

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of the Indian experience with private and public schooling. It does four things: (i) shows how the enrolment share of different school-types has changed over time, (ii) illustrates from Indian literature on the relative effectiveness and costs of government, aided and private schools, (iii) discusses the experience of public-private partnerships in education in India and (iv) summarizes issues relating to the school-choice debate in India in height of recent/current educational legislation.

Analysis of education in India in general and of private and public schools in particular is hampered by the lack of availability of data. Despite recent improvements in the educational database in India (Mehta, 2010), there is a serious paucity of reliable educational data in India. Firstly, the official data collection exercise on schools (both annually and in the periodic 'All India Education Surveys') collects information only on the so-called 'recognised' schools. Thus, large numbers of private schools are not included in the official data since they are 'unrecognised' (Kington, 2006). Secondly, coverage of even the recognized schools is incomplete. For instance, coverage of various types of special schools is patchy across different states, such as Central Schools, Army Schools, Education Guarantee Schools, schools registered with national examination boards, etc. (Mehta, 2010). Thirdly, enrolment figures in school-returns data are unreliable because failing / unpopular publicly funded schools exaggerate their student numbers in order to justify their existence (Dreze and Kington, 2006). Fourthly, no national, state or district level data are collected on student learning achievement in primary and junior education in private and public schools; on student learning achievement in primary and junior education in private and public schools; while exam boards do have achievement data for *secondary* school level, these are not publicly available to researchers and in any case, they are not linked to student, teacher and school characteristics.

The Relative Sizes of the Private and Public Schooling Sectors

The very first fact about the private and public schools in India is that even their relative enrolment shares are not known. This is mainly due to a failure to include all types of schools in official data collections but also partly due to exaggeration of enrolments in publicly funded schools in these data

| School - Type | Basic / Elementary Education | | Secondary Education | |
|---|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| | Primary (also known as 'lower primary' (grades 1-5) | Upper primary (also known as 'junior' or 'middle') (grades 6-8) | Secondary (also known as 'lower secondary') (grades 9-10) | Upper Secondary (grades 11-12) |
| Government | | | | |
| Aided | | | | |
| Private - recognized - unrecognized | | | | |

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE**Typology of School-Types in India**

There are three main school types: government, aided, and private. Schools run by the central, state or local governments are referred to as 'government' schools. Schools run by private managements but funded largely by government grant-in-aid are known as private aided or just 'aided' schools. In the first two decades after independence, these schools were somewhat similar to the current charter schools in the US and they charge the same fee level as government schools (which is now nil). However, following important centralizing legislation in the early 1990s, their teachers are paid at government-teacher salary rates directly from the state government treasury and are recruited by a government-appointed Education Service Commission rather than by the school.

Thus, government and aided schools are now very similar and they are both publicly funded. Schools run by private managements without state aid are known as 'private unaided' schools. These run entirely on fee-revenues and have virtually no government interference in matters such as teacher recruitment. These are thus the genuinely private schools and we refer to these simply as 'private' schools rather than using their full name 'private unaided'.

Private schools in turn divide into two types: recognized schools and unrecognized schools. It turns out that of understanding the true size of the private schooling sector in India, the distinction between recognized and non-recognized schools is crucial. While government educational data collection exercises are intended to be a census of schools in the country, in fact they cover only the so called 'recognized' schools and do not cover the unrecognized schools'.

Emergence of large numbers of unrecognized primary schools (as shown later) suggests this may no longer be necessary. Table 2 shows the enrolment share of private schools in rural and urban India, according to both official school returns data and household survey data. The bottom half of the table show corresponding figures Uttar Pradesh, a state with high levels of private school participation.

The latest official data available on enrolment by school-type are for 2008. The Seventh All India Education Survey was carried out in 2013 but its results have not been made available yet. The latest figures for the year 2013 - 14 from the District Information System for Education (DISE) are included in Appendix I because of its incomplete coverage.

Table 2 shows that according to official statistics, in 2008, only 4.8 per cent of all rural primary school students in India were studying in private schools but, according to household survey data for the same year, 12.1 per cent of all rural Indian 6 - 10 year old school attendees went to a private school, a figure that is more than three times as high as the official estimate. Overall, 11.8 per cent of all 6-14 year old rural Indian school-goers went to private schools.

In rural Uttar Pradesh, official estimates put the 2008 enrolment share of private primary schools at 10.8 per cent but according to the 2008-09 National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) household survey, the actual share was 35.7 per cent, again more than three times as high as the official estimate. By the time of the PROBE survey in 2006, 36 per cent of all primary-age student (6-11 year olds) in rural UP attended private schools

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

Table 2 Enrolment Share of Private Schools, 2008

| Area | School Level | Official Published data | Household Survey data |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| | | 2008 | 2008 |
| ALL INDIA Rural | Primary | 4.8 | 12.1 |
| | Junior / Middle | 8.5 | 9.9 |
| | Secondary | 8.8 | 11.1 |
| URBAN | Primary | 58.3 | 54.7 |
| | Junior / Middle | 34.6 | 29.1 |
| | Secondary | 10.3 | 16.3 |
| UTTAR PRADESH Rural | Primary | 13.8 | 35.7 |
| | Junior / Middle | 33.3 | 28.3 |
| | Secondary | 15.9 | 19.4 |
| URBAN | Primary | 58.3 | 54.7 |
| | Junior / Middle | 34.6 | 30.1 |
| | Secondary | 10.3 | 16.3 |

Source: Official data computed from the Six All India Education Surveys (NCERT, 2008). Rural household survey figures are based on the author's calculations from 2003 NCAER survey. The urban household survey figures marked are taken from 2005-06 National Sample Survey published in NSSO 2008.

The reasons for the large discrepancy between household survey estimates and official estimates of the size of the private schooling sector in India are discussed in Kingdom (2006) and Kingdom and Dreeze (2008): Firstly, government and aided school teachers have an incentive to over-report their enrolments when there is low demand for such schools; secondly, as stated above, all official school 'censuses' are carried out only in the government-recognized schools and in most Indian states, there is no enquirement on private primary schools to be even registered, let alone be government-recognized. It seems that rural private schools in particular do not easily get government recognition, for which many conditions need to be shown to be satisfied, failing which bribes are needed (Tooley and Dixon, 2005). As Kingdom (2006) says, given the exacting conditions for and scant rewards of recognition, it is surprising that most private primary schools remain unrecognized.

How Private and Aided School Enrolment Shares Vary by Level of Education

It is noteworthy that according to household survey data in Table 2, the size of the private school sector is generally proportionately largest at the primary level, smaller at the junior level and smallest at the secondary level. This also corroborated in table 3 which show that in India (rural+urban) in 2005-06, among primary age enrollees 22.3% attended private school, while among junior school enrollees, only 16.4% attended private school. Since government such as the requirement to be recognized and pay high prescribed-minimum salaries to teachers are progressively more stringent for higher levels of education, more private schools exist at the primary level than at the junior level and the secondary level. Since the children of the poor are best represented at primary education, this pattern is clearly pervers from the point of view of equity.

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE

Public Private Partnership in Education in India

In response to the poor functioning of government run schools across many countries, in recent years there has been advocacy in favour of private public partnership in education, i.e. publicly funded but privately produced/delivered education. Privately run charter schools are an example of PP in US education. The main supposed advantage of PPPs is that they are a more flexible way of producing education, since the entity running the school, such as the private management of a school, has considerably more discretion about the running of the school and disciplining staff than is possible in public schools. An extensive PPP system does operate in India at the junior, secondary and higher level but not so much at the primary level. This is the system of government grant-in-aid to privately management schools. Grants to aided schools account for a very substantial proportion of the education budget, for example, about 70% of the higher and 80% of the secondary education budgets in Uttar pradesh. PPPs are the main mode of delivery of secondary and higher education in much of india.

Conclusions

Private schooling has mushroomed in India at level where the government does not control it. According to qualitative accounts, this growth is greatest in areas where public school do not function well. Evidence suggests that private school are more than twice as cost-effective as government schools in the large northern state of Uttar pradesh, while aided schools- a form of public-private partnership in education-are no more cost-effective than government schools, this appears to be because they have over time become more and more like government schools owing to aided school teachers' demand for comparability with public school teachers. Issues of school choice and competition have not seriously been considered in India as a means of improving schooling. It is very desirable for there to be both a popular and scholarly debate in India about the likely merits and problems of school choice, learning from the experience of other countries.

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