INDUS ACTION

CENTRAL SQUARE FOUNDATION

Project Eklavya

Making Social Inclusion Possible within private unaided non-minority schools under Section 12(1)(c) of RTE

INDUS ACTION

INDUS ACTION seeks to mobilize public resources and empower communities to solve India's wide gap between policy framing and grassroots implementation, by working in deep-rooted problem areas such as education, public health, law enforcement and accountability.

India's complex social norms are oftentimes at odds with its collective development aspirations. Overcoming such norms requires projects of a nature that are outside the realm of a traditional legal or a policy framework's influence. INDUS ACTION intervenes through social campaigns to complement and strengthen the efforts of government and civil society organizations working on the chosen policy.

Section 12(1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsary Education Act 2009 (RTE) guarantees 25% provision for children belonging to Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), socially disadvantaged groups, physically handicapped children and orphans in entering classes of private unaided schools. INDUS ACTION's first campaign, Project Eklavya, hopes to make this bold provision a reality.

Further details are available on the website – www.indusaction.org

Central Square Foundation

Central Square Foundation (CSF) is a venture philanthropy fund and policy think tank focused on school education and improving leaning outcomes of children from marginalised communities in India. CSF's endeavour is to achieve transformational standards of excellence for the Indian school education system. It supports exceptional social entrepreneurs with powerful ideas, provide a platform for the sharing of innovation, and highlight learning and knowledge that can influence public policy.

CSF recognises 4 key areas that can provide maximum leverage for systemic reform and supports initiatives around:

- Accountability and Governance
- High Quality Affordable Schools
- Human Capital Development
- Technology in Education

Further details are available on the website - www.centralsquarefoundation.org

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Diya

Gyaan

Project Eklavya

Behind the ritzy malls in South Delhi is one of the largest resettlement colonies in the capital. Cramped lanes, blaring sounds and the scurried steps of migrant workers, landless labourers greet you early in the morning. This is Sangam Vihar- where space is restricted but dreams are unbounded. In one of its many narrow lanes, a precarious building plays host to 4 families. In one of the 10x10 rooms resides a family of 4 with 'something' that sets them apart from the rest of the colony. They have 2 young children, like most other families; their father is a daily wage laborer and their mother is a homemaker, like most other families. What is it, you may ask? It's the determination to transcend all odds to enable an opportunity for excellent education.

Gyan and Diya, 6 and 4 years respectively, aspired to go to school like others their age. Mahesh, their father, on his way back from work once had seen a street play in his locality on Section 12(1)(c). A month of following through with documentation and lotteries, Mahesh's efforts finally enabled Gyan and Diya to study in Class I and Nursery in quality private schools. Their education cost is being borne by the government.

If you are reading this story, you have a gift. For Gyan and Diya, reading and writing breaks many sociological, psychological barriers and most importantly- gives them an opportunity to free themselves from the shackles of precarious living.

Getting into school was the easier leap for them. Gyan and Diya took time to make friends in their class and within the school. Teachers took a while to have high expectations of them and include them in their lessons. Breaks and play were supposed to be spaces for fun for all children, but were spaces Gyan and Diya got reminded of their difference. School took a while to be sensitive to the fact that Mahesh and Laxmi could read notices only in Hindi.

The school realized that to make the environment welcoming for each child, all of them- teachers, students and even the Principal, need to change their mindset. Principal and school teachers made a commitment as a group to make their school inclusive to all children, inclusive to every child who felt that he/she stood out for a certain characteristic. Gyan and Diya finally began to live the meaning of their names. Their school soon became a bright spot to learn from.

Acknowledgements

We are honored to have received an opportunity to bring together our collective efforts and motivations to help find what is it that makes classrooms inclusive. This would not have been possible without

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• St. Mary's School, Safdarjung Enclave
• Riverside School, Ahmedabad
• Blue Bells School International
• Laxman Public School
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Introduction

In the Indian mythological epic Mahabharata, the young tribal prince Eklavya aspires to study archery in the gurukul (school) of Dronacharya, the most reputed teacher of that era. Despite his precocious abilities, he is rejected on account of his low caste. Ekalavya's struggle to reach Dronacharya's school symbolizes the educational barriers that still exist today for India's underprivileged children and suggests a role for policies that can enable social inclusion.

In a landmark legislation in 2009, the Indian Parliament passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. Section 12(1)(c) within the Act mandated that 25 percent of entering class seats be opened up for children from weak and disadvantaged groups in all non-minority unaided private schools. This progressive policy has the potential to put roughly one crore children across India on a different life path in the next 5 years, making it the single largest opportunity seat scheme in the world.

This is not just an opportunity for the children who will attend the private schools, but it is an opportunity for us as a nation to make schools sites of social integration, to plant seeds of unity and respect. It is an opportunity for teachers to elevate their students and impart life education, for 75 percent children in private schools to understand the reality of India and embrace it. It is an opportunity for all the citizens to undo the segregation that plagues our society today.

This report dwells into the technical and adaptive aspects of Section 12(1)(c). Setting the context, it tries to answer the "how" of attaining social and academic integration in our classrooms. It is meant for teachers, school leaders, civil society organizations and anyone else who believes that education has the power to make children realize their own potential, and that schools are sanctuaries where the fundamental act of national building takes place.

Executive Summary

Section 12(1)(c) within the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE) mandates that 25 percent of entering class seats be opened up for children from weak and disadvantaged groups in all non-minority unaided private schools. This progressive policy has the potential to put roughly 1 crore children across India on a different life path in the next 5 years, making it the single largest opportunity seat scheme in the world[1]. When we juxtapose this with data from UNICEF report which states that 8 crore Indian children, of the 20 crore enrolled enrolled, are likely to drop out of school before completing elementary education[2] , it poses a grave concern. Why are so many children dropping out? A recent report[3] by Human Rights Watch draws attention to the insidious and damaging impact of ingrained discrimination in Indian schools. Chapter 1 captures the current reality and nature of the debate about Section 12(1)(c), the rationale for including the clause and its .

Chapter 2 makes an evidence based argument for why integration matters in our classroom and the role private schools can play. Research suggests that integration of children from various backgrounds leads to more robust and rigorous schools[4] and the benefits are not restricted to poor kids attending rich schools. Gautam Rao in a study of the impact of a land-lease policy in Delhi found that students from wealthier backgrounds in these schools were more likely to volunteer for a non-profit and also choose students from underprivileged backgrounds on their sports teams[5].

India is not the first one to introduce integration in schools through policy. Chapter 3 discusses cases like Brown vs. Board in United States, public education system in Finland and even Loreto School in Kolkata, which are examples of structural inclusion. Chapter 4 is a culmination of academic research, which shows that teachers and school leaders need to take concrete steps and address the needs of children raised in poverty: cognitive lags, safety and health issues, acute and chronic stressors, social and emotional challenges. It requires direction and motivation from the school leader to invest parents, children and teachers in the process of social inclusion[6].

Chapter 5 is based on primary research done by INDUS ACTION, and highlights 8 schools as bright spots, implementing a host of inclusive practices. It also includes a perception study done in 32 schools of Delhi. Results show that 42 percent schools want to have separate classes for children from EWS and only 21 percent take an effort to communicate with parents of first generation learners. This shows a clear disparity in the vision of architects of RTE and the ground level reality[7].

Chapter 6 discussed the collective impact possibilities, emphasizing that schools do not have to be on this journey alone. Civil society, government, corporates, nonprofits need to pitch in and challenge the status quo. Through various initiatives like media campaigns, funding for ancillary needs, streamlining the reimbursement process for schools, teacher training programs which equip them to handle mixed classrooms et al., need to gain momentum for us to do justice to all children of our country.

From slums to Japan- a ray of hope

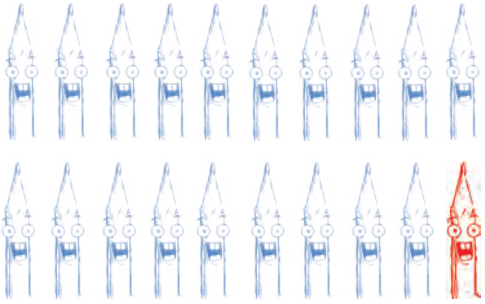
Lalit, a student now studying in Asia Pacific University-Japan, was born and brought up in the slums behind Blue Bells international school, New Delhi. His father, a rickshaw puller, never imagined that he will be able to send his son to an international school, while he could barely afford to feed Lalit and the family. However, driven by the ideals of social inclusion, Blue Bells international has, since a decade, admitted students like Lalit in their school. Treated equally and compassionately by his teachers and high-income peers, Lalit not only topped his classes at school, but also earned a scholarship to study robotics at Asia Pacific University.

1. Introduction to RTE Section 12 (1)(c)

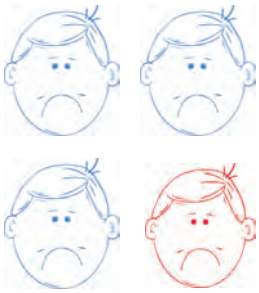
Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education 2009 is a landmark legislation in the history of Indian education system. Section12 (1)(c)of RTE is much debated and misunderstood. This chapter elucidates current state of the primary education system in India and establishes the context for reservation for children from economically and socially disadvantaged sections of the society in private unaided schools, with the aim of making our schools sites of social inclusion.

Background: Status of Indian education System

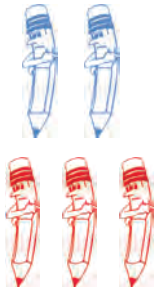
By 2020, India is set to have the largest employable population of the country. The good news is that 97 percent of our kids are enrolled in schools[8]. But, of those who start school, 25 percent don't complete primary school[9], and 6 out of every 10 children in India do not move ahead of 10th standard[10]. At the secondary school level, India's gross enrolment ratio lags behind regional neighbors Nepal and Bangladesh, despite India having a higher per-capita GDP[11].



97 percent of our children in India are enrolled in schools



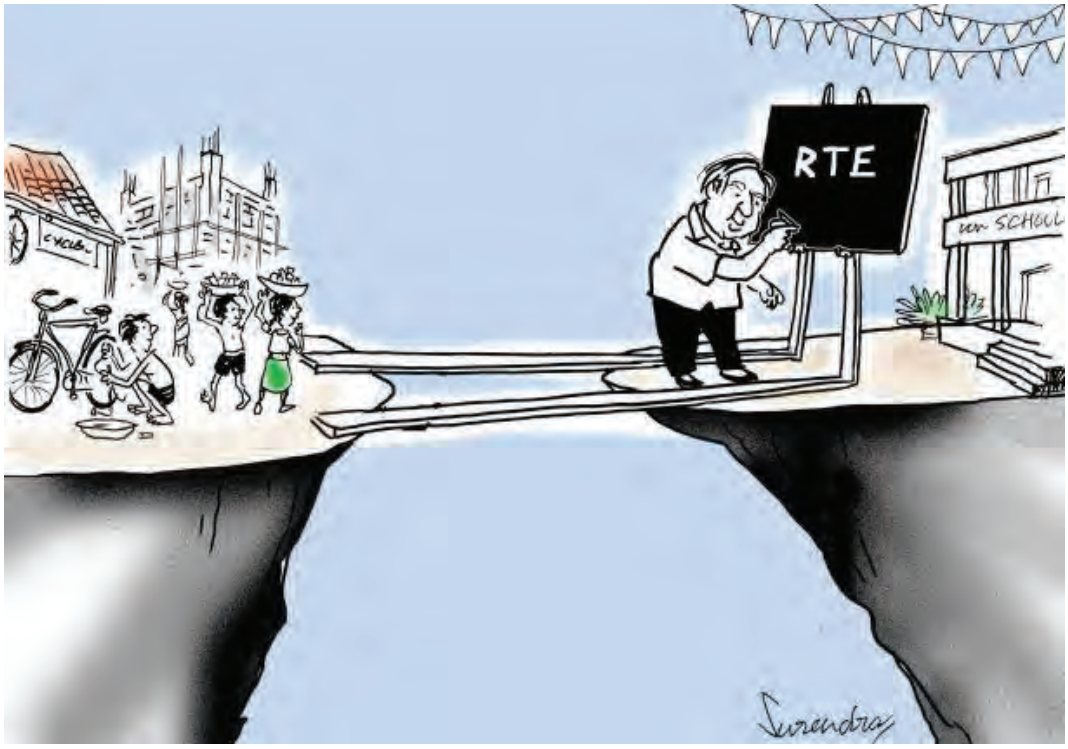
25 percent don't complete primary school



6 out of every 10 do not go beyond 10th standard

Further, despite a high enrolment rate in primary schools, Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) indicates a decline in basic literacy and numeracy skills in students across the nation over the last three years[12]. Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh ranked 72nd and 73rd out of 74 participating countries in PISA 2009 international test for 15-year-olds[13]. These reports suggest a systemic pattern of low quality education across all years of schooling. Moreover, the achievement gap between public and private schools and across social groups is widening[14]. ASER 2013 found that private school students performed 20 percent better on basic literacy and numeracy skills[15]. On the same basic skills, the nationally representative India Human Development Survey (IHDS) 2005 found the gap between richest and poorest quintiles to be almost 50 percent[16].

In response to these ongoing challenges, The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002, introduced Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education for all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right. RTE envisions that, "every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards"[17].



Illustation Credits: The Hindu

According to Vinod Raina, one of the major architects of RTE, the Act was designed with three well-thought intentions[18]:

1) All children should be in schools- especially from the marginalized sections communities like girls, socially and economically disadvantaged children.

2) The input parameters like teachers and infrastructure should meet minimum standards set by the Act

3) Students who undergo schooling should receive quality education-which is not just measured by marks, but also reflects good citizenship. These children should be socially sensitive and prepared for life.

Aligned to the intentions of its architects, RTE includes Section 12(1)(c) that mandates all private unaided schools (non-minority) in India reserve at least 25 percent of seats in their entering class for children belonging to the weaker sections and disadvantaged groups in the neighborhood and provide free and compulsory education till its completion[19]. The state government will then reimburse these schools for students admitted under this provision, at a per-month amount determined by the state rules. Section 12(1)(c) of RTE acknowledges the need for inclusion and explicitly establishes the normative responsibility for everyone to contribute towards this goal.

The WHY and HOW of Section 12(1)(c)

India is a diverse country and ideally our classrooms should be no exception. However, in the sixty years since independence, the schools for rich and poor have become different and segregated. Through the introduction of Section 12(1)(c) in the RTE, policy-makers challenged the Indian society to rise above social and economic biases, and make schools sites of academic and social inclusion. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2008, mentions the rationale behind the Act

"The [RTE] is anchored in the belief that the values of equality, social justice and democracy and the creation of a just and humane society can be achieved only through provision of inclusive elementary education to all." Provision of free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality to children from disadvantaged and weaker sections is, therefore, not merely the responsibility of schools run or supported by the appropriate Governments, but also of schools which are not dependent on Government funds[20]

Illustation Credits: The Hindu

Details of Section 12(1)(c)

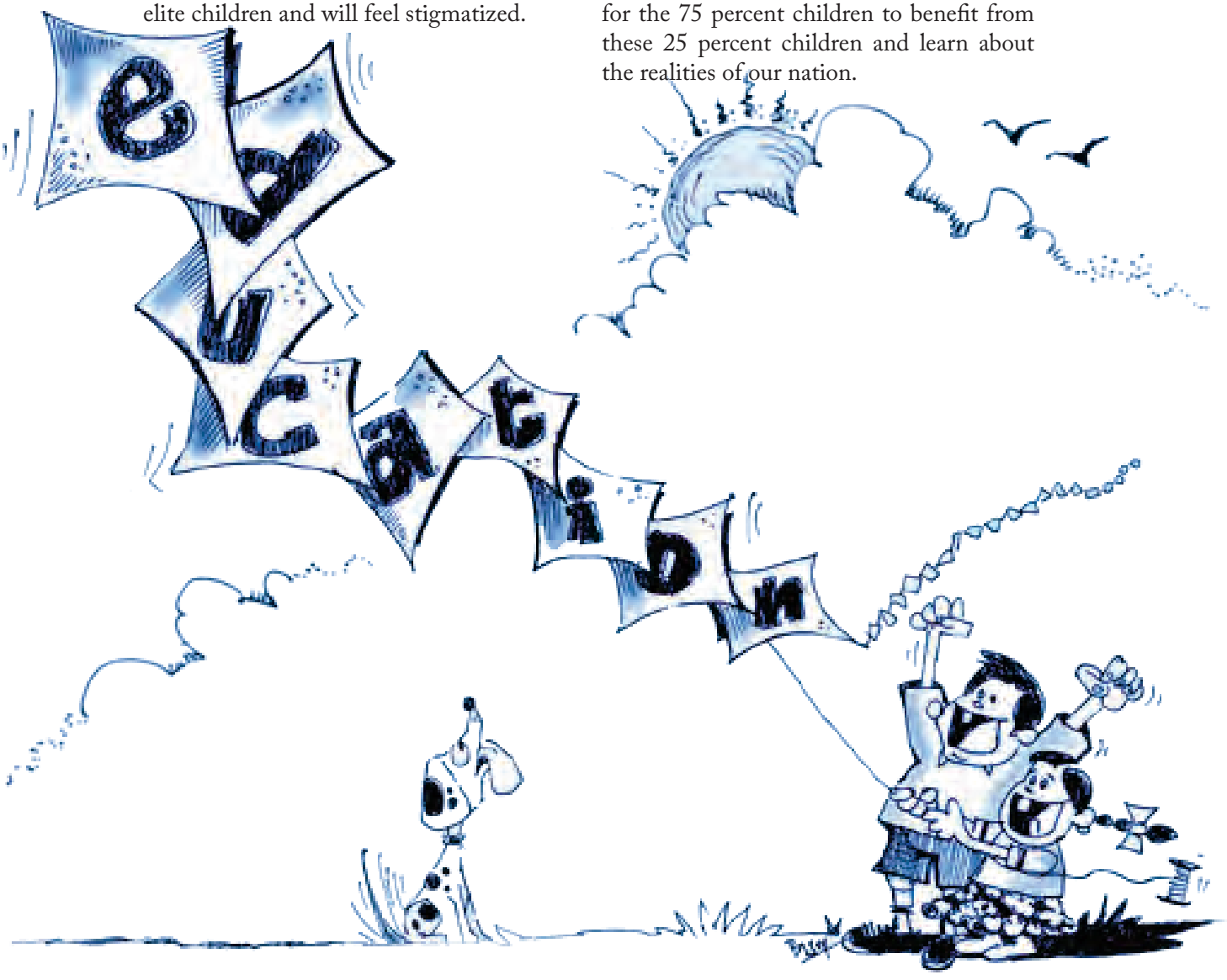
Each state has the autonomy to contextualize the model guidelines released by the central government and frame its own set of implementation processes. A lot of states like Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Uttarakhand have mentioned preference for girls under this quota and states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala have specifically stated transgenders and HIV positive children in the eligibility criteria. Some states like Kerala and Punjab have also conditioned admission under this quota to non-availability of seats in government or aided schools[21].

As per the Delhi State Rules and notifications with regard to Section 12(1)(c), eligible families include families from economically weaker section having household income less that 1 lakh per annum, and disadvantaged groups include scheduled castes, schedules tribes, non-creamy layer of other backward castes, orphans, and physically and mentally challenged children[22].

The Debate

Section 12(1)(c), primarily formulated to foster social inclusion, has been among the most contentious in the RTE Act. It is also perceived as a financial' burden' by many private schools.. However, the popular interpretations and opinions greatly deviate from the actual intentions behind formation of Section 12(1)(c). A lot of myths regarding its rationale are prevalent among schools and educators[23].

Myth	Reality
Government is abdicating its financial responsibility and transferring it to private schools.	For every student admitted under Section 12(1)(c), the government will reimburse the schools.
Government is providing an avenue to poor children for quality education in private schools without improving the quality of its own schools.	Private schools cater only to 30 percent [24] children in the country. Government remains the largest service provider in primary education. The government schools have a strict mandate to comply with all other provision of RTE. Government is also setting up 6000 model schools across the country[25].
These children just cannot integrate with elite children and will feel stigmatized.	The intention behind Section 12(1)(c) was for the 75 percent children to benefit from these 25 percent children and learn about the realities of our nation.



While Section12(1)(c) was being drafted, there were two schools of thought among the council itself, which was divided regarding inclusion of this particular clause in RTE[26]

1) Education being a universal "right" could not be applied in a differentiated manner by having both fee and non-fee paying children, implying a totally inclusive common school system (CSS) whereby a child would have a right to seek admission to any school in its neighborhood, government or private, for free education. This would prevent private schools from charging fees.

2) The counterpoint contended that as per Article 21(a), it is the state that has to provide free and compulsory education to children, and the obligation was thus on the government and not the "private" schools, which ought to be kept completely outside the Act.

However, after consideration of India's various social-economic factors, Section 12(1)(c) was included and is based on the following principles[27]:

• Schools must be sites for social integration
• Private schools do not exist independent of the state that provides them land and other amenities
• Social obligation of private schools cannot be waived by contending that only children whose parents pay their fees have a right to be in these schools
• Disadvantaged groups in the country constitute around 25 percent of the total population. [28]

One of the underlying beliefs of the policy makers was also to ensure that the presence of these 25 percent kids should alter the pedagogical nature of the classroom so that the knowledge base from where these children come from — farming, weaving, services, carpentry and construction, practical vocations like repair of vehicles, electricity, plumbing and so on becomes a part of the classroom, that can greatly benefit the other 75 percent who are now cut off from the informal sector knowledge base that still dominates the Indian economy[29].

Vinod Raina, in an interview, out rightly dismissed the claims about Section 12(1)(c) existing for benefits of poor. In fact he said that "the idea is for 75 percent children to learn from these 25percent about the reality of nation. The 25 percent children will be sources of knowledge and make schooling a real experience for all children."[30]

The policy makers reiterated that it ought to be clear that the sole intention for bringing in this clause was inclusion and social integration, and not to sneak in poor children into "quality" private schools.[31]

Despite the state legislations in favor of this provision, there has been enormous social resistance towards mixed classrooms. A survey by the Centre for Civil Society in 2011 estimated that in Delhi, 43 percent of the parents of fee paying students feared that their children might pick up bad habits such as abusing and fighting from the aided students. [32] Teachers also fear that the learning in the classroom may slow down as a consequence of this provision[33].

Resistance towards implementation of Section 12(1)(c) was probably predicted and any attempt to change the social fabric of the society requires effort not just from the government, but also the civil society organizations, citizens, media, and most importantly the educators, parents and children.

Neerottam- A reality, not a myth

Prabha Sridevan, a former High Court judge wrote an op-ed in The Hindu (Jan 8 2013) about the continued practice of manual scavenging in India. In the piece, she recollects a documentary scene "of a small girl in a blue frock, with liquid eyes."

The judge recounts the following exchange between the girl, 'Neerottam' (pseudonym), and an interviewer:
"Did you like school?"
"Yes" with a shy smile.
"What happened?"
"I stopped."
"Why?"
"I used to sit in the front row. Then my classmates did not want me to sit next to them. So the teacher asked me to move to the last row. I went for some days. Then I stopped."

Sridevan then continues, "Let us all feel on our skin the sandpaper-rub of exclusion. We are not done with that little girl yet. The camera stays on her face, while she looks back at us. Slowly those deep eyes, which have known a pain that no eight-year old should, well up with tears and she whispers: 'I wanted to become a nurse or a teacher.'"

2. Why Integration Matters

50 percent of nation's children are going to be in private schools by 2018, making private schools an equal partner to government in delivery of primary education[34]. This chapter, through secondary research, establishes the need for social integration in all schools of the country to foster progressive citizenship.

Poverty involves more than lack ofincome and exclusion is not merely because of money. "Social exclusion" is often described as the process by which individuals and groups are wholly or partly closed out from participation in their society, as a consequence of low income and constricted access to education, employment, social benefits and services, and to various aspects of cultural and community life[35].

In this context, our schools can be called socially inclusive when "the children of all classes, rich and poor, partake as equally as possible in the privileges of the school." [36] Education can be an equalizer, which mitigates this exclusion and fosters citizenship in children, just as was conceptualized by Vinod Raina and his peers.

"One of the important social objectives of education is to equalize opportunity, enabling the backward or underprivileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their condition. Every society that values Social Justice and is anxious to improve the lot of the common man and cultivate all available talent, must ensure progressive equality of opportunity to all sections of the population. This is the only guarantee for the building up of an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak will be minimized." [37]

Inclusion demands goals and polices that avoid separating citizens. Inclusion calls on us to strive for a nation in which everyone lives with purpose, dignity, and satisfaction[38] .

Diversity in society

A recent report by Human Rights Watch confirms that a large proportion of children, who drop out of school/are working and hence can't attend school, come from marginalized communities (Dalits/Muslims/girls). Lack of support in school is a significant reason for this[39]. According to UNICEF, India has 13 million child workers aged 5 to 14 years, the largest number in the world, and a large majority of them are Dalits or from Scheduled Tribes and other minorities. Elementary school dropout rates for children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe ar 1 percent and 58 percent, respectively, much higher than the 37 percent rate for non-Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe children. According to government statistics, the dropout rate among adolescent girls is as high as 64 percent. Among many reasons for this drop out, the stark one is that of social segregation. Lack of adequate training and sensitization at the school level leads to kids being discriminated against, and even unlawfully treated[40].

This achievement gap has life enduring effects. The Young Lives study 2006-09, of 12-year olds across 4 countries (including Andhra Pradesh in India),found that economic well-being of the family in which a child grows up affects the child's psychosocial competencies[41] like self-efficacy, sense of inclusion, self-esteem and educational aspirations. These competencies are correlated with classroom participation, and Young Lives found participation to be lower among disadvantaged students. More importantly, competencies like self-efficacy, sense of inclusion, self-esteem and educational aspirations measured during childhood have been shown to influence future socio-economic status[42]

Private Schools: A Necessary Partner for Inclusion

Education provision in India has become increasingly privatized. In particular, this expansion has been driven by a mushrooming of low cost or affordable private schools. DISE data collected by the government suggests that nationwide in 2012, 28.4 percent of primary standard students attend private schools. For Delhi specifically, state wise DISE data indicates that the rate of privatization is even higher than this national average – 75 percent of children in urban areas and 25 percent in rural areas attend private primary schools, averaging to 42 percent of students overall[43]. ASER 2013 results project that by 2018, 50 percent of Indian children will be in private schools[44]. While as a nation, we definitely need to focus on improving the quality of our government schools, we cannot turn away from this projected reality.

Two reasons can help to understand this flight to private schools. Firstly, private schools in India consistently perform better than government schools. ASER 2012 found that approximately 20 percent more Std. 3 and Std. 5 students in private schools could do basic reading and math when compared to students in those grades in public schools[45]. A study finds that returns to private schooling as measured by learning gains, likelihood of being praised, and reduced likelihood of being beaten are all greater for poorer children attending private schools[46]. Secondly, though access to information regarding quality is asymmetric, the predominant belief among parents remains that private schools are the best quality service provider.

Survey work in Hyderabad found that 98 percent of parents surveyed perceived the private sector to be a "better educational provider" and 96 percent indicated English medium instruction as very important factor to their school choice decision[47]. Yet, INDUS ACTION's baseline study in Delhi indicates that the probability of underprivileged children being in private schools is well below the overall private enrollment rate[48]. The widespread belief that private schools provider better education indicates this exclusion is not driven by preference, but rather by financial and social constraints. The result is that children from more advantaged backgrounds have migrated to private schools and this shows no signs of reversing.

Hence, for India to grow inclusively, keeping children from different socio- economic backgrounds together is very important. To achieve this, we require government and private schools to work with each other, and not against each other.

Benefits of inclusion

Research shows that the process of integrating students from low-income backgrounds into middle and higher-income schools can lead to a number of positive outcomes for all the students being admitted. Richard Kahlenberg, one of the leading advocates for socio-economic school integration in the United States, after studying various successful school systems around the world, including Finland, concludes that integration of children from various backgrounds leads to more robust and rigorous schools. His research shows that peer-environment remarkably impacts learning outcomes, and high-poverty schools fail to provide surroundings which are conducive to high academic growth[49]. He strongly advocates for integration of children from various racial and socio-economic backgrounds, and cites three important reasons for moving children from poverty struck areas to high-income schools[50] :

i. In higher-income schools, peers who, on average, are more academically engaged, will serve as strong role models for other students.

ii. Higher-income schools cater to a community of fee-paying parents who are more actively involved in their child's schooling and will be able to hold teachers and school staff accountable.

iii. Higher-income schools employ stronger teachers who have high expectations for students.

High Income School Attributes

Teachers with high academic expectations

Academically Engaged Peers

Invested parents who drive school accountability

Integrating low-income students into high-income private schools has a beneficial impact on middle and upper-class students in those schools also. One of the major oppositions to Section 12(1)(c) comes from the parents of students in elite private schools in India who fear that the inclusion of students from low-income communities will have a negative impact on the atmosphere of learning and discipline in schools. However, a number of research studies show little or no adverse effects on the academic and non-academic outcomes of existing students. Angrist and Lang studied the impact of the METCO[51] desegregation-busing program in Boston that sent students from inner-city Boston neighborhoods to high-income schools in the suburbs and found no evidence of negative effects on the academic achievement of higher-income non-METCO students[52].

Additionally, there is rigorous evidence from India, which suggests that integrating students from different socioeconomic backgrounds can actually lead to beneficial outcomes. Gautam Rao in a study of the impact of a land-lease policy in Delhi that required private schools to reserve 20 percent of their seats for low-income students found that students from wealthier backgrounds in these schools were more likely to volunteer for a non-profit and also choose students from underprivileged backgrounds on their sports teams[53]. Through his research in Delhi schools, Gautam Rao observed the following effects of mixed classrooms:

(i) Pro-social behavior: Having poor classmates makes wealthy students more pro-social and generous. They become more likely to volunteer for a charity at school, more generous towards b oth rich and poor students in dictator games, and exhibit more egalitarian preferences.

(ii) Having poor class-mates makes wealthy students discriminate less against poor children, as measured in a team-selection held experiment. Consistent with this, they become more willing to socially interact with poor children outside school.

(iii) Marginally significant negative effects on test scores in English, but no effect on Hindi or Math.

Overall, he concludes that mixing in schools has substantial positive effects on the social behaviors of wealthy students, at the cost of negative but arguably modest impacts on academic achievement. To shed light on mechanisms, he exploits idiosyncratic assignment of students to study groups and that the effects on social behaviors are largely driven by personal interactions between wealthy and poor students, rather than by changes in teacher behavior or curriculum.

Researchers have also begun to trace the emergence of social preferences in children, where egalitarian preferences are seen to emerge around age 4-8[54], while more sophisticated notions of fairness emerge in adolescence[55].

Section 12(1)(c), in the next 5 years, has the potential to put around 1 crore children across India on a different life path in the next 5 years, making it the single largest opportunity seat scheme in the world[56]. However, our classrooms do not embody integration yet and much needs to be done to truly foster diversity within all the classrooms across India and realize the benefits of this policy.

In A Pedagogue's Romance, Krishna Kumar explains that the romance and adventure of education lies in the fact that children, like stem cells, have the ability to transform them-selves to something far beyond their predicted outcomes, that there is no guarantee that a particular input will produce a specific result.

Learning levels

A lot has been said about first generation learners and more specifically first generation learners from socially or economically weaker backgrounds. It is up to us as a nation to take up the challenge and RTE Section 12 (1)(c) is a bold attempt to break the age old mindsets, challenge the status quo and instill/encourage equity in the opportunities we provide our children.

As research literature suggests, "achievement is maximized when students feel competent about their abilities, when they have personal goals to achieve, when they feel they have control over their successes and failures and when they are motivated intrinsically to learn. Student perceptions of supportive relationships within their learning environments in terms of the support from the parents, teachers and peers, are stated to be most critical to their academic success. In the case of children coming from poor and economically deprived situations, support from the school environment seems to be all the more crucial[57].

These supporting structures can be created by the government, schools, teachers and parents. Ideal would be for all the inputs to work towards holistic development of child, through policy, pedagogy, psychological and academic support. Next chapter dwells into international and national case studies, studying the policies and practices, which created the structures required for inclusion in schools.

“My husband runs an electronic rickshaw from Saket to Sangam Vihar. His income is hardly enough to feed us, so I work as domestic help in the morning and run this shop in the evening.

One cold morning through a street play, I found out about this provision to send my kid to a private school for free. The task of going through the application process was inundating and my mind was full of fear. I am glad I persevered as my son got admission into a high income school in Saket. He is the only one from the neighborhood whose name got picked in the lottery and I can already see how he has changed and how much he enjoys going to school.

When I go to drop him to school, I can see how motivated his peers and teachers are. I think this education will change his life, our lives and I am very grateful for the opportunity”

3.

Some International laws about Inclusion and an Indian example

India is not the first country to encourage social integration in schools through a policy. This chapter looks at international case studies of inclusion and also at a unique school in Kolkata, which has been fostering inclusion since more than five decades. This chapter showcases secondary research on how policy level interventions and school leadership can change the way educators shape society positively

Brown vs. Board case of Education: Implications on policies and relevance to the Indian context

Introduction

The Brown vs. Board case, based on the premise "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal", was a revolutionary case in the United States which seized the segregation of children according to their race in public schools. This case was instrumental in ending the policy of 'separate but equal' in the previous case of Plessy vs Ferguson, which allowed state-sponsored segregation as far as it applied to public education. After the ruling of Brown vs. Board case, the African Americans were able to enjoy the same educational facilities as their white counterparts.

Context

For the sixty years preceding the Brown case, race relations in the U.S. had been dominated by racial segregation. This policy had been endorsed in 1896 by the United States Supreme Court case of Plessy v. Ferguson, which held that as long as the separate facilities for the different races were equal, segregation did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment ("no State shall... deny to any person... the equal protection of the laws.")[58].The plaintiffs in Brown asserted that this system of racial separation, while masquerading as providing separate but equal treatment of both white and black Americans, instead perpetuated inferior accommodations, services, and treatment for black Americans.

Impact

According to researchers Richard Goldstone and Brian Ray, the Brown vs Board case led to changes in three areas of law around the world: [59]

1) The elimination of racial segregation
2) The importance of education in a democratic society
3) The development of innovative judicial enforcement powers

How it matters to India

The aim of Section 12(1)(c) is similar: to use schooling as a medium of social cohesion. When there is inequity and disparity in schooling which is supported by the law, the socio-economic hierarchies are reiterated and the economically advantaged feel pathetic towards the condition of the weaker sections of the society. This is reminiscent of the Brown case which was used by foreign courts as psychological and sociological indications to show that stigma is caused due to segregation.

Late News

Associated Press Leased Wires

The Bee.

FOR ALL DEPARTMENTS CALL 4500

56th Year — Danville, Va., Monday Afternoon, May 17, 1954 — FIVE CENTS

Suit Being Tried

Funds Requested

Considering Violations

Strike Called

SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENDED BY COURT

Ruled Unconstitutional By Supreme Court; Date To End Practice Not Set

Rules Separate Facilities Are Unequal

Danville School Board Will Meet At Once To Study Court Decision

Officials Give Views On Matter; Call For Calm Study On All Sides

Good Progress

Firm Entered, Haul Is Made; Boy Wounded

Man Accidentally Shot In The Hand

Paroled Slayer Captured After Bizarre Deaths

Held For Four Brutal Killings

McCarthy-Army Hearings' Future Thrown In Doubt

Presidential Order Shutting Off Inquiry Denounced By Sen. McCarthy

Studies which have looked into how the RTE Act has been implemented in India have found several concerns. Firstly, many schools in India still do not follow the norms of the Section 12(1)(c) of RTE. This could be probably because RTE is not strictly enforced with deliberate speed like what happened in the Brown vs. Board case, where state machinery was heavily employed to ensure enforcement.[60] Speeding up the process at the government's end will force schools to take necessary action to make it work in all schools. Some of the other issues with the implementation of Section 12 include discrimination of poor children which lead them to leave, rural parents being ignorant about the RTE Act, upper class parents fearing that poor children can have a negative impact on their children, bureaucrats implementing the RTE Act in urban areas (as people in these areas are more aware about the laws and also there is the influence of the media). To tackle these problems there are various NGOs and civil society organizations which have come up with models for an effective enactment of the Act throughout the country. The Centre for Civil Society has come up with a new model which emphasizes on an impartial selection process, a fair payment system and a monitoring and appraisal structure.[61]

If the government of India, NGOs and civil society organizations work in collaboration with schools, then Section 12 of RTE can achieve the same status as the Brown vs Board case has in the United States.

Brown vs Board Case was instrumental in ending the policy of 'separate but equal'

The Coleman Report

Sociologist James S. Coleman, in a report titled 'Equality of Educational Opportunity' released in 1966 in United States of America concluded that disadvantaged black children learn better in well-integrated classrooms. This conclusion help set in motion the mass busing of students to achieve racial balance in public schools.[62]

The Coleman Report is widely considered the most important education study of the 20th century in United States. With data from over 600,000 students and teachers across the country, the researchers found that academic achievement was less related to the quality of a student's school, and more related to the social composition of the school, the student's sense of control of his environment and future, the verbal skills of teachers, and the student's family background. After controlling for students' family background

characteristics, the report concluded that the strongest influence on the individual achievement of both black and white students was the educational proficiency of their peers. In upper grades, this influence was found to be two to three times greater for black students than for white students[63].

Increased diversity in the racial composition of schools was also found to have a positive effect on the achievement of African American students, decreasing the achievement gap between African American students and white students by nearly half, despite findings of lower self-esteem among African American students in racially diverse classrooms than among racially isolated African American students. For white students, increased racial diversity in the classroom, especially during the first three grades, was found to decrease their preference for white peers.

Coleman Report concluded that disadvantaged children learn better in well-integrated classrooms

Finland

Finland has consistently achieved top rankings in the worldwide PISA assessments since 2001. Many factors are seen as contributing to this high performance, such as exceptional teacher quality and collective responsibility of schools towards struggling learners. One important factor is the collective belief that all students can perform at a high level, regardless of background or region. This belief is corroborated by the PISA results, which show very little variation between schools in Finland, and between the top-achieving and bottom-achieving students[64].

In 1968, the Finnish parliament enacted a legislation to set up comprehensive schools which would offer free education for grades 1-9, creating access for all. Earlier in 1950, only a quarter of Finns had access to the middle-grade grammar schools (which they joined after 5 years of primary schools). In the mid-1980s, ability grouping (grouping of students according to their academic ability in the upper grades) was also abolished. The 1983 Comprehensive Schools Act mandated that no child can be exempted from completing basic education. The new system, which also introduced flexibility and choice into upper grades, led to an increase in demand for upper secondary education. The percentage of Finns who got an upper secondary diploma increased from 30 percent in the 1970s to 80 percent in 2010[65].

Finland also aims to provide equal opportunities to immigrant students. There is an Equality Act which prohibits discrimination in all fields, including education. According to the Finnish National Board of Education, immigrants are taught Finnish and Swedish, and

also encouraged to maintain their mother tongue. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of immigrants in Finland doubled, yet the national test scores remained consistently high. This goes to show that the public school system is strong enough to serve all students equally, through its well-trained teachers and practice of student-centered learning.

Finland also has a stellar record of serving children with special educational needs. The majority of special educational needs students study in mainstream schools, where they are provided support at all levels and are able to perform on par with their peers[66].

Finland also has a stellar record of serving children with special educational needs. The majority of special education needs students study in mainstream schools, where they are provided support at all levels and are able to perform on par with their peers.

Finland's achievements in inclusion included abolition of ability grouping and equal opportunities to immigrant students

Loreto, Sealdah

Loreto Day School at Sealdah in Kolkata, West Bengal is an example of an innovative experiment whereby a privately managed school has gone beyond the norm to successfully integrate middle class and poor children through a creative and flexible use of pedagogy, curriculum and resources. The school has 1,400 regular students, of which 700 pay fees, and 700 come from impoverished slums. Children are admitted through a lottery system at the age of four. They learn together, wear the same uniform, and play, work, study and eat together as equals.

Besides the regular school, three other programs for street children, domestic child laborers and rural children are also run by the school. 'The Rainbows' is a program for street children. They are allowed to drop into school whenever they are free, from early morning till late afternoon. When they come, they always find a regular student free and prepared to teach them. This is made possible by a creative structure of the curriculum. Regular children have Work Education for two periods a week which ensures that throughout the day there is a reservoir of 50 potential "teachers" free and prepared to teach whoever comes.

The street children are brought to a level for a class appropriate to their age and then slotted into school according to their age level.

Loreto children are also encouraged to make contact with domestic child laborers, to play and talk to them, listen to their stories and even interact with their employers to persuade them to get the children to school. The regular Loreto children also interact with and teach 3,500 primary school children in rural areas every Thursday (school holiday) in an ongoing child-to-child program.

Activity-based learning methods and use of local resources are emphasized. The school ensures that all activities are creative rather than money-based so that poor children do not feel excluded because they cannot afford to take part in them. It also provides head start / remedial / alternative programs to meet the needs of academically weaker children. There is no academic ranking or competition, no pitting children against each other for marks. Children are trained to compete with their own best performances and all prizes are effort-based; talent per se is not rewarded, as it is considered a gift. Child-to-child tutoring and peer learning in Rainbow, domestic child labor and rural schools programs encourage reflection and enrichment of teaching methods. Children are challenged to reflect on what they do and why they do it, to analyze what they have experienced and become aware of some of the burning socio-economic issues facing Indian society today.

The school is sensitive to the various cultures of the children coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and promotes appreciation of and pride in each one. It recognizes the injustices poor children are subjected to and is flexible enough to give them first priority. The school is deeply concerned for the dignity of every child and monitors carefully all existing structures. It removes or re-orients those which might make a child feel inferior. The curriculum encourages children to mix and have relationships with the poor, and exposes them to a variety of life experiences that children from diverse backgrounds bring from their homes or the streets. Even middle class parents understand the educational value of mixing children of several different backgrounds, and parent-teacher meetings are geared towards reflection on various aspects of education rather than reporting on individual children's shortcomings. The school thus exposes teachers, children and parents alike to a variety of socio-economic experiences and issues, and practically makes it possible for everyone to make their contribution in the successful implementation of its vision and purpose.

Loreto serves as an inspiration for all schools in India. It also elucidates that school leadership, community participation, pedagogical innovation and value education, all need to come together to make an inclusive schools, where learning goes beyond books. The next chapter discusses the need to understand the context from which disadvantaged children come and presents academic research which can benefit educators- especially teachers and school leaders.

50% students pay fees, 50% are from streets, Creative structure of curriculum encourages buddy- teaching, No ranking system- Children compete with their own previous best performance, Locally relevant curriculum, Parent teacher meetings focus not on academic outcomes, but on value education and inclusive decisions

When approached from a rights-based model (and not through a medical or charity model), inclusion has the ability to transform teaching methodologies and assessment practices. It is a great way to enhance a teacher's repertoire of classroom transactions. For in the teacher's quest to reach the child, he/she reaches into him-/herself for new ideas and reservoirs of understanding; as a result, teacher empowerment is an important outcome of the ongoing journey of inclusion. It is a journey that requires each group — parents, teachers and children — to examine itself and to change coordinates in order to fit into each other better.

~ Annie Koshy, Principal- St. Mary's school

4. Academic Research: How to teach in mixed classrooms

Classrooms involving children from different social backgrounds were a reality in India a few decades ago, when everyone, rich and poor, went to the same government school. However, in recent times, given how segregated schools have become owing to the income disparity, teachers are not specifically trained to deal with variety of social backgrounds in the same classroom. This chapter delves into what it means to teach children coming from poverty affected families and how to integrate them inside the classroom.

The context

Unfortunately, there has been a strong correlation between the economic status of a student and his/her academic performance. However, though poverty is often used as an excuse by educators for low academic performance of students, there is also lot of evidence of schools that do succeed with economically disadvantaged students. As educators, we can have no excuse to let any child fail. Poverty calls for key information and smarter strategies, not resignation and despair[67].

According to a report by UNICEF[68] on inclusion in Indian schools, some prevalent myths about children from economically weaker sections are:

- ✗ All children are the same
- ✓ Each individual learner has his or her own capacity which is influenced by socio-economic, cultural and political factors.
- ✗ Learning achievements depend on heredity
- ✓ Biologically, all children are born with a similar level of intelligence. As the child grows it is influenced by socio-economic, cultural and political factors. Underachievement of marginalized children is due to prejudices present in the classroom. "In their family nobody has ever been to school. How can these children learn?" This attitude leads to segregation, rather than integration in a classroom. Teachers pay less attention to first generational learners.
- ✗ School kids are different from street/poor kids
- ✓ Due to the prejudice against poor children, there is no emotional connect between these children and students which makes them drop-out of school. Also, relevant things (to real life) are not taught to them in schools.

- ✗ Boys are for schools, Girls for marriage
- ✓ Community values play a huge role in the life of students. Due to traditional values girls may hesitate to interact with teachers. Some communities consider religious education to be better than school education
- ✗ Children learn only from text-book transaction by teachers in classroom
- ✓ Socio-cultural milieu in which the student lives plays a huge role. By limiting classroom interaction to the rote-learning from the textbook the teacher is delegitimizing the knowledge of the students.
- ✗ Inclusive education means enrolment of all children in school
- ✓ Inclusive is much more beyond just enrolment. It is changing the attitude of teachers towards student diversity, improving teacher diversity within and changing the instructional approach/quality

If not all, a lot of these myths exist in most of the schools. For connecting with a child, educating him/her, it is imperative to understand the background a lot of our children come from, the hardships they face and the unsettling reality they encounter. The following section contains academic research on how poverty affects education, cognition and emotional abilities of a child.

Understanding poverty and how it affects children

Sometimes children from poverty-struck households find themselves in prejudiced classroom settings and are mostly alienated from the rest of the class. Eric Jensen, an expert in teaching children raised in poverty, has done a lot of research on poverty and its effects on children. The following chapter is compilation of his work.

Due to this exclusion, they find it very difficult to ask questions and mingle with the other children in the class. Children coming from lower socio-economic backgrounds are doubly deprived because they neither get support from schools and nor do they get any help or encouragement from their homes[69]. Poverty is laden with risk, especially in children, and adversely affects them in many ways.

> *"As a teacher teaching kids growing in poverty, I have realized that it's not the material gap that is hard to fill. It's the emotional gap which causes the disruption. It's beyond the control of the child, and as a teacher, my job is to understand that"*
>
> *~ Dr. Indira , a Delhi teacher*

Children are more vulnerable to the negative effects of change, disruption, and uncertainty. Developing children need reliable caregivers who offer high predictability. In the absence of care and nurture, their brain develops adverse adaptive responses. Environment created by socioeconomic deprivation, can lead to slow or no development of self and the capacity for self-determination and self-efficacy is also undermined. Children raised in poverty form more stress-ridden attachments with parents, teachers, and adult care givers and have difficulty establishing rewarding friendships with children their own age. They are more likely than well-off children to believe that their parents are uninterested in their activities, to receive less positive reinforcement from teachers, and to experience more turbulent or unhealthy friendships[70]

The Thirty Million Gap Study

In a study, Betty Hart and Todd assessed the ways in which daily exchanges between a parent and child shape language and vocabulary development. Their findings suggested that there exist extraordinary disparities between the sheer number of words spoken as well as the types of messages conveyed in families from different socio economic background. They found that children from high-income families are exposed to 30 million more words than children from families with lower income. Follow-up studies showed that these differences in language and interaction experiences have lasting effects on a child's performance later in life. This gap does nothing but grow as the years progress, ensuring slow growth for children who are economically disadvantaged and accelerated growth for those from more privileged backgrounds. In addition to a lack of exposure to these 30 million words, the words a child from a low-income family has typically mastered are often negative directives, meaning words of discouragement. By the age four, the average child from a poor family will hear 125,000 more words of discouragement than encouragement. When compared to the 560,000 more words of praise as opposed to discouragement that a child from a high-income family will receive, this disparity is extraordinarily vast.

Within a child's early life the caregiver is responsible for most, if not all, social simulation and consequently language and communication development. As a result, how parents and teachers interact with children is of great consequence

The four primary risk factors afflicting children in families living in poverty and the respective action steps needed to be taken by schools are:

Emotional and social challenges

Acute and chronic stressors

Cognitive lags

Health and Safety Issues

Action Steps			
Embody Respect	Recognize the signs	Build core skills	Increase health related services
Embed social skills	Alter the environment	Pinpoint assessments	Develop an enriching counterattack
Be inclusive	Empower the students	Provide hope and support	
		Recruit and train the best staff	

Early childhood interventions can be quite potent in reducing poverty's impact. Schools around the world are succeeding with poor students. We must end the cycle of blame and resignation and embrace a new mission to help all our students fulfill their potential. According to Eric Jensen the four challenges can be dealt with deliberate action steps from schools' side[72].

Addressing Emotional and Social Challenges

Embody Respect

• Give respect to students' first, even when they seem least to deserve it.

• Share the decision making in class. For example, ask students whether they would prefer to do a quick review of what they have learned to consolidate and strengthen their learning or move on to new material.

• Avoid such directives as "Do this right now!" Instead, maintain expectations while offering choice and soliciting input (e.g., "Would you rather do your rough draft now or gather some more ideas first?").

• Avoid demeaning sarcasm (e.g., "How about you actually do your assignment quietly for a change?")

Embed social skills

• Teach basic but crucial meet-and-greet skills. Teach students to face one another, make eye contact, smile, and shake hands.

• Remind students to thank their classmates after completing collaborative activities.

•Implement social-emotional skill-building programs in the early years.

Be inclusive

• Create a familial atmosphere by using inclusive and affiliative language. For example, always refer to the school as "our school" and the class as "our class"; avoid using a me-and-you model that reinforces power structures.

• Acknowledge students who make it to class, and thank them for small things.

• Celebrate effort as well as achievement; praise students for reaching milestones as well as for fulfilling end goals. Pack acknowledgments and celebrations into every single class.

Managing Acute and chronic stressors

Recognize the signs

Behavior that comes off as apathetic or rude may actually indicate feelings of hopelessness or despair. Students who are at risk for a stress-related disorder tend to

• Believe that they have minimal control over stressors.

• Have few outlets through which they can release the frustration caused by the stressors.

• Interpret stressors as evidence of circumstances worsening or becoming more hopeless.

• Lack social support for the duress caused by the stressors.

Alter the environment

Change the school environment to mitigate stress and resolve potential compliance issues with students who do not want to change:

• Reduce the parallels with prison. For example, consider eliminating bells and instead playing songs for class transitions.

• Reduce homework stress by incorporating time for homework in class or right after class.

• Use cooperative structures; avoid a top-down authoritarian approach.

• Help students blow off steam by incorporating celebrations, role-plays, mindfulness and physical activities (e.g., walks, relays, or games) into your classes.

• Incorporate kinesthetic arts (e.g., drama or charades), creative projects (e.g., drawing or playing instruments), and hands-on activities (e.g., building or fixing) into your classes.

Empower the students

Help students increase their perception of control over their environment by showing them how to better manage their own stress levels. Instead of telling students to act differently, take the time to teach them how to act differently by introducing conflict resolution skills.

• Teaching students how to deal with anger and frustration (e.g., counting to 10 and taking slow, deep breaths).

• Introducing responsibilities and the value of restitution (giving something back). In schools that embrace restitution, students understand that if they disrupt class, they need to "make it right" by doing something positive for the class. For example, a student who throws objects in the classroom may be assigned a cleaning or beautification project for the room.

• Teaching students to set goals to focus on what they want.

• Giving students a weekly life problem to solve collectively.

• Introducing stress reduction techniques, both physical (e.g., dance or yoga) and mental (e.g., guided periods of relaxation or meditation).

Bridging Cognitive lags

Build core skills

• Attention and focus skills
• Short- and long-term memory
• Sequencing and processing skills
• Problem-solving skills
• Perseverance and ability to apply skills in the long term
• Social skills
• Hopefulness and self-esteem

Recruit and train the best staff

Study shows that in one academic year, the top third of teachers produced as much as six times the learning growth as the bottom third of teachers did. Top teachers crave challenge and workplace flexibility and look for highly supportive administrators.

Pinpoint assessments

Helping to improve students' cognitive abilities and academic performance takes more than just knowing that a student is behind in a given area. Specific assignments help the teacher determine the area of improvement (e.g.: vision, vocabulary deficit, fluency problem etc.)

Provide Hope and Support

Any student who feels "less than" cognitively is likely not only to struggle academically, but also to be susceptible to such secondary issues as acting out, getting bullied or becoming a bully, having lower self-esteem, or having feelings of depression or helplessness. Ensure that teachers build supportive relationships, provide positive guidance, foster hope and optimism, and take time for affirmation and celebration.

Health and Safety Issues

Increase health related services

There are serious limitations on what schools can and should do about student health. But all of us understand that when we don't feel right, it's hard to listen, concentrate, and learn. Successful schools find ways to ensure that students have a fighting chance to get and stay healthy.

• Providing a physician on-site once a week
• Working with a local pharmacy to arrange for access to medications
• Arranging for a dentist to make designated school visits
• Educating students' caregivers about school resources
• Providing tutors to help students who miss classes to catch up
• Improving awareness among staff about health-related issues

Develop an enriching counterattack

The whole point of school ought to be to enrich the life of every student. Enrichment does not mean "more" or "faster" schooling. It means rich, balanced, sustained, positive, and contrasting learning environments. That's what will change students' lives over the long haul

• Provides wraparound health and medical services.
• Minimizes negative stress and strengthens coping skills.
• Uses a cognitively challenging curriculum.
• Provides tutoring and pull out services to build student skills.
• Fosters close relationships with staff and peers.
• Offers plenty of exercise options.

Including kids with Physical Disability

Benefits:

Integrating students with disabilities into classrooms allows all children to learn about various types of disabilities and to appreciate similarities and differences in people. Parents of all students notice that inclusion of children with disabilities encourages their own children's learning. Teachers also become better educators by learning to instruct different kinds of students.

Attitude and Beliefs:

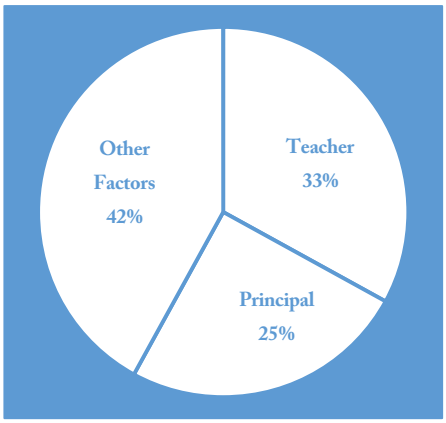
Teachers, Principals, students and all parents believe that all children can succeed. Non-teaching staff also is accommodative of kids with special needs.

Instructional Methods:

- Special curriculum based on specific disability
- Variety of instructional arrangements available (e.g., team teaching, cross-grade grouping, peer tutoring, teacher assistance teams)
- Special boards, games, bigger chairs, arrangement of class furniture
- Games which don't exclude kids using wheelchairs, crutches, and have vision impairments

Role of School Leadership

Research on the importance of school leadership suggests it could be a key lever in transforming the education system. After studying headmasters in India and abroad, Stanford University Professor Nick Bloom conclude that a one point increase on their scoring of school management practices is associated with a 10% increase in student performance. A study by New Leaders shows that the effectiveness of the school principal, just one person, accounts for 25 percent of the impact that schools have on student learning[74].



Teacher and Principal impact on student learning

Leading important and complex task of social integration in school calls for immense dedication, perseverance and expertise. As a leader, the Principal has to take initiative, build culture and provide the required guidance to teachers, students and parent.

"When I teach my students French, their parents don't speak French at home. Similarly even in the case of EWS children it's our duty to do everything it takes to educate a child, irrespective of the background and support at home."
~ Ms. Suman Kumar, Principal- Blue Bells School International

The previous section states what needs to be done inside the classroom, but the school structures need to be supportive and inclusive. As a school leader, the following steps can be taken to build those structures:

School community mapping

Making profiles of each and every child helps in identifying and classifying children who may be at the risk of dropping out of school.

The power of high expectations

"It is quite easy to equate success to race and background, but doing so will be your demise as a teacher. If you show your students that success is attainable through perseverance and self-motivated, then their background will become obsolete. It is simple to blame failure to background; the greater challenge is to teach well"

Katherine Smith, Delta 002, NYC Dept. of education

Deepen staff understanding

Teachers don't need to come from their students' cultures to be able to teach them, but empathy and cultural knowledge are essential. As a school leader, it is essential to encourage the staff members to take steps like home visits, not just to complain and problem- solve, but also to understand where the children sleep, eat, play and live after school hours.

Developing learner-friendly inclusive teaching and learning practices and processes
Diverse learners with their own knowledge from their own culture add to the overall learning of the class. New and innovative techniques can make instructional quality better.

Change the school culture from pity to sympathy

"Bless their hearts, they come from such terrible circumstances." The problem with that sentiment is that it leads to lowered expectations. Encourage teachers to feel empathy rather than pity. Establish a school culture of caring, not of giving up. For example, some teachers perceive certain behaviors typical of students from poor families as "acting out," when often the behavior is a symptom of the effects of poverty and indicates a condition such as a chronic stress disorder. Such disorders alter students' brains[75] and often lead to greater impulsivity and poor short-term memory. In the classroom, this translates into blurting, acting before asking permission, and forgetting what to do next.

Teaching Emotional Intelligence

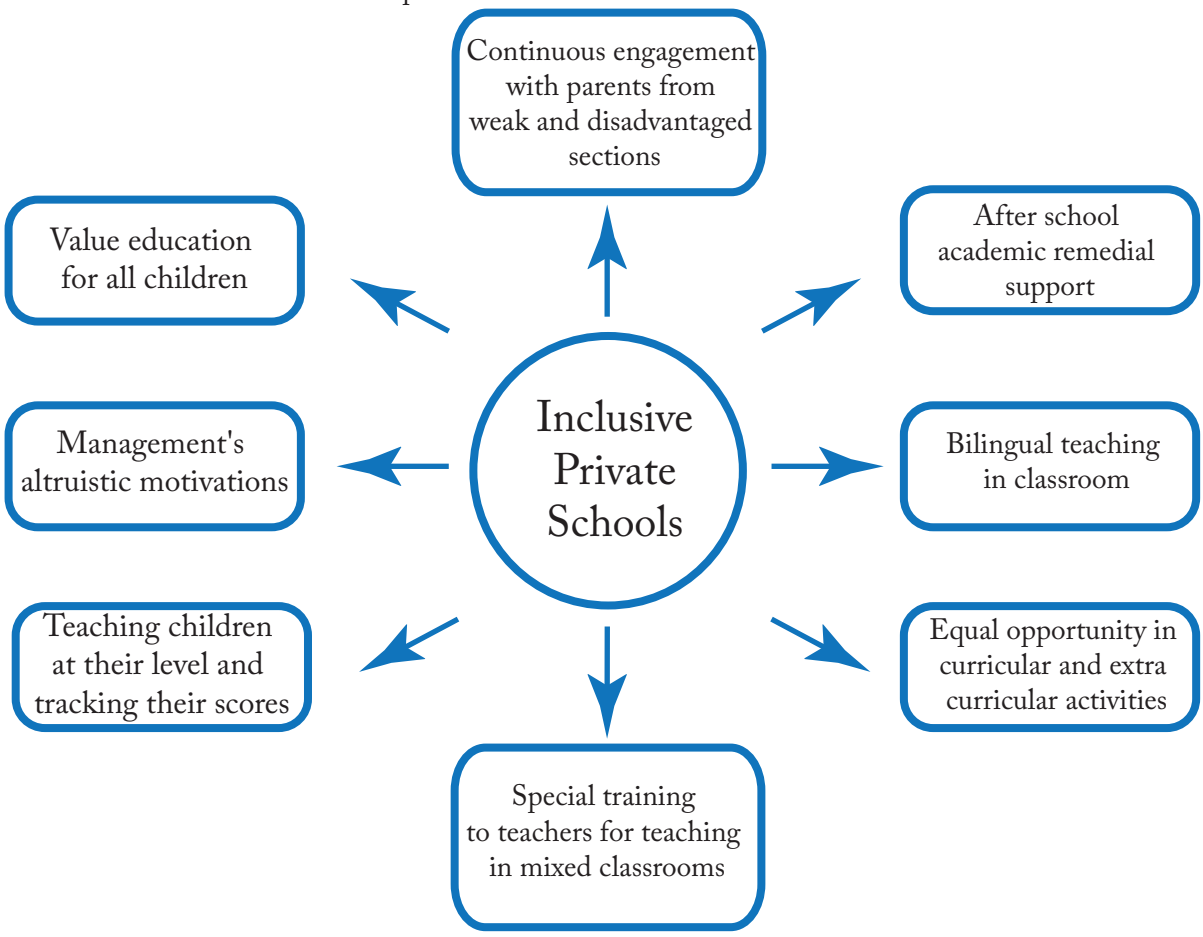
Every proper response that is not seen in children, must be taught. Rather than telling kids to "be respectful," teachers should demonstrate appropriate emotional responses and the circumstances in which to use them, and allow students to practice applying them.

The figure on the next page explains how emotions can be categorized- this categorization can serve as a guideline for teachers to work on emotions which can definitely be induced in a child during school years. Every emotional response other than the six hardwired emotions of joy, anger, surprise, disgust, sadness, and fear must be taught. Cooperation, patience, embarrassment, empathy, gratitude, and forgiveness are crucial to a smoothly running complex social environment, like a classroom. Teachers can incorporate classroom strategies that build relationships and strengthen peer acceptance and social skills in class.

The emotional brain can be represented by a keyboard on which children from poverty use fewer keys than well-off children. The six responses represented by the darker shading on the keyboard and in the center box are hardwired in our DNA. The responses represented by the lighter shading must be taught.

Developing a System of Regular Data Collection, Evaluation and Feedback

The student profile and their needs are not going to remain the same throughout. Regular Data Collection, Evaluation and Feedback will show how effective an initiative has been and what can be done to improve it.



Checklist for school leaders

The following checklist enumerates different interventions which can be initiated by a school for holistic approach towards asocial and academic integration

Curriculum

What we teach students is as important as how we teach them.	• Contextualize the curriculum to include examples to which all students can relate • Homework should not need internet or involve too much intervention from parents
Purpose of education is to prepare children for life and make them active, responsible citizens, who add value to their surroundings	• Projects should be real-life situations, not requiring too much material • Differentiated curriculum for students to learn at their own pace • Buddy system- Pair students, irrespective of their social background, to foster peer learning • Early hours- Teachers should come early to ensure that students who are reluctant in asking doubts in class, get one-on-one time with teachers • Tracking academic progress- Have weekly trackers to know the performance of each kid in each class. Remedial learning should not be pushed to exams, but instead happen on a daily and weekly basis

Teachers

School leaders need to build a culture of trust in schools so that adults open their practices to one another and learn from their peers.	• Create structure to allow for collaboration • Common planning time • Opportunities for peer observation • Focused cross-grade meetings.
Create high expectations for adults and students alike	• Create high performance expectations (vision). • Emphasize on the strong minute-minute planning irrespective of the grades. • Communicate these goals effectively to the teachers. • Foster group acceptance. • Create a protocol where the performance of students is shared among teachers.
Support educator learning throughout (not necessarily professional, can be through accessible best sources)	• Gauge the learning needs of the staffs on a timely basis. • Find the resources (Eg: Time, Space, Money) to create opportunities for that learning. • Provide individualized support. • Create an environment to make this learning as a self-reflective aspect to one's teaching. • Ensure that these acquired skills are put into practice.

Community Engagement

The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of the kids and their families are recognized and addressed.	• Through questionnaires find out the information regarding conditions that prevailed in the home. • Categorize the data identifying strengths and areas to concentrate. • Invite parents strong in any field as guest speakers to support relative classroom lessons.(irrespective of their social background) • Comprehensive school based health check-ups. • Ensure and emphasize the importance of physical exercise classes.
Create an environment where there is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents and school staff.	• Establishes a school-wide "open door" culture, in which all staff members are focused on high quality customer service, and always welcome and engage with families and community members. • Motivates disengaged or resistant external stakeholders to help achieve the school's goals. • Arrange focused grade-wise/ smaller groups comprising of the kids with their families and the school • Staff to constantly communicate the kids' progress to the parents. • Prioritize being visible and available to families and community members, and proactively find opportunities to engage with them.

	Students
Developing Rapport and Trust	• Consistently model care and commitment to students and as well, respond to each in a respectful manner. • Spend significant amounts of time participating in activities which helps them understand the students.
Dialogue and Listening to Students	• Consistently allow student councils to be represented at School Advisory Council meetings. • Collaboration through sharing of instructional and decision-making power with students in a climate of mutual respect. • Organize student and parent surveys/forums about topics such as school climate, bullying, student • Interests where every child is given a chance to voice his opinion. Schedule ongoing "professional conversations" to promote continuing dialogue and problem-solving.
Judging Behavior not the Individual	• Clearly delineating between the students themselves and their misbehavior. • Debriefing with the student and others involved following incidents. • Offering a cadre of supportive follow-up interventions for students experiencing repeated misbehavior.

The above checklist is just a starting point. Education is a sensitive process which needs to be contextualized based on background of school, teachers and most importantly the students. The next chapter shows what inclusion looks like, and discusses practices by some schools in New Delhi.

Look what 'I Can' did to a nation

Can you imagine the long-term cost to the economy, the loss to one's wellbeing, the loss in human capital if we have a generation of children that think that 'they can't?' Education should teach us that 'we can.'

We are constantly told that we should be quiet, we should not have an opinion, and we should not have an idea and then, we wonder why our children are not creative or imaginative. This is what happens when you tell a child that 'you can't'. 'I Can't' has a huge price with a real human cost. In a country of billions of people there are two hundred million children who go into school but only eighteen million actually graduate. Of those who graduate, nineteen percent of the eighteen million children cannot get a job because 'they can't'.

This is a staggering number and a big issue. A nation cannot continue having an education system that tells its children 'you can't.'

'I Can' means that we have to re-imagine and re-design the entire program, from the beginning. There is a lot more work that needs to be done from the side of the teacher. It is a huge price to pay if a teacher feels 'I can't'. A nation cannot afford to pay this price any longer.

- Kir Bir Sethi, Founder- Riverside School, Ahmedabad

5.
Bright spots for Inclusive Learning in Schools

INDUS ACTION team went scouting for schools which have been proactive about social and academic inclusion, mostly in Delhi. The findings are discussed in this chapter, and have been categorized with a focus on inclusion.

INDUS ACTION used a modified version of positive deviance approach to identify these schools, which we like to call 'bright spots'. Positive deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges. In this context, through positive deviance, we looked for schools which faced similar financial and behavioral constraints, but have made a conscious decision to work towards integration in their schools.

School

Academics

Teachers

Community Engagement

Special Measures

Salwan Public School, East Delhi

Salwan Public School has been implementing kids from economically weaker section under Delhi's land act. The oldest kids from EWS are in 8th grade.

The teachers in early grades pay special attention to needs of all children and hold remedial classes. There are special review classes for all children in higher grades, irrespective of their economic and social background.

The school teachers ensure regular contact with parents in Hindi and even send notices in Hindi. This ensures effective information loops and investment of parents in the activities of school. There is also a prescribed meal plan, which constitutes of meals available in all households, to ensure that kids don't feel inferior due to the tiffin boxes they bring to school.

The teachers are invested in learning of each child and very sensitive to their needs. Lower class sizes enable them to give personal attention to all students.

While a lot of schools complain about wrong targeting, Salwan Public School goes ahead and has a solution for it. After the lottery is lawfully completed, school staff makes physical visits to the selected students' houses before the academic session begins. This lets them verify the facts submitted by parents before admission. If they find that undeserving families have managed to submit wrong documents, they involve the respective officer who escalates this to DoE.

Though not required by the procedures, Salwan staff walks the extra mile to ensure that there is no forgery and that the beneficiaries are genuine. Teachers also create informal book banks for children to take benefit of books from students in previous years.

Blue Bells School, International

School

Blue Bells School has been admitting kids with special needs and economically weaker sections for more than a decade

Academics

Booster Classes: The school holds booster classes, for all children who need academic support and not just EWS children, to avoid tagging children.

Special education
Foreign Language: All kids are taught Chinese/Japanese as that opens doors to many opportunities for them. Exchange programs with African nations and Japan are open to all children.

Teachers

One of the distinguishing operating principles of Blue Bells is to raise the bar of the entire family and not just the child. For this mothers are taught English and there are conversations around aspirations, social confidence etc. The session begins with an orientation of parents of EWS families in Hindi to set them up for success and prepare them for the changes and expectations. The school has a lot of support staff including a social worker, special educators.

Community Engagement

The school leadership, especially the Principal, is very invested in attaining equality and making the school inclusive. This sensitization trickles down to teachers, students and even the non-teaching staff. Low academic results cannot be attributed to economic background of children. Teachers are responsible for performance of all children

Teacher training: Teachers are trained very regularly and culture of inclusiveness is built very subtly (to avoid tagging of students) every third Saturday is a workshop day for multi- level teaching, multiple intelligences, objective writing etc.

Special Measures

Mentor mentee program: Kids have mentors from various schools
Life skills curriculum: To build a value based environment in school, there is a life skill curriculum for all children, which fosters respect for diversity among all kids. There are youth parliaments held, where inclusive rules are formed by the students, for the students.

Stage performances: For all round development, all students are given equal opportunities in various activities and all kids have to perform on stage at least thrice a year to build their confidence and social skills.

Ankuran Center for drop outs and street children. It's a readiness center for MCD schools. Some children are included in BB itself. All kids in Ankuran are tracked for 3 years so ensure that they are in school. All students have to visit Ankuran and make visits in surrounding communities to be empathetic and learn from reality of families in low income communities. Students look forward to these monthly visits.

Chinmaya Vidhyalaya

School

Founded on values of Chinmaya Mission, Chinmaya Vidhyalaya has been admitting EWS kids since 2006. The school took time to ease the students in and faced problems as most children are first generation learners. However, the learning curve was steep and the school has now taken extensive measures to integrate children from economically weaker section in their schools.

Academics

ChinmayaVidhyalaya runs a centre called 'jagriti', for school children who need extra academic support. Attended by almost 100 students, Jagriti has provision for kids to have a healthy snack between regular school and Jagriti classes, which are run for 5 days in a week. To ensure small group and leveled learning, Jagriti has 9 additional teachers who teach kids and serve as extra support structures. To ensure continuity between morning classes and Jagriti, a coordinator visits Jagriti kids in morning classes, speaks to class teachers, identifies academic gaps and then makes reports and actions plans to bridge these gaps. A special educator is appointed to serve kids with learning disabilities.

Community Engagement

School teachers and Jagriti educators maintain regular contact with parents.

The teachers, both in morning school and Jagriti are extremely sensitive in building a culture of respect and approachability. Regular PTMs are held, in Hindi, for parents to interact with each other and be sensitive to the diversity in classroom.

Teachers

There is regular interaction between teachers and Jagriti educators to track progress of each child.

Ahlcon International School

School

Ahlcon has about 250 children studying under EWS category. Earlier they were running a parallel evening school for EWS like many other schools, but since 2006, they have integrated kids in regular school.

A lot of opposition to section 12 (1)(c) has been due to presumed dynamics claimed like adjustments, feeling deprived/ depressed, hygiene issues. However, this school believes that these issues always existed in schools even among elite children, and hence these issues cannot be attributed to EWS children.

Academics

The school reduces homework as much as possible, and if any, there are two types of homework- children driven homework but not parent dependent so design changes in homework itself prevent exclusion; the other type of homework requires parents and children to come together on the weekend which is equally important for fee paying children).

In higher grades when academic requirement increases, school takes responsibility of children who don't get academic support at home, without making the parents feel bad or inferior.

Ahlcon has a vision of empowering families and starting literacy classes for English education targeting towards parents of children who do not have these skills.

Teachers

There are lots of trainings and orientations held for teachers to prepare them technically to teach in mixed classrooms. The school leader pays person attention to build relationships with these children, to fill the gap for nurturing relationships at home.

The management has taken a conscious decision to not label kids of EWS category. The school leader is very passionate about social justice and strongly believed that the life of a kid can be changed if the school manages to create a transformative environment for 6 hours every day.

Special Measures

Till second grade, Ahlcon serves mid-day meals for good eating habits and inculcate togetherness in children. During PTMs, the teachers consciously have sessions in Hindi to include parents of EWS children. There is a zero period where EWS children can ask their difficulties, and share their experiences. .

The school leader especially noted that issues like stealing, abusive language, hygiene, which are attributed to EWS children, are not alien to schools as schools faced this issue even prior to RTE. This cannot be an excuse for exclusion. The under lying belief is to be on the side of the law, ¬¬and whether imposed or not, Ahlcon believes in implementing it with full gusto.

The school is ready to take financial responsibility for children even after the pas 12th grade, to ensure that their academic life is not impeded due to financial constraints.

Fee paying children have been sensitized value education, assembly issues, and the school prides itself in having no case of discrimination by children. The management believes that schools are place where values are created, nation building and character building happens.

Every year the school had intake of children form EWS that ranged from 15 to 200. In the year 2012, out of a 170 applicants, 140 EWS students were admitted into the school with the acceptance criterion being both income level and neighbourhood.

St. Mary's school, Safdarjung Enclave

School

St. Mary's school is one of the reputed schools in the South Delhi region. The school was established in 1966 and has had a commendable history of social inclusion practices from its very inception. The school hosts classes from I to XII under the CBSE board and boasts of strength of nearly 1500 students, 833 boys and 657 girls. In the course of its long history with social inclusion, the school which accepts students from economically weaker section (EWS) or specially challenged for 19percent of the class strength has been able to conceptualize, refine and develop various practices that facilitate social inclusion of these kids into the composite structure of the society as a whole.

Academics

Evaluation: A differential evaluation system is seen in process to cater to different pace and levels of learning in children with special needs, commensurate with the difficulties faced by them. e.g. more time, or a writer, or a different mode of examination than the written mode

Community Engagement

Parents are found to be volunteering at the school in various activities. This is especially encouraged by the administration as an efficient way to be a part of the school's ecosystem.

Guidance, counseling and training to parents in order to sensitivize them to the idea of social inclusion and school's policies to attain the same.

In St. Mary's this is done by organizing

a) lectures and discussion for parents with experts, teachers or school management
b)Once in 2 months, workshop for parents with experts, specialists etc. on topics ranging from social problems to environmental issues and etc

Teachers

Teacher Support:

1. Teachers are asked to fill in a portal form during the time of joining which helps the school to assess them and their beliefs and ideology.
2. Teachers were also recruited for the after school program for students who might require additional support.
3. The teachers discussed at the end of the day to find out what worked and what did not work with children. At the end of the year also it was discussed what worked for a particular child and what did not. This information was passed on to the next teacher to redesign their strategy as per the child's need.
4. The school also arranges special training for technical support to teachers on pedagogy and difficulties related to physical and mental disabilities such as down syndrome, cerebral palsy etc.

Special Measures

Myth Busting
There are certain myths that the school leader busts about EWS students such as, unhealthy practices like 'hair oil' in poor children compares to 'gel' for the affluent students. Lack of attention in both sections of the society leading to child's downfall in school. The Principal suggested that one can create a chart on different parameters on cleanliness, books, homework on one axis and children from EWS, Rich, Middle class, with disability etc. on the other axis to find out whether there is a real difference which exists among them or not on different parameters.

The school has employed people with Down syndrome as supportive staff to the teaching staff. These employees are in constant interaction with the students directly and indirectly.

Provide partial or complete support to children who might the same for participating in common events such as school excursions. In St. Mary's it's done by covering this cost in the packaged deals signed with the concerned firms/operators

Riverside School, Ahmedabad

School

Riverside School is one of the most revered schools in the country. It has been taking kids from economically weaker sections since last 3 years. Parents of children from EWS are auto drivers, factory workers, domestic helpers etc.

Academics

Riverside has a very strong support structure in place for academic and social inclusion. There are remedial classes everyday for an hour , for all children. However, there are special language support classes for kids from EWS as they do not get that support at home. These classes are open to other children as well, and focus on reading, writing and speaking skills to build confidence and bridge the academic gap, if there is any.

Academic results of EWS kids have shown an upward slope. There are many kids from EWS performing at an equal or higher level than other kids. Apart from the regular biweekly extra classes and sessions for parents, the school takes a reactive approach in solving various academic gaps.

Community Engagement

One of the distinguishing features of Riverside's RTE program is its deep engagement with parents. Riverside teachers hold sessions with parents, twice a week for 2 hours each. These are aimed at parental instruction. During these sessions, parents are systematically taught the curriculum their kids learn in class, English language skills are imparted; hygiene and social issues like cleanliness, family planning, physical abuse etc. are also addressed. This step, they believe, is the key driver of success.

All parents are occasionally invited to read a story to students and share experiences. Parents of EWS get the confidence to do so due to the weekly sessions and social gap is bridged.

Daily communication with parents of EWS section happens through diary in which messages are in local languages, and teachers are

accessible on phone for most of the day. In case of illiterate parents, phone calls are made every day for homework. PTM is held once a month where all parents interact with each other. The interactions are focused on classroom learning and updates about kids.

Parents from financially sound background are oriented in the beginning and shown the bigger picture. There hasn't been any resistance from the side of parents about this inclusive model

Teachers

All teachers are very invested in making schools inclusive and in fact believe that mixed classrooms enhance their abilities as teaches. . Kids from EWS are not given any special privileges or discounts due to their economic status. Equality in approach leads to seamlessness and encouragement for children.

Teachers focus on all 4 levels of investment: Social, Physical, Cognitive, and Emotional ; pay special attention to social and cognitive skills of kids from EWS

Teachers notice that EWS kids do tend to stick together and hence need to be consciously placed in heterogeneous groups for holistic social integration

Special Measures

There is also an annual health check-up for all kids to ensure that health and hygiene get due attention.

Since there is no uniform for kids till grade 1, all kids are asked to dress simply and maintain the same level of hygiene

There are no birthday celebrations or other events where the financial background of a student can be showcased

Books, stationary, and other materials are provided by the school to all students

Issues like violence are addressed though positive interactions in sessions with parents. There has been a significant change in student and parent behavior in areas of violence, respect, gender equality and even language (Parents from EWS are encouraged to use their training from sessions to talk to their kids in English)

The Shri Ram School, Vasant Kunj

School

The Shri Ram School, Vasant Vihar has almost 600 students of which 90 belong to EWS. They started admitting kids in 2009 and the oldest EWS kids are now in 4th grade. The land mark initiative by TSRS is called ShriUdaan.

ShriUdaan: ShriUdaan is a program completely run by the parent body of TSRS. The fee paying parents have taken the ownership to get teachers, funding, resources and even work with school teachers to solve

Academics

time tabling issues, Shri Udaan is an in school remedial model, so that students don't have to stay for extra hours after school. The main objective of ShriUdaan is to bridge the academic gaps and improve English comprehension and speaking skills to enable class comprehension and participation. The curriculum is based on leveled learning using Oxford books, and is imparted with activities, teaching aids.

Community Engagement

The students are pulled out from 1 of the 3 weekly classes for PE/music and art and are taught individually or in small groups. They are extremely affectionate towards their teachers. Not all EWS kids are pulled out of classes; only the ones who need remediation are asked to attend these classes.

Given that Shri Udaan is run by parent body, all parents are oriented towards making school inclusive and provide each child with an opportunity to learn well.

Special Measures

The teachers are given special training for teaching English as a second language, and being sensitive to backgrounds of children. School teachers are regularly in touch with Shri Udaan volunteers and also make student-specific list

One of the most important aspects of cultivating inclusion is open communication. Both fee paying and EWS children are told openly how everyone has their own strengths and areas of development. Teachers build the sensitivity to not judge students if they are pulled out for extra support. During circle time in mornings, students talk about issues which are on their mind and classroom is a circle of trust and camaraderie.

Laxman Public School, Hauz Khas

School

Laxman Public School is one of the largest public schools in Delhi and has been admitting children under EWS quota since last 10 years. They have taken special measures for upliftment of 3 communities.

Academics

The School organizes buses to get mothers of students from neighborhood communities and has a specially designed multi leveled English learning program. It's a certificate course taught by trained professionals.

Teachers

The School social service cell has also set up medical and legal aid clinics for communities for overall development of families.

The teachers are trained to deal with children with different needs through monthly trainings. Teachers are completely accountable for academic performance of children and have to spend two hours on a daily basis to provide remedial support.

Special Measures

Through specially designed life skills and value education program, the School inculcates the value of social inclusion in all its children. Children are encouraged to take up projects for social equity and are guided by experts in the field.

Summary

Following are some of the ways in which schools can take initiatives in each area:

Academics

Remedial classes, irrespective of background

Onus should lie on the school, and not shifted to parents

Teachers

Special training for topics like teaching English as second language, value education, bilingual teaching etc

Conduct programs to inculcate the value of respect and inclusion in parents, students and even non-teaching staff

Community Engagement

Bridge programs for parents

Orientation of parents from all backgrounds

Circular in vernacular language

Special Measures

Role of school leader is pertinent to streamline academics and align the mindset of all stakeholders. This can be done by setting progressive and inclusive structures in school for all activities

Perception Study

Under land use act and after the Public Interest Litigation filed by Mr Ashok Agarwal, schools in Delhi which received land from the government have a mandate to admitted EWS children in their schools. Hence, provision of Section 12 (1)(c) are not entirely new to schools of this city. For the purpose of this study, 32 schools were interviews for this study and teachers, principals, students and parents were asked relevant questions about Section 12(1)(c). The list of schools and detailed questionnaires can be found in Appendix.

Only 15% schools believe that it is the responsibility of the school alone to educate a child

70% of the schools believe that government is shirking its responsibility of improving government schools and passing the burden to private schools.

Only 18% school believe that their teachers will need to be given extra training to teach in mixed classrooms, whereas 61% of the schools think that there needs to be some external intervention with parents of kids from EWS.

42% of schools, mainly high income schools, said that they would rather have equal but separate classes for kids from EWS however only 24% of schools said that kids discriminate among each other.

Only 21% schools send circulars in Hindi, making it almost impossible for parents from EWS to understand and equally participate in activities of school

15 high income private schools asserted that Rs.1190 per month is not enough to cover cost of having 25 percent kids from weaker sections

58% of the schools believe that the level of academic rigor has gone down in school since RTE

6 schools specifically attributed stealing, abusive language and immorality to children from EWS

These numbers tell a story and also showcase the lack of preparedness in schools of our capital city. The school structures are not conducive for equal participation and the mindset of teachers is not encouraging enough to practice inclusion in classrooms. Much needs to be done to address this issue: pedagogical changes, policy modifications, support from government, activism from civil society etc. Chapter 4 initiated a conversation around pedagogy to aid teachers plan for mixed classrooms. The next chapter discusses ways in which all players in the system can come together to catalyze inclusion- from inside and outside schools.

" I came to know about Section 12 from an INDUS ACTION member and now I owe the benefits that I am enjoying to them. Both of us made all the efforts to ensure that our child gets admitted, and my daughter has been admitted to one of the finest schools in the city.

I know I am poor and I know I can barely write my name. But that does not mean my children have to live the same life. I believe all of us have will have to contribute to educate our children. The teacher should perform their responsibilities properly and should not discriminate between children. The school can ensure that all children are treated equally. From the rich parents, I just request some empathy, as it's not our fault that we cannot provide for fancy shining things to our children. They should not feel that 'yeh to hamari barabari karne laga'. The government should ensure timely delivery on promises so that schools can continue with their efforts.

I believe in one thing – We are not born equal, but we all have the right to live equally."

6. Shaping the path for the system

Schools do not exist in isolation from the larger ecosystem around them. Every stakeholder, inside and outside the walls of the school has to believe in the power of social integration for us to realize the vision of a just and inclusive society. This chapter points to the challenges faced and proposes some immediate solutions to be undertaken by schools, government, media, corporates and civil society organizations.

Introduction of Section 12(1)(c) in RTE is a landmark step towards inclusion. However, it is among the first of many which need to be taken to make our schools truly inclusive. For the ecosystem to be ready, we need to overcome a lot of challenges, and the proposed solutions involve a lot of stakeholders. The following diagram categorizes challenges and proposes solutions for four important groups of roadblocks. The list is by no means exhaustive and only attempts to address broad challenges facing implementation of Section (12)(1)(c).

Working Solutions to bridge the Gaps

Skill Gap

Teacher Training programs
School Leadership modules

Resource Gap

Book Bank
CSR funding
Incentives for highly inclusive schools

Structural Gap

Grievance Redressal system
Rubric for social inclusion
School Management Committees
Regular convening of schools

Mindset Barriers

Media campaigns
Mentorship programs
CSO initiatives

Skills Gap

India faces a shortage of 2 million teachers[77], and the learning levels are receding at an unpleasing rate and the quality of teachers entering the system is questionable. For imparting education and citizenship in our schools, as a system, we need to fill this gap with highly motivated and skilled teachers and school leaders, who are equipped to deal with diversity in the schools. There needs to be a thorough understanding of the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the diverse group of students to evolve new strategies and curricula for students.

Teacher Training

There needs to be for a greater focus on diversity issues in teacher training and teacher education programs[78]. Training programs need to be designed to help teachers become more flexible and equipped to teach diverse students. Pedagogical changes need to be introduced at a systemic level and must not be left to the discretion of school alone.

School Leadership Modules

Leading a school with over a quarter of students coming from poor or disadvantaged background needs training. Private organizations like NISA (National Independent School Alliance), Private school Association et.al, can mobilize resources to ensure that school leaders change their attitude towards Section 12 (1)(c) and look at this as an opportunity to learn and train their staff. Such self-organized groups can serve as excellent avenues to learn from each other, explore solutions instead of finding ways to circumvent the rules.

Grievance Redressal system

In recommendations submitted by National Advisory Committee (NAC), there are few actions steps which need to be implemented at the earliest; one of them is grievance redressal. The guiding principle for this mechanism should be for government and schools to work together and not against each other. Per the recommendations of NAC, each state will have its own nodal points for collecting and solving grievances for parents[79]. However, it's important for schools to have a say in the system as well as a protocol for filing their own complains. Our primary research indicated gap in reimbursements as a serious flaw, and schools should have an assured and timely way of getting them. This system should hold the stakeholders accountable but also ensure that it is supportive to both families and schools. Schools, the primary bodies implementing and fostering inclusion, should not collapse under the bureaucratic processes and pressure of getting the Act right.

Rubric for social inclusion

Social and economic inclusion is an idea which needs more structure and support. The nature of school education has become such that there is barely any external feedback mechanism. As inclusion is relatively a new policy, having a rubric which can serve as a standard for schools to follow, it will help them carve a path and plan for academic years accordingly.

Some existing school rating rubrics point to the following indicators for achieving an inclusive environment in school

- Effective and socially responsible management
- Every child learning
- Motivated staff
- Inclusive curriculum and pedagogy
- Community relations
- Supporting infrastructure

More such rubrics which evaluate the holistic health of school can be found in Appendix.

School Management Committees

Parents and Teachers Associations exist but they are not very effective. Parents and communities need to be involved more often to understand the socio-economic and cultural influences on the students. School Management Committees exist, but they need to be made representative including parents, teachers, alumni and students, and empowered in decision making processes of the school[80].

Regular convening of schools

DoE has to get directly involved in dealing with schools. Having a regular convening of schools at a city level will encourage feedback mechanisms, sharing of resources and also a minoring structure. A lot of schools exist in silos without supervision; hence the issue of inclusion has become deprioritized. This convening can make schools work towards having a vision and action plan to make their schools sites of social inclusion. It will also serve as an appropriate platform to conceptualize, discuss and debate measures for financial, academic and social sustainability of this clause. If such an avenue is created, a lot of other RTE clauses pertaining to continuous and comprehensive evaluation, school management committees, infrastructure regulations, remedial support et al can also be discussed, for a holistic plan for growth of every child.

Resource Gap

Book Banks

One of the pressing concerns voiced by parents has been that of ancillary expenses like books, uniforms, picnics, co-curricular activities etc. Encouraging schools to create book banks for any student who needs these resources can cultivate the traits of giving and collaborating. By empowering staff and teachers to take ownership of this book bank in each school, school management can facilitate sensitivity towards needs of various families. It is imperative to create a culture where using old text books in not looked down upon and each student values knowledge and internalizes learning.

Top up funding from Corporates from Corporate Social Responsibility Funds

Under the New Company's Act 2013, section 135 mandates big corporates to contribute 2 percent of their gross income towards social activities. Corporates can take the ownership to fund activities which address problems impeding implementation of Section 12(1)(c), like remedial education, community empowerment activities, teacher training etc. Par taking in these activities will bring the employees closer to this drive for education equity and inculcate a sense of responsible citizenship.

Incentives for highly inclusive schools

The formation and implementation of RTE has itself not been inclusive. Private schools were not part of the decision making process. Currently, a lot of schools perceive this section of RTE as a burden, have not been empowered to see the bigger picture and understand the motive behind this provision. Having said that, a lot of schools for the benefit of all stakeholders, have taken creative steps towards inclusion. As a system, it is imperative to acknowledge these efforts of schools through monetary and non-monetary recognition. This will serve as an incentive and also a way to disseminate best practices among other schools.

Mindset Barriers

Media campaigns

Changing the attitude of parents, teachers and children will not be enough to form an inclusive education system. Even those citizens who don't have a direct stake in Section 12(1)(c) can contribute. Having a series of newspaper advertisements, radio jingles, television air time which address the common myths and throw light on advantages of mixed classrooms can help build a public opinion about inclusion in schools.

Mentorship programs

Mentorship plays a nurturing role in any context and for children growing up to be citizens of a nation, placed in a school environment radically different from the homes they belong to, mentoring can have transformational impact. If civil society organizations can take up the responsibility of being facilitators for bringing together mentor volunteers who are willing to work with children and their families to adjust to the demands of private education, drive values and be a constant source of support, the child will be among relationships which add a positive meaning to his schooling.

Initiatives by Civil Society Organizations

A lot of the schools expressed the need to educate communities from which poor and disadvantaged kids come from. While the rationale can be questioned, it is in the benefit of our social fabric if adults can be made aware about how to hold the school more accountable, how to create nurturing environment at home and contribute to the education of their children irrespective of their own socio economic and educational background. CSOs can launch programs which address the needs of these parents who kids are first generation learners. These programs can serve two purposes: to help parents find a voice in the system and not feel inferior, and enable them to actively participate in learning of their child.

Conclusion

All these above factors, if achieved at a systemic level, can not only take schools towards inclusion, but also change the prevailing behaviors and mindsets in our society about children from various backgrounds studying together. There is no end to the debates that organizations and schools can have about Section 12(1)(c), the perceived financial and social burden imposed by it, and the lack of readiness of children to study in private schools. It is at this juncture that one must remember the true purpose of education and the responsibilities as an educator, and not let a child's education and inclusion in the society, be a function of his socioeconomic background.

It may seem like an inundating task to initiate academic and social integration in private schools, and it probably is, but the key is to keep child at the center of all decisions and the staff is trained and motivated, to ensure that each child is learning and growing socially, academically, emotionally and cognitively. Schools can follow the bright spots, innovate, engage and disseminate best practices. Section 12(1)(c) is an opportunity for India to create proof points for social integration in schools, with the hope of a more inclusive nation.

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and STs constitute 8.2percent (total 24.4percent) of the population/ Further, the Tendulkar Committee, setup by the Planning Commission to measure poverty, has estimated the below poverty line (BPL) population to be 37.2percent It is a fact that much of the population that suffers economic deprivation also suffers from social disadvantage. Thus, taken together, the figure of 25percent for admission of children from disadvantaged groups and weaker sections is considered reasonable.
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Appendix

Schools Visited for Perception and positive deviance study

1. Tinu Public School
2. Amrita Public School
3. New Green Field Public school
4. Green field, Dilshad Garden
5. Kalindi Bal Vidhyalaya
6. Baby Land Public School
7. Brahamapuri Public School
8. Savitri Public School
9. Army Public School
10. Aryan Public School
11. Lord Krishna School
12. National Public School
13. Yog Bharti
14. Gangotri Public School
15. Happy School
16. Don Bosco
17. Cambridge, Sangam Vihar
18. Blue Bells School International
19. Chinmaya Vidhyala
20. Ahlcon International School
21. Laxman Public School
22. St. Mary's School, Safdarjung
23. Salwan Public School, East Delhi
24. Riverside School, Ahmedabad
25. J. D Tyler School
26. The Shri Ram School, Vasant Kunj
27. Mata Guru Ji Public School
28. Tagore Modern Public School
29. DPS international
30. Bal Bharti School
31. New Saraswati Public School
32. Pooja School

Questionnaires available on request, lease write to info@indusaction.org

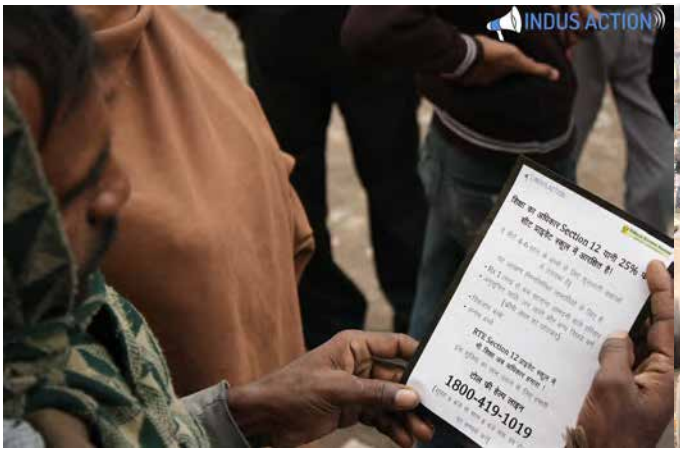
Following organizations have existing school evaluation rubrics for Indian schools:

1. Adhyayan Asia- Adhyayan Quality Standard
2. Central Board of Secondary Education
3. CfBT Education Trust
4. Grey Matters India
5. Micro Credit Ratings International
6. Bharatiya Jain Sangatha
7. Absolute Return for Kids, India (School Quality Assessment)
8. Azim Premji Foundation

Acronyms

ASER: Annual Status of Education Report
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DISE: District Information System for Education
DoE: Department of Education
EWS: Economically Weaker Section
NAC: National Advisory Committee
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
PISA: Programme For International Student Assessment
RTE: Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education
SMC: School Management Committee
UNICEF: The United Nations Children's Fund

Highlights from INDUS ACTION's Recruitment Campaign 1.0 for RTE Sec 12 , 1 (c)



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