Inclusive Primary Education: A Means to Social Inclusion?

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ABSTRACT

Social stratification in the society translates into inequality in education, and removing inequality in education might lead to equality in the society. This paper assesses the importance of social inclusion in the primary education system of India. It attempts to document the policies and practices which can be adopted to improve primary education in India, with emphasis on quality which is inclusive of social inclusion. It looks at challenges faced by children from economically weaker sections and socially marginalised communities (SCs and STs) in a primary school classroom. Recommendations, drawn from international best practices, have been made at the level of policy formulation and in terms of practices which can be adopted by individual schools. The paper recommends assessing the quality of the education system by measuring the level of inclusiveness.

INTRODUCTION

From a legislative perspective, social inclusion of marginalised sections of the society is the aim of a multitude of policies across the world. The heterogeneity of the Indian society has made 'inclusivity' a permanent fixture on the checklist of the Indian policy makers. Social Inclusion is a concept which is not alien to the Indian context. India has a long history of socially marginalised communities such as the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, women and people from economically weaker sections- being constantly excluded from the society. The schooling system is a reflection of the inclusiveness of a society, which in turn is a reflection of the schooling system. History of education system in India and abroad is a testament to this perpetual cycle of inequality.

As per the situation described above, this paper attempts to answer the following questions:

- How can an inclusive primary education system help in making the society more inclusive?
- What are the obstacles to social inclusion of children from socially backward and economically weaker sections in the primary education system of the country?
- What are the practices being adopted by foreign countries in schools abroad to increase the level of inclusion in their education system?
- How can these International best practices be used in the Indian context?

The author hypothesises that a quality primary education system accessible to all sections of the society plays an instrumental role in removing inequalities in the society. This means that an inclusive primary education system sets a level playing field for all children. Primary education is the first level of education, providing everyone with the same opportunities which they can access at a primary stage negates the need for aid at a later stage. This essentially leads to a socially inclusive society.

Education is a potent tool in achieving a plethora of societal aims, including equalising opportunity. It is an institution that can make an impact on a sub-conscious level, which is essential in removing the deep rooted prejudices in the minds of people.

SOCIAL INCLUSION – Definition

'Social Inclusion' is a multifaceted idea. The paper will talk about the following aspects of social inclusion:

Equal opportunity

Everybody should have the resources available to become competent to avail a particular opportunity, irrespective of their social, cultural or economic background. From the perspective of a classroom, all children should have access to quality education as per their needs. All children should have option of enrolling in a school of their choice irrespective of their

background. The concept of equality of opportunity is not limited to universal access, but is also contingent on providing all the children with the aid they need to realise their true potential.

Equal say in the decision making process

Every member of the society should have an equal right to voice their opinion. Often a member of a society might be constrained by the lack of resources which translates into inability to affect changes in the system. The difference in the aspirations of the members should not be due to lack of resources that emanate from discriminatory practices. In a classroom, views of every child should be given equal importance.

Primary Education

According to Amartya Sen, the capabilities "that adults enjoy are deeply conditional on their experiences as children"(Sen 1999). Primary school classrooms and early childcare centres are the places where children first establish contact with the world. The minds of children at this stage are still in the formatives stages. At such a young age, they do not have an understanding of the complex social structure, and can be conditioned to disregard the discriminatory practices that have resulted in a skewed social structure.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development talks about 6 stages of development of morality in a person. Three stages apply to children from 6-14 years of age, stage 1 and 2 under Pre-Conventional Learning and stage 3 under Conventional.

Stage 1
- **Obedience and punishment orientation**
- In this stage the child accepts what his/her parents/ teachers (authority) tells them to do, in order to avoid punishment. Their sense of right and wrong are influenced by what their parents/teachers tell them is right.

Stage 2
- **Egocentric- what is in it for me?**
- Children try to find out the benefits accruing to them out of an exchange

Stage 3
- **Interpersonal relationships- good/boy girl**
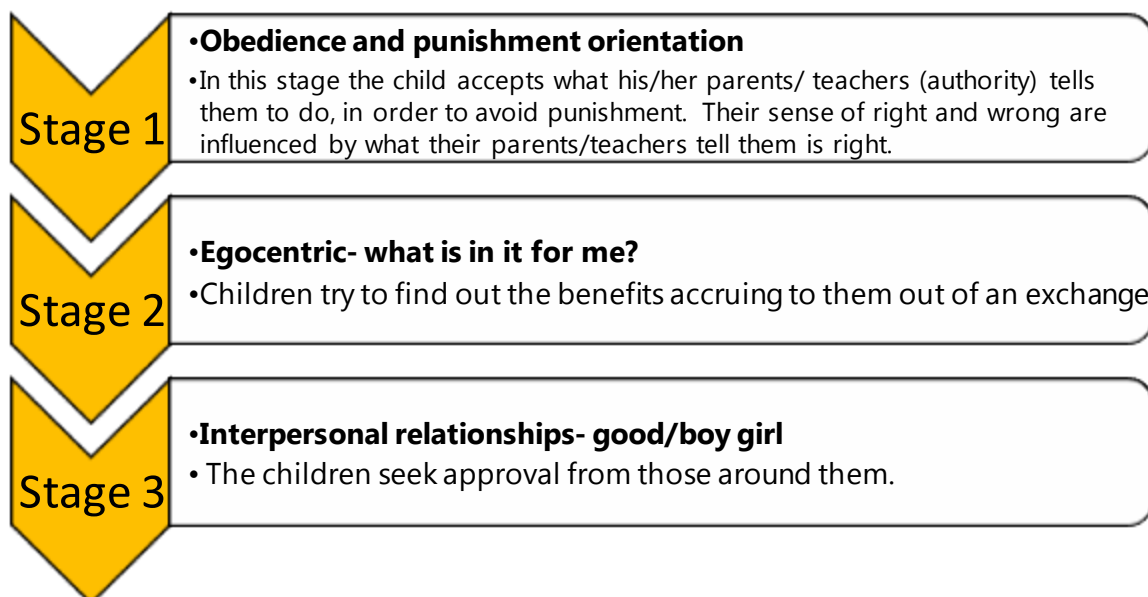- The children seek approval from those around them.

FIGURE 1: KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT
SOURCE: (FLEMING 2005)

Looking at the stages of moral development and juxtaposing it to the concept of inclusion, the author observes that the child can develop a sense of accepting diversity in the classroom, if the following practices are adopted by the school and parents during this crucial period of development:

Stage 1: As the child does exactly as told, the teachers can instill the belief of equality in the child. The children can be made to understand that disrespecting others or discriminating against a particular child because he or she is a little 'different' from them is wrong.

Stage 2: During this stage, teachers and parents can incentivise (appreciation-either verbal or through extra credit) inclusive behavior in the child.

Stage 3: As the children seek approval from those around them for their actions, it is important to make sure that they get the necessary encouragement for good practices such as trying to include everyone in games etc. It is also imperative to ensure that the approval comes from their peer group, as it is the peers' response which affects the child the most.

Promoting such a behavior in children at an early age sets the stage for lifelong learning, with the children internalising such values in their adolescence.

A primary or pre-primary education system that is built on the idea of social inclusion would ensure that every child has the opportunity to build a set of skills that would augment their capability to engage in economic activities, among other things, of their choice. No child would then be at a disadvantaged position on account of their social, cultural or economic background. The gaps in learning achievements at an elementary level lead to gaps in achievements in the long run in terms of the type of employment or the position in the occupational structure they attain; such processes endanger the cohesiveness of a society. Secondary education increases the future wages of girls by 18% and that of boys by 14% (Levine et al 2009). However, in order to enjoy the benefits of secondary education, a child has to pass the elementary level. Thus, elementary education has a 'domino effect' on the future achievements of the child.

METHODOLOGY

The paper primarily uses secondary sources of data and the case study method, using multiple cases. Challenges faced by students and teachers in creating a socially inclusive classroom were identified using the extensive literature available on the subject. Secondary data regarding learning achievement levels and other indicators were sourced from government websites and websites of non-governmental organisations.

The case study method was employed to document the international best practices. The data was sourced from respective government sites and United Nations reports. The case studies were selected on the basis of relevance from the perspective of India and the challenges faced by the system here. The effectiveness of each practice was assessed by looking at the objective of the programme and the end result. Analysis of the practices documented was done so as to use these in the Indian context.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: TWO APPROACHES

Inclusive education is the process of eliminating exclusion on the basis of social, economic and cultural background of the child in schools and other centres of learning. It is an indispensable tool to achieve social equity (UNESCO 2009).

Governments all across the globe adopt two sets of policies to increase access to education to all members of the society. One approach is to allot extra resources to low-income public schools[1] which cater to children from poor households, alternate schools for out of school children and other non-formal educational set-ups. The second approach is to make schools accessed by children from affluent households accessible to children from the marginalised sections. The author recommends the adoption of the second approach.

Improve schools which cater to children from socially/ economically disadvantaged backgrounds

Integration of children from socially/economically disadvantaged families with children from other backgrounds
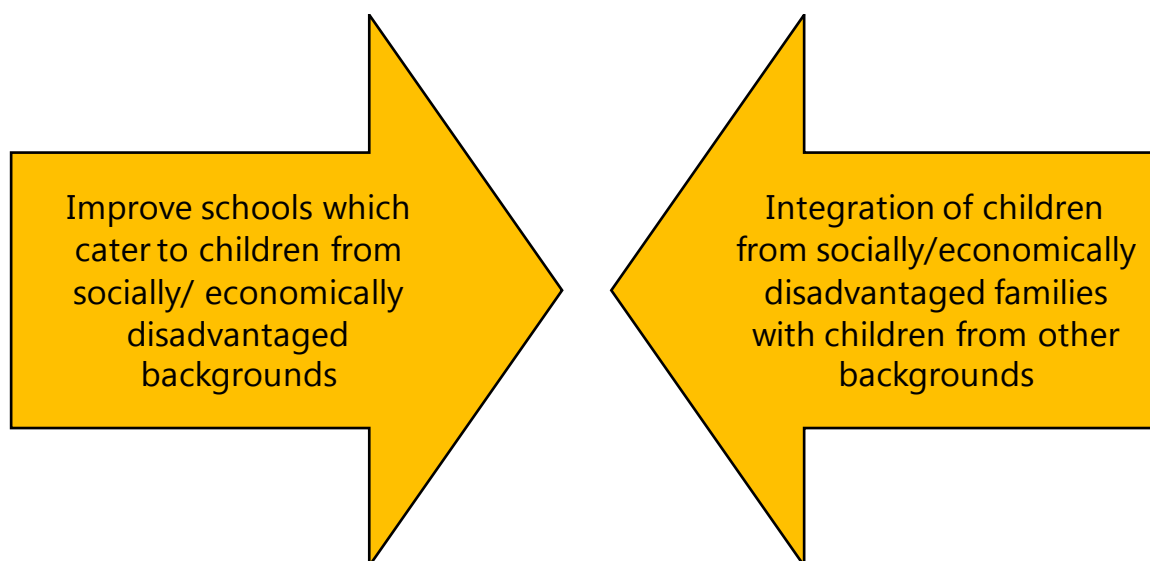
FIGURE 2 APPROACHES TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

A. Improve schools which cater to children from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds

In India, the Government schools majorly cater to children from disadvantaged groups. SCs and STs had a total enrolment of 37.6% and 35.29% in government run primary and upper primary schools in 2012-13 (DISE 2012-13). There is hence a need to ensure that these schools are equipped to provide education of standards equivalent to private schools in the country. This is however a long term policy which the governments should adopt. In the short run, with government schools failing to meet standards, there

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[1] In India, extra resources (monetary and non-monetary) are allotted to government schools. Foreign countries such as the US allot these resources to low-income public schools.

is a need to increase access to private schools to children from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure equitable access to quality education.

B. Integration of children from socially/economically disadvantaged families with children from other backgrounds

The drop out rate is the highest amongst SCs and STs which indicates the failure of government schools to retain children. With the ASER 2013 projecting 50% of Indian children attending private schools by 2018, and private school students performing 20 % better on basic literacy and numeracy skills, it is imperative to make the private schools more accessible to children from all sections of the society (Indus Action n.d.).

Section 12 (1) (c) of the Right to Education Act, 2009 aims to attain the goal of inclusive education through this approach. The provision mandates reservation of 25% seats in class 1 in private unaided and special category schools in the neighbourhood, for the children from economically weaker sections and socially backward groups; if a school provides pre-school education, then the rule applies to the pre-school section of the school.

However, this provision generated a severe backlash from various groups such as the principals and teachers of private schools on grounds of lack of proper implementation, improper financial re-imbursement and other socio-psychological reasons. Though the first two objections hold merit, it is the third objection that is not wholly justified.

The principals of private schools say that the quality of their schools gets diluted and that there is an unbridgeable social division between the kids from EWS families and fee-paying children. The principals are of the view that an alternate schooling system where children from disadvantaged backgrounds study in the same school premises in a different shift would be better than integration of such children with the fee-paying children (Mallica 2005).

This concern of school principals was unfounded as per Gaurav Rao's study of 20% freeships in Delhi schools prior to RTE, 2009[2] (Rao 2013). The study found that presence of classmates from poor households increased the prosocial behavior in wealthy students, with the wealthy students being increasingly involved in charities. Also, the wealthy students started interacting with the children, studying under the freeships, outside the school and indulged in less taste-based discrimination. There was no effect on learning achievements of the wealthy students in Hindi and Mathematics, a little negative impact was observed in English only.

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[2] Private schools in Delhi who had received concessions on land rates were supposed to introduce a quota of 10-20% in their nursery/class1 admissions for children from disadvantaged backgrounds

An observation of schools abroad shows that integration of children from different backgrounds has a positive impact on the performance of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Finland, which is considered to have one of the best education systems, had the lowest socio-economic segregation according to PISA scores(Kahlenberg 2012).

Case Study: Comparison of the two approaches applied to elementary schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, USA

Montgomery County is a suburb in Washington DC, USA which is inhabited by a heterogeneous population. Though the majority of the population is affluent, there is a presence of low-income households. The County follows a public housing-policy wherein a share of houses is allotted to low-income households in affluent neighbourhoods. The County has also divided its schools into two zones:

Green Zone	Red Zone
Affluent schools	Low-income schools

Half the children from low-income households attended schools under the green zone and the other half attended red zone schools. The red zone schools were given up to $2000 per child to improve the infrastructure of these schools. The following were the results:
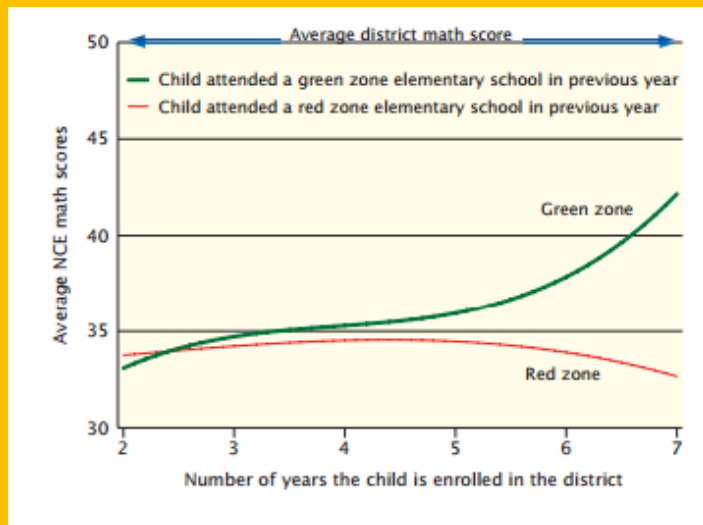

FIGURE 3 EFFECT OF RED ZONE/GREEN ZONE DESIGNATION ON MATH PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC HOUSING

Source: (Schwartz 2010)

Case Study: Continued
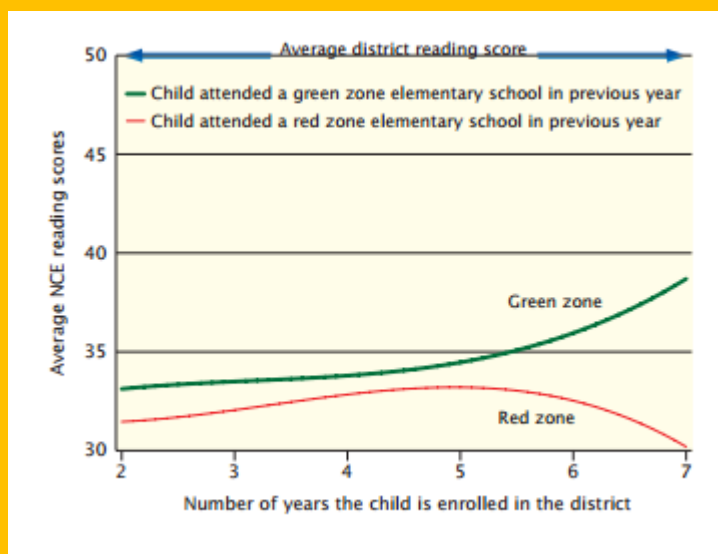
FIGURE 4 EFFECT OF RED ZONE/GREEN ZONE DESIGNATION ON READING PERFORMANCE OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC HOUSING

SOURCE: (SCHWARTZ 2010)

The following results were recorded:
- Children from low-income households who attended green zone schools performed consistently better than those who attended red zone schools.
- The achievement gap between children from low-income households who attended green zone schools and non-poor students was cut by half (mathematics) and one-third (reading).

Positive peer models, active participation from parents and better teachers in green zone schools maybe the reasons for the bridging of this achievement gap.

Effect on children from middle-income households: The scores of children from middle-income households did not deteriorate as long as the school had a majority of students from middle-income households.

Source: (Kahlenberg 2012) , (Schwartz 2010)

BOX 1: COMPARISON OF THE TWO APPROACHES APPLIED TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND, USA

It can be concluded from the case study that the improvement in learning achievements of students from poor households going to low-income schools, in comparison to students from poor households going to middle-income schools, consistently lagged behind the latter.

Extrapolating to the Indian scenario, children from economically weaker sections and socially disadvantaged groups mainly have access to government schools which do not have representation of children from advantaged groups. Even they suffer from the same fate in terms of wide gaps in learning achievements as that of low-income students attending low-income schools in the US.

Another advantage of inclusive education is the constant pressure from affluent parents to maintain a particular standard of education. The school authorities are more likely to listen to them and hence children from low-income families and disadvantaged group will benefit greatly too.

POLICIES IN EDUCATION- PAST AND PRESENT

Brief history of Education- from the perspective of social and economic hierarchy

Indigenous system and its transition under British Rule

William Adam's report on Indigenous education system in West Bengal and Bihar had a caste-wise record of children in 190 Sanskrit schools in Bihar. It reported the following:

In 190 Sanskrit schools there are 1,358 students, averaging 7.1 to each school. Of the total number 590 are natives of the villages in which the schools are situated and 768 natives of other villages. They are thus distributed in respect of caste:

Brahmans	1296	Daivajnas	11
Vaidyas	45	Vaishnavas	6

(Naik and Nururllah 1943, 15)

What is interesting is that all the four castes reported were the so-called high castes. Presence of other communities was nil. This shows the level of marginalisation of other communities which are now known as 'Scheduled Castes, Tribes and Other backward Classes'- an example of exclusion in society translating into exclusion in the education system.

Informal education was an integral part of the indigenous education system. Under this, the father used to verbally transfer his knowledge to his son (Naik and Nururllah 1943, 28).This practice further deprived the children from marginalised sections because even their parents were illiterate due to the social exclusion during their time. This vicious cycle of exclusion has continued till date. First generation learners' parents not being able to contribute to their children's education is a major reservation that principals of private schools have against inclusion of such children in mainstream education (Sarin and Gupta 2013). Therefore, education being an important link in the cycle, is the reason why it is the key to breaking this perpetual cycle of marginalisation.

Another practice prevalent during that time was hiring of scholars by affluent families. Often, if a family could itself not afford to remunerate the teachers, then the community hired a common master. However, communities of extremely low-income groups such as SCs/STs and OBCs would not have been able to manage even this. Also, scholars themselves would have been hesitant in teaching in such areas (Naik and Nururllah 1943, 25).

The indigenous system of education adopted a cost-effective practice of peer learning. Under this advanced learners would first teach the learners with low-academic achievements; the teacher would teach only when all the learners are at par. (Naik and Nururllah 1943, 25) This is an innovative method of teaching which can be practiced in the modern day world.

Education system under the British still remained accessible only to the elite (Rhines, Muralidharan and Ruzzi 2005). The British took the responsibility of the Indian education system in the Charter Act of 1813 by promising an annual grant of one lac rupees to develop the system of education in India. However, their aim to 'improve the education of the learned natives' ensured the Depressed Classes would remain deprived of educational opportunities (Naik and Nururllah 1943).

Acts (such as the Charter Act of 1833) were enacted to reduce this segregation at occupational level by entailing no discrimination on the basis of caste or creed for jobs, however, with appointments being made on the basis of educational qualifications, members of the Depressed Classes were at a disadvantage because of lack of access to formal education.

Almost a century later, it was BR Ambedkar, who in his Statement in Education of the Depressed Classes in the Bombay Presidency on 29 May 1928, said:
"It is useless to make provision for higher education of the Depressed Classes unless steps are taken to ensure the growth of Primary Education"
(Kumar & Thorat ed. 2009)

CASE STUDY: Perpetuation of hierarchy in society through education in the US

The history of education in America exemplifies how social structure translates into inequality in the schooling system. In colonial America, irrespective of your status in the society, every person enjoyed a degree of autonomy in the type of education he wanted to pursue. Skills were passed onto the next generations through informal instruction.

The advent of capitalism, however, saw the rise of mass education in terms of formal schooling. A school was perceived to be the place for socialisation. Proponents of this structure believed that a school is an institution where qualities like that of patience, punctuality and discipline can be fostered. They thought that the social relations prevalent in the society would be replicated in schools which would ease the process of making the children adapt to the social division of labour and make them think of the government as 'benevolent'. The elementary school education system in Massuchusetts, which originated in the nineteenth century, was built to coerce the non-Yankee workers into accepting the social structure.

Also, it was believed that a schooling system which was open to all would lead to the belief that the position of a person in the society is not by virtue of birth but their talents and efforts. This belief however was not in practice. The rapid expansion of schooling was accompanied with a growth in stratification inherent in the education system. Children from affluent families attended private schools. With children from the working class dropping out early, the transition from primary to high school saw an increase in representation of the elite. University education was accessible only to the elite.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a common curriculum gave way to curriculum on the basis of the social class background of the child. This class stratification in schools lead to division of labour in the society. What was different from the initial hierarchal structure was the absence of direct inheritance of an occupation. This however did not stop social hierarchal structure from seeping into the education system of the country. Higher the occupational position of the parent, greater the number of years of schooling received by the child:
"Even among those who graduated from high school, children of families earning less than $3,000 per year were six times as likely not to attend college as were the children of families earning over $15,000"

Source: (Bowles 1977)

BOX 2 PERPETUATION OF HIERARCHY IN SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATION IN THE US

This brief discussion of the indigenous education system in India and the structure in the US highlights how social class segregation and inequality have been intrinsic to the education system. With the family's stature and position in the family determining the type of education the offspring would receive, this segregation in the educational system created a similar inequality in the society. Also, as the type of education received determined the type of job a person got, it was essential to break this cycle of segregation from one generation to the next, by equalising the access to education.

Present Scenario

96% children are in schools according to ASER 2013 (Pratham 2013). The following is a timeline of the measures taken by successive governments to achieve the aim of universal access to elementary education in India:
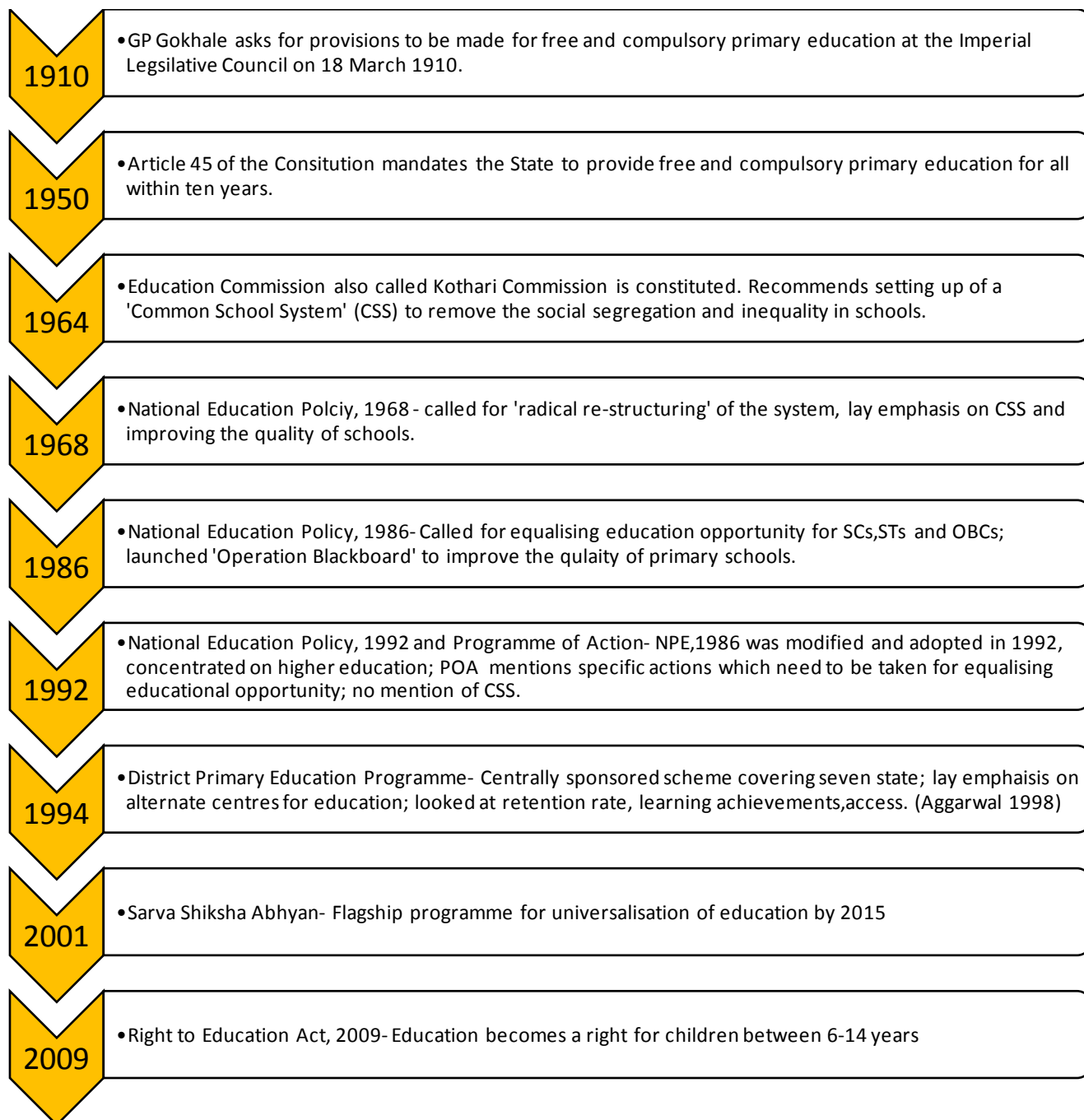
1910 • GP Gokhale asks for provisions to be made for free and compulsory primary education at the Imperial Legsilative Council on 18 March 1910.

1950 • Article 45 of the Consitution mandates the State to provide free and compulsory primary education for all within ten years.

1964 • Education Commission also called Kothari Commission is constituted. Recommends setting up of a 'Common School System' (CSS) to remove the social segregation and inequality in schools.

1968 • National Education Polciy, 1968 - called for 'radical re-structuring' of the system, lay emphasis on CSS and improving the quality of schools.

1986 • National Education Policy, 1986- Called for equalising education opportunity for SCs,STs and OBCs; launched 'Operation Blackboard' to improve the qulaity of primary schools.

1992 • National Education Policy, 1992 and Programme of Action- NPE,1986 was modified and adopted in 1992, concentrated on higher education; POA mentions specific actions which need to be taken for equalising educational opportunity; no mention of CSS.

1994 • District Primary Education Programme- Centrally sponsored scheme covering seven state; lay emphaisis on alternate centres for education; looked at retention rate, learning achievements,access. (Aggarwal 1998)

2001 • Sarva Shiksha Abhyan- Flagship programme for universalisation of education by 2015

2009 • Right to Education Act, 2009- Education becomes a right for children between 6-14 years

Figure 5: Steps taken for Universal Elementary Education in India

The Right to Education, 2009 (RTE, 2009) is the latest addition to the policies enacted to provide universal access to education. It was enacted with the aim of providing equal opportunities of education as a right, and hence, merits an analysis.

Analysis of RTE, 2009 from the angle of social inclusion

RTE, 2009 was legislated with the aim of providing universal access to education. However, provisions in the RTE aim at enrolment, and not at creating a socially inclusive classroom atmosphere. Enrolment rate is not a comprehensive measure of social inclusion. RTE ensues from Right to Life which guarantees dignity of life. So, it is imperative that the quality of education provided ensures dignity of life. It is thus the responsibility of every school to ensure that the environment in their school is socially cohesive.

The following table an analysis of a few provisions under RTE, which the author of the paper feels, need further discussion. It documents what the state currently settles for and what it should strive for in its struggle for universal access of education.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009		
PROVISION	Entails	Missing/ Correction Proposition
Section 8	The definition of compulsory education entails that no child from the weaker or disadvantaged groups would be discriminated against, elementary education is of good quality and teachers are trained.	The Act fails to define 'good quality' of education. Quality should measure inclusiveness. The mechanism in place to keep a check on discrimination in classrooms is not thoroughly defined. The responsibility has been simply shifted to School Management Committees with no clear guidelines on how to keep a check.
Section 16	No retention policy	No retention policy gives a false impression of the learning levels of a child. Though, retention has a negative impact on the child; passing without gaining skills is equally detrimental. It should be made mandatory to keep a record of children

		who display low levels of learning, in addition to making it compulsory for schools to provide such children with supplementary classes.
Section 17	No child shall be subjected to mental or physical harassment	No mechanism to keep a check on such practices. A child psychologist should assess the anxiety levels of children in classrooms on regular basis, as part of various surveys that are conducted.
Section 28	No teacher shall engage himself in private tuition	No record of teachers giving private tuitions; although the practice is rampant. If the teacher does give private tuitions and also teaches the same children in school then a personal bias towards those children who attend tuitions will be developed; this will lead to exclusion of children from low-income families who cannot afford private tuitions.
Section 29 (2)	Guidelines on how to set the curriculum	Private schools often follow their own curriculum in elementary classes. Such a curriculum may not be representative of all groups, especially the disadvantaged.
The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Rules, 2010		
Section 3 (1,2 and 6 f)	A School Management Committee to be constituted which would have 75% of representatives from amongst parents or guardians of children. This committee is supposed to bring to the notice of	There are no guidelines as to how the SMC should monitor the activities in a classroom. Private schools have their own Boards with parent representatives. Parents of children who take admission under the 25% quota should

	authority any incidence of violation of rights of the child, in particular mental and physical harassment of children	also be given a chance to be parent representatives.
Section 5 (1) (2)	Special training should be provided by teachers in school premises for a minimum of 3 months and maximum of two years; children to be identified by SMC. After this children should get special attention from teachers	No mechanism mentioned to monitor the special training programmes in individual schools- if they are taking place or not and their effectiveness.
Section 11(2)	The child shall not be discriminated from the rest of the children in any manner pertaining to entitlements and facilities such as text books, uniforms, library and ICT facilities, extra-curricular and sports.	Special equipments are required to participate in activities in private schools which are not covered under the re-imbursement formula.

TABLE1 : RTE HITS AND MISSES

For the RTE to actually affect change from the perspective of social inclusion, the author recommends appropriate modifications and specifications in the sections mentioned to guard against the loopholes highlighted.
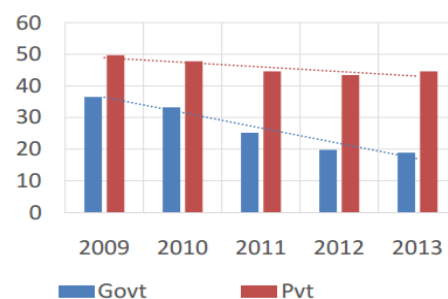
The current trends- Statistics:

To understand the effects of the policies enacted, it is necessary to understand what is actually happening in the country. The author through this section highlights the gradual trends in the spectrum of education in the country. Enrolment rates in India have been steadily increasing. The Government of India has thus far been successful in providing access to education. However, access to quality education is a distant dream.

The following statistics are an indictment of the failure of government schools in providing quality education:

- Reading levels of children (grade 3) enrolled in government schools have fallen from 43.8% in 2009 to 32.6% in 2013. Reading levels of children attending private schools in rural areas have increased marginally from 58.2% to 59.6% in the same period (Pratham 2013).

- Children enrolled in grade 3 in government schools have been performing worse than those in private schools. Though, there has been a decline in percentage of children who can do subtraction in both, the decline in government schools is starker than in private schools. This has led to wider achievement gap in the two sets of children(Pratham 2013).

FIGURE 6 % CHILDREN IN STD III WHO CAN AT LEAST DO SUBTRACTION

- 9 out of 13 states (with SC population above national average of 16.63%) have SC students performing worse than the rest in Language, while 6 states perform worse in Mathematics. While 9 out of 18 states (with ST population above national average of 8.61%) have ST students performing worse than the rest in Language, while 10 states perform worse in Mathematics (NCERT 2014).

- Enrolment in government primary schools has decreased from 64.17% (2012-13) to 62.77 % (2013-14), whereas enrolment in private unaided primary schools has increased from 27.48% (2012-13) to 28.95% (2013-14) (DISE 2013-14). This shows that more people are now opting for private schools instead of government schools.

The statistics highlight that the government schools are failing in providing quality education to children, as a result of which more children are opting for private schools. However, children especially from poor households and marginalised sections do not have access to these schools. It is therefore necessary to make private schools within the reach of such children. If this does not happen and the government schools still fail to attract equal representation from various groups, including the affluent, we will continue to witness a socio-economic segregation in private and government schools.

CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

It can be concluded from the discussion in the previous two sections that there is both a need and a demand for private schools to be accessible to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The need arises from the requirement of diverse classrooms and the demand arises from the failing standards of government schools and the RTE stipulating 25% seats in private schools for children from economically weaker sections and other disadvantaged groups. It is hence imperative that the classroom is void of any form of hostility, stress or anxiety (Deshkal Society 2010). The task is to identify the problems these children might face in private schools and introduce the reforms needed to make these classrooms more inclusive.

The following challenges have been identified after a literature review of papers (Sarin and Gupta 2013); (Mallica 2005), which have documented the problems faced by students from socially marginalized and economically weaker sections while entering private schools, also solutions inspired from International best practices have been proposed.
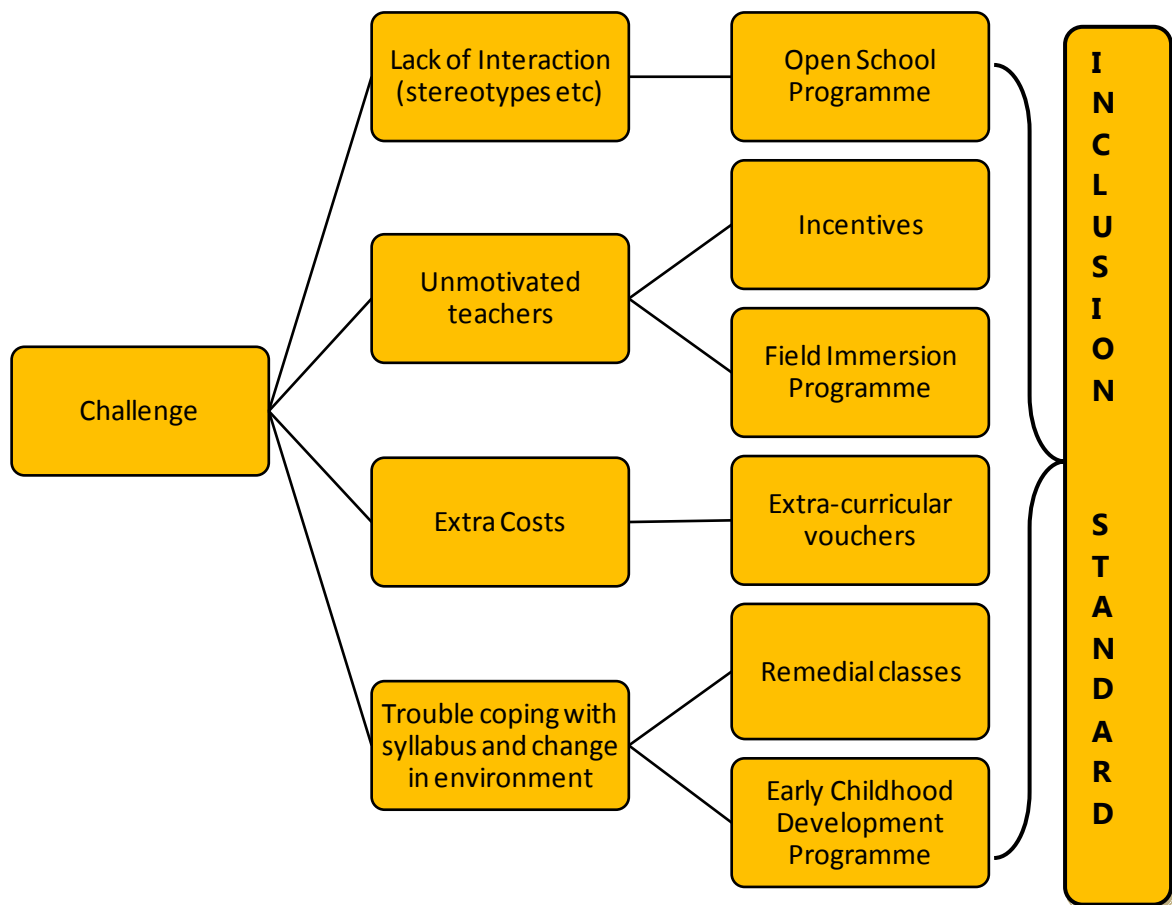

FIGURE 7: CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Challenge:

Lack of interaction between teachers and students, teachers and parents and lack of participation from the community in making schools more inclusive

The two papers 'Poor children in rich schools' (Mallica 2005) and 'Quotas under RTE: Leading towards an egalitarian education system? (Sarin and Gupta 2013) highlight the problem of lack of interaction between teachers in private schools, the children entering the school through the quota and their parents.

- The children are hesitant in freely interacting with the teachers because of the belief that the teachers would not be able to understand them. The teachers on the other hand themselves have pre-conceived notions about such children. Their prejudice against them makes them believe that these children do not have an aptitude towards studies.
- Parents of such children are usually illiterate, and hence are hesitant in talking to teachers during parent-teacher meeting as they do not understand English. With notices and notes being sent in English, these parents are further excluded from the education of their child.
- The children from poor households are at a risk of being discriminated against by children of fee-paying parents. These children too are misguided by stereotypes and hence are wary of including children from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, such incidents are not common as mentioned in the two papers.

Solution:

BOX 3 OPEN SCHOOLS PROGRAMME : BRAZIL

CASE STUDY: Open Schools Programme in Brazil

The Open Schools Programme in Brazil is a public policy being implemented in Brazil. It is handled by UNESCO and Ministry of Education, Brazil and is modelled on the Making Room Programme which was in operation between 2000 and 2006. The programme was based on the idea of attaining social inclusion through education. It involved opening of certain public schools on weekends, in communities marked by violence to the youth and the families of that particular community. Sports, cultural and leisure activities along with vocational training and educational programmes were conducted on weekends at such schools.

Source: (UNESCO, MEC 2009)
(Continued)

The aims of the programme were:
- Promotion of integration of the youth, community and the school through peaceful tools.
- Decrease incidence of violence in violence-hit areas.
- Increase interaction between teachers and students; integrate schools
- Use schools as a means to socially integrate communities
- Reduce drop out rates
- Connect the curriculum followed during the week with activities on weekends

At the outset, the facilitators faced huge resistance from schools and teachers, citing lack of funds or 'loss' of weekends. However, once the programme outline was presented, the schools consented. Different states found various ways of hiring people to facilitate this program. In Sao Paulo, university students worked in exchange of scholarships; in Rio, the workers were paid, whereas people volunteered in Pernambuco.

Starting in May 2006, the schools participating in the programme were included in the group of schools that receive resources directly from the federal government through a cash transfer programme which, until 2008, was titled Cash Straight into School. This measure allows schools to fund actions which are fundamental to their ability to open on weekends, based on their own needs. When the Open School Programme was introduced as a policy, the Ministry of Education and the National Fund for the Development of Education (FNDE) started directly transferring aid to such schools. This ensured the autonomy of schools, too.

The following results were recorded:

- In Pernambuco, 80% of the workers were the young from the communities who had previously attended the same school. Community participating increased which was exemplified when 80% of schools were autonomous.
- In Rio, most of the activities were conducted in partnership with NGOs.
- In Rio Grande do Sui, improvements in the inclusivity of schools were observed. Parents' participation in during-week activities also increased; teacher-student interactions also improved and the community-school bond was strengthened.
- In Rio, there was a reduction in violence rates at schools by 53% and theft by 43%.

Source: (UNESCO, MEC 2009)

Indian Context:

The Open School Programme of Brazil can serve as a model for creating a similar programme in India. This is because the aims of the programme are in resonance with the challenges which the schools in India are also facing. Private schools can 'open their gates' on weekends to improve integration in the society. This can be done in association with NGOs, or a similar UNESCO initiative can be started here, the only distinction being that it will involve private schools in India. The following measures can be adopted:

- Activities related to the curriculum taught during weekdays can be organised on weekends.
- These can be conducted by teachers (duties can be allotted on a rolling basis), parents volunteers, students volunteers and people from the neighbourhood community. Extra-credits or certificate of appreciation can be given to children who volunteer to help their peers from disadvantaged backgrounds in these activities. This will lead to greater peer interaction.
- Monthly sporting events can be organised with participation from teachers, parents and children. Teams can be formed such that children from all backgrounds mix and there is no segregation.
- Cultural activities organised can help reduce the inhibition of children and parents from poor households, which might lead to greater interaction. Sessions on breaking stereotypes associated with children and parents from marginalised communities can be organised. They can be conducted by children and parents from poor households themselves.

Challenge: Difficulty in coping up with the curriculum

Children from marginalised communities while switching from government to private schools face difficulty in coping with the fast paced curriculum. There is difficulty in switching to classes where English is the medium of instruction. These kids are as a result made to sit separately instead of providing these kids with special training or remedial classes (Mallica 2005).

Children from affluent families often attend private tuitions which help them cope with the curriculum better. Children from economically weaker sections and disadvantaged backgrounds usually do not have this luxury. They depend on classroom instruction to understand concepts. Even those poor households, who do enroll their children in tuitions, do so at a huge cost, which adds to their financial burden.

Solution:

BOX 4 AFTER SCHOOL CLASSES IN KOREA

CASE STUDY: After School Classes in Korea

The Government of South Korea introduced an 'After School' system in 2006 to counter the growing private tuition industry in the country. This programme was built on the 'After School Class' system which was introduced in 1995 by the Education Reform Commission. The 'After School Class' idea was introduced to provide children with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities.

The 'After School' system, however, was built to address the problem of private education classes which were becoming a social issue. The private education classes being very expensive were not accessible to low-income families. This created a problem of unequal opportunity. Thus, the aim was to introduce a public education programme which supplemented the regular teaching in school, and was accessible to all. This led to a reduction in expenditure on private supplementary education; with children who participated in this programme spending KRW 510,000 (per year) less than children who abstained.

In elementary schools, 'After School Dolbom (childcare) Classes' were put in place. This was introduced to lessen the financial burdens on low-income families. The government has also been encouraging private players to participate in the programme, in order to improve the teacher quality and provide other logistical support.

Students of low income families are reported as having low school attendance, and in many cases, school drop-outs occur as a result of a household's economic difficulties. The education ministry has been implementing a "Master Plan to Assist Regions that Require Priority Investment in Educational Welfare". Priority regions with many low income families are to receive concentrated educational welfare support. Under this plan, the ministry supports the students in the most needy areas with orientation and psychotherapy programs, meal provision, health education, after-school voucher program and edu-care for infants and children under age 6, in an integrative manner.

Source: (OECD 2014) , (Lee 2012), (KIM 2007)

Indian Context:

Need for remedial classes:

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds might face difficulty in coping with the curriculum initially, which affects their learning achievements. There is hence a need for remedial classes. Remedial classes can be of two types- one which is provided by the school itself and second in the form of private tuitions.

The private tuition industry has grown at a fast pace in India. 24% children in government schools and 22% children in private schools in rural India opt for private tuitions (Pratham 2013). The effect on learning achievements is also immense with government school children recording an increase of 15% in reading levels and private school children recording an increase of 9% on opting for tuitions. This practice creates a huge inequality in learning levels and inequality in the education system.

With private tuitions creating such an impact on learning levels, it is expected that remedial classes provided by the school would affect such a change too. According to Banerjee, Cole, Duflo, and Linden, remedial teaching increases the test scores by 0.28 standard deviations, with maximum benefit accruing to children with low levels of learning achievement (Muralidharan 2013).

The RTE, 2009 also entails special training to be given to such kids to help them cope with the syllabus and change in environment. Sadly, percentage of children provided with special training in government schools dropped from 54.23% in 2012-13 to 36.08% in 2013-14 (DISE 2012-13); (DISE 2013-14). No data is available for private schools. It is important for the government to ensure that private schools are giving supplementary classes to children admitted under the 25% quota.

Remedial classes can be held in the following manner:
- Schools can provide after classes to children who need extra help irrespective of their background. Children from affluent families can be charged a suitable fee (not more than market rate) and the EWS wards can be given these remedial classes free of cost.
- Peer learning can also be promoted with student volunteers (seniors or batch mates).
- Schools can tie up with NGOs and set guidelines according to which the NGOs can conduct remedial classes within the school premises.
- Remedial classes should not be restricted to the curriculum. Counselling and psycho-therapy sessions should also be provided by a special educator to lessen the anxiety and stress levels in the child.

Challenge: Unmotivated teachers

- Teacher apathy is a serious problem that children from the sub-stream face. Teachers in private schools can have prejudices against children belonging to EWS and other disadvantaged groups. They might have certain views such as the children being 'unruly' and not capable of performing well because of their family background. The teachers might be quite divorced from ground reality because of the socio-economic differences. Also, these teachers may not quite understand the problems of the parents of such children. The parent's inability to contribute to their child's education may be because of their inability to read notices and letters in English, however, their low involvement can be perceived as dereliction of parental duty by teachers. (Mallica 2005) ;(Sarin and Gupta 2013)
- Another problem associated with unmotivated teachers is that they have very low expectations from a child from a poor household. The Pygmalion Effect says that the higher the expectations from a person, the better the person performs. Robert Rosenthal and Lenore Jacobson demonstrated this in a school setting, where they found positive relation between teacher expectations and student achievements (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968). This study highlights the importance of the role of the teacher in a student's life. Thus, teacher expectation is a necessary impetus to a child's success and hence, teachers should be conditioned to have high expectations from all children.

Practices adopted to motivate teachers

A. **Teacher incentives:**

South Korea incentivises its teachers to teach in diverse classrooms. Diversity here means high proportion of students from poor households. The incentives are as follows:
- Credits which count towards promotions
- Freedom of choice to choose where (location) the teacher wants to teach in the future
- Smaller class size
- Higher salaries
- According to OECD, such incentives might result in students from low-income families being taught by quality teachers. Teacher quality is measured in terms of longevity of career, degree and certification level (South Korea: Education for All n.d.).

B. **Field Immersion Programme:**

- The fellows under the Teach for India Fellowship go through a 'community immersion' programme as part of their training. The fellows as part of their training are supposed to acquaint themselves with the atmosphere in slums and other not so affluent neighbourhoods.
- Teachers should have compulsory rural service in their training or any other form of practical exposure which can help them empathise and connect with the children and parents from economically weaker sections and other disadvantaged backgrounds. This can be modeled on the compulsory rural service proposed for doctors. Sensitisation should be an integral part of teacher training and should not be limited to theoretical testing, which is often reduced to a mere formality.
- Regular in-service sessions for other non-teaching staff should also be conducted on a regular basis.

Challenge: Extra-costs incurred because of expenditure on co-curricular activities etc

School fees is not the only expenditure which needs to be taken into account while calculating schooling expenses. Uniforms, books and expenses on purchase of equipment for co-curricular activities or to participate in certain trips are also a part of expenses incurred. Under the RTE children admitted under 25% quota should not be liable to pay for their uniforms or books, however extra-curricular expenses are not accounted for. When the child is not able to participate in such recreational activities, he is embarrassed and feels like an outcast. (Sarin and Gupta 2013)

Solution:

- Korea has a system of providing children from low-income families with extra-curricular vouchers. The feasibility of this system can be studied in order to implement it in India.
- Private companies can be encouraged to take the responsibility of the co-curricular activities of children under the 25% quota in individual schools.

Other recommendations

Inclusivity should be a standard for measuring quality

A. **Building an Inclusion Standard for private schools**

There is a need to assess the quality of private schools using inclusion as a yardstick. Also, incentivising adoption of inclusive practices by private schools is a pertinent issue. The author thus proposes building an Inclusion Standard for private schools in India. This 'Standard' can serve multiple purposes:

- Assess the inclusion/ exclusion practices being adopted by schools
- Incentivise adoption of inclusive practices by linking attaining the 'Standard' with the quality of education being imparted at the school.

BOX 5 INCLUSION STANDARD USED IN SCHOOLS IN BRISTOL

CASE STUDY: Inclusion Standard used in schools in Bristol

In the year 2002, as a means to incentivise inclusion in schools, a Bristol Inclusion Standard was introduced in Bristol, UK. The schools were entitled to additional funding from the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, the Equalities and Social Inclusion Team, and the Children's Fund. Under this pilot scheme, the schools were supposed to work on 14 criteria to attain the 'Standard'.

Criteria 1 Leadership	A person in the School Management Team (SMT) is given the responsibility of looking after 'educational inclusion'
Criteria 2 Educational Inclusion Policy	A framework to remove inequalities in school should be worked out. Clear guidelines as to who is responsible for what with a proper action plan should be developed. There should be clear targets with a monitoring mechanism
Criteria 3 School Improvement Plans	The improvement plans for a school should include provisions which enable schools to strive for inclusion.
Criteria 4 Inclusion Steering Group (ISG)	The committee should include representation from teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and representatives from marginalised communities.
Criteria 5 Auditing inclusion in schools	The school should have a process in place to audit the inclusion practices of the school.

Source: (Department of Education and Lifelong Learning 2003)
(Contd.)

Criteria 6 Access Plans	Regular audit of infrastructure in place to ease the movement of the disabled should be conducted.
Criteria 7 Race Equality Policy and Action Plan	Race Equality Policy and Action Plan should be developed through SMT and ISG. These plans should monitor the impact of policies on Blacks, Asian, and other minority ethnic pupils, staff and parents, and lay emphasis on learning achievements of the pupils.
Criteria 8 Admissions	The admission policy should be proactive in including students from diverse groups.
Criteria 9 Policy Review	The school should review all its policies as per a time line, with reference to the national inclusion policies and legislation. From school trips to anti-bullying policies, all practices have to be reviewed by the school.
Criteria 10 Staff Development	The school staff has to undergo sensitisation training. They should, on regular basis, attend training programmes/ seminars on issues pertaining to inclusion.
Criteria 11 Fair Selection and Positive Action	Inclusion policies for the staff should be in place. Equal representation from all communities should be there in the school staff.
Criteria 12 Accessible Meetings and Information	Schools should transmit all the information related to the students to their parents regularly. Minutes of the staff meeting should be accessible.
Criteria 13 Reviewing the Curriculum	The curriculum adopted should be such that it reflects social and cultural diversity.
Criteria 14 Family and Community Involvement	The community and family of students should be actively involved in school activities.

After the conclusion of the pilot project, the Standard was revised and included extra focus on analysis of learning achievements of children from diverse groups. As of 2011, 59 schools had been awarded the 'Standard'.

Suggestions:
- The 'Inclusion Standard' used in schools in Bristol, UK can serve as an example for building our own Standard. The Standard can first be run as a pilot scheme.
- The 'Inclusion Standard' can be a type of accreditation which schools get. There can be a positive incentive of additional grants linked to attaining the Standard.
- Also, a list of schools which have attained the 'Standard' can be circulated on a regular basis, especially before the commencement of admissions. Schools which have attained the Standard will have a greater goodwill attached to their name, which may help them attract more applicants.

B. **Education Development Index should account for diversity**

The Education Development Index takes into account the following factors under outcomes (DISE 2012-13):
- Average number of Instructional Days
- Average working hours for Teachers
- Percentage change in Enrolment in Government schools over the previous year
- Gross Enrolment Ratio
- Percentage SC enrolment
- Percentage ST enrolment
- Percentage Muslim enrolment
- Ratio of Girls' enrolment to Boys' enrolment
- Drop-out Rate
- Transition Rate from Primary to Upper Primary Level

The caveat with this EDI is that it does not take into account the learning achievements of children from various social groups. Taking only enrolment rate and drop out rate does not suffice because of the 'No retention policy' which the country has adopted. No retention policy gives a false impression of the learning levels of a child. Though, retention has a negative impact on the child; passing without gaining skills is equally detrimental. Hence, EDI should also include learning achievements which, as of now, are the best measure of quality which we have.

Improvement of Early Child Care System

Pre-primary schools play a pivotal role in a child's life. It is a place where children are prepared for a more formal school setting, both mentally and physically (CREATE 2010). Access to quality pre-primary schooling is contingent on the same arguments as that of inclusive primary education. With teachers complaining that children who take admission under 25% quota are unable to keep pace with the curriculum (Mallica 2005), it is imperative that a quality pre-

primary schooling prepares these kids for the formal setting of primary schools. If early child care services are developed, then their siblings studying in primary schools, would not feel the need to drop out. Unfortunately, only 40.99% of schools in 2012-13 had an attached pre-primary section (DISE 2012-13). Also, there is a need to upgrade the quality of the angadwadi centres running across the country. They are not a match for the private kindergartens in operation. An inequality at a basic level will translate into inequality even in the primary education level in terms of the readiness of the child to sit in a formal school setting.

Improvement of existing government schools

In addition to making private schools accessible to all sections of the society, it is imperative to simultaneously improve the government schools in the country. This is because government schools still are a major provider of education to large sections of the society, especially to those from economically weaker sections and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The quality of all government schools should be improved to such a level that they are equivalent to the private schools and special category schools such as the Kendriya Vidyalayas[3].

The Kothari Commission, 1964-66 had recommended building a 'Common School System'. Recognising the poor quality education provided by government schools and private schools being accessible to the rich, the need for public schools of good quality which can be accessed by students from various social groups was felt (NCERT 1970). As per the recommendations, the neighbourhood schools built should be of a quality such that even the rich do not hesitate in sending their children to these schools (NCERT 1970). It is important for the education system in India to improve the public education system in the country to achieve the aim of imparting inclusive education.

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[3] **Kendriya Vidyalayas or Central schools were established for children of transferable Central Government employees including Defence and Para-Military personnel. They are known for the excellent quality of education that they provide.**

CONCLUSION

Education is considered to be the panacea for all social evils. Primary education, in particular, can be a solution to the problem of inequality which pervades the society today. This paper specifically talks about social inclusion of children from economically weaker section and socially disadvantaged backgrounds (SCs and STs) through primary education. Social inclusion in the society entails every member being given the opportunity to realise their potential, irrespective of their social, cultural and economic background. In the context of this paper, it means equal access to quality education, with access not being hindered by the financial resources or the social background of the child.

Primary education affects the lifelong learning of a child. It moulds the mind of the child and sets the stage for future achievements. The paper lays emphasis on a classroom environment which has equal representation from all social groups. In the current scenario, it is imperative to make private schools accessible to all social groups because of the failing standards of government schools and the continuous migration of children to private schools. Making private schools accessible to children from economically weaker sections and socially disadvantaged backgrounds involves tackling various classroom challenges. Policies based on proposed solutions to these challenges need to be formulated and implemented, to remove the inequalities which mar the current private education system.

A quality primary education system is one which is inclusive. The quality of a school should be assessed on how inclusive the school is. In order to become more inclusive, schools in India can run an 'Open School Program' and a remedial class system as elaborated upon in the paper. The author proposes the construction of an 'Inclusion Standard' for private schools to incentivise private schools to adopt inclusive practices.

In a bid to equalise educational opportunity, India should strive for a 'Common School System' as envisaged by the Kothari Commission, 1966. This requires a concerted effort by private and public schools, working in tandem with non-governmental organisations and members of civil society.

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