



‘Equity, efficiency and inclusiveness in education: an empirical analysis of public and private schools’

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Abstract

Equity, efficiency and inclusiveness in education requires that all children in India gets equal access to an appropriate, relevant, affordable and effective education. However, with limited resources, it is challenging to achieve inclusive and equitable education in a developing country like India. Using a small sample, the study examines the difficulties in developing an inclusive school system. India's educational planning must aim to increase educational institutions' effectiveness while simultaneously achieving greater equity and inclusivity. Since education is essential to economic, social, and cultural growth of the nation, it must be equitable, effective and inexpensive for all.

Keywords: School, Education, Equity, Efficiency, Public, Private

Introduction

Education is the backbone of a country. Future prospects of a country depend upon the current educational landscape and standards. In this context equity, efficiency and inclusivity are three important dimensions of a sound education policy and these three dimensions are closely intertwined. It is worth pondering over the equity, efficiency and inclusivity in our educational policies and practices. The success of any policy depends upon its implementation. So, the problem is to assess in what manner and how far our government and private schools have adapted to the high standards educational policy envisaged in the NCF 2005 to meet the three broad objectives of equity, efficiency and inclusivity.

Literature Review

As a part of the overall effectiveness of educational institutions, attention is required towards equity, efficiency and inclusiveness in school education and whether there are any distinctions between publicly and privately administered schools. Various studies have been conducted across many countries to gauge this difference. In Cordero Ferrera et al. (2006), regional efficiency levels in Spain were estimated using the DEA approach at the student level. They discover that private school students are less productive than their public school counterparts. Mancebón et al. (2012) concluded that public high schools have greater levels of efficiency than subsidised private schools using DEA and the same dataset for Spain. According to UNESCO, increasing student participation in learning and eliminating exclusion from and within the educational system are two ways that inclusive education

seeks to address and meet the unique needs of all children (Nguyet and Ha, 2010). The process of expanding the presence, involvement, and achievement of all students is known as inclusive education (Booth and Ainscow 2002). Patrick G. Galleto, Narcisa S. Bureros. 2017 in their study in Phillipines showed that teacher education institutions are intensely vulnerable in the challenges on policy, curriculum, materials, and methodology. This makes it necessary for inclusive education policy to be a part of the larger dynamics and procedures of the body that makes policies. Teachers should be learning about, experiencing, and practicing inclusive approaches to teaching and learning throughout their professional development to promoting inclusive education. The needs to be matching revision of the materials used in teacher education programs should be seen essential, and inclusive teaching methodology should be intrinsically linked to and mutually supportive of inclusive curricula.

Research Question

The research question pertains to the three important concerns equity, efficiency and inclusivity in education at the school level. The question is how equitable, efficient and inclusive are our government schools and private schools separately and comparatively. Apart from the paper also tries to address the normative question like what measures should be taken to improve upon the existing situation.

Objectives of the Study

The paper examines the system of school education in India through a comparative study of the level of equity, efficiency and inclusivity of the government and private schools in imparting education to the students on the basis of the various parameters like design of education system, educational infrastructure, pedagogical aspect, teacher student ratio etc. How the two types of schools deal with the personal and social circumstances of the students. How adaptive they are to the inclusive school policies of the government? Are there differences in their practices to meet this end? How government and private schools deal with the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the students? The finally the paper tries to prescribe important policy measures to make our educational system more efficient, equitable and inclusive on the basis of the inferences from personal interaction during the study with the various stakeholders connected with the school education.

Design of the Study, Survey Design and Research Methodology

The proposed study is based upon primary data collected through surveys in research rural and urban areas of Delhi. It includes teachers, parents and students. Sample has been taken to ensure that it remains representative of the population so that better results are obtained. The survey questionnaires include qualitative and quantitative information. As mentioned earlier the paper is an empirical study based upon primary data collected through field surveys. Three brief questionnaires were administered to collect necessary information one each for the students, teachers and parents. A small sample of eight co-educational schools was conducted to collect the data. Four schools were selected from the rural areas and another four were selected from the urban areas of Delhi while ensuring them to be four from government and private sectors each. A total of forty-eight students were surveyed from these eight schools. So from each school six students (three male and three female) were selected in a manner so that equal number of them represent different class groups. For that purpose, all classes were divided into three groups (C1-Primary and Upper Primary, C2-Higher Secondary, C3- Secondary). Three male and three female students were selected from each school such that two students (one male and one female) are from C1, C2 and C3 each. Parents of sixty school going students were also selected from the rural and urban areas in about equal numbers. The surveyed parents were classified on the basis of their education level. Five categories of education levels: E1, E2, E3, E4 and E5 & above were taken for this purpose¹. Parents were also divided on the basis of their monthly income (low income, middle income and high income) and number of children (1-2, 2-4 and more than 4). A total of 24 teachers were also surveyed. Three teachers were surveyed from each of the eight schools in a way to ensure that about equal number of them teach the three levels of classes. Teachers were grouped on the basis of their educational qualifications, technological adaptations, experience and monthly salary.

¹ E1 –Primary & Upper Primary, E2 – Higher Secondary, E3-Secondary, E4-Graduation, E5-Post Graduation & E6 - Above Post Graduation

Findings of the Study:

1. Comparison of Equitability between government and private schools

The equitability of the government and private schools has been assessed in the study on the basis of the following four parameters.

- i) **Affordability Parameter:** All the students and the parents in the sample said that they can afford school education for all the levels in the government run schools. On the other hand, the same set of students and parents responded differently for the affordability of the private school education. On average about 54 percent students agreed that the school education in private school is affordable. Only 50 percent of the Female students and 50 percent of rural students said that private school education is affordable for them.
- ii) **Accessibility Parameter:** Accessibility parameter primarily focused on the distance of the school from the residence of the students. In other words, it is the ease of access parameter. About one third of the students on average said government schools are not easily reachable. As far as private schools are concerned on average 80 percent students find them easily accessible from their home.
- iii) **Gender Equity Parameter:** On the basis of gender-based equity it has been observed that private schools have more gender neutrality in their overall approach of functioning. As far as average responses are concerned about 80 percent male students and 70 percent of female students say that government school education is equitable on gender basis. On the other hand, private school education is accepted to be equitable by all male and only 80 percent of female students. Gender based equity is highest at the primary and upper primary level and it is the least at secondary level. Overall gender inequity is more in rural schools than in urban schools.
- iv) **Disability Based Equity Parameter:** This criterion was used basically to capture the sensitivity of the schools toward the special needs of the differently abled students. In general government schools are less disable friendly than the private school.

2. Comparison of Effectiveness of government and private schools: Ordinarily effectiveness of

3. A school depends upon many factors pot of which many are difficult to estimate. Nevertheless, an attempt has been made to compare the effectiveness in terms of the following seven factors:

- i. **Teacher Students Ratio Parameter:** The respondent students were asked about the teacher-students ratio of their schools. 20-30 students per teacher has been considered as a good t-s ratio, 30-40 students per teacher as average and more than 40 students per teacher has been taken as poor s-t ratio.
On the basis of this information government and private schools of rural and urban areas have been ranked. Private schools in the urban areas topped on this parameter followed by private schools in the rural areas. Government schools have been found to have a high student-teacher ratio.
- ii. **School Infrastructure Parameter:** On the basis of this parameter also urban schools have been found to have superior infrastructural facilities. Most of the government schools have been found to have average to below average infrastructure.
- iii. **Pedagogical Skills of Teachers Parameter:** Students responded on the pedagogical skills of the teachers. Private schools of the urban areas have been found to have slightly better average pedagogical skills of the teachers.
- iv. **Curriculum Parameter:** Curriculum of the private school and government school both have been reported to be more or less same. The similarities are due to the implementation of curriculum framework at both type of the schools.
- v. **Co-curricular Activities Parameter:** As far as co-curricular activities are concerned private schools outperform the government schools. Almost all the private schools of rural and urban areas have been recorded to follow sound extracurricular practices. There are stark differences between private and government schools on the basis of co-curricular activities.
- vi. **Nutritious Meal Parameter:** Government schools provide mid-day meals to the students however there is no such provision in the private schools. So, government schools outweigh the private schools on this parameter. Government students have this advantage. As far as the nutritional value of the mid meal has been concerned the respondent students of the government schools have reported it to be of average value.
- vii. **ICT Use Parameter:** On the technology usage parameter private schools are far ahead than the government schools. Government schools lack the necessary ICT infrastructure. So private schools

have an edge over private schools on this count. Private schools located in the urban areas are more efficient in ICT usage relative to private schools in the rural areas.

4. Comparison of inclusiveness of the educational practices of the government and the private schools. Inclusivity of an educational institution depends upon various parameters as given below. Out of these parameters pedagogy and curriculum together capture the epistemology-based inclusion.

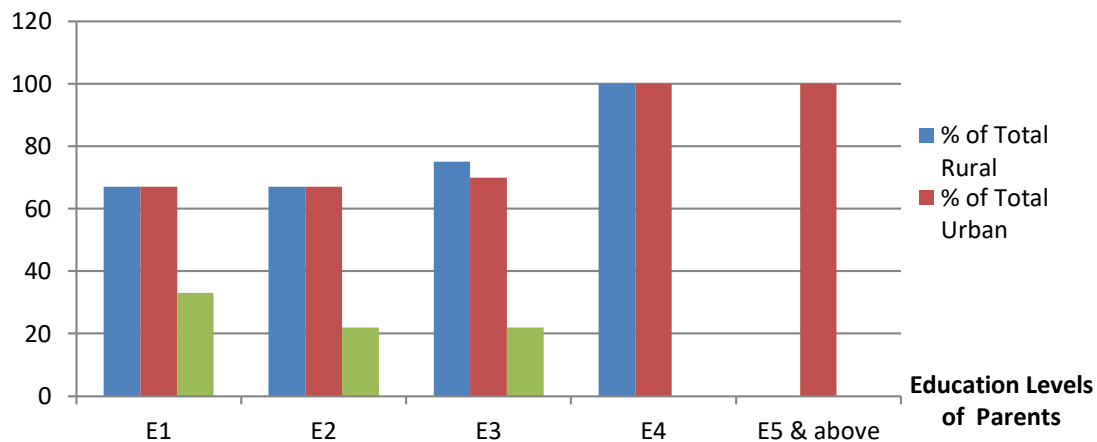
- i. **Cultural Inclusivity:** Cultural inclusivity is a quite wider term which however has been used a narrow sense in this small level study to reflect inclusion of the students from diverse social backgrounds. It highlights not only the neutrality of the institution towards the heterogeneous socio-cultural identities of the students but also how an institution facilitates and promotes assimilation them. The students in the sample were asked to report how much their schools support cultural mix up among the students within the overall educational practices of their respective schools. About sixty six percent of the government schools' students felt that their schools had cultural inclusivity of which the response of the female students was more affirmative relative to male students. The positive response from the students of the private schools was slightly less. Eighty percent students of rural area government schools also gave positive response for their schools being inclusive relative to just fifty percent of the students of the urban government schools.
- ii. **Religious Inclusivity:** Students were asked to report about their experience in the school with respect to the religious heterogeneity among the students and what is the approach of their schools and their teachers towards various religions. The students had varied opinions about their experiences in their current schools. More than eighty five percent students of the government schools find their school accommodating students of all religions with equal treatment. Government Schools in the rural areas are found to be more inclusive than in urban areas. About fifty six percent students of the private schools have reported the religious inclusivity in their schools. In this way government schools are ahead of private schools in terms of religious schools though within private schools, rural area schools are more effective at religious diversity.
- iii. **Epistemology based inclusion:** Epistemology based includes pedagogical inclusivity and curriculum-based inclusivity. Not only the curriculum framework but also the pedagogical practices of the schools can also align more with the objective of inclusivity. More than ninety percent students of public schools responded that their school followed inclusive epistemology. On the other hand, only sixty five percent of the students of the private schools reported the inclusive epistemology in their schools.
- iv. **Enabling Infrastructure:** About sixty five percent of the respondent students of the government schools reported affirmatively that their schools had enabling infrastructure. Private schools were reported to be more proactive towards infrastructural needs of the students.

Government schools found to have more post graduate degree holder teachers than the private schools. On the other hand, private schools had higher number of teachers having qualifications more than post graduate than the government schools. Government schools found to have more experienced teachers than the private teachers in terms of the length of services. Government schools lag way behind the private school teachers in technological adaptation. As far as salaries are concerned, it has been noticed that on average government school pays higher salaries than the private schools.

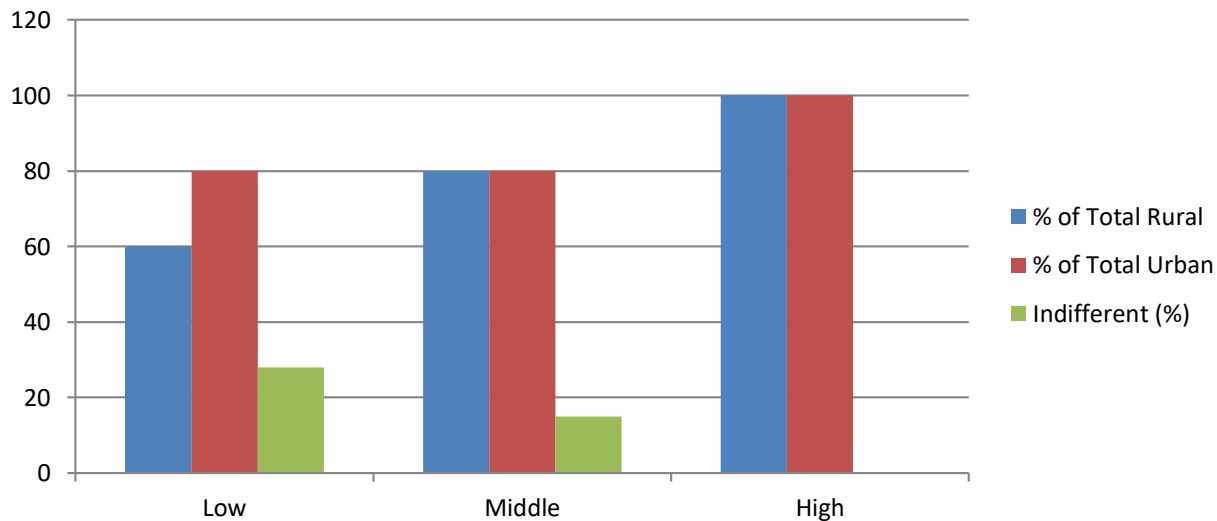
Figure-1, 2 and 3 represents the choices of the parents on the basis of three base parameters: education level, income status and number of children. Figure-1 shows that there is a correlation between educational status of the parents and their preference toward private schooling for their children. More educated parents find private schools to be more efficient. A few parents from the middle educational background are found to be indifferent between the private and government schools.

Figure -2 shows that preference for private schools also increases strongly with the income status of the parents. Although majority of poor people also prefer private schools over government schools but many of them are not capable to afford the cost so send their kids to the government schools. A few parents from the low and middle income are found to be indifferent between the private and government schools.

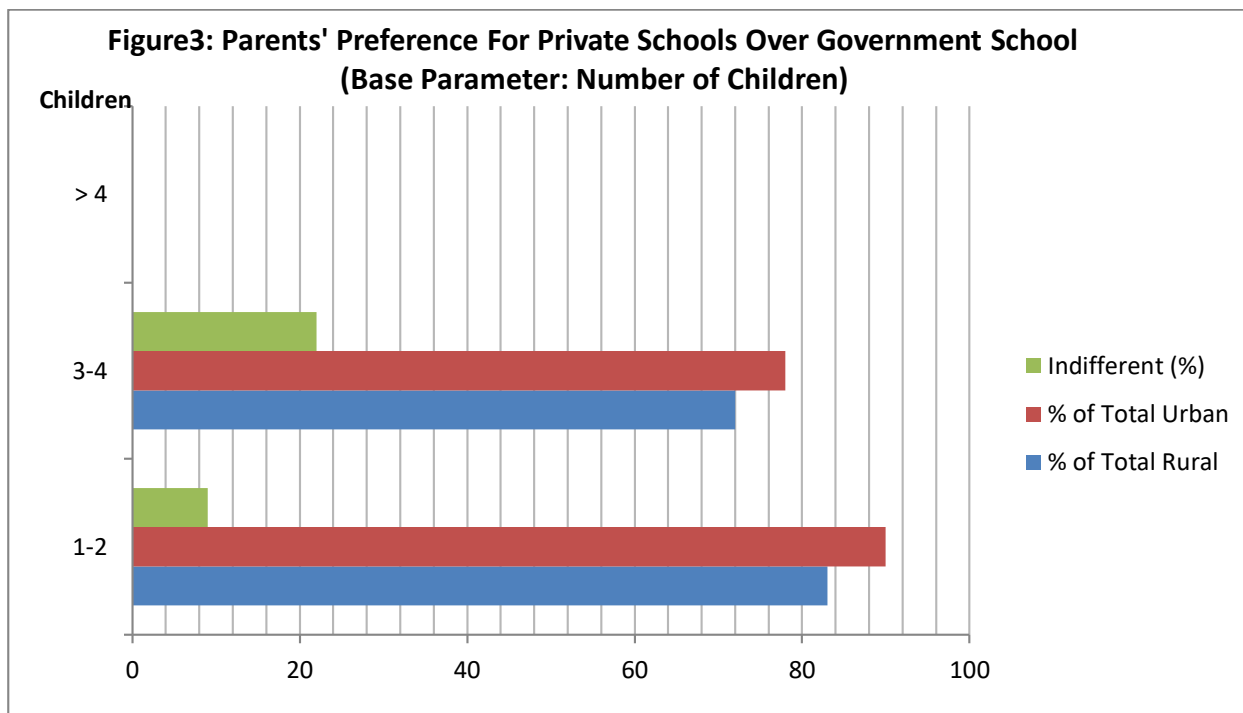
**Figure 1: Parents' Preference For Private Schools Over Government School
(Base Parameter: Education Level)**



**Figure2: Parents' Preference For Private Schools Over Government School
(Base Parameter: Income Status)**



As far as number of children in the family is concerned the parents within all sub groups have expressed their strong preferences for the private schools with exceptionally a small proportion of the parents surveyed showed indifference between the government and private schools.



Policy Outcomes: The study, in spite of its limitations of being very less representative, brings out certain policy prescriptions for the educational policy planning in our country. All the schools are lacking in equity and inclusivity while government schools in particular are lacking in the efficiency of their services. Therefore, the educational planning in India must strive to achieve not only greater equity and inclusivity but also to improve efficiency in the educational institutions. Education being the key to the economic, social and cultural development of the country needs to be equally accessible, equally affordable and equally effective for all. It is pertinent on the part of the government to create environment in the schools conducive for imparting inclusive education comparable with the standards of the developed countries.

Conclusion: The present study is an ardent effort to highlight the important issues of equity, efficiency and inclusivity in the Indian school education. The study encompasses a very thin sample of the schools, a few students, few teachers and few parents. Nevertheless, it paints a broader picture of the comparative strength and weaknesses of the government schools and private schools on three criteria equity, efficiency and inclusivity. Assessment of the each of the three criteria is a tremendously difficult because the respondents are minor students and to explain them these concepts is very difficult. In spite of the challenges and limitations in this research, it brings out important issues. It has been observed that none of the two types of schools, government or private, is proving perfectly competent in the test on the basis of either the three parameters. There is lot of scope for further state intervention and support in the schooling system to upgrade our schooling system to meet the international norms and standards.

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