

Primary Education (Implementation of RTE in Uttar Pradesh & Kerala and the Importance of Empowerment and Awareness Amongst the Community for the Development of Primary Education)

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Abstract - One of the major roadblocks in the development of Primary Education in India is not the scarcity of funds or policies, but the implementation of already existing policies. We compared the level of implementation of three policies MidDay Meal, the requirement of infrastructure, and 25 percent quota for the students from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), under Right To Education (RTE) Act in two states of India, Kerala, and Uttar Pradesh. Through a survey, we try to find the level of awareness about the these RTE policies amongst the parents in Kanpur, U.P. From the survey, we find out that educated and economically well off parents are comparatively more aware of the policies, and we analyze that participation of the community, especially parents, in the management of school plays a very important role in making the education system more accountable. Main reasons for the poor awareness and participation of the community and parents in the school management through School Management Committees (SMC) under RTE act is the high illiteracy rate in Kanpur, U.P. In a nutshell, we analyzed an overall count of four policies under RTE Act and conducted a survey through which we demonstrated the facts using primary information obtained from the survey.

2. OUTLINE

The article will first describe Introduction in Section 3 mentioning all the preliminaries and existing knowledge about the subject. Next up will be Review of Literature in Section 4 which will potentially complete majority content of the article and contains the literature of the subject in a very precise, detailed and well mannered way. After that, Methodology in Section 5 will provide information about the input of the article which is essentially the details about the survey. Next is section 6 which will be Results obtained from the survey and analysis of it, section 7 will be Conclusion of the paper and finally with all the research paper's references in Section 8.

3 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the current government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been directed towards making India a skilled country and center of the world manufacturing. Such efforts have translated into campaigns like Make In India, which envisions manufacturing of goods in India for domestic consumption as well as to cater the world's demand of goods. Make In India program requires existence of substantial skilled human capital to succeed. Primary education is the building blocks for development of skilled human capital. However the 2011 census reveals that 8.4 crore children are still out of school (census 2011 [1]). Coupled with the data on the number of children who have never been to school, one also needs to take into account the fact that India still has high school dropout rate. These alarmingly high dropout rates can derail the Make In India program of the government. Though vision is important for change but alone is not enough to succeed. It is required to be backed up with concrete policy measures.

A look at the fundamental category of education, i.e. the primary sector reveals that 83% of the primary schools in our country are owned by the government or are government aided schools (DISE 2015 [2]). Hence, the government plays an important role when it comes to primary education. Although private sector is blooming simultaneously, mostly in the urban areas, it accounts only for a small share of primary schools when compared to public schools. The quality of primary education, especially in the public schools, has always been cause of concern.

" If India has to fly, education system of India needs to be revived"

TSR Subramanian (Former Cabinet Secretary)

According to ASER report about 25% of class 8th students could not read class 2nd text and about 50% students of 8th class could not even do basic arithmetic operations. ASER report said in its report

that the quality of education in India is very low and what is even more alarming is the high rate of deterioration of the quality of education at the very fundamental and basic level (ASER 2014 [3]).

The landmark act, Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 that makes free and compulsory education for 6-14 years old children a fundamental right comes as a blessing to the doomed system of primary education in India. But in reality, less than 10% schools, both in government and private sector, are regularized according to the RTE. The implementation of the RTE has been shabby. If the schools had been modeled according to the RTE regulations, most of the problem would have been addressed. According to the three lists which specify duties and functions for different levels of the government, central government makes the policies and grant funds to the state governments and state governments implement the policies by making the action plan for the implementation (World bank 2002 [4]). But there is a huge discrepancy when it comes to the implementation of RTE among different states. In one federal nation, in spite of following the same constitution, laws, and intergovernmental finance system, and subject to the same election cycles, the inconsistencies are stark.

What are the factors that are making all the difference? To answer this question, we decided to compare the best and the worst scenarios: Kerala is the state with the best implementation of RTE and Uttar Pradesh is the one with the worst implementation of RTE. The factors that play a major role in the implementations of RTE are the political will, allocation of proper and sufficient funds, accountability of schools and teachers, awareness among parents, empowerment of the community and government. But among them, the most important factor responsible for the implementation of RTE and different policies under RTE is the awareness and empowerment of the community.

Through this article:

- We focused on Uttar Pradesh & Kerala and analyzed the level of implementation of RTE through analyzing the following policies under it: requirement of Infrastructure, Midday Meal, 25% Quota of children from Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in the private schools and School Management Committees (SMC).
- We tried to highlight the fact that awareness of policies and rights among the parents plays a very vital role in the implementation of the policies. Empowering parents, guardians or the community as a whole can result in wonderful outcomes.
- Through an Online survey, we tried to analyze the level of awareness of different policies under RTE (as stated above) among the parents in UP.

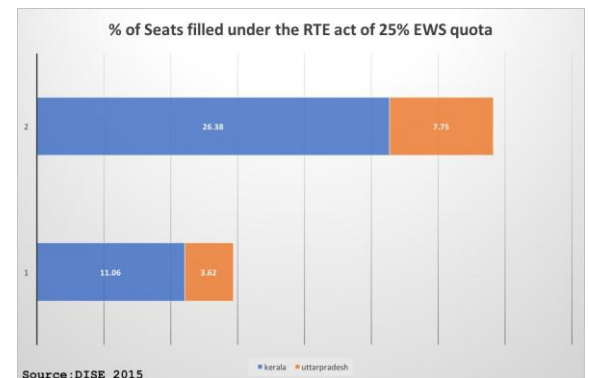
- Lastly, we have highlighted the importance of SMCs that are mandatory under RTE. SMCs play a very crucial role in empowering parents & making education system more accountable.

4 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

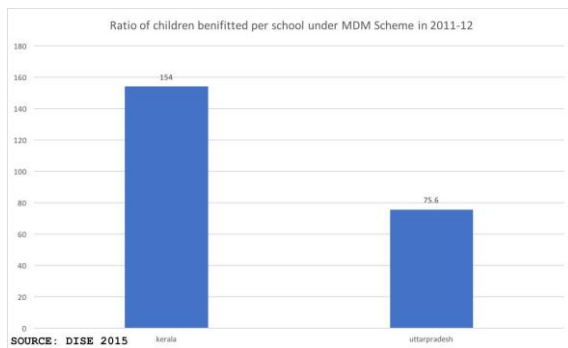
4.1 Implementation of RTE in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh has the largest share of children coming from the economically weaker section in the country and it is one of the worst performing states in the country when it comes to the implementation of RTE (DISE 2015 [2]). The landmark RTE act came as a hope to the lives of those 67 million (ministry of social justice and empowerment 2010 [5]) people living below the poverty line, for whom education was a luxury they couldn't afford. RTE if implemented fully is itself enough for the revival of our sinking primary education system. But the dear dream of a free and compulsory education is still very far from the reality even after 8 years. To analyze the level of implementation of RTE in UP we tried to analyze the implementation of the following 3 policies under RTE:

- 25% Quota in Private schools: The section 12(1)(C) of RTE Act 2009 states that 25% seats should be reserved for the students from economically weaker sections in private and government aided schools. But the implementation of this policy which was aimed to provide quality education is in an awful state. Out of 6,00,000 seats only 60 students from EWS were given admissions in the year 2013-14 (Bharat Abhyudaya Foundation 2014). Under RTE the definition of Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) are defined by the specific state. In Kerala, a family belongs to EWS category if their annual income is < 60,000 INR. In Uttar Pradesh definition of EWS is as follows: Children belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category or parents with annual income less than Rs.1 lakh and children whose parents are receiving disability/old age/widow pension.

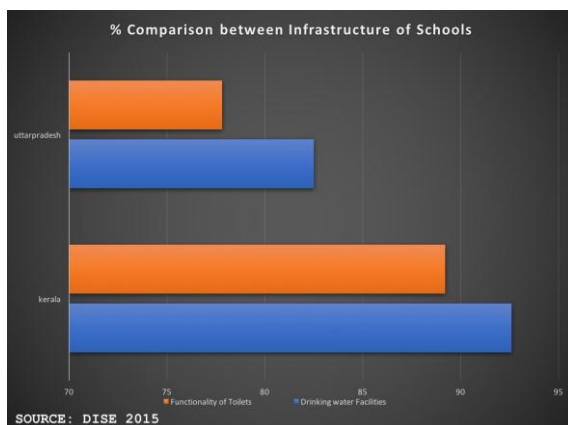


- Midday Meal Program: Midday Meal was introduced to encourage the community for primary education. Midday Meal resulted as a very effective policy when it comes to encouraging community. The enrollment rate has been very high since the commencement of this policy, whenever implemented successfully. Through midday meal government tried to address the problem of absenteeism, by giving incentives in the form of free food and the problem of malnutrition. Tamil Nadu is the best example when it comes to the implementation of MidDay Meal. MDM was launched first in 1982 in Tamil Nadu and later on over the whole country. The following data shows the implementation of midday meal in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh:



Implementation of Midday meal in UP revealed that 40% of the enrolled students still don't get free meals in the school.

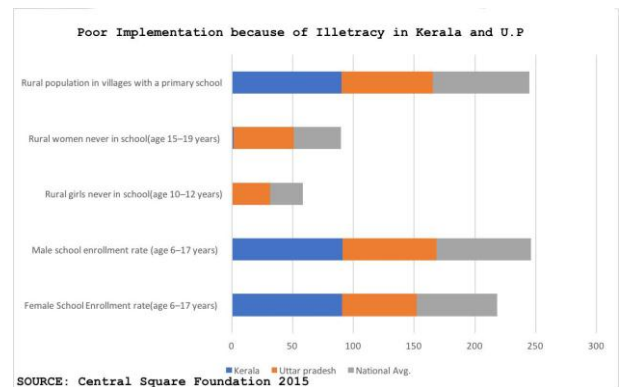
Infrastructure: Under RTE, schools were given a time period of 3 years to be competent with the RTE guidelines for the infrastructure for the schools that includes drinking water facility, toilets, desks, books and library etc. It's been years since the last deadline had passed but schools are far from being in accordance with the guidelines of RTE. Following data shows the infrastructure in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh:



4.2 Factors responsible for poor Implementation of RTE in Uttar Pradesh

Factors that could be responsible for the poor implementation of RTE are political interference, corruption, awareness, empowerment of the community or may be many more. There is political interference at every aspect and level of primary education, we need to diminish the political influence. But the main road block in the proper implementation of RTE is the lack of accountability that can be checked by awareness and empowerment in the community. Government plays the main role of driving engine when it comes to the implementation of different policies but awareness among the communities can act as a catalyst in the process of implementation.

In our country, accountability at the grass root level is obstructed by lack of knowledge of policy provisions because of low literacy and awareness, social distance between parents and teachers, and limited mechanisms for exercising accountability.



According to Dreze and Sen (2002) [11], the achievement of Kerala in the proper implementation of different policies and plans is due to public awareness and empowerment that leads to development at almost every level. Whereas U.P. lacks the same awareness among its population that leads to the poor implementation of policies and plans that further leads to the backwardness in the society. (World bank 2002 [4]).

As we can see from the above statistics, Kerala is better in terms of education and social development as compared to Uttar Pradesh. One of the reasons for the better implementation of RTE and its policies in Kerala is the fact that Kerala has more educated people that are more aware and empowered as compared to Uttar Pradesh, which is still struggling to get children in primary school. Public action is very powerful tool for the development. In Kerala, if the staffs is missing in a government hospital for 23 days, it might lead to a public protest in the concerned office.

Whereas in UP various schools and hospitals are in pathetic conditions for years and attract no public attention (World bank 2009 [4]). Most of the population in Uttar Pradesh is living helplessly in the darkness of illiteracy. Even when they know that something is wrong they are incapable of doing something to help themselves because of their ignorance. One of the main reason for the backwardness in Uttar Pradesh is the poor literacy rates. According to the census data 2011, UP has illiteracy rate of 67.68%, there is very low awareness in the community especially in rural UP which is still struggling to achieve its basic and fundamental rights.

4.3 How can we empower the community?

One of the main problem that affects the implementation of RTE and its policies is the lack of awareness that leads to the absence of community involvement in the school management. For policy implementation in India, one of the main requirement is proper accountability and the best way to make the system of primary education more accountable at the very basic level is through School Management Committees (SMCs).

- School Management Committees (SMC): In RTE 2009, School Management Committees were made mandatory under section 21, which states that SMCs should consist of 15 elected members out of which 11 members should be parents or guardian and overall 50% members should be women. SMCs mainly consists of teachers, parents and the principal. School Management Committees were introduced in the RTE at the school level to increase the participation of the community in the management of the school and to monitor the utilization of the grants that have been given to the schools. SMCs are also very helpful when it comes to making primary education system more accountable. As members of local community have a better motivation and understanding of the problems and challenges faced by the students at the grass root level. But in UP in most of the schools, SMC's either don't exist or are nonfunctional. As stated in (Education Innovation 2013 [8]) SCMs can challenge the administrative and physical constraints that obstruct the development of primary education.
- For the proper functioning of SMCs, members are supposed to be trained regularly but it is a very rare scenario. Training sessions take place either annually or in six months. That affects the outcomes of SMCs.

5 METHODOLOGY

We took a sample space of around 50 parents and conducted a survey in Kalyanpur district of Kanpur, U.P with different family incomes and different level of education of parents and asked them some questions about RTE and its policies (specifically, MDM, 25% reservation in private schools, Infrastructure (drinking water, toilets, free books, desks and library) and SMCs) to check if there is a relation between awareness and the education of parents annual income of the family.

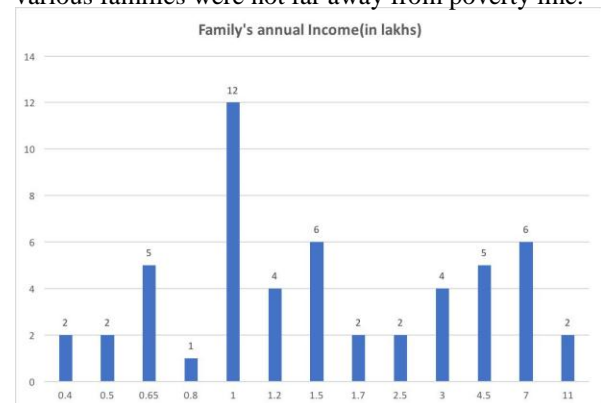
The basis of our survey includes information querying about family's Income and parent's educational level, the choice of private and public schools for their children with proper reasoning of it, existing knowledge about concerned RTE policies and Remarks.

6 RESULTS

We took 53 interviews and asked them 23 questions about the above policies and the findings from the survey are as follows:

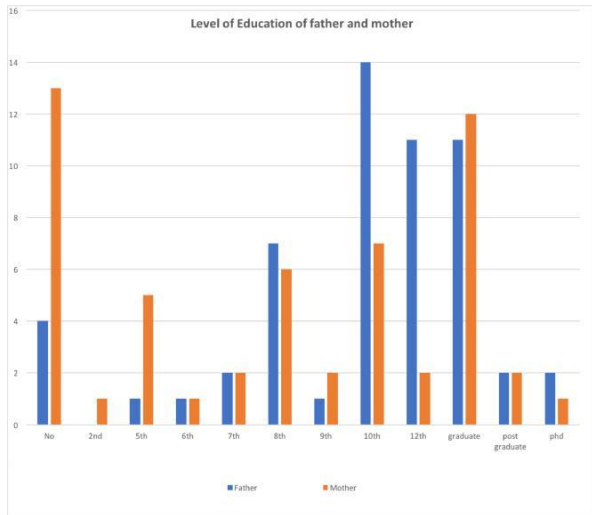
6.1 Family's Annual Income

Observation: In our survey most of the families had annual income around 1 Lakh, stating that on an average, randomly chosen families were above poverty line but various families were not far away from poverty line.



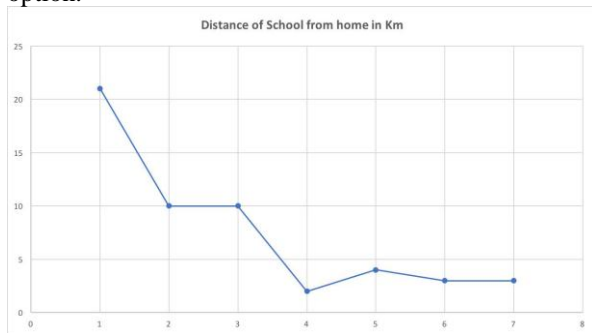
6.2 Parent's Educational background

Observation: This question helped us to gain an insight to another reason why parent's education is the most important part for primary education. In our survey most of the mothers were either illiterate or have completed their primary education while father's were Secondary passed.

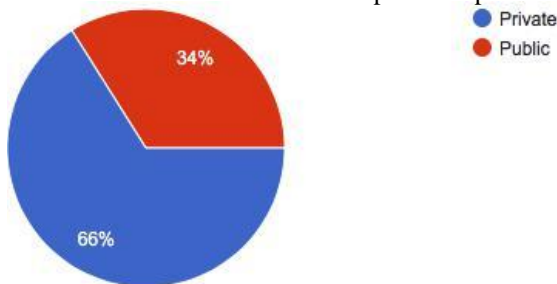


6.3 Choice of private to public Schools

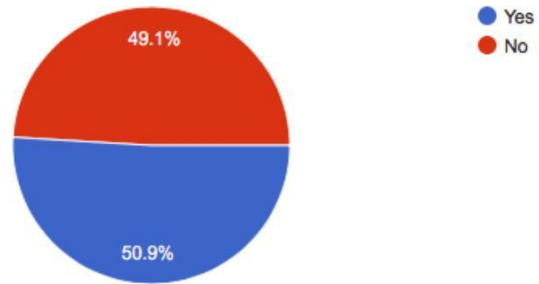
Observation: 'Money doesn't matter much if the child's education is in proper shape' : A parent quoted. In our survey most of the schools were inside the radius of 1 Km but parents still prefer private schools which were 67Kms away, which means it was not only one parent priority of education of their children over money there were roughly 60% of the parents who preferred this option.



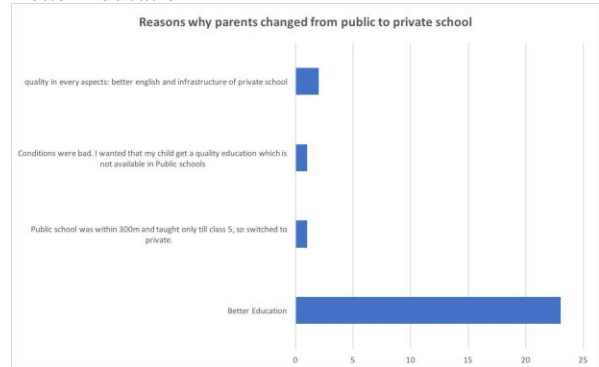
However, 66% of the parents preferred private over public schools and Out of the 66% parents 51% of them switched their child's school from public to private.



The only explanation is: Quality of education or Lack of proper Implementation of four Important policies of RTE (Mid day Meal scheme's success, 25% quota for EWS, proper Infrastructure and consolidation of SMCs)

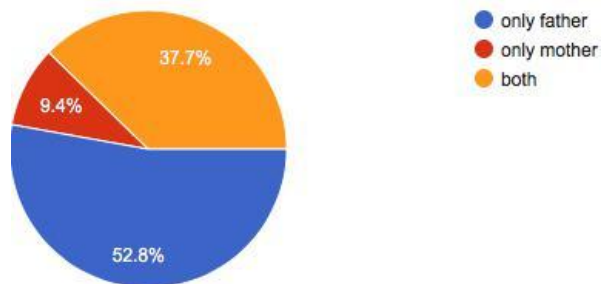


When asked about the reason to switch from public to private schools, Majority answered only one option: Better Education



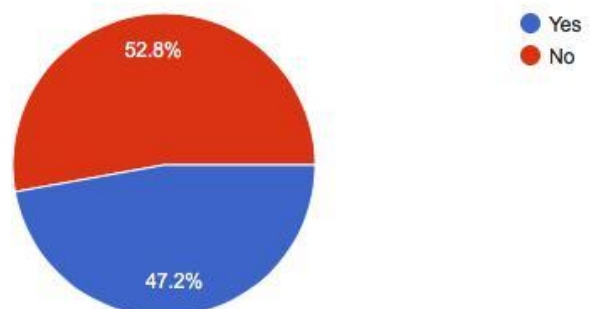
6.4 Parent's Working background

Observation: In more than half the cases father was the only employed member of the family. May be this is the reason why most of the families are still below poverty line, even if there are 5 brothers or sisters in a home, they still will go to one small shop rather than diversifying their sources of income.

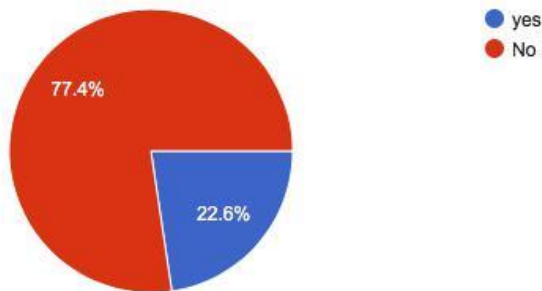


6.5 What is RTE?

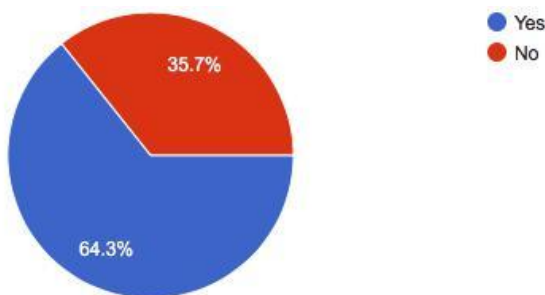
Observation: Through the data received, we get to know that 53% people didn't know about RTE



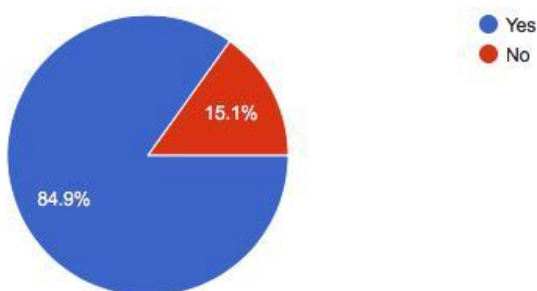
and Only 22.6% people knew about the provision of 25% reservation in the private schools for EWS.



Out of 12 parents who knew about the 25% reservation policy only 7 parents applied for it and only 4 of them got admission. The reason behind this scenario is the paperworks requirement by the officials which most of the uneducated parents or those with lack of resources were unable to produce at right time, some of the reasons being heard was the careless from officials and school staffs.

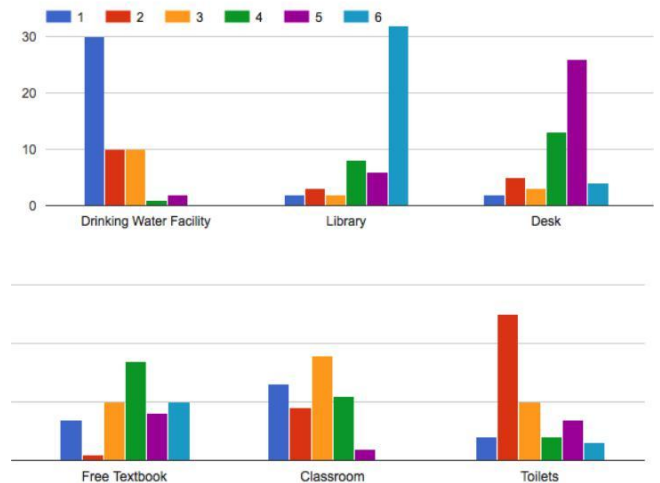


Statistics received from survey tells us that only 85% of the parents knew about the MDM.



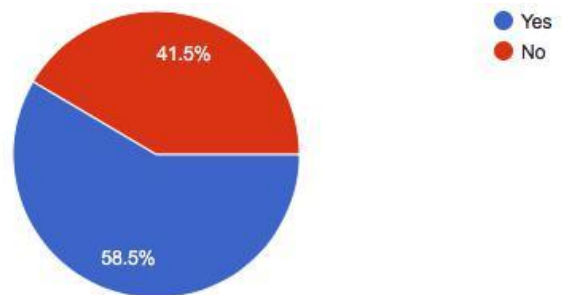
6.6 Infrastructure

We asked all the parents to give ranking to the above elements of the infrastructure according to the level of their importance. Most of the parents said drinking water facility and toilets are the most important elements of a good infrastructure and library was the least preferred element of the Infrastructure.

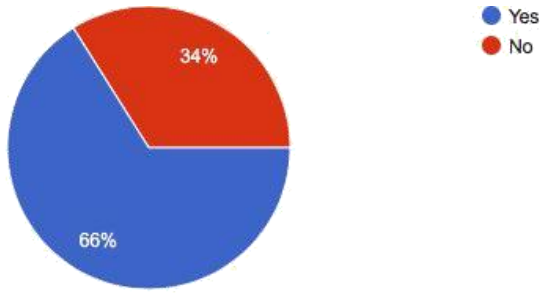


6.7 Student Management Committee

Amongst 53 surveys only 58.5% parents knew about the Student Management Committee (SMCs) and when they asked about whether they would be happy to have a contribution towards it, we got to know that 66% parents wanted to be a part of the SMCs.



80% parents said SMC is the right step for the functioning of primary public school system. Due to poor quality of education in schools parents are forced to shift their children to private schools and there is a correlation between the awareness and the annual income of the family/ Education of the parents. In a blog given in Down to Earth: Elementary failure it is mentioned that only 5% of the primary schools in India follow RTE policies and one of the state is Kerala having highest contribution to it whereas 95% who have poor Implementation of RTE policies, Uttar pradesh give highest contribution it. Clearly, all these stats are supported through our survey. Next season includes Conclusion and the ways through which this scenario can be improvised.



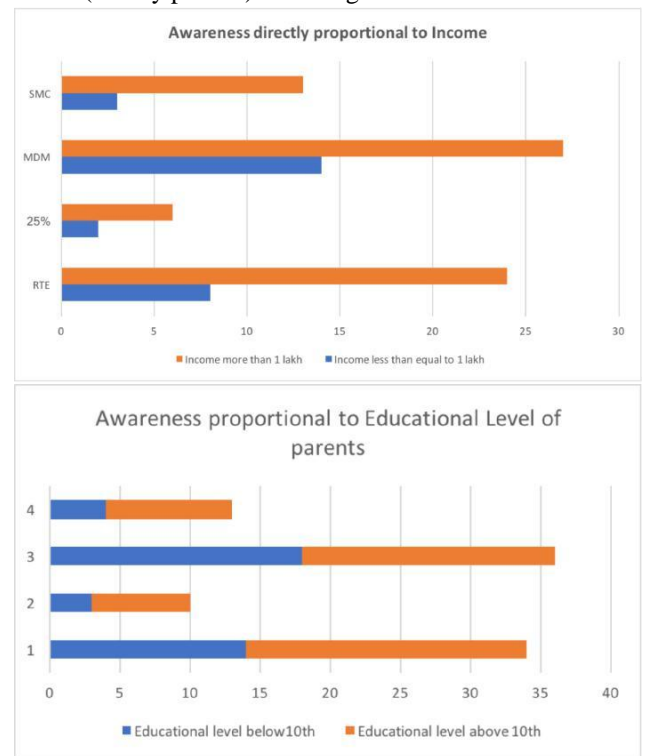
7 CONCLUSION

One of the best way to pull people out of the vicious circle of poverty is through education. High enrollment rates are not interpreted as successful delivery of primary education, when dropout rates are high. Substandard and poor quality of primary education increases the inequality in the society. If we can't provide equal and accessible opportunity at the very basic level to every child in our country irrespective of his/her caste, class, gender or economic status then how can we expect them to compete for jobs later on with the better o citizens of the country. What is it that is making all the difference? Is it the funds allocations? It seems that it is not the case. Policies, allocations and funds are not really the main problem but the implementation of these policies is. Implementation of a particular policy depends on many factors that's why different states perform differently in terms of the implementation but one of the factors that plays a major role in the implementation is the accountability and governance. Governance in education sector needs to be improved along with accountability. There is no doubt that the government is main driving force in the implementation of all the policies but community participation can act as a catalyst in the implementation of these policies. Through various studies it has been proved that the participation of the community in the implementation and management of the policies has a huge positive impact on the accountability.

The four E's of education of primary education: Educate, Enlight, Engage and Empower. For the proper delivery of primary education we need to Educate children, Enlight parents, Engage community and Empower school management committees. There is no doubt that reservation of 25% seats in private schools for students from EWS is a very good step towards quality education. In addition, this policy helps to generate a sense of responsibility in the different sections of the society and it brings together children from different social and economic backgrounds together. But still 80% of primary schools in India are owned by the government which caters to the largest share of children in the country (DISE 2015 [2]).

Accessibility is always a problem with private schools and most of the families get trapped in the cycle of documents as most of the families(EWS) comes from rural areas and to get their income certificates and caste certificates that are required for the admission they have to go back to their native village and run from one office to another. Private schools are not always very sensitive when it comes to deal with the children from diverse backgrounds. Most of the schools in the rural area are still owned by the government.

Hence, giving quota in private schools is not a long term solution of this problem. The Conclusion from the survey showed that knowledge and awareness is somehow directly proportional to the Income and Education level of a parent/Individual, supporting the fact that the parent with higher income and degree of education will have more awareness of knowledge (here RTE policies) and will try to keep his/her children in a school(mostly private) bene ting him/her the most.



Indian government's spending on education is around Rs.7000 per child every year it is still very low as compared to the developed countries. But the level of outcomes that we get through this input is very low (ASER 2014 [3]). The problem of quality and inclusivity need to be addressed. An observation from the research on community participation in education indicates that while there are significant gains to be made in community awareness and parental involvement in school processes, much depends on the context of

decentralization and the extent to which the local community is educated and empowered (Empowering Communities 2015 [6]). As a finding from the survey conducted by us we saw that more educated parents or parents with higher annual income were more aware about the RTE and its policies as compared to the parents which were illiterate or had annual income less than 1 Lakh.

India is the country with the highest number of adult illiterates then how can we make this huge population aware about their rights and make them part of the mainstream development? Through training. One of the best way to do that is through pictures and make them understand the difference between a good school (or management) and a bad school (or management). Such similar work is done by a NGO called Educate Girls in Rajasthan. They are working in the rural Rajasthan with the local volunteers (mostly young students) to increase the community partnership in the school management and to make parents aware about a good school and a bad school. They work mostly with the parents of students studying in the school, through training they are trying to make them capable to understand the working of the school management and what are the basic things that are necessary for a good school. As most of the parents in that area are illiterate and their children are first time school goers they train them through picture and video lectures. With the annual expenditure of around Rs.7,000 per school per year they are able to produce significant fall in the dropout rates.

One of the way to increase community participation in the school management is through SMCs. DISE reports that the percentage of government and aided schools with SMCs has increased from 68% in 2011-12 to 91% in 2013-14 at the national level, there is a need to further strengthen the capacity of SMCs (Empowering Communities 2015 [6]). Forming SMCs is not the solution of the whole problem. SMCs members are need to be trained as most of them are either illiterate or very less educated. Without training they might not be able to understand the working of SMCs and their suggestion might not be very sensible that will affect the outcomes of SMCs. More funds should be allocated for the training purposes as of now SSA allocates states up to Rs.300 per SMC member for training purposes, which adds up to only 1% to 2% of states allocated budgets. Secondly, awareness about SMCs lacks a lot. In many places the process (of creation was so not like a system where people can vote for leaders and laws and not having enough clearness that even members chosen came to know about it at the time of meeting or training (RTE FORUM 2013-14 [7]).

The analysis of the DISE District Report Cards (2015) suggests that places where SMCs meet very rarely (once in six months) have lower teacher attendance as compared to those which meet more frequently (once in a month or once in two three months) (RTE FORUM 2013-14 [7]).

In a nutshell, through this article:

- we tried to analyze the implementation of RTE and its policies in Uttar Pradesh and Kerala. Then we saw that Kerala was doing much better when compared to Uttar Pradesh and reflects the fact that more educated population is more aware about their rights.
- Then we show the significance of awareness and empowerment in the implementation along with the government, where government is playing the main role.
- Then we highlighted that how community participation can lead to better accountability and hence better outcomes in the context of primary education.

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