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## **'Poor' Children in 'Rich' Schools**

**A report on the implementation of 20 per cent freeships to economically marginalized children in recognised private, un-aided schools in East Delhi**

**Mallica**

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## **‘Poor’ Children in ‘Rich’ Schools**

### **A report on the implementation of 20 per cent freeships to economically marginalized children in recognised private, un-aided schools in East Delhi**

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#### **Abstract**

*This is an exploratory study of the impact of the Supreme Court’s judgment, followed by the Delhi government’s notification, of reservation of 20-25 per cent seats and freeships to children of the economically disadvantaged classes by recognised, private, un-aided schools in Delhi. The study also documents ISST’s experiences and the difficulties and challenges faced in assisting people from poor and deprived BPL families to get their children admitted in these schools.*

*An attempt has been made to look at the perspectives of the children (who have been admitted under this scheme); the experiences and perspectives of their parents; teachers (both of private and government schools) and principals of these schools.*

*The study reveals a tremendous sense of resentment against the order of the Delhi government and reluctance on the part of the private schools to admit children from the economically marginalized sections of society. This seems to be on account of the economic costs (since private schools will perforce have to bear the additional cost of schooling for these children) as also, more importantly from a hidden bias against children of the poor.*

*At the same time, however, the study also recognises the constraints and problems faced by these schools in the implementation of the court order, for instance, the problem of meeting expenses over and above the tuition fees; problems of streamlining students into the schools etc. It also raises the issue of problems that teachers might face in actual classroom situations while handling children from diverse, socio-economic and educational backgrounds and the need for capacity-building, counselling and training programmes for them. Perspectives and concerns of students in private schools from middle-class backgrounds have also been briefly looked at.*

*The study raises significant questions also about the ‘hidden costs’ that parents are being forced to incur (for school uniforms; books; private tuition; transportation etc.) despite the provision of the ‘freeships’. The need to deliberate upon markers of entry criteria, other than income, has also been stated.*

*The study stresses upon the need to address these and related issues to increase the sustainability and viability of the scheme and to achieve the larger goal of equity and equality in education within the larger purview of the Common School System in India.*

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This is a study of the impact of the Supreme Court’s judgment, followed by the Delhi Government’s notification, of reservation of 20-25 per cent seats and freeships to the children of the economically disadvantaged classes by recognised, private,<sup>2</sup> un-aided schools in Delhi. This study also documents ISST’s experiences and the difficulties and challenges faced in assisting people from poor and deprived BPL families to get their children admitted in these schools in East Delhi.

The 25 per cent quota has its genesis in the land lease agreements of private un-aided schools in Delhi. These schools had obtained land at concessional rates from the Delhi government on condition that 25 per cent of their intake would be in the form of freeships for children of poor parents. In January 2004, the Delhi High Court, hearing a Public Interest Litigation filed by the Social Jurist Forum <sup>3</sup> (in 2002) ordered private, un-aided schools to abide by the conditions in their land lease agreements. With this verdict, even schools whose land lease agreements do not have this clause now have to reserve 20 per cent seats <sup>4</sup> in their schools.

This verdict is being seen as a bid to check commercialization of education and to ensure that private, un-aided schools do not renege on their social obligations.

In contrast to this view, is the contrary opinion that this mechanism is merely a “façade to hide the real problem”, which is a lack of “proper functioning of government schools”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This study looks at two types of schools in Delhi: Private and Government schools. In India the term ‘public’ school is also used alternatively for private schools. This study has used the term ‘private’ in place of ‘public’ schools.

Private, aided schools receive regular maintenance grant from the government, local body or from any public authority. Private, un-aided schools are managed by an individual or a private organization and do not receive any maintenance grant either from government, local body or any public authority etc (Source:Gupta, Soumya,<http://www.ccsindia.org/policy/ed/studies/wp0068.pdf>).

According to the sixth all-India educational survey(1993), NCERT (1998), the share of private schools in Delhi was as follows:

**Primary:** 10.6 per cent. Out of this, 8per cent were private, un-aided schools

**Middle:** 57.7 per cent, Out of this, 52 per cent were private, un-aided schools

**Senior:** 34.4 per cent were private, un-aided schools

**Senior Secondary:** 37 per cent. Out of this 20.8 per cent were private, un-aided

(Source:Gupta, Soumya,<http://www.ccsindia.org/policy/ed/studies/wp0068.pdf>)

<sup>3</sup> Counsel for the petitioner, Ashok Aggarwal, reminded the court that out of 1500 un-aided private schools, over 1200 had been allotted private land at a rate much lower than the market price. The petitioner added that, as land was granted to these schools at concessional rates by the DDA, it was binding upon them to reserve 25 per cent of their seats for children from the weaker sections of the society. None of the schools, said Aggarwal, had complied with this condition. The authorities were “totally insensitive and apathetic towards the rights of the poor”, he said, as no action had been taken till date against the erring schools.

The allotment letters of certain schools mentioned, “that society shall ensure that the percentage of (concession in) tuition fees, as laid down under the rules, would be strictly complied with”. In the absence of any rules laid down by either the DDA or the Delhi Government, schools are exploiting the situation”, Aggarwal said (Source:*The Pioneer*, January 21, 2004)

<sup>4</sup> Das, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Naveen, ‘Regulation for 25 per cent freeship to poor students lands in soup’, [blog.ccsindia.org/mt/archives/2004/09/regulations\\_in.html](http://blog.ccsindia.org/mt/archives/2004/09/regulations_in.html), posted on 15/09/04.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The broad objective of the study is to provide an overview of the impact of the order of the Delhi government in recognised private, un-aided schools in Delhi. An attempt has been made to look at the interventions of the ISST Community Centre <sup>6</sup> in East Delhi, as well as to explore the experiences and perspectives of the children who have been admitted under this scheme and the experiences and perspectives of their parents, teachers, and principals. \*

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of the study extends to six schools in East Delhi - four private, un-aided schools (where children have been admitted under the scheme with the help of ISST personnel) and two government schools of the same area.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

Semi-structured discussions and interviews were held with ISST Community Centre staff; mothers of the children who have been admitted under the scheme; teachers of private and government schools and also school principals.

Case studies of the four children (out of the nine helped with their admissions by ISST Community Centre) have been done in an attempt to look at and understand the children’s perspectives on the entire issue, keeping in mind that these may be distinct from their parents, teachers and principals.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A review of the literature on the issue of education of poor children living in slums in urban areas suggests that the poor largely send their children to government schools rather than private schools. This is particularly true of Delhi where, according to Chugh, the urban poor cannot make use of private schools as there exists a ‘social distance’

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\* *Names and designations (of schools; interviewed government officials; ISST staff; parents; students) have been changed /omitted for reasons of maintaining confidentiality in the study.*

<sup>6</sup> The ISST Community Centre, alongwith its programmes for income-generation activities for women is also providing non-formal and supportive education for school going and non-school going children in East Delhi. For the past one year a computer programme has been implemented which aims at providing basic computer education to slum children and their facilitators. The number of children registered under the programme varies from time to time due to a number of reasons. One of them is their formal school timing as some of them attend morning shift and some attend evening shifts in government school. Apart from this, some of them work with their parents after school, especially girls. ISST has started the process of conducting a baseline survey to understand the most workable timings in order to motivate people to send their children to the Centre. (Source: [http://www.isst-india.org/Outreach\\_FccCommC.htm](http://www.isst-india.org/Outreach_FccCommC.htm)).

between them and other children (cites PROBE , 1999<sup>7</sup>). Moreover, she says that it is not possible for them to bear the high cost of education this entails considering their income level. It becomes even more difficult, she says, when there is more than one school-going child in a household. It is for all these reasons that the urban poor are, thus, forced to patronize government schools.<sup>8</sup>

According to Kaul, for people “below a certain threshold level, eking out an existence becomes a crucial issue, while above a certain threshold level, other factors like an unattractive school and lack of adequate facilities were also significant in children not attending schools”.<sup>9</sup>

A review of existing literature suggests that people from the economically marginalized sections of society living in slum areas generally face numerous problems in getting their children admitted to private schools (as compared to government schools) in the city. The situation, following the implementation of the scheme providing 20-25 per cent reservation in private schools to children from the economically marginalized sections, does not seem to have made things any easier for them however.

A newspaper report filed by Kumar, for instance, refers to problems faced by parents in getting their children admitted to private schools all over Delhi. In the first week of May 2004 , Kumar states, as many as 200 applications were submitted to private schools in just one area of Delhi called Bara Hindu Rao and “no school was entertaining them”. She refers to attempts by a parent who tried to submit applications of five children to five nearby private schools and who was “turned away” under the guise of several vague excuses like for example, Springdales School, Pusa Road, seems to have said that “admissions were shut” and St Thomas School seems to have said that there were “no vacancies”. At St Michael’s and Bal Bharti schools, it seems, she was not even allowed to enter the school premises and at Presentation Convent she was told that admissions “were closed”.

In East Delhi, a parent submitted applications from her area at Bharti Private School, Kondli; Salwan Private School and Evergreen School “but had no luck”.

Kumar reports that Mahesh, a peon, who draws a salary of Rs 2000, was told that there were no vacancies at ASN Private Schools in Mayur Vihar Phase I. Noor Mohammad, who lives in a resettlement colony along Hastsal said, “I visited Columbia Private School in Vikaspuri, but they said they could do nothing”.<sup>10</sup>

It must be pointed out here that there is a lack of available literature on the subject.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC & EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF SONIA CAMP (VINOD NAGAR)**

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<sup>7</sup> PROBE is the Public Report on Basic Education for India. It was supported by the Center for Development Economics and published in 1999 by Oxford University Press <http://www.oup.com>.

<sup>8</sup> Chugh, Sunita, and 2004: 84.

<sup>9</sup> Kaul,2001:157.

<sup>10</sup> cited by Kumar, 2004.

A low-income slum area called Sonia Camp (also called ‘*Harijan Basti*’<sup>11</sup>) in East Delhi was selected for this study. Sonia Camp is situated alongside the Shakurpur railway line, adjacent to a Gujjar village. Like any other slum in Delhi, Sonia Camp also suffers from abysmal conditions of sanitation, health and of course, education. Delinquency in different forms is responsible for creating negative role-models for children, especially boys.

Most of the male residents fall into the category of casual wage workers (daily wages) and have meager incomes. They work in factories, on construction sites or do white-washing jobs and help others in selling small articles. Some are rickshaw-pullers (rickshaw taken on rent and not owned), or vegetable sellers.

The women mostly work as domestic maids and take in home-based work such as sap-sorting which is tedious, back-breaking work and poorly paid. The income of the women seems to be contributing to the running of the family household, rather than that of their spouses. The women, however, seem to be facing domestic violence at home with husbands given to gambling, alcoholism and wife-battery.

In this scenario of poverty, insecurity and vulnerability, the decision to make attempts to get their children admitted to expensive, “high quality”, private schools, thus, was a big decision given their fragile means of earning their livelihood as also their low expectations in life.

The BPL (below poverty line) families in Sonia Camp mainly send their children to government schools in the neighbourhood. Those families which are a little better-off send their children to one of the many ‘English-medium’, private schools in the vicinity. The implications of this order of the Delhi government means that even the BPL families can now think of getting their children admitted to the ‘high quality’, private schools in the neighboring area of Lakshmi Nagar, Preet Vihar and Vinod Nagar.

The government order means that these people can also now think of getting their children admitted in private schools, which formerly, was an unthinkable dream.

## **ISST INTERVENTIONS IN SONIA CAMP**

ISST Community Centre interventions in Sonia Camp in this regard may be summed up as:

### **A) Counselling Parents**

ISST staff first began trying to counsel and encourage parents in the community to think about the prospect of getting their children admitted to better schools and to have higher aspirations for their children’s future (rather than letting them drop-out of school and

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<sup>11</sup> This area is known as ‘*Harijan Basti*’ as the residents who initially stayed in the camp were predominantly from backward classes. More recent entrants have included upper caste Hindu and Muslim families. Most are from villages in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Sudarshan & Bhattacharya, 2004:4).

pushing them into low-end jobs). Such counselling was required, according to the staff as for the BPL families to allow their children to complete their X standard from a government school, where education is largely free, is in itself a struggle, especially in the case of girl children. Future expectations are low given their existing reality, and counselling was therefore, much needed in order to encourage parents to approach the schools for their children's admission.

ISST field staff had to keep up motivation and confidence levels (through reassurance on field visits) when initial attempts to get their children admitted to the schools were not entertained by the school authorities.

## **B) School Admissions**

### **i) Problems in acquiring Income Certificates**

The initial visit of the ISST staff and the parents to the concerned official's office in the Preet Vihar area in order to get income certificates issued resulted in failure.

The applications submitted stated the monthly incomes as Rs 1,800-2,200. The concerned officer, however, refused to process the certificates on the grounds that "nobody survives in Delhi today in less than Rs 5000". He further stated that "such low incomes were being misquoted when he was fully aware that every evening these slum dwellers drank alcohol worth Rs 2000". He also laid down a condition that he would 'consider' the applications only if the monthly income was quoted as Rs.3, 500.

The attempt to reason with this official on the ground that these families were BPL card holders and that the Delhi government has distributed 4 lakh BPL cards to such families all over Delhi, whose annual income is 24,000 or less, also failed because he said, "I don't know how they have got BPL cards. I am fully aware that these people spend Rs.2000 everyday on alcohol alone."

Teachers from ISST, too, had to suffer ridicule in the office. They were referred to as "*netas* walking around with cell phones quoting such low incomes!" Matters came to a head, finally, with the official being told categorically that he was being unreasonable and that if he refrained from taking the matter forward, the matter could be taken up with the Deputy Commissioner as well as the Education Minister and the Chief Minister. It was only under threat of such dire consequences that the concerned official seems to have suddenly relented and agreed to process the applications for income certificates.

This was followed by ISST writing to the Education Minister and the Chief Minister with the request that "directions be issued to the SDMs of all districts to accept applications by parents of under-privileged children requesting income certificates for availing of the 20 per cent quota and not misguiding people in ways that can prevent underprivileged children from availing of the opportunities provided by court orders".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See Annexure: copies of letters to Education Minister and Chief Minister, Delhi Government dated 21-02-05

This problem of issuing income certificates to genuine cases is a serious one and needs careful consideration. It is significant that ISST personnel themselves faced such harassment in getting the income certificates issued and it can only be surmised as to the immense problems that may be encountered by illiterate and poor parents (without the support of NGOs like ISST) who try to approach government machinery on their own.

## **ii) Reluctance of schools to admit children**

Once the income certificates were issued, the next hurdle that had to be faced was the resentment and refusal of private, un-aided schools to admit children under this quota. ISST personnel had to make repeated visits to schools in the neighbourhood (with parents not even being allowed to enter school premises) to request the school authorities to admit children belonging to BPL families. Initial requests were met with responses such as, “all seats have been filled”; “We don’t take government school and slum children” etc.

What was particularly shocking was the prejudiced mindsets of school principals towards children of slum dwellers. A letter <sup>13</sup> written by ISST staff (who tried to convince the school authorities to admit the children) to the Deputy Education Director is particularly illuminating in this regard as it contains excerpts of the conversation with one principal who expressly stated that children from the slum areas are “criminals”; that they use “abusive language” (“*slum area ke bachche criminal hote hain, ve gaaliyan dete hain...*”). He seems to have further strengthened his contention with reference to an incident where a fight had ensued between two children over some eatable which finally resulted in the child from the slum stabbing the other child in the back with a compass. This incident, he stated, proved that the child from the slum will grow up to be a criminal. (“*Woh criminal hee banega..!*”)

The same principal gave another example where the son of a security guard ‘failed’ in the standard I. He was apparently ‘passed’ but again ‘failed’ the II standard. The boy was given ‘grace marks’ but then his father turned up and with folded hands requested the principal to remove his child’s name from the school register. The reason he gave was the growing ‘distance’ between father and son since he had joined the private school and the ‘hatred’ that the child now felt for his father. The principal stated that the son now ‘looked down’ upon the father saying that, “*Tum jhuggi mein rehte ho...Tumne apne jeevan mein kya kiya..?*” (“You stay in a slum. What have you done in your life?”) The father told the principal that he could no longer bear to see this.

The principal also seems to have said that “if the government was so much worried about these children, then it should improve its own schools rather than ‘troubling’ them!”

He also made the claim that they were spending more money than the government was, on these children and that the quota would only increase the burden on the parents of

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<sup>13</sup> See Annexure: copy of letter by ISST staff to Deputy Education Director, Department of Education, North Delhi dated: 16/03/05



the other children because in order to satisfy the quota the school would be forced to increase the fees.

Many other radical suggestions seem to have been advocated by the same person who felt that “neither the government nor the NGOs are doing any work...Both are ‘useless’... if they really want to do some work they should first stop population growth.” And further that “Children of people who have more than two children should not be admitted in schools, at all.” He also felt that the schools take admissions only in nursery so that the children can be “moulded according to them” (“...*Taaki bachcon ko apne anurup dhaal sakein...*”). He, therefore, refused to admit children in classes other than nursery as he stated that there were no seats available.

**It was only when ISST staff filed for information on the basis of the Right to Information Act, 2001 and after subsequent hearings (also including action from the Public Grievance Cell) that information was released<sup>14</sup> by the school authorities.**

Since there were seats which were vacant, children had to be eventually admitted. The long drawn-out procedure with bureaucratic hassles and prejudiced mindsets of the bureaucracy as well as the school authorities towards children of the poor which ails the admission process has to be addressed if the scheme is to benefit the targeted groups and achieve any measure of success.

### **iii) Negotiations with School Authorities for ‘Concessions’**

Once access to the schools was achieved, to ensure retention, ISST had to make several attempts to convince the school authorities to provide as much ‘concession’ with regard to expenses on uniforms, books etc., to the underprivileged children, as possible. This is because in the absence of clearly spelt-out directives<sup>15</sup> by the Delhi Government, the multiple ‘hidden costs’ with regard to uniform, books, transport, even for school excursions/picnics etc., create immense burden on poor parents, thus defeating the very purpose of the order. The money to be paid for these multiple heads seems to be determined by the whims and fancies of the school authorities. It is already proving to be backbreaking for those whose children have been admitted. This can also be one of the factors forcing parents, in the long run, to withdraw their children from these schools.

The importance of clearly spelt-out directives, in this regard, therefore, cannot be stressed enough if retention of these children is to be ensured.

ISST’s endeavors have seen positive results in this regard. While one school has provided 50 per cent discount on uniform and books, another has teachers who have

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<sup>14</sup> See Annexure: copies of application form along with list of vacant seats in schools released after the former was filed.

<sup>15</sup> The Directorate of Education, Government of N.C.T of Delhi’s order (dated 27-04-04) states, among other things, that “all schools will grant 20 per cent freeship (which includes tuition fees, PTA or any other fees/funds/charges of any kind related to teaching-learning) to the children of the weaker sections of society w.e.f.1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2004”( See Annexure copy of Order of Directorate of Education, Government of N.C.T of Delhi No: PS/DE/2004/10496-11595 dated 27-04-04) .

collected old uniforms from students and given them to needy students. A third school has agreed to provide 25 per cent discount (with the money to be paid in installments). But there are still others who have refused to provide any such ‘concessions’ at all.

ISST Community Centre staff , along with constantly negotiating with the school authorities to provide concessions with regard to these necessary expenses, has also pitched in to help parents by offering to pay a part of the expenses. To make the scheme sustainable in the long run, however, advocacy for clearly formulated and spelt-out directives seems to be required.

### **PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHILDREN**

An attempt was made in the study to interview four children who were admitted under the scheme to private schools in 2005 with the help of ISST personnel. The attempt was to look at and explore children’s perspectives on the issue and to discern differences, if any, from adult perspectives.

All the children interviewed in the study (studying in standard II, III, IV and XII) were of the opinion that they liked the new schools and wanted to continue their studies there. The reasons given for ‘liking’ the school were poignant and basic ones, for instance, “*yahan padhai hoti hai*” (“ we study here”); “*yahan teacher kaam dene ke baad staff-room nehi jaate hain*” (“Here teachers don’t go away to the staff-room after giving us work”); “*yahan teacher dande se nehi marte /gaaliyan nehi dete, homework dete hain*” (Teachers here don’t beat us up with sticks, don’t abuse use, they give us homework); “*yahan ache toilets hain, peene ka paani hain, science laboratory hai*” (“Here there are good toilets, drinking water and science laboratory”).

In terms of adjusting in a new socio-cultural environment with children belonging to the upper and middle classes of society, there do not seem to be many adjustment problems. They, however, seem to clearly differentiate between the two different classes of friends they now have – the ones living in the slum who use bad language and fight most of the time and the ones in the new school who are ‘better’ as they don’t use bad language or fight like the former group. There seems to be acceptance of the fact that they have been admitted to ‘good’ schools and they should strive to do well here.

The children, who were interviewed, did not claim to be subjected to any discrimination in the classroom by teachers or peers but seemed to have adjusted to their new surrounding.

One major problem that was identified, however, was that of low levels of understanding and academic performance due to transition from Hindi medium to English medium schools. They seemed to be facing this problem but seemed very shy and hesitant to approach the teachers in this regard.

It is important therefore that supportive classes be provided to these students and this is something that was found to be missing in all the schools that were visited during the course of this study.

The reason why these children felt shy and hesitant about seeking clarification of their queries from the teachers seems to be due to social distance and is also something that needs to be further studied.

### **Perceptions of Children of Private Schools**

Perceptions of children of private schools also needs to be explored as the reservation of seats and admission of children who belong to a different socio-economic and cultural background is likely to bring about a change in the composition and environment of the classrooms within these schools which would of course impact all students.

While the study does not include interviews of this group of children, the importance of looking at their perspectives and viewpoints cannot be disregarded.

Reference here can be made to views of a student of Doon School, a prestigious private school, who raises concerns of children studying in such schools in the country in this regard. According to the student, this mechanism cannot be said to be providing “equal opportunities for all” as “a staggering 150 out of 600 students will walk in, virtually without any true test of their abilities” in their school. He states that, “passing the Doon School entrance means that you have proved yourself worthy of the school. Reserving seats for students seems to imply that the school must prove itself worthy of you”.

Adding to his list of concerns and grievances, he says, “How can we pursue the system’s goal of training potential leaders when one-fourth of us have been granted a prize that others struggle to earn?” The student also addresses the concern of burden of the likely increase in fees to be shouldered by parents of the “other three-fourths...the middle-class that “either way has to foot the bills of the government’s charitable and bounteous gesture”. The student sees this as a “blatant attempt (of the government) to solicit votes”. He raises the question as to “why the government doesn’t instead try to improve the standards of government-owned schools rather than foist these students on unwilling institutions”<sup>16</sup>.

A survey of the Doon School students suggests while 44 per cent of the students support the proposed bill, a majority of students i.e. 56 per cent do not support the proposed reservation in private schools in the country.<sup>17</sup>

Perceptions of children studying in private schools in other parts of the country, therefore, also need to be explored to understand the problems that they seem to be facing and the reservations that they have with regard to the proposed legislation, which, if passed, would also impact on their lives in a number of ways.

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<sup>16</sup>Kuthiala, Tushar, ‘...Two Steps Back’, The Doon School Weekly, March 19, 2005, <http://www.doonschool.com/m2080/>.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEACHERS and PRINCIPALS (PRIVATE AND GOVERNMENT)**

### **A) Private School Teachers and Principals:**

Interviews with teachers and principals were very difficult to conduct as in all the four schools looked at in the study, the principal /school chairman seemed to be very reluctant to allow this. While in two schools, the request for interviews with teachers was met with outright rejection, in one school, the principal ‘asked’ the teacher to stay in the same room to give her views to the interviewer, almost dictating the answers to the questions asked. She also turned down the request for interviews with other teachers on grounds that “all the teachers have views similar to hers and so what was the need?” The chairman of the fourth school, on the other hand, agreed to be interviewed himself but used some pretext or the other to deny the interviews on two other occasions.

### **Prevalence of Stereotypical Mindsets and Resultant Attitudes**

All the school principals and a few of the teachers who were interviewed, echoed views which strongly seems to suggest that they possess stereotypical mindsets where school performance and classroom behavior of economically marginalized children is concerned. A lack of empathy for the children and their differential learning requirements and living conditions could be clearly seen.

One school principal, of a private school, referred to negative perceptions resulting in many of these children. She stated that these children do not possess the right environment at home or ‘home status’ to enable them to perform well in school; that they are weak in studies and continue to remain thus (“*Weak hain toh weak hi rehte hain*”); they don’t do homework (as they don’t get any help from their parents). They also tend to suffer from ‘inferiority complexes’ (when exposed to an environment where children from the better-off classes possess things like fancy ‘instrument boxes’ and even mobile phones ; with the parents of the latter distributing gifts to all students on their birthday etc.,) and (could) take to ‘stealing’. The principal, further went on to paint a very dark picture (of the result of such ‘integrationist policies) where the inferiority complex poor children develop in school vitiates their home atmosphere with their demanding similar things from their parents, which will lead, she felt, to parents trying to fulfill their children’s desires ‘at whatever cost’ i.e. stealing; robbery etc!

One of the school teachers, however, did admit to the existence of ‘levels of variation’ in terms of academic performance in school amongst these children (with some performing better than the rest).

Another teacher, teaching students of standard I, said that she had faced “no problems teaching these children”. She stated that “all children are the same, if these children sometimes face problems in catching up with what is taught in class, so do children belonging to better-off classes”. She believed that even though these children might lack parental support, they can pick up, especially when they start off young.”

Attempts to talk to another teacher in one of the schools was met with scared responses, like, “I have been teaching here since the past seventeen years and we are told not to talk to strangers about the school...we can talk only after the principal permits us to do so”.

### **Situational Constraints Faced by School Authorities-- Teachers & Principals**

The reluctance of the school authorities to implement the government order cannot be denied, alongwith the stereotypical mindsets that also characterize the attitude towards children of the economically marginalized sections of society. At the same time, however, one also has to recognize the actual problems in implementation that the private schools are facing for instance, the problem of meeting expenses over and above the tuition fees; problems of streamlining students into the schools etc. There are also problems that teachers are facing and might face in the future as regards actual classroom situations while handling children from diverse, socio-economic and educational backgrounds and the need for capacity-building, counselling and training programmes for them to enable them to deal with these problems in an efficient manner.

### **B) Government School Teachers and Principals**

#### **Prevalence of Stereotypical Mindsets and Resultant Attitudes**

Government school teachers (interviewed in two schools of the area), much like the private school teachers, too seem to be largely apathetic and lack empathy for the children and their differential learning requirements and living conditions.

The attitudes and actions of many of these teachers seemed to have an element of resentment and disdain towards the children. Many of them expressed both indirectly as well as directly their assessment and evaluation of students from poor families as failing to do well in studies because of their “home environment”. They said that most such families have a “hand-to-mouth existence” with the parents being largely illiterate and not finding the time to devote towards their children’s education (not coming to see teachers to enquire about their child’s progress etc), it is this lack of a supportive home environment, according to them, that is responsible for the low level of school performance of such children.

While it was accepted by the teachers that a child’s school performance is also dependant upon a supportive school environment, they stated that there was “no spirit of competition” amongst children of the government schools as also motivation to “do well, dress better, stay clean and tidy” etc., since all of them came from similar backgrounds and were the “same”. The attitude was that the children themselves are to be blamed for their “weakness” in studies. There is no understanding of the fact these children are first-generation learners and have differential learning as well as social or emotional needs. Instead of providing additional academic support for instance, extra classes after school; counselling or any other form of support; corporal punishment seemed to be freely used in the classroom. This view is supported by interviews held with children from government school backgrounds.

Most teachers responded by supporting this order on the grounds that the children will ‘benefit’ from the physical infrastructure of these schools (school building, labs, playground etc.) “*Suvidhayen milengi*” or “they’ll get facilities” that are not available to them in government schools.

One of the teachers also felt that it would give rise to a “competitive spirit” amongst these children who, according to him, feel the lack of competition in the government schools. All of them come from socially and economically disadvantaged classes and therefore behave accordingly (are ‘dirty’, ‘dress untidily’, ‘behave badly’, ‘perform badly’ (except for a few). Admission to private schools, he felt, will encourage them to perform well in class, to dress well and to behave well. They will get a chance to ‘become better’ in private schools.

One of the teachers alleged that children who have been admitted under this scheme are being subjected to discriminatory practices in some schools. He refused to name the school but said that in some schools, children are being made to sit in separate classrooms, so that other children (from privileged backgrounds) do not pick up their dirty, slovenly habits (“*unke baal lambe hotein hain, woh gande hotein hai*” or “They have long hair, they are dirty.”)

Teachers in a government school in the nearby area of Mandawali, near Sonia Camp, East Delhi believed that a favorable student-teacher rapport exists in government schools with teachers understanding the family situation and living conditions of the students and the students ‘openly’ talking to them about their problems. Such teacher-student rapport, they believed, is not possible in private schools because the teacher cannot relate to their problems and students will also be hesitant to share their problems.

They also felt (as in case of private school teachers) that inferiority complex can occur amongst children admitted to private schools.

The general perception amongst government school teachers was also that their quality of teaching is higher than private schools, “we focus upon the children understanding what is taught to them rather than on completion of the syllabus”. Children, therefore, could face a problem, they believed, in terms of the fast pace of studies in private schools.

They also felt convinced that better teacher-student ratios exist in government schools and therefore it was not possible for the teacher in private schools to devote adequate time and attention to every student. But this is possible in a government school.

One of the government school teachers actively advocated the cause of the ‘common school system’ regarding it as the ideal system which should be established rather than measures such as these to bring about integration of all sections of the society.

Government school teachers were in favour of measures to be taken by the government to improve the quality and conditions of government schools, in preference to enforcing this scheme.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS**

### **i) Demand for Private Schools**

The interviews suggest that even illiterate BPL parents are well aware of the advantages of education and are ready to support any/all initiatives which can enable their children to achieve a higher quality of education. This study, therefore, seems to reiterate findings of related studies, for instance, Banerji, also refers to private schools mushrooming even in low-income colonies in Indian cities because “poor parents feel that the child will learn something in a private school and so take on the additional expenditure involved”.<sup>18</sup>

It is apparent that parents are more than ready to suffer hardships and to pitch in (along with ISST as also individual schools’ initiatives), to the extent possible, in order to get their children educated in private schools. Private schools are preferred over government schools as they are regarded as schools where actual teaching takes place and where there is a serious atmosphere and discipline is maintained. Private schools also tend to be seen, with their impressive building and physical infrastructures as a mark of social privilege. Private schools are also preferred as they teach English and this will, it is believed, help in getting ‘good’ jobs.

This study reiterates the fact, therefore, that even the poorest of the poor aspire for quality education for their children. Research in this area states that, 9 per cent of boys and 5 per cent of girls enrolled in Delhi slums attend PUA schools.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, it is stated that “what is incredible are the absolute [low] levels of income at which demand for private schooling exists. It is incredible because government schools are virtually free.”<sup>20</sup>

It has been observed that “teachers’ sincerity, interest and involvement” in government schools tends to be questioned by parents.<sup>21</sup> A common complaint against teachers in government schools is that they seem to be more interested in their personal work and do not take their job seriously because they are not accountable to anyone. Private school teachers, on the other hand, are considered to be accountable to students and parents because their jobs are not permanent. The lack of discipline as also teaching of English is also perceived as a major drawback in government schools.

### **ii) Future Apprehensions**

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<sup>18</sup> Banerji, 2000:798.

<sup>19</sup> Nautiyal, 1999 cited by Kingdon.

<sup>20</sup> Chadha and Singh, 1988 cited by Kingdon.

<sup>21</sup> Jha and Jhingran, 2002.

One common complaint with private schools was that these tend to be expensive even with the 20-25 per cent freeships being provided because the parents still have to bear expenses of school uniform, books, school bag, stationery as well as transportation costs and most importantly, private tuition (considered as ‘necessary’ with the child unable to cope with the new pace of teaching). Hidden costs like school picnics or field trips also cannot be ignored.

### **iii) Gender Bias**

Examples of a gender bias, however, with the boy being sent to the private school and the girl to the government school were also noted. Studies such as Banerji’s refer to this phenomenon. Banerji, in her study of the urban poor in Delhi states that “one of the complicated strategies to optimize schooling given the limited options available, is to send the sons to a private school and the daughters to the local municipal school.”<sup>22</sup>

Another study by Anuradha De, Claire Noronha and Meera Samson (of districts in Haryana, U.P and Rajasthan) also refers to the prevalence of gender bias and the same phenomenon of boys being sent to private schools and girls being to government schools (if at all, especially in the poorest regions<sup>23</sup>).

While more in-depth study is required to explore the gender dimension, the field work suggests that preference is being given largely to boys (as compared to girls) in families struggling for their admission to private schools. Vikas, one of the students interviewed in this study, who was admitted to standard IV in a private school with ISST’s active intervention and who has three sisters and one younger brother, is a case in point. Both the sisters are in government schools, one in the XI standard and the second one in the VII standard while the younger brother is also studying in a private school (though not at par with Vikas’s school). Vikas’s mother, when interviewed, stated that she had not been very keen on letting her elder daughter, Rekha, continue her studies beyond X standard but had finally decided to give in to her daughter’s desire to study further. Rekha, it seems, is a very bright student but, as things stand, she will be allowed to continue with her studies only till XII standard. The family has financial difficulties and Rekha is required to take on domestic responsibilities (which she seems to hate doing!) Vikas’s mother made it very clear that the decision to enable Rekha to study till XII standard, is in itself, a major decision and ‘concession’ that has been granted to her. There seems to be ‘no need’ for Rekha to be admitted to a private school (despite her being good in studies) as the decision for her future (she will have to drop-out after XII standard) has already been taken. The girls’ wishes in this case do not count for anything.

Getting the son of the family admitted to a private school, despite financial hardships seems to be done as the same is regarded as an ‘investment for the future’ (will get a good job and will take care of parents). However, no specific attempt seems to be made

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<sup>22</sup> Banerji, 2000: 798.

<sup>23</sup> Anuradha De, Claire Noronha and Meera Samson, 2002: 5233.



for the daughters of the family (especially if the number of siblings is large) for the daughter will one day have to be married off and will go away.

### **QUESTIONING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY**

Before looking at the implementation of the scheme (and whether it has met its targets), an attempt needs to be made to look at its stated objectives. The major objectives can be summed up in terms of the following questions:

#### **i) Is it social obligation to the poor?**

The NGO ‘Social Jurist’ which filed the PIL in the Delhi High Court last year highlighted the fact that one of the objectives behind the granting of private lands on throwaway prices to more than 1500 un-aided recognised private schools in Delhi was that schools discharge their “social obligation” to provide free education to a certain percentage of the children of the poor through their schools.

Social obligation of the private schools catering to the educational needs of the economically privileged classes towards children of the poor, was therefore one of the objectives of the order.

#### **ii) Is it ‘punishment’?**

The petitioners stated that all these un-aided recognised private schools in Delhi are violating the conditions of land allotment as no school is providing free education to the children of the poor. It also stated that the public authorities have not taken any action against the erring schools for failure on their part to comply with the terms and conditions of land allotment. The question that arises is whether this notification is, therefore, simply aimed at ‘punishing’ the schools which had violated rules in this regard and make them pay up.

This aspect becomes especially important in view of the fact that a large number of private schools in Delhi, which had struck a deal with the state government at the time of acquiring land, are now playing the ‘victim’.<sup>24</sup>

These schools had also lodged an appeal challenging the government ‘diktat’ that was subsequently dismissed by the Supreme Court.

#### **iii) Is it aimed at ensuring equity and equality in education?**

"This was done in order to promote integration of rich and poor sections of society and to drive home the fact that an educational institution has a social obligation to fulfill," says lawyer Ashok Aggarwal, who was part of the group that filed a PIL on this matter in the Delhi High Court in 2002.

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.hindustan times.com/news/623\\_0,0012.htm](http://www.hindustan times.com/news/623_0,0012.htm)

The PIL added that the growth of private schools has widened the gulf between the classes and masses, which is opposed to the letter and spirit of the Constitution of India. The provision of free education to the children of the poor as stipulated in the allotment of land letters, it stated, if implemented, will go a long way towards achieving the goals set out in the Constitution.

The PIL refers to the Kothari Commission (1964-66) Report which refers to the concept of the ‘Common School’. “In a situation of the type we have in India, it is the responsibility of the educational system to bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society. But at present instead of doing so, education itself is tending to increase social segregation and to perpetuate and widen class distinctions.

There is, thus, segregation in education itself – the minority of private, fee charging, better schools meeting the needs of the upper classes and vast bulk of free, privately maintained, but poor schools being utilized by the rest. What is worse, this segregation is increasing and tending to widen the gulf between the classes and the masses”. The PIL, therefore, regards the implementation of the order as leading to equity and equality in education.

#### **iv) Is it extension of the Right of free and compulsory education?**

The petitioner submitted that Law Commission of India in its 165th report on free and compulsory education for children deals with the question of free education to the children of the poor in private schools. It proposed “Free and Compulsory Education for Children Bill, 1998” in Section 12 of the said Bill.

The petitioner, further, submitted that every child of this country has a fundamental right to receive free and compulsory education up to 14 years and in case of child with a disability up to 18 years and this right is an independent right of the child and does not depend on the economic and other status of his/her parents.

Reference was made to Article 51A of the Constitution of India, which states that, it is the duty of every citizen “to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavor and achievement”.

It also referred to the Delhi School Education Act, 1973 which provides for free education up to 14 years of age and Person with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 which provides free education to the children with disabilities up to 18 years.

The petitioners finally stated that all un-aided recognized private schools in Delhi irrespective of the fact whether public land has been allotted to them or not, should provide free education to the children of the poor to the extent of 25 per cent as a part of their social and moral duty towards the children of the poor, especially when such schools have been given public land at throwaway prices. And that further if they fail to do so the public authorities are legally bound to take action against such erring schools.

It was also seen as an extension of the idea of promoting free and compulsory education in the country.

#### **v) Combination of social, moral and legal obligations**

A combination of the above objectives shows that a combination of social, moral and legal obligations influenced the government order. The question that now arises is whether these objectives have been met since the implementation of the court order and government notification of the same.

#### **IS ‘INTEGRATION’ REALLY HAPPENING?**

As stated earlier, parents of children belonging to the economically marginalized sections of the society are being unduly harassed by school authorities and are facing a lot of problems in getting their children admitted to these schools, despite the state government’s directives.

Shantha Sinha, member, CABE Committee states, in the context of free and compulsory education in the country, that a “hidden apartheid” is being practiced by these schools by “resisting the idea of keeping aside 25 per cent seats for economically-backward children from their neighbourhood”. She further states that “these schools must realize that such attitudes encourage social disparities and they themselves inadvertently become instruments of hidden apartheid”. Private schools, she says, have a “historical task to perform and they must give children from all economic backgrounds access to their institutions”.<sup>25</sup>

At the same time, however, actual problems faced by private schools in the implementation of the government order also need to be taken cognizance of as they are roadblocks which hamper the efficient implementation of the scheme.

#### **Constraints faced by Private Schools and Suggested ‘Alternatives’**

Representatives of private schools seem to have expressed a range of reactions – opposition, doubt, worry, reluctant acceptance. Questions have been raised, like, Who will pay the cost of free education? Do we ask parents of those students who pay fees to undertake this burden? And more importantly, where do we go looking for these children? Or “while the inclusionary policy is good, governments may have to subsidize private schools in order to achieve the target of free education for 20-25 per cent students”.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the initial responses of private schools to the government order last year suggest an outright denial of admission on grounds of ‘non-availability of seats’ etc. Presentation Convent’s Sister Rosamma seems to have admitted that “they were not ready. The main school is already giving a Rs 13 lakh concession and freeship.

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<sup>25</sup> Sinha, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Das, *Outlook*, May 10, 2004.

Separately, we are teaching 120 students free. This order has put us in a fix--admissions were over in January. ”<sup>27</sup>

Assisting Officer, Columbia Private School, R.C. Verma states, “We already have a system of 10 per cent free seats and 20 per cent at half the rate. Every body wants to come here now --we cannot accommodate them. ”<sup>28</sup>

This host of objections to the scheme includes views of principals stating that, it is “not fair” to these children as they are “unable to follow what is being taught as the standard of their school is very high”. That “assimilation” will never happen, given the differences in “family backgrounds”; that inability to do well in school is an “inherited trait” that children receive from their parents”.

Another issue that private schools have complained against is the apparent “misuse” of the order, with people from economically better-off families also ‘acquiring’ income certificates and forcing them to admit their children. Most of the schools alleged that people “with cars and mobile phones” have come for admission of their children and they have been unable to refuse because of the order.

One view of this sense of resentment that school authorities seem to have is said to stem from the fact that the “local government “is riding piggy-back on the success of private institutions. Das states that while the ideal system would have been a mix of state-run and private schools that offer a uniform standard of education, private schools have become the reluctant heroes of progressive action. ”<sup>29</sup>

With the quotas being forced on the schools, there is considerable resentment in complete opposition to the government’s desire to promote integration.

The mechanism has also been regarded as a “façade” to hide the real problem, i.e. the lack of proper functioning of government schools in the country.<sup>30</sup>

There seems to be, thus, an overall sense of disgruntlement and resentment towards the government directive. Schools tend to feign ‘cooperation’ with the government authorities in implementing the court order stating that they have “no problems” as such with children of the poor coming to their schools and availing the freeship scheme. They state that they ‘support’ the order, so long as the benefit of marginalized children is concerned as they’ll get the chance to study (“*padh jaayenge*”) and to improve their lives (“*Life ban rahi hai*”).

However, a deeper exploration of the issue brings forth the problems that the principals feel will result because of the scheme and which need to be addressed if the order is to be implemented to benefit these disadvantaged children.

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<sup>27</sup> cited by Kumar, 2004.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Das, *Outlook*, May 10, 2004.

<sup>30</sup> Naveen, ‘Regulation for 25 per cent freeship to poor students lands in soup’, [blog.ccsindia.org/mt/archives/2004/09/regulations\\_in.html](http://blog.ccsindia.org/mt/archives/2004/09/regulations_in.html), posted on 15/09/04.

S.L.Jain, principal, Mahavir Senior Model School (and also coordinator, Action Committee Un-aided Recognised Private Schools) identify many problems in the implementation of the SC ruling and find streamlining of students from economically weaker sections very difficult. Jain, states that “firstly, these students are used to Hindi-medium education and it is very difficult for them to switch to studying in English. Secondly, there are bound to be problems in meeting expenses over and above the tuition fees. Even if we waive off their tuition fees, who will account for their uniform, stationery and other school expenses. Thirdly they have no parental support in any aspect and the requisite environment at home is utterly lacking. Moreover, children are very sensitive and dealing with the psychological stress of being in the same class with other, financially better-off students can be very difficult.”<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the expenses involved, Jain states that he has “no problems in waving off the tuition fee of some selected students...but the government is silent on who is going to make up for the deficit. Neither can I charge more from the parents of the fee-paying students nor is the government giving us special funds. Are we expected to run in loss?” queries Jain. As for why this aspect did not strike the private schools while making the deal with the government, he explains that, “the process of acquiring the land from the government was predictably monopolistic. We were not given a chance to negotiate or bargain. We had no choice but to sign on the dotted line. However, now as the implications become apparent we want things to be debated; we want a forum, a platform”. According to Jain, the term “concessional rate” is a “misnomer”, and that the private schools got lands at an “institutional rate which was slightly less than the market rate but exorbitant nevertheless.”<sup>32</sup>

Several of the above concerns of private schools needs to be looked at and probable solutions need to be worked out.

### **Suggested Alternatives**

An ‘alternative’ that was suggested by the principal of one of the schools in the study, was to continue the earlier system of “afternoon schools” (classes held within the school premises in the afternoon shift for children from the economically marginalized sections of society) as a “better system” where the children of the poor from similar family and socio-cultural backgrounds can study together and therefore, “adjust” well.

The principal of a private school advocated the continuance of the afternoon school that he runs in the second shift in his school premises (as against the quota scheme) stating that this “parallel school” provides similar school facilities to the children and allows them to “feel comfortable”. This is important, as he feels that to admit them to similar classes as children from privileged families will produce inferiority complexes amongst the children. “*Inferiority complex ka aana toh natural hai*” (it is natural for inferiority complex to occur in these children”).

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<sup>31</sup> Jain, Varupi, ‘Equals in Education?’ [www.indiatogether.org/cgi-bin/tools/pfriend.cgi](http://www.indiatogether.org/cgi-bin/tools/pfriend.cgi).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

There are also several schools, for instance, Springdales School , Pusa Road, which have other alternative arrangements which also deserves mention in this regard. According to Ms. Wattal, Principal, Springdales Pusa, the school has been admitting students from economically weaker sections for more than twenty years now. The Integrated Education Scheme was started in 1978 “with the objective of giving deserving students from the economically weaker sections of the society (family income below Rs. 5000 per month) an opportunity to receive good quality education and holistic development.”

The school admits twenty students every other year in standard V under this scheme. 79 students are currently studying under this scheme in the school. Besides waving off the tuition fee, the school provides them with uniform, text books and stationery, extra coaching classes for board examinees, medical expenses and educational trips.

The mid-day meal scheme is available for students of standards V and VI. It is discontinued in the senior classes so that children do not feel singled out. The school recognises that a typical problem is the absence of a home environment conducive to studies. These students lack basic infrastructure facilities and guidance and support from their parents, to remedy which the school has introduced peer tutoring and remedial classes for scholarship students.

According to Ms. Wattal, “the scheme costs us about Rs. 15 lacs annually yet it does not dent our finances. I guess it is all about proper management of resources. We run our school more like an NGO. We have always been, are, and will remain a socially committed school. I think a school is a reflection of the community. We do not charge exorbitant fees like some other private schools do. This is because we are in no money-spinning business. Unlike some of these up-market schools who focus on meeting sophisticated individual needs, we emphasize the role of the community.”

To minimize drop-outs, the social-workers visit the students’ parents especially when the students near 14 years of age. “This is because at this age children can legally work in factories etc. We've observed that children are forced out of school at this age to work in carpet, metal and furniture factories near their villages. To prevent this, our social-workers visit the parents to motivate them against this practice,” offers Ms. Wattal.

In association with the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, the school also runs Computer and English classes for young adults from the community belonging to scheduled castes and tribes. Moreover, vocational training is offered at the village adopted by the school - Dasgharah. Ms. Wattal has also initiated the integration of physically challenged students in the mainstream.<sup>33</sup>

There does, therefore, seem to be recognition by private schools of the need to provide free schooling and additional support (through schemes such as the Integrated Education Scheme of Springdales School) to meritorious and ‘deserving’ children from the economically deprived sections of society. However, even principals of schools such as the former, who already have schemes for the poor also recognize the need to implement the scheme in a “scientific and holistic manner with equal orientation and sensitization of the parents, teachers and the school leadership”. The government order

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

is being regarded as a “typically terse ruling” that does not give much thought to the implications of implementation which may be regarded as perhaps the most crucial juncture where most well-meaning legislations fail.

While there might be a few schools like Springdales School, Pusa Road, with alternative and replicable arrangements already in operation, they tend to remain in a minority. It therefore follows that the ruling embodies too many sensitive and implicit arrangements to be made for the proposed integration/mainstreaming of students; minimization of emotional and psychological stress of students also teachers ; and payment of expenses over and above tuition, addressing the home environment among others – thereby making it difficult for most schools to comply with the order at once.

Similarly, probable problems that can be faced by teachers in these schools while dealing with this mixed crowd of children from diverse socio-economic, educational backgrounds also need to be recognized with solutions worked out in terms of additional training programmes, counselling etc.

One of the many suggested alternative solutions is the use of market mechanisms and “de-governmentalising all government schools”. It is suggested that the “problem of the poor is purchasing power. Now you have the same private schools trying to get this child admitted to their school. Again, the student has the right to withdraw from a poor-performing school and go to the school of his choice. A poor parent can add his savings to the voucher and send his child to a previously unaffordable school”. The poor, it is argued, will then get what has been denied to them since long, i.e. choice. It is therefore, suggested, that the poor need to be empowered by giving them purchasing power and letting them make the decisions. With this the “incentives of the private schools will be rightly aligned with the incentives of the system. Give the poor student an Education Voucher (equivalent to a sum of money) and let him use this voucher to go to the school of his choice.”<sup>34</sup>

The crucial importance of debates and discussions in public forums across the country, is therefore the need of the hour in order to determine suitable and viable solutions to these problems .

### **Prevalence of stereotypical mindsets /prejudices against children of the poor:**

While students of the economically poorer sections have been admitted to these schools, one factor of concern that cannot be overlooked is the stereotypical mindsets and prejudices of the school management and, to some extent, the teaching community. As mentioned earlier notions abound that children from the slums are “criminals” who use “abusive language” and “violent behavior”; who do not have the proper attitude and aptitude towards studies given their lack of parental support at home and more seriously, that these are “inherited traits” that they’ve “acquired” from their parents. In other words, their home and environment (of filth, squalor, illiteracy and decadence) are responsible for the “weakness in studies” and it would be “unfair” to them to admit

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<sup>34</sup> Naveen, ‘Regulation for 25per cent freeship to poor students lands in soup’, [blog.ccsindia.org/mt/archives/2004/09/regulations\\_in.html](http://blog.ccsindia.org/mt/archives/2004/09/regulations_in.html), posted on 15/09/04.

them to private schools as the quality of education of these schools is “high” and “beyond” their level of understanding.

There is also an inability to empathize with the living and working conditions of the parents of these children, for instance, the chairman of a private school happened to state in the interview that these people are used to an “easy life”, “stealing electricity”, with “free water supply; ration cards and also used to getting free education in government schools”. Therefore they are unable to appreciate the fact their children are now in good schools. He referred to his “attempts to counsel” parents to devote “at least one hour to their children encouraging them to study” or at least ask them if they’ve done their homework; send children neatly dressed to school; and to ask them to send their children to school on time. He stated that he had to “counsel” parents to make them realize how their children would pass out of the schools as “*saahebs*’ and “*officers*” (“*afsar ban jaayega*”).

A middle-class frame of reference to assess parental attitudes towards their children exists. The inability of parents, most of whom are non-literate, to supervise their children’s homework, to send them neatly dressed to school, to attend parent-teacher meetings are instances cited by teachers as indicating parents’ neglect of children and their inability to be “supportive”.

There seems to be a complete lack of sensitivity towards understanding the culture and conditions which prevents parents from being supportive towards their children. The differential learning requirements of first-generation school-goers and the understanding of the student’s capacities and talents by teachers also suffers from several pre-conceived erroneous notions. There is no realization of the need to provide positive academic support which children are unable to receive at home. There seems to be a complete lack of engagement and commitment towards teaching children from these backgrounds.

While there is widespread acceptance that the students’ failure to understand is due to the transition from a Hindi (medium of instruction) to English and also the quality of education (with hardly any teaching activity going on in government schools being a proven fact<sup>35</sup>), there is still no attempt to provide additional support to help them catch up. Their obvious requirement for supportive classes to help them improve their pace is totally ignored and the fact that the student is unable to cope is treated as a “natural” or “inherited” weakness, not as the failure of the schooling system and teaching community. There is a complete lack of empathy with the special needs of these children as also a lack of a feeling of ownership or responsibility of the school management and teaching community towards the cause of helping these children cope with the stress of the demanding school curriculum and change of environment.

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<sup>35</sup> According to the PROBE Report proportion of head teachers who were engaged in the following teaching activities when the PROBE investigators arrived:  
Teaching Activities=25per cent; Absent=33per cent; Other Activities=42 per cent  
(Source:<http://www.ashanet.org/stats/PROBE.html>) (Published in 1999 by the Oxford University Press <http://www.oup.com>).



Segregation of children is another issue that requires attention. What seems to be dangerous is that along with an indifferent attitude towards the predicament of the children, an attempt is also being made by at least one of the schools in the study, to change the organization and make-up of the classroom and to segregate the children within the classroom. An interview with the school principal, in this case, led to the principal stating that the children admitted under the quota scheme (mostly in standard I) were made to "sit separately" from the rest of the class. She justified this measure by stating that this was an attempt at providing "special care" to these children, with the teacher "simplifying the syllabus to help them understand" the lesson taught. The seating arrangement being followed in the classroom in the school seems to reinforce the idea of superiority of not only the teacher, but also, the rest of the children, as compared to the marginalized children. Rather than achieve the goal of integration, thus, what seems to be reinforced within the classroom is the division between the 'rich' and the 'poor', which needs to be checked.

Despite the above mentioned resentment of school authorities and resultant problems that need addressing, the latent potential for achieving 'integration' of the rich and the poor through this mechanism definitely cannot be minimized. Children who have been thrust from a school environment where everything except the teaching-learning activity goes on to a school which lays stress on studies along with extra-curricular activities, have welcomed the change. Children seem to like the private schools, if nothing else but for the sheer joy of coming to a class where the teacher actually "teaches" without hurling abuses with liberal doses of beatings; where the teacher actually stays in class for the entire length of the period without strolling away to the staffroom to chat with other teachers; where clean and usable toilets exist along with drinking water; a school, in other words, which actually looks and feels like a school.

This feeling of happiness and of wanting to go to school everyday, however, needs additional support from the school environment, in terms of a sensitive and supportive teaching community and school management which does not harbour the above mentioned prejudices and misconceptions (which is all the more important due to lack of supportive home environment). This, however, was found to be severely wanting in all the private schools looked at for the study.

Notions of the "inherited" lack of ability to do well in studies (as mentioned above) when translated into classroom interactions between teachers and children from marginalized communities has the danger of being internalized by the children. This is dangerous, as feelings of inadequacy and 'learned helplessness'<sup>36</sup> and low self-esteem

<sup>36</sup> According to 'Wikipedia', The Free Encyclopedia, **Learned helplessness** is a term initially used in experimental psychology, is a description of the effect of inescapable negative reinforcement (such as electrical shock) on animal (and by extension, human) behavior. It is also evoked as an explanation for a human condition in which apathy and submission prevail, causing the individual to rely fully on others for help. This can result when life circumstances cause the individual to experience life choices as irrelevant. Chemical dependence may also foster such a condition. Extremely predictable environments such as a total institution and extremely unpredictable environments such as war, famine and drought may tend to foster learned helplessness.. People in a state of learned helplessness, view problems as personal, pervasive, or permanent. That is,

and confidence can further be translated into low levels of academic performance in school.

Need-based training and counselling on a regular basis for the sensitization of the teaching as well as non-teaching staff in schools dealing with children from the economically marginalized sections of society, thus, can be suggested as an important requirement. This would enable the former to break free of stereotypical mindsets and prejudices governing their treatment and behaviour towards children in the school situation.

## **FUTURE IMPLICATIONS**

The un-aided, private schools in Delhi have been compelled to admit the children of the economically marginalized classes and provide 20 per cent-25 per cent freeships to them. The future implications of the directive, however, need to be worked out specially in view of the fact that, the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) has, along with finalizing the Free and Compulsory Education Bill, reportedly incorporated the recommendation (to be tabled in coming monsoon session of parliament) of a parliamentary sub-committee chaired by the Union Minister for science and technology, Mr. Kapil Sibal, to mandate a 25 per cent reservation in private schools for poor and socially disadvantaged children. The Kothari Commission's recommendations of introducing a common school system and the Supreme Court's observations on commercialization of education by private schools were, apparently taken into consideration, while formulating the draft bill. The proposed bill reportedly also seems to have the backing of the PMO (prime minister's office) and will do away with the existing option of reserving a minimum of 5 per cent of capacity for disadvantaged students and also substitute the lower and upper limits by a flat percentage. Once enacted, the bill, will bring about a "drastic change" in the fee structure of private schools, which will have to "cross-subsidize the freeships of poor students by hiking tuition and other fees across the board".<sup>37</sup> The management of private schools, who, as per Nehru, Autar were, in the garb of 'afternoon-schools for poor students' "exploiting loopholes in the existing law" will find this option closed as the bill provides for 'integration of both categories students'.<sup>38</sup>

The future implication of this court directive needs to be, therefore considered, as it can impact the education of children throughout the length and breadth of the country in the near future.

- Personal - They may see themselves as the problem; that is, they have internalized the problem.
- Pervasive - They may see the problem affecting all aspects of life.
- Permanent - They may see the problem as unchangeable. Questioning these so-called "3 Ps" usually helps individuals to break out of a mindset of learned helplessness (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learned\\_helplessness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learned_helplessness))

<sup>37</sup>Nehru, Autar, [http://educationworldonline.net/eduworld/article.php?choice=prev\\_art&article\\_id=344&issueid=29](http://educationworldonline.net/eduworld/article.php?choice=prev_art&article_id=344&issueid=29)).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

### **A. Access achieved, but what about Retention?**

While it does seem to further the goal of getting children to school (Access), the question as to whether it would enable children to stay on in school (Retention), seems to be doubtful. This deduction can be made due to the following fall-outs of the directive as of now:

#### **i) Is ‘freeship’ equal to ‘free education’?**

The order of the Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi, dated 27-04-04 states that “all schools will grant minimum 20 per cent freeship (which includes tuition fees, PTA or any other fees/funds/charges of any kind related to teaching-learning) to the children of the weaker sections of society w.e.f.1st of May,2004”.The ‘freeship’ order, however, does not take into account additional ‘hidden’ expenses, in terms of expenses on uniforms/shoes/belts; school books; transportation charges (rickshaw/bus etc.); private tuition; additional expenses demanded by school authorities (for picnic etc.) being faced by the poor parents which puts at stake the viability and sustainability of the entire policy over a specific period of time.

The problems faced by the private schools in providing freeships, in this regard also needs to be recognised. What also needs to be considered is the fact that parents of children belonging to the economically depressed sections of society, despite hardships, also have children studying in private schools and an increase in the fee structure is likely to hit them. For the freeships to be actually ‘free’ for the economically deprived groups of society, all such considerations need to be deliberated upon.

#### **ii) Need for streamlining the process**

There seems to be an urgent need to clearly delineate appropriate markers/indicators for entry of the economically marginalized children into the schools. This is because, the criteria, as of now, of income <sup>39</sup> certificates with a stated income tends to be a somewhat rigid and inadequate indicator of the level of deprivation of the household and continuation of the same over a period of time. If inclusion of children from the marginalized households into private un-aided schools is the objective, entry of children from households with an income level which also is relatively low but not yet BPL also ought not to be excluded in the scheme.

Also, since the income levels of households may fluctuate and move up or down the ladder of deprivation over a period of time making it difficult to verify, it becomes important to include other criteria of entry. This is required to make the scheme more flexible and inclusive and for benefits of the scheme to percolate to the deprived sections of society.

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<sup>39</sup> The order of the Directorate of Education states that “the annual parental income from all sources shall form the basis of admission in the schools. The qualifying parental income changes from time to time and the same will be notified from time to time by the Department of Education. However, the present annual parental income limit is Rs.48, 000/- for boy students and Rs -60,000/- for girl students. Further, the parents of the child should have been staying in Delhi for last 5 years. Adequate proof like ration card or electoral identity card or driving license or birth certificate of child etc. should be insisted on in this regard (See Annexure Order, Directorate of Education, No.PS/DE/2004/10496-11595 dated:27-04-04).

It becomes important, therefore, to look at the other possible criteria of entry, for instance, neighbourhood/residence etc. Residence in a slum has been accepted as a criteria for allotting ration cards intended for BPL households by the Delhi government in the past, confirming the difficulties in establishing income levels.<sup>40</sup> Residence in a slum “indicates the existence of certain dimensions of poverty: poor housing conditions, limited access to clean drinking water, toilets and electricity, and is also generally indicative of irregular earnings from the informal economy. However, it is not necessarily a good measure of income poverty”. The point which is emphasized is that “urban poverty is not income poverty alone”, and thus, primacy is given to the fact of slum residence which includes income as one of the markers of poverty.<sup>41</sup>

In order to identify such markers, other development programmes across the country, for instance, the *Kudumbashri* programme for poverty alleviation and women’s empowerment adopted by the state government of Kerala can be referred to. In this programme, women were classified as poor from families having four or more of the following risk factors from a nine-point non-income based index. These nine factors are: *Kutcha* (mud) houses; no access to safe, drinking water; no access to sanitary latrine; illiterate adults; not more than one earning family member; family getting only two meals a day or less; presence of children below age 5; alcoholic or drug addict; scheduled caste or scheduled tribe family.<sup>42</sup>

The necessity to include other indicators of entry also stems from the problems in regular verification of income certificates. Ashok Agarwal, of the Social Jurist recently revisited the issue in a letter to Delhi’s Education Minister, Mr.Arinder Singh Lovely stating that “some schools are making a mockery of the court’s order. Students admitted under the reserved quota are being asked for parental income certificates every year. Imagine two lakh students queuing up at the SDM’s (Sub- Divisional Magistrate) offices for this certificate. Therefore we have asked the state government to centralize the admission process by appointing nodal officers to oversee the admission procedure without involvement of the schools.”<sup>43</sup>

What also needs to be deliberated upon is the fact that if the income level of a particular family changes after the child’s admission to a school, is the child, then, to be thrown out irrespective of the fact that the child may have adjusted to the school and may be doing well in class? The justification of this action also needs to be thought of, keeping the well-being of the child in mind.

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<sup>40</sup> The ISST study states that “in the absence of micro -level information on the income status of households, the Delhi government took the decision to issue TPDS (Targeted Private Distribution System) ration cards to all *jhuggi* families who declared that their income was below the poverty line income” (*Source: Chronic Poverty and Gendered Patterns of Intra-Household Resource Allocation: A Preliminary Enquiry, 2004*).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Source:<http://www.ifpri.org/divs/fcnd/dp/papers/fcndp180.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> Nehru, Autar, [http://educationworldonline.net/eduworld/article.php?choice=prev\\_art&article\\_id=344&issueid=29](http://educationworldonline.net/eduworld/article.php?choice=prev_art&article_id=344&issueid=29).

Ability of students (with the ‘bright’ ones being sent to these schools to enable them to perform better) is another possible criterion. While this, as a point of entry, is not provided for by the order as it will defeat the very purpose of inclusion; an interview with the principal of a government school revealed that a certain principal of a private school had actually written letters stating that the “toppers” and “bright” students of the government school could be sent and would be admitted. This gentleman, when questioned, even admitted to sending the letter to all government schools in the area. He said that he’d done this to “help” deserving students do “better”. The principal of the government school, however, complained that his school will suffer with the brightest children going away to either the *‘pratibha vikas vidyalayas’*<sup>44</sup> within the government school system or to these private schools.

The desirability of a variety of indicators of entry into the private schools under scheme, such as residence; ability etc; along with the relative importance of each, therefore, needs to be debated upon to ensure both efficiency and sustainability.

### **iii) Need of Academic and Non-academic support within the School**

To enable the children to catch up with the pace of studies and to adjust to their new surroundings, it is essential that understanding of the specific life situation of the children by teachers and principals is also translated into taking responsibility and the sensitive handling of children within the schools.

Discriminatory practices explored in the study which reinforce difference within the classroom such as separate seating arrangements will have to be done away with.

At the same time, teacher attitudes based upon negative stereotypes of children from economically marginalized families also needs to be actively challenged through teacher training and other exercises. This is important, because, as has been stated before, negative opinions and attitudes lead to no expectations or very low expectations from the children and may contribute to a low self-image and below-average performance among children.

Reference can be made here to field studies by Banerji in Delhi and Mumbai in slum communities which suggests that the “reasons why children are not in school or why they are not learning have more to do with the nature of the schools than with the economic circumstances of their families” .<sup>45</sup> Teachers’ attitudes and the willingness and competence to deal with children coming from poor and deprived situations, therefore seems to be more crucial (amongst other things to improve school environment) rather than blaming the children themselves for their “weakness in studies” .

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<sup>44</sup> *Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas* have been opened by the Delhi Government where meritorious students from Government Schools are admitted through competitive examinations. These schools have excellent teachers, good laboratories, libraries and other equipments(Source: <http://delhiplanning.nic.in/Write-up/2004-05/Volume-11per cent20pdf/ChXV.pdf>).

<sup>45</sup> Banerji, 2000: 801.

Non-academic support, in terms of counselling of students and academic support, in terms of supportive classes to enable children to catch up can also be aimed at, if children are expected to stay back in school.

As research literature suggests, “achievement is maximized when students feel competent about their abilities, when they have personal goals to achieve, when they feel they have control over their successes and failures and when they are motivated intrinsically to learn. Student perceptions of supportive relationships within their learning environments in terms of the support from the parents, teachers and peers, are stated to be most critical to their academic success.<sup>46</sup> In the case of children coming from poor and economically deprived situations, support from the school environment seems to be all the more crucial.

Reference can be made here to the case of Raju, an adolescent admitted to the XI standard in a private school whose exam results seem to suggest that he is not doing as well as expected. The problem was again an internalization of the limited parental aspirations (Raju’s parents would like him to drop-out of school after the XII standard and start working to support the family). Raju believes that his dreams of becoming an astronomer and ‘going to NASA’ will remain just that, ‘dreams’ as he will have to start working soon. The fall in his examination grades is a response to this low expectation on the part of his parents.

Thus, to enable retention of children as also to improve academic performance in school, the support structure within the schools needs to be strengthened. To enable this, the attitude of the teacher and their willingness and competence to deal with children coming from poor and deprived situations, needs to be addressed through training, capacity-building and sensitization workshops.

#### **iv) Resistance to Reform**

It is an accepted fact that attempts to reform the educational system in India tend to be largely treated with scepticism and apprehension, if not outright rejection. In the context of educational reform and the tremendous resistance to it in India, Krishna Kumar, Director, NCERT feels “if an intrinsic urge for reform is a measure of systemic quality--as a recent UNESCO report suggests then we deserve to be rated poorly. Indeed, resistance to reform is so high that you are forced to wonder why the system attracts any criticism at all”.<sup>47</sup>

The new NCF (New Curriculum Framework), Kumar states, relates quality in terms of “experiences provided to children to enable them to construct knowledge”. This approach, he states, calls for the “recognition of children’s creativity and motivation to learn. The belief that every child has a personality and a unique potential is fundamental to the development of a democratic system of schooling.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Merchant et al, 2001: 505-519.

<sup>47</sup> Krishna Kumar, *The Hindu*, July2, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

On the Common School System, Kumar states that four decades have passed since the Kothari Commission recommended the same. “That vision, he states, is in shambles today and cannot be resurrected magically in the midst of sharp socio-economic contradictions. But, what is possible and important, he states, is to initiate long-range reforms, starting with steps to improve systemic efficiency and accountability” to bring about a change in the system.

Kumar also calls for the need to appreciate children’s own capacities (refers to Prof. Yashpal’s a “child-inspired approach” rather than a “child-centered one”) in this regard.

### **NEXT STEPS FORWARD**

With regard to the 20-25 per cent freeship scheme, it becomes important, therefore, to identify the problems in its implementation and to suitably address them through appropriate strategies so as to bring about its efficient and sustainable implementation in the long run. For the real purpose of encouraging integration for which it has been initiated, one needs to look at the above issues and chalk out strategies to address them.

At the same time, there is a need to make the scheme more “child-inspired”<sup>49</sup> as it is evident that this scheme has, as yet, not emphasized the centrality of making schooling an experience and a process in which discriminatory practices can be challenged. More significantly, there is the danger of difference and discrimination being reinforced in the school and classroom through seating arrangement in the classrooms and also attitudes based upon negative stereo-typing and labeling by the teaching community.

If the combination of social, moral and legal obligations behind the scheme are to be adequately met, thus making quality education a right of all sections of society, there is an urgent need to address the several issues stated above to enable the effects of the scheme to be sustainable and replicable (if enforced) throughout the country.

Most significantly, the pessimistic attitudes towards educational reform and “Hidden Apartheid” against the children of the poor will have to be actively challenged with the private schools waking up to their social responsibilities and quality education being democratized and accessible to all in the country rather than to a privileged few.

At the same time, the perspectives, experiences and concerns of children belonging to the middle class sections of society studying in the private schools, their parents, those of the teachers teaching in these schools alongwith the principals and the school management authorities also needs to be addressed to enable the proper implementation of the government order and the goal of inclusion in education to become a concrete reality in the truest sense of the word.

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<sup>49</sup> Prof. Yashpal cited by Prof Krishna Kumar in *The Hindu*, July2, 2005.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### **CASE STUDY I**

**Raju**

**Age: 19yrs**

**Class: XII standard**

Raju is a quiet, precocious and reserved nineteen-year-old who was admitted to a private school last year. Earlier he'd been studying in a government school. His father works for a lawyer and helps in making affidavits and his mother is a housewife.

Raju has two younger brothers. One of these is a X standard drop-out who dropped out of school a year back and is planning to complete his Boards Examination through open school next year. The youngest brother is studying in the VIII standard in a government



school and is apparently not very bright in studies but is picking up with the help provided by the teachers at ISST community centre in Vinod Nagar.

Raju had secured 72 per cent in his X standard Boards Examination (with an 84 per cent in Mathematics; 72 per cent in Science and 68 per cent in English). He wanted to pursue Science in his plus-two but since the course was not offered by his school, he was forced to opt for Commerce which he studied for three months. He then dropped out of school, sitting at home for a year. Once he got to know of the computer course being offered by the ISST Community Centre, he enrolled himself in it and pursued it for a period of 6 months.

A school drop-out, Raju wanted to continue with his studies but his parents wanted him to start earning a living for himself (conditions were so bad that his father wanted him take up any job, even that of a waiter in a hotel, if possible).

After counselling by the ISST resource persons, however, Raju’s parents finally realized the mistake of forcing him into a low-status and low-income job and decided to let him continue with his studies instead.

After the initial groundwork by ISST staff, Raju was called for an interview at the school and finally admitted.

### **Raju’s daily routine**

With class starting around 8 am, Raju leaves for school at 7 am in the morning. School finishes at 2 pm and he reaches home at 3 pm. After a quick change of clothes, he comes to the community centre for computer lessons. Around 5pm he goes home for ‘lunch’ and at 6pm goes with friends to the local park to ‘hang out’.

### **Raju’s Dreams**

Raju’s dreams are big and beautiful. He dreams of becoming an astronomer at NASA, someday, “if conditions permit”. His dreams are, however, hemmed in by the bitter realization that these might remain just dreams as his parents want him to give up his studies after the XII standard and to start earning a living for himself. His parents have allowed him to finish his XII standard, but want him to take up a job as soon as possible.

### **Adjustment Problems**

#### **i) Socio-cultural problems**

Raju says that initially he did face adjustment problems and he ‘used to sit alone’ for the first 15-16 days. Then gradually the boy sitting next to him opened up and started talking to him. Today, this boy, called Abhishek, is one of his closest friends.

When asked about his friends, he stated that, “The whole class is my friend... everybody knows me”. They seem to ask for his help in tackling difficult questions in mathematics, at which he is very good.

Some of his close friends are Karan, Darshan and Dhar. Darshan, the naughtiest of all his friends teases him calling him ‘Lallu’ (or a ‘dimwit’) while Raju says he retorts back calling Darshan ‘Kaala Ganna’ (or ‘Black Sugarcane’) as he is dark-complexioned!

Amidst this seemingly easy-going banter, however, the presence of a socio-cultural schism cannot be ruled out. This is evident from the sharp dichotomy that Raju himself makes between the two groups of friends he now has. One group, the older one, is of the ‘Mawaali-type and goondagardi-wale’ (or ruffians) who roam around in the park and “talk about girls all the time”. These are Raju’s “old friends” who ask him to “come back” to the government school as they miss him but Raju does not seem to want to go back.

The other group, of the present school, comprises of friends, with whom he shares lunch (with his ‘lunch’ often being a ‘patty’ that he buys from the canteen for Rs10/-) and who talk more about their studies and career-related concerns of wanting to clear their NDA (to get into the army) or MBA etc.

Raju says that he enjoys being with both these groups. Raju, however, seems also to be bound by rules of allegiance and ‘loyalty’ to the former group of guys, of what he termed as the ‘Mawaali-type and goondagardi-wale’ type, saying that he cannot give up on them now (*‘ab unko toh nehi chod sakta na’*).

He seems to be caught between these two different lifestyles and world views with the old gang often jeering at him saying *‘yeh toh ab sahi ho gaya hai’* (‘he has become ‘right’ now’). He seems to be struggling to find a balance (without walking out of his old gang, saying, that while he would hang around with them, he would not necessarily adopt their ‘bad’ ways (chewing tobacco; eve-teasing girls; getting into unnecessary brawls etc).

#### **ii) Transition from Hindi to English medium**

The transition from Hindi to English medium has been “not very difficult” for Raju. According to him, he had initially faced problems but now he is okay with it.

#### **iii) Transportation problems**

Facilities provided by the school, seem to exclude transportation. Though the school bus covers the area around his locality, its services are not available to him. He claims to have been given the money for the DTC bus fare by ISST, helping him to get his bus pass made. He, however, is forced to pay around 20/- per day for his bus fare (if the DTC bus service is not available).

#### **iv) Academic results**

In terms of examinations results, Raju does not seem to have done quite well in the XI standard. He says that the reason for this was his inability to finish all the questions in the required time limit.

He says that he would like to take tuitions but cannot because money would be a problem. He, however, seems to have worked out an alternative in the form of studying with a friend who is taking tuitions.

#### v) **Raju’s Views**

**Private school much better:** Raju says that this school is ‘much better’ than the government one in terms of:

- **Quality of education:** The ‘quality’ of education is a lot better, according to him. Extra classes, he says, have been started by the present school to enable students to get acquainted with the XII standard syllabus. This, he says, is helpful.
- **Basic facilities:** basic facilities like, drinking water, toilet as also science laboratory
- **Teachers:** Teacher absenteeism, he says was a major problem in the government school, with the teachers hardly turning up to teach.

The behavior of the teachers is also much better, according to Raju, with the teachers in the government school freely ‘using the rod’ (i.e. sticks, wires etc) to beat up students.

This does not happen at his new school.

Raju says that the teachers at the private school are very cooperative, often asking him to come up to them for additional guidance if he requires it. Raju, however, says that he fails to seek their help as he feels scared and shy (“*Himmat nehi hoti...Kyonki aajtak nehi kiya...*” (or ‘Don’t have the courage to...as haven’t done it till now’). Despite his ‘bad performance’ in the XI standard, the teachers seem to have encouraged him saying that he’s done well but needs to do much better in the XII standard.

Raju’s favourite teacher is Mr. Das, the Physics teacher. Raju seems to like him because of his ‘behavior’ as he encourages him and gives him extra attention.

Raju definitely seems to have the potential to do well in his Board examination. However, his lackluster performance in the XI standard, seems to suggest that he could be facing problems at the home front (increasing parental pressure to somehow ‘complete’ XII standard and get a job) resulting in a lack of motivation and sense of despondency (‘what’s the use of working hard, when I will have to start working after my XII standard?’). Raju also needs coaching classes as additional academic support if he is to do well.

#### **RAJU’S MOTHER, KAMALA**

Raju’s Mother, Kamala stays in a small, one-room tenement with her three sons and husband. The rent of the place is Rs.900/- per month. Her husband does not seem to make enough and while her brother has brought her a sewing machine to stitch clothes, she does not earn as much as others in the area who are also doing the same activity. She and her husband had migrated from Uttaranchal a long time back. She would like to go back, she says, to cut their expenses, but her children have their roots here since this is where they grew up and they don’t want to go back to their village.

Life seems to have been difficult for this family and looking at the ‘house’, one tends to wonder how Raju could have managed to secure a 72 per cent in his Board Examination, trying to study while cooking, cleaning, entertaining of guests went on in the very same room.

Kamala is apologetic about her poverty, saying that getting her son admitted to a private school was much beyond their means, ‘*hamari to gunjaish hi nehi thi*’ (‘We just did not have the means to’).

Allowing their son, Raju, to complete his +2 was a big decision for them due to their financial problems and they would rather have him working than studying once he completes his XII standard. The additional expenditure after his admission to the school includes transportation costs and, more importantly, the loss of a pair of ‘working hands’ which could contribute to the family income. Raju has been provided books along with a set of uniform by the school but the school does not provide bus services (even though it passes through the locality everyday).

As Kamala puts it, ‘*Man kiska nehi karta apne bachon ko padhane ka. Par apni gunjaish dekhni padti hai*’ (‘Who doesn’t want his/her children to study, but one has to also see to her/his ability to do the same’).

## **CASE STUDY II**

**Name: VISHAL**

**Age: 10yrs**

**Class: III standard**

Vishal is an active, talkative and precocious boy. He has been admitted to a private school in standard III, despite, having passed this in the Government school he was attending earlier.

Vishal has been attending school only since the past fortnight but seems to like the new school, because of a number of reasons.

### **Vishal’s Views:**

**Private school much better:** Vishal feels that the private school he has joined is better than the government school he was in earlier because of the following reasons:

- **Quality of education:** he says that “studies are better here”
- **Teachers:** are also better. While they do scold and slap the children for their “mistakes” or if they are “naughty, they ‘don’t not slap them hard and it doesn’t hurt much”. The teachers in the government school, Vishal says, on the other hand, used to beat up the children with ‘*dandas*’ (sticks) and it used to be bad, because “it hurt”. They also used to verbally abuse the children (“*gaali dete the...*”)

Vishal also complains that the teachers in the government school used to give them work to do and then go out of the classroom to the ‘office’ and were not serious about their work.

- **Homework:** Vishal gets homework to do now and seems “not to mind it much”, rather enjoys it, particularly Hindi (as will take time to catch up with English).
- **Friends:** the friends, he has here, are apparently better, according to Vishal, as they don’t indulge in abusive language (“*gaali nehi dete hain*”) as compared to the friends in the government school.

Vishal, despite problems in catching up with English, seems to like his new school and would like to stay on here. “I like everything here!” he says.

### **VISHAL’S MOTHER, GAURI**

Vishal’s mother, Gauri, is a domestic worker, working at two houses in a day, earning Rs1000/- in a month. Her husband is a casual labourer, who works when he finds work. He drinks and then beats up his wife (a common occurrence in the area). The family migrated to Delhi from Jhansi some twenty years back. Both she and her husband are illiterate.

Gauri expresses her dissatisfaction with the government school where Vishal was earlier studying saying that alongwith the quality of studies, lack of proper drinking water and toilet facilities were a major problem. She also says that, school expenses were also a problem because she had to “pay for everything”.

Gauri, realizes the importance of education in her children’s lives. She says that she wants her children to study and to do well in life.

She is filled with gratitude towards the ISST personnel for getting her child admitted in the private school as without their help she “couldn’t even have thought of doing this”. ‘*Hamari aukat hi nehi thi*’ (‘We didn’t have the status/position to’)

### CASE STUDY 3

**Name: SUKANYA**

**Age: 7 yrs**

**Class: II standard**

Sukanya is a quiet and shy girl admitted to a private school. She’d been earlier studying in a government school.

Sukanya seems to like this school better than the government school because as she gravely puts it, “children used to talk and play in class” in the government school and there were “no studies”.

According to this seven-year-old, her present school is better as children don’t do naughty things and “*class mein padhai hoti hai*”. The teachers here are also better, “*sahi se padhai karwate hain*” (“they teach properly”)

#### **SUKANYA’S MOTHER, RASHMI**

Sukanya’s mother, Rashmi is a home-based worker working as a sap-sorter. Her husband is a casual labourer. They are migrants from Bihar. They have seven children, with three of them going to school (including Sukanya). The other two are in government schools.

Rashmi had no idea about this new policy of the government and she states that it was ISST which got “everything done”. “*Hamne toh kuch bhi nehi kiya hai, sabhi aap logon ka kiya hai*” (“We haven’t done anything, it is you (ISST) who has done everything”), she says.

She claims to be finding it difficult due to the increased expenses that the admission has brought but doesn’t mind as she wants her children to be well-educated, despite the “*bojha*” (burden).

She voices her apprehensions and worries about the increased expenses that Sukanya’s admission to a private school has brought about, wondering whether she would be able to continue meeting the expense and for how long. She says that though the tuition fees has been spared, the additional costs of transportation (a rickshaw-puller charges Rs200-Rs250/- per month) and private tuition (if her child needs tuitions in future) would be difficult to manage.

#### **CASE STUDY 4**

##### **Name: VIKAS**

Vikas is in the IV standard studying in a private school. He’d been studying in another private school which was a primary school up to standard V.

It’s just been twelve days, he says, since he joined the new school but says that this school is “better” than the former one. “*Zyada padhai hoti hai*” (“More teaching takes place”) and “*bacche zyada ladai-jhagra nehi karte*” (“children don’t fight much”).

Vikas seems to have problems with the medium of instruction being English and seems to have approached his teachers about his problem. They’ve been helpful, he says, translating words into Hindi to make him understand.

##### **VIKAS’S MOTHER,\*MANORAMA**

Vikas’s mother, Manorama works as a piece-rate worker (sap-sorter) from home. Her husband works as a gardener in a private school (the school where Vikas has been admitted). She also has three daughters. Two are studying in government schools one in the XI standard, another in the VII standard and the third in another private school in the II standard.

Vikas’s mother and father seem to be stretching their resources beyond their limits by allowing Vikas to shift to a better, more expensive school. They, however, do not seem to have similar plans for the youngest daughter who “is not interested in studies” as also for the eldest daughter who has been “allowed” to complete her +2 (but not beyond) as she is bright in studies (even though she is required at home to take care of the domestic responsibilities of cooking/cleaning/taking care of her siblings).

Manorama states that his school is “English-medium” and therefore “better” while the earlier one had been following Hindi as a medium of instruction and was therefore “not good”.

She seems to find the education-related expenses difficult to manage, as along with the daily private tuition fees (around Rs250 per month), uniform, books and transportation charges also needs to be met. She admits this despite her contention that, “No parents want their children not to study” (“*Koi maa-bapp nehi chahte ki unke bacche nehi padhe*”).

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## **LIST OF ANNEXURES**

- 1) Letter(Copy of) to the Education Minister, Delhi Government & to the Chief Minister, Delhi Government dated 21/02/05 from ISST Field staff (Amita Joshi; Shanta Gururani; Kamlesh Gaur and Nirmala)
- 2) Letter (Copy of) to the Deputy Director, Education Department, North Delhi from ISST Field Staff: Kamlesh Gaur; Nirmala and others (Satyabhama; Maya Devi; Sarita & Mumtaz dated 16/03/05
- 3) Letter (Copy of) to the S.D.M, Geeta Colony, North Delhi related to Income Certificate dated 01/06/05
- 4) Form ‘E’(Copy of) Appeal under Section 7(1) of the Delhi Right to Information Act, 2001 submitted by Mrs. Amita Joshi on the 27/07/04 to the Secretary, Public Grievance Commission, New Delhi
- 5) Form ‘A’(Copy of) Form of application for seeking information submitted by Mrs. Amita Joshi to the Directorate of Education, New Delhi
- 6) Copy of details of seats available under the Freeship scheme dated 27-12-04
- 7) Hearing Notice from Office of the Appellate Authority, Delhi Rights to Information Act, New Delhi, No.F.Appeal(882)/2004/PGC/DRI/Edu 8146-8148
- 8) Appeal(Copy of) of Ms. Amita Joshi vs. Education Department, Office of the Appellate Authority, Delhi Rights to Information Act, New Delhi, No.F.Appeal(882)/2004/PGC/DRI/Edn.8720-8722, dated 25/10/04
- 9) Appeal(Copy of) of Ms. Amita Joshi vs. Education Department, Office of the Appellate Authority, Delhi Rights to Information Act, New Delhi, No.F.Appeal(882)/2004/PGC/DRI/Edn.11636-11639, dated 27/12/04
- 10) Additional Information regarding the Nursery & KG classes for Right to Information, Delhi Act, EO(Z-II) dated 04/01/05(Copy of)
- 11) Additional Information from Office of the Deputy Director of Education, East Rani Garden, Gita Colony, Delhi No.F.DE-47/EO/Zone-II/04/E/RTIA/213, dated 26/08/04(Copy of)
- 12) Additional Information from Office of the Deputy Director of Education, East Rani Garden, Gita Colony, Delhi, No.F.DE-47/EO/Zone-II/04/E/RTIA/214, dated 26/08/04 (Copy of)
- 13) Information about admission of students under Freeship Scheme as on 31/07/04 from AVB Adarsh Vidya Bhawan; Bal Bhavan Public School; Ahlcon Public School; Vanasthali Public School; Mayur Public School

- 14) Appeal(Copy of) of Ms. Amita Joshi vs. Education Department,Office of the Appellate Authority, Public Grievance Commission, New Delhi, No.F.Appeal(882)/2004/PGC/DRI/Edn.10860-10863, dated 13/12/04
- 15) Hearing Notice from Office of the Appellate Authority, Delhi Rights to Information Act, New Delhi, No.F.Appeal(882)/2004/PGC/DRI/Edu 10193-10195,dated:06/12/04
- 16) Order (Copy of) , Government of N.C.T of Delhi, Directorate of Education dated 27-04-04, No: PS/DÉ/2004/10496-11595