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Jharkhand's Zero Primary Dropout: NITI Aayog's UDISE+ 2024-25 Reading

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Jharkhand's Zero Primary Dropout: NITI Aayog's UDISE+ 2024-25 Reading

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WHY IN NEWS

A NITI Aayog analysis released on May 8, 2026 – based on UDISE+ 2024-25 data – shows **Jharkhand has recorded 0% primary-stage dropout**, a sharp fall from 11%+ in 2022-23 and 6.41% in 2014-15. The report also flags **Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh** as reporting near-zero figures, alongside concerns about data validity.

THE HEADLINE NUMBERS

EDUCATION STAGE	JHARKHAND 2014-15	JHARKHAND 2022-23	JHARKHAND 2024-25
Primary (Grade 1-5)	6.41%	11%+	0%
Upper Primary (Grade 6-8)	–	7.42%	1.7%
Secondary (Grade 9-10)	–	23.2%	3.5%

The same UDISE+ analysis flags four states reporting zero or near-zero primary dropouts:

- Jharkhand
- Telangana
- Uttar Pradesh
- Madhya Pradesh

WHAT IS UDISE+?

UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) is the **principal management information system for school education in India**.

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Operating ministry	Ministry of Education (MoE) – Department of School Education and Literacy
Pre-cursor	DISE (1995), then UDISE (2012), and UDISE+ (since 2018-19)
Coverage	~15 lakh schools (govt + private); 25 crore+ students
Data captured	Enrolment, attendance, infrastructure, teachers, learning outcomes
Reporting unit	School-level (UDISE+ code)
Recent reform	Student-level individual tracking (PEN – Permanent Education Number) since 2024-25

UDISE+ is the data backbone for:

- Samagra Shiksha scheme allocations
- PM POSHAN (mid-day meal) outlay
- NIPUN Bharat (Foundational Literacy and Numeracy)
- NEP 2020 monitoring
- Performance Grading Index (PGI) – both state-level and district-level

HOW DROPOUT IS MEASURED

UDISE+ uses two principal measures:

- 1 **Annual average dropout rate (AADR):** cohort-based, comparing enrolment from one academic year to the next.
- 2 **Retention rate:** proportion of students still in school at the end of a given stage.

A school year’s “0%” dropout means: of the cohort that began the previous year, all are either continuing in school or have legitimately transitioned (e.g., to upper primary).

Why “0%” Is Unusually Low

- Even Kerala, which has India’s strongest school ecosystem, reports small positive dropout rates owing to migration and inter-state movement.
- Some level of **administrative dropout** (data-cleaning of duplicate enrolments) is expected.
- A 0% figure therefore requires close validation – which the NITI Aayog report explicitly acknowledges.

DRIVERS OF IMPROVEMENT IN JHARKHAND

FACTOR	MECHANISM
Samagra Shiksha funds	Sharper targeting to high-dropout blocks
Right to Education (RTE), 2009	Compulsory schooling Grade 1-8; Article 21A
PM POSHAN (mid-day meal)	Nutrition incentive; raises attendance
Tribal scholarships	Pre-matric scholarships, MoTA-funded EMRS schools
Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)	Reduces drop-off in tribal blocks
Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)	Uniform, scholarship, cycle schemes via DBT
State Right to Education enforcement	District task forces, IEC campaigns
Aadhaar-based individual tracking (APAAR / PEN)	Real-time student-level data; harder to lose track

CAVEATS AND CONCERNS

The NITI Aayog analysis itself notes data quality concerns:

- ❶ **Possible underestimation** of “out-of-school” children – children not enrolled at all are not in UDISE+ at all.
- ❷ **Reporting delays and revisions** – state data submitted to UDISE+ undergo correction over many months.
- ❸ **Migration-driven mismeasurement** – inter-state migrant children may be counted as continuing in source state.
- ❹ **“Stage transition” definitional choices** – a child who completes Grade 5 but does not enrol in Grade 6 is a Grade 6 dropout, not a Grade 5 dropout. This shifts dropout perception across stages.
- ❺ **Tribal pockets:** in remote Jharkhand blocks, school enrolment registers may not capture genuinely out-of-school children if they were never enrolled.

A more comprehensive metric is the **Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER)** which captures both dropouts and never-enrolled children.

THE NATIONAL PICTURE (UDISE+ 2024-25 – SELECTED INDICATORS)

INDICATOR	VALUE
Total schools	~14.7 lakh
Total students	~24.8 crore
Total teachers	~98 lakh
Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)	Primary 26:1; Upper Primary 19:1; Secondary 18:1
Schools without electricity	~1.19 lakh (per recent NITI Aayog report)
Schools without functional toilets	A small but persistent share
Schools with internet	~57%-58%

THE BIGGER POLICY PICTURE

Right to Education Act, 2009

- Operationalises Article 21A (86th Constitutional Amendment, 2002)
- Free and compulsory education for **ages 6-14**
- 25% reservation in private schools for disadvantaged students

National Education Policy 2020

- Restructured stages: **5+3+3+4** (Foundational, Preparatory, Middle, Secondary)
- **FLN goals by 2026-27** through NIPUN Bharat
- Universal access by 2030
- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) target for higher education: 50% by 2035

Samagra Shiksha (Integrated Scheme)

- Launched 2018 (merged SSA + RMSA + Teacher Education)
- Centrally Sponsored Scheme; 60:40 funding (90:10 for NE and Himalayan states)

PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal renamed 2021)

- ~11.2 crore children covered across govt + govt-aided schools
- Bal Vatika and Grade 1-8 coverage; some states extend to higher classes

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2 – Social Justice, Governance, Education

- Right to Education Act, 2009; Article 21A
- NEP 2020 implementation
- Samagra Shiksha, PM POSHAN, NIPUN Bharat
- UDISE+ as governance tool

GS Paper 1 – Society

- Educational deprivation; tribal education
- Gender and dropouts
- Migration and schooling

Mains Angles

- 1 Examine the policy and administrative drivers behind Jharkhand's dropout reduction. What does it reveal about the limits of data-driven governance?
- 2 Discuss the limitations of UDISE+ in capturing the true scale of out-of-school children in India.
- 3 Critically evaluate the implementation of NEP 2020's foundational literacy goals.

FACTS CORNER – KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
JHARKHAND DROPOUT (UDISE+ 2024-25):

Primary stage: 0% (down from 11%+ in 2022-23; 6.41% in 2014-15)

Upper primary: 7.42% -> 1.7%

Secondary: 23.2% -> 3.5%

Other zero/near-zero states: Telangana, UP, MP

UDISE+:

Operator: Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education

Covers ~14.7 lakh schools; ~24.8 crore students; ~98 lakh teachers

History: DISE (1995) -> UDISE (2012) -> UDISE+ (2018-19)

Student-level tracking (PEN / APAAR) from 2024-25

RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT, 2009:

Operationalises Article 21A (86th CAA, 2002)

Free, compulsory education ages 6-14

25% RTE reservation in private schools

NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020:

Approved July 2020; replaced NEP 1986 (1992 amended)

5+3+3+4 structure

FLN target year: 2026-27

GER (higher education) target: 50% by 2035

SAMAGRA SHIKSHA: LAUNCHED 2018 (SSA + RMSA + TEACHER ED MERGER); CSS, 60:40 FUNDING (90:10 NE/HIMALAYAN).

PM POSHAN: RENAMED 2021 (FORMERLY MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME, LAUNCHED 1995); COVERS ~11.2 CRORE CHILDREN.

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