

**How Much We Gained: A Case of U-DISE+**  
(U-DISE Stands for Unified District Information System in India)

By

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## **Background**

It is mandatory for each district of the Country to formulate [Annual Work Plan and Budget](#) under the aegis of the recently launched integrated School Education programme, namely the *Samagra Shiksha* which was also true for the previously launched nation-wide [Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan](#) (Elementary Education for All) programme. The concept of developing district plans was initiated during the World Bank assisted project, namely [District Primary Education Programme](#) (1994-95 to 2000-01) under which 272 districts across 18 states were covered. District Annual Plans are supposed to be appraised first internally at the state level which is in turn appraised by a team of Consultants at the Technical Support Group of [Samagra Shiksha](#) at the national level after which the same is submitted to the Project Approval Board for appraisal, approval, and release of the funds (in installments) to the State Implementation Society. District School Education Plans are supposed to be developed by the District Planning Team by following the plan formulation guidelines but in most of the districts plans are now being developed at the State level which generally lack academic flavour as the same in most of the cases is based on the EXCEL Tables designed by the Technical Support Group of Samagra Shiksha.

Annual Work Plans are exclusively based on the data generated through the Unified District Information System for Education ([U-DISE](#)) which was till recently managed (1994-95 to 2017-18) by the apex National Institute/University of Educational Planning and Administration ([NIEPA](#)). District Information System for Education (DISE) was also initiated under the DPEP initially for the primary education which was subsequently extended to first, upper primary (elementary education), and then to the secondary and higher secondary levels of education and is termed as the most successful and longest initiative (a collaboration of NIEPA, UNICEF, and

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<sup>1</sup> Article is has been written after superannuation from NIEPA in August 2019.

Ministry of HRD) towards strengthening EMIS/Educational Statistics in India. From the year 2018-19, renamed **U-DISE+** is being managed by the Department of School Education and Literacy of the Ministry of Education/HRD technical aspects of which is being managed by the [National Informatics Centre \(NIC\)](#) located in the Ministry.

Till recently, it was a practice to formulate Annual Work Plans based on the current year's data but the same is de-railed since the U-DISE has become **U-DISE+** or the data collection and management work under U-DISE is transferred to the Ministry of Education which is now being managed by National Informatics Centre and Deputy Director-General located in the Ministry of Education. It is also of importance to mention that as of February 2021, data collection work concerning U-DISE 2020-21 which should have been initiated as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 has not yet been started. Even data for the year 2019-20 is not available (in most of the states) and none of the set of 14-publications based on U-DISE 2017-18 and more recent years is made available in the public domain which was a routine practice till recently when the same was being managed by the Department of EMIS at NIEPA. Even U-DISE 2017-18 data in the form of Flash Statistics is yet to see the light of the day (*now released in April 2021 without ritual Foreword & From the V-C's Desk*) but unfortunately, several articles have been published exclusively based on U-DISE 2017-18 data by other agencies other than NIEPA and Ministry of Education (formerly Ministry of HRD) and are available in the public domain ([Recent Trends in India: Contractual Teachers by Vimla Ramachandran & Ganesh Nigam](#) & [School Education in India: Data Trends & Policies, Central Square Foundation](#))

Given the limitations in the educational statistics which was being managed by the Planning, Monitoring, and Statistics Unit of the Department of Higher Education located in the Ministry of Education, U-DISE was initiated in 1994-95 by NIEPA, New Delhi in collaboration with the UNICEF and Ministry of Education at the time the country launched one of the wide-spread programme concerning primary education with the support of the World Bank, namely the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). The collaboration between these agencies is perhaps the longest one in the history of educational statistics in India which survived for almost three decades. Initially, DISE was to cater to the need of the primary level of education which was extended to the entire elementary level of education when the country launched another ambitious programme towards achieving the goal

of universal elementary education through *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* programme which was launched in 2001. Further with the RTE and RMSA, DISE Data Capture Format was modified to meet its requirement but there were two systems, one DISE, and the other SEMIS because of which there were lots of duplicity and wastage of resources. From the year 2012-13, by using one unified format, data from the entire school education, from primary to secondary and higher secondary levels of education is being collected and since then DISE is popularly known as U-DISE or Unified DISE and has acquired the status of the Official Statistics and all the parallel collection of information system in case of school education in India abandoned. Over the time the quality, sharing, dissemination, utilization, consistency of data improved but questions used to be raised about the quality and consistency of enrolment data because of which in the year 2016-17 an effort was made to collect individual student data on 35 parameters in-sync with U-DISE to generate all U-DISE enrolment tables based on student information and its very first year, detailed students records of around 210 million were collected but the whole exercise was discontinued in a year thereafter for unknown reasons. Because of the recommendations of the NEP 2020, it is heard that fresh efforts are being made to re-initiate the student data collection.

Below some of the achievements gained through U-DISE at NIEPA is listed:

#### **Landmark Achievements: U-DISE up to the Year 2017**

- Through the concerted efforts, MIS units have been made operational both at the district and state levels across the country and are equipped with necessary hardware and software.
- The U-DISE has eliminated data gaps as comprehensive information on all aspects of school education is now available over a period of time at all disaggregated levels, such as school, cluster, block, district, state, and national levels.
- Both the district elementary as well as secondary education plans are exclusively based on U-DISE data and annual plans were used to be developed based on the current year data which were submitted to the PAB for appraisal and approval.
- Liberalization of data to ensure that data reaches all data users in a user-friendly mode. A separate online channel was devoted to easy hassle-free downloading of the data and online generation of reports as per the requirement of users on hundreds of parameters.
- What is more remarkable about U-DISE is that it has drastically reduced the time-lag in the availability of educational statistics, which is now down from 7-8 years to about a year at the national level, and only a few months at the district and state levels.
- A set of 15 publications were used to be brought out annually covering both elementary as well as secondary levels of education.

- School Report Cards of an individual school for the period 2005-06 to 2016-17 were made available which also includes a rating of each school based on the 10 RTE parameters.
- Every bit of information collected through the U-DISE was made available to block, district, and state-level MIS units to ensure that data is adequately used where the strong U-DISE software having powerful reporter modules was installed, the officers used to generate all requisite indicators at their own at their desired levels. The data to state-level was provided by the block and district level MIS Officials which has had helped to create ownership and accountability of data.
- U-DISE was being managed by a small team at the national level with support from the UNICEF and Ministry with an annual budget of Rs. 10 million approximately. All the U-DISE websites were hosted in-house in NIEPA for which a special data center was developed which was equipped with necessary servers and other necessary equipment.
- For many years, data was cross-checked by a third party not involved in the data collection and SSA on sample basis sharing of which was used to be shared with all the stake-holders.
- The web-portal may be very attractive but of not much use unless the quality of data has been provided by the respondents which are qualitative in nature. Keeping this in the mind, numerous interactive programmes to discuss Data Capture Format with the respondents, namely school headmasters, CRC and BRC Coordinators, District, and State MIS Officers and other stakeholders were conducted over a period through EDUSAT which was used to be received by thousand and thousand respondents from across the country.
- It was an annual major activity to release the data in a special data release programme which was used to be attained by data users which have helped immensely in creating awareness about the data.

As has already been mentioned that U-DISE from the year 2018-19 is being managed by the Ministry of Education through the NIC, it is hoped that the quality, reliability, consistency, utilisation, sharing, and dissemination of data from the year 2018-19 from its 2017-18 level will further improve in the year that follows. Before U-DISE was shifted to the Ministry of Education, there was a proposal for the national roll-out of Teacher Module as a part of the Extended U-DISE in the form of *Shaala Kosh* in May 2018 which was initiated by the Ministry towards “its efforts to revamp the existing U-DISE system to make it relevant to today’s educational requirements, this was an attempt to develop a comprehensive integration of State MIS Systems”. Before *Shaala Kosh*, the Ministry also had launched *Shala Asmita Yojana* (to replace U-DISE) the task of which was envisaged to be completed by February 2017 but nobody knows its status? In a letter to all the States & UTs on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018, through *Annexure I* concerning *Shaala Kosh*, the following observations regarding U-DISE are worth to mention some of which are also documented in the **U-DISE+** Booklet produced by the Ministry

(<https://udiseplus.gov.in/#/Publication>) at the time of taking over U-DISE from NIEPA is briefly presented below:

**Quality of Data:** *“The current system does not incorporate a comprehensive list of validation checks which results in low data quality”.*

**Ease of Use:** *“The current system is offline and employee a pen-paper format to collect data. This results in yearly data collection exercise which is time-consuming and has monetary implications”.*

**Data Usage and Dissemination:** *“There is huge time-lag between data collection and data usage. The data is currently collected as of 30<sup>th</sup> September and is used next year. This time lag results in usage and **stale data** and thus **inaccurate decision making**. The current system does not provide information to all the relevant stakeholders”.*

**Lack of Coordination and Supervision:** *“NIEPA lacked the requisite infrastructure, **expertise**, and authority for coordinating with officials of the States and UTs to ensure smooth and timely availability of the information. Further, the UDISE was being handled in the project mode by a small team, and data was hosted in a private server rendering it vulnerable”.*

**Lack of Accountability due to Absence of Audit Trail:** *“The data was uploaded in the system by district/block MIS officials who were contractual in nature. In many states, the data entry work was totally outsourced. Hence, there was no clear traceability/audit trail of those who were responsible for the authenticity of the information provided.” “Transfer of official at the cluster, block and district levels further compounded the problem as a result of which the data was never verified. Since there was no accountability, the officials concerned did not take adequate care to upload consistent and correct data, thereby compromising the reliability of the UDISE”*

**Multiple Versions of Data Collection Software:** *“Because of the limitations of UDISE, many states and UTs developed their own MIS systems to collect data required in UDISE DCF. Therefore at the national level, the Department had to contend with two sets of data. Thus, over time, the authenticity and utility of the UDISE gradually decreased and aggregation of data at the national level became difficult”*

**Single DCF for all Categories of Schools:** *“In UDISE there was one Master DCF for all schools irrespective of the category. However, many of the fields were not applicable to a particular category of school. “This created confusion as a result of which there were instances where the data for the relevant school category was wrongly inserted. Consequently, the information provided by the schools suffered from inconsistencies”.*

**Lack of Verification and Analysis of Data:** *“It was mandatory from 2006-07 for all states and UTs to carry out sample checking of U-DISE Data. However, largely due to the lack of proper guidelines, the verification of the UDISE data was hardly being carried out. Bulky paper reports were never analyzed and feedback was not made available to States and UTs.”*

It is unfortunate to observe that even after almost three years of **UDISE+**, no visible improvement is observed concerning most of the above observations from its 2017-18 level. On top of the above, the time-lag which was brought to less than a year at the national level and only a few months at the block, district, and state levels have again started to increase. It was said that “*the time-lag (under U-DISE) results in usage and stale data and thus inaccurate decision making*” is now more true for **U-DISE+** data. Not only the 2017-18 complete U-DISE data (15 publications) is yet to see the light of the day but initiatives made by the Ministry from 2018-19 data collection under **U-DISE+** has further increased the time-lag in data. As of date, data collection for the year 2020-21 has not even been fully initiated (*now initiated in April 2021*), and work concerning 2019-20 data is still going on in many states. For two years, Annual Work Plans through EXCEL Tables under Samagra Shiksha were continued to be based on 2017-18 data which had no such tradition in the recent past.

One of the important visible changes which have been observed is the development of a dedicated portal for the **U-DISE+** but that itself doesn't guarantee improvement with regard to the concerns raised for taking over the U-DISE. It was expected that because of the online portal, data-entry will take place from the school but barring a few Secondary and Higher Secondary schools the same couldn't be achieved simply because only 32.66 percent of the total 1.5 million schools covered under **U-DISE+** have had a computer in the school as against 18.73 percent schools having the internet connectivity. Even only 63.43 and 32.70 percent of the total 39,077 Senior Secondary schools have had computer and internet connectivity in school in 2018-19 (see Table 2). The percentage of schools runs by the Department of Education having

**Table 1**  
**Schools having Internet & Computers: All India**  
**2018-19\***

School Management	Total Primary Schools					ALL Schools				
	Number	With Computer		With Internet		Number	With Computer		With Internet	
		Number	%age	Number	%age	Number	Number	%age	Number	%age
Department of Education	5,21,780	70,349	13.48	14,594	2.80	8,35,488	2,01,006	24.06	67,284	8.05
Tribal Welfare Department	31,435	299	0.95	379	1.21	45,409	3,801	8.37	2,354	5.18
Local body	1,34,882	27,989	20.75	7,557	5.60	1,96,530	73,889	37.60	33,445	17.02
Government Aided	18,556	6,455	34.79	5,260	28.35	84,623	45,068	53.26	32,648	38.58
Private Unaided (Recognized)	89,417	29,592	33.09	21,728	24.30	3,26,228	1,66,836	51.14	1,41,619	43.41
Other Govt. managed Schools	595	98	16.47	29	4.87	1,322	505	38.20	332	25.11
Unrecognized	15,467	2,406	15.56	2,148	13.89	32,366	8,959	27.68	7,787	24.06
Social Welfare Department	948	237	25.00	22	2.32	2,413	1,341	55.57	695	28.80
Ministry of Labor	331	27	8.16	20	6.04	356	30	8.43	20	5.62
Kendriya Vidyalaya/Central School	31	11	35.48	8	25.81	1,566	1,247	79.63	1,313	83.84
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya	0	0	#DIV/0!	0		505	397	78.61	416	82.38
Sainik School	5	5	100.00	3	60.00	64	52	81.25	49	76.56
Railway School	13	3	23.08	4	30.77	80	44	55.00	41	51.25
Central Tibetan School	1	1	100.00	1	100.00	14	11	78.57	10	71.43
Madarsa Recognized (By Wakf Board/Madarsa Board)	10,859	994	9.15	741	6.82	19,150	2,797	14.61	2,048	10.69
Madarsa Unrecognized	2,708	139	5.13	162	5.98	4,886	500	10.23	386	7.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,27,028</b>	<b>1,38,605</b>	<b>16.76</b>	<b>52,656</b>	<b>6.37</b>	<b>15,51,000</b>	<b>5,06,483</b>	<b>32.66</b>	<b>2,90,447</b>	<b>18.73</b>

\*Tables are exclusively based on the raw data downloaded from the <https://udiseplus.gov.in/> maintained and developed by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education & NIC. Conclusions drawn are of the author of this write-up and should not be attributed to the Ministry of Education or any other organisation.

computer and internet facility is as low as 24.06 and 8.05 percent respectively. About 8,35,488 schools (53.87 percent) out of a total 15,51,000 schools covered under **U-DISE+** during 2018-19 are government-managed schools of which 75.94 percent schools didn't have a computer in school; for all practical purposes they are either dependent on cyber café or the Office of the BRC Coordinator where both the internet and computer facility is expected to be available but even these centers in many locations face the problem of uninterrupted (if available) power

supply and bandwidth as most of them at these centers still has got access to only 2G connection. In addition, only 73.86 percent of the total 1.5 million schools had electricity connections in 2018-19. Apart from the schools run by the Department of Education, the majority of schools run by the other government departments including the Local Body Department (1,34,882 schools & 37.60 percent having computers) and Tribal Welfare Department (31,435

**Table 2**  
**Senior Secondary Schools having Computer & Internet Facility in School**  
**2018-19\***

Percentage Schools with	Grades IX to XII	Grades XI to XII	All Senior Secondary Schools
Computers	58.35	71.25	63.43
Internet	45.26	13.35	32.7
Total Schools	23695	15382	39077

\*Tables are exclusively based on the raw data downloaded from the <https://udiseplus.gov.in/> maintained and developed by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education & NIC. Conclusions drawn are of the author of this write-up and should not be attributed to the Ministry of Education.

schools & 8.37 percent having computers) also didn't have access to computers and internet connection. As it seems without strengthening computer and internet facilities in schools across the country, off-line U-DISE was switched to on-line as a percentage of schools with these facilities over the same in 2017-18 do not show any significant improvement. One can easily understand the plight of states where the majority of schools do not have access to the computer in the schools. Three states, namely Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh has a total of 5,16,523 schools imparting school education which is 33.30 percent of the total 1.5 million schools covered in U-DISE+ in 2018-19 which also means that one in every three schools in the country is located in these three states but these schools do not have got computer (89.50 percent) and internet (89.72 percent) connection in 9 out of every 10 schools. The percentage of schools with the computer is as low as 6.58 percent in Madhya Pradesh compared to 11.08 percent such schools in Bihar and 12.53 percent schools in one of the most populous states having the highest number of schools in the Country, i.e. Uttar Pradesh. It would be of interesting to know how these schools would have managed data-entry during 2018-19. It is a moot question to know whether they made data-entry in on-line or off-line mode and also the location where data-entry was made and whether they took school records or filled-in paper DCF to a data-entry point i.e. mostly the BRC; thus forfeiting the basic purpose of developing a paperless U-DISE+. Unlike paper authentication (on DCF) by the school and other higher levels



in the case of U-DISE, **U-DISE+** prescribed on-line verification at each level. It is not known how on-line verification would improve the quality and consistency of data and on what basis block and other higher levels have approved the information submitted by the lower levels in the absence of information on paper? It has also been observed that despite being an online system, schools in most of the locations continue to maintain a hard copy of information fed into the online **U-DISE+** system mostly soft copy of which is provided by the state level MIS by downloading the same from a link provided by the **U-DISE+** national team.

**Table 3**  
**Showing Schools having Computer & Internet Connectivity: 2018-19\***

State	Internet	%age	Computer	%age	Total Schools	%age
Bihar	5991	6.71	9882	11.08	89224	5.75
MP	17386	11.28	10131	6.58	154064	9.93
UP	29751	10.89	34236	12.53	273235	17.62
All India	290447	18.73	506483	32.66	1551000	100.00
Total of 3 States	53128		54249		516523	33.30
					33.30	

\*Tables are exclusively based on the raw data downloaded from the <https://udiseplus.gov.in/> maintained and developed by the Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education & NIC. Conclusions drawn are of the author of this write-up and should not be attributed to the Ministry of Education. Inconsistency in data is observed in Madhya Pradesh where the percentage of schools having internet is higher than schools having got access to the computer.

In most of the other schools, data entry could take have done by the MIS Official either at the Block or District level which have had necessitated visit of the respondents i.e. School Head-Master/Teacher to the BRC Office which might have got access to a computer with electricity and internet connectivity; thus forfeiting the basic reason of developing an online paperless system.

*The current system (i.e. U-DISE) does not provide information to all the relevant stakeholders* was another observation but far from the reality. The beauty of the previous form of the U-DISE before taking over by the Ministry was that every bit of information was available to block, district and state MIS In-charge/Data-Entry operator on his/her own system which was equipped with the powerful reporter and consistency check module which in the new arrangement is completely missing as only limited data now reaches back to the lower levels which are provided by the national level authorities to state MIS which in turn reach lower levels. It was routine to generate reports by the district and block level MIS Officials by themselves by using the U-DISE

Software installed on their terminal that is now made dependent on the higher authorities and feel handicapped which surely would affect the effective and adequate use of data. At the time of taking over, it was said that *“the current system does not incorporate a comprehensive list of validation checks which results in low data quality”* even though U-DISE off-line software have had very strong consistency check modules on hundreds of parameters and was available to all the MIS staff irrespective of a level in the absence of which it is not known how the quality of data under **U-DISE+** in general and enrolment data, in particular, would improve.

Dissemination and free availability of data were some of the strengths of U-DISE. A set of 15 publications were used to be brought out annually which is now completely discontinued. It is strange that nobody raises concerns about the missing publications, not even by the Project Approval Board of Samagra Shiksha. In addition to publications, users were provided raw data and an online portal to generate tables on hundreds of variables (2005-06 to 2016-17) which is also discontinued for unknown reasons. However, a comprehensive data sharing policy is now put in place which has a lot of restrictions on downloading and use of data. Department of School Education & Literacy will use *pseudo code* and school name rather than sharing the actual U-DISE Code for unknown reasons. The Department also reserves the right to deny access to any user with or without any reason? The earlier simple system of data sharing has now been made a bit complicated which may discourage users than encourage using data. As it seems, it is the end of liberalization of the use of school education data initiated in 2005-06 when school report cards were launched. Under the previous U-DISE, it was a usual practice to share dump of the entire data except for sensitive data (contact number, email, etc.) to institutional and other data users but under the new **U-DISE+** system full set of data is not being shared and whatever, data is shared one has to bring it into usable form; thus if 15 users have been provided data, all 15 users will do the same to make the data usable.

Some of the other concerns raised are deliberated below:

**Lack of Coordination and Supervision:** *“NIEPA lacked the requisite infrastructure, expertise, and authority for coordinating with officials of the States and UTs to ensure smooth and timely availability of the information. Further, the UDISE was being handled in the project mode by a small team, and data was hosted in a private server rendering it vulnerable”* which is factually

incorrect. NIEPA has got the adequate infrastructure for the smooth functioning of U-DISE. Yes, the U-DISE at NIEPA was being handled in the project mode by a small team which was the beauty of the system that was evolved over more than two decades. Achievements by a small team had always been applauded at different forums including by the Joint Review Missions of SSA and RMSA. It is glad that a small U-DISE Team could manage the affairs of the U-DISE over a period of time efficiently which the present large team loaded with multiple resources couldn't deliver as envisaged at the time of launch of **U-DISE+**. U-DISE/SDMIS data was never hosted on a private server. A data center was developed at NIEPA where all the servers are located. [www.dise.in](http://www.dise.in), [www.udise.in](http://www.udise.in), <https://student.udise.in> and [www.schoolreportcards.in](http://www.schoolreportcards.in) all are hosted in-house on servers installed in NIEPA. NIEPA doesn't have the expertise is a joke of the day as it has got the best-experienced faculty those who have soiled their hands in playing with the numbers. Is the present leadership more experienced? It would not be an easy task for any agency to bring out a set of 15 publications annually. Time will show whether the new arrangement accepts this challenge or term the existing publications simply not required (nothing has been published as of now). Will it able to maintain and update [www.schoolreportcards.in](http://www.schoolreportcards.in) or the same may also not even found useful. Unfortunately, an institution lacking in expertise was allowed to be engaged for over more than two decades. Yes, NIEPA doesn't have authority to directly deal with the States and UTs but it had never experienced any problem in communicating, coordinating, and dealing with the states which are evident with the fact that even in the absence of the letter released by the ministry before the launch of U-DISE 2016-17, it had successfully collected student data of about 210 million which by no standards is a mean achievement. States treat NIEPA and its Faculty more seriously than any other institution concerning MIS.

**Lack of Verification and Analysis of Data:** *“it was mandatory from 2006-07 for all states and UTs to carry out sample checking of U-DISE Data... However, largely due to the lack of proper guidelines ... the verification of the UDISE data was hardly being carried out. Bulky paper reports were never analyzed and feedback was not made available to States and UTs.”* The statement is partially correct as this was perhaps one of the weak areas of U-DISE. Guidelines to conduct random sample checking of data were provided and are still available at [www.dise.in](http://www.dise.in) because of which at one point of time as many as 27 states conducted such studies and submitted

to the national level summary of which was made available to states and shared which is available in the public domain for five years. However, momentum couldn't be maintained in the subsequent years because of inadequate funds for the same which despite the JRM recommendations, and repeated requests from the states were never been provided in the absence of which slowly the number of states conducting such studies declined. Major findings of studies conducted used to be shared with the states annually (in July) during the annual conference of MIS Coordinators of both SSA and RMSA. It was expected that sample checking of **UDISE+** data across the country by an independent agency will soon be initiated but the task of checking of data is assigned to officers who are part of the system? Is this third-party verification? But, first let us wait for the full 2019-20 data, which is already late by more than a year as most of the states have missed the deadline. Preparation for U-DISE 2020-21 is supposed to be started in September 2020; do states and districts are left with enough time to utilize and analyze **UDISE+** 2019-20 data? Even if the UDISE data of a year is populated next year, the same is not expected to be updated from the schools because of which it will be impossible for **U-DISE+** to become real-time data in the real sense. In the process which is now been adopted, there is no date of reference (*i.e.* 30<sup>th</sup> September), it is said that since it is real-time data, no date of reference is required? This is a departure from being followed over the last more than 50 years. Was it recommended by Experts or a committee headed by an expert, were the states taken into confidence, or was just decided by some individuals without knowing its implications? DISE/U-DISE may be a good case study to know how an institutionalized well-established project can be de-railed at the whims of an individual or two without acquiring any responsibility.

**Lack of Accountability due to Absence of Audit Trail:** *“The data was uploaded in the system by district/block MIS officials who were contractual in nature. In many states, the data entry work was totally outsourced. Hence, there was no clear traceability/audit trail of those who were responsible for the authenticity of the information provided.”* Transferring the U-DISE from NIEPA to the ministry will make the contractual staff regular? Since the transfer, how many of the MIS Officials are made regular? Was it because of NIEPA, the MIS staff are contractual, or because of the SSA Guidelines? Except, in the initial period, that too only in a couple of states, never the data entry work had ever been outsourced, totally a false statement. Bihar has outsourced Block Information Centre with one manpower and one Laptop for **UDISE+**, others

may also have done similar arrangements for **UDISE+** which is mainly because schools are not equipped to facilitate on-line data entry. *“Transfer of official at the cluster, block and district levels further compounded the problem as a result of which the data was never verified. Since there was no accountability, the officials concerned did not take adequate care to upload consistent and correct data, thereby compromising the reliability of the UDISE”* Has the transfer now been stopped? Data was always supposed to be verified first at the cluster level by the CRC Coordinator (100 percent) and thereafter at the block (20 percent) and district level (10 percent). Also, there was a strong in-built consistency check module in U-DISE off-line software which is now missing in the new setup. Even a complete reporter module has not yet been provided. District MIS Coordinators/In-charges have not got access to raw data, unlike the previous arrangement under which every bit of information along with the reporter module to generate ‘n’ number of indicators at district and lower levels were made available. Instead of taking signature (on DCF) at all these levels, the emphasis is now on authentication at all these levels online, which is very tiresome for schools that do not get access to computers. Since data was not fed by the schools onto the online portal, the authentication in most of the cases is being carried out by the Data Entry Operators at the Block level which forfeited the basic purpose of developing an online system. Mute point is to ensure which is key to the quality of data is whether schools have submitted correct data? Which cannot be assured by taking signatures on-line or off-line? How many capacity-building programs, like through EDUSAT have been conducted and how many respondents (HMs, Principals, Head-Teachers, etc.) across the Country have been imparted training before the launch of the **UDISE+**?

**Single DCF for all Categories of Schools:** *“In UDISE there was one Master DCF for all schools irrespective of the category. However, many of the fields were not applicable to a particular category of school. ... This created confusion as a result of which there were instances where the data for the relevant school category was wrongly inserted. Consequently, the information provided by the schools suffered from inconsistencies”*. False statement and questioned the understanding of those who are engaged in **U-DISE+**. Yes, U-DISE had only one DCF unlike 18 DCFs under present **UDISE+** and was used to be printed from the SW for over more than a decade. The previous year’s data, except enrolment, was printed as per the category of school obtained based on the lowest and highest class in a school. As it seems officials

engaged now were initially more confused than the respondents i.e. schools. Printed DCF from SW has had helped immensely in improving the consistency of data. All the schools were supposed to get 2017-18 populated data under **U-DISE+** 2018-19 which is not true for schools that are upgraded in between. Despite the on-line system, the majority of schools got blank printed DCFs which are expected to adversely affect the quality and consistency of **UDISE+** data. Were the filled-in DCF checked by the CRC Coordinators or being checked online only? Even at this stage, there is no alternative to the Printed DCF irrespective of how good schools are equipped with computer and internet connectivity.

**Multiple Versions of Data Collection Software:** *“Because of the limitations of UDISE, many states and UTs developed their own MIS systems to collect data required in UDISE DCF. Therefore at the national level, the Department had to contend with two sets of data. Thus, over time, the authenticity and utility of the UDISE gradually decreased and aggregation of data at the national level became difficult”* False statement, in fact, the quality and reliability as well as utility of U-DISE data improved with each passing year. What more one can expect that PAB used to appraise and approved annual work plans based on the current year's data which has now been badly missed. The current year's plans are no more developed using the current year's data. Every year by now states used to submit data which is nowhere true now, we have already missed a year or two. There is now a gap of a year, 2019-20 data shall be used in 2021-22? In which years work plan? At the national level, states never at any point in time, submitted two sets of data. It is not because of the limitations of U-DISE data, states developed their own MIS systems just because of their state-specific requirements. After the transfer how many states have discontinued their own MIS systems is a mute question that must be answered. The majority of the states continues using their MIS systems despite the **UDISE+** in place and will upload the data by using the Web Service/API onto the online portal. Is this an improvement over the previous arrangement? Certainly not! Previously, we have only one off-line uniform system, now we have more than 25 such systems. States who didn't have the state MIS system previously are also now planning (like West Bengal) to develop one such system so that **UDISE+** requirements are met.

It is expected that improvements as envisaged while launching the **U-DISE+** will be visible in years that follow concerning time-lag, consistency, utilisation, dissemination, sharing, quality,

and reliability of data. Not only this, **U-DISE+** has to maintained overall achievements of U-DISE which may not be an easy task. It is also hoped that the district planning module developed by NIEPA will be implemented in the real sense, for sure not only based on EXCEL Tables which may be resulted only if all those who are engaged in planning shake hands.