

A study on Parental preferences to admit children in Government schools and Private Schools

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Abstract: The present study was taken up to research question of Parental Preference for School Type. When government schools do exist in sufficient numbers alongside private schools, will families choose to enroll children in private schools over government schools? Does curriculum matter? Do other cultural factors matter?

I. Introduction

Indian education space is one of the fastest growing sector and Private schools are preferred choice of Parents due to the perception that better education is imparted by these schools to their children, number of private schools in the country are growing. Parents of this generation want best for their children. In India education is seen as road to success and fame. Lack of necessary facilities in government schools, growing population and immigration to urban cities imposes capacity constraints on private schools. These private schools, thus, cater to children hailing from financially weaker sections of society, and is often a preferred choice over no-fee government schools because the learning levels in several such schools are also considered better than those in state run schools. Another reason why parents choose unrecognized schools over government schools is because the medium of instruction in most such private schools is English.

With this review background the study on parental perception to admit children in government school and private schools was taken up with the following objectives -

Objectives

- To study the demographic profile of the sample parents
- To study the parental perceptions on government schools
- To study the parental perceptions on Private schools

II. Methodology:

The study was conducted in Hyderabad urban slum and in two mandals of Medak district. A sample of 200 parents whose children are in government schools (100) and private schools (100) were selected for the study. Interview schedule was prepared to study the perception of parents about school choice. It was pre tested before administrating to the sample.

III. Results And Discussion

Table1 : Parental educational aspirations for their children

| S. no | Dimensions | Government(n=100) | | | | Private(n=100) | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| | | Rural(n=50) | | Urban slum (n=50) | | Rural(n=50) | | Urban slum(n=50) | |
| | | Male n=27 | Female n=23 | Male n=31 | Female n=19 | Male n=38 | Female n=12 | Male n=34 | Female n=16 |
| 1 | Getting good marks in all subjects | - | - | 2(6%) | 1(5%) | - | 2(17%) | 15(44%) | 3(18%) |
| 2 | Getting good marks in mathematics and science | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | Fluency in English | - | - | - | - | 19(50%) | 2(17%) | 7(20%) | 5(31%) |
| 4 | Should join professional course like engineering/ | - | - | - | - | 12(31%) | 2(16%) | 8(23%) | 2(12%) |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------|----------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | medicine | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Should get government job | 17(62.9%) | 3(13%) | 19(61%) | 3(15%) | 5(13%) | 6(50%) | 4(12%) | 6(37%) |
| 6 | Should have good knowledge of school subjects | 7(25.9%) | 2(8%) | 2(6%) | | - | - | - | - |
| 7 | Should learn family traditional skill work like weaving, tailoring, carpentry, farming | - | - | - | | - | - | - | - |
| 8 | Should learn household work | - | 9(39%) | - | 10(52%) | - | - | - | - |
| 9 | Should go abroad | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 10 | Knowledge of reading and writing is enough | 3(11%) | 9(39%) | 8(25.8%) | 5(26%) | - | - | - | - |

The above table gives interesting facts on educational aspirations of parents. In rural areas majority of the parents of government school attending children aspire that their male child should get Government job. And very less percentage aspire that their child should have knowledge of the subjects studying in school. For their girl child the parents think that just knowledge of reading and writing is enough and it is important for the girl to learn household work. Even urban slum areas parents of government school attending children aspire for government jobs for their male child and having knowledge of reading and writing for their female child and that learning household work is more important for the girls. In contrast, the parents of private school attending children in rural areas aspire for fluency in English (50%), admission in professional courses like engineering and medicine (31%) and good government job (13%) for their male child. For female child, half (50%) of the parents aspire for a good government job while 17% of them have aspiration for fluent English, good grade in SSC and admission in professional courses. In urban slum areas parents of private school attending children aspire for good grades(44%), fluency in English(20%), Professions like engineering and medicine (23%) and government job(12%) for their male child. For their female child urban slum parents have almost same aspirations like good grades(18%), fluency in English(31%), government job(37%) and admission in professional colleges(12%).

Table 2 Parental perception on preferring Government school

| S. No | Dimension | Government(n=100) | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------------------|------|
| | | Rural(n=50) | | Urban slum (n=50) | |
| | | n | % | n | % |
| 1. | School is near home | 33 | 66% | 29 | 58% |
| 2. | Transport facility easily available | - | - | - | - |
| 3. | There is no need to pay fees | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 4. | Children are given free uniform | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 5. | Children are given free text books | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 6. | Children are given mid day meals | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 7. | No strict rules and regulations followed | - | - | 5 | 10% |
| 8. | There is no need for the parent to visit school | - | - | - | - |
| 9. | Children can go late for school | - | - | 9 | 18% |
| 10. | Children can get their younger siblings | 19 | 38% | - | - |
| 11. | English language is not insisted | - | - | - | - |
| 12. | Teachers are not strict | - | - | 7 | 14% |

| | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----|----|-----|
| 13. | Relatives children are also in the same school | - | - | 28 | 56% |
| 14. | Teachers don't give much home work | - | - | 19 | 38% |
| 15. | Less number of tests conducted | - | - | - | - |
| 16. | Less/ no project works given | - | - | - | - |
| 17. | There is no check on student absenteeism,(Child can be absent for longer periods) | 40 | 80% | 21 | 82% |
| 18. | Instruction is in mother tongue | 35 | 70% | 22 | 44% |
| 19. | There are no private schools in the area | - | - | - | - |
| 20. | Teachers are kind, good and helpful | - | - | - | - |

The study reveals that the top most reason for parents to choose government school in rural areas is that they have no fees and incentives like free books, uniform and mid day meals provided for children. Another important perception of majority of parents (80%) is that child can be absent for longer period. The study further reveals that 70% of rural parents choose government school as the medium of instruction is Telugu and 60% of parents perceive that government school are very near to their homes making it very convenient for them. In urban slum areas all the selected parents feel that they choose government school only because the education is free along with incentives like free uniform, books and mid day meals. Another important reason cited by 82% of parents is that child can be absent for longer periods in government schools. Other reason for choosing government school by urban slum parents is relative and friends children were in the same school (56%), medium of instruction being mother tongue (44%), less home work (38%), proximity (58%). Some other reasons like no strict rules, teacher not being strict were also given as reasons by few parents for choosing government schools.

Table 3 Parental perception on preferring Private school

| S.no | Dimensions | Private School Parents | | | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|------------|------|
| | | Rural | | Urban slum | |
| 1. | Sending child to private school is very prestigious | 33 | 66% | 42 | 84% |
| 2. | Relatives and friends children also study in private schools | 19 | 38% | 14 | 28% |
| 3. | Private schools are well furnished | 6 | 12% | 8 | 16% |
| 4. | Private schools have toilet facility | 15 | 30% | 26 | 52% |
| 5. | Private schools have separate toilet for girls | 7 | 14% | 17 | 34% |
| 6. | They encourage child to speak in English | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 7. | Medium of instruction is English | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 8. | Teachers are very strict | 46 | 92% | 43 | 86% |
| 9. | School insists on neatness | 38 | 76% | 42 | 84% |
| 10. | Child will given extra information on the subject | 25 | 50% | 31 | 62% |
| 11. | Frequent tests conducted to assess performance of child | 19 | 38% | 18 | 36% |
| 12. | Parents are regularly informed about child performance | - | - | - | - |
| 13. | Children are taught computer skills | - | - | 37 | 74% |
| 14. | Computer aided learning is available | - | - | - | - |
| 15. | I know children from private schools were academically successful | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 16. | Child can score good marks in Board exam | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 17. | Teachers are dedicated | - | - | - | - |
| 18. | If the child is not performing well they will be given extra classes | 42 | 84% | 45 | 90% |
| 19. | Children are given home work regularly | - | - | - | - |
| 20. | Discipline is followed | - | - | - | - |

The results of study indicate that in rural areas parents who prefer private schools state the following reasons; they encourage English speaking, and medium of instruction is in English. Another top reason for choosing private schools by parents in rural areas is that the private school educated children are academically successful and score good grades in their broad exams. Majority of parents (84%) feel that private schools give extra coaching and help the students academically. It is interesting to note that 66 percent of parents in rural areas perceive that it is prestigious to send child to private school. The other reasons perceived by parents in rural areas for choosing private schools are, having separate well maintained toilets(38%), neatness (76%), relatives or friends children are from same school and frequent tests conducted in private schools. Parents of urban slum areas prefer private schools because of English language, almost all the selected parents perceive that private school educated children can communicate well in English and they are academically successful

scoring high grades in board exams. Another important reason cited by these parents are extra coaching (90%), teachers being very strict (86%) toilet facilities(52%), extra coaching for backward children (90%) , computer training (74%) and a large majority (84%) of the parents perceive that educating children in private school is prestigious.

Table4 : Parental perception on not preferring private schools

| S. no | Perception | Government school parents | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------|------------|------|
| | | Rural n=50 | | Urban n=50 | |
| | | n | % | n | % |
| 1 | There is no private school near my house | - | - | - | - |
| 2 | Child has to travel long distance for school | - | - | - | - |
| 3 | Private school is only upto primary level | - | - | - | - |
| 4 | They charge fees | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 5 | They charge for books | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 6 | They don't give mid day meals | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 7 | They don't give free uniform | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 8 | They follow rule and regulations very strictly | - | - | 3 | 6% |
| 9 | Children are asked to speak only in English | 4 | 8% | 11 | 22% |
| 10 | Parents have to visit schools | - | - | - | - |
| 11 | Lot of home work will be given | - | - | - | - |
| 12 | Frequent tests are conducted | - | - | - | - |
| 13 | The school has very small building | - | - | - | - |
| 14 | Teacher is very strict | - | - | 13 | 26% |
| 15 | Other children make fun of my child in school | - | - | - | - |
| 16 | They don't allow absenteeism for longer periods | 47 | 94% | 45 | 90% |
| 17 | They insist on full uniform like belt, badge, shoes | 37 | 74% | 23 | 46% |
| 18 | We need spend more money for stationary items | 35 | 70% | 33 | 66% |
| 19 | They are very particular with child academic performance | 11 | 22% | 21 | 42% |
| 20 | Medium of instruction is not mother tongue | 45 | 90% | 50 | 100% |

The findings from the study on reasons why some parents of rural areas don't prefer private school indicate top reasons as high fee structure, lack of incentives like free books, uniform and midday meals. The other important reasons perceived by rural parents are that most of the private schools don't offer Telugu as medium of instruction and don't allow absenteeism. The other reasons cited by parents for not choosing private schools are insisting on English speaking, extra financial burden on parents in the form of stationary items and few of the parents also cited that private schools insist on neatness, full uniform with belt, badge and shoes which they cannot afford.

Table 5 : Reasons for not choosing government schools

| S. no | Reason | Private school parents | | | |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|--------------------------|------|
| | | Rural areas n=50 | | Urban slum areas n=50 | |
| | | n | % | n | % |
| 1. | It has low prestige value | 37 | 74% | 21 | 42% |
| 2. | Government school is very far away from home | - | - | - | - |
| 3. | There is no/ very less transport facility available | - | - | - | - |
| 4. | Government school is only up to primary class | - | - | - | - |
| 5. | Medium of instruction is Telugu in government school | 28 | 56% | 50 | 100% |
| 6. | Government schools are not well furnished | 33 | 66% | 46 | 92% |
| | Government school don't have proper toilet facilities | 43 | 86% | 46 | 92% |
| 7. | The teachers are not interested | 22 | 44% | 23 | 46% |
| 8. | The teachers are absent frequently | 29 | 58% | 48 | 96% |
| 9. | Less number of tests conducted | - | - | - | - |
| 10. | Home work is not given regularly | 11 | 22% | 10 | 20% |
| 11. | Computer skills are not taught | - | - | 5 | 10% |
| 12. | Computer aided learning is absent | - | - | - | - |
| 13. | They don't insist on English speaking | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 14. | Teacher doesn't finish the syllabus in time | - | - | - | - |
| 15. | Teacher doesn't take extra pains to make class interesting | - | - | - | - |
| 16. | Parent teacher meetings are not conducted frequently | - | - | - | - |
| 17. | The class size is large | - | - | - | - |
| 18. | The children don't get good marks in their Board exams | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 19. | Higher education is difficult if child is in government school | 50 | 100% | 50 | 100% |
| 20. | They don't insist on neatness | 44 | 88% | 38 | 76% |

The study reveals that one of major reasons for the parents not choosing government school is that , they don't insist on English speaking, Government schoolchildren don't get good marks in their Board examination and higher education is difficult for the government school educated child. The parents in rural areas perceive that government schools are not well furnished (66%) and 86 percent parents feel that they don't choose government school for their children due lack of proper toilet facilities. It was interesting to note that 58 percent of rural parents and 96 percent of urban slum parents perceive that teacher absenteeism is one of the major reasons for not choosing government school. It was surprising to note that 74 percent of rural parents and 42 percent parents of urban slums perceive sending their children to government school is of low prestigious value. The study further indicates that 88 percent parents of rural areas and 76 percent parents of urban slum areas perceive that the government schools do not insist on neatness hence they do not choose them for admitting their children.

Table6 : Most preferred school of Parents for their children

| S. No | School | Government(n=100) | | Private(n=100) | |
|-------|------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | Rural(n=50) | Urban slum (n=50) | Rural(n=50) | Urban slum(n=50) |
| 1. | Government | | | | |
| 2. | Private | 50 | 50 | 50 | 50 |

It was interesting to find from the study that all parents from rural and urban slum areas preferred private schools to government schools.

Table 7 : Decision about School choice

| S. No | Decision Makers | Government(n=100) | | Private(n=100) | |
|-------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| | | Rural(n=50) | Urban slum (n=50) | Rural(n=50) | Urban slum(n=50) |
| 1. | Mother | 7 (14%) | 15 (30%) | 22(44%) | 25 (50%) |
| 2. | Father | 19(38%) | 17 (34%) | 10 (20%) | 12 (24%) |
| 3. | Both | 24(48%) | 18(36%) | 18(36%) | 13(26%) |
| 4. | Grand parents | - | - | - | - |

It was very interesting to find from the study that government school parents in rural areas nearly half of them responded that it is collective decision of both parents to choose government school for their children, while urban slum areas the sample were distributed equally based on mother's decision (30%), father decision (24%) and collective decision (26%). In case of private school parents it was interesting to find that the decision of admitting the child in private school was mainly taken by mother. It clearly indicates that mothers seem to play an important role in decisions regarding choice of school for the child.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion it can be said that, though better qualified and trained teachers are available in government schools, parents in general perceived the private schools providing better educational opportunities and learning environments for their children. If they can afford it, most of the respondents would prefer their children to be in private institutions rather than government schools. This should be a clear indicator to authorities of government schools, especially in rural areas to a) run schools more strictly in terms of regularity in taking classes, conducting class room evaluations etc b) ensure regular attendance of children c) provide computer based education d) better opportunities for co curricular and extracurricular activities e) ensure regular interactions with parents f) motivate children for higher learning and g) introduce English language in teaching at earlier classes, and train children in both spoken and written English language, since this is perceived as an important advantage that private schools tend to have.

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