

## **Foreword**

It gives us pleasure to share this study focusing 'Low Fee Private Schools' with all of you. This study highlights the significant issues primarily focusing on Low Fee Private Schools. Through this study we have tried to examine Low Fee Private Schools' adherence to the norms laid down in Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Affordability, Equity, Quality and Adherence of the RTE norms are the four areas that have been examined through this study. Study brings out the fact that Low Fee Private Schools are not affordable to the most marginalized sections of society. Quality, in terms of teachers and teaching learning process, is also quite appalling in low fee private schools. Low fee private schools also score badly in terms of equity, specifically gender equity. The study explores the above mentioned areas through the data that was collected from different areas under study, interviews and groups discussion were undertaken.

We are very grateful to all the Partners who have supported us for conducting this study. We would also like acknowledge with gratitude Ms. Anjela Taneja, Prof. Mondira Dutta, Prof. Ajay Kumar and Mr. Anand Singh for their support in completion of this study. We would also like to thank the entire NCE, India team for their efforts in bringing out this publication.

Hope this report contributes towards strengthening our voice in advocating for educational rights of children. Suggestions for improvement are most welcome.

**Ram Pal Singh**  
General Secretary

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## Our Partners Involved in Conducting Study

Name of the Organization	State
Asra Foundation	Madhya Pradesh
Bharat Uday Education Society	Uttar Pradesh
Duddhi Gram Vikas Samiti	Uttar Pradesh
EnBloc	Uttar Pradesh
Gaurav Gramin Mahila Vikas Manch	Bihar
Gram Vikas Avam Samajik Badlao Kendra	Haryana
NCE	Maharashtra
NCE	Odisha
NCE	Delhi
Unnati Sansthan	Rajasthan

# Introduction

## Status of Elementary Education in India:

Education is the biggest enabling factor in human life. Education leads to individual freedom and empowerment, which yields significant societal development gains and makes an individual self-reliant. It is seen as the foundation of society, enabling economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability. Education is, therefore, increasingly being viewed as a fundamental right across the globe and essential for the exercise of all human rights. All individuals are entitled to education. Elementary education forms the foundation for all levels of learning and development. It empowers and equips individuals with analytic capabilities, instills confidence and fortifies them with determination to achieve goal-setting competencies. It, therefore, plays a pivotal role in improving the socio economic condition of the nation. For any country to grow, it is imperative that it has a strong elementary education system.

India has made substantial progress in achieving its elementary education goals over the last few decades, yet there are certain sections of society that continue to remain significantly underserved. Despite the progress made, there remains a lot of ground to be covered for the establishment and functioning of a high-quality elementary education system. Primary research, with the input of various stakeholders in the education sector, indicates the serious gaps in achieving Education for All (EFA) by 2015.

The 86th Constitutional amendment making education a fundamental right was passed by Parliament in 2002. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, a law to enable the implementation of the fundamental right, was passed by Parliament last year. Both the Constitutional amendment and the new law came into force from 1st April 2010. The new law makes it obligatory on part of the state governments and local bodies to ensure that every child gets education in a school in the neighbourhood. The Constitution (Eighty-sixth) Amendment Act has now inserted Article 21A in the Constitution which makes education a Fundamental Right for Children in the age group of 6- 14 years by providing that;

*“The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine”.*

The 12th Five year plan period coincides with the period of the implementation of the Right to Education Act (RTE). India is poised to provide quality education to all children in the country irrespective of gender, caste, creed, religion and geographies. The provisions of the RTE such as the prescription of a pupil teacher ratio of 1:30, the prescribed standards for teacher qualification are creating an enormous need for teacher education of 12.84 lakh teachers.

With the RTE coming into force, there is an expectation that this will finally be translated into provision of quality school education for all children. It is the primary responsibility of the Government to ensure implementation of the Act. Being part of the concurrent list, the Central and state governments are both responsible for ensuring effective implementation of the Act. There has been significant improvement in terms of the number of primary schools, largely due to additional resources made available through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan to bridge existing gaps. The scheme is now being extended to the secondary school level as well. In addition to the Government’s initiative, the private sector has also played a role in improving the state of education in the country and continues to do so.

RTE Act, 2009, a landmark in the history of education in India, universalized elementary education and made it a right of every child towards free and compulsory education. It has defined types of school and has also set norms for every school to adhere to. This Act is seen as a strong instrument to improve the Education in terms of the four A's (available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable).

**Status of Enrollment and Teachers in India:** Enrollment data this year has been heartrending. Data reveals that total enrolment in the schools has decreased. Number of children enrolled in schools is 19,88,99,659 (198 million approx) in 2013-14 which was 19,97,10,349 in 2012-13 (a decrease of more than 8 lakh children). However, the enrolment has increased in private schools while have gone down in government schools. According to 2011 census, children aged 6-14 were 233.52 million (121.96 million male, 111.56 million female). According to DISE report 2012 only 198.89 Million children are in schools. This would mean that 34.63 million children are still out of school! However, various reports presents this number to be differently.

**Table (A): Number of Children Enrolled In Government and Private Schools**

Classes	Government schools		Private Schools	
	2012-13	2013-14	2012-13	2013-14
I-V	86491505	83121238	44481644	45665198
VI-VII	38567724	38839642	25265429	25566596
<b>Total</b>	<b>125059229</b>	<b>121960880</b>	<b>69747073</b>	<b>71231794</b>

**Table (B): Percentage of government and private unaided schools**

Year	Percentage of Private Unaided Schools	Percentage of Government Schools
2010-11	14.22	78.14
2011-12	16.04	76.26
2012-13	16.75	<b>75.81</b>
2013-14	17.4	75.5

## Government and Private Unaided Schools

**Table (C): Percentage Enrolment in Private and Govt. Schools**

Year	Percentage Enrollment In Private Unaided Schools	Percentage Enrollment In Government Schools
2010-11	21.98	67.39
2011-12	24.28	65.01
2012-13	26.65	62.62
2013-14	27.8	61.32

Table B shows year wise percentage of government and private schools in India. Data reveals that percentage of private unaided schools has been rising while percentage of government share to total schools have been decreasing over the years. The numbers of schools have increased from 1431702 in 2012-13 to 1448712 in 2013-14. However, government's share in the total schools has gone down from 75.81% in 20012-13 to 75.51 in 2013-14 (which was 78.15 in 2009-10). Table C reveals that the percentage enrollment of children in private unaided school has also increased while has decreased in government schools.

### Categories of schools in India

The RTE Act defines following types of schools in India. The "low fee Private schools" may fall in the either 3rd or 4th category of Table (B)

**Table (B): Categories of schools in India**

Category of Schools	Basic/Elementary education
1. Government run	Primary (also known as 'lower primary' (grades 1-5)
2. Private aided by Government	
3. Private Unaided - recognized	
Special Category	Upper Primary (also known as 'Junior' or middle') (grades 6-8)
4. Other schools notified by law i.e. sainik, Navodaya, Kendriya vidyalaya	

### Low Fees Private School: A Background

The last two decades have seen a significant growth in private schools and thereby an increase in enrollment in these schools. Its prominent that privatization is not limited to changes in schooling provision in middle or elite class but in an increasing number of countries, are leading to the emergence of private schools for lower income group. Mushrooming of what have been termed as 'low fee private' (LFP) Schools in India for socially as well as economically marginalized groups is one such phenomenon (Prachi Srivastava, 2007). Another concern, that has been practically significant, especially since the last decade, is the advocacy for private schools for the poor and the 'edu- business' that is riding on it (G. Nambissan, 2012). However, critics of LCPSs maintained that they were failing to reach the poorest children, they were providing unregulated education of questionable quality and the expense of fees had detrimental effects on household poverty. Critiques argue that more investments in a high-quality system of public schooling is needed, and financial support for LCPSs was a distraction or at worst a diversion from this, the only sustainable and long-term path to inclusive education.

Lewin , one of the critiques of these low fees private schools, argues the limits to the growth of private schooling in low-income developing countries. He argues that 'demographic and cost factors – including high ratios of income-earning adults to dependent school-age children, income distribution heavily skewed towards the wealthy and a general scarcity of domestic capital – constrain the expansion of unsubsidized private schools that are otherwise reliant on fee collection from lower-income households.'

Some commentators are opposed to the delivery of education- typically regarded as ‘public good’ that produces both collective and individual benefits, through a private market. Others are against charging of school fees, either private or public actors, on the argument that education is a right that should be universal and free at the point of use (UNESCO, 2009). Another important, argument made to critically question the role of private schooling in EFA is that only states are obligate to extend the right to education to all population including marginalized and economically disadvantage groups (Lewin, 2007). Even when a group of experts are convinced that Low Fees Private Schools have become a choice of poor for various reasons, access and quality being two of the most important ones others uphold that in practice, government schooling remains that only education option available to the vast majority of the economically or socially marginalized sections in developing countries. (UNESCO, 2009).

In India, the role of the private sector was recognized even in the 1960s when the Kothari Commission was assigned the task of preparing a road map for school education in the country. In India too, discontent has been exhibited in accepting the role of the private sector. The genesis of private schools have been criticised by many as having an elite nature perhaps lies in the ever increasing inequality in the education system, which has shaped the two faces of the country “India” and “Bharat” — one for the elite and the other for the have-nots.

In India, making profit from education has been prohibited .This raises the question, then how will programs be sustained. There is a demand for allowing “reasonable returns” on the investment the private sector makes toward education so that its efforts are sustained. On the other side, if these reasonable returns are allowed, where will it stop? Will there be enough safeguards to ensure that children from economically disadvantaged sections are not denied education because they cannot afford to take admission in schools? Is 25% reservation in private schools the only answer to address issues related to social inequality?

The RTE Act, 2009 however, also takes into account the role of the private sector in providing schooling facilities. One of the provisions in the Act is that private schools provide at least 25 % of their seats to the weaker and disadvantaged sections [Chp. IV, Art. 12 (c)]. The Eleventh Five Year Plan also proposes that corporate bodies run 2500 model schools. This brings the issue of the role of private schools in providing education to the excluded/disadvantaged sections to the forefront. Another issue that needs to be looked at is the issue of recognition of private schools. RTE act mandates recognition for the all the private schools. Recognition would be granted to schools which abide by the norms laid down in the act. Also, schools which are recognized prior to the commencement of Act need to re recognize themselves on the basis of the set norms.

The private un-aided sector in India is now highly heterogeneous and varies significantly in scope and quality encompassing the expensive and elite to the cheapest Low Fees Private Schools targeting the children of manual labourers. This has initiated lively debates among scholars on various aspects related with private schools, i.e. causes for their mushrooming, affordability, quality of education, equity and sustainability.

Scholars agreed that the deterioration in the quality of public schooling in developing countries has resulted in increased private provision (De, Majumdar, Nohrona and Samson, 2002). Another factor that contributed to the growth of private schools is the non-availability of government schools in the neighborhood.

Baird (2009), Harma (2011) and Srivastava (2007) in their studies have shown that the lack of availability of government schools in neighborhood and English medium education in these schools have contributed in creating demand for low fee private schools, which was successfully tapped by these unregulated low fees private schools.

### **Schools of Thought: Low Fees Private Schools**

While today the buzz word of non-state education providers is “Low Fee Private schools”, we believe that while discussing the role of the private sector, it is important to define the meaning and scope of “low fee Private schools”. In normal terms the non-state providers include NGOs, INGOs, Corporate houses run schools, Philanthropic schools etc.

Defining ‘**low fee private schools**’ is difficult, and scholars have put forward various definitions of Low fee Private Schools keeping in mind the heterogeneity of such schools. Prachi Shrivastava, Defines “low fee private schools were usually characterized as being independently funded through comparatively lower tuition fees (relative to elite or higher fees private schools), financially sustained through direct payments from poorer or relatively disadvantaged households (though not necessarily poorest and most disadvantaged), and independently managed by a single owner or team, usually comprising family members.” In other words, LFPSs may be conceptualized as institutions in which ownership, financing and management are independent of the state, and adding a specification for fees charged within a range that maybe accessible by some among poorer groups. Thus, in her study on Low fee Private Schools in U. P., Prachi Srivastava (2007) defined LFPSs as those that: “saw themselves targeting disadvantaged groups, were entirely self financing through tuition fees, and charged a monthly tuition fee not exceeding about one days earnings of a daily wage laborer at the elementary level.

Rose defines low fees private schools as ‘Private or non-state provision of education conducted by a wide variety of actors, which may include ‘NGOs, faith-based organisations, communities and commercially oriented private entrepreneurs (‘edupreneurs’), each with different motives for their involvement in education’ (Rose, 2007: 2). The type of private school that is currently mushrooming in India is the small school that is started, owned and run by a private individual, or ‘edupreneur’, and funded solely out of parental fee payments. These schools are often run at the lowest possible fee level in order to appeal to as wide a market as possible, therefore being referred to as low-fee private schools. These fully-private, un-aided schools have complete autonomy in terms of management, hiring and pedagogy (De, 2002). It is illegal in India to operate schools for profit (Unnikrishnan vs the State of Andhra Pradesh, Supreme Court of India, 1993). In Unnikrishnan vs the State of Andhra Pradesh, Supreme Court of India stated that private schools should not ‘commercialise education’ and imparts education with the motivation to profit from it. However this does not stop many people from doing so, and cloaking their activities in the ‘rhetoric of social service’ (Srivastava, 2007). One of the biggest proponents of LFPSs, Tooley accepts that though profit making is prohibited under the judgment but in practice this does not seem to encroach upon the actual behavior of the schools except in terms of their reporting of accounts, and, of course, in the associated payment of the bribes (reference) . Further he agrees that ‘running a school even for low-income families was potentially profitable undertaking with estimated profits of about 25% in the year of recognition (establishment). (Reference)

According to Harma, these schools are often run at the lowest possible fee level in order to appeal to as wide market as possible, therefore being referred to as low fee private schools ( Harma, 2010). A few private schools are emerging which attempts to achieve cost low enough even for poor to access. These private schools have complete autonomy in terms of management, hiring, and pedagogy. These LFP schools have been seen as an alternative to the government school in access and providing quality education to the (Tooley, 2001). Though, Unnikrishnana vs State of Andhra Pradesh, Supreme Court of India, 1993 makes it illegal for any school to operate for profit in India, there are numerous schools, both in urban and rural parts of India, with sole motive of profit making.

The marketisation of primary education has created much contentious debate in India and several studies have been carried out by scholars to examine these 'for profit' schools under different parameters. The most popular issues of concerns that generally come under debate are the issues of afford ability, equity, quality and choice.

### **Affordability in Low Fees Private Schools:**

Though there have been researches carried out on Low fees Private schools, there is still a lot of discrepancies in the findings. The first and the most publicized study was carried out by Tooley who studied low free private schools in Hyderabad in the beginning of the decade. In his research, Tooley found that these low fee schools were run at low cost, limited infrastructure and poorly paid contractual teachers. He mentions that that the low fee charging private schools meet the demand of parents by offering quality education in English medium at a very low fee. Also, parents make a choice to send children to private schools because they perceive that private schools offer better quality education (Tooley, 2005).While Tooley asserts, through his research, that 'low fee private' school are the choice of poor as they offer quality education at affordable fee, another study by Harma in 2011 shows that less than one third of the children of unskilled workers attend LFP schools, while 55% of farmer and over three quarters of skilled workers children attend LFP schools. The main reason behind parents not enrolling their children in LFP schools was the lack of affordability of the school fee indicating that though Harma had categorized these schools as 'low fee' the fees are not low enough , at least from the perspective of a large section of the families studied. (cited in Nambissan, 2012). Other scholars have also posed questions on the outcomes of Tooley's research. Geetha Nambissan cites the studies of P. Rose and C. Dyer wherein they have questioned Tooley for not defining 'poor' in clear terms. They claim that the poorest of the people are more likely to send their children to government schools which provide free education, text books, uniform and mid day meals.

Several researches have been undertaken to bring out evidence of the factors that shape the choice of parents of low fee private schools. Integral to the private schooling debate is the concept of choice as it determines whether choice can truly be said to exist between competing schools (Harma, 2011) and integral to the 'choice' is affordability. Affordability, as defined by chronic poverty research center, 2005, means that a family should be able to pay for education of their children, and ideally all of their children to the same standard and at the same type of school, without having to excessively restrict spending in other essential areas such as food, medicine or shelter. Schooling is not considered affordable where family must cut severely from these essential areas, or where loans at punitive levels are taken to pay for it. De et al, in their study accepts that 'many parents do choose to sacrifice greatly in other areas of essential spending to educate their children, often coping with deprivation as a result.'



Talking about affordability of the LFPs, Lewin (2007), writes that since these schools charge tuition fees and have other direct and indirect charges makes it unlikely for the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of the society to send their children to these schools. Prachi Srivastava, (2007) sees financial constraint as the most acute and pervasive factor while shaping the choice of parents. Another research by De, Norhona and Samson(2002), also reiterated that while low fees private schools were accessed in rural and urban India, asset ownership confirmed that private school children came from somewhat better off families. Further, Joanna Harma (2010) cites evidences from her study that demonstrate the unaffordability of even the lowest fees schools to the poorer half of the rural society. She further mentions that ‘the proportion of cash income needed to send the average number of children to private school is simply unmanageable and it is further found that those poor families tend to send their children to low fees private schools tend to have significantly smaller than average family sizes.’ These studies thus pose a question on the affordability of these LFPs to the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of the society. Even if the parents stretch their budgets and send their children to these schools, the proposition poses a question of sustainability for these families. It has been pointed that ‘some low income parents spend up to 50% of their income on the education of their children. There are still poorer parents, who in spite of their aspirations, ‘cannot afford to’ (Centre for Civil Society, 2011, webpage). Srivastava concludes that ‘affordability focuses on immediate economic ability of household to access low-fees private school, it does not sufficiently engage with how long they may be able to access them, or with the deeper and multidimensional aspects of potential exclusionary or push out factors’. Moreover, the studies have also posed questions of sustainability of these schools themselves. Harma and Rose (2012) observed that LFPs were operating for short periods of time, with as many as a quarter of them closing down within 18 months of their establishment.

### **Choice and Low fees Private Schools:**

Braid (2009) believes that the lack of availability of government schools in urban slums led parents to low cost schools. In number of studies ‘distance’ has been posed as an important factor in the choice of the schools, especially for very young children and girls. (Nambissan and Ball, 2011). A range of socio cultural factors interface with mobility strategies and mediate parental decision making on schooling for their children. (Nambissan,2012). Nambissan writes that larger institutional and social contexts appear to shape the choices that low income families make about schooling and hence must be viewed with caution.

Geetha Nambissan points out that ‘the aspiration for English medium instruction among low income parents has been highlighted by pro-LFP proponents as a key factor that drives the demand for low cost schooling. One of the studies (Dixon and Tooley, 2005) brings out preference of ‘English’ education as a major factor that shapes the choice of parents to send their children to private schools. Baird (2009) in his study explained a clear preference of parents to send their children to schools with English medium instructions. He writes ‘the vast majority of low income parents I interviewed believed that if their children can speak English, he or she would be guaranteed a middle-class job’. This inclination towards English medium education is primarily because of the perceived linkages between knowledge of English, middle class jobs, social distinction and elite status. However, the fact that teachers in these schools often do not know English themselves makes the quality of instructions suspect as well as belies parental aspiration that their children will the English language.

## Quality of education in Low Fees Private Schools:

An enormous amount of weightage is being given to the quality of education that is being offered in the schools. Quality is the most critical issue in the schooling. It is because of the aspirations for 'quality' education variously perceived by different social classes that there has been a shift from government to private schooling (Nambissan, 2012). English medium schooling is often equated with 'good education' by low income parents, a fact exploited by players in private sector. Few researchers associate higher quality of education in private school to its lower pupil teacher ratio. Aside from the teacher-pupil ratio, commonly-used indicators of school quality include teacher salaries, teacher experience or training, expenditure per pupil, and various indicators of physical infrastructure. In the Indian context; however, there is a case for focusing on a different list of school-quality variables (Dreze and Kingdon, 1999).

Karthik Murlidharan and Michael Kremer (2008), in a survey of rural schools in some states of India, have highlighted higher teacher attendance and greater teacher activity in private as compared to government schools as indicators of better teaching quality in former. Even if we accept that the PTR and teachers' presence in the classroom is better in private schools, the quality of teachers themselves is an issue of concern. Most of the scholars are in agreement that to reduce costs, private players are appointing untrained, less qualified teachers on contract basis with meager salaries thus raising doubts on the quality of teaching-learning process in low fee schools. Nambissan mentions the fact that studies are silent about the quality of teaching learning process in low cost schools. The teacher, target of budget school advocacy and for making such schools cost effective, has also received inadequate attention. She writes, 'teachers are largely untrained, an increasing number whose basic qualifications are barely beyond secondary/higher secondary school. They are on contract and their salaries are minimal and linked to classroom presence.'

De et al's (2002) study in Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh found that low levels of school income in low fee private schools led to poorly qualified and poorly paid teaching staff. The most disadvantaged groups accessed government schools which were comparatively of even lower quality on basic indicators of facilities and teaching activities. Similarly, in her study of recognized and unrecognized private unaided schools in 10 villages in Uttar Pradesh, Harma (2009) found that 'none of the teachers were trained, that only 34% had secondary schooling, and that they received salaries only up to one-tenth of those in government schools'. Nambissan, citing Lall's study, says that teachers in Lall's study were mainly young women for whom teaching was a 'time-pass' activity, a stepping stone to some other vocation and not a career in itself. Lall further found that 'mostly teachers were mainly graduates; there were some who passed only secondary school. Very few were trained teachers. They were paid very low monthly salaries ranging from Rs. 400-2000' (Lall, 2000)

Prachi Srivastava highlights a very important concern related with teachers of low fee private schools. She writes, 'approaching quality education from an integrated social justice approach would have to ensure that not only are the children from disadvantaged backgrounds provided with equitable basic resources, a key component of which consists of teachers, but also that teachers' basic rights of fair wages are protected.'

The principle that competition between private and public schools drives up quality across the entire education system has not been rigorously tested in empirical research (Day-Ashley ,2013). This is true not only for whether competition leads to better quality LCPSs, but also for whether it leads to better-quality government schools (i.e. the 'system-wide effects' of competition). For some, these market-based arguments do not apply in developing country settings, where private provision is generally a supplement (rather than a competitor).

Researchers have attacked LFP schools in their quality of provision. While one of the studies shows an unclear picture of the LFP school quality, calling into question the private school advantage (Bashir,1997, cited in Harma,2011) another study found that in the new private school, quality remains largely ignored. Srivastava found that head teachers and managers were often neglectful about quality matters, expressing disdain for the views and suggestions of their own teachers and clients alike. Dreze and Gazdar found that 'private school teachers are poorly trained'. (Harma, 2011).

### **Concerns around Equity in Low fees Private Schools:**

Equity is a serious concern where basic services are to be delivered through market. (Hirschman, 1978). Maitra (2011) found the gender gap in private school enrolment in India was twice as large as that in public schools, worse among younger children and increasing over time in rural areas. Where found, gender inequality in private school enrolment is typically attributed to a selection bias towards boys – that is, low-resource households that cannot afford to send all of their children to private schools choose to enroll boys over girls (McCloughlin,2013). Macro level data indicate that going to a private school is a mark of social privilege and that, for example, rural Schedule Caste females are very unlikely to find themselves in a private schools (De, Norhona and Samson,2002).There were also examples of 'gender bias with the boy in private school and the girl in the government school'. The bias was even stronger in rural areas with majority of girls attended government schools and most boys in private schools. Very vulnerable families who were trying private schools at the bottom end of the spectrum, initially often sent all their children to government school. When they found they were making little progress, they might take one or more children out and put them into private schools. The privileged ones were often boys. These finding brings out 'equity' as a matter of serious concern in the low fee private schools.

The push towards education privatization has become more apparent in the last two decades, globally and in India as well. Reviewing of literature gives a picture that Low Fee Private Schools have become a phenomenon both in urban as well as rural parts of the country. Few researches show that these schools can be a potential alternate to the increasing demand of education among parents where as others strike out this option as they see these for profit private schools as schools with low quality of education, exclusionary in nature and are not sustainable financially. However, enrolments in private schools have increased significantly. Countries such as India have experienced active participation of the private sector in education. The proliferation of low fee, for profit private schools and shadow education throughout India are clear manifestations of push toward privatization of elementary education. The expanded role and participation of the private sector in education provisioning, funding, and policy making are certainly influencing the thinking of post 2015 education agenda, its financing and governance. Deeper analysis is, therefore, needed

to present an alternative view and effectively engage in defining a financing and governance framework for education agenda that is equitable and inclusive.

## **Rationale**

Low fee Private Schools have been growing, especially in developing countries. There are debates around the mushrooming of the private schools in terms of quality of education that they offer, Equity, Affordability and role that it can play on universalization of education.

In India, the enforcement of RTE Act by amending the constitution was a result of long journey of advocacy. India being the country of maximum number of illiterates (almost 35% of the world) has a responsibility to educate its children as a constitutional obligation. Also as per the planning commission report we have almost 35% population living below poverty line. Hence the poor population cannot afford to send their children to fee charging schools. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act) came as a universal solution to all children to realize the right to education. RTE Act also stresses the need of quality in elementary education and thus talks about full time trained teachers and a set of norms of infrastructure in the schools. Besides this, the RTE Act further envisages the issue of nondiscrimination, child friendly education, no corporal punishment, gender and other child friendly provisions. It is, therefore, a vast majority of this country still looks at RTE Act as a universal solution to out of school children and universalization of elementary education in India. The RTE Act also expects the private schools to play a significant role in unreached area hence there are certain regulatory mechanisms and norms for private schools to serve the unserved population.

RTE Act has set norms for private schools as well which addresses many issues related to quality ( for eg. norms regarding teachers), equity ( no child can be denied admission,25% reservation etc), affordability ( right to free and compulsory education). By the initiation of RTE Act, Private Players have been knocking the door of Apex court of India for getting the provision of 25% to be waived off. However the Apex court did not agree to it. There are mixed experiences from various corner of the country regarding admission, schooling and adherence of RTE norms. Hence it becomes important, at this juncture, to study the adherence of private schools to the norms that has been set to maintain the quality and equity in elementary education. is worth studying the prevalence and working of private schools.

Though there have been studies conducted by various scholars on different aspects of LFPS, not many studies study the adherence of private schools to the RTE norms

Also the 12th five year plan is in operation since last year. It is high time to see the impact of policy provisions for non-state actors and new economic policy. Since 31 March 2013 happened to be the cut of date for implementation and enforcement of RTE rule in the states this study will play a pertinent role in finding the adherence “low fee private schools”. Also the RTE Act has been notified for last three years it will be a great experience to see the regulatory bodies and mechanism in place.

## Objectives of Research:

- To study the adherence of provisions/norms set under RTE Act 2009/Rules of states.
- To understand the cost of education in 'Low Fees Private schools', including direct and hidden cost,
- To understand the process of admission and process of evaluation.
- To study the recent experiences of children and parents in terms of child rights, discrimination, corporal punishment etc. as enshrined in the RTE rules
- To develop recommendation for making the private schools adhere to the norms of RTE Act, 2009 and for universalisation of elementary education.

## Methodology:

The given research is an exploratory research. Both quantitative and qualitative ways of data collection were undertaken. The study was conducted in the seven states of India namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra and a total of eleven districts were covered in the study.

The districts were chosen on the basis of accessibility of partner NGOs of National Coalition for Education (NCE) in the states which the study was conducted. (List of districts covered is given below in the table.)

States	Districts
Bihar	Rohtas, Patna
Uttar Pradesh	Sonbhadra, Meerut
Rajasthan	Udaipur
Madhya Pradesh	Khandwa
Maharashtra	Mumbai, Thane
Odisha	Khurda, Balasore
Delhi	Nazafgarh

Data was collected with the help of partners in all the above mentioned districts. Four tools, namely interview schedule for school (headmaster/manager), interview schedule for parents whose children are in private schools, children from private schools and teachers from private schools were prepared. The tools were piloted and finalised. An orientation of field investigators was done and the tools were also fine tuned with their help. After the orientation, the partners were asked to undertake the data collection in their coverage areas.

Focused group discussions were undertaken with teachers, parents and children to understand issues in low fee private schools. Twenty two focused group discussions were undertaken. Focused group discussion (FGD) brought out different issues that parents, children and teachers face in private schools in terms of Infrastructure, Fees, Salary, Corporal punishment etc.

**Sampling:**

Seven states were chosen to undertake this research. In every state, one district was covered (in few states two districts were also covered as the accessibility was better in those states) and each district, eight schools. Four schools from the urban and four schools from the rural were chosen for conducting the study. In each of the schools head teacher, one parent, children (one or two depending on the availability), and parents (one or two depending on the availability).

Number of states covered	Seven
Number of districts covered	Eleven
Number of schools covered	Ninety two
Number of parents covered	Ninety
Number of teachers covered	Eighty Eight
Number of children covered	Ninety two

**Process for Data Collection:**

Data was collected by the field investigators who were trained and oriented in the tools that were used for collection of data. Investigators identified the private schools in their coverage area, four schools from rural and four from urban and started their data collection. Most of the investigators weren't provided with the kind of data they demanded from the schools. Investigators even had to change the school as they were not allowed even to enter the school when the manger got to know that they were there to conduct study. One of the investigators from Patna, Ms. Prateema shared her experience where she visited five schools and none of them allowed her to enter. She again identified other schools and after trying a lot, the head teacher agreed to giving her data of school However, she was not allowed to verify if the data that provided was true of not. This was case with many of the investigators. However, finding parents and children from the school wasn't very difficult. Most of the investigators interviewed outside the school itself. One of the interviewers interviewed the children in the presence of head teacher because of which the interview didn't bring out data that was required.

As mentioned above, twenty two Focussed Group Discussions (FGD) were undertaken with parents, teacher and children. FGD was organised with the help of a partner of NCE. In the FGDs, teachers, parents as well as children participated and shared their experiences and concerns in private schools.

Data, both qualitative and quantitative were compiled and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Verbatim has also been used.

# Through the lens of RTE Act, 2009.

Present chapter deals with the data collected from the field. Data was collected through interviewing school head teachers/managers, teachers from private school, parents whose children are in private schools and of children going to private schools. Focused group discussions were also organised with teachers, parents and children in order to have an in-depth understanding regarding the functioning of private schools.

This chapter starts with the socio-economic profile of parents and children who are in private school and further discusses the parameters on which schools need to abide to as per the norms of RTE Act, 2009.

## 1. Profile of Parents

Type of engagement	Percentage
Business/Service	54.8
Farmer	22.5
Daily wage labourers	22.5

	No	Yes
Land	40.5	59.4
BPL	86.4	13.5
Any vehicle	40.5	59.4
Gas connection	29.7	70.2
Electricity	16.2	83.7

### Parents Economic and Educational Profile

Table 1.1 shows the economic engagement of parents (who send their children to private schools). Data reveals that 54.84 percent of parents who send their children to private schools are engaged either in business or are in service. It was found that these services were middle or low level (in terms of income) ranging from being a teacher, nurse, government employee as a support staff and government driver. Another 22.58 percent of parents are farmers and 22.58 percent of parents are employed as daily wage labourers. It can be observed that most of the parents who send their children to private schools have a regular income. Only 22.5 percent of parents are those who do not have a constant source of income and work as daily wage labourers.

Table 1.2 reveals that almost 60 percent of the parents own land. Parents owning land were mainly from the rural areas and most of parents who do not own land are from urban area. Further, 86.49 percent of the parents do not belong to the Category of Below Poverty Line (BPL). Almost 60 percent of the parents have a vehicle of their own. Here, data reveals that higher percentage of parents from rural background has cycle where as from urban had motorcycle as their vehicle. None of the parents had a car as vehicle in their house.

It can be interpreted that most of the parents whose children are enrolled in private are those above poverty line. The table highlights that most of the children enrolled come from financially better off families, and excludes children from weakest sections.

Present study also tried to explore the educational background of parents whose children are enrolled in private schools. Table 1.3 gives the educational background of parents who send their children to private schools. Data reveals that high percentage of parents, 64.86, have attained educational standard above secondary level. Another 27.03 percent of parents have completed their upper primary. Small percent of parents have completed their primary education only. This could mean that parents, who have received education, come from a relatively affluent family.

**Table 1.3. Educational of parents**

Educational level	Percentage
Primary	5.4
Upper Primary	27.0
Secondary and Above	64.8
None	2.7

Table 1.4 brings out the family size of children who attend private schools. It can be seen that almost 70 percent ( 3.03%+ 33.33% +30.30%) of children come from family which has size not more than 5. It can also be seen that percentage of children coming from family goes on decreasing as the family size increases.

**Table 1.4 Family Size**

Number of members in family	Percentage of families with given members
3	3.0
4	33.3
5	30.3
6	12.1
7	9.0
8	9.0
10	3.0

Affordability of private school also depends on the size of the family that a child comes from. When the family is small, it can manage to send their children to private schools but when the family is large, it becomes difficult to pay for education of more number of children.



## 2. Teachers in Low Fees Private Schools

The implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 requires the recruitment of a large number of teachers across the country in a time bound manner. In spite of the enormity of the task, it is desirable to ensure that quality requirement for recruitment of teachers is not diluted at any cost. It is therefore necessary to ensure that persons recruited as teachers possess the essential aptitude and ability to meet the challenges of teaching at the primary and upper primary level. RTE Act has laid down criteria for eligibility of teachers for teaching in schools. As teachers' qualification and training are vital factors contributing to the quality of education in schools, it was important to study the educational as well as professional qualification of teachers in private schools. Table 2.1 shows the educational qualification of the teachers teaching in low fees private schools under study. The information was provided by the school (head teacher/manager).

Table 2.1 **Educational qualification of Teachers** (as provided by the head teacher/manager of school)

Qualification	Percentage
BA/BSc	39.9
MA	25.2
12th pass	20.6
MBA	3.2
Bed	7.3
D Ed	3.6
Total	

39.9% of the 218 teachers teaching have completed a bachelor's degree in arts or science, and another 25.23% completed a master's degree. It can be seen that more than 20 % of the teachers teaching in these private schools had only completed high school (12th pass).

Only minuscule 7.34% of the teachers have completed a Bachelors degree in Education and another 3.67% have a diploma in Education.

Table 2.2 shows the responses of teachers who have been interviewed from the schools under study. Data shows that 60% of the teachers said that they do not have any professional qualification. Table 2.3 also shows that 13.3% of the teachers have B Ed degree (as teachers responded B. Ed. as their educational qualification). However, it can be seen that only 20 percent of the teachers have their B. Ed. degree and another 20% have Diploma in Education. 60% of the teachers interviewed did not have any professional qualification to be eligible to become a teacher in school.

Table 2.2 **Professional qualification**

Qualification	Percentage
B Ed	20
D Ed	20
No Professional Qualification	60

Focused group discussions also brought out similar facts. Teachers were asked about their qualifications, most of them didn't have qualifications as per the requirements (Table 2.3). Of the nine teachers who were interviewed in the focused group discussion, seven didn't have any professional degree (B Ed or D Ed) as required under the norms of RTE Act.

### **Teachers Training**

Another data that was made available by the school was about how many teachers have received any kind of teachers training. Head masters/ managers of the schools made data (Table 2.4) available for 206 teachers of which only 20 teachers (9.7%) have received teachers' training whereas more than 90% ( 186 teachers) have not received any kind of teachers training at all.

### **In service Training**

On being asked about whether there is a provision of in service training, 67.5 percent of head teachers/ managers responded no, while 25 percent head teachers/ managers responded yes. (Table 2.5) 7.5 percent of head teachers/ managers did not respond to the question.

While the teachers were asked whether they have received in service training, 26.7 percent of them said that they have received in-service training. More than 70 percent of teachers said that they haven't received any in-service training. (Table 2.6).

On being further enquired about their opinion of requirement of in-service training, for teachers, 66.6 percent of the teachers agreed to the importance of training where as 33.3 percent of them responded that they do not require any training (Table 2.7). Further, data also revealed that teachers who were of the opinion that that they do not require any training are the ones who have never been trained and teachers who were of the opinion that they require training were the ones who have earlier received training. This could mean that even if 33 percent of teachers think that they do not require training, it could be understood or interpreted as their limited understanding of the benefits from trainings.

**Table 2.3 Educational qualification  
(as responded by teachers interviewed)**

Qualification	Percentage
BA/BSc	33.3
MA/MSc	23.3
MBA	3.3
12th	26.7
Bed	13.3

**Table 2.4 Received teachers training**

Yes	20	9.7
No	186	90.
Total	206	

**Table 2.5 Provision of in service training**

Yes	25
No	67.5
No response	7.5

**Table 2.6 Received in service training**

Yes	26.7
No	73.3

**Table 2.7 Do you think training is required**

Yes	66.6
No	33.3

## Teachers' Salary

Salary of teachers in low fee private school has been discussed in few studies and also seen as the prime factor which keeps the fee at 'low' levels to make these schools affordable. Table 2.8 shows the salary that teachers from the studied schools receive. 43.3 percent of teachers receive salary between 2500-4500 (91 percent are from urban area), 33.3 percent receive salary between 500-2500 (mostly for rural area). Only 10 percent of the teachers receive a monthly salary of more than 6000, all of which are from urban area.

While their counterparts in government schools receive a much higher salary as compared to salary in private school, well trained teachers are recruited in the government schools. With the kind of salary paid to the teachers in private schools, no qualified trained teachers see their future in private schools. Even if there are few teachers who are qualified and trained, interview with them reveals that all of them are interested in joining a government school and private school teaching is just an interim arrangement for them.

Focused group discussions brought out many issues concerning salary of teachers. One of the teachers shared that their contract ends at the starting of vacation and hence do not receive the salary for the vacation period they are paid the salary resuming post vacation, from the joining date onwards. It was also shared that even if leave for one day is availed, it is deducted from their salary. Sharing about the abysmal working conditions, one of the teachers commented that they work on daily wages. It was also informed by a teacher that though students are charged fees in vacations, teachers are not paid. One of the trained teachers shared that salary is irrespective of teachers being trained or untrained. On being asked about the salary of teachers in his school, he replied that it ranges from 3000-5000 rupees a month. He further added that if a teacher complains regarding anything, he/she is asked to quit the job.

An interesting phenomenon that came out regarding the salary was that on record, the salary of teachers is much higher compared to the amount which teachers actually receive. One of the teachers shared that she receives 32000 Rs in her account and has to return it to the management after keeping 3000 Rs, which is her actual salary. Confirming the situation, a teacher from another school shared it to be rampant phenomenon that teachers are asked to return money to the manager after receiving it in their account.

It was also informed that teachers with professional qualification (like JBT and B Ed) are made to sign two registers (one which has name of all the teachers of the school and another which has names of those teachers only who have professional degree). He shared that the managers inform teachers regarding this before the appointment itself. Another teacher confirmed that most of the schools do it. A driver of school bus (who was present in the discussion) added that even drivers and caretakers were given 16,000 and

Table 2.8 Salary of teachers

<b>500-2500</b>	<b>33.3</b>
2500-4500	43.3
4500-6000	10.0
6000 and above	10.0
10,000 and above	3.3
Total	

were asked to return 8000 to 12000 (depending on the agreed salary) immediately. Driver shared about the receptionist of the school had similar complaints. When inquired about yearly increment, teachers informed that increments are never offered and that even if there are increments, it's for teachers who are close to the principals/managers. Increments made in salary were found to be ambiguous.

### **Teachers' Eligibility Test**

RTE Act mandates every teacher (who have joined after the commencement of RTE act) to pass a Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) for teaching in any elementary school. It was found that none of the teachers interviewed had their contract from the schools so whether they have been teaching before the commencement of this Act or have joined after the commencement is ambiguous. However, if there are no contracts with the teachers, clarity on their requirement of passing TET is required. If schools are unable to prove appointment of teachers before the commencement of the act, teachers would require passing TET.

Table 2.9 shows that 94 percent of the teachers in private schools have not passed TET and another 3.3 percent did not respond to it. While collecting data, there were teachers who weren't even aware about TET and therefore did not respond. Data reveals that 2.7 percent of teachers said that they have passed the teachers eligibility test (Table 2.9). In the FGDs teachers when asked about TET being eligibility, many weren't even aware about it.

**Table 2.9 Teachers Eligibility Test**

Yes	2.7
No	94
No resp	3.3

### **Problems faced by teachers in Private Schools**

Study also highlights the problems faced by teachers in low fee private schools. Interview with teachers brought out that for 57.14 percent of the teachers, temporary nature of employment is seen as highly problematic and another 16.7 percent of teachers see it as problematic. 13.3 percent of teachers see temporary nature of employment as problematic at times and 16.7 percent of teachers do not see temporary nature of employment as problematic at all. (Table 2.10)

FGD also substantiated this data and brought out the severity of this problem more strongly. Teachers recounting their experiences of working in private schools shared that temporary nature of employment is extremely problematic. As mentioned earlier, teachers informed that they are not paid for the vacation as they are not permanent in schools. Also, they are not given any contract and are not provided with an experience letter for the time they are employed in schools. They are not even provided with the salary slip. Sharing about her problem, a teacher complained that she required two years teaching experience for applying for admission in B Ed and while she asked the school principal to provide with an experience certificate, she was totally denied. Further she added '*principal to apne mann ka he sab kuch karti hain, humse itna kaam karwati hain, jo chahti hain wahi hota hai par kam se kam humein kaam ka certificate to dena he chahiye*'. (Principal act the way she wants. she makes us work the way she wants but at least an experience certificate should be provided).

Table 2.10 What are the problems faced by teachers in private schools

	Highly problematic	Problematic	Problematic at times	Not problematic
1. Temporary employment	57.14	16.7	13.3	16.7
2. Less salary	57.14	26.7	10.0	10.0
3. No benefits like medical insurance, pension	53.57	36.7	3.3	10.0
4. Less number of Leaves	21.43	13.3	16.7	50.0
5. Large classes	63.3	0.0	20.0	17.7
6. No grievance redressal	10.71	30.0	13.3	46.7
7. Managements/principals autocratic behaviour	73.3	0.0	16.7	10.71

Another problem that teachers shared was that of less salary. 83.84 percent of the teachers see less salary as highly problematic or problematic. As discussed earlier, meager amount paid as salary is a point of concern shared by most of the teachers in focused group discussion as well.

Data also reveals that no benefits like medical insurance and pension is also seen as highly problematic for 53.57 percent of teachers and problematic for another 36.7 percent of the teachers. While the investigator tried to ask teachers about such benefits in focused group discussions, one of the teachers said '*jab salary he nahi de sakte to baki kya he denge. Hum to ye sab umeed bhi nahi karte*' (When not even proper salary is being paid to teachers, what else can they provide. We don't even expect it from them (schools). Not having a grievance redressal has also been seen as highly problematic or problematic by almost 50 percent of teachers and 13.3 percent as problematic at times.

### **Autocratic Behaviour of Principals**

Regarding the autocratic behaviour, more than 73 percent of the teachers replied that it's highly problematic. Teachers in discussion shared that even if they have some problem, principal/manager are not concerned about it. One of the teachers shared the experience about a teacher facing problem with her fractured leg. She was not being able to use the stairs for going to upper floors to take classes. On requesting process the principal to shift her classes to ground floor temporarily, principal spontaneously replied '*Classes ghar par he bhejwa doon kya?!*' (should I send the class to your home?!).

Regarding the freedom that teachers get in schools in terms of deciding teaching learning process, teacher complained that before the session starts they are given a timetable which has day to day plan of teachers. The timetable has the number of chapters and its name written, on a daily basis which every teacher has to follow and in case of deviation, teachers are answerable to the principal. In such case, teacher replied, they become a machine and interest in teaching is totally lost. Further complaining, teachers shared that School give no space to interact with students, and that they hardly have space to talk about vision, hobbies and other such things. Hence, they are unable to motivate children. 'There are many books that needs to be completed, which sometimes aren't even required'; said one of the teachers.

### **Overburden of work**

Few other concerns were also raised by teachers in the focused group discussion regarding problems they face. Sharing about the overburden of work teachers informed that they are overburdened which hampers their performance in classroom. When asked whether teachers have made combined efforts to solve the problem by confronting principal, she replied that it's difficult as principal never listens to anyone. She never cares about what others have to say about it (*principal to apne he mann ka karti hai*). It was also shared in the discussion that there are no contract between teachers and school which makes employment of teachers at principal's discretion. Sharing about the overburden, another teacher informed that most of the schools have appointed just one teacher for each class till standard fifth. It was informed that no separate subject teachers were appointed even when eight subjects are taught in fifth standard.

It was also informed that teachers are supposed to complete other administrative works after the completion of classes. *"There are more than 100 notebooks that need to be corrected in a day for which an additional 3 to 4 hours are required. Teachers are not permitted to carry notebooks to their home so they are not left with an option but to stay back in schools till the completion of work"*. Said Ms Minu (a teacher) Further she added that due to extra work, teachers have to complete it during the class hours which hampers the time spent on teaching.

It was also found in the study that teachers are sent for conducting surveys of children who could be admitted in the schools, especially during vacations. While a teacher was on internship in a government school, she was given a responsibility of surveying out of school children with the purpose of enrolling them in government school. She shared her experience that many parents did not open the gate thinking that she was from private schools. Many of the parents responded that they do not want admission in private school and so don't even want to open the gate. On being convinced that she was from government school and was doing a survey, parents allowed her to enter! Another teacher shared her experience and said that even if one gets some free time or a holiday, teachers are asked to go to the community and market for the school.

### **Temporary Nature of Employment**

Another problem that was shared in FGDs was that of their temporary employment. Teachers shared that they are not given any contract and are not provided with an experience certificate for the time they teach in schools. They are not even provided with the salary slip. Sharing about her problem, a teacher informed that she required two years teaching experience for applying for admission in B Ed and while she asked the school principal to provide with an experience certificate, she was totally denied.

Discussions brought out various issues faced by teachers in LEPS. Insecure and unfriendly environment has been vehemently criticised by teachers.

### 3. Abysmal state of Infrastructure

There are several studies which states that there exists stark contrast in satisfaction levels between students attending schools with good quality infrastructure as compared with those in schools with poor infrastructure. Also infrastructure is one of the four indicators of Educational Development Index which makes its pivotal for better learning environment for children. For achieving quality education for all, infrastructure also plays a major role. RTE Act has set certain norms which is mandatory to abide by all schools including private schools as well.

Data on infrastructure has been provided by the managers/head teachers of the school. In most of the cases, the investigator was not allowed to enter the school and so had to rely on the data that was presented by the head teacher/manager of the school. However, having a focused group discussion with children, parents and teachers brought out different realities concerning the infrastructure of schools.

Table 3.1 shows the responses of head teachers/managers of the school regarding infrastructure of their schools.

Boundary wall	No	13.3
	Yes	86.7
Playground	No	20.0
	Yes	80.0
Functional toilets for girls	No	20.0
	Yes	80.0
Functional toilets for boys	No	00.0
	Yes	100.0
Drinking water facilities	No	0.0
	Yes	100.0
Ramp	No	56.7
	Yes	43.3
Library	No	33.3
	Yes	66.7
Staff rooms/offices	No	66.7
	Yes	33.3
Multi grade classes	No	86.7
	Yes	13.3

**Boundary Wall and Playground:** It can be seen from Table 3.1 that 86.7 percent of the school studied had boundary wall and 80 percent of the schools have play grounds. However, in the focused group discussions with the children, it was found that though their schools have playground, its size is significantly small that it cannot serve the purpose of a playground. It was also mentioned in the observations by the investigators that schools are run in small buildings without boundary wall.

**Functional Toilets:** Data reveals that 80 percent of the schools reported having functional toilets for girls and 100 percent reported having functional toilet for boys. On further inquiries from children about the toilets in their schools, girls informed that they have toilets constructed in their school building but the state of hygiene of the toilet is appalling. They further added that they cannot use the toilet while in school at all. Few girls complained that the boys' toilets in their schools are also very unkempt. A group of girls shared that in their school boys toilet is next to the canteen which makes it difficult for them to even sit at the canteen!

**Drinking water:** Head teachers responded that 100 percent of the schools have drinking water facility. In this case too, focused group discussion brought out some further striking realities. Girls from one of the schools under study informed that though there are water taps available, water tanks are very unclean. One of the girls shared her experience of finding a lizard in her water tank. Another girl shared that there are always insects found in the tank. It was also shared by a boy that everyone in school carries their own water bottle as the water in the tap is very dirty. This was also an observation by the investigators for this study. 70 percent of the investigators observed children carrying their own water bottle.

**Library:** As per headmaster's responses, 33 percent schools have library and only 33.3 percent of schools have staff room. Regarding multi grade classes, 86.7 percent of the head teachers/managers said that they teach one class at a time.

Through discussions it was found that infrastructure of low fees private schools are in a bad state (though it might look impressive at the first glance). Basic facilities like having a clean toilet for boys and girls have also not been provided by these schools. Schools are run in a very small and congested space. Most of the schools visited by investigators were shabby and Underconstructed.



Building of a Low Fee Private School



Classroom of a Low Fee Private School

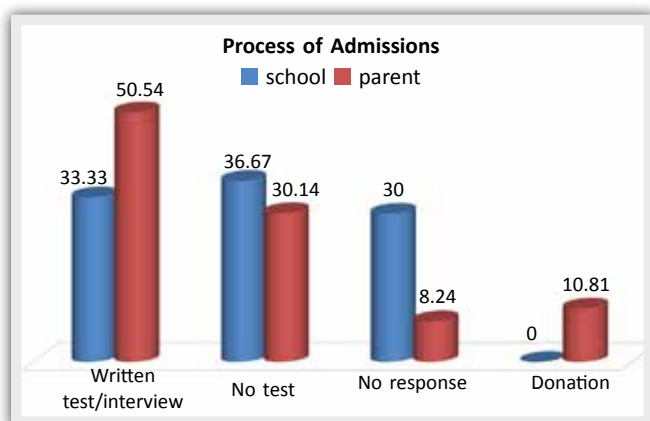


## 4. Functioning of Private Schools

Present section deals with the process of admission followed by schools under study. It also further looks at the process of evaluation and the text books used in these schools. Section 13 of RTE act 2009, screening of the students in any form (written test, interview etc) for admission is prohibited. It also prohibits schools from charging any kind of fee (donations) for admissions. Further section 29 (h) talks about the process of evaluation to be followed in schools. Earlier, the traditional way of evaluation was by giving tests to children whereas after the commencement of Act, CCE (continuous and comprehensive evaluation) has been prescribed for evaluation of children's learning achievements in schools.

### Process of Admission undertaken in schools:

Table 4.1 Process of admission



As mentioned earlier, RTE Act prohibits any kind of written test or screening in the admission. Graph 4.1 shows the process that was undertaken by schools for admissions. Data reveals that though 33.33 percent of the head teachers responded that written test or interview was undertaken for the admissions, more than 50 percent of the parents informed about written test being conducted for the same. 36.67 percent of the head teachers/managers and 30.14 percent of parents responded that there was no screening process for admission. Another 30 percent

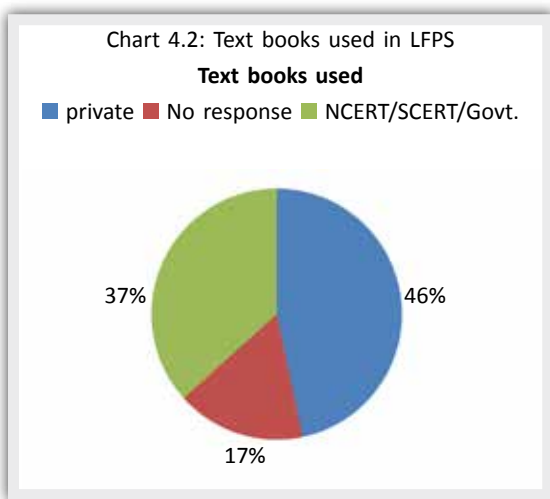
of the head teachers did not respond to the question which raises doubts about the process followed in schools for admission.

In an FGD conducted with parents, it was found that even though tests are not conducted in school for nursery or standard one, however for children to be admitted in any other class, s/he has to undergo a test. The performance of children in the test is used by the school authority to decide appropriate class for children. In one of the cases, a child studying in standard 5th of a government school wanted to take admission in private school. He was made to undergo a written test. On the basis of his performance in the test, school authority decided to admit him in standard second! This is totally against the spirit of age appropriate learning mandated in RTE act. Parents also confided that almost all the private schools follow a similar procedure for admitting to children coming from government school.

Though none of the head teachers/managers accepted that donations are taken for admission, 10.81 percent of the parents accepted paying donation for admitting their child in private schools. A parent, sharing in the focused group discussion, informed about her child being denied admission initially. However, principal demanded a donation of 5000 Rs. and the child was admitted after paying the amount.

### Text Books Used by Private Schools:

To understand the kind of curriculum used in the schools, present study inquired into the kind of study materials and publications used in the private schools. Data reveals that 46.6 percent of the schools



used books of private publication for teaching in their schools. These private publication books are published by publishers like Sanskritik, Holy search, Berry Black etc. Another 16.67 percent of the head teachers/managers did not respond to the question. 36.6 percent of the school teachers responded that books published through NCERT/SCERT and other governments are used in their school (Chart 4.2).

However, since the data was provided by the head teachers and triangulation of data wasn't possible with the parents; this data cannot be taken at its face value. In the FGD, one of the parents shared the concerns about books that are being used in the schools. She shared that only

those books which are very expensive are being sold by the schools and since schools makes it compulsory to buy books from school itself; parents are not left with any option. A teacher from private school also agreed to this being a trend of private schools and informed that mostly NCERT books are not used as they are inexpensive so the parents might not buy it from school at higher rate (parents are aware about the rate of NCERT books); hence schools choose those books which are unavailable in market and are much more expensive than NCERT books. Even if parents want to buy books from market, it's not available and, therefore, parents are left with no choice. It is evident that private schools are minting money from every possible source leading most of the parents burdened.

**Evaluation Procedure:**

RTE Act mandates Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) to be used as a method for evaluation of children in schools. The Act prohibits examinations to be undertaken in schools. Schools were asked about the evaluation process they follow to assess the learning of children. It was found that only 16.7 percent of the head teachers/managers responded that they conduct CCE and 30 percent of teachers responded that CCE is undertaken. 43.3 percent of teachers as well 63.3 percent of school head teachers/

managers replied that they do not undertake CCE in schools (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 evaluation procedure

Evaluation Procedure	School	Teacher
	Yes	16.7
No	63.6	43.3
No response	19.7	26.7

Teachers shared that reason behind them not being able to undertake CCE. Both unawareness about the process of conducting CCE and large class size were discussed as major reasons believed not undertaking CCE in Schools. Accepting the positive outcomes of CCE, teacher informed that it requires time to be spent with children. She also added that a class with 50 to 60 students is extremely difficult to be examined using CCE. Teacher while talking about the extra burden of

work shared that at times, when parents come to meet and ask about their child's performance, teacher has to find out students' score in examination to inform parents about their child's performance.

## 5. Children's Profile

Through this study, experiences of children in low fees private schools were collected and this section reveals the experiences of children in their schools. Children were interviewed about their likes and dislikes regarding their schools and teachers and their experience about corporal punishments and homework. The section also deals with profile of children studying in Low fees Private Schools in terms of gender.

### Enrollment in Private schools

Table 5.1 shows that the percentage of male and female admitted in Low fees Private Schools under study. Data reveals that of the total 200 (details of children of parents interviewed, who are enrolled in private school) children for which data has been collected, 66.6 percent of children are male and 33.3 percent of children are female. This shows a huge gap in terms of gender equity. Gender gap has been discussed in most of the studies that have been undertaken on Low Fees Private schools and is a matter of serious concern.

	Percentage
Male	66.67
Female	33.33

### Children is Experiences in schools

Children from private school discussed about their things they like about their school (Table 5.2). Highest percentage of children (27.91) responded their liking about the co curricular activities that are undertaken in schools. Another high response was for teachers (20.93 percent) and 18.60 percent of children responded that they like infrastructure of their school.

Teachers	20.93
Discipline	9.30
Good education	16.28
Lab/infrastructure/bench an desk / playground	18.60
Games/playing/co-curricular	27.91
Distance of school	2.33
Others	4.65

On further being asked about what children not like about their school, there were different responses. Highest percentage of children (18.6 percent) responded infrastructure of their school as something that they don't like about their school. Responses included lack of playground, computer labs, badly constructed toilet in infrastructure of school. Next on the list was lack of games facility and stringent rules in school. Stringent rules included less number of holidays, rules of not letting children to talk to their friends etc. 7 percent of children responded that they don't like the unclean environment of their school and 7 percent replied that they don't like the punishment given in their school. Almost 25 percent of the children did not respond to what they do not like about their school (Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3 What do you not like about your school**

Nothing	7.0
Rote learning	2.3
Punishment	7.0
No time to play/lack of game facility	11.6
Infrastructure	18.6
Cleanliness	7.0
Distance	2.3
Stringent rules (no holidays, no talking to friends)	11.6
No extracurricular activities	2.3
No resp.	25.6
Indiscipline	2.3
Lots of homework	2.3

In focused group discussion, children shared that playground in their schools are very small, toilets are dirty and cannot be used, water facilities are not proper etc. Many children also shared punishment by teachers, no games period and lot of homework as things that they do not like about their schools.

Similarly, children were also interviewed regarding the things that they like and dislike about their teachers. Table 5.4 and Table 5.5 shows the responses of children on what do they like and not like about their children. 37.2 percent of students said that they like the teaching style of their teacher whereas 23.3 percent of teachers said that they like friendly behavior of the teachers. 7 percent of children replied that teacher’s regular presence and it is what they like about their teacher. On being asked on what they do not like about their

teachers, 46.5 percent of them replied that teachers punishing children, 16.27 percent of children replied that teachers give lots of homework which is what they don’t like about their teacher. 37.20 percent of children did not respond to the question at all.

**Table 5.4 What do you like about your teacher**

Teaching style	37.2
Encourages	7.0
Present everyday	7.0
Discipline	4.7
Friendly behaviour	23.3
Everything	4.7
She allows to play	2.3
Sings good	9.3
No punishment	4.7

**Table 5.5 What do you not like about your teacher**

Corporal punishment	46.5
Lots of homework	16.2
No response	37.2

## Homework

Table 5.6 shows the responses of children on whether their teachers give them homework. If yes, how much of homework do they get? Responses show that 53.4 percent of children said that they get a lot of homework and 46.51 said that they get homework at times. Earlier table 5.6 also showed that almost 16 percent of children said that they do not like homework being given in school. None of the children said that they do not get homework. On the matter of homework, parents too showed concerns. FGD brought out the fact that a lot of home work is given in schools and parents are expected to help children in completing it. One of the parents shared that her child was asked to learn Ram Charitra Manas' shlok (hymn) which she herself didn't know. Complaining about homework, another parent shared that it almost becomes impossible to complete homework. 'Itna kaam de rakha hai ki hum hi dukhi ho gaye hain kar kar ke, inse kya he ho payega'(So much of homework is given that not even I can complete it, forget about children being able to do it.). On being inquired about the repercussions for not completing the homework, parent shared that marks are deducted in the final examination.

RTE Act, which has introduced continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) system with an objective to unburden children from undue pressure which would enable them to enhance their skills and enable better learning, with so much of burden on student, it would be impossible to achieve the objective of CCE.

## Corporal punishment

Section 17 of RTE Act prohibits corporal punishments in schools and it was important to know whether these schools adhere to this norm. To inquire about this, children and parents were interviewed.

Children were interviewed whether they are punished for not completing their homework. It was found that 83.72 percent of the children have been punished for not completing their homework. Data revealed that high percentage of children (more than 90 percent as per data collected) have faced severe beating for not completing their homework. Though children were questioned just about being punished for not completing homework (Table 5.7), it also brings out the fact that there is a culture of punishing children in the schools and children as well as parents did not question it. Corporal punishment has been banned by RTE Act and more than 80 percent of schools have violated it. In the earlier table, 46 percent of children on being asked about the things that they do not like about their teacher answered punishment by teachers. However, when asked whether they are punished, more than 90 percent of the children said that they are punished in their schools.

Table 5.6 Does teacher give homework

Lot of homework	53.4
Sometimes	46.5
No homework	0

Table 5.7 Do you get punished for not completing homework?

Yes	83.7
Sometimes	6.9
No response	4.6
No	4.6

Severity of this problem was found while discussions with children in the focused group discussion undertaken. The discussion was started with question to children on what do they like about their school. One of the children said that she likes teachers because she teaches well. On further being asked about what she not like about the school, she informed that she dislikes her principal for the reason that she beats a lot. One of the parents shared an incident in which a child was being beaten up severely for not completing his homework. The parent, on being asked the reason for not stopping the principal answered that as she was also called to the school regarding the complaint of her child, she didn't want to get into trouble. Another parent also shared that even in her child's school; children are beaten severely if they do not complete the homework or are undisciplined.

To know more regarding the corporal punishment in the schools, interviewer asked children if they are punished for not being able to complete homework. One of the girls replied that '*teachers murga banate hain*' (physical punishment is given). Another girl reported that there are teachers who use pipes to beat students for not completing homework. Here too, one of the parents shared that he has witnessed such incidences. Another parent informed saying '*unka dimag kharab hua na toh bahut buri tarah peettain hain*' (if they lose temper, they beat children severely). Parent further shared that both principal and manager of school (principal and manager are siblings in the school she was referring to) punishes child severely. Another parent also shared that though girls are not beaten as bad, her child was also beaten when she didn't complete her homework.

Even after corporal punishment being forbidden under RTE Act, rampant incidences have been observed during the study. Data suggests that prevalence of corporal punishments being inflicted on children is a normal phenomenon in private schools. This requires strong monitoring of private schools which would be possible only when they are recognized as schools!

## 6. Perceptions behind Performance of Private Schools

The study also tried to bring out the perception of teachers and parents regarding the performance of private schools. Both teachers and parents were interviewed regarding the reason they think is behind better performance of private schools. 80 teachers and 80 parents were interviewed regarding the performance of children in private school. Teachers (from private school) were asked whether children from government school or private school perform better. All the teachers responded that children from private school perform better than government school.

### Teachers' perception on performance

Table 6.1 Why do children from private perform better?

	Very strong	Strong	Average	Weak reason	Not a reason
Teachers presence in class	53.8	15.3	30.7	0.0	0
Family background	26.9	34.6	38.4	0.0	0.0
Facilities	42.3	26.9	23.0	3.8	3.8
Teaching learning material	34.6	23.0	34.6	3.8	3.8
Better management	53.8	7.6	30.7	7.6	0.0
Proper PTR	50.0	15.3	23.0	7.6	3.8
Regular attendance of children	46.1	26.9	23.0	3.8	0.0
Regular tests	50.0	26.9	15.3	3.8	3.8
Parents awareness	34.6	26.9	34.6	3.8	0.0
Better curriculum	50.0	30.7	15.3	3.8	0.0
Better monitoring system	50.0	23.0	23.0	3.8	0.0
Tuition	11.5	23.0	38.4	23.0	3.8
Involvement in co curricular activities	30.7	30.7	23.0	11.5	3.8

Table 6.1 shows the perception of teachers on why children from private school perform better than children from government school. It can be seen from data that 53.85 percent of teachers think that teachers' non-involvement in non-teaching activities plays a very strong reason for better performance of children from private school. 26.9 percent of teachers see family background as a very strong reason behind better performance while 34.62 percent of teachers see it as a strong reason. 38.46 percent of teachers see family background as an average reason behind the better performance of children from private school.

42.31 percent and 26.92 percent of teachers see facilities provided as very strong and strong reason behind the better performance. 53.85 percent said that better management and 30.77 said that it plays an average role in performance of children. 50 percent and 26.92 percent of teachers said that regular tests play a very strong and strong reason behind better performance of children. Almost 60 percent of teachers also said that parents awareness plays a strong role in performance, 73.08 (50 percentage and 23.3 percent) said that better monitoring also plays a strong and very strong reason behind performance. Data also reveals that most of the teachers said that tuition doesn't play any significant role in good performance of children in private school.

Better performance of children coming from private school is just a perception. There have been several studies suggesting that there is no significant difference in the performance of children from private and government schools, and the minute difference if any, is due to the different social economic background that the children come from. In other words, after taking into account the socio-economic backgrounds of the students who attend these schools and the related material and instructional advantages that accrue to the schools, the small performance difference between public and private school students that remains is associated with higher levels of autonomy over curricula and resources among private schools. In fact, PISA has found that when public schools are given similar levels of autonomy as private schools, and when public schools attract a similar student population as private schools, the private school advantage is no longer apparent in 13 of the 16 OECD countries that showed advantage. (PISA IN FOCUS, 2011).

## **7. Parents' Perception on Performance**

Parent's response to the reason behind sending their children to private school shows that the strongest reason for which they send their children to school is for English medium of instruction. 56.76 percent of parents responded English medium of school to be a very strong reason behind sending their children to school. Another 20 percent replied it as a strong reason behind sending their children to private school. Many of the parents were of the opinion that if government schools provide education in English, they would send their children to government schools instead. It was also found in the focus group discussions that parents feel it very strongly that their children would be able to acquire good job only if they are English educated.

51.35 and 32.51 percentages of parents think that high number of teacher is a very strong reason and strong reason respectively for sending their children to private school. 40.54 percent parents see punishment as an average reason for better performance of children in private school. 35.14 percent of parents think better infrastructure is a strong reason for sending their children to private school. Quality of education also is seen as a very strong reason for sending their children to private school. However, quality of private school is questionable as data about the teachers brings out the fact that most of the teachers are untrained. Almost 60 percent of parents said that others' opinion of private being better than government school served as a strong reason for sending their children to private school. 35.14 and 29.13 percent of parents also responded good qualification of teachers served as a strong reason for sending their children to private school. Interestingly, a high percentage of teachers in private school are untrained and not professionally



qualified to teach in schools.

Social pressure to has been seen as a strong reason for sending children to private (40 percent of parents gave it as reason.) (Table 7.1)

Table 7.1 **Parent's Perception on Performance**

	Very strong	Strong	Average	Weak reason	Not a reason
Teachers presence in class	53.8	15.3	30.7	0.0	0
Family background	26.9	34.6	38.4	0.0	0.0
Facilities	42.3	26.9	23.0	3.8	3.8
Teaching learning material	34.6	23.0	34.6	3.8	3.8
Better management	53.8	7.6	30.7	7.6	0.0
Proper PTR	50.0	15.3	23.0	7.6	3.8
Regular attendance of children	46.1	26.9	23.0	3.8	0.0
Regular tests	50.0	26.9	15.3	3.8	3.8
Parents awareness	34.6	26.9	34.6	3.8	0.0
Better curriculum	50.0	30.7	15.3	3.8	0.0
Better monitoring system	50.0	23.0	23.0	3.8	0.0
Tuition	11.5	23.0	38.4	23.0	3.8
Involvement in co curricular activities	30.7	30.7	23.0	11.5	3.8

## 8. Challenges Faced by Parents

Parents were interviewed with an objective to know about their problems while sending their children to private schools, there were different problems that they faced of which fee charged by private School was a major challenge faced.

### Fee and Other redirect Cost

Fee has been one of the major challenges that parents face. It decides the affordability of schools. Various studies have posed a question on the 'Low Fee' of these schools. There have been studies which suggest that only a certain section can afford to send their children to these low fee private schools, as even the 'low' fee charged is not affordable for parents to pay. Under this pretext head teachers as well as parents were asked about the fees that have to be incurred in schools. Table 8.1 shows the fee charged by schools in urban area. Data reveals that 70 percent of schools charge fees more than ranging 200-500 Rs a month. Data further reveals that 8 percent of the schools charged less that hundred rupees a month, another 12 percent charged between 100 to 200 Rs, highest percentage of schools charge fee between 200-300 Rs a month. 10 percent of schools charge fee between 500- 700. However the charges shown in the table shows only the direct fee that parents have to pay monthly. On further inquiry, it was found that all the schools in urban area charged admission fee every year amounting to 10,000 to 20,000 Rs.

Table 8.1 Fee charged by Schools (Urban)

Fee charged by schools (urban)	
<100	8
100-200	12
200-300	26
300-400	23
400-500	21
500-600	6
600-700	4

Table 8.2: Fee charged by schools (rural)

Fee charged by schools (rural)	
<100	30
100-200	49
200-300	21

In rural areas, 49 percent of schools studied charges fee ranging from 100-200 Rs a month whereas 21 percent charges between 200-300 Rs.

Baraka considers that schooling costs should not exceed 4% of the household budget to be considered 'low-fee'. Prachi Shrivastava also mentions about it not being more than 1 percent of the total expenditure of the house. Similarly, USAID defines fee to low if it's below 50% of the minimum wage.

In India, people who earn below 960 Rs. a month in rural areas and 1410 Rs. a month in urban areas are considered to be in the Below Poverty Line category. Going by the definition given by Bakara, if one

assumes that people belonging to below poverty line (BPL) spends their entire earnings (Rs 960 for rural), 4% of 960 , an approx 40 Rs a month would mean 'Low fee' school for them. Similarly, this would be Rs. 57 Rs a month for urban areas.

Fee charged by schools have been studied in two different contexts, rural and urban. It was found that in urban area, sixty five percent of the private schools charged fee between 200 Rs to 500 Rs a month. This is much higher as compared to 4% expenditure (as suggested by Bakara) for person belonging from below poverty line. Similarly, for rural area, 90 percent of schools charge fees ranging between 100-300 rs a month. This too is much higher compared to the 4% (which is Rs 40 a month). Clearly, the so called 'low fee schools' aren't affordable to the people belonging to below poverty line.

Further the problem was discussed in focused group discussions and several indirect costs were also brought out by parents as a challenge for them to sustain their children in private schools.

A question whether parents are comfortable with the fees charged by the schools was asked, one of the parents replied that earlier when she admitted her child in the private school, fee charged was affordable (for parent) but with every year it increased at a very high rate and now the fee charged is so high that she is thinking of admitting her child in government school. Another parent also shared the similar story. Interestingly, she informed that fee of the school in which her ward was admitted was also not very high initially but once the principal's wife contested election and lost fee was increased four times. She further added that earlier even the bus charges were normal but later the bus charges too were doubled. Fee of younger children was also raised to double. At present her fees is 700 for child who is in fourth standard, 350 bus charges when the distance is less than 500 meters. Earlier the fee was below 200 but within two years the fees has been raised to 700. She further informed that if she had an option to send her child to government school, she would have but since government school is a little far, she has no option. On being asked about the indirect cost that parents have to borne, parents shared about schools organizing programmes for which, charges are collected from the children. Parents further shared about the amount charged to be above Rs 100 per child irrespective of children attending or not. She further shared that it doesn't stop there as schools demand small amounts frequently. On being asked about reason behind collecting these amounts frequently, she replied that it's used for celebration of independence days and other such occasions. On further being enquired regarding this, parents replied that principal's autocratic behaviour prevents them from refusing to pay this amount. Adding to this, another parent shared that parents are further compelled to buy reports of the programme, price of which is high.

Talking about the other expenses they have to incur, one of the parents shared that children are supposed to keep four register for every subject (homework, class work, rough work and test). Parent informed that every subject has to have these four notebooks which not only increases the cost of education but at the same time makes the baggage extremely heavy for children to carry, '*unke baste to unse bhi bhari hain*'(baggage of my children are heavier than themselves.'). It was also shared that many students drop out after studying for few years as their parents cannot afford to pay such high fees any further.

## **Admission fees:**

Parents shared about high amount charged as admission charges. Most of the parents informed that admission fee makes it really difficult for them to manage as it is very high and has to be paid as a lump sum. They also shared that examination fees are also charged before every examination.

## **Expenses Incurred on Books and Uniform:**

The discussion moved further and parents were asked about the expenses that have to incur for the books. *'Poocho mat'* (don't even ask) was the spontaneous answer that as given by one of the parents. Another parent shared that schools generally have a set of books that has to be brought from school itself. This set contains not just books but also notebooks for every subject. Though notebooks are available in market at a cheaper price as compared to that charged by school but schools' compulsion on parents to buy books from school itself leaves parents with no choice. Parents also informed that there are books in the set which are not even used in school. These books are story books, poetry books and other such books which are not taught in schools but are still sold to parents.

On being enquired about whether bill or receipt for these books are made available, parents informed that they are not given any receipt. However, a detail of books and price are written in a plane paper and shared with parents.

One parent from the group responded: *'Pareshan to sabhi hai private schoolon se par kya he karein, bachho ke liye karna he padta hai. Paas mein government school hota to theek rehta.'* (Everyone is fed up of privates schools but there are no option since it's about future of children.) "If there were government schools available, it would have given us an options".

'Books have to be brought from schools itself and uniform as well', said another parent. She further shared about her financial inability to send her children for tuition. It was further found in discussions that few schools charge for first aid facility as well. It ranges from 200-250 ( yearly ) in schools.

## **Cooperation from Teachers**

Non cooperation of teachers with parents was also discussed by parents as one of the problems they face in school. Parents stated different incidences where schools acted non cooperative with parents. In one of such incidences, a mother explain her discontent while she was trying to fill up one of the forms required for availing government support for girl child education. She wasn't informed about the forms availability and when she asked the school authorities, she received discourteous reply saying ' kahan so rahi thi ab tak' (where were you sleeping all these days?).

Sharing her dissatisfaction, parent informed that even after spending large amount of money, she has not seen any development in her child. On being asked about the reason for her children not being able to perform well, she replied that large class doesn't allow teachers to focus on children. Teachers come to class and write things on blackboard, students copy whatever is written on the board. Even if there are questions that children would like to ask, teacher hardly have time to explain things. She also agreed that teachers have a lot of pressure already so it's not their fault but in the end, children have to suffer.

Another parent shared about the huge lack of motivation in private schools. She added that children are never motivated by teachers for performing better. If a child is not performing well, he/she is ignored by the teachers which becomes an impediment in their improvement. Teachers do not even interact with children; they come to class, teach and leave. A teacher agreed to this being the situation. A parent suggested that teacher should be given some freedom to teach the way they want to, this would improve the interest of teacher in teaching. They would use better and innovative ideas to make children learn better.

One of the parents, sharing her experiences stated *“I have four children and the fee per child is 700 Rs. a month. A child which is in nursery has a fee of 540 Rs. Admission fees of almost 8000 per child. It’s very difficult for us to pay this amount and under this condition; we won’t be able to pay fees for long”*. She too, like many parents responded English as reason behind sending her children to private and confessed that if government could have English as medium, she would send her children to government school. She also showed her concern regarding teacher’s absence in government schools and this being another reason behind not sending her children to government. She further suggested that if monitoring is undertaken, government schools will be lot better than private schools.

*“We are thinking that two of our children could continue to be in private, younger two will be shifted to government school as now we can’t afford it any more. We have tried to get admission under 25% quota but couldn’t get as paper requirements could not be fulfilled”* replied a parent when asked whether they can afford to send all children to private school. On being asked about what are the problems faced as parents, she replied *‘sare problem he problem hai. sari cheez ki dikkat hai. Sabse badi dikkat hai kharche ki. Itna ghar mein khane ko nahi hai jitna fees bharna padta hai. Jahan doo roti ki bhookh hai , whan ek khani padti hai’*. (There are numerous problems. We don’t even have so much to eat but have to pay huge amount for our education. We have to cut down even on the food)!

### **Tests and Examination:**

A parent in the group discussion shared that she got her child admitted in private school. Her child was in standard fourth and was admitted in 2nd standard that too after taking an admission test. After the test, parents were told that he is not good enough to be in 4th standard so should be admitted in 2nd. As per the RTE Act, schools are prohibited from conducting any tests, examinations or any other screening process. However, it was found that screening procedure was being conducted by many private schools.

On being asked whether they can send their children to government, parents replied that if government school provides good education, no one would send their child to private schools. Parent shared that there are government schools which are much better than private school, which is due to better monitoring by the community itself. (Case studies have been shared later in the report.)

On being asked about whether children has to drop out due to the fees charged, one of the mothers replied that she herself is planning to take out two of her children and get them admitted to government school. This is the case with many parents. Fees are increased every year and it becomes difficult for parents to pay after a while. Parent also shared that once she tried to request authorities to lower the fees, it was reduced by 20rs for one child, however, fees of other child was increased by the same amount leaving no effect for parents paying the fees.

### **Reservation for children from Economically Weaker section:**

Research also enquired about the status of implementation of reservations in private schools for children coming from EWS category. Schools did not respond on it and most of the schools denied providing data. In focused group discussion, parents did share about it. One of the respondent responded that though she had heard about such reservations but haven't heard about any child getting admission under such quota. Sharing about her brother's experience, she further informed that even after efforts been taken, his daughter didn't get admitted under the quota. Another parent said that they weren't even informed about such provision. A teacher informing about the state of reservation in his school shared that even if schools admit children under this quota, they are children of their own staff and the fees waiver that they get are deducted from the salary of that staff. Reservation was introduced in RTE Act with an objective to provide children from economically weaker sections to attend schools without being discriminated on the basis of them belonging for specific section of society. However, results from the study shows that it is least being implemented in true sense. Infact, many secondary sources also brought out discriminations faced by children coming from EWS category in private schools, not limited to non adherence in providing admissions, but also differential behavior in classrooms, questioning the idea of inclusive education.

## Interview with Mr. Ashok Aggarwal

Mr. Ashok Aggarwal is a practising lawyer in Supreme Court of India and raises issues on Right to Education. He also is an activist and have filed several PIL related to educational rights of children. Below are the excerpts from his interview with National Coalition for Education (NCE), India.



**There is an increasing growth of private schools which charges exorbitant fees and are unregulated. What are your comments on it?**

*“Every child between 6-14 years is covered under Right to Education Act which entitles 8 years of free schooling. Also, the education cess that is being collected by government is basically to provide education to all the children. So, if the government is collecting money in the name of every child, it becomes the duty of government to ensure free education to every child. In fact, it becomes a double punishment for the child as he/she is paying fees as well as being taught untrained teachers. As per Unnikrishnan report, in principle, private school children are also entitled to free education but practicality parent had to pay exorbitant amounts of money as fee in private schools. We need to think what they should be getting in return: good quality education in child friendly environment or their kids being taught by less qualified, untrained teachers. Commercialization of education has been banned in Unnikrishnan report and charging fees tantamount to commercialization.*

**If we talk in constitutional terms, every child is entitled to free and compulsory education and therefore there should be no exclusion. Even in private schools, children should not be paying. In such a situation, if one really wants to give a child constitutional rights, the burden of private school should go to state. Why should a child pay?”**

**So what should the Government do to regulate such schools? Don't you think that these schools are leading to commercialisation and commodification of education?**

*“Practically, these schools are money minting machines and there is no check from the state. It is the state's responsibility to check the commercialization of education. Government did inspection in many schools and found gross violation of norms. It was found that fund diversions were made and money was conned for personal benefits. High court gave a judgment and laid down parameters and directed that not only banning commercialization but government also have a duty to check commercialization. Sadly, Government has failed to do it.*

*There are examples of schools which have six other feeder schools which were run and the whole expenditure was put in the accounts of one school and therefore children were burdened with paying for other schools as well. There is a school which gave loans to another school registered under the same Society at certain rate. Second school tried to generate money for repaying the loan to the first school. Consequently, children from second school were made to pay heavy fees. We have collected data from 200 schools and made a chart of the earning and expenditure of these schools, we found that half of the money is hidden and cornered which they take home. There are instances where students are paying for interest,*

*property depreciation, property tax which is impermissible. High court ordered the institution of a committee to look into the matter. However, schools never cooperated with the committee and neither did government offices cooperate and finally, nothing happened.*

*On the lines of Delhi Education Act, Tamil Nadu made a Fee Regulation Act which constituted a committee to look into fee regulation. It mandated that if any school wanted to increase fee, it needed the committee's approval. Schools went to Madras High Court against the Fee Regulation Act and Committee but their plea was struck down. Then they went to Supreme Court where it wasn't even admitted.*

*Secondly, when 6th Pay Commission came, private schools increased their fee which was protested by the parents. Under this pressure, many state governments issued orders to regulate fee. But these orders were hardly implemented as either the courts struck down the orders or the government failed to implement these orders because of the pressure from the strong private school lobby. There are instances where some efforts seem to be made by authorities to keep a check on these schools. For Example, Ghaziabad DM ordered that fees cannot be increased without inspection, on violation chairman of a private school was arrested and temporarily parents won. Santosh Duggal Committee and Justice Anil Dev committee directed 330 schools give back money that they have collected in the name of sixth pay commission with 9% interest. One of the schools have to pay 22 crore refund.*

*We are raising a question to bring a national law to regulate fees. Justice A.K Sikri also said that central government should think of formulating a national policy for fee regulation. For legal purposes, the private schools stand on these four pillars: philanthropic, community service, no profit and no commercialization. But, what they are doing is quite contrary to these. RTE act talks about School Management Committee with 75% representation of parents in these committees. Why should it not be same for private school? If parents are made to be in School Management Committees some of the problems could be settled easily."*

**Teachers are working in exploitative conditions in private schools? What are your views?**

*"Section 10 of Delhi School Education Act 1973, mandates that the scales of pay and allowances, medical facilities, pension, gratuity, provident fund and other prescribed benefits of the employees of a recognised private school shall not be less than those of the employees of the corresponding status in school run by the appropriate authority. But it is also true that most of the private schools are flouting these rules and hiring teachers with very less salary and make them work in very poor conditions, which is a clear violation of the mandated rules and norms."*



## 9. Case Studies of Government Schools

### RAJKIYA PURVA MADHYAMIK VIDYALAYA, CHANDPUR, HARAYANA

During the study, it was realized that failure of government schools to provide quality education to children as led parents to depend on private schools. Many parents admitted that if there were government schools which functions properly, they would never chose private over governments' schools. Unser this pretext, we found it important to compile case studies of such schools which has been able to satisfy parents and have therefore been able to attract children from private school. There were several such schools found, few of which are being compiled in this section.



Rajkiya Purva Madhyamik Vidyalaya, is a government school situated in Chandpur, Yamuna Nagar in the state of Haryana. Haryana is a state with 29.4 percent of private schools and 70.6 percent of government schools, which is much above the national average of 22.09 percent private Schools.

Mr. K.K Pandey is the head teacher of this government schools. There are 750 students in this school. Mr. Pandey shared that in the current year, there has been a total new enrollment of 94 children, of which 80 children were those who were earlier enrolled in private schools and have taken a migration to government school. Rajkiya Purva Madhamik Vidyalaya is perceived as a school which gives



better education than any private school, leading to migration of children from private to government school. Head teacher shared that earlier children whose family could afford to send their children to private school, use to send children to private schools, but after the implementation of the Right to Free and Compulsory Act, 2009, enrollment of children in this government school has increased and large proportion is of in children who have migrated from private school. Parents and teachers from this school believe that incprovement in quality of education has led to this migration. Parents, who have admitted their children in this school, appreciate teachers' hard work and the new pattern of evaluation which, according to them, has brought change in the behavior of teachers. Parents also believe that the teachers take good care of their children. Co curricular and cultural activities are also organised in this school which helps to enhance children's personality. Head teacher of the school believes that Right to Education Act has given them scope to experiment things which would be in children's interest and for their overall development.



**Madhu**, daughter of Mrs. Umawati is a thirteen year old girl studying in standard seventh of a government school in Haryana. Madhu has three more sisters, of which, Madhu and other two went to a private school named Vishwa Samta School. Parents observed that their fourth daughter, who has been going to government school, is performing better than all the three other sisters who were attending private schools. They enquired about the quality of education that the government school offers, compared it to the private schools and decided to send all their daughters to government school itself. Mrs. Umavati, Madhu's mother shared that the government schools have much more to offer if they function well. She appreciated the mid day meal scheme, scholarships, medical services, trained teachers and discipline of the government school. Madhu's father wanted to his daughters quality education and was ready to pay fees of private schools as well but later was convinced that government school, in his area, offers much better education as compared to the education offered in the private school which Madhu earlier went to.



## PURVA MADHYAMIK VIDYALAYA, SISAULA, MEERUT, UTTAR PRADESH

Mr. Manoj Kumar, Head Teacher, Purva Madhyamik Vidyalaya, is a thirty eight year old man who has committed himself to making his school a model school. He believes that its teachers' hard work which can make a school a good school. Mr. Manoj strives hard to maintain the standards and quality of his school, which, according to him is the reason behind the good enrollment of his school. The enrollment of this school shows an improvement and especially with high number of children coming from private schools. Head teacher of the school believes that other than the improved quality of education, there are other factors which are attracting children from private schools to get admitted in government school. Few strong factors leading to migration of children from private to move to government schools are the better lab and technological facilities, more focus on girl child education, better infrastructure, children's assembly like Bal Sabha, Meena Manch etc. Organizing cultural activities and sports also help to enhance children's interest. In the current year, more than 25 children have migrated from private school to this government school.



**Jishant** is a thirteen year old boy studying in standard seven. His mother, Miss Fareeda wanted him to get good education and therefore admitted him to Faiz Public School, a private school, assuming that private schools offer better quality of education. However, after a year, parents realized that there isn't any significant improvement of their child in Faiz Public School. They enquired about the performance of government school in their area. Many people suggested them that the government school has improved and that the quality of education is much better as compared to the private schools. Ms. Fareeda mother of Jishant decided to admit him in the nearby government school. She is happy with his performance. Ms. Fareeda appreciated the kind of facilities that is provided in school. She states numerous reason for good performance of the government school. For her most important reason for sending her child ot Government School good numbers of and qualified teachers in school. Space and number of classroom is also good which helps in better development of children. Government schools also have constructed labs which interests children. She further added that there are special classes for children who are not performing up to the mark. Cultural activates organised in schools was also counted as strong reason behind her child performing better. Ms. Fareeda said that she is very happy with her decision of admitting her child back to government school. She also suggested that government schools should be made better and if that happens everywhere, as it has happened in her area; people will send their children to government schools only.



## 10. Major Findings of the Study:

RTE Act, under Section 19 and 25, has set norms for the schools (private and well as government) and, recognition from the government will be awarded to private schools only when the schools fulfilled all the norms set in RTE Act. Schools which do not comply with the norms and are not registered and hence not allowed to operate. Primary objective of the research was to find out the adherence of private schools to these set norms. Findings have brought out many realities pertaining to private schools. The findings have been written under two sections, first regarding the adherence of set norms from the RTE Act and another section has findings which though are not mentioned as norms norms but are significant.

### Section A: Findings related to RTE Norms

- 1) **Teachers Eligibility:** As per section 23 (I) of the RTE Act, teachers recruited after the enactment of Act require to pass TET (Teachers' Eligibility Test) in order to be eligible for teaching in schools. It was found that 90 percent of teachers interviewed didn't have any contract with the school which created ambiguity regarding their recruitment in schools, whether they were recruited before or after the commencement of the Act. However, 91 percent of the teachers interviewed have been teaching in schools for less than five years implying that most of them joined after the commencement of RTE Act, 2009. It was found that 90 percent of teachers had not passed TET to be eligible for teaching.
- 2) **Curriculum:** Section 29 (I) and (2) of RTE Act has prescribed guidelines for curriculum to be used in the schools. Data revealed that almost half of the schools use the books of private publication which are not reviewed in order to make the compliant to the norms.
- 3) **Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation:** Section 29 (I) and (2) of RTE Act has introduced the new system of evaluation which does not allow children to be evaluated using the traditional method of examination. Continuous and Comprehensive evaluation (CCE), which is the new system that has been adopted in RTE Act, has to be undertaken in all the schools. No school is allowed to give exams and detain children up to eighth standard. However, through this study, it was found that 67 percent of the head teachers informed that they do not undertake CCE in schools. Even high percentage of teachers responded that they do not undertake CCE with children, one of the reasons being large classroom with large number of children.
- 4) **Corporal Punishment:** Section 17 (I) of the RTE Act prohibits corporal punishment. Here too, research shows many incidences of corporal punishment. More than 80 percent of the children shared that they get punished by the teachers in schools. Even teachers shared that they punish children as it's necessary for disciplining them.
- 5) **Twenty Five percent reservations for children from economically weaker section (EWS):** Section 12 (c) mandates a private to reserve 25% of its seats for children coming from weaker sections of society. It was found that most of the schools denied providing data on 25 percent reservation. More than 75 percent of the schools totally denied providing information regarding reserved

seats for EWS category. Few schools did provide the data about there are high discrepancies and gaps in the provided data. In few cases, it was evident from data itself that the information provided has been fabricated. Many principals/managers also admitted that since they are not recognised by the government, they do not need to provide admissions to children from EWS (economically weaker section) category.

Few of the principals shared that they haven't even applied for getting recognition. This is in contravention to Section 18 (I) mandates every school to get recognition from government and shall function only after obtaining a certificate of recognition. Further section 19 mandates that schools must follow norms set for schools and in case of contraventions, punitive action must be taken against those private schools.

- 6) **Capitation Fee and Screening procedure for Admission:** Section 13 (I) and (2) prohibits school from collecting any capitation fee from parents and conducting any screening procedure for child as well as parents for admission. It was found through the discussions that most of the schools charge admission fee every year from children when they are promoted to higher class. Admission fee is higher when a child wants to get transferred from one school to another. Though section 13 (I) has prohibited capitation fees to be charged, however most of the schools charge it in the name of admission fees.

Data also reveals that there were few schools which demanded for donations directly. Ten percent of schools of the total studied charged donation directly. RTE Act also prohibits any kind of tests or interviews to be conducted for admission of children. However, the research findings show that more than 50 percent of schools studied have conducted either written test or interviews for admission.

- 7) **Infrastructure:** Availability of the infrastructure was also studied and it was found that though, initially, the status of infrastructure seems to be good but when further enquired through observation and discussions with parents and children, schools do not have infrastructure as per the norms of Section 19 and 25 of the RTE Act.

## Section B: Other Significant Findings

- 8) **Gender Gap:** Significant gender gap in the number of children admitted in private school was also found through the study. Percentage of female children studying in private schools is one third of the number of male children studying. Even focused group discussions and observations brought out preference of sending male child to private school.
- 9) **Teachers' problems:** Large classes, temporary employment, no allowances like medical and pension, less salary and autocratic behavior of principals and school managers were found as major problems faced by teachers in private schools.
- 10) **Economic Background of parents:** Less than one fourth of the parents whose children go to private schools are daily wage labourers and less than 15 percent of children come from family which is below poverty line. Also family size of children who come from private school is small

(almost 70 percent have family size 5 or less than five). This would mean that LFPS are not affordable for economically weaker sections.

- 11) Educational Background of Parents:** It was also found that more than 90 percent of parents whose children go to primary schools have received education above Primary, of which more than 60 percent of parents have received education above Upper Primary. There are debates around the performance of children from private are better than that of children from government schools. Though the study did not focus on the performance of children but other studies show a correlation between performances of children depending on parents' educational attainment. Children who attend government schools are found to be first generation learners which significantly affect the performance of children.
- 12) Teachers Salary and Trainings:** Salary of teachers is also a matter of concern. Study brings out the fact that most of the teachers are paid very low (much below their counterparts in the government schools). More than seventy five percent of the teachers are paid between 500-6000 (of which 33 percent are paid between 500-2500). It was also found that though they receive good amount of money (ranging from 25000-35000) in their account; they have to return it to the school. It was also found that three fourth of the teachers have not received any in service training.
- 13) Fee Charged by Schools:** A large number of parents shared their concern about the enormous amount of fees being charged by the schools. Both direct as well as hidden charges are collected from parents like admission fees charged every year, compulsion of buying books and other stationeries from the schools itself, money charged for celebration of different programmes and compulsion of buying photographs as well as reports of functions of school as few such examples. Both direct and indirect cost of education has burdened parents.

It is important to understand that in India, commercialization of education has been prohibited by the constitution and hence schools which are making profit out of education are nothing but mere illegal institutions and are operating against the spirit of constitution. Therefore, educational institutions can run only as a nonprofit organization. Under this pretext, it becomes important to study those institutions which are imparting education in the name of nonprofit organization. These schools can run only if registered with the government after fulfilling the norms under RTE Act. Since RTE Act mandates the registration of all the schools, and schools can get registration only after fulfilling the norms, studying the school whether they comply with the norms is extremely important. The norms laid down are the minimal norms to maintain the quality of education.

Discussing findings of the study, it is implicit that most of the schools are not adhering to the basic norms that has been laid down by the RTE Act and thus makes these schools unauthorized to be run (as without fulfilling all the norms, a school cannot get registered which is mandatory for giving it a). If one looks at the compliance of these schools to the RTE norms, it wouldn't be difficult to say that high percentage of schools have failed to adhere to the norms. For that matter, there wasn't one school found

under the given study that adhered to all the norms prescribed in the Act. Infrastructural norms have been violated by private schools.

Fee regulation is another important issue that needs discussion. Moving to next most important finding of the study, it was found that fees charged by the schools are high and parents have to undergo a lot of problems to be able to send their children to these low fee private schools. It was found that most of the parents who send their children to low fees private schools do not come from the most disadvantaged sections of the society even then, most of the parents were finding it difficult to cope up with the expenses they have to incur for educating their children in these private schools. Many of the parents agreed that they sacrifice a lot of other essential things for being able to send their children to private schools. Some of the parents even agreed that after a certain standard, they will not be able to afford it and will have to take their ward off the private schools. Therefore, one can argue that these private schools are not just exclusionary in the first stage where it is accessible only to those families which are not the most disadvantaged but also exclusionary as many of the children have to drop out after studying in it till certain standard another most important factor that needs to be noted is that gap between the girls and boy's enrollment is very high. Here equity becomes a serious matter of concern. Many of the researches have shown that boys' enrollment is much higher in private schools as compared to girls.

Advocates of low fees private schools argue that the quality of private schools is much better as compared to the government schools. However, there is a disagreement by many of the critiques. This has been a finding in this study as well. Quality of education depends a lot on the quality of teachers, and quality of teachers is pitiable in the private schools. Compromising on quality doesn't stop here, but is also done through the books that are taught in most of the private schools. There are certain standard that has been laid down regarding the curriculum to be used in schools however schools are failing to follow the guidelines.

Not just in the given study, there have been cases in schools which have been covered in newspapers time and again. Teachers in most of the schools are paid even lesser than the minimum wages. Newspapers have been covering about the schools which have denied admissions of children from the economically weaker sections (they are mandated to provide 25% reservation for the children coming from weaker sections of the society). There have been cases where fake admissions have been taken under the quota which has been defined for admission of children from Economically Weaker Section.

Low fee private schools have not been able to provide child friendly environment as more than 85 percent of the schools practice corporal punishment which is unlawful and can prove to be detrimental in the short as well as long run for child development. Continuous and Comprehensive evaluation, the system which every schools requires to adopt and implement for evaluation of children, have not been followed by high number of schools, high pupil teacher ratio as well as unaware and untrained teachers being reason behind it. Teachers are overburdened with work which doesn't give them space for focusing on child. Low PTR is a prerequisite for adopting CCE, which is required for doing a comprehensive and continuous evaluation.



From this study and the literature that is available for the low fee private school, one can take the liberty to conclude that these schools are not adhering to the norms that has been laid down in the RTE Act and hence cannot be seen as any alternative to government schools especially with an argument of former providing better quality of education. Also with the socio economic context of this country, it is impossible to see it as an alternate to the government schools which provide free education to every child without any discrimination. People favouring LFPS argue that if regulated and monitored well, schools will be able to impart quality education at very low fees. Important here again is to reason out that if investments (in terms of resources, finances and energy) are to be made, why not spend it in the government school which provides free education, provides qualified teachers and which has the capacity to universalize education to every child of the country rather than putting it in schools which are exclusionary in nature and cater only to the already advantaged sections.

## **Recommendations:**

### **For Private Schools:**

- 1) There is a need for a strong regulatory framework for private schools and must in out in place. Though RTE Act has set norms, there still exists lacunae and hence strengthening the existing norms is of prime importance and must be done with utmost urgency.
- 2) A system to undertake the mapping exercise of the schools functioning with or without registration must be put in place. School Management Committee could be used for the purpose of school mapping.
- 3) Punitive action must be taken against schools not adhering to the norms of RTE Act. Further, if schools contravene the rules in RTE Act, they must be shut down and children from these schools must be admitted to nearby government schools by the help of School Management Committees.
- 4) Strong Fee regulatory legislations should be put in place and committees to look into the matter must be formed. Resources for implementation of plans and regulatory framework must be properly allocated.
- 5) Transparency in functioning of private schools must be assured and community participation in the governance of private schools must also be ensured.

### **For Strengthening Public Education system**

1. Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 must be implemented effectively.
2. Shortage of teachers is hampering the effective implementation of RTE. Thus States and Union Territories should recruit permanent, qualified and trained teachers within a time frame.
3. SMC is a major player to assure effective implementation of RTE. States and Union Territories shall take serious steps to ensure that all schools have a properly constituted and trained SMC with compositions in compliance with RTE Act Section 21(1).
4. An allocation of 6% of GDP must be made for education and 50% of it should be allocated for elementary education
5. A stronger accountability system should be established to strengthen public education system

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