Current Status of Primary Education in Karnataka.

Literacy:

Literacy attainments for Karnataka as a whole at present are just above national average. Karnataka’s overall literacy rate is 67.04% (2001 Census). The male–female differential is still high, with 76% male literacy and 57% female literacy. Female literacy is highest in Dakshina Kannada (77.39%) and Bangalore Urban (78.98%), which is far lower than the highest in the states of Kerala, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra. The disparity between male and female literacy rates is highest in rural areas. Rural female literacy in the state is low, with some districts such as Gulburga and Raichur having a female literacy rate of 38.40% and 36.84% only which is well below the national average of 54.16%. Totally 12 districts have female literacy below the national average of 54.16%.

The status of Primary Education in Karnataka is as follows:

Access:

The present scenario in Karnataka is that about 98% of the population has been provided lower primary schools within 1 km distance and higher primary schools within 2 km distance. Primary schools have been started in all habitations with a population of 200 or more (whereas the national norm is 300 population) and in other habitations with less than 200 population a primary school is available within walking distance. Access is therefore no longer an impediment to the goal of universalization. The number of schools, now over 50,000, has increased by nearly 25% in the last 10-12 years.

Enrolment:

School enrollment has increased significantly in recent years through special enrollment drives. In classes 5-7 the increase is nearly 5%, a very encouraging sign. The drop out rate in classes 1-4 came down from about 27% in 1992-93 to about 10.5% in 2000-01. A measure of the progress achieved in this direction in the last few years is the further rapid drop in the number of out-of-school children shown in the chart below. This has been successful due to the massive campaign launched to bring the drop-out children back to school with the help of the community.

Teacher Pupil Ratio (TPR):

The pupil teacher ratio for the state as a whole was about 34 in 1999, which constitutes a great improvement over the situation a few years back. The ratio has deteriorated in the last two years because no recruitments were done. It will again improve with the recruitment of 15,000 primary school teachers in the current year. However, we find great disparities in teacher pupil ratios across districts and among blocks.

The PTRs for Government schools district wise in the state are as follows (1999 figures). While there is one teacher for 46 students in Koppal, in Uttara Kannada and Chickmagalur there is one teacher for half as many students i.e. 23 students.
In order to have an average pupil: teacher ratio of 35:1, Karnataka needs to hire an additional 25,000 teachers to reach a total figure of about 2,26,000 in elementary schools.

There has been a move recently to re-deploy teachers or close down or merge schools as redundant wherever pupil: teacher ratios fall lower than a certain level. What needs to be considered while deciding whether teachers are in excess is the total child population: teacher ratio in the area and not merely the pupil: teacher ratio. If low pupil: teacher ratios are because children are out of school and not in it, then the need is to bring the out-of-school children to school and not to send away the teacher. Teachers need to be made accountable for bringing every out-of-school child to school.

(Source: EduKar document)