



Does Democratization Of Education Lead To Social Inclusion? Special Emphasis On Rte Act In Private Schooling

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Abstract

This paper presents the role of democratization and its impact on social inclusion in education in general and schooling in particular. Public education needs to be reclaimed to fulfill its role as a democratizing force to address social and economic inequality and to respect and recognize diversity and difference. Also to demonstrate that the role of the state has been dismantled and the public nature of education has been diluted due to privatization of school education. The factors responsible are to be articulated and discussed with particular reference to the impact of neo-liberal policies in education, the marketization of education, and new policy Acts. The RTE Act was introduced with the intention to promote democratization of education and social inclusion of poorer and deprived section kids. Is it a real inclusion and a promoter of equity and equality by providing 25% seats to these sections in private schooling through fee reimbursement by the government? Are the teachers treating all the pupils equally? Why does public education matter vis-a-vis equality? What are the purposes, nature and role of public education in the 21st century? These are key questions that frame this paper. How public education has been dismantled through privatization, and advance a preference for English medium in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Some examples of how systems have revitalized and supported the public nature of education are discussed. These include creating better accountability systems, which respect the professionalism of teachers and developing collaborative curriculum development strategies that engage with all including those who are deprived.

Keywords: Democratization of Education, RTE Act, 25% seats for poor and deprived, Private school, Equity, and Social Justice.

1.1 Introduction

In India, during the past five decades we have placed several initiatives to universalize education for its citizens. One of the foremost initiatives came with the recommendation of the Kothari Commission. The Indian Education Commission (Kothari Commission) 1964-66,

after reviewing the status of Indian education system, gave several recommendations. One of the most important amongst of these recommendations is that of common schooling system with a view to eliminate inequality in educational opportunities. Thereafter, the National Policy on Education (NPE) was framed in 1968 and it dealt with issues of equalization of educational opportunity by adopting the idea of common school system to promote social cohesion. In the process through NPE the aim was to re-affirm the goal of universalisation of school education. This policy is in addition to Article 21-A of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to Free and Compulsory Education (FCE). Another notable scheme is Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the year 2000 which is also an effort to universalize elementary education through community-ownership of the school system and promote social justice through basic education. The objective of SSA is to place systems for achieving the following goals: a) All children should enroll in primary schools by 2007; b) eight years of elementary schooling by 2010 and c) universal retention of children by the year 2010. The recently launched Rashtriya Madhyamika Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) 2009 is also aimed at expanding and improving the standards of secondary education that is classes from VIII-X. The Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry has taken note of the success of SSA and in order to advance the goal of universalization of secondary education (USE) plans to implement RMSA during 11th plan at a cost of Rs.20,120 crores. Simultaneously, the Government of India started Bridge Schools an opportunity for students that dropped out of the school to enroll themselves again.

With the new initiative of the Right to Education Act (RTE) 2010 was introduced to pat the private schools through the government pay in the form of fee-reimbursement with different clauses within the Act. It is an opportunity to change the way that private unaided schools are regulated and gaining recognition in India. The role of private unaided sector in India is crucial for achieving "Education for All". The RTE Act of 2009, which came to force on 1st April 2010, provides an opportunity for state governments to explore ways for assuring even of education to children through private unaided schools. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 provides for free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 to 14 years, and mandates government aided and non-minority unaided schools to reserve 25 percent of the total seats belonging to children for marginalized sections. Some government schools had to be closed down due to low pupil strength despite implementation of District Primary Education Program (DPEP) and midday meal programmes to increase enrollments in the government schools in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Some schools are running under the trees or in a rented building though the SSA provides funds for developing infrastructure. Further the rampant growth of private schools, with the fancy names such as techno schools, international schools, English medium with language lab facilities and enriched class room facilities. The above reasons are raising the query that 'Do we still need public schools?' but we need them in order to promote the poorer and deprived sections children and to implement democratization of education in the

society. The state of Andhra Pradesh has a very good number of government residential schools for the promotion of rural talents, scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and other backward communities. These schools are best examples to bring in innovative solutions and be accountable for delivery of democratization of education. The neo-liberal policy and marketization of education revolves around the theme of 'Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in Education is one form through education by private operators provide education though it is publicly funded.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 presents a huge opportunity for PPPs. However, the financial capacity of the governments to achieve the goals spelled out in RTE Act is uncertain. Many studies have shown that private schools in India provide a reasonable quality of school education at almost 25-30% of the cost of government education (Tooley 2010). With an additional financial support from the state in the form of fee- reimbursement, the quality of education can be augmented in these schools, and thereby deliver education to disadvantaged groups that desire private schooling. According to the provisions of the RTE Act, in private schools 25% of the total seats are to be filled with children that belong to economically weaker sections and disadvantaged groups. The intent here is also to the idea of Public Private Partnership into the national education policy. A successful implementation of PPPs depends heavily on the capacity of the governments to design, develop, and manage the complex contracting processes associated with PPPs. Unless this capacity in the governments is developed and transparent systems adapted, PPPs may end up increasing rent seeking behaviour in an already inefficient system.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- To ascertain reasons why public education matters in a democratic society
- To analyze accessibility, equity and inclusion in public schools that have implemented common school system
- To assess the relationship between RTE Act and social inclusion
- To elucidate reasons for exclusion of poorer children in private schooling.

2.1 Review of Literature

James and Pauline, (2006) 'De facto' privatization of education and the poor: implications of a study from sub-Saharan Africa and India. In this article the authors discuss teacher absenteeism in public schools and the chain of accountability being weak. They also found teachers have a permanent job with salaries and promotions are unrelated to performance. Despite further high fees in private schools the poorer parents are willing to pay for their education because there is accountability. They have concluded that government schools are of low quality, but private schools still managing with different nomenclatures with a special feature of English medium along with language lab facilities.

Pankaj and Ravindra (2009) in their article 'Feasibility of Implementation of Right to Education Act' have emphasized that meeting the goal of universal schooling of all children, given an education budget of below the generally recommended 6% of GDP, is not possible. This is especially true if school education is through government schools with all the teachers being paid salaries at level recommended in the Sixth Pay Commission. They have suggested at the alternative way to meet the Right to Education obligation is to rely on low cost private schools as a significant instrument of government education policy though the RTE Act 2009 opposes low cost private schools. Therefore the authors have recommended the PPP as an alternative avenue to achieve the goals aimed through the RTE Act.

Govinda and Bandyopadhyay (2010) in their article titled 'Social Exclusion and School Participation in India: Expanding access with equity' analyzed based on access and equity, process of exclusion. They found more number of Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe children are excluded compared to upper caste children, specifically from secondary schools. Most of the children are working (such as child labour and manual labour in the place of adults). They also noted the high dropout rate in secondary schools compared to primary level.

Nalini Juneja (2003) in her occasional paper 'Constitutional Amendment to make Education a Fundamental Right' explains her critical point of view regarding the changing Article 45 from Part IV of Directive Principles of State policy to Fundamental Rights of Article 21A. And why does new legislation required for giving this right an operational meaning when almost every State already has a Compulsory Education Act? Should private institutions have a role to play in this national endeavor? How can they bring in? With the Unnikrishnan Vs Supreme Court education got the status of a Fundamental right but denying the Articles 24 and 39. According to the article 24, No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or in any other hazardous employment, and Article 39 gave emphasis on the State shall direct its policy toward securing the tender age of children and that children are given opportunities and facilities to grow in a healthy manner and provide conditions of freedom and dignity and protect against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment. Finally, she concluded with the fact Legislation is much less to make the children come to school than to make it for those who cannot.

Meera (2002) in his article 'Education-The inclusive growth strategy for the economically and socially disadvantaged in the society' enumerates the present situation and literacy levels of Dalits and Tribals in India. He emphasized on the investment in education in order to achieve the World Bank's social development objectives, which support inclusive growth, social cohesion and accountability in development and nation's socio-economic progress. He supported policies and policy frame works and they shall have to focus on inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies.

Val Klenowski, (2009) in his article 'Public Education Matters: Reclaiming Public education for the common good in a global era' enumerates about the discussion and explanation of the interface of policy development and practice, support for the development of schools as learning organizations with a focus on the relationship between teacher learning and student learning, and schools as reflective and inclusive communities of practice. It is distributive leadership that is valued in his context. The value of partnership with academe, teachers, school leaders and policy makers is illustrated. His study also conceptualized the notion of 'productive encourages classroom practices. The 'productive pedagogies' and productive assessment are keys to improve learning skills of students, especially those from disadvantaged.

Annie (2012) in her article 'The idea of quality in Inclusive Schools' explains about the rationale of reserving 25 per cent seats for the economically weaker section (EWS) in schools run by the non-state sector and the ongoing debate on it contributes interestingly to the definition of a 'quality' education as envisaged in the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. She also emphasized on the practice of inclusion in schools where the student acquire the socialization and envisaged by the RTE demands greater access and integration of children. Lastly, she concluded that the government expenditure is to create long-term solutions and not just dependence, the quality of State-run schools needs to be urgently and consistently addressed. The RTE also needs to be clarified that the best infrastructure and parameters in evaluation and curriculum may still fall short of delivering an ideal education. Consequently, the RTE should most importantly emphasize and implement a strong teacher education programme focused on the vision of an inclusive classroom and where every child is getting an equitable, quality education.

The above studies intent to explain it is difficult to fulfill the RTE Act with only common school system without private partnership, but the PPP has its own consequences on the education system where the state has to provide free and compulsory education for the citizens. Some of the studies on the accountability, teacher promotion and salaries unrelated to classroom teaching. The governments have to focus more on the provision of government schools with boarding facility where the principle of inclusion and social justice are being fulfilled.

2.2 Methodology

This research was carried out to assess the implementation of Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act in private schools, we also assessed the policy of social inclusion i.e. 25% of poorer sections and deprived are enrolled in the elite schools. In this study, we have taken two private schools that have implemented RTE Act. The two private schools are – Jesus Mary School and Little Flower School. Both schools implemented 25% reservations for poorer sections under RTE Act. Additionally, I have consulted Private Schools and

management and collected data from the children who are studying under RTE Act. Some of the respondents faced discrimination the pupil facing discrimination in the schools, were interviewed for their perspective about teachers, regarding the children of poorer sections and their grasp on subject matter. The inclusive aspects of private schooling were ascertained through structured interview schedule, and purposive sampling technique was employed. Secondary sources such as survey of literature were through books, articles, and vernacular newspaper essays. Data is analyzed and scrutinized by using SPSS 27 software in order to determine the government policy making progress towards equity and inclusion.

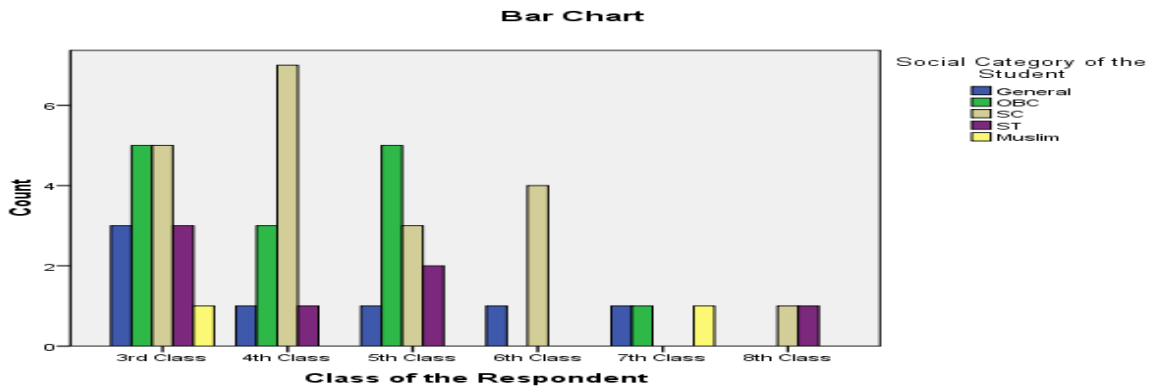
We compared schools run by Government, Local Bodies, and Private Day Schools. The Study explored the difference between the institutions regarding access, equity, and inclusion of education in the schooling system. In Government school's pupil have free access with teachers and their peer group due to the same socio-economic background and teachers' accountability, discipline and biased attitude in both the schools seem to have impact on children's holistic development.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

Table: 3.1 Class of the Respondent * Social Category of the Student

Class of the Respondent	Social Category of the Student					Total
	General	OBC	SC	ST	Muslim	
3rd Class	3	5	5	3	1	17
	17.6%	29.4%	29.4%	17.6%	5.9%	100.0%
4th Class	1	3	7	1	0	12
	8.3%	25.0%	58.3%	8.3%	.0%	100.0%
5th Class	1	5	3	2	0	11
	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	18.2%	.0%	100.0%
6th Class	1	0	4	0	0	5
	20.0%	.0%	80.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
7th Class	1	1	0	0	1	3
	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	100.0%
8th Class	0	0	1	1	0	2
	.0%	.0%	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%

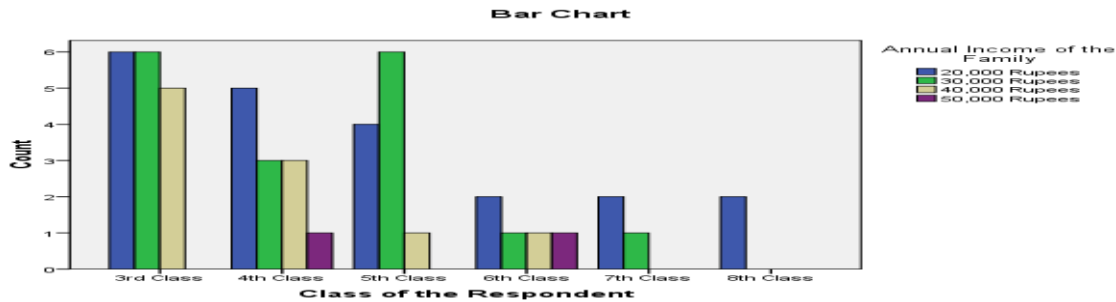
Total	7	14	20	7	2	50
	14.0%	28.0%	40.0%	14.0%	4.0%	100.0%



The above table explains about two private schools implementing RTE Act and the students' admitted under this Act at Hyderabad. From the class 3rd to class 8th admissions have taken place in Jesus Mary School and Little Flowers School. Majority of 40% are admitted from SC category, followed by 28% OBC children got admissions in 3rd, 4th and 5th classes. The equal number of students joined under this Act with 14% of general category and schedule tribe kids, followed by 4% Muslim boys. Lastly, admissions have taken place in ascending order in relation to increase in the standard of class.

Table: 3.2 Class of the Respondent * Annual Income of the Family

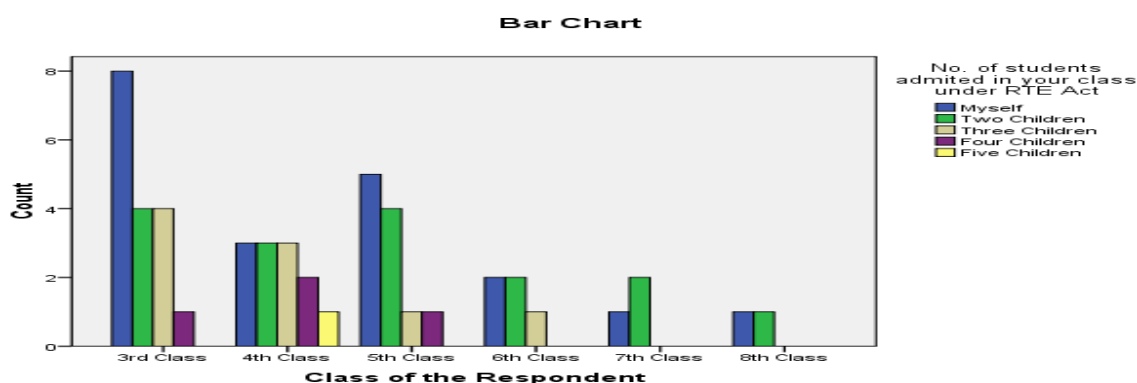
Class of the Respondent	Annual Income of the Family				Total
	20,000 Rupees	30,000 Rupees	40,000 Rupees	50,000 Rupees	
3rd Class	6	6	5	0	17
	35.3%	35.3%	29.4%	.0%	100.0%
4th Class	5	3	3	1	12
	41.7%	25.0%	25.0%	8.3%	100.0%
5th Class	4	6	1	0	11
	36.4%	54.5%	9.1%	.0%	100.0%
6th Class	2	1	1	1	5
	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
7th Class	2	1	0	0	3
	66.7%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
8th Class	2	0	0	0	2
	100.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	21	17	10	2	50
	42.0%	34.0%	20.0%	4.0%	100.0%



The students admitted under RTE Act according to class-wise and their parental annual income. They have produced their income certificates during their admission in these private schools. Majority of them are from 20,000 rupees annual income with 42%, followed by 30,000 rupees and 40,000 rupees as their family annual income with 34% and 20% respectively. This shows the income criteria and social category of the students in enrolment or getting admission into the private school under RTE Act. Here the fee has been fixed and will be reimbursed by the government for this 25% children in private schooling.

Table: 3.3 Class of the Respondent * No. of students admitted in your class under RTE

Class of the Respondent	No. of students admitted in your class under RTE Act					Total
	Myself	Two Children	Three Children	Four Children	Five Children	
3rd Class	8	4	4	1	0	17
	47.1%	23.5%	23.5%	5.9%	.0%	100.0%
4th Class	3	3	3	2	1	12
	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	16.7%	8.3%	100.0%
5th Class	5	4	1	1	0	11
	45.5%	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%	.0%	100.0%
6th Class	2	2	1	0	0	5
	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
7th Class	1	2	0	0	0	3
	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
8th Class	1	1	0	0	0	2
	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	20	16	9	4	1	50
	40.0%	32.0%	18.0%	8.0%	2.0%	100.0%

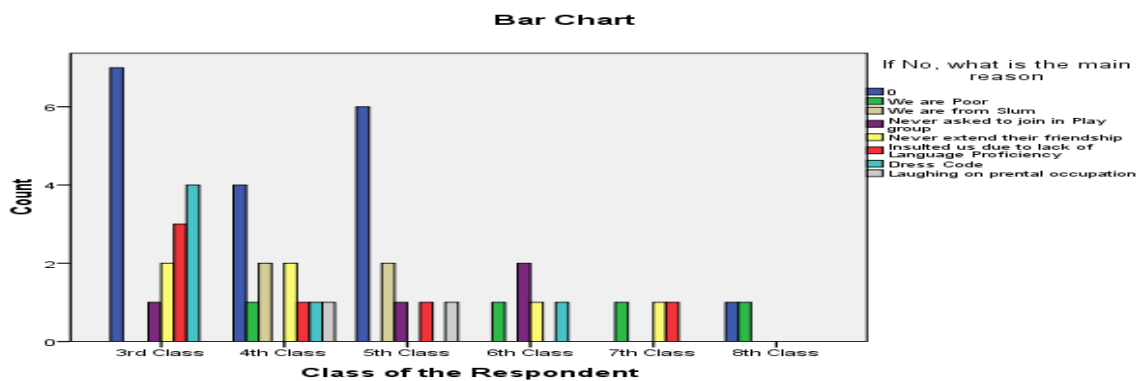


In these two private schools, there is an increase in number in the admission has taken place in the 3rd standard, followed by remaining classes in descending order. Majority of 40% have got single admissions in various classes from 3rd to 8th class. Two children in a class of 32% got admitted in all the classes, followed by 18% are three students admission and 8% are in primary schooling with four children in each class. Lastly highest number of 5 students got admitted in 4th standard in two sections.

Table: 3.4 Class of the Respondent * Peer Group Response

Class of the Respondent	If No, what is the main reason								Total
	N.A	Poor	From Slum	Never asked to join in Play group	Never extended their friendship	lack of Language Proficiency	Dress Code	Laughing on parental occupation	
3rd Class	7	0	0	1	2	3	4	0	17
	41.2 %	.0%	.0%	5.9%	11.8 %	17.6%	23.5 %	.0%	100.0%
4th Class	4	1	2	0	2	1	1	1	12
	33.3 %	8.3%	16.7%	.0%	16.7 %	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	100.0%
5th Class	6	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	11
	54.5 %	.0%	18.2%	9.1%	.0%	9.1%	.0%	9.1%	100.0%
6th Class	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	5

	.0%	20.0 %	.0%	40.0 %	20.0 %	.0%	20.0 %	.0%	100.0%
7th Class	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
	.0%	33.3 %	.0%	.0%	33.3 %	33.3%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
8th Class	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	50.0 %	50.0 %	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	18	4	4	4	6	6	6	2	50
	36.0 %	8.0%	8.0%	8.0%	12.0 %	12.0%	12.0 %	4.0%	100.0%

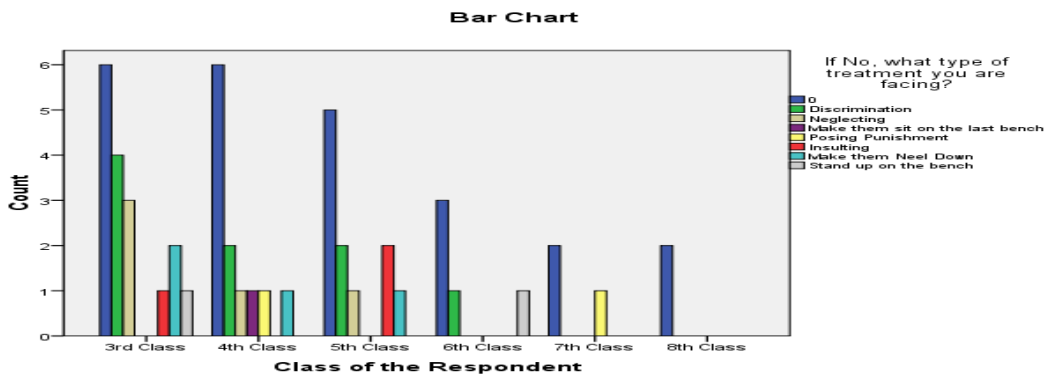


The above table explains an important aspect of equality and access in the class environment from the peer group. The students who got admitted under RTE Act 8% students have some problems with their peer group due to poverty, slum background and they never ask them to join in their play group. The equal number of 12% students reacted that their class mates never extended their friendship towards them, insulted by pointing out dress code, and lack of English language proficiency elite class kids have showing discrimination by comparing with them. The other 4% are unable to adjust because they are laughing on their parental occupation. It indicates though the government is ready to provide good education to the poorer, the act itself has some drawbacks based on child psychology. It impacts on child's all round development.

Table: 3.5 Class of the Respondent * Teachers' treatment

Class of the Respondent	Teachers' treatment towards these students								Total
	N.A	Showi ng Discri minati on	Negle cting	Make them sit on the last bench	Posin g Punis hmen t	Insulting	Make them Knee l Dow n	Stand up on the bench	
3rd Class	6	4	3	0	0	1	2	1	17
	35.3 %	23.5%	17.6 %	.0%	.0%	5.9%	11.8 %	5.9%	100.0 %
4th Class	6	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	12
	50.0 %	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	.0%	8.3%	.0%	100.0 %
5th Class	5	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	11
	45.5 %	18.2%	9.1%	.0%	.0%	18.2%	9.1%	.0%	100.0 %
6th Class	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
	60.0 %	20.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	20.0%	100.0 %
7th Class	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
	66.7 %	.0%	.0%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0 %
8th Class	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	100.0 %	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0 %
Total	24	9	5	1	2	3	4	2	50
	48.0 %	18.0%	10.0 %	2.0%	4.0%	6.0%	8.0%	4.0%	100.0 %

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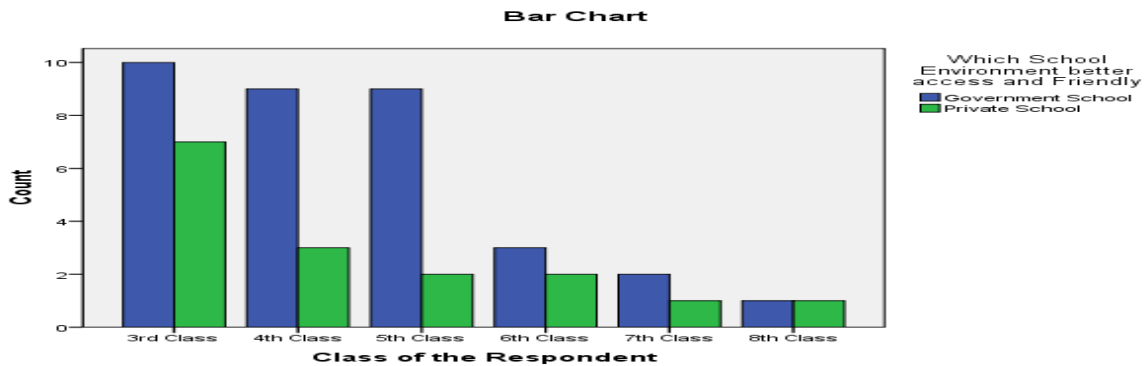


It is well known fact that teacher should be bias free in his/her classroom teaching. The above table explains the teachers' treatment towards RTE Act admitted students in various forms such as 18% have responded teachers' are showing discrimination, and 10% have understood that teachers' neglecting them intentionally. The rest of the students have reacted that imposing punishments such as kneel down in the class, make them stand on the bench, make them sit on the last rows of the class, insulting and abusing based on parental occupation and social category of the respondent.

Table: 3.6 Class of the Respondent * Which School Environment better access and Friendly

Class of the Respondent	Which School Environment better access and Friendly		Total
	Government School	Private School	
3rd Class	10	7	17
	58.8%	41.2%	100.0%
4th Class	9	3	12
	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
5th Class	9	2	11
	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
6th Class	3	2	5
	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
7th Class	2	1	3
	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
8th Class	1	1	2
	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total	34	16	50

	68.0%	32.0%	100.0%
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From the 3rd class to 8th class students under RTE Act have reacted on the comfort ability between government and private schools, regarding good peer group and student friendly environment. Among these students about 68% have responded that government school environment has better access and friendly relationship compare to 32% of private schooling at Hyderabad.

4.1 Conclusion

Post-Independent India has emphasized on education to all, that education with equity and inclusion. The growth of educational opportunities seems roughly to be aligned with the growth of economy and remain so for nearly three decades after independence. The educational policies and their implementation mechanisms seem to have fully overlooked at universal literacy and education for all. With respect to Elementary education, the National Education Policy (NEP) has addressed the same along with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Mid-Day Meal scheme the two flagship programmes of the Government. In addition, Teacher Education schemes and programmes under the National Literacy Mission have been implemented. As a result, most of the indicators have turned positive. There has been a reduction in the number of out of school children, a decline in gender and social gaps, and similarly a decline in dropout rates. While the number of teachers and number of schools have increased substantially, there are however some challenges that remain in implementing RTE Act provisions for example gaps have been noticed in access and equity of 25% reservation in private schooling from class 1 to class 8. The growing popularity of private schools has led to concerns about increasing economic and social stratification in education and cultural capital leading to calls for expanding access to private schools for all Children, regardless of socioeconomic background – including experimenting with voucher-based school choice programs (Shah 2005). If implemented as per the law could lead to India having the world’s largest number of children attending private schools with public funding,

and also be one of the largest attempts at school integration (across economic classes) that may have ever been attempted anywhere in the world.

If the government expenditure is to create long-term solutions and not just dependence, the quality of State-run schools needs to be urgently and consistently addressed. The RTE needs to acknowledge that every child is different from the other. The SSA implementation states that it provides for 'children's right to an education of equitable quality, based on principles of equity and non-discrimination' (MHRD 2011: 3). One has to clearly acknowledge the need, as well as provide for, a diverse transactional framework and alternate assessment patterns in order to prove that it is serious about delivering an education that is truly inclusive and non-discriminatory. It needs to look closely at infrastructural requirements and state these in appropriately sensitive terminology. Consequently, the RTE should most importantly emphasize a strong teacher education programme focused on the vision of an inclusive classroom.

In principle, the RTE Act 2009 with appropriate modifications and financial provisioning offers a great opportunity to correct the anomaly of poor education outcomes, and can deliver on the long-standing commitment of providing basic and quality education. This study reveals discrimination and some challenges in the socialization of children, ability comfort of poor children in private schools through reservation. Unfortunately, short-term political gains and poor judgment on the part of poor and deprived by politicians and policymakers may continue to be major roadblocks in accomplishing this critical goal of educating all at the school level.

Private schools have their benefits but handing over the future of education to market forces is not a panacea for all the ills of education. Indeed, a concerted effort is required to balance the system and allow the best practices to flourish.

4.2 Best Practices in Schools

- Remedial classes are conducted to give special training to support the students with low learning outcomes.
- Bilingual medium of instruction to support the EWS students to cope up with the general students.
- Buddy Program in which the senior students support the children with low learning outcomes.

4.3 The Way Forward

- Need to conduct regular orientation programmes for of teachers and principals on how to include the children in EWS/DG category in the mainstream.
- Similar to in-service training of government school teachers, training of private school teachers should be conducted by respective schools through DIETs.

- Section 12 (2) RTE Act, 2009 states that the total expenditure on education has to be reimbursed by the State. Hence, these children should be included in important co-curricular activities conducted in the school.
- Section 29 (2) of the RTE Act, 2009 states that the medium of instruction should as far as possible be mother tongue. Hence, the school make efforts for multilingual teaching.
- The NCF given by academic authority should be implemented strictly in private schools. That is the books should be as prescribed by SCERT in the respective States. This means section 29 (1) of the RTE should be strictly implemented, especially in schools affiliated to CBSE/ICSE or any other private board.
- The Parent's Teacher Association in private schools should have reservation for parents of EWS/DG category students admitted in the school.
- It should be mandatory for the Principal/Head of the School to report absence of students as per rule 2B (2) of Child Labour Rules, 2017.
- Per-child expenditure should be calculated including all expenditure on education of a child in schools.
- Also, private schools need to be graded as per the infrastructure and facilities available in the schools and parents be asked to fill in the preferences as per the facilities available in the school. This will help the parents to make informed choice for admission of their child and will help in reducing the dropout.
- The teacher's analysis of observation of children's behaviour in a peer-group during classroom interaction, in playground etc.

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