



GOVERNMENT SCHOOL AND LOW FEES PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN INDIA

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Abstract

In the present scenario school is the main institution where children learn not only the textbook subject but their life dependency also. Every day new schools are getting built in small spaces equipped with basic infrastructures such as limited classrooms, low fees, regular class, and organized extracurricular activities. All these qualities attract the parents. Government also try to enrol children into government schools through various programmes but parents prefer low fees private schools for the better future of their children.

Key words: Right to Education, Economically Weaker Section, Schedule Caste, Privatisation.

Introduction

Education plays an important role in the life of a human being. After home, school is the second place for most children, where socialisation and learning takes place. Therefore, school is considered to be the place where the overall development of a child begins. We can only imagine the situation and future of a child, who by some reason misses this opportunity and his/her right of going to school. India after independence has seen a growing number of changes in several sectors including education. Now, under the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, primary education is a fundamental right in India and there is a provision of 25 per cent of reservation for children from socio-economically disadvantaged background to study in private schools. Along with government schools there is also a rise of private schools in India.

It is often believed that private schools are equipped with advance infrastructure, provide quality education and personal attention to their students, hence private schools are more popular in India. Private schools appear to be interesting and great options, however expensive tuition fees and other affluent maintenance demand makes it impossible for several parents to send their children into these schools. Thus, private schools are mainly accessible to richer class. Nevertheless, majority of parents from economically weaker section of society also desire to educate their children in private schools with the hope that their children can get quality education which will facilitate them to get good jobs in future. To satisfy this growing demand and profitable market there is a rise of Low Fee Private (LFP) schools in India.

Since last few decades LFP and unregulated schools in India have emerged as a cost-efficient, high-quality, and equitable solution for the education of the poor and as a site for viable business option (Nambissan, 2014). These LFP Schools are rapidly growing from small town to metro cities, since LFP aimed at the poorer strata of the society, fees are affordable to disadvantaged groups. There are various other reasons for choosing LFP schools, poor quality of education in government schools is one among them. Parents choose to send their children to these LFP schools because they perceived that the public schools are bad in every way, either it is school infrastructures, curriculums, teaching patterns or school management (Tooley, 2013).

As Public Report Basic Education (PROBE) Report 2006 shows, access to primary schooling in India has improved over the years through various government programmes or schemes such as the District Primary Education Programme¹ and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan². However, the dropout rates from primary government school children have remained high especially in the remote rural areas and among the socio-economically marginalised groups. Nevertheless, LFP schools who claims to provide the quality education, equipped with basic infrastructure and organised management are easily influencing several parents to send their children to these school.

Objectives

1. To identify the low fees private school and government school in Balugaon.

1. District Primary Education Programme was launched in 1994 to revitalise the primary education system and achieve the objective of universalisation of primary education.

2. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is Government of India's flagship programme.

2. To understand the socio-economic condition among the disadvantage parents.

Methodology

The study was based on qualitative and quantitative methods. Information are gathered by both these methods. The study area was conducted in Nodal 1,5,6 number ward Balugaon town in Khordha district, Odisha. It is a major economy centre for prawn and fish business.

Sampling Methods and Data Collection Tools

Focus group discussions (FGD), and individual interviews was conducted to find out the reasons for government school children those who are drop out or took admission in Low Fees Private school. Research was conducted among these socially disadvantaged(SC) families they are socio-economically deprived and belong to fishermen (keuta) community they are fishermen by Scheduled Castes. (Samal, & Meher, 2003)., to collect all the possible information, the key informant's data collection was Balugaon Block families.

Socio-economic Reasons

According to Census 2011 Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe constitutes 25.75 percent and 0.39 percent of total population most of them are engaged in business, cultivator and labour activity.

Average literacy rate of Balugaon Block were 81.31 percentage in which, male and female literacy were 88.51 percentage and 73.75 percentage respectively. Total literate in Balugaon Block were 81,895 of which male and female were 45,674 and 36,221 respectively. Despite that most of the families belong to low income earning so they are not able to send their children to private schools. Parents are not able to fulfil the LFP schools demand but in government school's mid-day meals, text books are provided by government, there is no terms and conditions, strict rules and regulations in schools thus children are also interested in going to schools regularly.

Education Status among Children

In this area majority of families are engaged in fishing and Odia is the major language spoken. In home and schools' teachers and staffs are used Odia language. Children in the age group of 6 to 14 those who have dropped out of schools and even their parents. Five children who

have dropped out of school and their families was selected for the study.

Low Fess Private Schools

Every day new low budget schools are getting built in small spaces equipped with basic infrastructures such as limited classrooms, regular classes and organized extracurricular activities. Members of school management also do their best to advertise the school's information in a very innovative way that convinces several parents to enrol their children in these private schools. Parents who identified school facilities as the most influential factor in their decision-making, also pedagogy and medium of instruction in English make them feel that if their child studies in English medium schools, he/she will get a better job in the future. All these qualities are attracting many parents. Therefore, they join LFP schools that claim to provide quality education for their children (Harma, 2011).

A major segment of its population belongs to scheduled tribes and scheduled castes, living both in the urban and rural areas.

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan provides free textbooks in elementary education, while LFP schools do not provide these facilities. In India marginalised society are often referred to people from Scheduled castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) community. SCs/STs are the most disadvantaged group in Indian society, since they are considered being from the lowest strata, they are always devalued by others caste groups and denied access to education and other basic facilities from centuries. Since India's independence various reform and development activities began to empower SC/ST people. Despite various efforts, the educational backwardness among them still exists.

Socio-Economic Conditions among Balugaon areas.

All most all families belong to below poverty line (BPL) and their primary occupation is fishing, farming, agriculture and contractual labour. Odia is the major language spoken. The houses were mainly pakka houses.

School infrastructures Observation

The first school had two classrooms. A small playground. A headmaster's room, common toilets for students and for teachers which are used only for girls and female teachers. The second school had five classrooms; class one to three students are seating in the same

class room. A common room for teachers, a small playground and a platform to hoist flags. The third school had 5 classrooms, a common room for teachers, and a large playground. It had 2 toilets for students and 2 for teachers. All the schools had handpump and wells.

Facilities Available in Schools, Classroom

The classroom were spacious, well ventilated but crowded. Some classrooms had wooden benches and tables while in others sat on the floors. The students were given free textbooks printed by the government according to the standard syllabus. The students were given mid-day meal on week days. On Saturdays they didn't give mid-day meal as it was considered to be a half day school. Children those who belong to BPL family come school to have mid-day meal this is a major reason why parents send their children to government schools. Teachers are engaged in official work like meeting, making reports, entry data, calculating funds so they have extra burden, so they do not focus on teaching. In LFP schools' fees is low and regular classes, strict rules and regulations, teachers are engaged mainly in academic work and other school activities, basic facilities are available. The schools encouraged dance, debate, music, competition and sports. All these activities made parents get attracted to LFP schools, they made this choice for their children, for better English educations for their better future.

Observations and Findings

Sex ratio in classroom

In LFP schools girls enrolment is less but in government schools classes one to five girls enrolment is higher and all these girls are regular in attending the classes. Parents are more interested to send their boys in LFP schools despite the ratio of girls are very less after age of fifteen or seventeen parents are stating to search a boy for her marriage. They all have same mind set that girls will go to others house after her marriage and boys are our helping hand.

The girls made up around 40-50% of the total population. The girls attended the school regularly as they were quite dedicated to their studies and loved to attend school. The girls performed better than the boys in examination and debates. Despite that the ratio of girls decreases in higher classes in government school and there are multiple reasons like early marriage, once they fail in examination they stop their study,

they are busy at home as they cook the food, take care of their siblings, helping hand in agriculture and fish market.

In LFP school disadvantage children are more active in sports, some were good at studies. In government school boys remained absent at times because they had to go on fishing with their elders.

Helping hand for their families

The students of primary and secondary school children were good at memorising things, they calculated very fast because they are always helping their parents in fish market to sell fish. They were good at singing poems and traditions songs which are closed to the 'water, jungle and soil'. The students of classes 4-6 were poor in English, they were good at mathematics and science because it was in their mother tongue but they suffered in English. They couldn't read, write and speak in English.

Language speaking in home and school

The students spoke odia at their homes and even in school. The teachers taught English with the help of odia. The knowledge of English was rote learning for examinations.

Choices of government schools

The students were sent to government schools by their parents as the fees was less. The government provided free textbooks and mid-day meals. The schools provided basic education till class 8 at a quite affordable rate. The government schools were nearby. But some parents who earn better they send their children in LFP schools or private school they easily get influenced by the decision made by other parents also parents have many expectations from their children for better English education.

Teachers role in classroom

In LFP and government school most of the time the teachers taught in the class without any interaction. The teaching learning process was one way. The teachers focused on completing the syllabus rather than focusing on the students. Some teachers never left their chairs during class timing and some occupied on the front section of the class. They didn't paid attention to the students. But in LFP school teachers made the class very interesting by adopting various methods they conduct activities and children also enjoy the class room seasons but

in government school teachers did not focus on students but in LFP teacher give attention to the children.

Recommendations

The schools can appoint more teachers. The government should make more classrooms for the students, laboratory and other facilities which will create interest among students to attend school. The quality of the mid day meal can be better. Some students should get extra time which will help them cope up with others. The teachers should use various teaching learning strategies and methods. The students should get encouragement for other things like sports, debates and competitions. The quality of teachers can improve. The schools are doing good in providing basic education but a lot more can be done. The schools can start using ICT based teaching learning in government schools and in LFP schools under zero balance, anyone can access the internet through (Information Communication Technology) ICT.

The study also explores the government provisions for primary education systems for economically weaker section (EWS). The major overall findings show that EWS parents do have a wish to send their children to private school but poor family income restrict this desire. Although LFP schools aims to full-fill this desire but they lack infacilitating quality in academic services and teaching facilities. Lack of qualified teachers is the reason of failure to create a holistic development of the children. LFP school teachers are also facing other issues such as receiving poor salary and work under pressure to give more classes as well as involve into administrative activities. Study indicates that majority of children belongs to socially and economically marginalised groups or those who for various reasons have dropped out from schools. The study also indicates that, in the highly socially stratified Indian society majority of the population from scheduled caste are socially underprivileged as well as economically backward, they are kept in the bottom strata of the caste system. As a result, they were systematically denied access to education facilities, however LFP schools emerges as a hope for better education and better future.

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