

The Plight of Budget Schools: Need to be Addressed

Kanagiri SN Prasad

Date of Submission: 25-12-2020

Date of Acceptance: 06-01-2021

The Importance of Primary education has been side-lined since independence in our country.

We wonder if the act was deliberate or out of negligence. However, of late, the Government is keen to improve primary education by amending legislation and planning to cover children of all the age groups, i.e. 6–14 years with an assurance of free education.

The key to imparting free education lies in our willingness to lend a helping hand and pragmatic outlook towards the implementation part. We honestly appeal to all the educationalists to kindly ensure that no child is left out, at least possess basic education to survive and prosper in one's life.

Areas where the Government cannot run schools, it can support poorer students through direct cash transfer to study in private budget schools. It can stipulate certain standards for such schools, instead of diverting deserving students to high budget corporate schools.

The Reality: The term private schools usually evoke an image of fancy institutions that charge high fees on the promise of holistic education for children. But in reality the vast majority of private schools in India excluding corporate schools as per the estimates nearly 80 percent agree with small-scale budget schools and they in fact charge very low fee but are seen by many parents as better alternatives to government schools.

Background statistics: A first-of-its-kind recent report by Central Square Foundation based on government data released has to say about private schools of India:

The students: While the number of private schools in India (at 4.6 lakh) is less than half that of government schools (10.9 lakh), the difference in the number of students studying in the two categories is marginal — 13.1 crore in government schools vs 11.9 crore in private ones.

Telangana state has 2.537 higher secondary institutions and 6.9 lacs students are studying in these institutions. Only 404 are government institutions and 41 are aided. All the rest are private institutions.

The shift: The share of government schools has gone down from over 74% in 1978 to just over 52% in 2017. The shift becomes more prominent as the level of education rises. Even in rural areas private schools account for over a third (35.10%) of the total school enrolment.

The fees: Most students are at the lower end of the fee structure of private schools — 70% pay less than Rs 1,000 a month and 45.5% pay less than Rs 500 a month as fees. Private schools, while reducing the government's burden, contribute around Rs 1.75 lakh crore to the economy.

The size: An average private 'unaided' school had 246 students on its rolls in 2017-18 compared to 120 in an average government school (in 2019). While over 65% government schools have less than 100 students, only 38% private schools fall in the category.

Share of private schools : The share of private schools in overall enrolment varies widely across states with some like (with 83.8% share of private schools) depending almost entirely on them excluding Bihar and West Bengal where government schools are popular. In 16 states and union territories, private schools account for over half the enrolment.

The Plight of Small budget Schools:

The small budget schools largely depend on the fee paid by the students to pay salaries to the teachers and non-teaching staff, apart from meeting the administrative and recurring expenses.

The most affected and unrecognized by either state and central governments the services rendered by these small budget schools, they completely ignored and put them in hardships in difficult times. Many correspondents lost their lives due to pressure from the rented building owners, financiers, and teachers they could not ever witness such problems in their lifetime. Majority of the parents could not pay even the proposed monthly fee to the institutions as they were also facing financial problems.

Government is treating the corporate schools and budget schools equally but it is not correct. The corporate schools can withstand the difficulties but small budget schools cannot

withstand this unforeseen covid-19 situation. A helping hand is required from the government as they were doing selfless services all the years equally taking the responsibility with the government in giving proper education but their services are not honoured in the society

Corporate Schools and Colleges: The Truth

The corporate schools and colleges slowly overtook all the non-corporate colleges and schools and only two prominent groups of colleges dominated the educational system in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Out of the total number of students enrolled, preference was given only to one section, whereas other sections were neglected in their academic performance. The projected result is the sum of all the branch toppers as each and every branch claims the credit. In reality, there are equal numbers of failures and the pass percentage would be less than 60 %. Such unethical practices by corporate and private institutes go unnoticed due to the underlying support from the government. They work hand in glove for funds and other perks through these colleges and school management. The educational system has been totally rotted as the parent mind is brainwashed because of the fake advertisements and marketing gimmicks, claiming state ranks in every stream by these institutions.

Unchecked Enormous Fees Structure:

- 1) Parents have no choice for admission and they have to forgo huge amounts for the sake of admission in these schools and colleges.
- 2) By paying more money towards educating their children in these schools doesn't prove better performance, when compared to average and below-average students.
- 3) They (corporate) don't have a magic wand, and unlike other schools, are least concerned to groom the weaker students, because they target only the bright ones. They take special care and provide intensive coaching for securing top grades and ranks.
- 4) Every year they get new admissions by marketing the brightest students and their ranks, but never speak about the failure percentage.
- 5) Knowing all these facts, parents have no option as everyone discusses these corporate schools. Enrolling wards in such schools and colleges has become a status symbol for most of the parents and they take immense pride at the stake of their wards.

Advantage-Non-Corporate Schools:

(Affordable Primary and Secondary Education for the Weaker Sections)

The concept of our CM, Mr. Chandra Shekar Rao's KG to PG free education in each and every Mandal is a noble approach towards education. We have to take into consideration a few pragmatic factors before implementing the scheme.

We have many government schools, residential schools, social welfare hostels, and colleges and even English medium schools in each and every Mandal. We have qualified and trained staff and better infrastructure when compared to other States. If we concentrate on these schools and improve the basic amenities/facilities like toilets, science and computer labs and sports facilities for the students, the students will be further benefited. If the Telangana Government wants to mould these schools on par with the private schools, it can concentrate on KG to PG free education scheme in each and every Mandal. We need to mention here how the Government schools are transformed in Delhi under the able leadership of Mr Kejriwal Government and showing good results and surprised to not they are top few schools of Government Managed schools only. No doubt in Telangana Dr. RS Praveen Kumar IPS is the Secretary of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Institutions Society could able to achieve a very good number of seats even in reputed medical colleges. Hats off to Dr RS Praveen , teachers and the students for the historic results in NEET (UG) this year. In 2012 -13 we got just 3 MBBS seats! And now more than 100! What a mega transformation! Thanks for the trust .We need people like him to transform society through proper education to the children. In Andhra Pradesh also total transformation is taking place in particular to School Education and the government has realized and given needed support by way of improving the infrastructure facilities and also encouraging schemes like AMMAVODI. "AMMA VODI" as a part of "NAVARATNALU" for providing financial assistance to each mother or recognized guardian in the absence of mother, who is below poverty line household, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and region to enable her to educate her child/children from Class I to XII (Intermediate Education) in all recognized Government, Private Aided and Private Unaided schools/ Jr. Colleges including Residential Schools/Colleges in the State from the Academic year 2020-2021.

One has to agree that the non-corporate school managements are doing yeomen service and dedicate their lives for the cause of education of the weaker and needy sections of the society.

Possible Solution:

The non corporate schools are registered under the name of Educational Societies or Trust with clear mention that these institutions will fall under service to the society category or otherwise considered as NGOs.

1. All GHMC or Government related Welfare activities such as polling stations, Survey, Pulse polio centers or any other scheme by GHMC, the Private School building, the staff and their infrastructure is utilized.
2. Most of the cab/auto drivers, daily wage labors and private employees whose income is below Rs 10,000 per month educate their wards in such schools.
3. The fee structure is affordable and most of the parents pay according to their convenience, unlike corporate schools. The parents have flexibility in paying fees.
4. Most of the schools give free admission to at least, 5-10 students in an academic year, unlike the corporate schools.
5. When we talk about compulsory education for every child and discourage such schools, what will be the plight of the parents and their wards?
6. The Government has to realize the importance of such schools and should allot land at a nominal cost for the institutions that have rendered more than 25 years of service such that they can do better service and uplift the weaker sections of our society.
7. Most of these schools have low enrolment of less than two hundred and to sustain is a challenge, bearing all the expenses. Most of the collected money, nearly 95 percent by the way of tuition fees, goes towards the teachers' salaries and rent of the rented building only.
8. The Government should be flexible in terms of granting permission to such schools.
9. The Government should not treat these schools on commercial basis and must fix minimal charges towards property tax, electricity and water cess.
10. The Government should arrange interest free loans based on their strength from the state Financial corporation, flexible which can be repaid in 36 months and it will be certainly a relief for the management of the schools and the teachers,

Finally: The Government should realize the fact under the COVID-19 the hardships faced by the Budget schools and few lost their lives due to unforeseen financial crisis unable to sustain themselves for the complete academic year of 2020-2021. The Government should meet and resolve the major issues faced by these Budget Private Schools as all the years they were supporting and sharing equal responsibility in educating the children of Telangana State now it is

the turn of the government should realize the selfless services of the managements positively

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Mr Boki Isaiah Vinod, MA, MPhil., for editing the Manuscript. Daily News Papers-English and Telugu Regional News Channels. Google Search and Observation

“Bouquets and Brickbats” a book penned by Kanagiri Prasad- a faceoff on modern societal challenges: 24/7 publication in June 2020. isbn:978-93-89963-90-8 Ref: Hyderabad – Section I on Education