



Viewpoints of Teacher Unions on Various RTE Norms

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Abstract

The introduction of the RTE law has initiated unprecedented changes in the field of education in India. However, these changes have not come without its complaints from various stakeholders; many argue that the improper implementation of RTE has led to a decline in the standards of education. As a debate on the future of India's education sector takes place, teacher unions, represent a collective body of teachers and deserve to be recognized. This paper explores the opinions of various local/national teacher unions and seeks to obtain their perspectives on some of the most prevalent RTE debates. These unions' claims are then thoroughly fact-checked and compared with those of teachers from government schools. By doing so, this paper hopes to bring some validity to the voice of teacher unions in India.

Introduction

Through this paper, I hope to understand and analyze the various opinions that both local and national teacher unions in India hold in regards to six out of many other norms mandated by the Right To Education (RTE, 2009) (write the full form of the Act first then use RTE, 2009) law. The six norms of RTE, 2009 that I am covering in this paper are reservation for underprivileged children in private schools (section 12 (1) (C)), school recognition norms (Section 18 & 19), pupil-teacher ratio (Section 25), teacher-classroom ratio (Section 19), teacher eligibility (Section 23), and teacher salaries in private schools (Section (23)). Many of these issues, such as complications with the implementation of both private school reservations and infrastructure norms, have garnered national attention over the past few years due to their dramatic implications both inside and outside of the classroom. Some of the norms considered in this paper have led to reported corruption at the local level (in the case of the reservation norms) and others have simply caused the closure of a number of private schools across the country.¹ With this in mind, the debate on these issues has intensified over recent years as many have begun to call into question the effectiveness in the implementation of these norms.

However, we've only heard from a select number of individuals during this conversation; this has primarily been from government officials and/or experts in the field of education (researchers, NGO presidents, etc.). Every now and then, might even get a perspective from a government or private school teacher that would provide the public with details about how these norms are affecting their performance in the classroom. But, as I searched through a number of articles and research papers during my secondary research into these six norms, I never once found a perspective from a teacher union. The closest I got to an opinion from a union was a paragraph in a news article, and even that was vague in its description of the union's side of the story.

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Francis, Alys. "Why India's Landmark Education Law Is Shutting down Schools." BBC News. March 6, 2014. Accessed July 15, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-26333713>.

As a whole, teacher unions do not enjoy a very positive image (use: “do not enjoy a very positive public image” instead of “well-respected” or maybe say what exactly is the problem: they are often perceived as obstructionists or lobbyists) in India primarily due to the fact that they are viewed as obstructionists as opposed to progressive thinkers. They are often considered to be working for their own interests as opposed to focusing on positively benefiting the entire field of education, and they are subsequently given little attention while these important discussions are taking place.

However, despite mixed opinions these teacher unions are not only a prevalent but essential voice as we continue to debate on the future of the RTE law. These unions represent a collective body primarily composed of government teachers which attempt to express their grievances or raise demands towards the government. While many argue that education should be focused on the development of students as opposed to teachers, if the teachers aren’t satisfied with their current working conditions then who will teach the students? The voice of teacher unions are a vital part of the current debate on education and their grievances need to be understood so a better learning environment for students can be created.

I started by collecting primary data from one local and one national union. The questions that I asked these unions attempted to garner further information regarding their views on the effectiveness of each of the norms, what problems they saw with each norm, what more did they think could be done, and if they believed there is a solution to each of these problems (if they were satisfied with the current conditions of the norm then I would dive into what has worked well in its implementation). I then moved to collect primary data from the government teachers themselves in order to explore if the opinions of these unions aligned with opinions of those whom the Unions are supposed to be representing. After I finished collecting all of my primary and secondary data, I attempted to define each union’s opinions on the six norms being studied, compare each union’s view with the views of the government school teachers that I have spoken to, fact-check claims that they made with the secondary research that I had previously conducted, and present some of their proposed solutions to the problems they observed with the RTE norms.

My paper concludes by presenting consistencies (or striking differences) that I noticed between teacher unions in regards to each of the six norms. In addition, I will discuss the general similarities and differences between the stances of these teacher unions and the stances of the government teacher’s

that I had interviewed. I will delve into the reasons behind any striking differences that I notice. Hopefully my study will make room for others to be conducted, which can further analyze and validate the claims that these unions make; this paper simply attempts to bring teacher unions into the conversation.

With the debate on these RTE norms reaching a peaking point, and many of these policies failing to garner any substantive results, the time for reform is now. Many fundamental changes need to be made for the education system and RTE to do their job. Considering that teachers are the primary concern when it comes to these issues (teacher quality, pupil-teacher ratio, etc.), it is only fair that their needs be prioritized just as much as the needs of their students. ~~It is time to open our perspectives and give these unions a chance to get a seat at the discussion table.~~ (I am not sure why have you formed this opinion that teacher unions do not have a seat at discussion tables, In India Teacher Unions do have a significant say in almost all education policy matters, its up to the Unions whether they want to limit themselves to issues of self-interest or also talk about wider issues of quality of education. Some might argue that teacher unions in fact are opportunist hence they do not take up some of the key issues in education. I would suggest you should not include this part where you say that your research will give Unions a chance to get a seat at the discussion table, simply because it is quite contrary to the reality) (I agree with this. The only reason I put that statement in there was because I was under the impression that teachers unions' opinions were commonly undervalued in Indian politics. As you know, I am not familiar with India's educational infrastructure and subsequently took the opinions which I heard from others about these unions at word of mouth since I didn't know otherwise. But, if this is not the case, then feel free to take out the phrase referenced above.) This is why I have decided that the research question for this paper will be, "Do teacher unions believe that both the idea behind and the implementation of various RTE norms has been effective?"

Background

Right To Education (RTE), the widespread education law which, for the first time, gave the right to education the same importance as the right to life in the Indian Constitution², was monumental for many reasons. It made it compulsory for every child ages 6-14 to attend eight years of elementary education in an age appropriate classroom that must be in the area of their neighborhood and held the state responsible for ensuring that these children are not only enrolled in but also continue to attend school. However, widespread laws also lead to widespread problems. For instance, it was mandated that any school that doesn't meet the standards and requirements of the RTE act would be shut down after three years of non-compliance.² Before we dive into specifics though it is necessary to define some key terms that will be used throughout this paper.

Firstly, according to Section 23(1) of the RTE law, an individual who is eligible to become a teacher is defined as someone who, "[possesses] such minimum qualifications, as laid down by an academic authority, authorized by the Central Government, by notification."³ More broadly, in this essay the term "teacher" is used to describe "a person who teaches or instructs other individuals as a profession in a school and who obtains a salary as a result of their work." In addition, I have defined the term "teacher union" in this paper based off of the mandated definition of trade unions specified in India's Trade Unions Act of 1926, which states that a trade union is defined as, "any combination, whether temporary or permanent, formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relation between workmen and employers or between workmen and workmen...and includes any federation of two or more trade unions."⁴ With this in mind, in this paper I define the term "teacher union" to describe "any combination, either temporary or permanent, of a group of teachers formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relation teachers and different stakeholders in the school system, and includes any federation of two

² "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act." Wikipedia. 2009. Accessed July 7, 2015. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_of_Children_to_Free_and_Compulsory_Education_Act.

³ "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009." DELTA. August 27, 2009. Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://www.delta.org.in/form/rte.pdf>.

⁴ Trade Unions Act: "The Trade Unions Act." National Commission for Women. March 25, 1926. Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://ncw.nic.in/acts/TheTradeUnionsAct1926.pdf>.

or more teacher unions.” Lastly, I define RTE in this paper to indicate the Right To Education act which was approved by the Indian parliament in 2009 and signed into law on April 1st, 2010.

Teacher unions have had a long history in India. The first teacher’s union was the Women Teachers’ Association in Madras in 1890. However, the first national teacher’s union did not come until 1954 with the creation of the All India Federation of Teachers’ Association. With the long and deep rooted history that teacher unions have had in India, they have subsequently been able to build up immense political power and often play a pivotal role in the fate of education in India. Many strikes and other reform methods have been used to create key policy changes in the field of education (e.g. numerous successful attempts by unions to lobby for pay increases from the Sixth Pay Commission). Teacher unions have commonly used this political power to oppose decentralization measures and teacher accountability at the local level; when RTE was first drafted in 2005, it included a clause that caused a teacher’s number of unexcused absences to affect their salaries, which numerous unions were quickly able to strike down.⁵

In regards to RTE, teacher unions have been quite vocal with their concerns. For the purpose of this paper though, six aspects of RTE will be covered: RTE’s mandated reservation for EWS (Economically-Weaker Students), infrastructure norms, pupil:teacher ratio, teacher:classroom ratio, teacher eligibility, and teacher salaries in private schools.

There are many core issues associated with these norms that have polarized teacher unions and the government on this expansive debate. In regards to the first norm concerning reservation in private schools, RTE officially mandates that 25% of the enrollment in private schools must be reserved for Economically Weaker Sections (with the exception being made for many religious private schools). With this mandate, the government hoped that they would be able to provide kids from underprivileged families with opportunities to take advantage of the private school system, which is proven to produce better scores than most government schools. However, private schools weren’t too adamant about providing free tuition to ¼ of the students in their schools.⁶ Many parties who argue against the move

⁵ Gupta, Saumya. "Perspectives of Teachers' Unions on Challenges to Education in India." CCS. 2013. Accessed July 5, 2015. https://ccsinternship.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/304_perspectives-of-teachers-unions-on-challenges-to-education-in-india_soumya-gupta.pdf.

⁶ Kumar, Manoj. "SC Upholds Right To Education Act; 25 Percent Reservation For Poor Children." International Business Times RSS. April 14, 2012. Accessed July 3, 2015. <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/sc-upholds-right-to-education-act-25-percent-reservation-for-poor-children-328079>.

claim that it is unfair to assume that everybody who is admitted to private schools are rich and to subsequently burden them with the financial costs of other students. In addition, the Delhi government offered only 1190 rupees per child per month as an estimated cost for educating children in government schools which fails to account for other pay factors such as taxes and/or maintenance.⁷

In regards to RTE's infrastructure norms, the government mandated that the standards set by RTE, which include working days, teacher's learning equipment, sports material, library and student-teacher ratio must be followed in its entirety by all schools as of December 2013 or face complete closure.⁸ However, due to the inability from many schools to produce such a quick turnaround, ASER 2014, an annual survey conducted by a non-profit organization, Pratham-based study, ~~to check in on RTE's progress~~, reported that an average of about 63.3% of schools sampled in their study are currently complying with the infrastructure norms.⁹

In regards to RTE's PTR (Pupil:Teacher Ratio), the law states that the PTR can vary from 1st-5th grade but can be no more than 1:35 for 6th-8th grade. This has drawn many criticisms from teacher unions who claim that the standards will result in a massive shortage of teachers in each school and create ambiguity in pay and service conditions.¹⁰ In addition, these norms are also rather difficult to enforce; according to ASER 2014, only 49.3% of schools are abiding by the mandated PTR's. With these current standards, about half of India's primary and upper schools will need more teachers. This also translates into the mandated TCR (Teacher:Classroom Ratio) of 1:1 since RTE commands that one teacher can only be

⁷ Indiresan, P.V. "RTE, a Half-baked Idea." The Hindu Business Line. April 20, 2012. Accessed July 3, 2015. <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/p-v-indiresan/rte-a-halfbaked-idea/article3336497.ece>.

⁸ Bhusari, Piyush. "Five New Norms to Be Included in RTE - The Times of India." The Times of India. May 30, 2014. Accessed July 3, 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/Five-new-norms-to-be-included-in-RTE/articleshow/35741891.cms>.

⁹ "ASER 2014: Annual Status of Education Report Main Findings." ASER Centre. 2015. Accessed July 3, 2015. http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER_Reports/ASER_2014/National_PPTs/aser2014indiaenglish.pdf.

¹⁰ Kiran, K.P. Sai. "Teachers Oppose Clause Of Pupil-Teacher Ratio." The Times of India. May 16, 2013. Accessed July 3, 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/Teachers-oppose-clause-of-pupil-teacher-ratio/articleshow/20078149.cms>.

assigned to one classroom which, according to the ASER study, means that ⅓ of these schools will also need to provide more classrooms.¹¹

RTE's teacher eligibility mandates have also posed an issue to many unions. Specifically, RTE authorizes that the minimum qualifications of a teacher should be followed based on the rules set by the NCTE (National Council for Teacher Education), one of these being the completion of the TET (teacher eligibility test). According to the government, the TET can provide many benefits to all interested parties due to the fact that it sets a general benchmark for the quality of teachers in the recruitment process, encourages teacher institutions and their students to improve their performance, and illustrates the government's importance on teacher quality to private stakeholders.¹²

Lastly, RTE commands that the salaries of private and public school teachers must be at par with one another. While this seems to be a reasonable demand, many private schools in the past have had issues when it comes to paying their teachers suitable wages; while the basic mandated salary for a teacher in an unaided private primary school and high school is 6800 and 8800 RPM respectively¹³, an average private school teacher gets paid about 42% of an average government teacher's salary and 43% of an average private-aided school teacher's salary. While government schools pay their teachers salaries as per Pay Commission norms, private schools tend to pay their teachers wages at market rates. As a result, many of these teachers complain that their payment is hardly enough to sustain a decent standard of living.¹⁴ In addition, RTE's ban on private tuition makes this debate even more complicated since that served as a primary source of many teachers supplemental salaries outside of school hours.¹⁵

¹¹ "ASER 2014: Annual Status of Education Report Main Findings." ASER Centre. 2015. Accessed July 3, 2015. http://img.asercentre.org/docs/Publications/ASER_Reports/ASER_2014/National_PPTs/aser2014indiaenglish.pdf.

¹² "Guidelines for Conducting Teacher Eligibility Test (TET)." Ministry of Human Resource Development. February 11, 2011. Accessed July 2, 2015. http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/RTE_TET.pdf.

¹³ "Teachers of Unaided Schools Not Being Paid Basic Salary." The Hindu. June 15, 2014. Accessed July 2, 2015. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/teachers-of-unaided-schools-not-being-paid-basic-salary/article6118464.ece>.

¹⁴ Kingdon, Geeta. "Private and Public Schooling: The Indian Experience." Harvard Kennedy School. October 6, 2005. Accessed July 2, 2015. <http://hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/events/MPSPE/PEPG-05-15geeta.pdf>.

¹⁵ Private Tuitions (Basic): Iyer, Rajeshwari. "Government Ban on Private Tuition Irks Teachers, Parents." The New Indian Express. December 6, 2012. Accessed July 2, 2015. <http://www.newindianexpress.com/education/student/article1368094.ece>.

Despite the Indian government's best attempts to provide a more quality education to all aspects of schooling of India, many problems have still arose primarily due to the fact that RTE's mandates are oftentimes unfeasible. These expectations have resulted in a variety of harsh reactions from teacher unions demanding solutions to issues that affect their jobs, livelihood, and quality of teaching. However, unions have often been criticized in the past for focusing on bettering their own condition as opposed to demanding changes that would positively affect India's educational field as a whole. Are the solutions that teacher unions are posing to these issues benefiting themselves or all parties involved? Are they even feasible to implement? Have they worked in the past? These are some of the fundamental questions which this paper attempts to tackle.

Research Methodology

Primary Research:

For my primary research, I plan to use:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires

I have utilized these methods of research because my topic revolves around gathering the opinions of different parties on the RTE law, I deduced that a structured questionnaire with guiding questions combined with the fluidity of an interview would be the most beneficial way to accomplish my goal. I decided that sending out questionnaires and/or gathering interviews from people on the street wouldn't allow for the same in-depth analysis and range of opinions that I hope to gather from my study which is why I ultimately settled on collecting my data by finding specific parties with a wide range of opinions to interview. Specifically, I decided to pre-write a set of questions to ask these individuals because it allows me to guide the scope of the conversation in order to gather data on a variety of issues pertaining to RTE.

For my study, I have interviewed:

- Representatives from both local and national teacher unions
- Teachers from government schools

I chose to interview these individuals because I felt that this would give me a large pool of data to work with during my analysis period and would allow me to accomplish my goal of gathering a wide variety of opinions relating to teacher unions on the RTE law.

Since the RTE law primarily affects the duties and responsibilities of teachers both inside and outside the classroom, I interviewed two different teachers from *Gargi Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya*, an elementary government school located in the Hauz Khas neighborhood of Delhi. Their names are *Gopa Soodh* and *Rashmi Gulati*, both English teachers. I felt that interviewing a teacher from a government school would be able to:

- Give me an in-the-classroom perspective of how the implementation of the various RTE norms examined in my study has affected teachers' abilities both in and out of school
- Allow me to gather local opinions on potential solutions to fix the issues posed by these changes

- Explore if the opinions of local teachers vary at all from the collective teacher unions that represent them

I felt that interviewing a representative from a local or national teacher union would be able to:

- Give me a more general perspective from individuals who are in charge of advocating for teachers' grievances throughout the country
- Allow me to gain a better understanding of how teacher unions are working to change these issues
- Discover if the complaints that many local teachers have on the widespread issues which emerged from the passage of RTE are echoed by teacher unions
- Gain an overall viewpoint on the two aspects of RTE which I am researching from the perspective of a collective body of teachers

In short, I believe that my interviews with teachers from individual schools have given me a local perspective on the effectiveness of the RTE norms which I examine in this paper while my interview with representatives from both local and national teacher unions gave me a more national outlook on the grievances of teachers and the different sort of consequences they faced following the formal implementation of the RTE law. This portion of my study takes up about 60% of the overall paper.

Secondary Research

I extensively reviewed existing literature in order to gain a better understanding of the education system in India and how it has been affected by the RTE law. I examined a variety of case studies and news articles to learn about RTE's impact on all parties (teachers, students, government). Specifically, I thoroughly researched the current issues and response/backlash associated with:

- RTE's mandated decrease in pupil-teacher ratios and its effectiveness
- RTE's mandated reservation in schools for 25% of the enrollment quota to be reserved for underprivileged students and its effectiveness
- RTE's mandated infrastructure norms and their effectiveness
- RTE's mandated teacher eligibility test and its effectiveness
- The stark difference between the salaries of public and private school teachers and the moves being made to combat the salary gap

My sources range from academic papers conducted by well-renowned scholars such as Geeta Gandhi Kingdon to clips of news articles from media outlets such as the Times of India. I have included a complete list of my sources in the bibliography section at the end of my paper. This portion of my study takes up about 35% of the overall paper.

Template for Interviews:

Here are the questions which I have asked both the teacher unions and local teachers that I have spoken to:

1. General Teacher Union Questions

- a. What sort of influence do you have in regards to legislation pertaining to education? In schools? In the government?
- b. What are examples of past legislation that has been passed solely due to the influence of teachers unions? How has this been done?
- c. What is your current views towards the field of education (especially in light of the passage of the RTE law)? Is there any pertinent legislation that you're trying to lobby for in Congress that deals with the RTE law?
- d. What is the approximate membership size of your union?

From these questions, I was able to break the ice and get a better sense of how teacher unions function/what general goals they hope to accomplish.

2. On Reservation in Private School for Underprivileged Kids

- a. On reservation in private school for underprivileged kids
 - i. What is your stance on the RTE's decision to set aside 25% of a school's enrollment for underprivileged kids?
 1. If you believe it is ineffective, can you think of a better system that would allow all kids to enjoy the added benefits of a private education?
 - ii. Do you feel that the space reservation is feasible? Or too costly?
 - iii. What do you feel the purpose of the reservation is? Do you think there is anything missing from the plan?

From these questions, I learned more about teacher unions' opinions on this controversial mandate by RTE and if they believed that there is a better solution to ensuring that all children gain the same rights and access to private education.

3. On Infrastructure

- a. What is your stance towards the new infrastructure norms mandated by RTE? Do you think they are necessary?
- b. Do you believe there is a linkage between the recent mass school closings and the newly implemented infrastructure norms? If so, how/why do you think this is the case?

- c. What do you think needs to be done to improve on these infrastructure norms? What do you think is right/wrong with the current system?

From these questions, I learned more about teacher unions' stance towards the newly mandated infrastructure norms set forth by RTE and if they believed that these norms are ineffective in their goal of ensuring quality education.

4. On Pupil-Teacher Ratio

- a. What are your feelings towards the Indian government's move in the RTE law to reduce pupil-teacher ratios in all classrooms? What sort of consequences has this move had in the schools themselves?
- b. Do you think reducing the PTR in all government schools to 1:35 is feasible? Why or why not?
- c. Do you see a correlation between lower PTR's and increased academic performance? How so?
- d. How do you think the mandated PTR system could be improved?

From these questions, I learned about the issue of pupil-teacher ratios from a more in-depth perspective that allowed me to understand its implications at both the local and the national level. In addition, I gained a better understanding of the current moves (if any) being made by teacher unions to address the implementation of the new pupil-teacher ratios.

5. On Teacher:Classroom Ratio

- a. What are your feelings towards the Indian government's move in the RTE law to reduce teacher-classroom ratios in all classrooms? What sort of consequences has this move had in the schools themselves?
- b. Do you think reducing the PTR in all government schools to 1:35 is feasible? Why or why not?
- c. Do you see a correlation between lower TCR's and increased academic performance? How so?
- d. How do you think the mandated TCR system could be improved?

From these questions, I learned about the issue of teacher-classroom ratios from a more in-depth perspective that allowed me to understanding its implications at both the local and the national level. In addition, I gained a better understanding of the current moves (if any) being made by teacher unions to address the implementation of the new teacher-classroom ratios.

6. On Teacher Eligibility

- a. Do you think the teacher eligibility system is effective in weeding out bad teachers and encouraging better teacher performance? If so, how? If not, why?
- b. Why do you think the current TET is flawed (if at all)? How do you think it could be improved?
- c. Do you think that TET's are necessary? If no, then what alternate system would you propose?

From these questions, I learned about teacher unions' beliefs regard the effectiveness of TET's and if they felt that they are a necessary component when judging and assessing the performance of a new teacher.

7. On Teacher Salaries in Private Schools

- a. How do you think teacher salaries in private schools compare to those in public schools? Do you find this to be a problem?
- b. Do you think the salaries between both parties should be more equalized? If so, how should this be done?

From these questions, I learned more about what teacher unions believe should be done (if anything at all) in order to address the major salary gap that exists between public and private school teachers in addition to gaining a better understanding about how big of a problem these unions deem the gap itself to be.

Teacher Unions

On All Indian Primary Teachers Federation (AIPTF)

Background On Their Union

AIPTF, short for All India Primary Teachers Federation, was founded on January 7th, 1954 shortly following the amendment to the Societies Registration Act which assisted in the creation of the union. The act itself, which was passed during the 1860's under the British government, was originally meant to allow the registration of many literary, scientific, and charitable societies. In regards to teacher unions, this act formally gave them the right to register as an educational union. However, the 1954 amendment expanded their rights by allowing for unions to change their names while still being covered under the act. According to the President of AIPTF Rampal Singh, this was a key step in formatting the model for the union which would eventually become AIPTF.

The union's membership includes both primary and upper primary teachers since it only focuses on elementary school education. It was originally presided over by Acharya M.V. Donde and was formally acknowledged by Pt. Jawahar Lal Neharu, India's prime minister at the time. According to their website, after primary government teachers gained their independence from the government they quickly became very poor. Seven years after they gained this independence, many were unable to support themselves on the salary they made from teaching alone. As a result, after extensive debates and exchanging of ideas, to finally come together and form the first national teacher union in India known as AIPTF. This idea then reportedly spread to other states around in India which resulted in the massive expansion of teacher unions throughout the nation.¹⁶

AIPTF has many aims and objectives in regards to what they believe the future of India's educational system should look like. Many of these are listed on their website, but some noteworthy beliefs which define their unions are their strong desire to improve both the working and living conditions of teachers,

¹⁶ "Brief History." AIPTF India. 2015. Accessed July 8, 2015. http://aiptfindia.org/?page_id=9.

to promote and reestablish the standard of education in Indian society, and to ensure the proper implementation of the recently passed RTE act.¹⁷

As of now, AIPTF has a member size of around 2.3 million teachers and has about 24 state affiliates. They are currently a part of a coalition of national teacher unions in India which includes other unions such as AISTF (All India Secondary Teachers Federation), AIFTO (All India Federation of Teachers Organizations), and AIACHS (All India Association for Christian Higher Education).

The main demands which their union focuses on revolve around the RTE act. Specifically, AIPTF claims that one of their many demands to Congress was for education to be listed as a fundamental right in the Indian Constitution. Their initial protests started in 2000 and, after years of strong and consistent protests outside of the Indian Parliament building, the 86th amendment was added into the Indian Constitution which stated that, "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine."¹⁸ In addition, AIPTF also helped fight with India's VI Pay Commission in the mid-2000's which eventually lead to an overall increase in primary teachers' salaries.

According to Singh, AIPTF's structure model consists of a general counsel and an executive committee. When faced with an issue or a demand that they wish for the government to take action on, the union first discusses the matter with both the general counsel and executive committee. Afterwards, representatives would begin to write-in to the government and submit a memorandum asking Parliament to discuss the matter. If this doesn't work, AIPTF would organize a sit-in protest near the Parliament building in order to make their demands more publicly known. If all else fails, the union members would go on strike.

As a whole, AIPTF hopes to work to the best of their abilities to ensure the development of primary teachers on all fronts all over India for the purpose of further improving the education through

¹⁷ "Profile." AIPTF India. 2015. Accessed July 8, 2015. http://aiptfindia.org/?page_id=26.

¹⁸ "The Constitution (Eighty-Sixth Amendment) Act." India Code Legislative Department. December 12, 2002. Accessed July 15, 2015. <http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend86.htm>.

cooperation with the Indian government that would ultimately result in the self-sufficiency of teachers. By uniting all primary teachers in India under one blanket organization, AIPTF believes that it would be much easier for teachers to form relationships with one another under their common struggle to not only safeguard but promote their rights and privileges as teachers on all matters relating to education.¹⁹

Proposed Solutions On The Six Norms

On 25% Reservation:

According to Singh, he was the first individual to propose and advocate for RTE's mandated 25% reservation of EWS (Economically Weaker Students) in private schools to the government. When drafting the RTE law, the government reportedly needed help. As a result, they turned to outside sources; education experts who they believed could provide valuable insight regarding the best way to format and implement the RTE law. Singh claims that he was one of these individuals.

AIPTF believes that RTE's mandated 25% reservation is necessary in order to ensure that EWS are provided with better opportunities and the chance to succeed later in life. In addition, since the govt. are the ones paying for the EWS' education, Singh believes there is no reason for the schools to complain about providing free education $\frac{1}{4}$ of their students. While many argue that the other 75% of the private school's population should not have to bear the extra costs of other students, AIPTF believes this is the only feasible option and ultimately results in the chance for EWS to thrive in a better learning environment.

On Infrastructure:

Not only does AIPTF believe that the current infrastructure norms should be in place, but they believe that these norms need to be more strictly enforced by the government. AIPTF demands that these norms be implemented in all schools in order to ensure that students are given the best learning environment possible. More importantly though, AIPTF believes that when a school fails to comply with these norms then the appropriate action must be taken. They demand that the National Committee for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), the committee created by the government for the purpose of overseeing the

¹⁹ "Vision and Mission." AIPTF India. 2015. Accessed July 8, 2015.
http://aiptfindia.org/?page_id=36.

implementation of RTE, should give harsher notices to non-compliant schools and be more willing to shut down these schools if they are unable to comply over a certain time period.

AIPTF wants to pressure the government to enforce these norms, and they believe that the core issue in their implementation stems from the funds received by each academy's School Management Committee (SMC). A school's SMC is in charge of drawing a plan that details how much money is needed in the school itself and then submits its plans to the government in order to get the funds approved. However, Singh claims that the funds are not being transferred to these SMC's since the government is not spending the proper allocated amount of money on education from the country's GDP. While it is currently mandated that 6% of the nation's total GDP be spent on education, less than 4% is being allocated as of now.

Singh believes that RTE must be treated as a civil right for all students, and that the responsibility falls on the government to not only approve the SMC's plans but to provide more schools with the funds needed to comply by these RTE norms. If more money is allocated from India's GDP towards education, then Singh believes the funds will be available to allow more schools to properly implement the infrastructure norms mandated by RTE.

AIPTF has already submitted a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) with Delhi's National Coalition for Education (NCE) which calls the government out not only for their ineffective implementation of these infrastructure norms but also for failing to enforce RTE as a whole. They also claim that this PIL has already been taken into consideration by the Supreme Court of India. As of now, Singh claimed that the case is currently lying with the Supreme Court. (Is this your translation of the interview or verbatim?) (Yes, and I fact-check this statement later on in the paper)

On Pupil-Teacher Ratio:

AIPTF believes that the lower Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTR) in classrooms mandated by RTE is not only feasible to implement but should also be heavily enforced through a more concentrated effort from the Indian government. Singh pointed to the state of Kerala, which he claims has reduced the PTR in all of their schools to 1:25. He claims that he has seen much better learning conditions in schools (like the ones in Kerala) where the mandated PTR of 1:35 or lower has been implemented. In addition, Singh believes that Kerala is not an isolated case; he asserts that a majority of primary schools are currently complying by the mandated PTR norms.

However, he does acknowledge a fundamental problem in regards to enforcing these PTR norms: teacher shortages. According to Singh, there are currently 1.1 million teachers who are needed in the classroom in order for schools to feasibly bring down their PTR's and class sizes. This is why AIPTF is actively involved in further pressuring the government to provide teachers with better resources (higher salaries, quality education in teacher academies, etc.). While quality teachers are available, they believe the government is not hiring them and are weeding out potentially exceptional teachers through standardized tests such as the Teacher Eligibility Test (this will be discussed more in later sections).

In regards to the correlation between PTR's and learning outcomes, Singh believes that, while AIPTF is unaware of any formal studies conducted which compares PTR's to learning outcomes, that a higher PTR leads to a much lower learning outcome.

If the learning conditions are conducive, which includes well-equipped teachers, then Singh believes quality education in these schools is attainable. He once again ties this to the government's budget allocation from the overall GDP towards the education sector. If there can be an increase in the appropriation of funds, then Singh believes this can lead to the hiring of more qualified teachers and subsequently provide the conditions needed for a lower PTR in the classroom.

On Teacher-Classroom Ratio:

AIPTF is a firm believer in the notion that every classroom should have at least one teacher that teaches the class irrespective of the number of students. In addition, similar to their beliefs on other infrastructure norms, AIPTF asserts that problems related to a shortage of classrooms due to this TCR mandate can be easily fixed if the government was willing to allocate more funds from India's GDP towards the education sector.

On Teacher Eligibility (TET):

In regards to some of the tactics used to determine the quality of a teacher that were set forth with the passage of RTE, specifically RTE's mandate that every teacher-in-training must now pass the Teacher Eligibility Test in order to graduate, AIPTF believes that the move is completely unnecessary and that it is only preventing quality teachers from gaining better teaching positions. They believe that the content within the TET itself is not universally covered in all education colleges and subsequently puts certain teachers at a disadvantage.

With this in mind, Singh proposes that the Indian government shifts their attention away from standardized testing and more towards educational institutions, which prepare these teachers to enter the classroom. He believes that focusing teacher reform on these institutions will allow the government to close education academies which are not up to par and subsequently improve the quality of teacher education (and ultimately teacher performance) at a deeper level instead of simply using the TET to measure their performance.

Singh pointed to the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) recent efforts to reform this aspect of teacher education. Specifically, he claims that the NCTE has recently increased the course length for a teacher to obtain their B.Ed degree (a necessary requirement to become a teacher in India) from one to two years, thereby making it easier to weed out unqualified teachers and fill up school vacancies.

Even though AIPTF is in support of reforming the test to include universally taught content, they still firmly believe that the TET must be abolished if this sort of reform cannot be properly implemented. If more attention is placed towards expanding the learning material that is being taught in different education colleges then Singh believes that the government would no longer need to worry about whether or not they are hiring quality teachers.

On Teacher Salaries In Private Schools:

AIPTF agrees with the notion that the salaries of private school teachers in India are inherently lower than their public school counterparts. In consequence, Singh feel that the RTE's move to equalize the salaries provided to both government and private school teachers is a commendable change that the government needs to enforce.

However, AIPTF as a whole is still opposed to the commercialization of education through the private sector. Since upper-class citizens are commonly the only ones who are able to enjoy all the added benefits of a private education (up until RTE's mandated 25% reservation in private schools, which still has some faults of its own), AIPTF wants to focus their attention towards schools where all are guaranteed admittance so that they can ensure that students from a diverse range of backgrounds are provided with a quality education. More importantly, private school teachers are not even members of AIPTF; their organization solely deals with elementary government school teachers.

With this in mind, AIPTF believes that no more needs to be done to equalize the salaries between government and private school teachers and that this problem should not be a priority for the union.

Fact-Checking Their Claims

On 25% Reservation:

In my interview with Singh, he claimed that he was specially chosen by the Indian government to assist in the formal drafting process of the RTE law. While there is no clear way to validate whether or not Singh proposed the idea of a mandated 25% reservation in private schools for EWS, I have found many sources confirming President Singh was actively involved in a variety of discussions both inside and outside of the government concerning the effectiveness in the implementation of RTE's mandated 25% reservation law.

One of these meetings was a gathering back in March 2012 of teacher unions, civil activists, and educationists from 24 states coming together in Bhubaneswar for the purpose addressing some of the core issues and developing potential solutions in regards to school education in India. Both AIPTF's General Secretary (S. Eswaran) and President (Rampal Singh) attended the large gathering (partly hosted by AIPTF). One major issue discussed during these proceedings was the proper implementation of the 25% reservation mandate from RTE and ensuring that no urban and/or rural communities are excluded from this process, an issue of RTE which is consistent with Singh's strong support of the ruling in my discussion with him.²⁰

In addition, Singh contributed to a document published in association with the Indian government titled "Status of Implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009: Year Two (2011-12)." The document, as can be inferred from the name, examined various aspects and mandates of RTE and judged their effectiveness. Specifically, one aspect of RTE that the paper explored was the private sector's role in its implementation.

Many of the conclusions which the paper drew from its analysis of the private sector were consistent with Singh's views (as he presented them to me); the paper deduced that there needs to be much more

²⁰ "Teachers Unions, Educationists from 24 States Came Together in Bhubaneswar to Discuss Challenges of School Education." Odisha Diary. December 19, 2012. Accessed July 10, 2015. <http://orissadiary.com/bhubaneswar/ShowCityNews.asp?id=38366>.

regulation in the private sector as they tried to find ingenious ways to avoid accountability from RTE, a Common School system for all students is preferable to a Public-Private Partnership, a bridge needs to be built between the middle class which can draw them away from private schools and back towards the government schools, etc.²¹

While there was no clear evidence which insinuated that Singh was directly responsible for implementing the 25% reservation mandate in private schools through RTE, it was very evident through my secondary research that AIPTF's voice was very prevalent (through both governmental and non-governmental channels) in the conversation revolving not only around the implementation of the 25% reservation norm but the future of the private sector as a whole.

On Infrastructure:

There were two claims made by Singh that I felt needed to be validated; one concerning the government's allocation of funds on education from the country's overall GDP and AIPTF's reported PIL with Delhi's NCE that calls the government out on their ineffective implementation of RTE.

In regards to Singh's first claim, a previous paper which I examined during my initial secondary research highlighted many unions' discontent with the government's allocation of funds towards education from India's overall GDP. The paper, published by CCS, is titled "Perspectives of Teachers' Unions on Challenges to Education in India." In the section of the paper titled "Major Challenges of Education in India: A Perspective of Teachers' Unions," the author, Saumya Gupta, states that, "[The unions] complain that while 6% of the GDP is supposed to be allocated for education, less than 4% is being spent currently."²²

In regards to Singh's second claim, I was able to locate the PIL that he claimed AIPTF helped file in accordance with Delhi's NCE. The litigation itself is indeed being handled by the Supreme Court and the two parties involved are listed on the document as the following: NCE being the petitioner and Union of India & Ors. being the responder. The synopsis of the PIL states that the litigation itself deals with,

²¹ "Status of Implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009: Year Two (2011-12)." RTE Maharashtra. 2012. Accessed July 8, 2015.

<http://rtemaharashtra.org/downloads/rteforumsecond.pdf>.

²² "Perspectives of Teachers' Unions on Challenges to Education in India." CCS. 2013.

Accessed July 5, 2015. https://ccsinternship.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/304_perspectives-of-teachers-unions-on-challenges-to-education-in-india_soumya-gupta.pdf.

“systematic and widespread violations of children’s Right To Education across the country, including violations of numerous specific requirements of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009,” which is consistent with Singh’s assertions that infrastructure norms were some of the many issues covered in the NCE’s PIL.²³

However, infrastructure norms are still explicitly mentioned and addressed in the PIL. In sub-section 4 of Part C of the synopsis of the litigation, outlining the NCE’s demands, it states that, “The States and Union Territories upgrade all deficient schools (per paragraphs 20 to 29) with the appropriate physical infrastructure so as to be in compliance with the RTE Act Schedule 2 within 6 months of today.”²⁴

On Pupil-Teacher Ratio:

In my conversation with Singh, he claimed that the state of Kerala has managed to reduce their PTR to 1:25. In addition, he also believed that many other states throughout India are already abiding by the mandated PTR norms and subsequently claimed that the efforts needed to enforce these norms were already being undertaken.

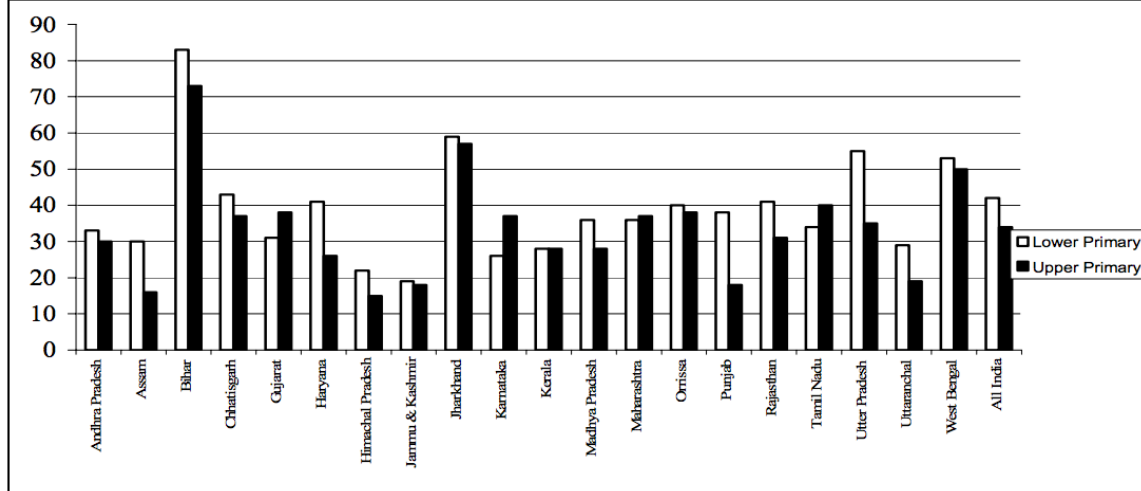
To validate Singh’s claims, I searched for a document titled, “Access to Elementary Education in India” which examines the conditions of elementary schools throughout India. The paper, originally published by the NUEPA (National University of Education Planning and Administration), conducted many case studies to examine various aspects that determine a quality elementary education in India. One of these aspects was a school’s PTR ratio; the study gathered data from numerous government schools in several states and paired the numbers together in a data table:

²³ "Public Interest Litigation Concerning Indian Govt. Implementation of RTE." Human Rights Law Network. March 1, 2014. Accessed July 10, 2015.

<http://www.hrln.org/hrln/images/stories/pdf/rte-final-petition.pdf>.

²⁴ *ibid*

Figure 3: Pupil-Teacher Ratios in the Major States



Source: NCERT (2005)

As can be seen from the table above, while Singh’s claim that Kerala has managed to lower their PTR to 1:25 is not 100% accurate, the PTR indicated in the table (which I have estimated to be around 1:28) is not too far off from Singh’s estimate and is also in accordance with RTE’s mandated PTR of 1:35. However, Singh’s claim that a majority of the states in India are abiding by the mandated PTR norms is evidently false based on the data provided from this table. While RTE mandates a strict PTR of 1:35 or below, about 13 of the 20 states sampled in this study have a PTR>1:35. In addition, the bracket on the x-axis titled “All India,” which indicates the nation’s average PTR, is about 1:42 for lower primary (which is still higher than the RTE-mandated norm).²⁵

Lastly, Singh asserted that he had not heard of any studies correlating PTR’s to learning outcomes. While such studies do indeed exist, they only validate Singh’s later claim that higher PTR’s lead to lower learning outcomes (and vice versa). According to a paper published by the Azim Premji Foundation titled, “The Criticality of Pupil-Teacher Ratio,” which studied 1,887 schools throughout the course of their study, there is a direct linkage between PTR’s and learning outcomes. The study found in a majority of the schools they studied that school performance sharply dropped as PTR’s began to increase. They deduced this by determining which of the schools they studied qualified for the learning criteria that was suitable

²⁵ Govinda, R., and Madhumita Bandyopadhyay. "Access to Elementary Education in India." NUEPA. July 1, 2008. Accessed July 10, 2015. http://www.nuepa.org/Download/Publications/Create/CAR_2008/India_CAR.pdf.

for their grade. In the end, only 8% of the schools studied qualified for this learning criteria; less than 2% of these schools had a PTR>1:40 while 27% of these school's PTR<1:20.²⁶

On Teacher-Classroom Ratio:

I did not deduce that any fact-checking of Singh's claims was necessary for this portion of our discussion.

On Teacher Eligibility:

There were two claims made by Singh that I felt the need to validate during this portion of our discussion. First was the NCTE's apparent move to increase the course length required for teachers-in-training to obtain their B.Ed degree. After conducting more secondary research, I found a piece published by the Times of India which corroborates with Singh's allegation. In accordance with what Singh told me, the article states that, as of 2014, the NCTE not only increased the length of the B.Ed curriculum but also substantially modified it.²⁷ Secondly, Singh suggested that many teachers are put at a disadvantage when taking the TET since a majority of the content covered in that test is not taught universally in education colleges. According to the Times of India, only 5.6% of teachers out of 6.6 lakh candidates managed to pass the October 2014 test. Surprisingly though, this was an improvement; the February 2014 test only saw 1.79% of the teachers passing the exam out of the 7.5 lakh who qualified.²⁸ The article points to numerous academicians who believe that the failure in the implementation of this exam is directly attributed to the quality of teacher education institutions throughout the country, subsequently validating Singh's previous complaints about the TET as a whole.

On Teacher Salaries in Private Schools:

I did not deduce that any fact-checking of Singh's claims was necessary for this portion of our discussion.

²⁶ "The Criticality of Pupil Teacher Ratio." Azim Premji Foundation. September 1, 2010. Accessed July 10, 2015. [http://www.azimpremjifoundation.org/pdf/Criticality of Pupil Teacher Ratio.pdf](http://www.azimpremjifoundation.org/pdf/Criticality%20of%20Pupil%20Teacher%20Ratio.pdf).

²⁷ "BEd to Become 2 Years Long; Curriculum to Be Changed." The Times of India. December 19, 2014. Accessed July 10, 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/BEd-to-become-2-years-long-curriculum-to-be-changed/articleshow/45568736.cms>.

²⁸ Borwankar, Vinamrata. "Only 37,000 of 7L Clear Teacher Eligibility Test." The Times of India. October 10, 2014. Accessed July 14, 2015. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/education/news/Only-37000-of-7L-clear-teacher-eligibility-test/articleshow/44766601.cms>.

Comparison between Teacher Union Views and Views of Government School Teachers

On 25% Reservation:

Both of the teachers who I spoke to generally agreed with Singh's views; they both feel that the 25% reservation clause is a good idea which would ideally provide EWS with more opportunities to succeed. Soodh points out that many of her friends who are government school teachers send their kids to private schools; another indication that one system of schooling is able to provide a more quality education than the other.

However, both teachers feel that the implementation of the norm has proven to be highly ineffective. Unlike Singh's apparent belief that the 25% reservation clause is currently running smoothly, Gulati points out that many private schools that she knows of are filling in the wrong data in order to allow slots reserved for EWS to go to upper class students. Soodh concludes that once kids are allowed to go to any type of school within 4 km of their homes then the 25% reservation norm would be able to achieve its original purpose.

On Infrastructure:

Both of the teachers who I spoke to agreed with Singh's views in its entirety; all parties felt that RTE's mandated infrastructure norms are necessary in providing students with a better learning environment and need to be implemented in all schools. Gulati discussed how even the smallest changes (good classrooms, better lighting, etc.) were able to impact the effectiveness of her teaching.

On Pupil-Teacher Ratio:

Both of the teachers who I spoke to once again appeared to agree with a majority of Singh's views on this norm; while they believed that a lower PTR would lead to better scores in the classroom, they both felt that the implementation of this norm in all schools is highly unrealistic.

In particular, Soodh believed that a lower PTR would give her a better idea of where each kid in her class stands (which ones are grasping the material, which ones need improvement, etc.). Gulati agreed, adding that a lower PTR would allow her to concentrate on every student and create more personal bonds with her pupils. However, both teachers recognize realities; as of now their school's average PTR is about 1:60 and lowering it would not only require more classrooms but also more teachers. While Singh feels that a majority of schools in India are already abiding by the PTR norms, both teachers recognize that it is

impractical to accept all students into government schools and still expect to have enough teachers to observe a PTR of 1:35.

On Teacher-Classroom Ratio:

Both teachers felt similarly about TCR's as they did PTR's; while they both believe that the proper implementation of RTE's mandated TCR would allow for many benefits in the classroom, they knew that it was highly unlikely. Each Vidyalaya teacher already teaches about 5-6 classes.

On Teacher Eligibility:

Unlike Singh's belief that the TET in its entirety should be abolished, both teachers feel that the test is effective to a certain extent. Soodh feels that the test is very effective and believes should be taken more than once a year in order to ensure that a teacher is consistently performing to the best of their abilities. She feels that if teachers are not consistently assessed then they will feel too much comfort with their current position which will subsequently lower their effort levels. In addition Soodh feels that student evaluations have the potential to be useful; if the administration is able to hear about a teacher's performance from a student it will give them a better idea of how the teacher conducts themselves inside the classroom.

While Gulati also believes that the TET is relatively effective, she leans more towards Singh's views that it generally allows even less teachers to be hired. She believes that TET can sometimes weed out too many teachers as opposed to just bad teachers. If the TET were to be done before teachers achieve their B.Ed and another test was put in place to assess their aptitude after receiving the degree then Gulati believes the intended purpose of the TET would be achieved.

In short, while Singh feels that the TET needs to be completely removed in order to allow more teachers to enter the workforce, both teachers who I spoke to felt that the concept behind the TET was an efficient way to ensure that only quality teachers would be obtaining jobs and believed that a little more refining would allow the test to accomplish its intended purpose.

On Teacher Salaries In Private Schools:

Both of the teachers who I spoke to appeared to agree with Singh on all aspects of this norm; they felt that more effort should be put in by the government to equalize the salaries between government and private school teachers and that these teachers should receive the same benefits as those in government schools. However, Soodh felt that certain realities needed to be recognized; while she emphasized that the commercialization of education should be discouraged (echoing Singh's beliefs), she felt that some sort of concrete relationship should exist between the private and government sector since neither party will be abolished anytime soon (contrary to Singh's ultimatum-styled vision).

Teacher Unions

On GSTA

Background On Their Union

Both my primary and secondary research on GSTA resulted in little information regarding the history of their union. According to their website, GSTA is, “an elected body [that advocates] for [the] rights of government school teachers.”²⁹ The union itself is based out of Delhi. When I spoke with the General Secretary of the Union, Ajay Yadav, all I was able to find out regarding the GSTA’s current endeavors was that they have been unable to assist in the creation and/or impact of public policy in the field of education. Yadav claims that this sort of involvement/influence comes directly from advisors and that unions are unable to play any role throughout this process (contrary to the legislative results demonstrated by AIPTF).

While Yadav declined to provide me with the specific member size of GSTA, he did inform me that 98% of the union’s members are indeed government school teachers.

Their Views/Proposed Solutions On The Six Norms

On 25% Reservation:

Yadav believes that the 25% reservation norm, while it is an ideal tactic to ensure that EWS are gifted with more opportunities, is not being properly implemented and is subsequently resulting in the corruption and abuse of a clause which only hoped to provide all students with equal opportunities.

He claims that there are many rich people and corrupt businessmen who are taking certificates away from EWS and are instead giving it to their own children. According to Yadav, a BPL card is required to obtain a certificate claiming that a person is an EWS and is subsequently eligible for the 25% reservation slots. However, many rich families found it cheaper to buy a BPL card from a lower class family instead of paying the private school admission fees. Yadav states that he has personally seen over 100 cases of this sort of malpractice and that, since 80% of students within government schools are EWS, rich families are taking advantage of a system which is intended for good purposes.

Yadav believes that the best way to reduce the corruption in this system is to remove the quotas in its entirety and simply reduce the fees for private schools. By doing so, Yadav feels that the government

²⁹ "About GSTA." GSTA. Accessed July 14, 2015. <http://www.gstadelhi.com/about.html>.

would no longer have funding issues since more students will be applying to private schools in order to take advantage of the quality education they have to offer. As a result, the government will simply be able to look at a private school's balance sheet and get an accurate picture of how much money they intake (which Yadav claims is a lot of money).

According to Yadav, a teacher minister has already conducted a meeting with 250 schools to discuss this issue and to see if they could change the policy in order to allow the government to control the fees that private schools set. GSTA plans to support this movement and take similar actions in the future.

On Infrastructure:

GSTA firmly agrees with the necessity and supports the proper implementation of RTE's mandated infrastructure norms. To prove their necessity, Yadav points to the thousands of students who often live in congested areas (slums, small houses, etc.). Many of these children are not able to gain quality infrastructure at their own homes, and school is oftentimes the only break they get from this sort of low quality environment.

With this in mind, Yadav believes that children will not only be more excited to go to school but will be able to develop better if they are able to come to a building where there is a functional playground, a fully-stocked library, etc. However, Yadav does recognize realities; keeping in mind the congested space around many cities in India, he proposes that some of the mandates for these norms could be loosened.

If a common playground were to be built for three schools located on the same block then he feels that could save money while still providing kids with the necessary facilities. Yadav claims that the government could even go a step further and build small multi-story high rises if there are many schools relatively close to each other on a city block. This would also solve the problems related with enforcing RTE's mandated TCR since it would provide these schools with more room for classrooms. As a whole, Yadav believes that if RTE's infrastructure norms can be implemented in a fashion where a long term vision is taken into account then it will be more feasible to implement at the ground-level.

On Pupil-Teacher Ratio:

While GSTA accepts the current ratio of 1:30, they feel that it has resulted in a massive shortage of teachers which has subsequently caused currently-employed teachers to be overloaded and stressed with the extra work (upsetting the whole environment of quality education in a school). Yadav directly correlates this vacancy of teachers to the lack of planning, vision, and recruitment by the government. In

fact, he attributes this complication to an overall issue of control within teachers themselves. He claims that, in addition to the PTR norms creating a large shortage of teachers, RTE has also implemented policies that have forced teachers to pay for food, books, etc. while students are now allowed to breeze by in classes due to RTE's strict no-fail policy.

Now that corporal punishment has also been removed from classrooms under RTE, Yadav believes that kids are receiving their own sort of "salary" as they are no longer receiving any sort of accountability pressures from their educators. If this power balance can be restored then Yadav is convinced that the issues stemming from the PTR norms are one of the many concerns that can be addressed.

On Teacher-Classroom Ratio:

Similar to their views on the PTR norms, GSTA believes that the current mandated TCR is providing a burden to many teachers and schools which simply don't have the proper facilities to provide one classroom to each student. As mentioned earlier, GSTA feels that the best way to fix this issue is by combining multiple schools (that are within the same general vicinity) together into a multi-story highrise building so that more space for classrooms would be provided.

On Teacher Eligibility:

GSTA feels that the current TET is effective in weeding out bad teachers and should be mandatory for all teachers-in-training since it allows schools to gain a more qualified staff.

On Teacher Salaries in Private Schools:

GSTA feels that, since private school teachers aren't members of their union, the issue of teacher salaries in private schools isn't too much of a concern for them. Nonetheless, they feel that the government should forge some sort of relationship with the private sector so they would have the ability to regulate their teachers' salaries and set minimum standards. Since there are so many good schools in the private sector, Yadav believes their teachers deserve good salaries.

Fact-Checking Their Claims

On 25% Reservation:

The one aspect of my conversation with Yadav that I felt the need to verify was his claim that there are many rich families who are getting a hold of BPL cards in order to provide their kids with a better education at a much cheaper cost. After conducting more secondary research, I found a case study based

out of Jharkhand published by CCS titled, "Status of Implementation of 25% reservation in Private Schools for underprivileged Children as per the RTE Act."³⁰

The paper had a section titled, "Apprehension regarding genuineness of the poorness of the BPL card holders," which dealt with issues similar to those Yadav brought up during our discussion. The study found that, while 65% of the principals of the schools in the studied region have raised this as a concern, 55% of these principals claim that they don't have the manpower to verify the poorness of each BPL card holder while another 40% stated they couldn't question the legal validity of a BPL card presented to them.³¹

The study also discovered that about 2/3 of the BPL card holders in the region have a salary 2 to 2.5 times higher than the criteria required for Non-BPL card holders. In addition, 38% of the families studied have houses on their own legal property, 95.2% of these families have television, and 33.8% of these families have running water facilities within their house.³²

While the paper makes no general conclusions regarding the authenticity of BPL card holders in India, these statistics make it appear very evident that Yadav's claims regarding corruption in the BPL card system have some validity.

On Infrastructure:

I did not deduce that any fact-checking of Yadav's claims was necessary for this portion of our discussion.

On Pupil-Teacher Ratio:

In this portion of our discussion, Yadav claimed that RTE mandated teachers to pay for their own food, books, etc. while students were practically given a free pass.

However, after careful examination of the RTE law, I can conclude that there is no portion within the text that requires teachers to pay for any of the supplies which Yadav listed during our conversation.³³ To

³⁰ Singh, Rajan, Chandan Singh, Lix Roj, and Pankaj Kumar. "Status of Implementation of 25% Reservation in Private Schools for Underprivileged Children as per the RTE Act: Case Study of Ranchi, Jharkhand." Academia.edu. Accessed July 14, 2015.

https://www.academia.edu/10066243/Status_of_Implementation_of_25_reservation_in_Private_Schools_for_underprivileged_Children_as_per_the_RTE_Act_Case_Study_of.

³¹ ibid

³² ibid

³³ "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009." DELTA. August 27, 2009. Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://www.delta.org.in/form/rte.pdf>.

further validate this, I found an external website which summarized the duties and responsibilities of teachers as listed by the RTE act; none of these related to the purchasing of any sort of supplies.³⁴

Nonetheless, I was able to find many articles which both referenced and detailed the no-fail policy that Yadav mentioned during our conversation. Specifically, I found an article published by the Hindustan Times, "No-Fail Till Class 8 May Be Reviewed," which discussed the criticism surrounding RTE's no-fail policy. In a nutshell, the policy states that children ages 6-14 (up to Class 8) are unable to be failed in any of their classes.³⁵ The article stated that India's parliamentary standing committee on HRD (Human Resource Department) has sharply criticized the move following a consistent declination in reading and math scores in government across the country (similar to Yadav's complaints). As of now, an independent panel has been set up by Congress and is planning to formally request that India's HRD reconsiders the no-fail policy.³⁶

On Teacher-Classroom Ratio:

I did not deduce that any fact-checking of Yadav's claims was necessary for this portion of our discussion.

On Teacher Eligibility:

I did not deduce that any fact-checking of Yadav's claims was necessary for this portion of our discussion.

On Teacher Salaries In Private School:

I did not deduce that any fact-checking of Yadav's claims was necessary for this portion of our discussion.

Comparing Their Views With Govt. School Teachers

On 25% Reservation:

Both teachers I spoke to seemed to agree with Yadav's views on this norm; all parties felt that the 25% reservation clause was an excellent way to ensure that EWS are given the same opportunities as upper class students but still seemed to agree that its implementation has been faulty at best. Both teachers felt that many rich families have been taking advantage of the system and purchasing BPL cards from lower class families in order to allow their children to take away the slots reserved for EWS. Even though

³⁴ "Teachers-RTE." RTE Maharashtra. Accessed July 14, 2015.

<http://www.rtemaharashtra.org/index.php/teachers>.

³⁵ "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009." DELTA. August 27, 2009. Accessed July 5, 2015. <http://www.delta.org.in/form/rte.pdf>.

³⁶ Kasturi, Charu. "No-Fail Till Class 8 May Be Reviewed." Hindustan Times. April 30, 2013. Accessed July 12, 2015. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/newdelhi/no-fail-till-class-8-may-be-reviewed/article1-1052440.aspx>.

they all believe that the clause is a necessary tool to ensure quality education for all students, they understand that major reforms are necessary.

On Infrastructure:

For the most part, both of the teachers who I spoke to seemed to agree with Yadav's views on this norm. All parties believed that implementing RTE's mandated infrastructure norms should be a priority and that it contributes to a better learning environment for students who enter the classroom. The only true difference between Yadav's views and that of the government teachers I spoke to was that Yadav felt the provisions within the infrastructure norms could be loosened in order to make them more feasible.

While he believed that certain norms could be condensed (e.g. common playgrounds, multi-story school buildings, etc.), both of the teachers I spoke to felt that the only way to guarantee that a quality learning environment was provided to their students was if the infrastructure norms were to be implemented in their entirety.

On Pupil-Teacher Ratio:

Both teachers I spoke to appeared to sharply disagree with Yadav's views towards RTE's mandated PTR norm. While Yadav simply brushed off the norm as acceptable, both teachers felt it to be a necessity that redefined their interactions inside the classroom. None of the teachers seemed to care about the extra workload or burden that it might have placed on them and instead focused on all of the benefits that a lower PTR would have to offer to their school.

In addition, these teachers' biggest complaint about the PTR norms was simply on the feasibility of its implementation. Yadav, on the other hand, felt that the issues posed by PTR linked to a systematic problem in the Indian school system of teachers losing control over their students.

On the contrary though, the teachers I spoke to believed that a lower PTR would allow them to gain control over their students. According to Soodh, a lower PTR would give her a better idea of where each kid stands in her class (which ones are grasping the material, which ones require more assistance, etc.) which would subsequently lead to higher exam results.

On Teacher-Classroom Ratio:

Both teachers I spoke to seemed to feel similarly to Yadav in regards to this norm; while they felt that a TCR of 1:1 was a helpful tool to provide students with a better learning environment, they recognized the harsh realities of actually providing a school with that many more classrooms.

The real difference between the two parties is that Yadav came up with viable solutions; while both teachers simply deduced that it's unfeasible to implement, Yadav believed that it could be done if multi-story schools were built which would lead to more room for classroom space.

On Teacher Eligibility:

As a whole, all parties seemed to agree on this norm. To a certain extent, both the government teachers I spoke to and Yadav felt that the TET was a good way of measuring a teacher's performance and subsequently weeding out candidates who were unqualified. The only real difference between responses in this section would be that both government school teachers felt that some refining needed to be done in order to make the test effective (whether it was to add more evaluations or to shorten the length of them) while Yadav simply approved of the test as a whole. Nonetheless, they all believed that the TET was an effective tool and that it should continue to be enforced as a requirement for becoming a teacher.

On Teacher Salaries In Private Schools:

Once again, both Yadav and the teachers appeared to agree that the salaries between government school teachers and private school teachers should be equalized. In fact, similar to Soodh's belief that a relationship needs to be forged between the government and the private sector, Yadav stated that this relationship would be the best way for the government to regulate the salaries given to private school teachers and ultimately set a minimum benchmark for how much they should be paid.

Summary Of Teacher Union Responses

	25% Reservation	Infrastructure	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Teacher-Classroom Ratio	Teacher Eligibility	Teacher Salaries in Pvt. Schools
GSTA	-Quota must be eliminated; instead reduce pvt. school fees	-Good to implement but lower standards for feasibility (e.g. common playgrounds)	-More work put on teachers b/c of shortage, lowers quality education	-School buildings should be permanent w/ multiple floors for more rooms+class rooms	-Should be mandatory+ heavily enforced	-Govt. should set minimum standard for both pvt.+public schools
AIPTF	- Strongly supports+advocates for	-Should be there and must be implemented; govt. needs to heavily enforce	-Feasible implementation; govt. needs to hire more qualified teachers	-Heavily supports ratio; govt. needs to commit \$\$	-Needs to be abolished; focus should be on improving education colleges	-Pvt. schools not their problem; fine with low salaries

Summary Of Govt. School Teacher Responses

Gargi Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya School	25% reservation	Infrastructure	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Teacher-Classroom Ratio	Teacher Eligibility	Teacher Salaries in Pvt. Schools
Rashmit Gulati	-Good idea but bad implementation; should be reformed	-Necessary and should be enforced; govt. must issue funds to all schools	-1:35 ideal but not feasible; should find better way to implement	-Also not feasible in practice; govt. schools need pvt. school facilities	-Limits amt. of teachers that are hired; should be done before B.Ed degree along w/ aptitude test after	-Needs to be equalized; govt. should provide private schools w/ more benefits
Gopa Soodh	-Helpful but slots should go to the right people; should be replaced w/ policy that lets kids go to any school w/in 4km radius	- Effective+should be encouraged; not a priority though	-1:35 isn't feasible but more can be done to lower PTR; should be a priority	-Unfeasible w/ current situation but more could be done (change ratio)	-Very effective and TET+more evaluations should be used regularly	-Pvt. sector+government must have closer relationship to equalize salaries

Conclusion

After conducting thorough primary and secondary research, I have been able to group each of the six norms into three general categories which remain consistent with my findings from discussions with both teachers and teacher unions: Mandated School Regulations (which consists of the 25% reservation norm and the infrastructure norms), School Ratios (which consists of RTE's mandated PTR and TCR), and Teacher Guidelines (which consists of RTE's teacher eligibility and teacher salary norm). Within these three categories, it became easier for me to notice and analyze trends in the responses between the two unions I was able to interview. In addition, this categorization allowed me to more effectively compare these unions' responses to the government school teacher counterparts.

In regards to the "Mandated School Regulations" category, I noticed that both of the unions consistently agreed with the ideas behind the policies but always felt some sort of skepticism when it came down to the norm's implementation. And this was generally for a good reason; when I fact-checked all of the claims which both unions made against the policies in the "Mandated School Regulations" category, they would not only check out but would oftentimes further support these unions' original claims. Whether it was complaints about how the certificates associated with the 25% reservation norm weren't going to the right students or how more schools needed to abide by the infrastructure norms set in place by RTE, both unions showed a similar pattern: while they were happy with the proposed ideas, they were more than ready to see substantive results.

This was especially evident when comparing the views of both of these unions with the two government school teachers I was able to interview; both teachers I spoke to shared the exact same views as their union counterparts. The only notable difference between any of the involved parties was that AIPTF seemed to believe that the 25% reservation norm was being implemented much more effectively than it actually was (possibly due to the union's previous involvement in a number of talks and studies concerning the utilization of the reservation clause).

In regards to the "School Ratios" category, I noticed that whatever feelings each of the teacher unions had towards RTE's PTR norms they would exhibit towards its TCR norms as well. This was most likely because of the strong correlation the two norms had to each other; both of them affected the hiring of

teachers, the amount of resources provided by the government, and the direct impact on a child's performance in the classroom. However, each union had contrasting views when it came to PTR; while AIPTF believed that the ratio was a necessary regulation to create a more productive learning space, GSTA pointed to the burden that it bore on teachers who already had enough on their plates.

Nonetheless, when comparing these unions to government it was clear that AIPTF's views were more heavily supported. Both of the government teachers recognized the benefits associated with a lower PTR and had seen firsthand how it can dramatically change the dynamic within a classroom. While GSTA appeared to be connecting the norm to unrelated (and sometimes nonexistent) issues in the school system, AIPTF's views on "School Ratios" emerged as a more accurate reflection of their constituents' beliefs.

In regards to the "Teacher Guidelines" category, I only seemed to notice consistencies when it came to the issue of teacher salaries in private schools. Both unions, despite the fact that they did recognize the salary gap between government and private school teachers as a troubling issue, did not find the enforcement of this norm to be too much of a concern since it did not directly affect their workplace lives. They did sympathize with these teachers, but that was all the effort they were willing to put into the issue.

TET was the one norm where both unions seemed to be polarized. While GSTA felt that the test was acceptable in its current form, AIPTF strongly believed that the TET was unfair and needed to be abolished immediately. In fact, it seemed that AIPTF's criticisms were more valid due to the fact that GSTA did not provide any sort of evidence to back up their praise. When I fact-checked AIPTF's views on TET, every claim they made appeared to check out. On the other hand, I wasn't even able to fact-check GSTA's claims since they simply acknowledged the test as effective and moved on.

When comparing these union's views to government school-teachers, I was surprised to find out that both teachers I spoke to agreed with GSTA. While they didn't necessary place their support of the TET in such simplistic terms, both teachers felt that the test was an effective tool to measure a teacher's performance and subsequently weed out candidates who were unqualified. One teacher even insisted on more tests and evaluations, preferably conducted by students, in order to ensure that a teacher is always performing at their highest inside and outside of the classroom. Both of the government teachers

also seemed to disagree with AIPTF's belief that the content tested in the TET is unfair, which may suggest that the union fears accountability pressures from the government.

Overall, both teacher unions and government school teachers shared similar feelings on a majority of the norms examined in this study. While their views may have varied when it came to the implementation process, both unions seemed to have students' best interests at heart and felt that more pressure needed to be placed on the government to allocate more funds towards India's education sector. Even the government school teachers believed that, while RTE's policies have the potential to dramatically alter the quality of education in India, proper implementation is key to ensuring these positive results.

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