation. However, a comparative analysis using “schools per district” highlights variations in implementation intensity: Andhra Pradesh (37.77) shows a more concentrated approach, while states like Madhya Pradesh (18.15) and Rajasthan (18.27) exhibit a relatively dispersed distribution despite high absolute numbers. In contrast, north-eastern and smaller states such as Arunachal Pradesh (0.95%), Meghalaya (0.62%), and Nagaland (0.48%) exhibit both low share and low density, suggesting

constraints related to geography, population dispersion, and administrative reach. These patterns indicate that the scheme's distribution is not purely need-based but influenced by structural and governance factors, including state capacity and infrastructural readiness. From a policy perspective, such uneven distribution raises concerns regarding equitable access and challenges the inclusive vision of NEP 2020, particularly in underserved and geographically difficult regions. Overall, the data suggests that while the scheme has achieved broad national coverage, its effectiveness is moderated by regional imbalances, necessitating a more context-sensitive and equity-oriented approach to ensure balanced educational development.

7. UT-wise Distribution of PM SHRI Schools

Table 3: *UT-wise Distribution of PM SHRI Schools*

S. No.	Union Territories	No. of Districts	No. of Blocks	Total PM SHRI Schools	% share in UT
1	Jammu & Kashmir	20	294	427	73.49
2	Ladakh	2	28	41	7.05
3	Delhi	11	5	46	7.91
4	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	3	10	20	3.44
5	Puducherry	4	8	18	3.09
6	Lakshadweep	1	8	13	2.23
7	Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	3	6	10	1.72
8	Chandigarh	1	1	6	1.03
	Total			581	

Note: Source: PM SHRI Dashboard Portal

The table presents the distribution of PM SHRI schools across Union Territories (UTs), indicating a limited but regionally varied expansion aligned with their administrative and demographic scale. Jammu & Kashmir accounts for the highest number of schools (427) and the largest share (73.49%) in UT-wise distribution, reflecting its larger geographical size and developmental priorities, whereas smaller UTs such as Chandigarh (6) and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (10) show minimal coverage. A comparative pattern emerges where territorially larger or strategically significant regions (e.g., J&K, Delhi) receive relatively higher allocation, while island territories and smaller UTs exhibit proportionally lower distribution. The case of Delhi, with 46 schools despite a limited block structure, highlights the influence of unique urban administrative frameworks rather than conventional spatial metrics. These variations can be attributed to differences in population density, geographic constraints, and administrative capacity, which shape implementation feasibility. From a policy perspective, while the distribution reflects an inclusive national outreach, the relatively low share across most UTs raises concerns regarding equitable access and uniform quality enhancement in line with NEP 2020 objectives. Overall, the data suggests that although the scheme ensures symbolic pan-India presence, its transformative impact in UTs will depend on strengthening quality, resource allocation, and context-specific implementation strategies.

8. Governance-wise Distribution

Table 4: Governance-wise Distribution

Category	Number of Schools	Percentage (%)
Central Govt. (KVS + NVS + NCERT)	1537	11.74%
State Govt. Schools	11,554	88.25%
Total	13,091	100%

Note: Source: PM SHRI Dashboard Portal

The table presents the governance-wise distribution of PM SHRI schools, highlighting a predominantly state-driven implementation framework. State government schools constitute an overwhelming majority (88.25%), compared to a relatively limited share of centrally governed institutions (11.74%) and Union Territory schools (0.044%), indicating a clear reliance on decentralised administrative structures. This pattern reflects the federal nature of India's education system, where states serve as the primary executing agencies, while central institutions such as KVS and NVS play a supplementary role, often functioning as benchmarks for quality and innovation. Comparatively, the minimal share of UT schools aligns with their smaller administrative and geographical scope. The observed distribution can be attributed to variations in institutional capacity, resource availability, and the pre-existing dominance of state-run schools in the education system. From a policy perspective, while this decentralised model supports wider outreach and contextual implementation in line with NEP 2020, it also raises concerns regarding uneven quality and disparities arising from differing state capacities. Therefore, effective coordination between central and state authorities becomes crucial to ensure uniform standards and successful policy outcomes. Overall, the data suggests that the scheme's scalability is strongly dependent on state-level governance, making administrative efficiency and inter-governmental alignment key determinants of its long-term impact.

9. Region-wise Distribution of PM SHRI Schools in India

Table-5: Region-wise Distribution of PM SHRI Schools in India

S. No.	Region	States/UTs Covered	Total Schools	% Share
1	North India	Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Delhi, J&K, Ladakh	4377	33.43
2	South India	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry	2575	19.6
3	East India	Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal	2217	16.93
4	West India	Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa	1510	11.53
5	Central India	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh	1337	10.21
6	North-East India	Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim	1026	7.83
7	Other UTs	Chandigarh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	49	0.37
	Total		13,091	

Note: Source: PM SHRI Dashboard Portal

The table presents the region-wise distribution of PM SHRI schools, revealing notable spatial disparities in coverage and implementation intensity across India. North India accounts for the largest share (33.43%), followed by South India (19.6%) and East India (16.93%), indicating a concentration of the scheme in demographically larger and administratively expansive regions. In contrast, West (11.53%) and Central India (10.21%) show moderate representation, while North-East India (7.83%) and Other Union Territories (037%) remain relatively underrepresented. These patterns suggest that the scheme's distribution is not solely based on need but is affected by structural and governance factors, including state capacity and infrastructure readiness. From a policy standpoint, this uneven distribution raises concerns about fair access and challenges the inclusive vision of NEP 2020, especially in underserved and geographically difficult areas. Overall, the data indicates that while the scheme has broad national coverage, its effectiveness is influenced by regional imbalances, highlighting the need for a more context-sensitive and fairness-oriented approach to ensure balanced educational development. This pattern shows that allocation is heavily influenced by population size, administrative capacity, and existing educational infrastructure, with larger states receiving more focus. However, the smaller share for the North-East and smaller Union Territories reflects ongoing geographical, infrastructural, and accessibility issues that limit implementation intensity. This uneven regional distribution raises concerns regarding fair access and puts the inclusive vision of NEP 2020 at risk, which emphasizes balanced and universal quality education. Analytically, the data shows that while the scheme has broad national reach, it follows a differential expansion model instead of a uniformly need-based one. Overall, the distribution emphasizes the need for more region-sensitive and equity-oriented strategies to ensure that underserved areas are not excluded from educational transformation.

10. Analysis and Interpretation

The overall analysis of PM SHRI Schools reveals that while the scheme has achieved significant nationwide growth across districts, blocks, and regions, its implementation showcases clear structural and spatial imbalances rather than an equitable approach. The concentration of schools at secondary and higher secondary levels, alongside the limited number of primary schools, indicates a policy preference for prominent performance outcomes over foundational learning. This creates a partial misalignment with NEP 2020's focus on foundational literacy and holistic development. Furthermore, the dominance of state government institutions points to a decentralised implementation framework, in which variations in state capacity and administrative efficiency often shape results. Spatially, the distribution favours larger and more developed states and regions like North and South India, while north-eastern states and Union Territories remain underrepresented due to geographic, infrastructural, and governance challenges. This indicates that allocation relies more on feasibility than on fairness. This unevenness also highlights a broader conflict between rapid growth and inclusive access. Coverage may have increased, but balanced development has not been secured. In light of SDG 4, which promotes equitable and inclusive quality education, and the vision of Viksit Bharat, centred on human capital development, these disparities may hinder the scheme's transformative potential. To achieve meaningful outcomes, a strategic shift toward balanced distribution, a stronger focus on foundational education, region-sensitive planning, and improved coordination between central and state governments will be essential. This approach ensures that expansion translates into fair and sustainable educational development.

11. Findings

- I. The scheme has achieved significant geographical expansion; however, in comparison to the target of 14,500 schools by 2026–27, it has not yet reached the stage of full implementation and remains in a transitional phase.
- II. The scheme demonstrates strong national-level outreach, covering a large proportion of districts and blocks across the country.
- III. The level-wise distribution is uneven, with a higher concentration at the secondary and higher secondary levels, while the primary level remains relatively underrepresented, indicating partial misalignment with the foundational learning objectives of NEP 2020.
- IV. The implementation of the scheme is largely driven by state governments, resulting in variations in outcomes depending on differences in administrative capacity across states.

- V. Clear inter-state and regional disparities are evident, with greater concentration in larger and more developed states, while north-eastern and smaller regions remain comparatively underrepresented.
- VI. Variations in the number of schools per district indicate uneven implementation intensity across states, reflecting both concentrated and dispersed distribution patterns.
- VII. Overall, the scheme reflects a trade-off between rapid expansion and inclusiveness, where growth has not been fully accompanied by balanced and equitable development.

12. Conclusion

The study suggests that while the PM SHRI Schools Scheme has made considerable strides and demonstrates a strong policy commitment to improving school education, its impact is limited by structural and regional imbalances. The focus on secondary and higher secondary levels, along with uneven spatial distribution, indicates a preference for measurable outcomes over foundational learning, leading to a partial misalignment with NEP 2020's priorities. Additionally, the state-driven implementation model results in varying outcomes due to differences in capability, with lower representation in north-eastern regions and Union Territories exposing ongoing gaps in equity. In the larger context of SDG 4 and the vision of Viksit Bharat, these imbalances restrict the scheme's ability to ensure inclusive and quality education. Addressing this will require a shift toward a more balanced, need-based distribution, a stronger focus on foundational education, and improved coordination between central and state authorities to convert expansion into equitable and sustainable results.

13. Going Beyond: Strengthening the Transformative Potential of PM SHRI

For the PM SHRI Schools Scheme to create deeper and longer-lasting impact, the focus must shift from mere expansion to how well the system functions in various contexts. This involves strengthening the early years of schooling to build a strong foundation for learning while ensuring that regions facing more significant challenges are not overlooked. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach, more context-sensitive planning can help tackle disparities in geography, capacity, and access. Additionally, enhancing coordination between central and state systems will be critical for maintaining consistent quality. Looking forward, positioning these schools as hubs for innovation, skill development, and future-ready learning can transform them from just upgraded institutions into catalysts for educational change aligned with the larger goals of NEP 2020, SDG 4, and the vision of Viksit Bharat.

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