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Leadership for Equity

Leadership For Equity (LFE) a non-profit (NGO) - is a systems change and research organization that supports governments with structural and implementation reforms to improve the quality of learning at scale. LFE’s fundamental belief is that public education systems are by definition ‘gatekeepers’ of equity and effective and sensitive public systems will ensure that quality education systems are by definition ‘gatekeepers’ of equity and quality of learning at scale. LFE works on four key verticals namely, Officer Professional Development (OPD), Teacher Professional Development (TPD), Technology Enabled Learning (TEL) and Advisory & Advocacy (AAA).

LFE has been closely working with the state education institutions like Maharashtra State Council of Education Research and Training (MSCERT), Regional Academic Authority (RAA) Aurangabad, Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research (Balbharati), District Institute for Education and Continuous Professional Development (DICE-PDL), Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), Nashik Zilla Parishad and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC).
ABBREVIATIONS

BEO  Block Education Officer
CSR  Corporate Social Responsibility
FGD  Focused Group Discussion
GN  General/Open
HSC  Higher Secondary Certificate
KP  Kendra Pramukh
KVS  Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan
MDM  Mid-Day Meal
MIDC  Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation
NA  Not Applicable
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NT  Nomadic Tribes
OBC  Other Backward Classes
PHC  Primary Health Centre
RM  Religious Minorities
SC  Scheduled Castes
SMC  School Management Committee
SSC  Secondary School Certificate
ST  Scheduled Tribes
TWT  Teaching with Technology
UDISE  Unified District Information on School Education
VJ  Vimukt Jati
ZP  Zilla Parishad

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Khed Taluka in Pune District of Maharashtra has seen a multitude of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives directed towards the education sector over the past few years owing to the presence of a large Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) area. It is well established that CSR initiatives tend to be compliance based initiatives due to the company policies and legal mandates responsible for the design of such initiatives. An often-heard concern regarding this is that the resulting approach to complex social problems is disjointed in fashion and limited to specific problem areas or geographic regions. It is also well documented that problems in education require a long term focus. We at LFE feel that one of the contributors to this disjointed approach, especially with respect to Khed taluka, is an absence of a detailed articulation of the systemic factors leading to the problem of unequal access and low overall quality of education. Thus, to propel sustained systematic investments in support of long term interventions geared towards improving the quality of and access to education, this study aims to contribute towards a better understanding of the challenges for education in Khed.

This short report begins with an introduction to Khed taluka, before discussing some of the key findings relating to access and infrastructure as well as the involvement of students, teachers, parents and civil society. The data and insights presented here have been edited based on a longer, more exhaustive research report. The challenges highlighted here are some of the most pressing challenges found during the course of this study and those that, we believe, will merit immediate action.

METHODOLOGY

The key objective here is to enable decision makers in the government and civil society organisations to make informed, evidence-based investments into the education sector in Khed, in order to provide equitable, quality education for all children in the taluka. For this purpose, the study aims to describe the education landscape in Khed, understand the needs from the perspective of its key stakeholders - government, community and civil society organisations, as well as evaluate the systems that govern access to and quality of education in the taluka. This study uses existing databases, such as UDISE, and primary data, to ensure that we are engaging with various stakeholders in Khed to understand their perspective. Primary data included a survey of 52 schools in the urban, rural and tribal areas of the taluka where parents, teachers and students reported their opinions on various issues ranging from cost of schooling to transportation and teacher quality. Apart from the survey, primary data was also collected through FGDs with parents, teachers and students, and via key informant interviews with educators, civil society members, school management committee (SMC) members and government officials. The team also spent time examining case studies in urban, rural and tribal settlements that highlighted nuances with respect to each geographic location.

1 About 9.5% of all the schools (549) in the taluka.
2 The survey locations were selected randomly using the UDISE list of schools in Khed. The school locations are classified as urban and rural as per the database - these classifications themselves were applied for urban and rural locations. Additionally rural areas were marked as tribal for our study in the following two categories: ST population >75% and ST population between 60-75%. Schools were selected from both the categories equally.
3 Refer to Annexure 1 for a detailed breakdown of the guiding thematic framework.
4 A detailed breakdown of various data sources have been provided in the annexure.
KHED TALUKA: KEY FINDINGS
KHED TALUKA in Pune district has a population of 4.5 lakh as per census 2011. While predominantly rural, Khed taluka has an MIDC area in and around Chakan, with more than 600 industrial plots spread over 8,500 acres of land. The influence of the adjoining Pune city is also seen in the south-east region of the taluka. Here, we find development concentrated around industrial belts and along the south-east corridor following the National Highway 60. This concentration of economic activity has attracted a large number of migrants from the state, as well as the country. Amongst these migrant families, women commonly work in houses as domestic workers and men in MIDC areas. The jobs include security personnel, drivers, floor managers, factory workers, janitorial staff amongst others. Those who are semi-skilled/skilled, work in higher, more managerial positions at the nearby industrial plots.

In contrast to this, the north-west section of the Taluka has remained relatively under-developed and has a higher concentration of tribal populations than MIDC areas, particularly from the Katkari and Thakkar communities. These communities predominantly draw their livelihood as daily wage agricultural labourers, through goat rearing and other labour intensive and unskilled work. Apart from this, there is also a high dependence on fishing and hunting for subsistence. The settlements as well as schools in this part of the block are remote and more difficult to reach, particularly due to weak transport infrastructure.

All of these aspects translate into unique challenges for students in MIDC, tribal and rural areas that are compounded by their family’s economic background and social barriers of gender and caste. For instance, the MIDC areas have a higher problem of students not following the dominant medium of instruction since a large number of students come from migrant families where the students’ mother tongues are different from the medium of instruction. Additionally, the abundance of infrastructure in certain sections of the taluka stands in stark contrast to the lack of it in others, where opportunities to complete one’s education remain difficult to access. In the tribal parts of the taluka we see harsh conditions for the students to overcome; including having to for walk long distances to reach schools, facing alienating and non-contextual curriculum and, due to the lack of economic resources and academic support at home, struggling to cope as they move from primary to secondary and tertiary education. The sections below discuss these issues amongst others in detail.
The state-led education in Khed taluka is within the purview of the Panchayat Samiti, Khed Taluka for rural areas and respective urban local bodies for urban areas. Both of these fall under the jurisdiction of the district education officer (DEO), under the office of Pune Zilla Parishad or district council at the district level.

Under the block education officer (BEO) in Khed there are 2 extension officers, 36 Kendra Pramukhs (KP), as well as subject experts and special educators. Thus the BEO remains the key decision making authority in the block and on the ground, KPs exert a high degree of influence on teachers on a daily basis. All these individuals are responsible for ensuring that teacher training happens on time, supporting the teachers post training, and implementing and reporting data on various state and central government schemes. While a large part of their role requires them to better support teachers to improve the quality of education, much of their actual effort remains focused on program implementation, data collection and data reporting.

There are multiple schemes run by both, state and central governments, for the benefit of the students. However, in our study we found that knowledge regarding only a few, popular schemes such as scholarships, free uniforms and textbooks, ST bus pass, cycles and mid-day meal scheme (MDM) was prevalent. We found that awareness of schemes such as direct benefit transfer (DBT) and 25 percent reservation in private schools was low amongst the parents as compared to the schemes mentioned earlier. Furthermore, limited access due to the lack of appropriate documentation and hidden costs in availing benefits, often discouraged rightful beneficiaries from receiving benefits under schemes.

5 Data from Panchayat Samiti Khed, 2018-19
6 Only 52% of parents in the survey could answer a Yes or No when asked if DBT scheme was useful. Rest 48% responded either Don’t Know or Not Applicable.
7 Such as caste certificate or income certificate.
CROSS SECTORAL CONCERNS

This report covers in detail concerns of access, quality and school infrastructure - and other enabling factors such as system of education governance, school readiness, health, home environment, student attitudes and CSR-NGO presence - that shape outcomes in education for students in Khed. However, as per key informant interviews and FGDs, there are multiple infrastructural gaps pertaining to transportation, health, water supply and telecommunications infrastructure that were observed across the taluka that indirectly affected education. For instance, due to the lack of network availability in the remote tribal regions of Khed, students are not exposed to various technology based learning tools and due to lack of infrastructure, computer skills also remain poor. Lack of water, especially in the summer months, leads to ineffective maintenance of toilets often rendering them useless. Additionally, lack of reliable transportation constricts access to higher education for many students, particularly girls. Further, the availability of health facilities, private or public, is poor in rural Khed. In many instances we found that there were either no health facilities in villages or, where present, sub-centres and PHCs were not adequately staffed. In contrast to this, health facilities were highly concentrated in urban areas but either have inadequate infrastructure or can be expensive for those from vulnerable economic backgrounds.

SCHOOLS AND ENROLMENT

Khed taluka has 549 schools that cater to 98,616 students in the 2018-19 academic year. Including students in pre-primary, the total enrolment increases to 1,02,954. The enrolment in Khed is concentrated in the lower grades, with 75 percent of the school-going population enrolled between grades I and VIII. Category-wise, 24 % of the student population is from the OBC category, while 10 % from SC and ST categories each. This is in comparison to 34 % OBC, 13 % SC and 10 % ST students in Maharashtra overall.

Over 83 % of all schools are either directly run by or funded by state bodies. These state bodies include the Department of Education, Tribal and Social Welfare Department, central government and local bodies such as municipal councils and corporations. The average enrolment in Zilla Parishad (ZP) schools is 80 students per school as compared to 284 students per school in private aided schools and 68 students per school in privately run schools. Most number of schools are run by the ZP (384 or 69.9% of schools), however these are largely composed of

Privately run schools here include self-financed schools and private unaided schools.
As per census 2011, the child sex ratio in Khed taluka is 861, where females make up 47.10 percent of the population between the ages of 0 to 6 years. While the sex ratio was 892, where females make up 63.77% of the total population.

Education is changing and parents are keen that they educate both girls and boys. In urban areas, another common phenomenon observed was that the male child would be sent to a private school while the female child would be sent to a state-run government school. As was evident in the UDISE data presented above, the enrolment gap between girls and boys increases from 6.9% in grade I to 20.4% in grade IX and then again shrinks to 3.5% in grade XII. It is clear that gender norms do have a role to play when it comes to educational opportunities and outcomes for girls and boys. While most parents do send their children to primary schools, the difficulty arises while accessing secondary and higher education as social barriers due to gender and caste as well as economic barriers due to household incomes along with shortfalls of infrastructure discourage girls and boys from pursuing higher education.

Since Khed Taluka is predominantly rural, 93% of schools and 77.3% of students are located in rural areas. Amongst schools in rural areas, a majority of them are ZP schools (73.9%), while amongst those in urban areas, the majority are self-financed schools (33.33%). Additionally, data shows us that 47% of students in urban areas are enrolled in just 6 of its private aided schools, thus indicating a higher pressure on private aided schools and classrooms in urban areas. Further, as the data clearly shows in the table below, there are fewer and fewer schools at higher levels of education. This is particularly a challenge that students face while accessing higher education institutions, which has been discussed in detail in the section below.

A closer look at the gender split in total enrolment shows a higher number of boys enrolled compared to girls across categories. Across the entire student population in Khed we find the gender gap to be 12.2 percentage points. While the gender gap in Pune district as per data for 2017-18 was only 7.7 percentage points. In all four category groups, the number of boys in school is higher than the number of girls in school in Khed. This gap is the highest among OBC students and general category students where this gap is as much as 16 percentage points and 12 percentage points, respectively.

Data from key informant interviews as well as observations show that social norms around education are changing and parents are keen that they educate both girls and boys. In urban areas, another common phenomenon observed was that the male child would be sent to a private school while the female child would be sent to a state-run government school. As was evident in the UDISE data presented above, the enrolment gap between girls and boys increases from 6.9% in grade I to 20.4% in grade IX and then again shrinks to 3.5% in grade XII. It is clear that gender norms do have a role to play when it comes to educational opportunities and outcomes for girls and boys. While most parents do send their children to primary schools, the difficulty arises while accessing secondary and higher education as social barriers due to gender and caste as well as economic barriers due to household incomes along with shortfalls of infrastructure discourage girls and boys from pursuing higher education.

‘Girls even if they work at home, perform better in school. Today girls only study better than boys. So there is a difference in the reason for boy and girl drop-out...It is mostly the mentality of parents that think that girls anyway have to look after the house so what is the point of educating them further. Boys leave for a different reason...they leave to look for jobs and earn money’ - Headmaster 1.

9 As per census 2011, the child sex ratio in Khed taluka is 861, where females make up 47.10 percent of the population between the ages of 0 to 6 yrs. While the sex ratio was 892, where females make up 63.77% of the total population.
High dependence on state run and funded schools among SC, ST populations

As we have seen earlier, the largest number of schools are run or funded by the government, i.e. 456 or 83% of schools where 71.56% of students are enrolled. Even within the larger school-going population we find that a higher percentage of students are enrolled in ZP schools, but among SC (43%) and ST (50%) categories, this percentage is even higher. Thus, as is evident from the data, that while a majority of students are dependent on the schools run by the state administration, a higher number of general and OBC category students are enrolled in private aided schools, while a higher number of ST and SC students are enrolled in ZP schools.

ACCESS TO AND COST OF EDUCATION

Access in education indicates that students have equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education irrespective of their caste, class, gender or geographic location. While this definition implies a broader sense of access to education, we focus on barriers to access to schools themselves. As we see, the structure of the school system in Khed is such that government schools cater to most communities. Thus, while the access to primary and upper-primary schools is relatively high in the region, lack of access and increasing costs often discourage students from pursuing higher education or vocational training.

Low number of higher education institutions

Access to higher education is limited partly due to inadequate number of higher education institutions in the taluka. Out of 549 schools in the taluka, only 94 have secondary classes (IX and X), while only 35 have higher secondary classes (XI and XII). As per this data we find that for every 10 primary schools in Khed, there are 6.36 upper primary schools, 5 secondary schools, and only 1.60 higher secondary schools.

As per parents, teachers and community members, vocational education is important for students, especially as many parents find little or no value in mainstream education at present. This perception is linked to the fact that the current form of schooling does not result in employability and skillling for students. However, there is a lack of vocational education institutions in the region, which are limited to only 4. These existing institutions also find themselves with limited resources. The problems of access to these are compounded by the fact that parents feel that students are not adequately equipped at school and thus remain unaware regarding such opportunities.

Cost of education

Even though government schools are free till upper-primary and do not charge any tuition, parents incur indirect expenses such as stationary and transportation costs as well. In our survey we found that even with the state funded education, the average cost that parents reported spending each year on their children’s education was anywhere between Rs. 4,968 and Rs. 10,884 per year. Specifically, the costs as reported in MIDC areas can go up to Rs. 4,000-5000 per year in lower grades itself, and more than Rs. 6,000 as the child progresses to higher grades. These school related expenditures are difficult to bear for those from economically vulnerable backgrounds. Low income households often find it difficult to finance the day to day needs of their children and as the child moves through grades, the associated direct and indirect costs pose a burden for the parents.

Transportation and safety

One of the major issues related to access is directly connected to transportation in Khed taluka. Transportation is mostly missing for primary school students. Students largely walk to school and the distances can go up to 4 kilometers. As per participants in FGD and interviews such distances can take up to an hour or so to traverse in tribal areas where the terrain is more uneven than urban and

Table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade X</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade XI</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade XII</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 Compared to which only 32.72% of OBC and 24.47% of general category students are enrolled in ZP schools. It is also interesting to note here that among ST category students only 8% percent are enrolled in self finance schools compared to 25.6% in OBC, 20.6% in SC and 81.18% in general category students.
11 During the course of the study, the team was unable to verify the exact number of vocational institutes in the taluka. As per online repositories we found as many as 17 institutes but our key informants were aware of only four.
12 See original report for the average cost of education per year, per child for families of different sizes.
13 As per the survey responses.
Here schools with higher ST populations were classified as schools with more than 23% of ST population, given that the average ST population across schools was 23.6%. As per the given calculations, 175 schools were classified as schools with high tribal populations.

In our study, we find that overall infrastructure in most parts of Khed was described as adequate, except in the case of tribal areas. As per the UDISE data for 2018-19, the infrastructure availability was lower in schools where the population of ST students was higher. This includes lower electricity availability (by 8 percentage points), internet availability (by 25 percentage points), availability of a single functioning desktop (by 9 percentage points), higher number of classrooms in need of minor repair (by 4 percentage points), higher number of classrooms in need of major repair (by 3 percentage points) as well as schools with lower number of functional toilets for boys and girls (by 4 and 2 percentage points respectively).

School Building

In Khed, as many as 44% of the schools are small two-classroom schools with 11 students on average in each of these schools. Further, as per data for ZP schools, 52 classrooms in 25 schools are in completely dilapidated conditions, while 141 classrooms in 52 schools are in partially dilapidated conditions, which make 14% of all schools in the taluka. We also find that the enrollment density in urban areas is higher, and thus proportion of classrooms were low compared to the number of students enrolled in them. A lack of school buildings or classrooms can be detrimental to the quality of education students receive, particularly in areas where they may not have ready access to better alternatives. In our observations, we also found that the school classrooms were limited irrespective of the status of the school buildings, with students often made to sit in the same class rooms either due to the lack of school infrastructure or due to lack of teachers in the school on a given day.

Library

The library facility was found to be absent in many schools in Khed. As per UDISE data, 1 in 5 schools did not have a library. In Khed, 19.30% schools do not have libraries compared to 7.2% of schools in Pune district. As per key informant interviews, the quality of books was reported to be inadequate and inappropriate overall. This was also reflected in the survey where only 62% of students rated "high satisfaction" with respect to library availability, while the percentage was as low as 31% in case of ST students.

Electricity

Electricity is unreliable in most of the schools in rural and tribal areas in Khed. This is not because of the lack of connections or infrastructure, rather due to the school’s capacity to pay bills. According to a key respondent, the electricity bills are often not generated by physically inspecting the meter, and can be arbitrary. In one case, the bill fluctuated from Rs. 600 per month to Rs. 2100 per month. At

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14 Here schools with higher ST populations were classified as schools with more than 23% of ST population, given that the average ST population across schools was 23.6%. As per the given calculations, 175 schools were classified as schools with high tribal populations.
times, electricity is provided irregularly in schools which has led to disinvestment amongst teachers and school authorities to pay bills. Some NGOs have intervened to provide solar kits, which have aided some schools in running a limited amount of technology based teaching.

School Toilets

Overall toilet infrastructure was found to be less than satisfactory in Khed, as is evidenced by the teacher survey responses. 75% of teachers did feel that enough toilets were available to students at schools. 10% fewer female teachers felt that the number of toilets were adequate as compared to male teachers in our survey. As per UDISE, Khed taluka has 16 schools without functional toilets for boys affecting 1420 male students and 29 schools without functional toilets for girls affecting as many as 2629 female students. After looking at the strength of schools as well, there are 41 schools where there are over 50 students per toilet for females and 57 schools where there are over 50 students per functioning toilet for males.

In many instances while toilets were built, their maintenance requirements proved to be the key limitation. There is a lack of regular water supply in tribal areas, which makes it difficult to keep the toilets clean. As per the UDISE data only 41.5% schools have water in all their functioning toilets. Further, while 62% of parents rated the quality of toilets high overall, this reduced to 42% in urban areas and 38% in tribal areas.

Technology

Amongst the increasing demand for teaching with technology across all stakeholders in Khed, technology infrastructure was observed to be limited and unsatisfactory as per more than half of the parents who participated in our survey. As many as 46% of the parents rated
technology infrastructure high, however, high satisfaction among parents reduced to 36% in urban areas and was even lower amongst parents in tribal areas (25%). The key issues ranged from lack of electricity to charge tech devices and the lack of internet connections, particularly in the tribal belt in Khed, to absence of a single functional computer in as many as 27% of the schools overall. The know-how to use a computer was missing amongst students, and was seen as a crucial skill set to improve their employability as per our key informants. This gap not only affects teaching and learning practices in the classroom but also limits student’s exposure to various skills and opportunities necessary for the current workforce.

CWSN Infrastructure

The infrastructure facilities for children with special needs (CWSN) is limited to providing ramps in schools, which according to UDISE data are present in all but 14% schools. However, one of our key respondents mentioned that the ramps are missing in most schools. Additionally, more than 50% of teachers surveyed responded that the resources for physically disabled students are inadequate. The training provided to teachers to work with children with special needs is also of poor quality or nonexistent as per key informant interviews.

STUDENT RELATED CONCERNS AND NEEDS

A pressing concern among educators in Khed related to student readiness for higher education. The students are often not ready to tackle content at higher grade levels because of weak basic skills. Low parental investment in early years and the presence of no-detention policy were indicated to be leading to low attendance, and hence, weaker basics of the students. It was also understood that there is a lack of exposure for students in rural and tribal areas, which leads to students not aspiring to pursue higher education and positions of power and impact. Such an exposure was understood to be necessary for students to stay motivated to study.

We found that while there are multiple factors that cause lower student attendance and absenteeism, some of the more pressing concerns highlighted by educators in Khed are that:

- Students prefer to miss school, instead of sitting in a classroom where they may not understand anything. This is particularly true when the students do not understand the medium of instruction and have weak basics in higher grades.
- Since a large majority of students walk to school, students in more remote areas or those having to cross geographically difficult terrain like hills in the western part of the taluka, tend to miss school during bad weather conditions.
- Migration is a common phenomenon among Thakar and Katkari communities, particularly those flocking closer to urban centres like Chakan and Pune city. This increases the instances of student absenteeism amongst these communities.
- Sometimes the parents are not invested and do not buy into the value that education provides for the students. In such cases, there is a higher tendency of students to miss school.
- Students tend to miss school if there is a hostile, non-supportive school environment particularly due to the presence of corporal punishment or emotional distress caused due to public humiliation and stressful peer relationships.
- In cases when the burden of household work is too much, students tend to miss school at best, and drop out in worst case scenarios.
- The weak economic conditions of certain groups/communities, compels students to help out during peak agriculture season. In such cases, the students are seen to miss school.

During the course of this study, many of these factors were not specifically investigated into, but merit further study and additional data to be understood completely.

Out-of-School Children

Children between the ages of 6 and 14 years, who have never been admitted to school or having been admitted have not completed elementary education, are classified as out-of-school children as defined in the Right to Education (RTE) Act\(^\text{15}\). This definition includes students of elementary education who have been absent for more than a month continuously. According to the Khed coverage list of out-of-school children 2018-19, there are a total of 951 students in Khed who are out-of-school. 65 % of which are boys. This compared to data from 2017-18, where 1,010 students were classified as out of school children, the percentage of boys and girls was equal.

The average age for dropping out is similar amongst girls and boys in 2018-19: 9.5 years and 9.4 years respectively. Of all the out-of-school children, the majority cite 'job' as the key reason for being out-of-school. As many as 23 % of out-of-school students include students of elementary education who have been absent for more than a month continuously. It was, however, seen that the students did not explicitly express any need to improve the teaching-learning practices in the classrooms, change the school environment or the economic problems that they face at home. Thus, the needs mentioned by the students were a small fraction of the issues affecting the students in Khed taluka.

Student Needs

When directly asked, students stated the need for improved facilities to travel to school, the need for clean and adequate number of toilets in the school, a need for computers and technological devices available to the students in rural and tribal areas and adequate space in the classrooms for students to sit comfortably in areas with high enrollment. From the data that was collected via surveys, key informant interviews and case studies, it was understood that the gaps mentioned by the students resonated across various stakeholders. It was, however, seen that the students did not explicitly express any need to improve the teaching-learning practices in the classrooms, change the school environment or the economic problems that they face at home. Thus, the needs mentioned by the students were a small fraction of the issues affecting the students in Khed taluka.

TEACHER RELATED CONCERNS AND NEEDS

As per the UDISE data there are a total of 3,584 teachers in Khed taluka. There are 12 schools in Khed with only one teacher, which makes up approximately 2 % of the schools. However, a major chunk of schools in Khed are small schools as 43 % of the schools in the taluka are 2 teacher schools. Further, of the 1467 teachers in ZP schools in Khed, 234 are placed in areas classified as 'difficult'\(^\text{17}\) and the remaining 1233 teachers are placed in ordinary schools.

Highest student teacher ratio is seen amongst higher secondary classrooms and urban classrooms. Looking at the enrollment and number of teachers across the block there is 1 teacher for every 28 students enrolled. In addition to the table presented above, schools where teachers are teaching higher secondary only i.e. junior college, the student teacher ratio is the highest, with 56 students per teacher/class, indicating a staffing requirement in these schools.

For most parents and community members, the quality of schools and teaching is associated with student teacher ratio. As per discussion with key informants areas classified as difficult in Khed’s context are schools in remote tribal areas.

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16 A category wise breakdown of students has been provided in the annexures.

17 As per discussion with key informants, areas classified as difficult in Khed’s context are schools in remote tribal areas.

18 The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 in its Schedule lays down Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) for both primary and upper primary schools. At primary level the PTR should be 30:1 and at the upper primary level it should be 35:1. The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) framework stipulates that the PTR at secondary level should be 30:1. Here PTR has been calculated as the total number of students in a particular grade category divided by the number of teachers teaching those grades.
the quality of specific teachers in the school. Thus the relationship between community members and teachers is an important determinant of teacher quality. However, as per many parents, often what is seen missing in schools is the lack of guidance to students regarding future opportunities to pursue education or guidance relating to aspects of life skills education. Additionally, some key respondents also highlighted that in the context of Khed, teacher mindsets need to change towards empathising and understanding each and every student in their classroom.

Various policy and structural aspects of how ZP schools function can deter teachers from effectively driving learning. Some of these are discussed below:

- Teachers find it difficult to provide multi-grade multi-level (MGML)19 teaching to students with only one teacher present in school. This is often the case in a two-teacher school where one teacher may be engaged in some administrative tasks leaving only one teacher in-charge of classroom teaching. In these cases, teachers have been trained to teach multiple grades in one classroom, but the effectiveness of this is in question.
- Multiple educators that we interacted with stated that teachers find it difficult to teach the syllabus in 30 minutes while providing individual attention to all students within the same classroom.
- In many instances, teachers felt that their administrative work kept them out of the classroom, while limiting instructional time at schools.
- Difference in the background of the students and teachers, results in less engagement for tribal and migrant students in Khed. This is because the teaching approach that the teachers and the curriculum take is not mindful of the background of the students.

Of the various support structures that exist for teachers, there are multiple inadequacies that teachers in Khed have pointed out. As per the teachers, teacher training is not effective and does not adequately equip teachers with the required pedagogical techniques. These training sessions often require teachers to leave their classrooms and miss a day of instruction. Additionally, KPs often find themselves ill-equipped to support teachers academically and are more often evaluative, rather than supportive, in their classroom visits. Their role is often reduced to collecting data for the administration. In speaking to some DIET officials, it was found that the support system for teachers is not as effective as needed. Much of this is connected directly to the resource constraints that bodies such as DIETs face.

Another concerning aspect is related to the mandate against corporal punishment. It was seen that, to an extent, the mandate was not perceived favourably by educators and parents. On directly asking about the use of corporal punishments it was denied, however almost none of our respondents were in favour of the rule itself. Overall, there is a negative outlook among educators towards the no punishment policy, since in the absence of corporal punishment most teachers find themselves unable to discipline students. Thus, teachers take an apathetic approach towards discipline at times and often find themselves lacking classroom management techniques which do not employ corporal punishment. Further relating to this, no-detention policy, as reported by some teachers and key respondents, has contributed to a lackadaisical attitude amongst parents and students.

Teacher Needs

We find that the needs amongst teachers are largely concentrated on the infrastructure requirements of the school. Most common amongst the demands is the need for e-learning content, smart TVs or smart boards. Where absent, teachers also demand compound walls, better classrooms or toilets. Other than the need for better infrastructure, the focus amongst teachers has largely been on the lack of support they see on the part of parents. Particularly in relation to the needs of the students to study at home or the participation required from the parents in SMCs. They feel that parents need to pay more attention to students at home to ensure that students study after school hours.

Apart from the explicit demands of the teachers, the data presented in the report finds some major gaps in the form of the administrative burden teachers face, challenges in teaching multiple students of different grade levels at the same time and concerns around learning levels of students which teachers are unable to drive due to various policies. Apart from these, we found that teachers felt that the training was inadequate and teachers remained ill equipped on subject pedagogy and classroom management practices. None of these were however, mentioned as a need explicitly by teachers. Juxtaposing the needs amongst teachers and the gaps we see, there is almost little to no overlap. While the demands from teachers focus on improving infrastructure and increasing support from the parents, the need for provision of effective support and training, as well as improvement in their own skill in driving learning outcomes are essential but have not been articulated as a need by teachers participating in this study.
COMMUNITY RELATED CONCERNS AND NEEDS

Parents showed high willingness to send their children to schools irrespective of the gender of the students, in all locations. From speaking to various key informants in Khed, it was found that educated parents were more likely to be invested in their child’s day to day education, even though parents overall feel ill-equipped to support their children at home. This, coupled with the lack of opportunities for remedial education in rural areas and the high cost of remedial education in urban areas, leads to students relying mainly on the teachers and the school’s limited infrastructure to guide their learning.

It was seen that the majority of parents who were not able to provide support at home were unable to do so because of the lower level of education amongst them and/or long working hours. The communities in MIDC/urban areas showed a much more positive response concerning involvement in their children’s education as compared to parents in rural areas where multiple adults in the household were engaged in agriculture related and labour intensive livelihoods.

Another concerning aspect relating to the home environment was the burden of household chores placed on students. It was seen that students sometimes tend to miss school because of work that is to be done at home such as fetching water, taking care of livestock and other household activities. Additionally, overall 27% of the students agree that they do not get enough time to study at home. 31% of students also agreed that they find it difficult to manage household chores with their studies. This is especially true for girls, but also affects male students. Moreover, the trend was seen to be stronger in Thakar (ST) communities. Based on learnings from qualitative interviews, this might be attributed to the fact that ST students mostly come from low income families, with livelihoods earned from labour intensive jobs such as working on farms and construction sites and rearing goats.

It was also found that the emotional needs of the students are sometimes not fulfilled at home. Either the parents are inattentive or are unavailable due to work. As per a key respondent, students have, at times, reported feeling lonely and without support. Educators have also stated this as a cause for psychological distress in students in Khed. In such times, the school is often required to step up and support the students, the absence of which might lead to students dropping out.

Parent Needs

As with students, parents also voiced a need for adequate transportation facilities to access higher education, clean toilets, improved sports facilities and improved library facilities. Parents also demanded low cost remedial education in some cases and adequate number of subject specific teachers in other instances. They also expressed a need for higher education institutions, all of which link to improved educational outcomes for their children. Most of the needs that were explicitly mentioned were centred around tangible resources, and few outlined the requirement for improvement in quality of teaching and learning practices.

EDUCATION QUALITY

With regard to student performance, we find that the quality of education in Khed taluka in comparison to other talukas in the district is medium to high based on the Adhyayan Star Nischiti20 data for 2018-19. We find that 78% of students in Khed can read with understanding and 77% of grade IV and V students are able to perform division, which is highest in the district. However, the perspective on the quality of education in Khed was found to be limited, since much of the discussion regarding education quality was focused on either infrastructure or normative aspects of quality related to student performance in scholarship and state level exams. In the case of remedial education in Khed, we see that while some form of remedial education is available, its presence in rural and tribal areas is limited.

Beyond examinations, the relevance of the curriculum also has a direct bearing on the quality of education as the curriculum fails to be inclusive and take into account the previous knowledge of students, particularly students from tribal communities. Focus on the current infrastructure needs such as those relating to improved transportation facilities, adequate number of toilets, functional computers, e-learning facilities, sports and library facilities and services relating to remedial education, was seen across various stakeholders we interacted with in Khed.

20Adhyayan Star Nischiti conducted for ZP schools by District Institute of Education and Continuous Professional Development, Pune (DIET) is an assessment program conducted by the Maharashtra Government under DIECPD department. It is to assess the learning levels of students in Maharashtra across Marathi, English and Urdu medium. The assessments are conducted for students of grades II and V to identify level of competencies in language literacy and Maths skills.
NGO CSR INVOLVEMENT

The NGO involvement in Khed was seen to be present extensively in areas closer to MIDC/urban centres. The interventions were seen to be fewer in number in interior parts of the taluka, especially in tribal and rural areas, away from the census towns. For instance, in tribal areas only 13% of the parents mentioned the presence of an NGO in their child’s school while the overall this was 20%. However, there was a higher awareness amongst the teachers and headmasters of the school. It was observed that the teachers and HMs across the taluka were actively seeking CSR support and were well aware of such an opportunity for assistance.

The beneficiaries of the CSR-NGO support also felt that while NGO presence is helpful, the CSR-NGOs should take into account the needs of the schools before intervening. The beneficiaries felt that the CSR programs were very rigid and were not able to fulfil the needs of the schools adequately. It was also seen that very few long term programs were running in the schools, and aid generally came in the form of one time donations to meet infrastructure needs. This was especially true for areas away from census towns.
RECOMMENDATIONS
**Solutions / Recommendations for CSR**

**Initiate Shuttle services for students through 5-10 year partnership agreements with local governments (panchayats) and community members.** These shuttle services could be led by one or more women staff from the community. Potentially MSRTC/PMPML could be roped in to contribute where relevant.

**Inclusive and need based (financial) scholarship programmes for students pursuing high school and colleges across the taluka.**

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**Key Issues in Khed Schools**

There is a lack of reliable public/low-cost transportation for students to travel in Khed. There is a perceived lack of safety for students, especially female students, while using public shuttle services could be led by one or more women staff from the community. Potentially MSRTC/PMPML could be roped in to contribute where relevant.

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**Solutions / Recommendations for CSR**

**Access**

- As a general rule, all toilets and other hygiene related infrastructure should be built along with rain water harvesting systems to improve access to water - especially in hard to access areas.

- All the toilet solutions, going forward, could be built for water-free/auto-clean toilets.

- A centralised, cluster based book donation-and-exchange program can be initiated to provide access to reading material to students from multiple villages.

- There is an inadequate number of clean toilets in most schools. Low to no water availability is a key reason for out-of-use or unclean toilets. The number of toilets is less than adequate.

- There are no functional libraries, and thus no access to reading material for students, in most of the schools in the taluka.
Solutions / Recommendations for CSR

Partnering with NGOs working on systemic solutions integrating Social Emotional Learning and 21st Century Skills must be encouraged.

Locally contextualised teacher handbooks and videos, which allow teachers to teach using local knowledge should be spread through cluster meetings and trainings.

Supporting innovations that give more voice to community and students to hold schools accountable on quality are needed.

Investment to upgrade cluster resource centres is desirable, to ensure convenient availability of local resources and conducive training space for all teachers.

Grants to DIET for upgrading training centres to a world class level

Key Issues in Khed Schools

Student performance in Khed taluka stands at medium to high when compared to other regions in the district.

Parents and key respondents have outlined that the teaching in the classroom is not contextual and relevant, especially in tribal areas.

There is a presence of corporal punishment in almost all schools, with teachers and parents feeling it necessary to use corporal punishment to discipline a child.

Environmental Factors

Key Issues in Khed Schools

There is a lack of remedial support for some students at home. Additionally, a lot of kids, especially from tribal and migrant communities, do not have access to emotional support at home.

Solutions / Recommendations for CSR

Set up CSR-NGO Cell which allows for NGOs across health and education to learn from each other and collectively solve issues of the communities they serve children for academic activities outside the school.

Key Issues in Khed Schools

Most of the villages do not have ready access to basic health facilities. The PHCs in most villages do not have a doctor and there is a lack of reliable transportation to travel to nearby villages.

Solutions / Recommendations for CSR

Partner with NGOs who do School Readiness Programmes, and work to improve the quality of education in Anganwadis.

Incentivize and sponsor sensitization programmes with Panchayats to ensure there is community support to children, rather than at an individual family level, to ensure a conducive environment for learning.

Prioritization of interventions in tribal areas

It is often cited that compared to the government, CSR has limited reach and resources. Hence to achieve maximum impact, it would be imperative to utilize these limited resources to empower people who need them the most. Thus, based on the experience of our research team, a strong recommendation is to focus on the roll out of interventions mentioned above in tribal areas. To emphasize, barriers to access and likeliness to drop-out is highest there and despite being the most in need, very few or no NGOs are operational in those areas.

Gap between primary to secondary to higher education as a strategic priority

Given the high demands of today's economy and increasingly competitive job market, primary education alone is insufficient to unlock better life opportunities for people from under-served communities. Presently, a high investment and willingness to send the child to high school is observed, but some financial and access barriers remain to bridge the gap between easily available free primary schools and scarce, fee charging secondary and higher education institutes. An effort to build partnerships and intervention strategies focusing on bridging this gap through creative solutions would be of utmost priority.

Systems approach to sustaining each solution

It is well documented that individual interventions targeted at specific problems work well for a while, but do not sustain in the long run. Another aspect arising from the study is that rather than each factor or theme being seen individually, it is combined systemic impact resulting from the interaction of these factors that results in lowered educational outcomes for children from disadvantaged families. Hence the most important recommendation is to ensure that there is an approach of collective action among CSRs to address
these issues as a whole, with the joint resources of everyone, rather than approach them in a piecemeal manner. This would entail the following:

- Host an education roundtable consisting of CSRs, NGOs, government representatives, political representatives and community members in Khed to spread awareness, and create a shared understanding on key issues. Furthermore, one must focus on crowdsourcing resources and solutions from interested parties.
- Form a joint CSR-government collective at the Khed Taluka level to prepare a long term joint action strategy with key nodal officers nominated from both sides to ensure timely follow up on the decisions
- Incentivize a joint strategy of tackling Khed as a system, rather than prioritizing solutions proximal to the field of operations of individual companies.
REFERENCES & APPENDIX


APPENDIX 1: THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS

In order to provide a starting point for this study a literature review was conducted to identify the various recurring factors that affect access to and quality of education in our context. Although this is not to say that problems are universal, patterns from these studies assisted us in constructing the guiding framework for this study as well as our own evaluation tools. In the course of literature review, we came across the following themes:

1. Cost of education - Cost of education is a factor to be considered for families from low economic background, and affects the education of the child in the household. A lack of access to credit may lead to child labour being used as a collateralisable asset to cushion financial shock in a household. There is evidence to show people with lack of access to credit tend to withdraw their students from school earlier than those with access to credit (Jacoby, 1994; Jacoby and Skoufias, 1997; Dehejia and Gatti, 2002 quoted in Beegle et al, 2002 as cited in Reddy et al., 2010). Moreover, even in government schools, teachers often exercise pressure on the parents and students for obtaining resources for school, instead of pressuring the government. (Reddy et al. 2010)

2. Girls’ education - The eldest girl in the household often bears the burden of financial and household responsibilities, and in general, there is a lack of a supportive school environment that girls should continue schooling even beyond puberty. (Ramachandran 2008, Bhagavatheeswaran et al. 2016)

3. Proximity of school - the distance between the school and the student’s home affects whether or not the student completes primary school. In a study undertaken by Ramachandran (2008), it was seen that a school being in reachable distance positively affected the school completion rates for both boys and girls. This effect was seen strongly for boys and very strongly for girls.

4. Transportation - In a study conducted by Tilak (1996), the availability of transportation to and from the school was seen as a significant factor in predicting if a student attends school regularly or not. As seen in the previous heading, being able to reach school is a significant factor in predicting the completion of primary schooling.

5. CWSN education - The government has a mandate to provide quality education and services to Children with Special Needs. This mandate comes in the forms of the 2003 Education For All (EFA) programme, the Right to Education Bill 2005 (and subsequently the Right to Education Act 2009), the Action Plan for Inclusion in the Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities (IECYD) 2005 and the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2006. Despite such mandates, according to the 2003 Census of individuals with Disability, over 90% of the population remains unserved. This population also includes children between the ages of 6-14, and thus, under the purview of the Right to Education Act 2009 (Kalyanpur, 2008). Furthermore, in a study by Das et al (2013), it was seen that nearly 70% of the regular school teachers had neither received training in special education nor had any experience teaching students with disabilities. The needs of Children with Special Needs and the provisions available for them, thus are an important point of inquiry in this report.

6. Prevalence of child labour - In literature, it is seen that child labour has resulted in a trend of lower attendance in schools, and this is particularly true for girls who are employed at younger ages. (Weiner 1996)

7. SC & ST education - children from Scheduled Castes are less likely to enter school and continue schooling, while access to quality education in isolated geographies has proven to be a deterrent for Scheduled Tribe communities. In a study conducted by Sengupta and Guha (2002), it was seen that in Bijnor district in Uttar Pradesh, the rural elite had used superior wealth and connections to provide privileged access to education for their sons, and even though greater opportunities for formal education has allowed small group of Dalits to raise their social standing, the historical relationships between castes stays unaltered (Sengupta & Guha 2002). Furthermore, a study by Wankhede (2001) highlighted that the educational attainment of Scheduled castes has been filled with a lot of variance in Maharashtra in the previous decades. Regarding ST education, though it has been highlighted time and again, no concrete step has been taken to provide locally relevant material to tribal students. (Sujatha, K, 2002). It has also been emphasized that the focus of tribal education should be on quality and equity rather than quantity as has been the case in the past. (Sujatha, K, 2002). Moreover, equity for SC and ST and mainstreaming for the minorities is necessary and missing (Chanana, 1993). It is seen that the Scheduled tribes lag behind Scheduled Castes (another beneficiary of positive discrimination), in all areas including education (Virginius Xaxa, 2001). With such literature, it is necessary to understand how the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes fare in the khed taluka.

8. Availability of teachers - teacher absenteeism, while not a particularly severe issue in Maharashtra, it has been an issue across many other states (Ramachandran, 2008). The study of lack of teachers
Parents’ education levels are directly related to a child being in school. According to Reddy et al. (2010), if the parents are educated, a child is more likely to be in school. However, if the parents are illiterate, there is a higher risk to child’s participation in school. Moreover, neighbours and community members may also discourage children’s participation, pressure which illiterate parents might not be able to overcome. In Maitra and Sharma (2009), it was seen that there is a significant positive effect of mother’s education on enrolment in primary education of both males and females, while father’s educational attainment has a positive and statistically significant effect on the probability of continuing to post-secondary school/college, particularly for males. Effect of household factors with regards to girl education were seen in Sengupta & Guha (2002) as well, and was positively related. Parents’ perception of benefits of achieving cognitive skills imparted through literacy, numeracy and other school knowledge, is also a factor affecting the decision to send a kid to school. (Dreze and Kingdon, 1999).

9. Corporal Punishment - Corporal punishment faced by the child at home and in school negatively affects student mental health, and reports of anxiety and depression among students in more pronounced in youth with family tension (Deb et al 2017).

10. Learning process and quality of education - Although we have witnessed an increase in enrolment across schools, little attention is paid to retention and actual learning. “On the one hand, more and more children are coming into school and staying longer. On the other hand, what they are learning in school is woefully inadequate. (Banerji, R., 2015, Vankhedhe 2001).

11. Discrimination and misconceptions about performance - there are common stereotypes that students from marginalised communities do not perform as well in school as students from upper castes, but evidence shows that many of these students actually do perform well academically. (Ramachandran et al, 2008). In study, it was seen that differential treatment of a child affects the self-esteem and self-confidence of a child. More often than not, it was seen that the teachers “do not appreciate the predicament of children who have to work before and after the school”. Caste and community based stereotypes have a long term effect where the children tend to internalize them and believe themselves to be unable to be literate (Factors influencing successful primary school completion (Ramachandran, 2004). Furthermore, Inclusive education has been a matter of concern, particularly so in Andhra Pradesh and Assam, and is reflected in the language used in classrooms, seating arrangements for mid-day meals and access to water, among other avenues. (Ramachandran et al, 2008). Presence of such practices is an area of exploration for the study.

12. Factors surrounding teacher quality - Teachers’ salaries, absence, working conditions, duties and pedagogical skills need to be assessed, along with an inspection into the larger political and bureaucratic landscape within which teachers operate. For long, the education system has treated teachers as lowly, passive recipients as opposed to implementers of instruction and content. This has consequences on the motivation and mindset of the teachers. (Ramachandran, 2008). Moreover, skill development, competency building, and teachers motivation also need to be strengthened for sustaining educational development (Sujatha, K, 2002). Thus, we see that there is a dire need for active engagement with teachers, as seen in the literature. Exploration of the same in context of Khed taluka is a necessary part of this study.

13. Mid-day meals - Mid-day meals are particularly effective in increasing school participation in rural India, especially among girls. (Dreze & Kingdon 2001, Tilak 1996). Lack of an adequate meal before attending school, what has usually been referred to as short-term hunger, has an adverse impact on the child’s performance in school, her ability to concentrate as well as learn new concepts. In such a situation, the provision of a hot mid-day meal becomes all the more necessary. (Ramchandran, 2008)
