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Between growth and inclusion, India stands at an economic crossroads



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When Governance Becomes Pedagogy



Ratna Viswanathan



In conversations about education reform, governance is often treated as scaffolding- important, yet external to the core work of teaching and learning. But governance is not merely oversight; it is the pedagogy of the system itself. How institutions plan, communicate, and support shapes learning across classrooms. When governance embodies the qualities we expect of good teaching, that is, clarity, responsiveness, and self-reflection, it becomes a powerful enabler of sustained improvement.

At Reach to Teach, our work with the State Education Departments shows that systemic coherence matters more than isolated interventions. A well-trained teacher or updated curriculum can achieve only so much if the surrounding system remains fragmented. When district officials, system officials, school leaders, and teachers work together, the education system

functions as a single learning ecosystem. Governance, in this sense, is not about control but alignment. Without treating governance as a living, adaptive system, reforms falter before even reaching classrooms. Research by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reinforces this understanding. When education systems are aligned, coherent, and feedback-driven, embodying a learning-by-doing approach, they no longer rely on one-time reforms. Instead, they evolve continuously, learning from their own practice much like a good classroom does.

This global insight mirrors our own field experience across Haryana, Gujarat, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya: meaningful reform begins when school leadership and different levels of the State Education departments see themselves not merely as custodians of

policy, but as facilitators of learning. The enabling tiers at the District or Block levels such as the Block and Cluster Resource Coordinators, and the District Administration, often the most overlooked layer between policy and classroom delivery, are the key enablers of this change. But the fulcrum of the entire system from design to delivery vests with teachers, who are often not heard or included in the creation process. For reforms to come home to roost, it is imperative to enable teachers with adequate agency and make them an integral part of the design to desk process. While officers enable the systemic wheels to move, it is teachers who interpret, adapt, and implement reforms; strengthening their agency is therefore central to systems performing efficiently.

At Reach to Teach, we drive with a design led approach which derives from

extensive consultation at every level, particularly with teachers to ensure ownership of everything that is created. With Learning Outcomes at the core we work with the system to create activity led collateral which focuses on bridging learning gaps.

Through intensive training of teachers we ensure that there is a shared understanding of our collateral, leading to a uniform roll out across all schools in a State. District Task Forces (DTFs) have been set up at our behest and provide supervisory oversight to ensure that all interventions are smoothly rolled out and implemented across the State.

While enrolment is at the 100% percent mark, just being in the Classroom is not equivalent to learning with competency. Learning Outcomes depend on design of collateral, training of teachers to roll this out competently and supervisory oversight by the system to ensure uniformity in teaching and learning. Between 2022 and 2024, Government schools saw notable gain in foundational skills, illustrating that focused systemic support, rather than school type alone, drives learning improvements. When district and block officers are equipped to use data judiciously, provide timely feedback, and recognise effective pedagogy, classroom quality improves not by mandate but by design. International research confirms that countries integrating instructional leadership with strong middle-tier support consistently achieve better student outcomes, highlighting the importance of embedding governance practices that mirror classroom pedagogy.

Governance that includes co-creation, where district leaders, teachers, and technical partners define strategy together, builds credibility and ownership.

The pandemic highlighted both the fragility and resilience of these support systems. District officials became the



first line of response, coordinating digital learning, supporting teachers remotely, and maintaining continuity despite logistical challenges. What enabled effective responses was not technology alone but an evolved understanding of leadership as a learning function. Governance adapted in real time, demonstrating agility and reflection, the same qualities that define effective pedagogy.

As education systems recalibrate towards foundational learning, the crucial question is not only what children learn, but how the system

learns. Are monitoring mechanisms spaces for inquiry or inspection? Do policy reviews engage with processes and assumptions or focus solely on outcomes? Governance matures when institutions develop the capacity to learn from their own practice. Equity too must be understood through this lens. Inclusion is not achieved through access alone, but through Governance that recognises differential needs; tracking participation beyond attendance and, training leaders in gender and socio-economic sensitivity.



With over 100 million children in the foundational learning stage, India stands at a pivotal moment. This window to realise the demographic dividend will remain open for at most another decade and a half, making governance an important determinant of national outcomes tomorrow.

The National Education Policy 2020 places the learner at the centre, but

achieving that vision depends on how effectively Governance mediates between aspiration and implementation.

When Governance becomes pedagogy, reform ceases to be episodic. It becomes part of the institutional habit, embedded in how decisions are made and how learning is understood at every level. In this lies the strength of an education system capable of steady,

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About the Author:
Ratna Viswanathan
Founder & CEO – Reach to Teach Foundation