CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Closure of NGO-run schools in Delhi under RTE

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Content

1. ABSTRACT

This paper studies the impact of the closure of NGO run schools under the Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 on parents and children. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 sets certain norms and standards that schools have to comply with within three year. The deadline was March 31 2013. Having missed the deadline, numerous unrecognised schools closed down. To highlight the impact of closures, a case study was carried out with Deepalaya schools. Field visits were conducted to find out where the children of these NGO schools are now. Are the children getting education? Where? What has been the impact on parents? How have they coped with the closure? It was found that a large number of the children were still enrolled in these schools which are currently functioning as tuition centres, post closure. However interviews with a few parents identified cases of out-of-school children. In certain cases the parents faced hurdles in getting admissions into government schools. The children and parents have been affected in various ways after the closures. The paper also identifies NGO run schools in other states and how have the RTE norms affected them. The paper argues that while recognition based on certain standards serves the education sector well, it is important to integrate the model of these NGO Schools in the Indian context. The paper concludes by recommending actions to be adopted in order to assuage the impact of the closures.

2. INTRODUCTION

The 86th Constitutional Amendment recognises elementary education (6-14 years age group) as a fundamental right (Gazette of India). Since independence India has acknowledged the importance of educating her population but was able to come with a legislation to guarantee that only in 2009. With the RTE India attempted to actualize the constitutional vision of providing free and compulsory education to every child. Without questioning the noble intention behind making education a fundamental right, the act cannot be considered flawless. The passage of the act was unwelcome in some quarters and it has since been criticized for its overt emphasis on inputs and for completely ignoring the significance of learning outcomes.

A major point of contentious is the various categories of inputs that are made binding on the private schools. The justification for these regulations is that these were necessary to keep a check on the proliferation of substandard private schools. It is interesting to note that before regulations the percentage of private schools to total schools was 19.50% (DISE, 2009), the de-facto privatization (Tooley and Dixon, 2006) had spread and the number of private schools stand today at 3,19,990 which is 22.09% of total schools (Flash Statistics, 203-2014). This increase in the role of the non-formal sector can be attributed to the neo-liberal discourse that advocates for an educational market and parental choice.

Section 19 of the RTE talks about the norms and standards that every school needs to comply with in order to get recognition. The schedule talks about the prescribed number of classrooms, teacher student ratio, separate toilet for boys and girls, drinking water facility, kitchen for mid-day meal, and playground in every school. Alongside these, Section 38 of the RTE provides for the concerned State Government to make rules for carrying out the provisions of the act. Failure to meet these norms would result in closure of schools. It was reported that a large number of private unrecognized schools closed down and it cannot be assumed that all the children coming out of these schools have been reinstated into government schools.

Alongside private schools, an additional category of schools has been recognized in this paper – Non Governmental Organization (NGO) schools. NGOs have come to acquire a huge role in the society and have a presence in almost every sphere of the society such as environment, health, livelihood, education and other issues. The assistance and activism of these NGOs makes them catalysts and facilitators. Seldom are they viewed as independent entities that are institutional in nature. Their role has often been limited to bridging the gap between society and the providers of public goods. However, this paper contradicts this assumption. It views NGOs as a separate stakeholder in education sector.

The paper begins with a brief overview of the system of alternative and innovative schooling and proceeds to engage with the issues that the NGO Schools faced due to the RTE. The existing literature discusses the alternative model of education that NGO Schools have developed. Various studies have been conducted on how the NGOs help in the betterment of education by means of

assisting the government and how NGO developed models of education have been successfully adapted in schools. The paper aims to identify NGO run schools and how these as independent entities contribute to education. Additionally, identifying the isolation of these schools in the education sector. Delhi has been chosen for the purpose of this research because numerous cases of school closure have been reported in the capital. The present nexus of laws controlling and entangling the recognition norms for private schools is also highlighted in context of NGO run schools.

A number of NGO run schools were operating in Delhi and catering to the urban poor. The closure of these schools under the RTE has impacted large number of students and parents adding to the already gigantic figure of out-of-school children. For the purpose of the study, primary research was conducted in areas where schools were run by an NGO named Deepalaya. With a certain number of Deepalaya schools now shut, the research paper aims to study the extent of the impact of these closures on parents and children.

It concludes with a set of recommendations that could substantially assuage the adverse effect of closure of NGO schools on parents and children and also address the various constraints and incremental consequences they face. The paper goes on to suggest an appropriate pattern of action that can be followed by the authorities to ensure smooth transition of these children into formal schools. Lastly, the paper recommends an integration between government controlled education system and innovative models of education unique to NGO run schools.

3. ALTERNATIVE AND INNOVATIVE SCHOOLING

Before embarking on the discussion of closure and its impact, it is important to take a look at the role of NGOs in the education sector and why alternative schooling is feasible in the Indian context.

Community specific approach of Alternative and Innovative Schools (A & I) run by NGOs have come a long way in proving to be an effective measure to substitute the low level of teaching in government schools. More often than not they are patronised by economically weaker sections of the society. The success story of these unique schools is characterized by the healthy learning environment they provide. These schools propagate an accommodating curriculum and teaching methods to ensure inclusiveness. The teaching is carried out with focus on better learning and state of the art technologies are used to innovate and update. The National Institute of Open Schooling's Open Basic Education (NIOS-OBE) and A & I schools have been successful in developing community specific curriculum.

A variety of NGO run schools are running in different states following their home grown models of education and innovation for better learning. However, they have reached a dead-end against the RTE norms which most of them will fail to comply with resulting in their closure. One such example of an NGO initiative is the *Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samithi* (BGVS) which aimed to bring about mass literacy and promote quality education. The BGVS did sprawling work in 20 states and opened

1,200 *Gyan Vigyan Vidyalayas* in 9 states with community encouragement and support. The BGVS was a hub of creative teaching methods, teaching of moral, ethical and democratic values. Apart from schooling the initiative also worked for mother and child care and opened health centres. They were basically community led indigenously innovated centres of learning. The clauses of the RTE threaten closure for the BGVS. Similarly *Rishi* Valley Education Centres came out with a 'School-in-a-Box' kit in 1993 which was an innovative 'learning ladder' approach and children were given autonomy to track their own progress using learning cards. These methods even attracted a number of government schools teachers from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. This model benefits an estimated 10 million children and operates over 250,000 primary schools in India (India Infrastructure Report, 2012).

Apart from these independent initiatives one such NGO model was even adopted by a state government. An Ahmedabad based NGO, *Gyanshala,* has been operating 350 low-cost non-formal school for the economically disadvantaged from class 1 to class 3. In 2006 the Gujarat government extended its support to *Gyanshala* under the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). The creative model included group activities for children and daily lessons for 3 hours and the classes were conducted close to the place of residence. *Gyanshala* claims to be a more cost effective model of education compared to government schools.

The above mentioned examples of A &I schools give an understanding of the impact NGO run initiatives have had on the education sector. Another factor underlined is the importance of community led and supported education models often tailor-made to meet the specific needs of learning in the space. However, the feasibility of these models as a blue print of education at the national level remains to be studied. The RTE with its norms and standards has raised a question regarding the existence of these NGO run schools. In the face of these closures it becomes important to study the impact these closures have on the children and parents who rely on these schools for quality education in the remotest areas.

4. Deepalaya- A Case Study

As the study focuses on NGO Schools in Delhi, Deepalaya was identified as the largest NGO which was running schools across the national capital. Deepalaya is a registered charity that is operational since 1979 in Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The organisation works towards assisting the socially and economically marginalized. The NGO has done extensive work in health, education, vocational training, and women empowerment. Along with classes for elementary education Deepalaya also admits differently abled children and provides a fully functional therapy centre. The school works to particularly attract girl children. The program of Father Daughter Alliance (FADA) is a successful model of ensuring girl education. The NGO has done unique work in education through formal and non-formal means. The aim of its endeavours in education sector was to focus on the underprivileged, and hence majority of its schools are located in slums. Deepalaya has been severely hit by the RTE norms.

Post closure the schools run as tuition centres. Apart from this, social entrepreneurs are also allowed to use the premises to give private tuition to interested students. The NGO has come up

with these different mechanisms to keep functioning. The number of children enrolled in Deepalaya schools is as follows:

List of Deepalaya schools; Table-1

Name of School	Female	Male	Total
Deepalaya School, Kalkaji Extension	501	625	1126
Deepalaya School, Sanjay Colony	210	296	**506**
Ramditi JR Narang Deepalaya School	279	208	**487**
Deepalaya School, Golekuan	95	143	**238**
Deepalaya School, Gusbethi	325	374	699
Deepalaya School, Titron	104	113	217
Total	1514	1759	3273

Source: Deepalaya Annual Report 2012-13

The data tabulated above suggests that a grand total of 1,231 children have been impacted because of the closure of the three schools: Deepalaya School Sanjay Colony; Deepalaya School Sheikh Sarai; Deepalaya School Golekuan.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Primary Research

A case study was conducted of the three Deepalaya schools which are closed. The objective was to study the impact on the parents and children after these schools were closed down. The number of households varied from slum to slum. Two of the three Deepalaya schools that are closed were visited. In each case, observations were made to identify (i) the school building and general infrastructure, (ii) the classroom size and other facilities, and (iii) any student activities taking place currently. Effort was made to reach out to the parents of the children of the school. In Golekuan, due to the relatively smaller size of the school only 6 parents were interviewed, whereas in Sanjay Colony 15 parents were interviewed. Occasionally, due to non-availability of parents, questions were answered by the other immediate family members. Along with parents some children were also interviewed. The respondents were questioned about occupation, family income, educational status of parent, number of children and aspirations for education of children. The closure's effects on aspects like financial, social, psychological and educational performance were researched.

According to the present status of enrolment, the children were put under two categories:

1. **Type A**[1]: Children, who were in Deepalaya, now are enrolled in government schools and attend the Deepalaya tuition centres. Focus was on their experience with Deepalaya as well as the government school, teaching methods, homework, relationship with teachers.
2. **Type B**[2]: Children who were in Deepalaya and are currently not enrolled in any government school. Reasons for not getting enrolled were investigated; difficulties in enrolment and present day-to-day activities of the out-of-schoolchildren were highlighted.

   The parents were questioned corresponding to the category their child belonged to. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain information from the parents. Apart from parents interviews were conducted with the person in-charge in Deepalaya. They were asked to give their opinion about the RTE and its norms. Questions were asked regarding the procedure followed by them for closure, and additionally if they considered applying for recognition. The norms and standards that were a cause of concern were inquired and the respective reasons for noncompliance were questioned. The research is primarily based on first-hand accounts of the respondents – the NGO staff and the parents of the children. The collected data is analysed and interpreted in the subsequent sections.

5.2 Secondary Research

Literature review

A study (Blum, 2009) on NGO Schools states that a number of NGO programmes across the nation have attempted to provide effective support for small, rural, and multi-grade schools. In many cases these NGOs provide children with access to primary schooling where the state has not been able to do so or has done so poorly. Thus they are important for discussions regarding access to quality education and poverty alleviation in India.

A study (Jagannathan, 2001) illustrates 6 successful NGO models in India and the number of children they impact. The study highlights that the government is yet to recognize NGOs as credible and full-fledged partners for elementary education. The collaboration extended to NGOs is mostly confined to certain segments of the education system, notably to deal with the hard-to-reach target groups.

According to Jha and Parvati, (2014) the only solution to the hierarchical and incongruous nexus of segregation in schools is a common school system (CSC)[3] that should be proposed to attain the

[1]For the purpose of this study this category will be referred to as Type A in the following sections.

[2]For the purpose of this study this category will be referred to as Type B in the following sections.

objectives of the RTE. Only a common school system can go beyond the web of social and economic disparity. The feasibility of CSC in the Indian context is debatable however the paper does propose a greater role for NGO initiatives in government as well as private education. Even in a CSC, inputs of NGOs will be crucial as they can come up with effective community specific models along with preserving the basic skeleton of a CSC.

Alongside these studies the review report of the committee on Delhi School Education Act, 1973 highlighted the incompatible provisions of the act. The report gives a detailed perspective on the inconsistencies that govern schools in Delhi.

The study of the literature highlighted that there are various cases where numerous models of NGO run school have been successful in making education more inclusive as they are mostly providing service in the backward and remote areas. With the growth of these NGO models a large number of children have come to be associated with them and the RTE norms will adversely impact the children in these schools.

Legal documents:

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009

Section 3(1) states that every child between the age of 6 and 14 years will have the right to free and compulsory education in the neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education. Section 5 of the RTE clearly mentions that if a child seeks transfer from one school to another the transfer certificate needs to be obtained from the previous school. However, it also goes on to state that failure to obtain transfer certificate will be no ground for denial or delay in admission of the children to the other school.

Section 18(1) of the Model Rules goes on to mention ''the State Government or the local authority, as the case may be, shall notify terms and conditions of service and salary and allowances of teachers in order to create a professional and permanent cadre of teachers'' but does not clearly state the salary and allowances to be paid.

Section 18(5) states that it is compulsory for the school to gain recognition within 3 years of the implementation of RTE Act. The schools which are not able to get recognition are liable for a one time penalty of Rs 1 lakh and Rs 10,000 per day fine.

Delhi Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2011

With regard to section 38 of the RTE the state government is authorized to make rules in the state in order to carry on the provisions of the act. Hence, the Delhi government came out with the Delhi State rules to be followed by in order to gain recognition.

[3] Kothari Commission first made the recommendation for a common school system in which admission will be on the basis of talent, no tuition fee will be charges and school will be open to all children, irrespective of caste, community, religion, economic conditions or social status. CSC Common School System of Public Education would include all government schools, all local authority schools and all aided private schools.

Withdrawal of Recognition of the schools:
Section 15 talks about the procedure for withdrawal of recognition. The schools which fail to comply with the norms and standards under rule 14 will cease to function.
"The order of withdrawal of recognition passed shall be operative from the immediately succeeding academic year and shall specify the neighbourhood schools to which the children of that school shall be admitted"

Appointment of teachers in recognized schools:
Section 17 Salary and allowances and conditions of service of teacher— "The Government or the local authority, as the case may be, shall notify terms and conditions of service and salary and allowances of teachers in order to create a professional and permanent cadre of teachers."

The Delhi School Education Act, 1973 (DSEA)

The RTE and the Delhi rules, 2011, both are vague with the regard to exact amount of salary to be paid to the teachers once a private school gains recognition. However, there is clear mention of a provision in the DSEA, 1973.
Section (10) Salaries of employees- (1) the scales of pay and allowances, medical facilities, pension, gratuity, provident fund and other prescribed benefits of the employees of a recognised private school shall not be less than those of the employees of the corresponding status in school run by the appropriate authority.

Each of the acts mentioned above form a close knit web of rules and clauses that make the process of recognition for private schools more and more cumbersome. The context in which they apply is elaborated in the analysis.

6. Analysis of Data

Deepalaya-Problems with Recognition

As mentioned above, Deepalaya operates 6 schools in India out of which 4 are located in Delhi and 3 of them closed due to the RTE norms. For the purpose of this research, two schools were visited.

Deepalaya School in Sanjay Colony: It started functioning in 1989 and since then has catered to the needs of the children of Sanjay Colony slum in the Okhla Industrial Area. In an interview with the NGO staff it was pointed out that there were particular norms the school was not able to comply with. The school has 23 rooms, a large open space, computer facilities, and a special unit for the therapy of differently abled, installed fire extinguishers and drinking water facilities and separate toilets. The land on which the building was built belonged to the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). The land was neither on rent nor on lease and was not owned by Deepalaya.

The school had applied for recognition but the proposal was disapproved on the grounds of inadequate space along with issues of salary and allowances of teachers. Even if the school did manage to gain recognition on the basis of infrastructure norms and standards it was not possible

for the school to pay 6th pay commission salary to its staff owing to the minimal fee charged from students (Girls- Rs 250 and boys-Rs 300). The DESA, 1973 makes it mandatory for the recognised private schools to pay salaries to its staff at par with the with government school.

Deepalaya School in Golekuan: This school failed to comply with the infrastructural norms of the RTE. The building is situated in the slums of Okhla industrial Area Phase I and there is no scope for expansion. The class size is much smaller than prescribed by the RTE, unlike the one in Sanjay Colony. The school voluntarily stopped functioning and did not apply for recognition.

All three schools have stopped functioning and have been transformed into tuition centres for the slum children in their respective area of operation. The Deepalaya schools have made an effort to enrol children into the tuition centres.

The contentious feature of the prevailing Delhi School Education Act is the requirement that all schools pay salaries in tune with government scales. Effectively it is unreasonable to demand the NGO run schools like Deepalaya, already functioning on a shoestring budget, to pay salaries in commensurate with government scales. It would not be fair to expect all schools to adopt the norm and in doing so, the tendency to obey only on paper but actually pay less to the teachers would continue[4]. NGO Schools will be financially starved if they are asked to pay the high salary to teaching staff that is at par with government schools. The financing of government schools is ill-designed and evidently focuses more on teacher related inputs. The state of infrastructure as indicated by various reports indicates the lack of attention on basic inputs and even teacher related inputs. In the face of these revelations it is unreasonable to demand NGO run schools to fulfil these norms with their limited financial resources.

Apart from these teacher-related inputs the next category is the infrastructural norms. That RTE does not specify land norms but the Master Plan 2021[5]gives land norms for granting recognition to primary schools under which every primary school is expected to possess 800 sq. metres of land. Such a clause is unrealistic and unattainable according to the Review Committee Report (2012). The conclusion holds true in the case of Deepalaya as the building of the school has no scope for expansion even in the future because of the clustered community in which it is built. Another key finding of the review committee was that in case land norms as specified in Master Plan 2021,800 sq. meters land for a primary school, are applied than a mere 16% would qualify for recognition. However, if Municipal Corporation Delhi (MCD) applies old land norms of 200 sq. meters then 61% of unrecognised schools would qualify for recognition.

There is an understanding in MCD that "recognition" cannot be given unless DDA's lands norms extracted below are met. DDA operates the Master Plan under the Delhi Development Authority Act, 1957 and the land requirements have been specified for those seeking land for setting up new schools. The Master Plan does not deal with schools that are running without recognition. DSEA,

[4]The Review Committee report on DSEA, 1973

[5]Introduced on 7 February 2007 prepared by the Delhi Development Authority to transform Delhi into a metropolis with variety of infrastructural changes and overhauling with sustainable development

1973 also does not mention land or space requirement. Thus the specific question of size of land for existence private schools seeking recognition is oscillating between the provisions of DDA and Master Plan.
Basic inputs such as adequate classrooms, assured drinking water, toilets, boundary walls, kitchens, electricity, and so on were still made available but the major concern for Deepalaya is the inability to pay the high salary.

6.2 Impact on Children and Parents:

Type A:

The focus group discussion with the parents of the children of Type A added a new perspective as they had experiences with Deepalaya as well as the MCD Schools. The level of education in the MCD Schools according to them was far below the standards of Deepalaya and hence they chose to continue sending their children in the tuition centres.

Admission in Government School

The issues they faced with MCD Schools were nuanced. The process of getting admission itself was not smooth; the authorities were not accommodative of the children coming out of Deepalaya schools and a negative bias was shown towards them. It was not easy to get admission in the month of April (beginning of the academic session)[6]. However, process was smoothened by June-July, as the authorities were under compulsion to give admission[7]. The next stage was their experience as a parent with the MCD Schools. The respondents illustrated various instances which convinced them of the inferior quality of government schools. The primary concern was the treatment of the child by teachers and other peers. They mentioned instances when the child was forced to sit on the floor and also poor learning, and lack of personal attention from the teachers. They were aware of the problem of teacher absenteeism in the schools. They stated that with the Deepalaya teachers they shared a different relationship wherein the interactions were more often and informal as their residence was around the school. The same was not true for government school teachers. A community understanding had developed between Deepalaya and the parents. They had faith in the quality of education but were forced to withdraw the children from the formal schooling system and instead maintain informal channels with Deepalaya in the form of tuition centres.

From the point of a pupil there were issues with the homework which was hardly assigned and classrooms were overcrowded in the MCD Schools. The children were apprehensive about patronising the mid-day meal offered in the MCD Schools due to instances of poisoning of food

[6] The focus group discussion did not include parents who did not try for admission in the MCD School. Cases were mentioned where the child never came back to Deepalaya for tuition and neither applied for admission in the government school. Reasons given were migration back to native place or vacation in the native place and have not returned till now.
[7] Every local authority shall provide free and compulsory education to every child-Section 9

and fear of falling ill. Thus, they often carried their own lunch from home. A comparison was drawn between the MCD Schools and Deepalaya where in the latter the choice of a short trip home for lunch was available. The benefit derived from this can be questioned, as the trip to home could be considered a potential break in the flow of the time to be spent in school and thus reduce the seriousness of attending school. However the parents and children considered it convenient.

Parental Preference

It could be assumed that while the parents had to pay a certain amount of fee in Deepalaya - Girls Rs 250 and Boys Rs 300- migration to MCD School has reduced financial burden, but it was not ratified by the narratives of these parents. This is due to the fact, the MCD Schools are required to give free uniform and textbooks but very often these items were not given in kind instead money was distributed on a later date. When inquired as to why they continued to pay the additional tuition fee in Deepalaya (same as pre-closure school fee) which was an added burden in spite of the free education guaranteed in the MCD Schools, the parents justified it on grounds of better teaching and quality education in Deepalaya. Private schools are meeting parents' needs and preferences in ways that government schools are unable to. Parental choice and disillusionment from government schools has caused private and non-formal providers to play a major role in educating the poor (Baird, 2009).

Certification and other Private Schools

The question of certification arises as Deepalaya is an unrecognised school, and parents wanted the education of their children to be certified and formal. The parents noted that even though they did not prefer MCD Schools they were forced to send the child to government school for certification**.** As a result the children attended two centres for education- MCD School and Deepalaya. The private recognised school was too expensive for these parents so that was not an option. The recognised School X charged Rs 500 as monthly fee and Rs 5000 at the time of registration. Another mechanism that surfaced was the one developed by Deeplaya, the child was allowed to continue in the tuition centre and later reaching class 6 he or she could be transferred to the only recognized school that Deepalaya is running in Kalkaji. Such survival techniques not only retained the children in Deepalaya but were encouraged by parents too. A few such cases were reported.

Medium of Instruction

English is used a medium of instruction by a majority of private schools and Deepalaya. One reason why private schooling is in demand is because parents want their children to be fluent in English. Majority of parents saw learning English as prerequisite of education in today's time. Career building and better opportunities were available to those who knew the language (Baird, 2009). One point of dissent of parents from government school was lack of English medium teaching. Parents did not wish to send their children to government schools because English was not taught there. To compensate for this they chose to send the children in the tuition centres to continue education in English.

Bridging the Gender Gap

Though private schools provide better facilities, it is said they have failed to bridge the gender divide and even contributed to widen it. In the case of NGOs, evidence from data collected shows that the tuition centres in Deepalaya were running separate batches for girls and boys but this was only to accommodate the different timing for girls and boys in government schools. The boys attended tuition in the morning and MCD School in the afternoon and girls, vice versa.

Attendance

Parents did not want to send their children to the MCD School as there was teacher absenteeism. This was not the case when it came to attending the tuition centres and children felt Deepalaya was more accommodating and welcoming and teachers were regular. Some parents were not interested in sending the child to the government school regularly once the admission process was completed. But they failed to exercise this option as the child was penalised for short attendance - Rs 5 to Rs 10 was charged. This information cannot be relied on as substantial prove of such activities was not obtained. Nonetheless it underlines the orientation of the parents against the MCD School. It can be said that parents judged quality of education in schools also on the basis of regularity of teaching staff.

Type B:

A door to door survey was carried out to locate the parents and responses were obtained and interpreted to study the impact of Deepalaya closure

Where to go?

The respondents like Type A sought admission in the MCD School and faced difficulty and harassment. The post-closure scenario was such that these parents did not have an option to send their children in the school they thought was good. As was evident from the educational aspirations they discussed, they were willing to continue educating the children. However their only condition was quality education. They did not have an option to patronise the private recognised school so they turned to government schools. Interestingly preference played a role even in the choice of government school. To illustrate, the parents chose not to send the children to the closest government school in neighbourhood but the school they thought was better off. If the number of seats in the desired government school X are limited then a certain section of the children ended up without a seat in any school. This category can be called ''no-where[8]'' children. The parents oscillated between their first, second and third preference of government schools and this fixation was based on perceptions floating around the slum that one particular government school was better than the others. In case the admission was not obtained in the desired school they generally gave up on trying to seek admission in the government schools and the number of out-of-school

[8] (Dipa Mukherjee, 2011) defines ''No-where Children'' as the ones who neither have the economic condition to carry on their education nor have sufficient employment opportunities. For the purpose of this paper the phrase is interpreted differently.

children increased. The process becomes more complicated because most of the parents are daily wage earners and cannot afford to run around during the day from school to school, leaving work.

This is not to suggest that the respondents were too convinced about the quality of government schools. The counter to this preference pattern for government schools was the finding which indicated an ever persisting preference for private schools-for boys. Certain household were willing to spend a substantial amount of their family income for educating the boys in private schools but the same was not in the case of girls. Concomitantly, it is not saying that girl education was absent. The parents chose to send girls to government schools where elementary education was free but went an extra mile to educate the boys in an expensive school. Out of the households interviewed large number of them consisted of girls who were out-of-school because seeking admission in government schools was cumbersome, often taking as long as six months. It is safe to say that closure of Deepalaya has not just impacted children in terms of enrolment and education but also deepened the gender divide.

The paper does not go on to generalize that Deepalaya solved the issue of gender gap, it can be deduced that because Deeplaya did not charge the high fee payable in other recognised private schools, parents were comfortable with spending the same amount on both girls and boys. Private schools will remain in demand only if they charge low fee so the poorest strata can afford them. (Braid, 2011). NGO schools will only remain a preference if they continue to charge fee lesser than private schools.

Is Education Really Free?

Certain households sent their children in a government school X which was not the closest neighbourhood school. The household spent 10% of the family income on transport of the children; they paid no fee for schooling but still ended up spending substantial amount of their income on additional expenses such as transport. Tooley argues that low-income families are willing to spend a huge portion on education in private schools. The question arises as to why do they spent more even when the children all enrolled in a government school. From this contradiction it can be inferred that parents continue to spend an extra amount irrespective of the kind of school the children attend. Preferences of parents play a role not only in the choice of private schools but also government schools.

Certain other issues were common between the experiences of type A and type B. Both faced delay in admission for non-availability of transfer certificates and difficulty in adjusting to non-English medium curriculum in government schools. Another point of similarity was in the perception of education as a means to outgrow their current socio-economic background. Among these the most important factor is the growing aspiration of parents to provide education which would ultimately lead to career options for their children marked by a preference for professional courses followed by government jobs. Parents have also understood that the pursuit of academic excellence in terms of examination results alone would not lead to the best career options for their children unless there the all-round development of the child through extracurricular activities and

personality building is also given importance. It is the belief of most parents that these aspirations can be met only by private unaided schools and therefore the rush to gain admissions. In municipal schools the students after completing class V get automatically transferred to Delhi Schools. In the case of private schools the tendency is to stay rooted to the same school. This hope was eroded by the closure of Deepalaya run schools.

7. Policy Recommendations

To facilitate drawing up recommendations for corrective measures, the major findings can be clubbed together under suggestions for easing of stringent norms, de-entangling the complex uncertainty around the rules and laws operational in Delhi governing the schools and making case specific modifications to reinstate the impacted children. Based on the data collected and its analysis it can be said that NGO run schools are a special category in the education sector. Their activities and mode of operation is different from government as well as private schools. Recommendations are made keeping in mind the impact the closure has had on the parents and children

- Albeit the study does not question the importance of infrastructural norms envisaged in the RTE, the recognition norms should be weighted and aim should be to balance the inputs and the past record of learning outcome and performance of the school. Recognition norms should include a clause that considers the past result and student learning outcome.
- Efforts should be made by the government to integrate the better performing NGO run schools into the education system and provide financial assistance where necessary. In the cases where closure is inevitable and sufficient evidence proves that the school does not meet basic security and infrastructural norms the authorities should be mandated to locate the children out of the school. Proper reinstatement should be carried out in a timely fashion. Mapping of unrecognised along with a categorization of the children coming out of the closed schools should be done by the authorities and inspectors of recognition norms.
- Remove requirement for transfer certificates:
  The authorities should make a clear distinction between children seeking admission as a result of transfer from one government or recognised school to government schools and the children who seek distress admission in the face of these closures. Relaxation should be given in terms of the transfer certificates.
- Recognising that the private sector is not just represented by profit making entities but that it also has a substantial number of non-governmental and non-profit making players that effectively contribute to innovate and design new forms of learning. These NGOs significantly contribute towards making education more readily available to the poorest sections of the society. The model of *Gyanshala* adopted by Gujarat government can be followed and effective innovative models developed by these NGOs can be adopted by the

government schools on a large scale. It would prove beneficial for both, the NGOs as well as the government schools who do not enjoy much credibility among the parents of even the economically most disadvantaged. This is not saying that NGO run schools should be given exemptions from all the norms and standards under RTE, but only if the potential of the NGOs actually doing good work could be recognised and they could be given aid by the government to meet the specific criteria that they are unable to comply with. As in the case of Deepalaya, it can be deduced that the school is kept in high opinion by its patrons. It was reflected in the retention figure of the tuition centres. Innovative and social initiatives for more inclusive education such FADA can be learnt from. The government schools can learn from social and inclusive initiatives of NGOs.

- Teacher salary clause in the DSEA, 1973 was a major issue for NGO run schools. The teachers in Deepalaya have been better accepted by the community and have cultivated its reputation as a centre for learning. It is unreasonable to demand the NGO to hike the salaries as that would cause the fees to be inflated. Their objective of catering to the poorest sections will be defeated. A new model of contractual teaching could be developed in which the process of recognition would include a teacher competence test for the teachers that the school wants to retain rather than relying on conventional degrees. The school should be given the autonomy to decide the remuneration for its staff. In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the government orders prescribe that 50% of the fees collected from students would go towards teachers' salaries. That may not work in a place like Delhi but it highlights the fact that salaries need to have some relationship to the fees charged. The Review Committee has addressed this issue by suggesting that the requirement to adopt government scales may be done away with but in no case should the salaries be less than what is paid to contractual teachers engaged by the Delhi Government. However this would not imply that all teachers would be contractual and their security of tenure would need to be assured.
- As revealed in the paper even the preference shown to government schools was not uniform. This underlines the failure to standardise the government schools. The government schools should also be brought under the purview of the RTE norms. .
- The application of the Master Plan 2021 should be confined to the new schools but the existing primary schools should be assessed in accordance with the RTE requirements--with modifications. The area prescribed for a school building is not stated--this figure should be decided by case by case inspection. However, this extensive inspection must be premised on the school assuring a high quality of education and catering to a vulnerable section of the society.

7. Conclusion

The idea behind emphasizing on recognition norms and setting standards of infrastructure and basic facilities were to ensure that the substandard, poorly functional and exploitative private schools were brought under the ambit of the government. The government realised it was high time India came out with an act that not only ensured education for all but right education through right means. What the act failed to visualise was that these generalizations were not true for all educational institutions. The RTE makes a distinction between a formal school for the general public and a minority school; it would do well to make a separate category of schools serving the needs of the economically most disadvantaged.

The large swathes of urban slums are growing day by day with migrants adding to these ever expanding clusters. The problems of urban slums are complex--struggle for livelihood, basic amenities and health issues. In this scenario, education is seen as a 'way out' and the choice of school is carefully exercised even by the slum populations. The response pattern reflected an alertness and consciousness about the importance of education. The capability to decide which education is right and what is essential for education is not exclusively found in the well off. The condition in which these slums are breeding and the lack of infrastructure and housing has caused them to value quality education more than a school building. When we compare the achievement results of unrecognised schools with that of government schools it is clear that with small and inadequate infrastructure, less financial resources and untrained teachers with low salaries, children of unrecognised schools are performing better especially in mathematics than those of the Government schools (Chugh, 2003). The fact that these parents continue to send their children to tuition centres proves that their idea of learning is not restricted to mere enrolment and ceremony. The RTE has failed to tap in on this consciousness by overemphasizing on inputs. This input centric approach has overlooked the genuine work of NGO run schools and, more importantly, outright closures have severely affected the poor urban population. No effort has been made by authorities to formally reinstate these children in formal schools; just an assumption that existing schools can accommodate these children.

This paper discussed the impact of the closure of NGO Schools and the analysis revealed specific aspects in which the impact was noticeable, namely financial, social, changes in school environment and after effect of closure on parents. The paper concludes with recommendations to address the incongruous provisions of the various acts in education for Delhi. It enlists the tasks to be performed by the government with regard to the children out-of-school due to closure of unrecognised schools and the special provisions to be put in place.

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