Low-Fee Private Schools in India: The Emerging Fault Lines

Working Paper 233

National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education

Teachers College, Columbia University

May 18, 2017

Tamo Chattopadhay* and Maya Roy**

*** Bard College, Program in International Education, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; tchattopadhay@bard.edu**

**** Independent researcher, India**

Suggested citation: Tamo Chattopadhay and Maya Roy, Low-Fee Private Schools in India: The Emerging Fault Lines, Working Paper 233, National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, May 18, 2017, accessed at http://ncspe.tc.columbia.edu/center-news/low-fee-private-schools-in-india/.

Introduction

Private schooling for the poor is a highly contested issue in international educational development. Whether supported by fee-paying poor parents (as in the case of low-fee private schools or LFP), or by allocation of public funds to private operators (as in the case of charter schools), or by direct public subsidy to fee-paying poor parents (as education vouchers), there is growing attention globally to engaging the private sector in education of poor children (Baum et al., 2014).

In this paper, we provide a critical perspective on the complex reality of private education for the poor, focusing on the LFP schooling sector in India. While much of the recent literature in this area has examined the relative learning outcomes of pupils from public and LFP schools, our objective is somewhat different. We contrast the promise of LFP schools by their advocates in India with the reality experienced by poor children and their parents. In examining this promise versus reality gap, we organize our narrative along three structural challenges or fault-lines facing the LFP sector in India. We submit that unless these challenges are addressed, they will continue to undermine the ability of the LFP schooling sector to become a viable alternative to public schools that educate most of India's poor children.

Several factors motivate us to undertake this task. First, the sheer size of India's school-age children attending private schools makes such a critical analysis justifiable. Second, the growing body of empirical research on the relative cost-effectiveness of India's public and LFP schools also provides a rich evidence base to draw upon. Third, the evolving implementation of India's landmark Right to Education Act of 2009 (RTE) provides an important policy backdrop to examine the complex dynamics of poor children's education in India. The confluence of these factors motivates us to situate the reality of LFP schools in India in the broader discourse of private education for the poor.

Low-Fee Private Schools in India's Diversified Education Space

With one-third of its 1.2 billion people below the age of 18, India has the largest child population in the world (UNICEF, 2011). With 1.4 million recognized schools, it is also home to one of the most complex education systems (MHRD, 2011). In this large and complex system, the passage of the Right to Education Act (RTE) of 2009 has unleashed a reform agenda of unprecedented scope. For the first time in the country's history, basic education (grades 1 through 8) has become a constitutional right: mandating the government provide free schooling for all children between 6 and 14 years of age (MHRD, 2009).

Schools in India's stratified society embody an array of quality and status, and are broadly divided into three categories in terms of funding and management: public, private-aided, and private-unaided. Public schools are commonly known as government schools – and are funded and managed by the central or state government.[1] Public schools are free and provisioned with free mid-day meals, textbooks (up to 8th grade) and uniforms, and are bound by law to admit every child that shows up at their gates.

[1] India is a republic, with 29 states and a central government in New Delhi – the national capital. Education in the country is a concurrent responsibility of state governments and the central government.

Consequently, public schools remain the most reliable destination for the overwhelming majority of poor children in India. For the most part, state-run public schools offer their instructions in the respective regional languages of the state. While schools affiliated with the central board are generally considered to be of good quality, significant variation exists in state-run school systems across the country.

Private schools refer to any school not managed by the government. Indian laws stipulate that no school may be managed by a for-profit private entity. Unlike government schools, the private schools predominantly offer their instruction in English. In multi-lingual India, English is both a dominant language of commerce and higher education, and the official language of government transactions. Consequently, across all social classes, English is valued as a language for employability and social mobility. This in turn significantly drives the demand for "English Medium" private schools in India.

Within the private education sector, there are two categories of schools in terms of funding sources: aided private schools and unaided private schools. Aided private schools receive funding from government as grant-in-aid. The government controls the recruitment of teachers and pays their salaries for the teachers. In return, the private operators comply with government norms to maintain their fees within a stipulated limit. In this regard, the aided private schools embody the oldest public-private partnership model in India's education system (Tilak, 2004). In terms of quality, there is considerable variation in this category of schools, as well (Kingdon, 2008).

The unaided private schools receive no government assistance, set their own fees, and range from high-fee private schools (HFP) catering to middle- and upper-class children to low-fee private schools (LFP) serving the poor. Unlike the unaided HFP schools, the unaided LFP schools may neither provide quality nor confer status. However, their promise of English as a medium of instruction acts as a tremendous draw for poor families. Interestingly, a large proportion of LFP schools in India are not registered with any government agency, i.e., they fall into the category of "unrecognized" schools - a status no longer tenable under the RTE laws.

Government reports – based on school census data - suggest that private unaided and aided schools enroll 27.5 percent and 5.5 percent of the total student population, respectively, while constituting 17 percent and 5 percent of total schools nationally (NUEPA, 2013). These national averages mask wide variations among the states of India. For example, the northern states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have tallied private enrollment above 50 percent in 2014 while the eastern state of West Bengal posted private enrollment under 10 percent in 2016 (ASER 2016). Furthermore, the number of children being served by unaided LFP schools is usually underreported, since data from government sources only cover recognized private schools. For example, a school census and GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping for a city of 1.8 million population reported a total of 1,574 schools in the city, while the government sources indicated only 350 schools (Rangaraju et al., 2012).

According to the Annual State of Education Report of 2014 (ASER 2014) – a nationwide sampling survey of school-age children in all rural districts of India carried out by the NGO Pratham – the proportion of surveyed children enrolled in the private sector rose steadily before and immediately after the passage of the RTE: from 18.7

percent in 2006 to 30.4 percent in 2014 (ASER 2014). However, the most recent ASER of 2016 (released on January 18, 2017) shows for the first time that nationally private enrollment has remained essentially flat since 2014 at 30.8 percent, with certain states showing significant increases in public school enrollment (ASER 2016).[2]

Perhaps even more significant, for the first time since the passage of RTE, nationally the learning levels (as measured by ASER's simple diagnostic tests) show improvement, with most of the learning gains coming from the government sector. The point on learning gains deserves particular attention because ASER is a rapid survey, and it does not control for household income, mother's education, or a host of other factors that typically privilege children attending private schools in India. The fact that even without accounting for such factors the government schools are recording higher learning gains vis-à-vis private schools is revealing. In the words of the Wilima Wadhwa, Director of the ASER Center:

> The thing to note … is that in 2016 this improvement is being driven by learning gains in government schools as opposed to private schools. In Std 3 of government schools, the ability to read a Std 1 level text has increased from 31.8 percent to 34.8 percent and the ability to read a Std 2 level text from 17.2 percent to 19.3 percent. As always, there is a lot of variation at the state level. States like Punjab, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Gujarat have experienced large gains (in excess of 8 percentage points) while states like Andhra Pradesh have seen a decline. However, by and large most states have seen an improvement in learning levels in Std 3 in government schools (ASER 2016, p. 16).

While the absolute level of learning is still alarmingly low, these findings nevertheless mark an important inflection point in the national discourse about the relative value of public and private education in India. It is also clear from the ASER 2016 report that seven years into the implementation of RTE laws, there are improved physical conditions and learning support systems for children in public schools.

To be sure, ASER is a snapshot that does not make distinctions between LFP and other types of private schools. Furthermore, ASER primarily surveys rural districts of India – while the fastest growth in the LFP sector has taken place in urban areas of the country. Nevertheless, the latest findings from ASER 2016 provide a strong rationale for a closer look at the private schools of India – especially the unaided LFP schooling sector that claims itself to be a better alternative to public schools for poor children.

Equally significant, the RTE laws also extend to the operation of private schools– both aided and unaided. Consequently, the post-RTE policy landscape is a significant backdrop for analyzing the dynamics of the LFP sector, and its claim of becoming a viable alternative to public schools that continue to educate India's poorest children.

[2] "At the all India level, the proportion of children (age 6-14) enrolled in private schools is almost unchanged at 30.5 percent in 2016, as compared to 30.8 percent in 2014. In Kerala, the proportion of children (age 11-14) enrolled in government school increased from 40.6 percent in 2014 to 49.9 percent in 2016. In Gujarat, this proportion increased from79.2 percent in 2014 to 86 percent in 2016. On the other hand, three states show substantial increases since 2014 in private school enrollment among children in the elementary school age group (age 6-14): Uttarakhand (from 37.5 percent to 41.6 percent), Arunachal Pradesh (from 24.4 percent to 29.5 percent), and Assam (from 17.3 percent to 22 percent)." ASER 2016 – National Findings

Fault Line #1: Threat to Affordability in a Contested Policy Context

Affordability - meaning a fee structure that is within reach of poor parents – is a central tenet of the LFP school value proposition in India and elsewhere. The advocates of LFP schools argue that the act of poor parents choosing an LFP school over a free public school for their children speaks to the better quality of education these parents are capable of accessing at an "affordable" price point (Tooley 2013). However, the reality of such affordable quality remains highly contested. The authors of several empirical studies of school fee structures in India have observed that the urban LFP schools are beyond the reach of the poorest parents, and are increasingly catering to low-income segments of the population with relatively stable earnings and livelihoods (De, Noronha & Samson, 2002; Harma & Rose, 2012; Singh & Bangay, 2014; Srivastava & Walford, 2007; Srivastava, 2013). In other words, one is compelled to ask: can the poorest in India truly afford the LFP schools? We posit that the affordability is further undermined as a consequence of the RTE laws. Specifically, we argue that Section 18 of the RTE Act poses an existential risk to the LFP sector.

Section 18 of the RTE requires that all private schools in the country (LFP and otherwise) furnish a self-declaration form to the state government regarding ownership, enrollment, infrastructure, medium of instruction, teacher capacity, and so forth (Center for Civil Society, 2016). There is much emphasis on reporting the school's physical infrastructure – for example, number of classrooms, separate toilet for boys and girls, drinking water facility, kitchen for mid-day meal, size of playground, etc. There are also detailed requirements related to teaching-learning inputs such as teacher qualification, minimum teacher salary, teacher-to-student ratio, and so forth. Schools are typically given a grace period of up to three years (which varies by states) to satisfy these RTE requirements. In case the schools fulfill these criteria, they are officially recognized by the state. If not, the government can deny official recognition to the school – regardless of the school's academic outcomes. De-recognition would trigger closure of the school in question.

It is not difficult to understand why Section 18 is an existential threat to the LFP sector. The LFP schools typically keep their fees below the levels of traditional higher-fee private schools through savings on teacher salary and infrastructure. Hiring more qualified teachers, as per the requirements of Section 18, would require salaries – which in turn would translate into higher fees for students. Similarly, the infrastructure criteria of Section 18 would require expansion in physical space – inevitably leading to higher operating costs and student fees. To put it differently, the critical question facing LFP schools in India today is whether they can truly remain affordable for the poorer parents of the country in the post-RTE era.

Many advocates of LFP have noted that denial of recognition to LFP schools on grounds of input criteria such as size of playground (an impossibility in the densely populated urban slums where many such schools operate) is unfair. Others have observed that many government schools themselves do not meet these same criteria, and that the closure of LFP schools would severely jeopardize the educational prospects of millions of low-income students who attend them (Shah & Agarwal, 2010).

However, the fact remains that RTE is the law of the land, and the closure of LFP schools due to non-compliance with Section 18 is a reality that continues to appear in

the media. The latest and most reliable figures on school closure (presented below) across India come from National Independent Schools Association (NISA) – an advocacy platform of LFP schools that represents over 36,400 schools, from 20 state associations that cater to the needs of approximately 9.35 million children.

Data on School Closures due to the RTE Act (as of October 2016)

#	State	Schools Closed		Closure Notices Served		Closure Threat	
		2014	2015-16	2014	2015-16	2014	2015-16
1	Andhra Pradesh	400	141	NA	102	800	767
2	Assam	NA#	NA	NA	NA	NA	145
3	Delhi	300	3000	NA	NA	750	1893
4	Haryana	713	NA	NA	NA	1379	1206
5	Karnataka	NA	NA	NA	NA	8	1465
6	Madhya Pradesh	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	1500
7	Maharashtra	NA	NA	NA	7000	1404	1539
8	Odisha	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	573
9	Punjab	1170	191	NA	NA	NA	219
10	Tamil Nadu	574	NA	NA	746	1000	NA
11	Telangana	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	75
12	Uttar Pradesh	1170	NA	NA	50	288	NA

Source: NISA http://nisaindia.org/data-on-school-closures **Notes:** Closure Threat implies that non-official public announcements made by government officials or ministers with or without actual closure notices issued. NA implies that no specific data available in public domain as of August 2016

Elsewhere, a study conducted by a major Indian foundation in 69 districts across 8 states found that 7,156 of the 34,756 private schools (21 percent) were served notice of closure on noncompliance of RTE norms (Azim Premji Foundation 2014).[3] Other studies have focused on school closures in specific states such as Punjab (Kainth, 2014) and Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh (Francis, 2014). While the actual closure numbers may still be relatively small, they nevertheless underscore the real threat of closure looming over the LFP schools in the country (NISA 2014). Equally significant, the power of government officials to de-recognize schools has created an unpredictable, corruption-prone, and unfavorable environment for the LFP schools to operate in.

There is a widespread concern in the LFP community in India that it would be impossible to comply with Section 18 of RTE. Not surprisingly, operators of the LFP schools and their advocates have been vocal against this clause, and have been actively lobbying for its repeal or modification. The advocates for LFP schools have been also calling for direct per-student subsidies in the form of education vouchers. However, public subsidy for private education remains a highly contested issue in India (Srivastava, 2010) - as it is globally (Menashy, 2015). Critics of LFP schools argue that the "demand" of LFP schools is driven by the untested promise of quality education (De

[3] Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Telangana, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry – these are the states where the foundation – Ajim Premji Foundation – supports public schools

et al., 2002; Sarangapani, 2009; Sarangapani & Winch, 2010). Srivastava (2013) also raised serious doubts about the extent of "choice" that poor parents would actually enjoy under an unbridled expansion of private schools in India. These concerns, along with the political landscape of the existing public education structures (ministries, teacher unions, and local school management committees) make public subsidy for LFP schools a highly unlikely outcome in the near future.

Fault Line #2: Unreliable Teaching and Learning in English

A highly promoted aspect of LFP schools in India is their claim of offering "English-medium" education. To put things in perspective, India is a country of immense linguistic diversity – with twenty-six "major" languages being used as mediums of instruction in state-government run schools across the country.[4] At the same time, partly because of its colonial past and partly because of the language policies of successive national governments, English overwhelmingly remains the language of social status, elite identification, and upward mobility in India (Annamalai 2014, Azam et al 2013). The fact that English is used in official communication across all states of India's multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society gives the language a rare pan-Indian status. No less significant, English is used widely as the medium of tertiary level education – making its knowledge imperative for anyone with higher-education aspirations.

Beyond its instrumental value, English also conveys status. The ability to utter English words and phrases that show familiarity with the western culture – movies, music, and cultural icons – signals social position (Annamalai, 2004). This combination of instrumental and cultural purposes makes English in today's India the language of power (Annamalai, 2004, Mohanty, 2006).

Not surprisingly, English as a medium of instruction has long been offered by elite private schools. Today, however, poor parents also seek English fluency for their children as a ticket to employment and recognition (Desai et al 2009). The LFP schools have strategically responded to this aspiration by promoting themselves as affordable English-medium schools for the poor. However, the reality of such English-medium instruction remains untested. We submit that the gap between the projected value of English-medium LFP schools and the actual manifestation of English as a medium of instruction in them represents a significant fault line for the LFP sector.

To elaborate, the quality of English spoken and written by Indians varies enormously. Understandably, elite HFP schools would attract qualified teachers - who have strong command of English (having themselves often studied in HFP schools) – with significantly higher salary, status, and working conditions than LFP schools. Given that English fluency is a highly valued employable skill, it is unreasonable to expect that

[4] An exception to these are the schools under the management of the central government in New Delhi – known as Kendriya Vidyalays (literally Central Schools). Meant for children with parents in the civil service of the central government, these schools offer their instructions in English, and represent an exclusive tier within the public schooling space. In addition, three frontier states of India (Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh) use English as medium of instruction in public schools

adults with strong competency in English will be seeking out employment in poorly compensated LFP schools. Even state-run schools, which use regional languages as the medium of instruction, are in a position to attract more qualified English language teachers than LFP schools - given the higher salaries, better benefits, and greater job security at state-run schools. In other words, the level of English proficiency of teachers in LFP schools – and more importantly their capacity to deliver coherent and effective instruction in English for all subjects – remains highly questionable.

Indeed, classroom visits by one of the authors to three different LFP schools in the slums of Kolkata validate this concern. In every classroom visited, teachers' ability to teach content areas (mathematics, history and English) was greatly compromised by their lack of competence in English. The English employed by the subject teachers was not only full of grammatical errors, but also for the most part it was incomprehensible to the author. Children reacted with blank stares and silence to their teacher's instructions in one English lesson. In a mathematics lesson (level 4), the instructions for a problem to be solved in class and the later explanation were hard to decipher from the teacher's diction. Only when the teacher started writing on the board, did some students begin to raise their hands. It was painful to watch how bright-eyed, eager children were shut out from a deeper understanding of the concepts because of the language barrier in instruction. Similar observations echo from a study by Jhingran in eastern Indian states:

> "The teachers, who are not very proficient in English, prepare questions and answers in advance and dictate them to the students, who commit them to memory by copying them many times. There is no classroom interaction in which students express themselves and ask questions on the subjects taught because of 'silencing by English', the way the teacher makes use of the students' inability in English in order to keep them quiet in the class" (Jhingran, 2009, p. 270).

In these situations, not only are children "silenced out" of the classroom lesson, but also the English used by the teachers does not provide them an acceptable model to follow. These scenes repeat every day for millions of children in the LFP schools across India.

It would be unfair to suggest that only in LFP schools one finds teachers with poor English knowledge. The problem is also widespread in public system, which faces a shortage of qualified people to teach English as a second language.[5] But at least in the public schools, the children can learn the subject matter in a regional language spoken more coherently by their teachers, and more likely to be spoken in their homes and communities. Decades of empirical research have shown that "when children are forced to study through a language they cannot fully understand in the early primary grades, they face a serious learning disadvantage that can stunt their cognitive development and adversely affect their self-esteem and self-confidence for life" (Jhingran, 2009 p 265). This is especially true for children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds attending LFP schools in India – since there is no support for English either at their homes, or exposure to it in their social environment (Jhingran, 2009, Mohanty 2006). If one additionally considers teachers who cannot communicate properly in English – a child's learning potential is compromised by a "language trap" in the LFP schools.

[5] While the public schools might use a state vernacular as medium of instruction, they would still offer English as a separate subject – typically as a second language required in the school curriculum

There is no denial of the fact that knowledge of English is critically important in India's globalizing labor market today. And it is also natural that demand for learning English is going to increase across all social classes over time. However, there is no reliable evidence that LFP schools truly impart a superior knowledge of English to their pupils compared to the students in public schools. With the caveats that ASER does not disaggregate private schools by school type, and does not control for student and school characteristics in presenting learning outcome, it is worth noting from ASER 2016 that:

> "a few states show improvements since 2014 for government school children enrolled in Std V. These states are Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Maharashtra and Kerala (all with improvements of 5 percentage points or more). In nine states, the levels of English reading of private schools has also improved. These are Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Assam, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana"(ASER 2016).

Surprisingly, there have been very few rigorous, large-scale studies in India to examine the impact of the English-medium instruction on children from low-income background as compared to instruction in their mother tongue. As Jhingran has observed:

> "Standardized assessments of children's learning in reading, language and mathematics conducted by state agencies or NGOs have seldom used the dimension of children's mother tongue to understand the variations in learning outcomes" (Jhingran, 2009).

Further, there is no credible evidence that acquiring a good knowledge of English would necessarily require all of instruction – in every discipline –to happen in English only from the first day in school. However, this is exactly what the LFP schools have pursued as their marketing strategy.

Herein lies the tragic paradox. On one hand, the middle class in India continues to consolidate its privileges by educating its children through adequate English instruction by qualified and well-compensated English-speaking instructors in HFP schools. On the other hand, the poor parents, aspiring to model the middle class behaviors for their children, become willing participants in the "English medium project" of LFP schools that presents a mirage and a false choice. In LFP schools, poor children may neither attain knowledge of English nor gain understanding of subject matters that are taught in poor quality English (Bhattacharya, 2013). "The language deficit that is forced upon the child the day she/he joins school becomes a learning deficit that only grows each year (Jhingran 2009, p 268). Hence, the unreliable and untested quality of English-medium instruction in LFP schools is a fault line that fundamentally challenges their core value proposition as private schools for poor in India. LFP schools must address the capacity of their teachers to deliver coherent instruction in English, or risk the liability of irreversible learning deficit among the poor children in India who attend them.

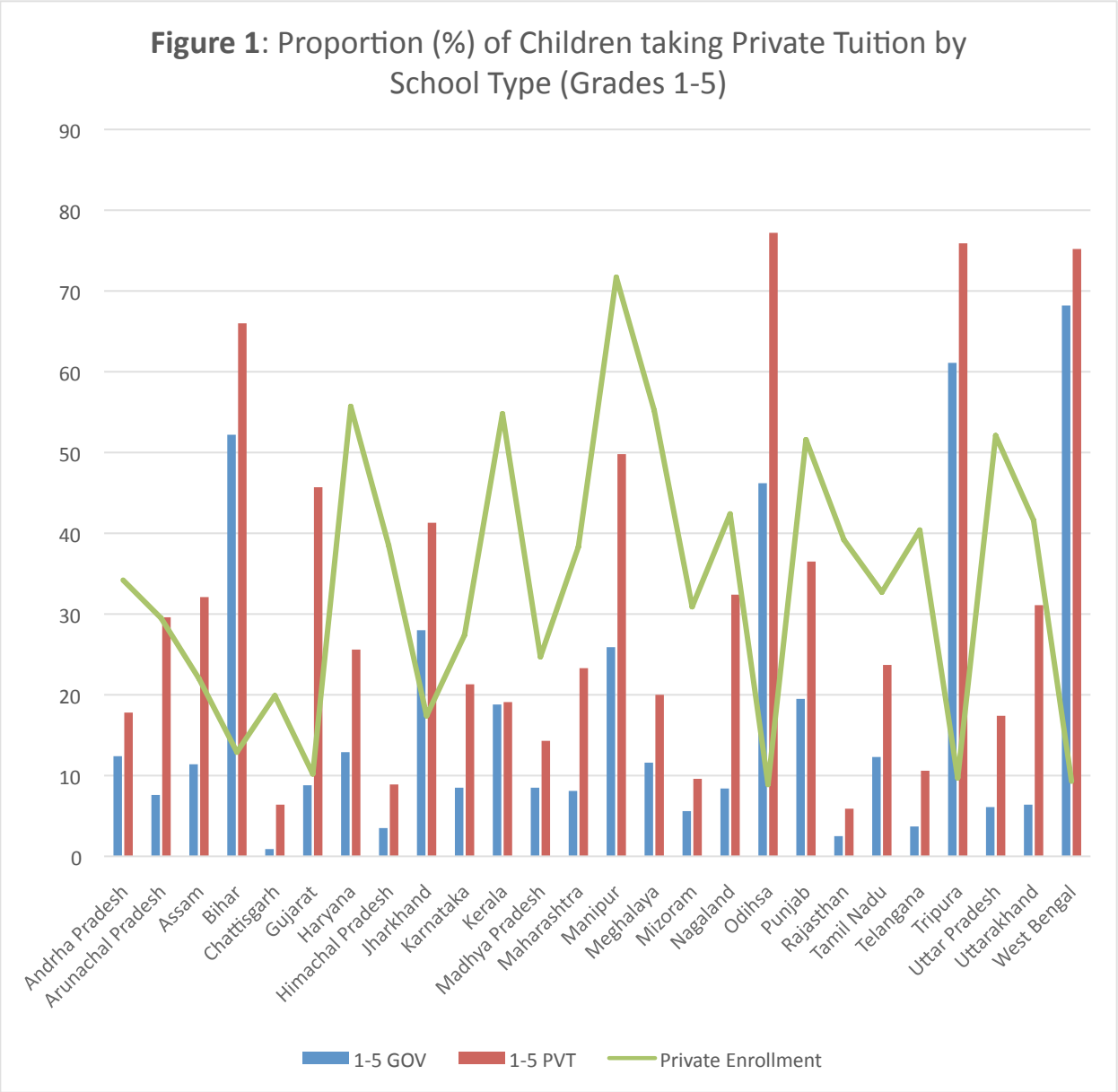
Fault Line #3: The Disruptive Shadow of Private Tuition

Private tuition – or privately paid supplemental education, where a student takes lessons form a tutor outside of school hours – has been a mainstay in the ecosystem of Indian education for a long time (Majumdar 2014, Aslam & Atherton, 2014, Wadhwa, 2014, Azam, 2015). However, there is anecdotal evidence that unchecked practice of private tuition is threatening to undermine the very fabric of schooling in India today – both public and private. For example, Majumdar (2014) presents evidence – in the voice of tutoring teachers themselves – how public and private school teachers hold back parts of their lessons in class, and only make them available to fee-paying tutees. Threats of poor grades from school teachers to students - who have not opted for private lessons from them - are common, as are the allegations that school teachers share with their private tutees the questions to appear on tests.

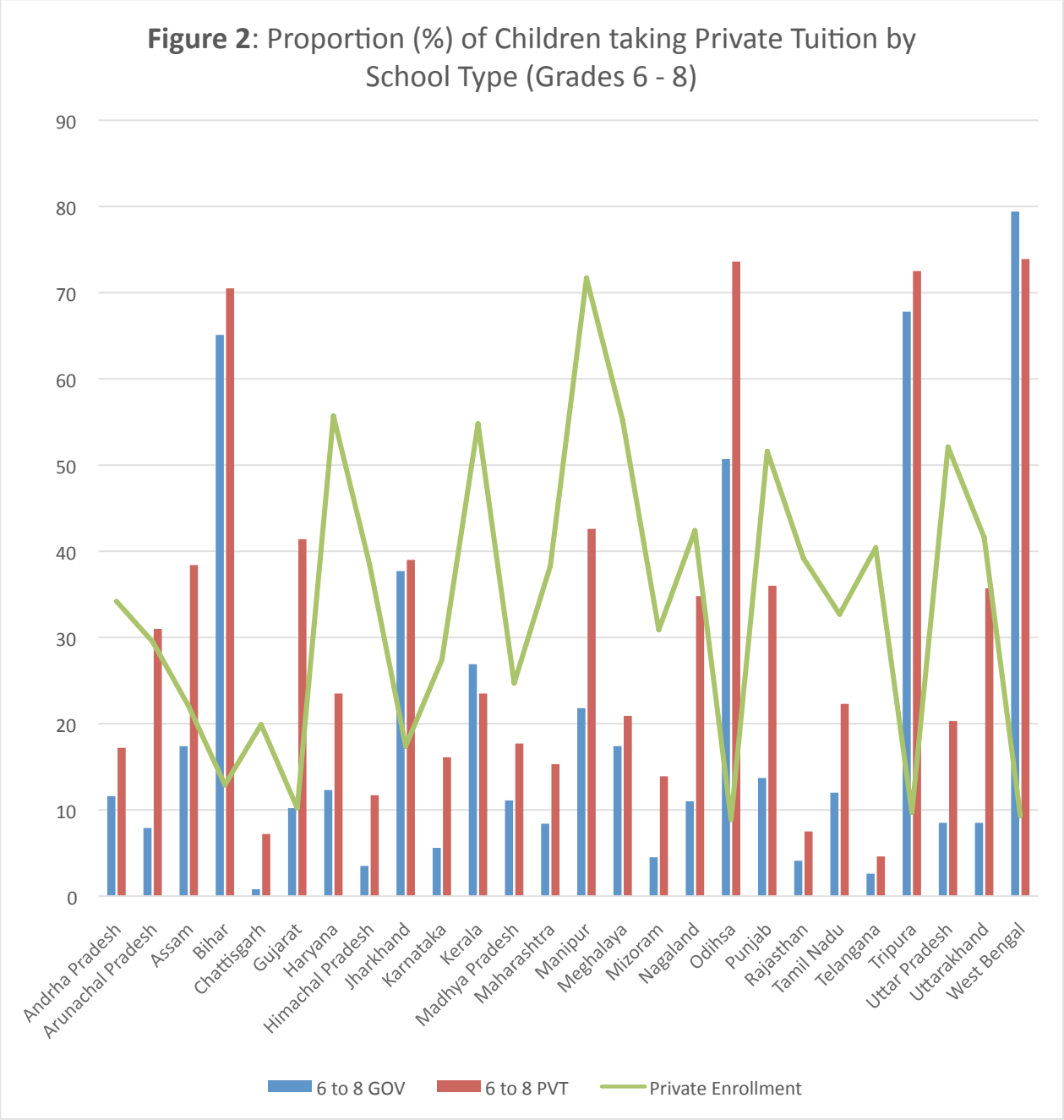
It is important to note that besides such direct and "predatory" private tuition practices, there are multiple indirect pathways through which private tuition undermines teaching and learning in school. For example, authors' interviews with government school teachers in rural West Bengal revealed that children with external private tutors were paying less attention in class activities. Classroom teachers attributed this behavior to the children's belief that their private tutor would "explain everything later at home." Often, children have multiple private tutors- one for each subject area– increasing manifold the private cost of education to parents.

While the practice of private tuition affects all school children, we submit that it is the LFP sector that is most vulnerable to the disruptive forces of private tuition in India today. Our case is analytical because there has been no empirical study (to our knowledge) that look specifically into the nexus of LFP schooling and private tuition.

An earlier India Human Development Survey estimated that 20 percent of children aged 6 to 14 opted for private tuition in 2004-05 (Desai et. al. 2010). The latest ASER 2016 suggests that roughly 25 percent students in public and private schools in rural India are taking private lessons paid for by their parents. However, a closer look at the ASER 2016 private tuition data by state level presents an intriguing pattern, as captured in the charts below (Figures 1 and 2). Across all states, among surveyed children, a higher proportion of children attending private schools opt for private tuition than do children attending government schools (Figure 1). The same pattern holds among children in grades 6 to 8 (Figure 2), with the exception of few states (such as West Bengal) where a higher proportion of government school-going children participate in private tuition. Notable also is the fact that the level of participation in private tuition among students of either school types does not strongly correlate with the level of overall private enrollment of students aged 6 to 14 in the corresponding state. While much of these variations require far more nuanced examination (since ASER does not disaggregate between low-fee and high-fee private schools), there is enough indication supporting the core argument of this section that private school students are more likely to seek out private tuition.



Source: ASER 2016 Data, Authors' Calculations



Source: ASER 2016 Data, Authors' Calculations

Indeed, there is a normative status of private tuition that one finds today among all education stakeholders across India. As Majumdar observes, "Unless it is beyond the parents' capability, private tuition at the primary stage has become as necessary a chapter as going to school" (Majumdar, 2014). Besides enjoying such a receptive environment, the private tuition market itself - a shadow cash economy, un-taxed, and under-reported - remains lucrative for private tuition providers. Surprisingly, little – if any –thoughtful regulation is encountered in supplemental private tutoring in India. This is a paradox given the highly elaborate rules that exist in all other aspects of school infrastructure and governance in India under the RTE laws. There are only broad policy directives in certain states (for example, a "ban" on private tuition by public school teachers), but such policies are flagrantly violated with impunity. Such a status quo only emboldens private school teachers – not bound by any regulation – to consider private tuition as a fully justifiable vehicle for generating income for themselves.

While the prospects of generating supplemental cash income through private tuition is true for Indian school teachers in general (Banerji and Wadhwa, 2012), we posit that the very nature of LFP schools would make private tuition practices almost inevitable for their teachers. As already mentioned, LFP schools minimize their costs through significantly lower teacher salaries, and fewer - if any - employment benefits, compared to teachers in public schools. Consequently, the need to supplement their formal salary is substantial. Additionally, the identity of LFP schools' teachers – as educators in English-medium schools – would project a higher status in the private tuition market than the public school teachers. This is because in the eyes of undifferentiating low-income parents, "English medium" affiliation of LFP schools' teachers would be worthy a price premium. This last point is illustrated by a teacher applicant's testimony to one of the authors. The applicant was offered a teaching job in an LFP school in the city of Kolkata with an extremely low salary. When the perplexed candidate asked the principal why her salary was so low, the principal's answer was: "Do not complain about the salary, just imagine how much you can earn through private tuition by being a teacher of this English-medium school!"

Just as the cost-minimizing nature of LFP schools would fuel a ready supply of private tuition by their teachers, the use of English by these schools as a medium of instruction would trigger a sustained demand for private tuition from their fee-paying clients – poor parents, already pressed to cover the cost of tuition at these schools. For reasons elaborated earlier, children in LFP schools will very likely have difficulties comprehending their lessons in English, and hence may rely on private tuition outside classroom. An argument can thus be made that it is the low-income parents with children in LFP schools who would bear the biggest burden among all socio-economic strata (Majumdar, 2014).

Along with the high cost of such tutoring, the inherent weakness of English instruction by ill-equipped teachers and the imposition of Section 18 of the Right to Education Act make the future of LFP schools in India far less promising than advocates contend. These three factors indeed constitute substantial obstacles.

References

ASER (2016). Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2016. Retrieved from: http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202016/aser_2016.pdf

ASER (2014). Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2014. Retrieved from: http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202014/fullaser2014mainreport_1.pdf

Annamalai, E. (2005). Nation-building in a Globalised World: Language Choice and Education in India. In Angel Lin and Peter Martin (eds). Decolonisation, Globalisation: Language-in-Education Policy and Practice. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon. 20-37

Aslam, M. & Atherton, P. (2014). The shadow education sector in India and Pakistan: Opening Pandora's box. Education, privatisation and social justice: Case studies from Africa, South Asia and South East Asia, 137-158.

Azam, M. (2015). Private Tutoring: Evidence from India. IZA Discussion Paper No. 8770

Azam, M., Chin, A., & Prakash, N. (2013). The returns to English-language skills in India. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *61*(2), 335-367

Azim Premji Foundation. (2016, January). Right to Education (RTE) Act , 2009 and Private School Closure in India. Retrieved from: http://www.azimpremjifoundation.org/sites/default/files/Right-to-Education-Act-2009-and-Private-School-Closure.pdf

Banerji, Rukmini and Wilima Wadhwa (2012). 'Every Child in School and Learning Well in Indi a:
Investigating the Implications of School Provision and Supplemental Help'. *India Infrastructure Report, IDFC Foundation*. New Delhi: Routledge.

Baum, D., Lewis, L., Lusk-Stover, O., & Patrinos, H. (2014). What Matters Most for Engaging the Private Sector in Education: A Framework Paper. *Washington DC: World Bank*. [SABER paper]

Bhattacharya, U., 2013. Mediating inequalities: exploring English-medium instruction in a suburban Indian village school. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *14*(1), pp.164-184.

Center for Civil Society. 2016. RTE State Rules Matrix: A comparative analysis of the state rules under the Right to Education Act. http://www.righttoeducation.in/resources/rte-matrix (retrieved 3/22/ 2016)

De, A., Noronha, C. and Samson, M., 2002. Private schools for less privileged: Some insights from a case study. *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp.5230-5236.

Desai, Sonalde, Amaresh Dubey, Reeve Vanneman, and Rukmini Banerji. "Private schooling in India: A new educational landscape." In *India Policy Forum*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 1-38. 2009.

Francis, A. (2014). Why India's landmark education law is shutting down schools. BBC News Online. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-26333713

Härmä, J., & Rose, P. (2012). 12. Is low-fee private primary schooling affordable for the poor? Evidence from rural India. In Robertson, S., Mundy, K., & Verger, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Public private partnerships in education: new actors and modes of governance in a globalizing world*. Edward Elgar Publishing. 243.

Jhingran, Dhir (2009): "Hundreds of Home Languages in the Country and Many in Most Classrooms:
Coping with Diversity in Primary Education in India," Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove, Phillipson, Robert, Mohanty, Ajit and Panda, Minati (eds). *Social Justice through Multilingual Education*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters Ltd. pp.263-282.

Kainth GS. (2014). Implications of adoption of RTE in Private Schools of Rural Punjab. Retrieved from:
http://www.ncert.nic.in/departments/nie/der/publication/pdf/Gurucharan.pdf

Kingdon, Geeta. 2008. School Sector Effects on Student Achievement in India. In R. Chakrabarti & P.
Peterson (Eds), *School Choice Internationa*l p 111–139. Cambridge: MIT Press

Majumdar, M. (2014). *The Shadow School System and New Class Divisions in India*. Working Paper Series, TRG Poverty and Education, Max Weber Stiftung.

Menashy, Francine. (2015). Tiptoeing Around Private Schools in the Global Partnership for Education. *National Center for Study of Privatization in Education – Teachers College, Columbia University*. Working Paper No. 224

MHRD. 2011. Education for All: Towards quality with equity, 156. Retrieved from http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/EFA Review Report final.pdf

MHRD. 2009. '*The Right of Children to Free And Compulsory Education Act, 2009'*, Retrieved from
Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD) website on January 7, 2012
http://education.nic.in/Elementary/free%20and%20compulsory.pdf

Mohanty, A.K., 2006. Multilingualism of the unequals and predicaments of education in India: Mother tongue or other tongue? In Garcia, Ofelia, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, and Maria E. Torres-Guzman. (eds.) *Imagining multilingual schools*. *Clevedon: Multilingual Matters*, pp.262-79.

NISA 2014. National Independent School Association (NISA) Data on School Closures (as of 18 March 2014) due to RTE Act. Retrieved from: http://nisaindia.org/data-on-school-closures

NUEPA. (2013). Elementary Education in India: Progress towards UEE. Flash Statistics: DISE 2012 – 2013. *National University of Educational Planning and Administration*. New Delhi Rangaraju, B., Tooley, J., & Dixon, P. (2012). The Private school Revolution in Bihar, Findings from a Survey in Patna Urban. Retrieved from http://www.indiai.org/index_files/the-private-school-revolution-in-bihar.pdf

Sarangapani, P. M. (2009). Quality, feasibility and desirability of low cost private schooling. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 67-69.

Sarangapani, P. M., & Winch, C. (2010). Tooley, Dixon and Gomathi on private education in Hyderabad: a reply. *Oxford Review of education*, *36*(4), 499-515.

Shah, A. and Agarwal, S., 2010. The Right to Education Act: A Critique. *Citizen Economists*, *2*.

Singh, R., & Bangay, C. (2014). Low fee private schooling in India–More questions than answers? Observations from the Young Lives longitudinal research in Andhra Pradesh. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *39*, 132-140.

Srivastava, P. (Ed.). (2013, May). Low-fee Private Schooling: aggravating equity or mitigating disadvantage? Oxford: Symposium Books Ltd.

Srivastava, P. (2010). Public–private partnerships or privatisation? Questioning the state's role in education in India. *Development in Practice*,*20*(4-5), 540-553.

Srivastava, P., & Walford, G. (Eds.). (2007). Private schooling in less economically developed countries: Asian and African perspectives. Symposium Books Ltd.

Tilak, J. B. (2004). Public subsidies in education in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 343-359.

Tooley, J., 2013. Challenging educational injustice:'Grassroots' privatisation in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. *Oxford Review of Education*, *39*(4), pp.446-463.

UNICEF. (2011). The Situation of Children in India A Profile. Retrieved from: http://www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAn_India_May_2011.pdf

Wadhwa, W. (2014). Government vs private schools: Have things changed? 19–21 http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER%20Reports/ASER%202014/Articles/wilimawadhwa.pdf