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# **Research maGma**

## **An International Multidisciplinary Journal**

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### **SCHOOL CHOICE, MARKET AND CLASS STRATEGIES: AN INQUIRY INTO CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines various policy and market ramifications of the school choice debates. While starting with theoretical underpinnings of the contemporary debates of school choice, the paper describes how is the state shifting its priorities, and thus paving the way for private sector to operate profusely as a potentially major stakeholder in the delivery of basic services including schools education. India as of recently has witnessed a rapid growth of varieties of private schools. Class (parental) strategies and consequently reproduction of social inequalities are two major aspects which are examined with regard to the issues of school choice debates in general and in Indian context in particular.

#### **KEYWORDS:**

School choice, market, parenting, risk, social reproduction

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

For last couple of decades, India is witnessing a unbridled growth of private schools. Stakeholders owing to such development often claim to offer choices for parents, and thus a competitive efficiency in the delivery of better education. Eventually, the rise of middle classes, as one of the market force, the issue of school choice become as one of the most contentious issue. Nevertheless, the rise and size of private schools in both rural and urban areas leaves parents in quandary as to how to make better choices for their wards. It may be noted that the schools do also make choices and selections of their intake. So, the school choice is purely a market phenomenon engaging both parents as purchaser and schools as seller. The school thus being a site of consumption,

as Stephen Ball (2004) said, where various stakeholder compete and struggle over. This essentially has caste and class ramifications and thus involves qualities of reproduction of social inequalities in the society. This paper attempts to examine various issues related to school choice. It addresses the questions such as; what are demand and policy aspects of school choice? How does market engaged with the choice phenomena? Finally, the paper tries to contextualise school choice debate within the contemporary developments in school education in India.

### **MARKET AND EDUCATION: CONTEXTUALISING THE PROBLEM**

Due to the worldwide upsurge of neoliberal market economy, education is deemed to be the productive area to invest and earning profits. Given the rise of competitive global economy, it seems there is a growing demand for better skills, learning capability and communication skills which government schools have failed to facilitate. Societies respond to changing times, emerging new needs and aspirations of city dwellers, parents, teachers, educational authorities, and community's employer and students often articulate their aim of education in different ways while engaging with market demands, global pressures and opportunities. Given this, school education being competitive is struggled over especially in relation to the emergence of market forces at one hand and meeting the needs of social justice and so called inclusive growth by the state on the other. There is also a demand from education seekers themselves (Scrase and Scrase 2009), who are basically an 'anxious middle class' (Ball 2003). It is assumed that such preferences of the government seriously raise doubts over achieving its fundamental aim of inclusive growth (ibid). Given this backdrop, educational authorities, parents and communities often articulate different ways of engaging with the market demands, global pressures and opportunities.

Private schools do compete. They act as per the market norms and attract students. In other words, they target certain sections of students to sell their product. For instance, 'private schools provide services in exchange for payment, and unless heavily subsidised from outside, they must please their consumer (students and parents), if they are to prosper' (Chubb and Moe 1988: 365). Private schools in their intake composition choose students based on their own determined sets of goals, standards and methods which suit the market best. For earning and best survival in the game of market driven mechanisms, they target a particular strata in society reflecting a particular socio-economic status. Hence, it is observed that "whatever be the constituency of private school, it surely be much smaller and more homogenous than the democratic constituency of public school and students and parents will occupy a much more central position within it" (ibid.: 364) though private schools are certain to provide larger 'freedom of choice' based on ability to pay.

### **NEOLIBERALISM, THE STATE AND THE EDUCATIONAL REFORMS**

Neo-liberalism, as a state policy, refers to a set of liberal market policies adopted by the State. There is emphasis to make market powerful in setting its own rule and free to sell product on its conditions. The market forces become the dominant player in this framework. This is certainly relevant for the broad spectrum of policy making to small transactions in the society. Olszen et al (2004) note, "every social transaction is conceptualised as entrepreneurial, to be carried out purely on personal gain. The market introduces competition as the structuring mechanism through which resources and statuses are allocated efficiently and fairly" (p. 137). This leads to claims of upcoming private ownership of the public sector to bring in efficiency, productivity and better management. Thus the market forces let loose in tune with three principles of neo-liberalism such as individualism, rationality and self

interest under the ambit of privatisation.

The states propagate such norms and adopt neo-liberalism as an ideology to encourage private sector. Neo-liberalism, as a dominant ideology which brought in market as an autonomous entity' of the state, has significantly emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century. In the developed world, neo-liberalism is often coupled with Thatcherism and grew up in opposition to Keynesianism. In the developing world, it emerged in opposition to the development strategies based on market substitution industrialisation which had dominated the period 1945 to early 1980s. Here it is often linked to the so-called 'Washington Consensus' (Privatisation and deregulation; trade and financial liberalisation; shrinking role of state; encouraging foreign direct investment) and to the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) promoted by the IMF and the World Bank" (McClean and McMillan 2003: 368). Nevertheless, the defining characteristics of neo-liberalism are based on classical liberalism, but there are substantive differences between the two.

Given such autonomous individuality and penetrating nature of market under neo-liberalism, it is assumed that 'neo-liberalism brings in two fundamental shifts in the working of the state. First, 'it changes the nature of the state, from being an entity apparently standing above society and intervening in its economic functioning in the interest of the society as a whole, even at the expense of unbridled interest of financial capital (such as state in the era of Keynesian demand management) being an entity acting exclusively to promote the interest of financial capital. This changes the nature of capitalist state, which is sometimes mistakenly called "retreat of the state," "is manifest in the shift that occurs from it being a spender, an investor and a producer, to its new role in carrying out "privatisation" and "disinvestment" (all of which benefit financial capital) and undertaking state expenditure deflation (which exceed to a perennial demand of finance capital). The second fundamental shift is related to the fact that since financial capital in the contemporary era is not tied to any particular national domain (and its important adjunct) but has an international character, to protect and promote it on global plane where it operates as a surrogate global state necessarily has to come into being" (Patnaik 2007: 4).

In the present neoliberal environment, the state said to have created greater flexibility for itself through exporting the risk to the consuming educational community. The burden of risk, responsibility (Dixon 2009) and legitimation now lay, not with the state but with individuals in civil society, the 'community' of individual consumers (Robertson 2011: 293). School choice and neo-liberalism in social policy thus opens risk to everyone (Kelly: 2007). While digging into the work of Foucault, Kemshall notes, "growing preoccupation with risk is implicit in the broad range of neo-liberal reforms associated with post-welfare states. Policies and programme designed to provide collective social protection have given way to those that encourage individual responsibility and mutual obligation' (Kemshall 2006). However the risk and exercise of one's economic power differ in the market.

### **MARKET, SOCIAL CLASS AND THE SOCIAL BIAS**

There is nothing democratic and egalitarian about the functioning of market. The market treats different classes differently. Ranson (1988) states that the market has social biases; it reproduces and sets its own agenda to grow faster to perpetuate its own predefined terms and conditions. For instance, Sir Mark Tully metaphorically refers to market as 'donkey'. He says it goes better if you drive and guide it to the destination. But if you let it to guide you, it will not only move its own awkward way but it will kick you out of the order.

Middle class takes the most possible advantage of such arbitrary behaviour of the market as the middle class people have better economic capacity. Market responds to economic power. Since

schooling is quasi-market and guided by the market economy, the middle class has an added advantage. For instance, as Ball (2003) argues, “within the social fields of education the middle class have enough capital in the right currency, to ensure a high probability of success for their children. Their tactical deployment of these capitals more often than not enable them to gain access to and monopolize advantageous educational sites and trajectories” (p. 168).

According to Ball (2003), the propagation of neo-liberal market economy provides strategic advantage to the middle class. In other words, the middle class gets stronger positional advantage over others, namely, the lower class. Such advantages, even middle class may store for future use, give a significant leverage to the middle class parents. For instance, the middle class put their market power to gain a competitive advantage. This certainly helps them to maximize their chances of gaining access to elite institutions. As a result, the middle class parents seem to get success in ensuring that their child acquires credentials for use in the labour market and thus the reproduction or enhancement of position and advantage (Ball 2003).

In the words of Vincent (2004) “good parenting is not class neutral” (cited in Ball 2003: 45), rather it involves loads of multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. Davies and Aurini (2011) rightly argue that the socio-economic status provides knowledge and finances required to be engaged in choice, be it of school or any resource to procure. In the words of Ball (2003), ‘the class is realized and struggled over in the daily lives of families and institutions, in consumption decisions, as much as in the processes of production, and particularly at moments of crisis and contradiction as parents think about the well-being and happiness and futures of their offspring’ (p. 7). Class, in this context, as Ball (2003) further argues, is basically about, “knowing how to act at these defining moments” (p. 7). This knowledge and socio-economic advantages, provides special advantages and mileage to the middle class parents over others. The present study thus keep these theoretical formulations of class advantage or disadvantage in mind while look at the middle and lower class strategies to exercise various school choice.

### **SCHOOLS AS BY PRODUCT OF MARKET (ISATION): PARENTING AT RISK**

School choice is one of the facets of competitive market. The schools are driven by market principles, they aim to make profits. They thus sell education as a packaged commodity. The parents as prospective clients choose and buy the same. Furthermore, to unpack the very notion of market in the context of schooling, Teelken (1999) argues, “the market in education refers to the presence of a supply and a demand side in education: the suppliers are the educational institutions and their competent authorities; the demand side is the parents and students” (p: 283-284). The school becomes an open site of consumption wherein not only the management and teachers are commercialized but also the parent and the children themselves are commercialized heavily (Ball 2004). Given the neo-liberal ideologies of the State, market has subsequently become the key criterion to decide about anything worthy of dealing with matters of livelihood including the issues of schooling and career prospects of children. The individual sees his/her actions in terms of cost and benefit analysis. The parents therefore look forward to market driven schools as a solution (Kearney and Arnold, 1994) where performativity and measureable outcomes become the decisive criteria. It is argued that the state education system seems to lack characteristics commonly perceived for business efficiency, consumer choice, competition, profit incentives and performance related pay’ (Adnett and Davis 1999: 221).

Market driven schools actually aim to have better performativity or results in obligation with market led protocols. Market determines the demands of the schools and creates choices as per the



paying capacity of parents of different socio-economic strata. Gerwitz et al (1995) on the basis of their work on three local schooling markets maintain that choice is very directly and powerfully related to social class differences...choices emerge as a new factor in maintaining and indeed reinforcing social class divisions and inequalities (cited in Adnett and Davis 1999). Various scholars (Bowe et al 1994; Waslander and Thrupp 1997; Reay and Ball 1998; Scrase and Scrase 2009) are of the view that social class affects the pattern of preferences as well as the exercise of choice itself. Ball (2004) concluded that the greater social and cultural capital enables the middle classes to exploit the quasi-market of schooling to reproduce social and economic inequalities. They are called quasi market because they replace monopolistic state providers with competitive independent ones. Further to understand market aspect, one needs to unpack the chemistry between choice making, the market of schooling and class positions given the intervening factors of availability and accessibility to parents.

The market driven schools go for open (competitive) enrolment, choices, diversity of school provisions, competition among individual educational providers and seekers. With marketisation comes marketing, for this is one way schools respond to the external pressures endangered by the need to compete for more targeted students. This lead to the intensive competition to recruit students by private schools through claims and counter-claims for procuring quality education and various other incentives and thus going for profit making.

Historically speaking, "the spread of neoliberal tendency, since the crisis of 1970s, led some sections of the people to claim that the invisible hands of market will lead to the better schools" (Apple 2001: 413). This further led to "the evolution of education market wherein education is viewed as a commodity" (Reay 1998: 2002). Furthermore, this led to the emergence of a sort of 'post-emotionality' era in school education leading to establish a sort of mechanical relation between teacher and school management basing itself on immediate measureable outcomes (Ball 1999). Thus the craze for quick and measureable results made parents to choose for better schools for their wards. Given this trend, Ball (1999) argues "parenting becoming serious, demanding and professionalized" (p. 136). Thus the parents make choices to select a school which they feel fit to meet their aim and the same is within their economic capacity.

To dwell little more deeply, the notion of choice refers to an act of choosing between two or more possibilities. In the quasi-market of schools, parents have options to choose. Parents make 'preference ordering' (Dhar 1997) while making choices. This goes with the assumption that the choice results from a "hierarchical or sequential decision processes" (Fotheringham 1988). Parents first collect information and make a list or set of preferable schools.

Gervitz and Ball (1994) argue that the choice is not free-floating. Making choice involves costs or investments. It carries a complex chain of decision making which occurs over time and thus has a 'multi-layered context. Parents form a set of choice in hierarchical order as discussed earlier. According to Gerwitz and Ball (2003), "the planning and futurity are again central to the making up of the child in relation to educational opportunities" (p. 119). Hence the school becomes open site of consumption with contestation and strife for better and seamlessly productive and an anxious hope for immediate outcomes.

According to Ball (2003), choice involves both 'logic and taste'. Parents always choose their best, of course, based on their socio-economic dispositions and knowledge . They choose better educational institutions (whether in terms of brand name, status symbol or better quality provider claimant or all in one) and the skills which can be better marketed to ensure better future. Given such growing deep utilitarian penetration in schooling process in terms of making choice based on real market concerns, it

is speculated that educational discourse of our era is near to be marked by “market fundamentalism” (Tully 2008) and a move towards “Over-Choices,” what Alvin Toffler (1970:263-283) called a “peculiarly super-industrial dilemma”(p. 264).

Contemporary neoliberal policies thus, with their emphasis on choice and individual responsibility, have led to a “privatization of risk management” (Murphy 2000:293). Parents, not the State, are made responsible to ensure better education. School Choice reflects this aspect of the shift of ‘risk taking’ from state to people. Ball notes that the choice making processes involve ‘emotional as well as social and material expenditure’ (Ball 2003). He further notes, parenting in this regard, “involves worries about getting things wrong, about failing the child, about mistaking priorities, about not finding the perfect school or right university. The other side of all this was various forms of guilt. Both a personal guilt about letting the child down or in some cases social guilt about choosing private school in preference to the state sector” (p. 161). Thus choice journey is not just simple and smooth. It involves various sorts of risks and constraints which relates to parental social capital or social class they belong to (Zeng and Xie 2008). For instance, Families with greater economic means may have better access to information on schools and accessible transportation, and, therefore, may be more likely have better facilitating environment to make their choices and also getting the same done.

Certainly, the parental choices are constrained by what is available and accessible (Glatter et al 1997). The notion of constrained choice, as Zeng and Xie (2008) describe, “refers to conditions where the choice making processes and the decision is ‘influenced not only by the decision maker’s intrinsic preference but also by external factors such as availability, abundance, and accessibility of the items in the choice set” (p. 618). Davis and Ostrom notes that “the distribution of access to educational services can easily be biased so that some individuals have many more opportunities than others” (Davis and Ostrom 1991: 321) as, “choice is 'framed' by location, by material and social circumstances” (Gerwitz and Ball 1994: 75).

School choice is often associated with the risk involved for parents while making a choice. Ball (2003) notes that the risk is such that the Parents become ‘manic’. There is a danger of feeling ‘panicked’. Decisions are almost made and then not” (p. 162). At policy level, “the school choice involved risk at three levels; firstly parents who choose a school for their wards. Secondly, children for whom the school is chosen. Children belonging to poor families face an elevated risk for a variety of adverse educational outcomes” (Jacob and Ludwig 2009: 58), and thirdly, the community sphere within which the choices are made. In community context, “the main risk associated with expanded choice opportunities is the possibility of exacerbating the segregation of poor, minority, or low-performing students within a subset of schools” (Jacob and Ludwig 2009: 59). According to Reay (2004), ‘The city is also marked by certain spatial labeling such as the locality in which these children live and the schools within it are “not good enough” (p. 1011). This labeling of schools noticed among the middle and even among the lower class. In fact many of such school especially in certain localities become a microcosm of whichever ethnic community they belong to (Reay 2004). These schools are manifestations of class and racial exclusion and exclusivity (ibid) that exist and shape the city’s educational landscape over a period of time. Educational markets is actually what Reay (2004) said, “operate in the inner city as processes of differentiating schools, concentrating problems, demonizing the ‘ethnic other’ and pathologizing working class pupils” (p. 1019). Kelly (2009) notes that, “the choice is inherently bound to uncertainty and favours those who are risk-friendly or at least risk-aware” (p. 272). In fact, “each Individual is not similarly exposed to modernisation risks” (Robertson 2011: 292). For instance, middle class having better economic resources, often have strategic advantage over others to beat any



upcoming risk of failure in competing neo-liberal economies. Market driven schools thus present parents with a range of choices and they are thus held responsible for their decision making. So, the risk of failure and any unwanted situation, if any, occur in the process of selection of schools and/or delivery of education is put on their shoulders or parents themselves.

### **CHOICE DEBATES, POLICY RESPONSES AND CLASS STRATEGIES IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

School choice debates essentially reflect state's dilemma whether it should go to crude neo-liberal market economy where 'profit is God', (Kumar and Hill 2009) or welfare state where social justice in terms of welfare subsidies, grants, flagship programmes and various sorts of incentives are made available to serve the masses.

In the post-1990s education policy in India is significantly guided by the philosophy of neo-liberalism candidly adopted by the Government of India. Under the aegis of this philosophy, an overwhelming market niche has gradually been created for the proliferation of privatisation and commercialisation of school education in the country (Sadgopal 2010, Drury 1993). The state is perfectly realising it by three ways; (a) there is the opening of the new markets by demolishing the vast government school system; (b) shifting public funds to the corporate houses, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the religious bodies through Public Private Partnerships (PPP), school vouchers, refinanced loans, cash transfers and tax exemptions; and (c) expediting abdication by the state of its Constitutional obligation to ensure education of equitable quality to all children. It is precisely in this policy background the RTE was conceived which duly not only acknowledges the existence of private sector and but encourages the proliferation of commercialisation of school education by allowing a hierarchy of schools and gradation of quality education designed to be distinctly accessed by different sections of society. So the very idea of 'common schools' assumed way back in 1970 by Kothari Commission seem to be completely dead. In fact this is all due to the reluctant attitude of state which led to the drastic decline of public education system. Despite such reluctant efforts of the government to mobilise adequate resources for school education and bringing innovation, a fundamental mistrust seem to have evolved about credibility of public education system. The idea of working and useful government education system seems to be crumbling (Kingdon 2009, Tilak 2007, De et al 2000). Nevertheless, the government schools claim a larger chunk of enrolments especially in rural parts and children belonging to certain social groups and classes. But over the last decades there has been a significant decline in this too.

After the policy shift in 1990s, private sector started growing at much faster pace providing more options for parents to choose from a range of government and private service providers of education including various kinds of branded and elite schools. Many see such unbridled growth of privatisation in education as a direct fall out of government policy (De et al 2000, Tooley and Dixon 2005). Taking a similar note, Kingdon (1996) notes two important factors regarding the growth of private schooling; firstly, "the effect of rising income on the demand of private schooling, and secondly, the effect of the breakdown of the functioning and quality of state funded elementary education" (p. 3311). However, she doubts the viability of the first factor. She further points out that the lack of accountability, poor functioning of government schools, reluctant teachers in government schools as other important factors in the growth of private sector in education. Hence the parents tend to lose their confidence in government schooling.

Scrase and Scrase (2009) see a broader sinister design in the choices and strategies of middle class. Their characterisation of Indian middle class is based on their study in West Bengal. They record a

major controversy in West Bengal of 1980s, when Left-Front Government sought to abolish teaching of English in primary schools in favour of Bengali language as the sole language of instruction” (ibid. 38). According to them, middle class resisted this decision and continued the struggle until 1999 when finally the Left Government reversed its policy. Scrase and Scrase (2009) note that ‘the Indian middle class seeks to maintain its cultural hegemony precisely by adopting the cultural logic of globalisation to their advantage; i.e. English is a significant global language and must be taught to their children” (ibid. 33).

Similar to the arguments of Hatcher (1998), middle class is a skilled chooser, always have good knowledge or what Bourdieu called ‘cultural capital’ in terms of having knowledge of education system, how to navigate it and have longer goals in their mind in comparison to lower class/ working class. Sarangapani (2003) in her study of Kasimpur village near Delhi reproduced similar evidences. According to her, “among low income earning families, sending a boy-child to school is viewed as an investment by the whole family. Everyone is interested in his success at the school. And he is withdrawn at the slightest indication of failure or poor performance” (p: 28-29). Thus the different social classes respond differently to the policy changes that have been witnessed in the overall context of marketisation of education. The experience is not specific to India, but has been a trend all over the world, which produced rich literature on school choices, marketisation and class strategies which the next part of the chapter will discuss.

### **EMERGING ‘NEW’ REALITIES IN INDIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION**

In recent decades ‘India is recognised as an economy with a stunning’ but ‘jobless growth’ and a ‘booming economy with growing gaps’ where the spectacular success made have not been shared by all equally’ (Tilak 2008: 3872). Despite a number of high claims to bring-in inclusive growth or growth with humane face, state remains reluctant to spend adequately on social sector especially since the 1990s liberalisation of Indian economy. These economic reforms led to downsizing of public sector including public education” (ibid. 3874). The delay in passing the Right to Education Act, 2009 indicate the lacklustre attitude of the state. In fact, this Act faced the most stringent opposition, as many observers point out, from Finance Ministry and Planning Commission as they speculated heavy budget deficit, while ignoring the importance of inclusive growth for long term equitable development. Moreover, the 11th Five Year Plan admits that, “in the liberalized global economy where there is a pursuit for achieving excellence, the legitimate role of private providers of quality education not only needs to be recognized, but also encouraged’. According to the Plan document, “Public-Private Partnership (PPP) need not necessarily mean only seeking private investment to supplement government efforts, but also encouraging innovation in education that government school may lack. Schools under private management (unaided) have been expanding at a faster rate. Zoe and Martin (2014) notes that rapid economic growth, increased opportunities for social mobility and elevated aspirations for educational achievement have combined disillusionment with the quality and effectiveness of government schools to fuel demand for private schools, even amongst some of the poorest families’ (p. 2). However, still a vast majority of the poor, particularly in rural areas, are solely dependent on government schools (GOI 2007) and thus they have very limited choices.

It may be noted that the private schools expanded since Independence and are located mainly in the cities and towns to cater to the needs of ambitious middle class parents who can pay high fee for such type of schools (GOI 1993). Thus, the spread of the public school model and the consequent erosion of the concept of a common, neighbourhood school are “expression of the deeper tendency in

the system to provide emerging or neo-elites with islands of moderate security and hope of self-perpetuation” (Kumar 1998: 1394). Moreover, “schools and parents do not take government recognition as a stamp of quality” (Kingdon 2007: 18). It is also significant to note, as per the DISE 2013-14 many states have more than 50 per cent enrolment in private schools (Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Enrolment Share at elementary Level in Government and Private Schools, 2013-2014**

States	Government Schools	Private Schools	States	Government Schools	Private Schools
A & N Islands	76.43	23.58	Lakshadweep	100	---
Andhra Pradesh	53.81	46.18	Madhya Pradesh	65.17	34.83
Arunachal Pradesh	78.31	21.69	Maharashtra	39.06	<b>58.59</b>
Assam	78.6	21.39	Manipur	37.73	<b>62.28</b>
Bihar	93.48	6.53	Meghalaya	50.03	49.92
Chandigarh	67.14	32.86	Mizoram	59.27	40.73
Chhattisgarh	77.67	22.3	Nagaland	48.06	<b>51.91</b>
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	74.96	25.04	Odisha	83.87	16.12
Daman & Diu	54.22	45.78	Puducherry	31.19	<b>68.81</b>
Delhi	59.68	40.32	Punjab	57.17	42.83
Goa	21.55	<b>78.45</b>	Rajasthan	52.16	47.83
Gujarat	66.15	17.8	Sikkim	73.46	26.54
Haryana	52.26	47.74	Tamil Nadu	41.06	<b>58.95</b>
Himachal Pradesh	64.89	35.11	Tripura	84.54	15.46
Jammu & Kashmir	58.48	41.52	Uttar Pradesh	48.23	<b>51.63</b>
Jharkhand	75.8	24.09	Uttarakhand	48.82	<b>51.15</b>
Karnataka	51.39	42.62	West Bengal	88.93	11.06
Kerala	22.42	<b>77.59</b>	<b>All States</b>	<b>61.32</b>	<b>38.22</b>

Source: DISE 2013-2014

As per the data provided in the table 1.1, more than 60 per cent of the children enrolled in private schools at the elementary level. There are many states in which the enrolment is above the national average. The growth of private schools is not only restricted to urban areas, but increasingly growing in rural pockets and offering a number of choices for rural inhabitants (ASER 2014). Muralidharan and Kremer’s (2007) paper based on results from a nationally representative survey of rural private primary schools in India, notes that almost 28% of rural population in India including lower income groups have access to fee-charging private schools in the same village.

While making observation on the table, it may also be noted that private unaided schools are heterogeneous and differs in their delivery of education service. They are marked by heterogeneity in terms of not just fee but also in terms of their resource capacity, teacher salaries and socio-economic background of their student composition (Kingdon 1996). Similar heterogeneity is reflected in the study conducted by Yash Aggarwal (2000) on schools in Haryana. Stephen Ball (2007) is right in saying that there are ‘privatisations’ rather than just single type of privatisation of schooling. In nutshell, the private schools are making a big presence in the Indian education system and parents are readily choosing the private schools for their wards. As the foregoing discussion suggest, the predominance of preferring private schools is becoming an all Indian phenomena which certainly having larger implications for the social inclusion and social justice which the state aims to attain. The contemporary education scenario is unlikely to help in achieving this as it will reproduce existing inequalities on caste

and class lines.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The paper elaborately examines market, state and contemporary policy aspects of school choice debates. State's encouragement and parental preferences for private schools are making private education competitive. The commercialisation and predominance of the growth of the private schools is thus a shift in the educational systems in the state and witnessing a shift in the state's priorities as well. Due to change in priorities and a policy shift in India, it appears that the state is not interested to run a credible school system to deliver (low cost) education to the masses. Studies show that the government schools are poorly resourced making parents to choose private schools and thus consequently paving the way to growth of private school. Given this, India is moving towards growth of market driven schools wherein one's class or social background is deciding in making choices and materialising one's preferences which led to reproduction of social inequalities in the society.

## NOTES

1. However it may be noted that the recent financial crisis in the form of 'housing bubble' spread from United States of America to Europe and impact India and many developing countries has in a way proved the vulnerability of market autonomy. Many courtiers including USA, Britain has to come forward to bailout their depressing economic firms. Fareed Zakaria while appreciating state policy as major force even in contemporary neoliberal phase says "at the end of the day, governments are more powerful than the markets. They can close markets down, nationalize firms and write new rules" 40th Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture, Teen Murti Bhawan, New Delhi
2. It refers to the situation wherein states merely act as a facilitator for global economic players. It has less control on 'or become indifferent to' its own economy establishments.
3. 6th Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture on "Seeking Balance in an Unbalanced World" 25th November, 2008, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

According to Simon, 'no decision is the best decision. It is marked by bounded rationality (Simon 1990).

4. It is in this context Hara Marano in A nation of Whimps (2008) talks of hothouse parenting where in Parents are quite anxious and protective towards the lives of their children. Similarly, Frank Furedi in Paranoid Parenting (2002) talks of parents unending concerns and efforts to build the future of their children. Given such overwhelming concerns, anxiety and eagerness, Cucchiara (2013) notes that, "parents see private schools as highly protected places where they profusely invest for the safety and academic development" (P:86). Cucchiara (2013) thus talk of "intensive parenting," and explores that the current understanding of middle-class parental anxiety, how such parents negotiate the choices, responsibilities, and perceived risks inherent to contemporary parenting" (P. 78).

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