



Section 1

Reach & Diversity of Budget Private Schools in India

Section one analyses the reach and diversity of BPS in India, both through existing research & statistics, and stories. It presents excerpts from interviews with different stakeholders of eight schools, showcasing the various micro-innovations schools adopt within the constraints they operate in. The last part of this section discusses the two models of excellence, found within the BPS segment—GyanShala and Muni—to inspire a quality revolution in the sector.

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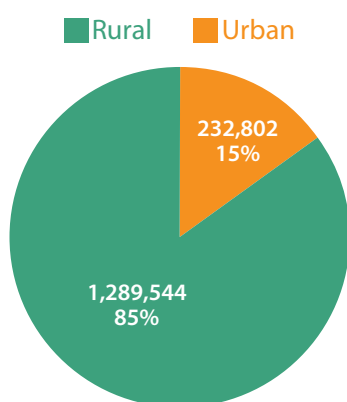
The Story of Numbers

India's schooling system is often described as "one of the largest and complex school education systems" of the world.¹ There are 1.5 million schools that cater to over 260 million students. With Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 96.9% at elementary level, we are close to achieving the universal primary education target set out in United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG).²

The 1.5 million schools are not uniform and vary in size, ownership, fee, infrastructure, and curriculum. Some of the questions this section will address include: What is the rural-urban divide? How are schools regionally distributed? Who owns the schools - government or private organisations? What kind of private schools exist? How are fee levels in private schools distributed regionally? Let us explore each of these questions through the lens of statistics.

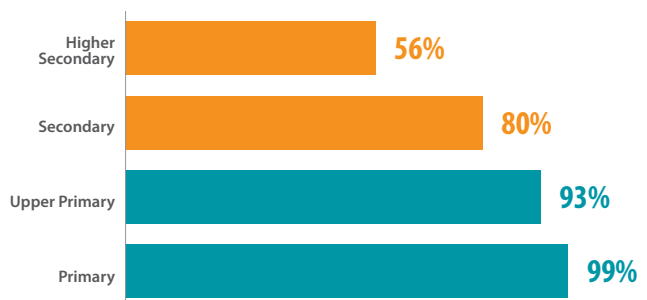
Rural and Urban Divide

Figure 1: Distribution of K-12 schools in rural and urban India, 2015-16



Source: Unified District Information System for Education 2015-16

Figure 2: Gross enrollment ratio, 2015-16



Source: Unified District Information System for Education 2015-16

Where are the schools situated? Given that 70% of Indians³ live in rural areas, it is no surprise that the total number of rural schools outweighs the number of urban schools. Another interesting fact to note is that while we have achieved universal enrollment at the primary level, the GER starts to fall sharply post elementary level dropping to just 56% at higher secondary level.

Who Provides Education? Is it a State or Private Initiative?

Another way to understand schools in India is through the lens of ownership. Overall, 75% of schools in India are run by the government and 25% by the private sector. Of the 25% privately run schools, 6% are aided by the government. Private aided schools are quasi-government, receive public funds and have less autonomy compared to private unaided schools. The proportion of government and private schools varies at a state level. For example, over 15 states in India have more than 20% of the schools run privately.⁴

¹ British Council 2014

² National University of Educational Planning and Administration 2015-16

³ Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India 2011

⁴ National University of Educational Planning and Administration 2015-16

Table 1: Private unaided schools as percentage of total schools; and enrollment as percentage of total enrollment, 2015-16

State	% private unaided schools as % of total schools	Enrollment, % in private unaided schools as % of total enrollment
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	16	19
Andhra Pradesh	24	43
Arunachal Pradesh	11	20
Assam	6	13
Bihar	5	5
Chandigarh	36	32
Chhattisgarh	11	24
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	9	23
Daman and Diu	15	30
Delhi	46	38
Goa	10	12
Gujarat	22	33
Haryana	30	52
Himachal Pradesh	15	33
Jammu and Kashmir	18	41
Jharkhand	4	15
Karnataka	23	36
Kerala	20	26
Madhya Pradesh	17	36
Maharashtra	16	23
Manipur	19	57
Meghalaya	16	20
Mizoram	26	42
Nagaland	26	55
Odisha	6	12
Puducherry	37	54
Punjab	24	37
Rajasthan	32	49
Sikkim	32	23
Tamil Nadu	19	32
Telangana	28	53
Tripura	6	10
Uttar Pradesh	32	51
Uttarakhand	22	44
West Bengal	10	7
All India	19	31

Source: School Education in India, U-DISE 2015-16, National University of Educational Planning and Administration

In the recent years, the share of private schools—in total number of schools and the enrollment—has been on the rise. Although the government runs one-third of schools, only a little more than half of all students attend government schools.

In developed countries, private schools are often the choice of the elite. However, this is not the story in India. In fact, there is a great deal of variation in fee levels with many economically backward areas observing a high growth of private schools. Private schools today serve parents across the economic spectrum, from those who work as daily-wage laborers to those who own high-end businesses. Some are migrants in search of better opportunities, and some are well-rooted third-generation families. Parents repeatedly echo terms like 'affordability' and 'quality' to describe reasons for their choice of schools. However, not all chosen schools are recognised by the government.

The diverse and complex network of schools in India raises questions on the viability of the neighborhood school system. Within private schools, some follow alternate teaching methods and curriculum; some are international schools, and others, religious schools.

How Affordable are Private Schools?

BPS are a growing segment of private schools that cater to economically backward communities and are often run by individuals from their homes. There are different ways to

benchmark fee levels in private schools to identify budget schools. Some of the commonly used benchmarks include minimum daily wage, per-pupil expenditure in government schools or state per-capita GDP. Professor Kingdon finds that 26.5% of private schools in rural India charge fee lower than the minimum daily wage, giving us an idea of whether a daily wage labourer can or cannot afford private schools. If we define BPS as those with expenditure lower than government per-pupil expenditure, an astounding 79% of schools in India can be called BPS.⁵

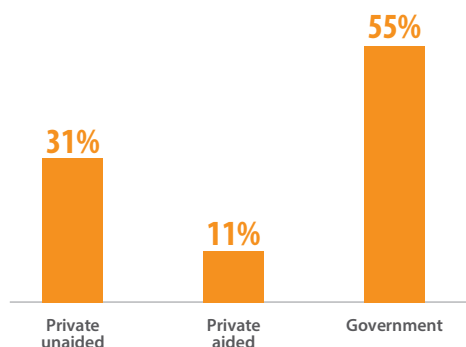
How Many Private Schools are 'Budget'?

Official statistics, such as the Unified-District Information System for Education (U-DISE), do not capture unrecognised schools. In the absence of official extensive information, we are left with insights from several researchers who have attempted to estimate the number of BPS.

Defining BPS as schools that charge less than Rs 5,000 per month, FSG⁶ estimates 1.3 to 1.7 lakh BPS in urban India. Their research finds 86% of students from families with income between Rs 9,000-20,000, constituting 70% of all urban households, attend BPS.⁷ Professor Tooley estimates nearly 92 million children—30% of all children—to be enrolled in BPS.⁸

The informal estimate from National Independent Schools Alliance (NISA), based on an interview with NISA President, Kulbhushan Sharma, is even higher: an estimated 4-5 lakh BPS across the country.

Figure 3: K-12 school enrollment by management, 2015-16



Source: Unified District Information System for Education 2015-16

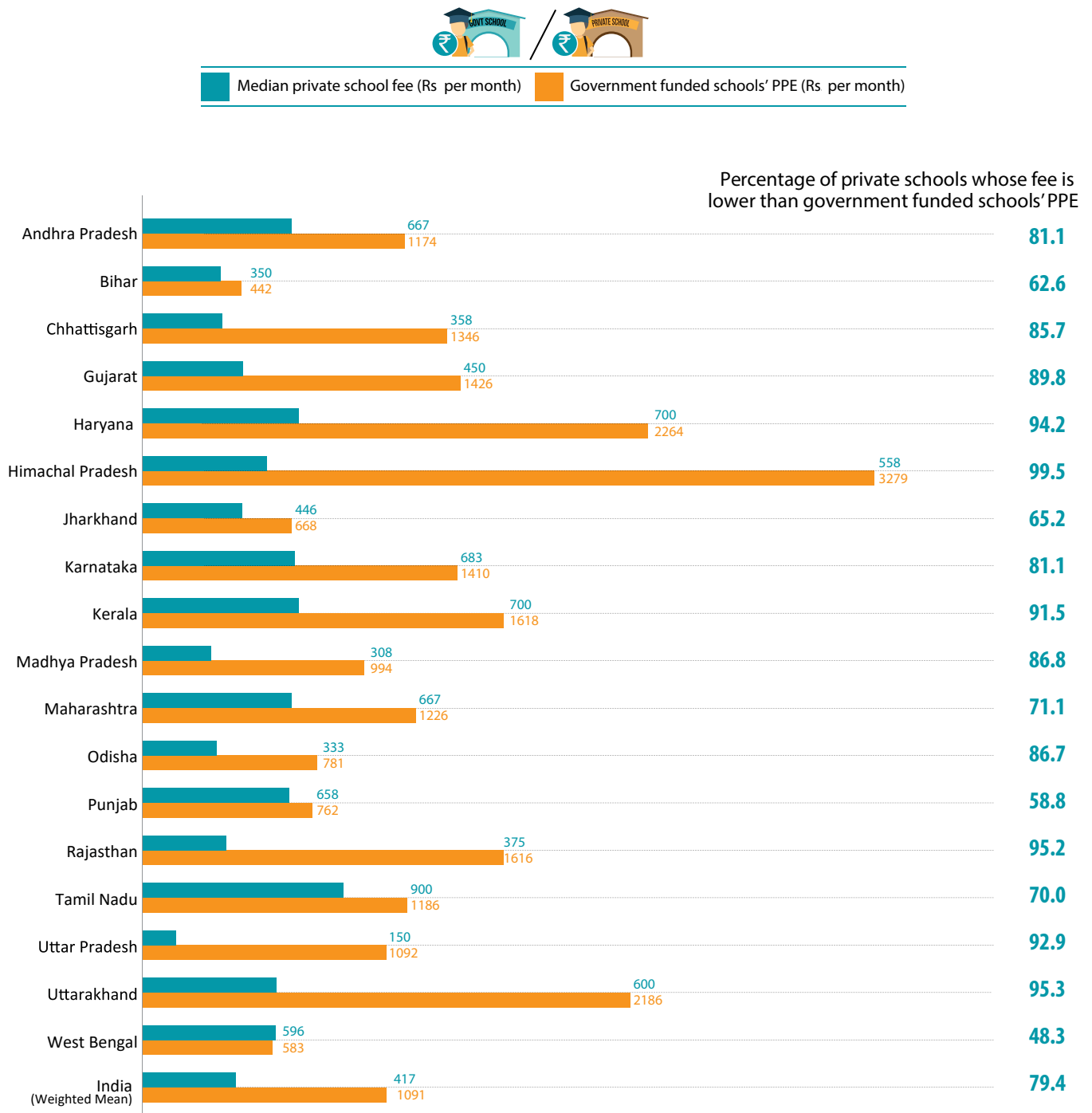
⁵ Kingdon 2017

⁶ FSG, *Understanding the Affordable Private School Market in India 2017*

⁷ FSG 2017, 23

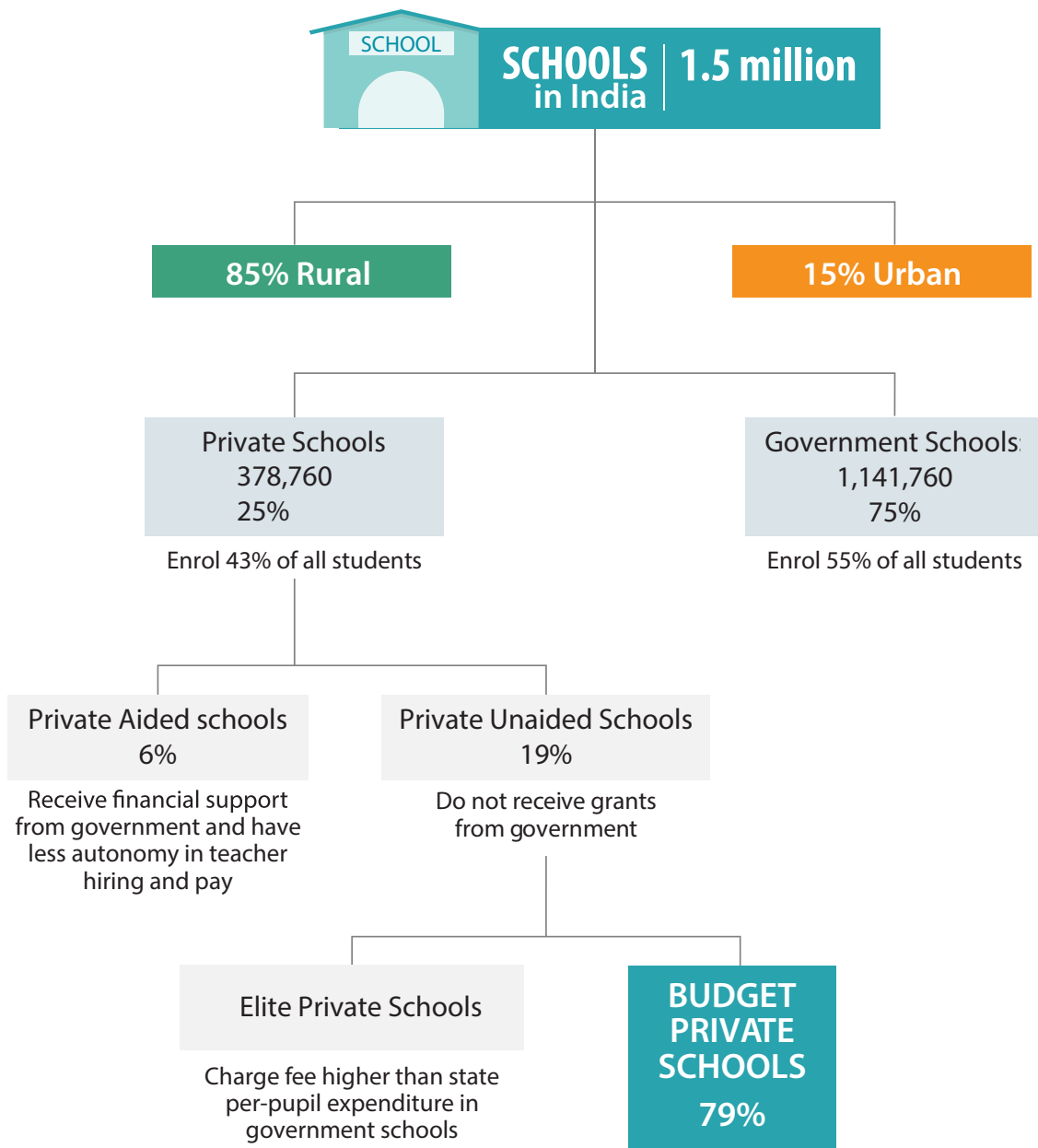
⁸ Tooley 2017

Figure 4: Private school fee in comparison with government per-pupil expenditure (PPE), 2014-15



Source: Adapted from Table 9, Chapter 1, Report on Budget Private Schools in India 2017

Figure 5: The big picture of Budget Private Schools



Source: Unified District Information System for Education 2015-16, FSG 2017, Kingdon 2017

Looking into the Future

Over the next two decades, India will continue to be a nation with a predominantly young demographic. Over one-third of India's population falls in the age spectrum of 15-34 years. By 2031, an estimated 350 million children (0-14 years) will enter the school system in India.⁹ Are we

prepared for the future? Will we be able to deliver them the education they need to live self-sufficient lives?

92 million children are in low-cost private schools today. 25% of students are enrolled in private schools, and the number continues to rise. Over 79% of schools charge a fee less than government per-pupil expenditure.

⁹ Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation 2017

It seems like BPS will continue to sprout with support from the local communities. The solution is not a one-sided debate about which kind of education is better. It is to foster a system that allows the choice to parents and students alike, an innovative system that continually strives to improve quality of that choice.

A case in point is the Neelsanda-Ejipura community in Bengaluru.¹⁰ Informal conversations with the community members highlighted the presence of approximately 10,000 school-age population within a 1.5 km radius. Population movements to urban areas have created many such pockets of migrant communities within our country. Following regulations, a maximum of two government schools can function in this area which can, at best, cater to about 2,000 students. What about the remaining 8,000 students? Private schools that are not too hefty on the pockets of migrant communities seem like the natural solution.

However, given the lack of space and reliance on fee as the source of revenue, it is difficult for schools to comply with the infrastructural requirements stated in the Right to Education (RTE) Act such as provision

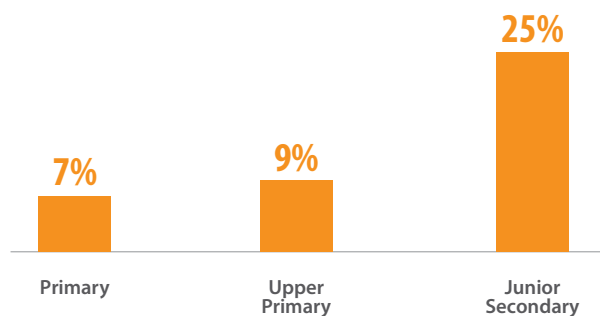
of playspace. Such issues drive the need for inclusive regulations and policies.

Another challenge we face today is that of drop-out. Enrollment in itself is not sufficient; retention of those enrolled is an equally important concern. The dropout rate, even at an elementary level, is higher than 10% in some states like Assam (13%), Andhra Pradesh (13%), Madhya Pradesh (11%), Manipur (11%) and Arunachal Pradesh (10%).¹¹ How can we ensure 100% retention? What do we need to do differently? Is there a role for private solutions to bridge the gap in needs versus supply?

The order of 'mandatory retention' brought with the passage of RTE Act coupled with the provision for 25% reservation for backward communities in private schools puts to fore new challenges. Millions of students will go through first to eighth grade without the attainment of age-appropriate learning levels. How do we plan to support these set of students?

These are some of the system-wide challenges that the nation needs to prepare for. Before we delve into the answers, let's take a look at different stakeholders of our education system.

Figure 6: Average annual dropout rate by educational level, 2014-15



Source: Unified District Information System for Education 2015-16

¹⁰ Interview with members of Neelsanda-Ejipura community in Bengaluru, November 2017

¹¹ National University of Educational Planning and Administration 2015-16



1.2

The Principal's Corner

It is no surprise that BPS are diverse as each school adapts itself to the area it is located in, students enrolled, requirements of the parents, and the motivation and qualifications of the teachers.

BPS are “small to medium-sized businesses run from the owners’ homes, while some have larger, purpose-built buildings”¹² with an average enrollment of about 400 students.¹³ A few successful ones grow up to enroll more than 1,000 students. 69% of them do not go beyond eighth grade. Most schools are lone-standing. Only 1/3rd of them are part of a chain of schools. Even if they are part of a school chain, the average number of schools in the chain is five.¹⁴

The common perception that private schools are for-profit has created several negative impressions for those who believe profit and education are not natural allies. However, private schools, especially budget schools, fill a vacuum for a large number of students that the state schools have failed to fill. The proponents of BPS argue against the limiting regulations that schools are required to meet. The debates will continue but so will the schools as long as parents choose them, whether out of ignorance or wisdom.

Parents have been choosing BPS for two reasons: a dissatisfaction with the government and a perceived better quality of teaching in private schools, primarily as a

result of higher teacher engagement. Parents can hold the schools accountable as payment of fee empowers them.

What is it that makes parents choose BPS? This section collects testimonials of leaders of eight BPS from across the country (Figure 7). The interviews throw light on the motivations, the vision, and the unique micro-innovations they employ in their classrooms.

STORY 1



Sri Rama Rural Academy, Andhra Pradesh: A Balance of Reading and Play

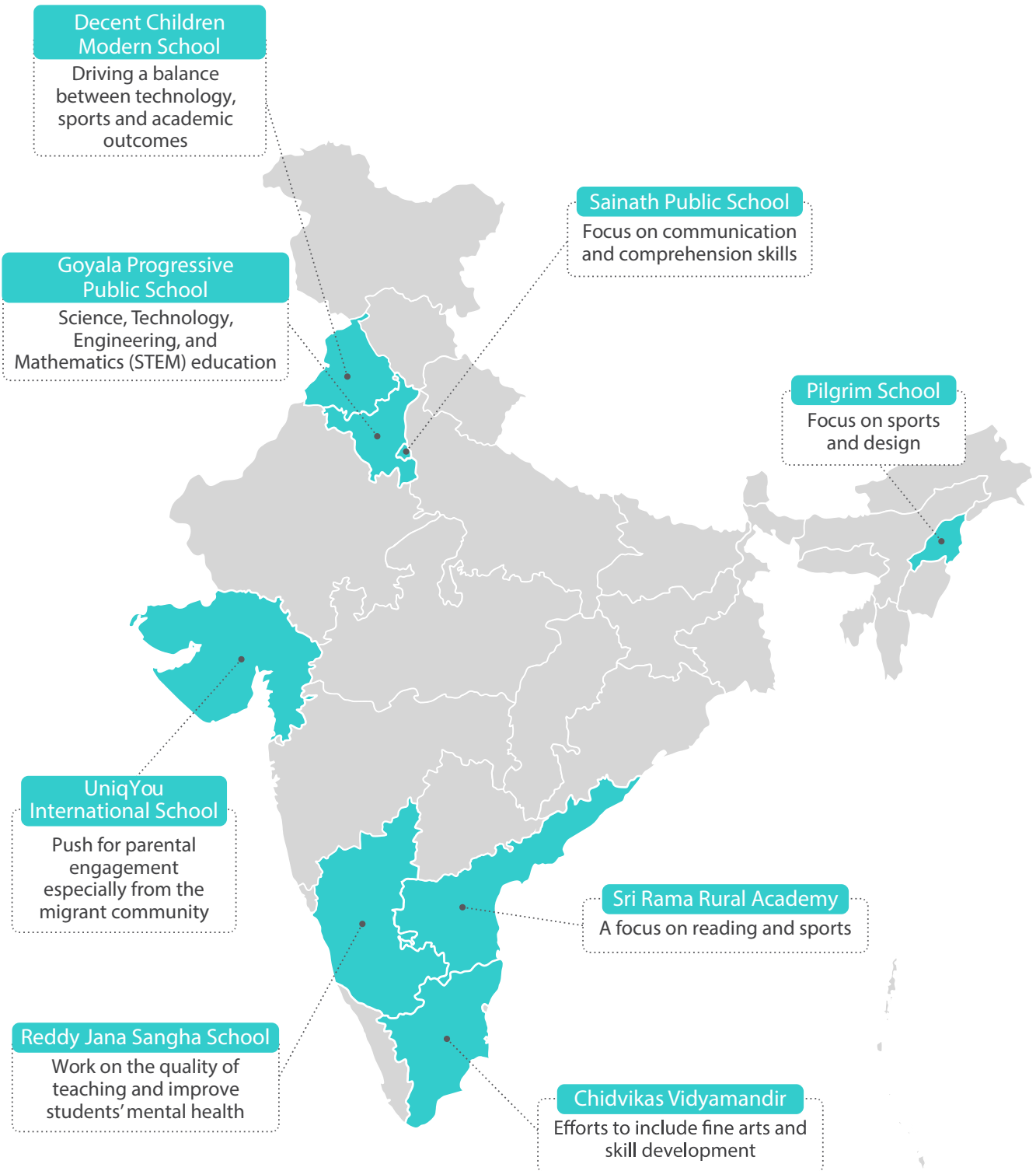


¹² Harma 2009, 152

¹³ Gray Matters Capital 2012

¹⁴ *ibid.*

Figure 7: Overview of school leaders interviewed



Location: Chilumuru village, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh

Class: From Kindergarten to Grade 10

Students: With 800 hostellers and 650 day scholars

Interview: Tulasi Prasad, Director, Sri Rama Rural Institutes

Located on the banks of Krishna River, Chilumuru is a green and beautiful village in Guntur district. Tulasi Prasad is a third generation school owner. His parents had expanded on the school set up by his grandfather and made it the first residential school in Andhra Pradesh. He took over the reins of the school after completing his higher education from the National Institute of Technology, Warangal.

While they follow the State Board curriculum with recommended textbooks, he often explores innovations that provide quality curriculum. For example, he has included the Individualised Progressive Learning Program (IMAX) curriculum in his school to personalize learning outcomes at scale by enabling teachers to incorporate detailed remedial feedback based on student learning levels.¹⁵



The campus is spread across 50 acres and has ample scope for children to play. Sports is taken seriously with cricket, fencing and handball championships. Classes are often held under the sprawling neem trees in their campus. Children spend morning hours browsing through newspapers and discuss the information they have digested to inculcate reading habits.

Tulasi Prasad also believes that children should be introduced to technology which is what the future holds. The school owns a 3-D lab and has access to the internet through WiFi. Recently, they conducted a seminar on cybersecurity and ethical hacking that inspired an eighth-grade student to innovate his ethical hack.

He argues that schools alone cannot drive change. Parents need to be actively involved. Often, he feels, parents do not focus on the right outcomes. Beyond learning assessments, he would like parents to care for the child's health and

ensure they receive proper nutrition. He also argues that parents should focus on enhancing communication with their children instead of merely focusing on their school-work. It will set a good foundation as children enter their tumultuous adolescent years.

STORY 2

Chidvikas Vidyamandir, Tamil Nadu: Fostering Arts and Skill Development

Location: Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Class: LKG to Grade 5

Students: 183

Interview: Anuradha Ajithkumar, Principal and Correspondent of Chidvikas Vidya Mandir

Anuradha aspired to be a teacher for as long as she can remember. Her uncle had once told her that she was an ambitious person. But, she wondered, "is being a teacher ambitious?"

She completed her Bachelors in Education and subsequently initiated herself into the Montessori philosophy, a method that integrates emotional, physical, social and cognitive needs of a child. She was taught by experts Amuktha Mahapatra, Uma Shankar, and Shobana. In 1985, she commenced her career as a teacher.

In 2006, she took the next step and started her school with two children, little money, and lots of passion. She firmly believes that learning must prepare children for their future and not just for scoring well in exams. What one learns in the third grade cannot be recalled in the eighth grade unless learning itself is a stimulating experience.



¹⁵ Details of the IMAX programme are discussed in Section 2, page 55

Her dream is to arouse the learner in every child, so they may engage in learning throughout their life.

The parents who send their kids to her school are mostly employed in blue-collar jobs such as plumbers, electricians, masons, housemaids, or own small businesses. The school uses textbooks prescribed by the government of Tamil Nadu, and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks for English.

The state-sponsored arts festivals organized in Kerala inspire Anuradha. She wants to teach her students fine arts, music, dance, tailoring, and more. She wants them to receive certifications for their skills, so they can capitalize on them as they grow up. Her dream is to hold an exhibition that displays her students' talents and celebrates all that they have learned over the years. If she has the budget, she would also love to extend her school until tenth grade. However, these are still distant dreams. So, she focuses on what she can teach her kids while they are there.



As a Principal, Anuradha does face challenges from parents who cannot think beyond the syllabus, exams, and preparing for entrance examinations for higher education. Her teachers are also hesitant to tread on new paths in the teaching-learning process.

Despite her numerous responsibilities, she still tries to teach. Recently, she asked fourth-grade students to pose three questions for a poem called 'Why?'. The questions she received were creative, to say the least. Here are some of the questions the children posed:

- Why do trees have so many leaves?
- Why do we look after babies so carefully?
- What is the biggest number?

- Why do people in Australia talk in English?
- Why did Modi take away 500 and 1000-rupee notes?

Important questions that indeed need answering.

STORY 3

UniqYou International School, Gujarat: Driving Parental Engagement



Location: Idar, Gujarat

Class: Nursery to Grade 10

Students: 746

Interview: Jitendra Patil and Yogesh Patil,
School owners and inputs from 2 students' families

Located in a tribal community in the north of Gujarat, UniqYOU derives inspiration from the Provision of Urban-amenities in Rural Area (PURA) thought proposed by Former President of India Dr Kalam. The school focuses on value education, learning English, leadership development, and practical exposure along with theoretical knowledge.

Given its location and the unique demographic, one essential learning for the school has been the need to involve parents early on. Over the past five years, they have reached out to 300 villages, creating awareness about the value of education, inculcating reading habits, healthy living, and self-learning. They have also conducted workshops for better parenting with village community leaders in 20 villages.

The school has also seen cases of reverse migration from the cities.



Vishal Mahendrabhai Patel studied in the school for three years from Grade 4 to 6 before shifting to Ahmedabad. He came back to the school in Grade 9. His grandfather, Babubhai Patel said, "Homesickness and differences in the daily routine of urban life created a negative impact on my grandson. Financially, schooling in the villages costs 50% less than schooling in Ahmedabad. At the same time, we get at par quality education and better grooming."

Yug Janakbhai Patel's family had migrated for better employment opportunities to Himmatnagar. Two years ago, the family returned to Idar, although his father still commutes to Himmatnagar for his job. Yug is now studying in the sixth grade. Apart from financial savings, his mother is happy to be back home and feels satisfied that her son receives quality education locally.

Over time the school-leaders have realised that it is better to work with the existing system. They work closely with government schools and three Anganwadis, have conducted workshops in more than 20 government schools for art and craft, sports, and career guidance. Over 50 schools from nearby areas have participated in international festivals organised by UniqYOU in UK, Japan, Papua New Guinea, and Brazil. For teachers, they have held training courses on phonetics and on teaching language skills. These courses have proven to be effective teaching methods for children with Learning Differences.

Apart from curriculum-based education, children learn Yoga and Ayurveda. UniqYOU has also implemented a

peer-learning program that groups thirty students for specialised training under a leading innovator and expert in that field.



STORY 4



Decent Children Modern School, Punjab: Breaking Barriers through Constant Innovation



Location: Punjab

Class: Nursery to Grade 10

Students: 4,000

Interview: Anirudh Gupta, CEO, DCM Group of Institutions

In the year 1946, while the seeds of partition were being sown in the minds of some, a dream for an educated India was taking shape in Ferozepur Cantonment, one of the most substantial garrisons in undivided Punjab. Born on 4th July 1915, Mr. Dass completed his graduation from Lahore and settled in this town. An avid reader, he used to frequent the English Book Depot, one of the most popular bookshops catering to both the civilians and the British Army officers. It was here that Mr Dass and his friends discussed the lack of quality educational institutions in Ferozepur. The Decent Children Modern School - an English medium school, the first of its kind in the entire area, was set up in 1946 with support from leading teachers and philanthropists.

However, before this experiment could blossom, the partition set in. The subsequent genocide, loss of property, and unprecedented flooding took Mr Dass' effort back to the drawing board. The first Deputy Commissioner of Ferozepur in post-independence India, Rai Bahadur Vishnu Bhagwan, encouraged Mr Dass to restart the school. So, he did. In 1950, the school had 201 students and 12 staff members on its rolls.

As early as the 1950s, the school had umpteen firsts to its credit. It had movie-projectors and other electronic aids to enhance learning (procured from Agfa in Germany). The school used 'Chevrolet' station wagons and tongas for transport which was later replaced by Matadors in the 1970s.

The school further experimented with several new techniques in the early 1960s and introduced allied arts like embroidery, handicrafts, clay-modeling, dramatics club and even Malkham. They started hostel facilities to help children from rural areas to study here. By the end of the decade, over 500 students had enrolled.

A team of educators from West Germany and Switzerland visited the school on January 7, 1971. In the early 1980s, students also won the All-India Gymnastics Competition, bagging several titles in table tennis and cricket. A General Knowledge Club was also formed. Students also secured top positions in central and state examinations, adding a vital dimension to its academic landscape. By 1988, the strength of the school had risen to almost 2,000 students, and it also became a pioneer in introducing IT education in the region with the inauguration of its 'Computer Lab.'

In 1991, with the unfortunate demise of Mr Dass, Mrs Kanta Gupta took over as the Principal. She introduced several modern practices. The school received the National Award for Excellence in Education in the year 1999 and became an accredited institution of NIOS.

Over the years, the school has produced numerous doctors, engineers, bureaucrats, and military officers. In 2010, the school shifted from the state board to Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) keeping in view the demand of the parents. Mrs Kanta Gupta passed on the baton of leadership to Mrs Yachna.

The school moved into the 21st century with a tremendous impetus to flipped learning. Mrs Rakhi Thakur took over the reins of the school in February 2016. She also initiated several Community Outreach Programmes besides setting up Atal Tinkering Lab under the aegis of Niti Aayog. The school also established a solar power plant and a paper recycling plant, making it a 'Green School'.

The years from 2002 to 2010 also saw the establishment of DCM Presidency School, Ludhiana & DCM International School, Ferozepur City followed by Dass and Brown World School in the year 2014. As the school steps into its 72nd year, it celebrates those who have helped shape its legacy from Shyam Lal (Head Clerk), Banwari Lal (40 years of service till 1997) and Raj Kumar (cook for the last five decades).

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STORY 5



Sainath Public School, Delhi: Building Confidence in Communication



Location: Delhi

Class: Kindergarten to Grade 8

Students: 350

Interview: Mr Rajesh Malhotra, School Leader

Ten years back, Mr Rajesh Malhotra left the non-government organisations' sector to set up the Sainath School. Today, when we look at a school, we imagine the school leaders' job to include interaction with parents,



STORY 6

Pilgrim School, Nagaland: Design Thinking and Sports



Location: Dimapur, Nagaland

Class: Grade 1 to 8

Students: 800

Interview: Bithung Kikon, School Leader, and
Kaini Kheko Kikon, Principal

selection of books, and to address notifications from the government. For Rajesh Malhotra, there is another critical role the school leader should play, that is, teach. He particularly enjoys teaching English. Out of six periods a day, he ensures that he teaches for at least three. For him, communication is a crucial skill required to build confidence and to develop self-esteem.

The parents whose children study in his school range from daily wage earners, small-time workers, people in small businesses, and low-cost service providers.

He believes in helping children appreciate good behaviour and discipline. While the curriculum includes sports, and art and craft apart from academics, he stresses on the quality of the textbooks. Apart from the standard textbooks, he also invests in books from Oxford, S. Chand, and Cordova to equip teachers with the right material to teach.

Rajesh Malhotra also believes in bringing wit and humour to his classroom. Children, he believes, learn best when they are having fun. He enjoys it when he sees his students apply some of that wit and humour to people, including him.

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The school was established in 1987 by Mr. Bithungo Kikon who was inspired by his father. Today, the school has over 800 students. It follows the curriculum set by the State. Mr Bithungo Kikon believes that learning outcomes need to look at three aspects - mind, body and soul. A school requires good teachers and the right infrastructure to achieve holistic growth. To inculcate creativity in children, he brings in design thinking as an element of change.

The parents whose children study in his school are mostly office goers or businessmen.

To promote the values of inclusiveness and creativity in children, the school organised a program called



'Difference Screen' in 2015. The program explored the dynamics of place, landscape, identity and culture and how that finds expression in the works of artists. Through film and video screenings on a worldwide journey, across 20 countries over 2.5 years, accompanied by talks and presentations by artist-filmmakers, it gave the students first-hand interpretation of a selection of the works. The sessions were interactive with dialogues, participation and feedback building platforms of exchange.



Sports are a big equaliser in Mr Bithungo and Ms Kaini's view. The school leadership encourages students to take up a game, and finds that the schools students excel at many sports.

Unlike the experience of schools in other states, they have no issues with the State government's policies. However, finding employment is a significant issue that students face as they graduate. Most of them still seek government jobs. The growth of home-based industries is creating some jobs within the service sector, also supported by the increased tourism. Still, their efforts are isolated and far from mainstream.

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STORY 7

Reddy Jana Sangha School, Bengaluru: Improving Teacher Motivation and Children's Health

Location: Koramangala, Bengaluru

Class: Nursery to Grade 10

Students: 764

Interview: Jessie George, Principal, and
Mita Das, Ragini, Teachers



Nestled in a busy street of Koramangala, traffic makes for a noisy backdrop before one turns on the road to find the quiet corner to find the Reddy Jana Sangha School.

Principal Jessie George has the air of happy efficiency. Her 30 years' experience in the education sector includes 14 years as a Principal of various Army schools. She believes that teachers are the main driving force behind a child's education. When she joined the school in August 2016, she found varying degrees of motivation among teachers. English was not the preferred language of communication for teachers or students.



Since then, she has actively engaged the teachers in several training sessions and subject-specific workshops, including workshops on communication and language skills with Kadadi Path. She is also forming a cell for cross-training all teachers and works with individual educators and counsellors. She aims to remove the fear of examinations and instill confidence in children. Armed with a Masters in Psychology, she believes students are not 'weak' when it comes to learning; some just take more time to absorb than others.

She makes it a point to observe the behaviour of her students. In this respect, she has set up a zero period led by students. During this time, students engage in peer-learning while teachers linger in the background and get involved only if their help is needed. She has also



conducted Spell Bee tests and included the different activities based on listening, speaking, reading and writing to learn a language. Four rooms exist for audio-visual sessions, and higher classes have integrated smart classes as part of their curriculum. Given the background that some students come from, they find it difficult to study after reaching home. For them, she has engaged motivated teachers to aid them after school.

However, she did not randomly implement these new initiatives. She keenly listens to the parents. For example, she remembers a parent calling her saying that her son did not want to come to school as he lacked new clothes for his birthday. She stopped the practice of celebrating birthdays with fancy clothes.

Another struggle that she faces is the automatic retention policy under the RTE Act for students. Even as she tries to motivate teachers and bring improvements in the curriculum, she finds it tough to motivate children as they know they will be promoted automatically to the next grade.

School safety and health are essential concerns for her. She has installed CCTVs, washrooms with sweepers and conducted a health check-up in partnership with Lions Club.

She is happy that her children are not just becoming strong academically but that many of them are also doing well in sports. The string of medals and trophies are a testimony to that. The school also has a membership of the St. Johns cricket academy.

There are scholarships ranging from Rs 8,000-12,000 for students who perform well academically. The Sangha also has a chain of colleges, and a polytechnic institute, that offer seats to students who perform well.

Many of the teachers have been teaching in the school for decades. For instance, Ms Mita Das joined in 1995 as a Social Science teacher. She promotes active questioning

as a tool to encourage participation. She remembers women's rights as being a critical debate in her class with viewpoints that were strong and persuasive.

Ragini has been teaching since 1997. Her subject is Hindi. Students in Bengaluru are not native Hindi-speakers and it is therefore a difficult language for them. She encourages them to write and speak through drama, such as one on Gautam Buddha recently.

STORY 8

Goyala Progressive Public School: A Story of a Principal, Mr Yudhvir Singh



Location: Palwal, Haryana

Class: Pre-primary to Grade 12

Students: 2600

Account written by Mr Yudhvir Singh, School Leader and Director

“ Three hours from Delhi, far from the crowded roads, one does not need Google Maps as any resident can show the way to the school.

Over 2,600 students study in this co-educational, CBSE affiliated school situated in Palwal, Haryana. My wife, Prem Lata Chaudhary and I rang the first school bell in 1993 with nineteen students, most of whom were first-generation learners.

I served in the Air Force and traveled across different states in India for most of my professional life. When it was time for retirement, I wanted to come back home. I did not have a defined idea of what I wanted to do. We had some ancestral land, and I realized that maybe I could set up

a school for my own community. That's how we started. The school began with an idea, a vision, and little money.

Today, my students tell my story better than I can. On one hand, we have students who are passionate about robotics. In fact, because of the passion children come with, we were one of the ten schools selected by Niti Aayog from Haryana for setting up an innovation lab. On the other, there are those who choose sports as their focus. My job, I believe, is to give my students the best possible platform so they can realise their dreams.

The fee structure of the school ranges from Rs 1,450 per month in LKG to Rs 2,050 in grade 12. The school is not centrally air-conditioned, but it has bright and airy classrooms.



We have tried to bring in infrastructure that includes smart classes, well-equipped science labs, computer labs, libraries, RO water coolers, necessary sports infrastructure, a robotics lab, 3-D labs for practical experimentation and learning, and more!

It has not been easy, but managing operating costs helps us invest in bettering the curriculum, and in infrastructure for our students. Take our solar panels for example. Today, the school is self-reliant for its electricity requirements and has the infrastructure for rainwater harvesting that helped save over Rs 30,000 per month in operating costs.

I believe my teachers are my brand ambassadors. Many of them have been here for over a decade now. The least I can do is ensure they are financially stable and satisfied with their employment. We pay salaries according to the seventh pay commission and focus on in-service teacher training and curriculum planning.

The best success story of a school are its ex-students. I am happy that my ex-students are not only shining the light but also come back to the school that they once studied in. Mr Jagdeep More, an ex-student from my school, is

now a teacher in the school. He is a CBSE resource person and trainer, and pens articles for several newspapers and magazines.

I do focus on discipline and holistic development of the students; you can call it the influence of my armed forces training. I believe that both scholastic and co-scholastic domains can be taught through teaching methodologies and pedagogical practices.



I want my school to be a happy place that blends the traditional and the modern, the spiritual and the scientific, the power of prayer and the power of technology, the learning of scriptures and the learning of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) subjects.



My view is that the future of education rests in the amalgamation of science and ethics. This year we had chosen the theme "Pragati" for our annual exhibition.

The students who study STEM subjects also recite Sanskrit shlokas. They are expected to imbibe within themselves the qualities of integrity, honesty, trust, tolerance, and compassion. We have also devised a curriculum of teaching life skills integrated with the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. Spiritual advancement of students is an integral part of our education policy.

The school offers various hobby options in the form of clubs that include abacus, Vedic math, photography, bakery, health and nutrition, classical dance, vocal music, painting etc. Students regularly participate in district, state and national level competitions and bring back many laurels. Participation in events like Model United Nations, science fairs, and adolescent peer education programs are also encouraged. A grade 5 student, Rohiteshwar, has been selected to receive an award from the President of India this year. Another student, Palak, received appreciation

from the Governor of Haryana for her artwork. Besides them, many students of Goyala Progressive Public School



have represented the school at zonal, district, state and national levels. Some of the students have developed a 3-D model for automated traffic control booth. What more can a school leader ask for?
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1.3

Emerging Models of Excellence

The previous section shows small initiatives, at a school level, in health, delivery of curriculum, and approach to teaching. The introduction of elements like physical activities and design thinking define the uniqueness of each school and help students go beyond the assigned curriculum. These changes bring meaningful impact in the lives of students enrolled.

In this section, we look at solutions that have gone beyond

a single school and have been emulated in other schools, impacting many more students and perhaps offer cues to the challenge of reduced quality education that plagues us today. Some of these innovations often do not come in the limelight as the schools do not have chains. The two models—Muni and GyanShala—discussed here are innovative and at the same time, scalable. They may be seen as schools capable of creative destruction of the existing outdated school system.

The Muni Model

The Future: Marked Absent No More?

Interviews with Ashok Thakur, Founder Muni Schools; Kulbhushan Sharma, Mamta Sharma, Harpal Singh, Vishal, Rajesh, Saurabh Kapoor, Shaveta Kapoor, Suresh Chander, Founders and school leaders for 6 Ambala schools profiled in this section.



Nestled into a narrow, busy lane in Delhi's bustling Mohan Nagar, there is a feeling of complete surprise when you come across the building of the Muni School amidst tightly packed houses and small shops. The most noticeable thing as you enter the office of the school is the board on the wall. It is called the "Research and Development Wall." It is meant to serve as a wake-up call for school authorities.

The Muni School is an institution engaged in innovations, with an in-depth focus on research and development. It is how they dream of the future as they work in the present. Education gives seed to innovation, but schools are often so busy in their day-to-day operations that the future is mostly marked absent. This is, however, not the case for the Muni School. So how does this model work?

As I entered the school, two grade 6 students, best friends, were entrusted with showing me around the school. One wants to be a judge. She already loves words and had no hesitation in speaking to me and answering my questions in English and occasionally, in Japanese. Her friend wants to be a doctor and wants to take homeopathic medicine and acupuncture to Germany. She already knows German.

Why acupuncture and why Germany? How do these children have such lucid dreams and goals? Well, these are the small details that the Muni School seems to have gotten right.



Ashok Thakur, Founder of the Muni School, served in the army. Education for him had never been about degrees and assessments. He has several reservations about the present system of schooling.

The Muni model was not built overnight, and it did not have multiple repeated frameworks. It stemmed from Mr Thakur's deep beliefs on education. After his short stint with the Indian Army, he returned home to his family



business. But it never really became his business. He received a small piece of land from his family where he brought his vision to life. The Muni school was inaugurated with two employees from his family's business. In its first few years, the school ran into losses and was called the "dukandar" school. To make things work, every summer Mr Thakur would fly to Dubai to earn money. It wasn't an easy journey. After six to eight years of hardships along with the support of inspired teachers from within the community, the Muni model finally started running successfully.

The child is at the core of this model. True to the "Ekalavya" of Mahabharata, he believes that children are capable of learning much more than we allow them to pursue. He thinks that the child needs to grow up, not just to secure a job, but to also be able to serve the community and be a compassionate and moral human being. By learning these values from childhood, as well as by learning multiple languages, children are better equipped to not only survive but to thrive in this fast-changing world. The Muni model does not claim that its children will be the best academic minds, but they do want to nurture happy and morally upright citizens.

As I was leaving the school, I met a parent whose child had studied in the school. He is a doctor. His child was studying in a different school before he shifted her to Muni School. His family was initially not happy with his decision. Today, his daughter has secured admission in a good college and is studying to be an engineer. The father is now an advocate of the Muni model.

The Muni model is now being replicated in ten schools, both government and private. Let us examine the model through the experience of six schools in Ambala that are currently implementing it.

1. **Shaeed Brij Bhushan Middle (SBBM) School:** When NISA President Kulbhushan Sharma (school leader, SBBM) wanted to adopt the Muni School model, he didn't just do it himself; he convinced five more schools in Ambala to join him. His motivation to focus on quality education came from his teachers. He studied in Decent Children Modern School, Punjab (profiled earlier), one

of the earliest private schools in our country. Years later, he still remembers the inspiration he derived from his teachers. For Kulbhushan Sharma and Principal Mamta Sharma, the Muni model brings back focus on some of the things they loved doing as children, like gardening where each child is given responsibility for a small plant as a part of building engagement with the community. So is the habit of practicing acupressure with people in the neighborhood. The parents of children who come to the school are mostly laborers. The students dream of joining the army, becoming doctors, and lawyers. The school leadership team love the fact that the Muni model is centered around first building confidence in children and then enabling them to pursue academic brilliance.

2. Inaugurated in 1990, **Damayanti Devi Middle School** started with just four rooms. Previously, the would-be Principal, Suresh Chander used to give tuitions to children. As his reputation as a teacher spread, more children began to come to him. A school seemed like the next logical step. Today, he is implementing the Muni Model in his school. He loves the focus on moral education that the model stresses on. Parents also appreciate positive change they observe in their children. In the first Parent-Teacher Meeting (a month after initiating the experiment), the parents reported that their children were not only learning English but also teaching them. For the Principal, a fluent command over the English language is a great way to instill confidence and self-respect in students.
3. Started in 1988 with 62 kids, **Sri Geeta Nand Public School** has been the family's commitment for over two generations. For school leaders Saurabh and Shaveta Kapoor, the Muni model transformed into reality with Akash (name changed), a student in fifth grade. Akash had a speech defect, a defect that other children teased him for. They did not mean to be cruel. They just found it funny. With the buddy system in the Muni model, the class was split into a parliamentary system. The course does not move ahead if a few children understand a concept. Everyone has to follow. Akash suddenly found himself with friends who wanted to help him, not laugh at him. It has only been a few weeks but teachers are noticing a positive change in Akash and the class' behaviour towards him. The school also realised the difference between their teachers; some of the younger teachers are rapidly embracing the model while the older teachers are taking more time to adapt.
4. Golden Army Public School (GAPS), established in 1988, has classes from preschool to eighth grade. There are two things that one can spot immediately on entering the school. The first is the open playground

where children can not only engage in sports but also role-play different real-life situations like going to the bank or to a post-office. The second is a board with the declaration "your competitor" as you walk in. Beneath the board is a mirror that highlights an important message - you are your competition. A key tenet of the Muni model, Mr Vishal, Principal, shares, is "to bring change in my students and my school, I need to first change myself." For him, the Muni model has helped him undergo self-reflection. His commitment to safety and security is visible in the way each child's name is called out aloud at the end of the day to ensure the child is being picked up by their guardian.

5. **Shree Vishwakarma High School**, inaugurated in 2002, operates classes from nursery to the tenth grade in Sohana village. Sohana is home to a population of 50,000. Residents thought it was impossible to establish a high-quality school there. Mr. Rajesh, who established the school, previously taught in government schools. He likes the way the Muni model pedagogy focuses on the principles of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and how homework is split into four components - understanding, planning, learning and comprehending. A problem is first understood and then debated using local examples and self-learning. The teachers' job, he feels, then changes from spreading the culture of rote-learning to creating interest in learning through everyday situations. For example, for a class on nutrition, the teacher might get grains from home that children also recognise to make the topic interesting for them.
6. **Sukhpal Senior Secondary School**, opened in 1986 in Ugala, has approximately 7,000 residents. Here, Principal Harpal Singh has been enthusiastically implementing the Muni model. His belief in the model stems from a disturbing experience that he and his teachers had. He had a student, less than ten years old, whose mother had passed away and her father had traveled abroad for his job. She was staying with her relatives. For a few days, her teacher noticed her crying in school and decided to speak to the child. What she heard was horrific. A relative was abusing the child. The school decided to take a stand. The Principal counseled the relatives but found them unwilling to accept the reality. So he called the child-helpline and, despite receiving threats, he got the child's statement recorded. For him, saving the child's life was more important than taking a safe diplomatic stand. For Mr Singh, the Muni model is embedded with this very tenet of respect for others. He believes in instilling the right values in children before they become adults who are less likely to amend their behavior.

GyanShala Learning is a Priority

Interview with Dr Pankaj Jain, Founder, GyanShala



In the states of Gujrat, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, over 45,000 children from needy families living in the slum areas of nine cities are a part of another emerging model of budget education—The GyanShala model. GyanShala's practices have been adopted in 7,300 government schools in Bihar, and in over 1,000 government schools in Uttar Pradesh. Encouraging results have also been realised in 38 Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation school trials.

According to Census 2011, "one in four children of school-going age is out of school in our country – 99 million children in total have dropped out of school."¹⁶ Add to this the 72 million people who migrate from rural to urban areas and work as daily-wage labourers.¹⁷ Children often migrate with their parents, leaving behind not just their homes, but also their chance for education.

The out-of-school children are the key focus for GyanShala.

Dr Jain's philosophy of education is simple. Uniform, food, certifications are all 'frills.' Education should connote better learning outcomes. Otherwise, it is not only a failure to provide quality education to the economically deprived children but also lost economic growth and possible social unrest. A significant problem, he believes, is the absence of a model that ensures quality on a scale at modest cost and thereby, failing government and private schools. According

to him, schools should not aim to provide a better education than their peers. Instead, there should be a continuous effort at bettering the quality; that alone will drive performance.

Since 1999, Dr Jain has been working on building such a model, initially, for grade 1 to 3, and then for grade 4 to 7. It took five years to develop material for grade 1 to 3, and a decade for the middle school curriculum to roll out. Reform in education is one for the long haul, he believes.

Dr Jain grew up in Uttar Pradesh. An engineering degree, a career in Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and a Doctorate later, he gave up an attractive offer just to work with Dr Kurien, the father of the White Revolution. He also worked with the Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) till 1994, and then travelled abroad as a teacher and consultant with several global institutions.

With his vast experience in tow, Dr Jain returned to India and laid the foundation for GyanShala. The key differentiating factor in GyanShala is the curriculum and how it works within the existing community. A design team of over 30 education professionals helped him to develop standardized lesson plans. He divided the teachers into two groups. A group of motivated women from within the community with strong interpersonal skills formed his first line of defense. A category of experienced teachers worked with these community

¹⁶ CRY 2017

¹⁷ American India Foundation 2017

teachers to address the more complex questions and to support them.

What they lacked in teaching expertise, they made up in passion and involvement of the local community. Dr Jain believes in placing greater focus on raising learner ability. He has also re-fashioned teacher-principal roles by delinking curriculum-lesson planning from administrative requirements for teachers and creating a six-tier academic team.

The multi-tier curriculum and lesson design-planning team lay the foundation of high-quality teaching for all grades. It also enables course corrections through supervision of all levels.

GyanShala believes in possessing only necessary infrastructure. Rented classrooms, with proper lighting, within the community are suitable work-spaces for them. The focus stays on improving the curriculum. Like the Muni schools, GyanShala model has also worked for government schools. The classes are close to the homes of students to facilitate regular attendance, particularly of girls, and to minimize social barriers to education. Independent assessments are conducted to bring accountability for improvements. The emphasis is on learning and not on expertise, on ongoing teacher training rather than on long-term teacher education.

Each child does over 600-800 worksheets each with 8-10 questions, in a year. It is not a recognized school. They operate through National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The teacher does not speak for more than thirty percent of the time. While worksheets are practiced throughout the year, they have two exams with an oral test in between.

The results speak for themselves. GyanShala partnered with Educational Initiatives to measure the impact on learning in students in the programme schools. The ninth phase of the assessment was conducted in March 2017 and covered students from third, fifth and seventh grades in schools where the medium of instruction was Gujarati. The students were tested in Maths and Science with the Educational Initiatives standardized assessment benchmark, ASSET scores.¹⁸ Students from the fifth and seventh grades were also tested for language. The results show minor differences with the benchmark.

The other critical insight Dr Jain has is the use of the local language of instruction for lower levels of education. He believes that learning outcome is higher if we can teach children in their local language. English can always be introduced later. As for technology, he feels it does not really add so much value to a child in the early years and can be integrated into the curriculum in the senior classes.

Table 2: Comparison of GyanShala (Gujarat) score with Assessment of Scholastic Skills through Educational Testing (ASSET)

SUBJECTS	GS-Gujarat			ASSET			Difference with ASSET
	Avg. (%)	SD	Average Scaled Score	Avg. (%)	SD	Average Scaled Score	
Maths 3	41.4	17.8	475	46.5	14.7	500	-25
Maths 5	39.4	16.3	472	44.6	15.9	500	-28
Maths 7	29.3	8.4	452	36.2	11.8	500	-48
EVS 3	46.6	18.4	464	54	15.5	500	-36
EVS 5	39.7	11.7	456	45.9	20.6	500	-44
EVS 7	26.5	7.2	425	36.1	12	500	-75
Language 5	36.3	18.8	427	55.3	6.9	500	-73
Language 7	46.3	19.8	491	48.2	14.1	500	-9

Source: Test for student learning, Educational Initiatives, Report submitted to GyanShala (Gujarat), March, 2017

¹⁸ Educational Initiatives, GyanShala, Gujarat, 2017, page 1

The parents whose children come to GyanShala include daily wage laborers, autorickshaw drivers, and domestic workers. For GyanShala, it is essential to demonstrate to them the real improvement their children can have in learning outcomes if taught right.

The GyanShala website also highlights the indicators of performance from noted international research and funding organisations:

“JPAL of MIT-USA: GyanShala children score 100-150% more marks compared to government schools.

ASSET, EI-India: GyanShala children in grade 3 on par with India’s best CBSE elite schools, over 2011-2015

CfBT–UK (2010 & 2013): GyanShala program on par with 35% UK public schools, and 50% Dubai International Schools.”

What is the cost of this model? “GyanShala charges a nominal monthly fee of Rs 100 (US\$2) per child in middle school. A child costs GyanShala INR 2,800 (US\$56) per year in elementary school and 4,000 (US\$80) in middle school (inclusive of class rent, learning material, and stationery).”¹⁹

¹⁹ Ashoka India, <http://india.ashoka.org/fellow/pankaj-jain>

1.4









Blueprint for Change

The success of the measures taken by the two schools are reflected in the adoption by other schools and also, through parents' continued support of what one may call 'alternative education.' As elaborated earlier, different

schools have chosen any one or all of the elements for reproduction in their own schools. This section summarises and compares the different facets of the two interventions.

Table 3: Comparison of Muni and GyanShala models

PARAMETERS	MUNI MODEL	GYANSHALA MODEL	COMPARISON
CHILD-CENTRED MODEL			While both the models are focused on children's' infinite capacity to learn, the GyanShala places major focus on curricular education while Muni model focuses more on child behaviour and moral development.
INFRASTRUCTURE			Both the models are similar in the way they give lesser importance to infrastructure. A clean, well - lit learning environment is enough, according to them.
CURRICULUM			In the GyanShala model, the curriculum is at the centre of the change. Hence it is designed from scratch. In the Muni model, the existing curriculum is followed. But there is more focus on language and confidence building.
RESULTS			GyanShala model places importance on results and quality. These are externally validated. While the Muni model has also started showing good results, the key focus of the model is more on children moral development.
MORAL EDUCATION			For Muni model, this is the biggest pillar of change. For GyanShala, this is not a separate focus. It is part of the overall curriculum.

PARAMETERS	MUNI MODEL	GYANSHALA MODEL	COMPARISON
FOCUS ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH			For Muni model, children learning healthy living habits is important. For GyanShala, this is not an explicit focus.
TEACHER QUALIFICATION			Both the models follow the child-centric method of learning where the teacher is the facilitator, not the sole provider of knowledge.
COMMUNITY FOCUS			Both the models are strongly integrated within the community. The parents, the teacher and the students are not participants, almost evangelists for the model.
FOCUS ON ENGLISH			GyanShala model does not believe English is helpful at younger levels. Muni model places great emphasis on it.