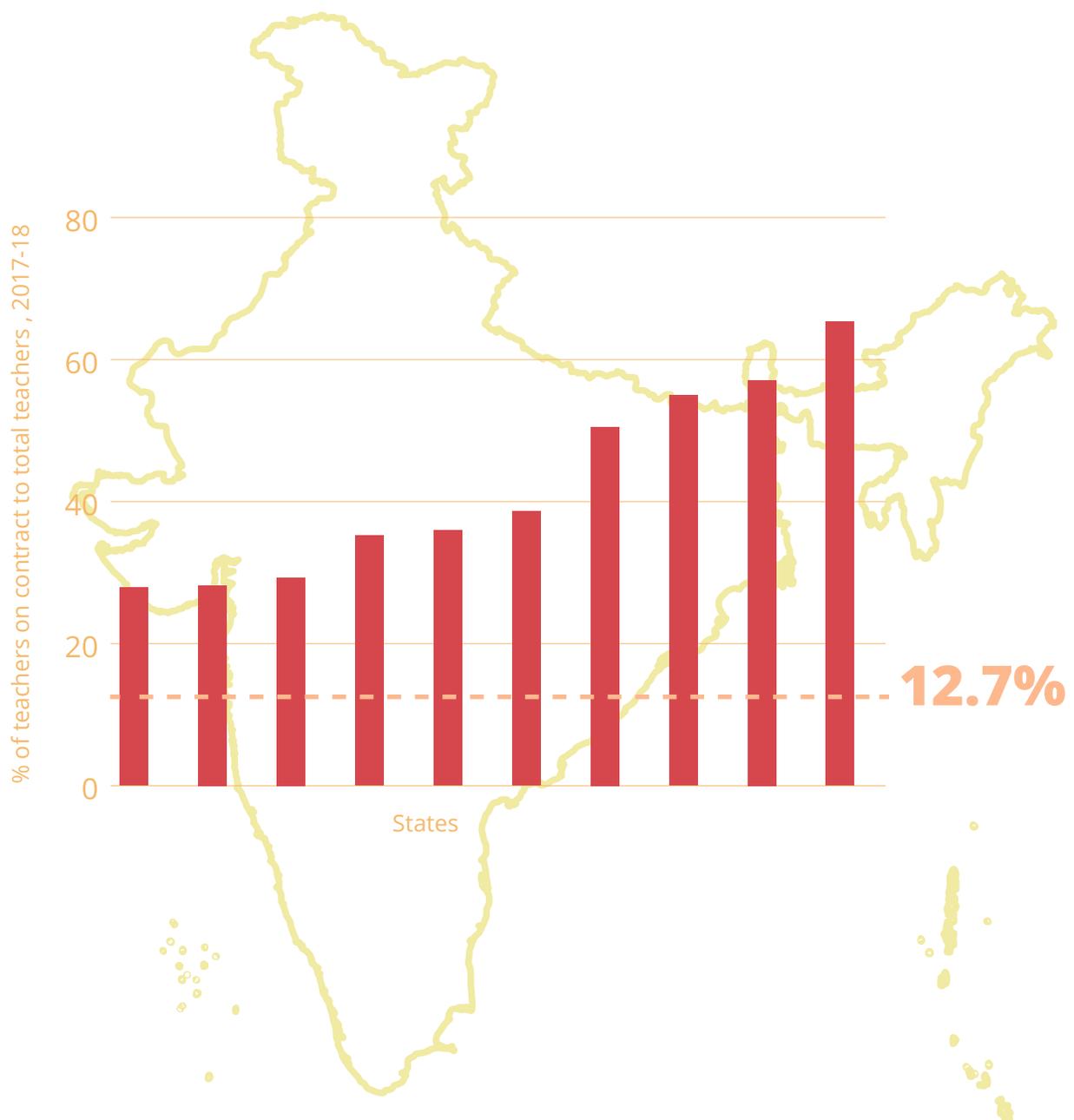


# CONTRACT TEACHERS IN INDIA

## Recent Trends and Current Status

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | JUNE 2020



# Executive Summary

1. There are very large numbers of contract teachers (also known as Shiksha Mitra, Shiksha Karmi, para teachers, guest teachers, ad hoc teachers, etc.) working in the Indian public education system.
2. These teachers are appointed on short-term contracts ranging from a few months to a couple of years, with much lower 'salaries' (called honorariums) than those of regular teachers. These contracts are repeatedly 'rolled-over', for years, and very often, for decades. In essence, these are teachers on 'short-term' contracts on low salaries, with no service benefits or job security, who are used to fill positions that should be filled by personnel (teachers) in standard and long-term employment.
3. Most such contract teacher appointments happen through ad hoc and non-standardized processes compromising the quality of recruitment and very often, opening more room for corruption and favouritism.
4. The practice of hiring contract teachers began in the early 1990s as a stop-gap solution to teacher shortage and fiscal pressures, consequent to the large expansion in the number of schools and the steady increase in student enrolment. Over the past three decades, this stop-gap solution has become a permanent feature of staffing of public schools in many states. It has been deliberately used to reduce the financial commitment of the states and to also open up a highly discretionary (and prone to abuse) alternative to the appointment of teachers in the regular cadre with full employment status.
5. This study was supported by the Azim Premji University and conducted by ERU (Educational Resource Unit) Consultants to develop a comprehensive overview of the status of contract teachers across the country. Some of the highlights of this study are:
  - a. 12.7 percent teachers were on various forms of such contracts in India in 2017-2018.
  - b. Contract teachers have steadily increased from 5,62,504 (2012-2013) to 6,32,316 (2017-2018). In 2017-18, 13.8% teachers at the elementary level and 8.4% teachers at the secondary level were contract teachers.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. Three states (Meghalaya, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh) have over 50 percent of their teachers on contract; two states (Odisha, Sikkim) have over 35 percent of teachers on contract, and another four states (Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, West Bengal) have more than 20 percent teachers on contract.<sup>2</sup>
6. This practice is exploitative of those on such contract employment and also deeply detrimental to education and children's learning. Having a set of teachers within the same system, and very often in the same school, being compensated differently for the same work is damaging to the morale of teachers – both those on contract and those in standard employment. This practice also harms the image of the teaching profession and leads to dysfunctional dynamics in schools and affects school culture, thereby, directly affecting student learning.
  - a. Contract teachers do not have the same service conditions as teachers in the regular cadre. They are recipients of a consolidated salary usually ranging on an average from Rs 6,000 to Rs 20,000, which is much lower than the entry-level salary of regular cadre teachers, without any other benefits or opportunities of professional growth/development.
  - b. This leads to deep demotivation often leading to disengagement in classrooms, work disruption through strikes, etc.

- 7.** The practice has caused long-term damage not only to the teaching profession but also to student learning due to the following reasons:
- a.** A significant proportion of contract teachers do not fulfil the required norms for being a teacher.<sup>3</sup>
    - i.** Around 30 percent of contract teachers do not even have an undergraduate degree.
    - ii.** The total number of contract teachers without professional qualifications is huge – 1,86,777 (29.5%) in 2017-18.
  - b.** Contract teachers are disproportionately deployed in schools catering to the most disadvantaged.<sup>4</sup>
    - i.** The proportion of contract teachers are the highest in the smaller primary schools. The burden of contract teachers, therefore, is disproportionately high for small schools with low enrolments (of up to 90 students); schools that typically cater to the poorest sections of the population.
    - ii.** 95.83 percent of children enrolled in schools that have only contract teachers are from rural areas.
    - iii.** More teachers are on contract in rural areas across all levels of schooling, with 5,71,363 contract teachers in rural schools as compared to 60,953 in urban schools.
    - iv.** The number of single contract teacher schools and two contract teacher schools in 2017-18 were 12,847 and 66,955, respectively, with 22,45,337 children enrolled in these schools.
    - v.** Schools meant for the most deprived, i.e., those run by Ministry of Labour and those managed by the Social Welfare Department, have a large proportion of contract teachers – 41.6 percent and 22.5 percent, respectively.
  - c.** Contract teachers as an ad hoc arrangement: mismanagement of teacher vacancies, teacher surplus and teacher deployment.
    - i.** There are significant vacancies in teacher positions supported both by the state government and Samagra Shiksha in many states.<sup>5</sup>
      - In 2018-19, there were 11.7 percent vacancies against the sanctioned posts of teachers.
      - The four states of Bihar (35.7%), Jharkhand (37.6%), Madhya Pradesh (20.5%) and Uttar Pradesh (31.2%) have the largest numbers of teacher vacancies.
    - ii.** Sixteen states do not have the required three subject teachers as mandated by the RTE (Right to Education) Act in many (ranging from 15% to 90%) of their upper primary schools.<sup>6</sup>
    - iii.** Eleven states have a surplus of teachers at the primary and upper primary stages, indicating issues in teacher rationalisation.<sup>7</sup>
- 8.** Despite these problems, studies that inadequately frame the work of the teacher as only another technical and substitutable input in the education system continue to endorse contract teachers as a solution to achieve better accountability in the school education system.
- 9.** The Report of the Kasturirangan Committee for the Draft National Education Policy submitted in 2019 recognised the urgency of the need to address this problem, and explicitly stated that all ‘para-teacher systems’ must end (P5.1.8, pp 123). The New Education Policy 2020 also reiterates a commitment to providing ‘regular trained teachers at each stage’ of the school system (Para 3.2) and providing a ‘robust merit-based structure of tenure’ for teachers (Para 5.17).
- 10.** What is ultimately required is the discontinuation of this ad hoc system and its replacement by a more comprehensively designed teacher recruitment and tenure system as suggested by the Report of the Kasturirangan Committee for the Draft National Education Policy submitted in 2019 and the National Education Policy 2020.

## Endnotes

1. UDISE, various years.
2. UDISE, 2017-2018.
3. UDISE, 2017-2018.
4. UDISE, 2017-2018.
5. PAB Minutes for SS 2019-20, MRHD, GOI.
6. PAB Minutes for SS 2019-20, MRHD, GOI.
7. PAB Minutes for SS 2019-20, MRHD, GOI.

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This Executive Summary is prepared by Azim Premji University. It is based on the full report "Contract Teachers in India - Recent Trends and Current Status" conducted by Education Resource Unit Consultants Private Limited, New Delhi with Support from Azim Premji University, Bengaluru.

Study can be downloaded from  
<https://azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/SitePages/research-projects.aspx>