



Centre for Civil Society



# **SCHOOL CHOICE NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**The Right to Education Act: Revolutionary, Redundant, or Regressive?**

Saturday, 18 December 2010  
The Theatre, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi



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## OVERVIEW

### SCHOOL CHOICE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

#### The Right to Education Act:

#### Revolutionary, Redundant, or Regressive?

The second annual School Choice National Conference was organised at The Theatre, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India on 18 December 2010. The Conference brought together 13 expert speakers and over 120 delegates comprising of policy makers, academicians, school and NGO leaders, media and the youth to discuss issues, share experiences and formulate a collective plan to advocate for reforms with the government.

The Conference focus on four broad areas:

- **Right to Education Act : Opportunities and Challenges**
- **Framework of Ideal School Ecosystem**
- **Accountability in Education**
- **Re-visioning Indian Education**

The Conference also saw the formal release of two CCS publications, [ViewPoint 9 and 10](#). The former is on **Skill Vouchers - Global Experiences and Lessons for India** and the latter on **Reservation in Private Schools under the Right to Education Act: Model for Implementation**.

Speaker presentations and video interviews as well as media coverage of the Conference are available at [www.schoolchoice.in/scnc2010](http://www.schoolchoice.in/scnc2010).

*For further details contact: [scnc@ccs.in](mailto:scnc@ccs.in)*



## **PROGRAM SCHEDULE**

- 10:30 WELCOME:** Parth J Shah, President, Centre for Civil Society
- 11:00 SESSION 1: RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**  
Chair: Amitav Virmani, Country Head, Absolute Return for Kids
- Comparison of State Rules: Vinod Raina, Member, Central Advisory Board for Education
  - Monitoring of RTE in Government and Private Schools: Kiran Bhatta, National Coordinator, Right to Education, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
  - Impact of RTE on Alternative Education: Sitanshu S Jena, Chairman, National Institute of Open Schooling
- Q & A Session
- 13:30 SESSION 2: FRAMEWORK OF IDEAL SCHOL ECO SYSTEM**  
Chair: Parth J Shah, President, Centre for Civil Society
- Encouraging Edupreneurs: Manish Sabharwal, CEO, TeamLease Services
  - Innovative Policies and Programs: Baela Raza Jamil, Public Policy Specialist and Coordinator, South Asian Forum for Education Development, Lahore, Pakistan
  - Italian School Voucher Program: Monica Grazia Boni, Director - Public Social Programs, Edenred Italia
- Q & A Session
- 15:30 SESSION 3: ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION**  
Chair: Urmila Sarkar, Chief, Education, UNICEF India Country Office
- Towards Informed Choice: School Ratings: Pradeep Sharma, Country Director, Gray Matters Capital, India
  - Teacher Effort and Teacher Accountability in India: Geeta Gandhi Kingdon, Professor of Education and International Development, Institute of Education, London University
  - School Accountability: Models and Practices: Yamini Aiyar, Senior Research Fellow and Director, Accountability Initiative, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi
- Q & A Session
- 17:00 CLOSING: RE-VISIONING INDIAN EDUCATION**  
Speakers:
- T K Mathew, Chief Executive and Secretary, Deepalaya
  - Gowri Ishwaran, Educationist and Founder Principal, Sanskriti School
  - K Satyanarayan, Director, New Horizon Media
- Open Forum

## SPEAKER PROFILES



**Amitav Virmani**  
**Country Director, Absolute Return for Kids (ARK)**

Amitav Virmani joined ARK in August 2008. Prior to this, he was General Manager in the office of the CEO & Managing Director of Ranbaxy Laboratories Limited (RLL), India's largest pharmaceutical company. Amitav previously worked with Bristol Myers Squibb spending four years in New Jersey and then moved to India to help set up the Indian office. Amitav is also a Trustee and Manager of two family run schools that serve lesser privileged children in New Delhi. He earned his MBA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2000, after graduating with Honors in Economics from St. Stephens College, New Delhi, India in 1994.



**Vinod Raina**  
**Member, Central Advisory Board for Education (CABE)**

A physicist by profession, Vinod Raina is one of the pioneers of the People's Science Movement in India, having helped set up the All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) and the Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS). He is a founding member of Eklavya, an organization advocating alternative education for more than two decades, and the only NGO whose curriculum was adopted in the state school educational system. He is a member of CABE which drafted the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act). He has been a Homi Bhabha Fellow, a Fellow of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, and an Honorary Fellow of the Indian Science Writers Association.



**Kiran Bhatta**  
**National Commissioner, Right to Education**  
**National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)**

Currently Kiran Bhatta is the National Coordinator, NCPCR. She has also worked with UNICEF as a Consultant. She was part of the team that came out with the much talked about PROBE 1 Report.



**Sitanshu S Jena**  
**Chairman, National Institute of Open Schooling**

Sitanshu S Jena is a postgraduate from the Utkal University and did his MPhil from the Kurukshetra University, Haryana. He was awarded the Indian Council for Social Sciences Research doctoral fellowship and completed his Ph.D. in Education from the Institute of Social Economic Change, (ISEC), Bangalore. He joined as one of the faculty members in the school of Education, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi at its initial stage. Subsequently, he worked as Regional Director of the Regional Centres of IGNOU at Shillong, New Delhi, Patna and Bhubaneswar. He also worked as Dean, School of Distance Learning; SVKM's NMIMS University, Mumbai and helped the institution in establishing its national wide distance learning programmes.



**Parth J Shah**  
**President, Centre for Civil Society**

Parth J Shah has conceptualised and organised liberal educational programs for the Indian youth including *Liberty & Society Seminars*, *Jeevika* Livelihood Documentary Competition, and Researching Reality Internship Program. He has edited *Morality of Markets*, *Friedman on India*, *Profiles in Courage: Dissent on Indian Socialism*, *Do Corporations Have Social Responsibility?* and co-edited *Law, Liberty & Livelihood: Making a Living on the Street*; *Terracotta Reader: A Market Approach to the Environment*; *BR Shenoy: Theoretical Vision and BR Shenoy: Economic Prophecies and Agenda for Change*. Parth is on the editorial board of *Education World*, *Vishleshan*, and *Khoj*, and is informal advisor to many non-profits. He has taken liberal ideas to numerous national and international workshops and conferences and writes regularly in the popular media. He is the youngest Indian member of the Mont Pelerin Society.



**Manish Sabharwal**  
**CEO, TeamLease Services**

Manish Sabharwal is a successful serial entrepreneur having started and successfully exited multiple businesses. He is a co-founder of TeamLease services - among India's largest private sector employers. Prior to that, he co-founded IndiaLife Hewitt (HR services, BPO), ICap India (fixed income and Forex inter dealer) and India Insure Risk Management (an insurance brokerage firm). He has an MBA from The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.



**Baela Raza Jamil**  
**Public Policy Specialist and Coordinator**  
**South Asian Forum for Education Development, Lahore, Pakistan**

Baela Raza Jamil is an activist in the education sector and a former technical advisor to the Ministry of Education, Pakistan. She has worked extensively in the areas of quality, community based initiatives for education access and quality, local governance and public-private partnerships in three continents and across several countries. She has studied comparative education, public policy and economic history at the Institute of Education, University of London, Rosemont College USA, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.



**Monica Grazia Boni**  
**Direttore Marketing, Incentive e Servizi Allaa Persona, Edenred**

Since 2005, Monica Boni is in charge of the development of public social programs and welfare services at Edenred Italia, branch of the multinational company Edenred. After working for a long time in marketing and communication, she took the responsibility of developing new products and services through voucher systems (paper, cards and web platforms) for the public benefits enabling their inclusion.



**Urmila Sarkar**  
**Chief, Education, UNICEF India Country Office**

Urmila Sarkar began her UN career with the International Labour Organization at its headquarters in 2000 and was charged with the task of developing their global expertise and managing their programmes on using education and training to combat child labour. She transferred to the ILO Asia-Pacific Office in Bangkok in 2004 to develop and manage the research, policy, operational and knowledge management work related to its largest program portfolio: combating child labour and creating education, training and decent work opportunities for young people. She has authored and supervised many publications and tools in this field.



**Pradeep Sharma**  
**Country Director, Gray Matters Capital, India**

Based in Hyderabad, Pradeep Sharma manages programs in the education sector to develop the education ecosystem in India with a focus on affordable private schools (APS). He is responsible for developing a rating system for low cost private schools and scaling it to multiple cities within India to enhance market transparency, to create market intelligence and to set quality standards. By partnering with innovative

solution providers, who typically do not find APS segment attractive, he intends to create a sustainable market by aggregating the schools and by creating a platform for commerce such that it leads to a paradigm shift in pedagogy and school management. Pradeep holds a Masters degree in Business Administration from Asian Institute of Management, Manila, Philippines and York University, Toronto, Canada and a Bachelor of Engineering degree from R.V College of Engineering in Bangalore, India.



**Geeta Gandhi Kingdon**  
**Professor of Education and International Development, Institute of Education, London University**

Geeta Gandhi Kingdon was until recently a Research Fellow at the Department of Economics, University of Oxford. She lectures in Development Economics and her research interests include Economics of Education, Labour Economics and the Economics of Happiness, mostly in countries of South Asia and Africa. Her work is based on micro-econometric analysis of survey data and has resulted in more than 25 papers in peer reviewed Economics and Development Economics journals. She is on the Editorial Board of three academic journals and does extensive academic refereeing as well as advisory work for governments and donor agencies.



**Yamini Aiyar**  
**Senior Research Fellow and Director, Accountability Initiative, Centre for Policy Research**

Yamini has an MSc in Development Studies from the London School of Economics, an MA in Social and Political Sciences from St. Edmunds College, Cambridge University, UK and a BA in Philosophy from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University. Prior to joining CPR Yamini was working as an independent consultant providing research and policy support to government, international donors and civil society organizations on governance reform with a focus on issues related to strengthening accountability in basic service delivery.



**T K Mathew**  
**Secretary and Chief Executive, Deepalaya**

T K Mathew is also the Founder and President of Pradan, professional development organization engaged in rural development with livelihood as the major theme. He has been consultant to the likes of CEVA, Cochin/Kuebel Foundation Germany, ICCO Holland, AMI Italy, PLAN International and many others. He has been awarded Vijaya Gujral Award-1999 from Vijaya Gujaral Foundation, Dr Ambedkar Smriti Award for upliftment of children in India by Dalit Children's Education & Development Programme Charitable Trust, the Man of Achievement Award-1999 by International Publishing House and several other prestigious awards and honours.





**Gowri Ishwaran**  
**Educationist and Founder Principal, Sanskriti School, New Delhi**

Recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri Award from the President of India in 2004, Gowri Ishwaran is an innovative educationist with over 30 years of experience in leading schools. She was the Founder Principal of Sanskriti School, New Delhi, an institution that has become one of the leading schools in India within a short span of 10 years. She has also been instrumental in developing, organising and conducting training programmes and seminars, for students and teachers, disseminating her experiences and learnings. A gold medallist and M A in English Literature, she reads extensively and writes for newspapers and magazines.



**K Satyanarayan**  
**Director, New Horizon Media**

K Satyanarayan studied at IIT Madras and Cornell University, USA. He was one of the co-founders of the website cricinfo.com and handled various functions there, ranging from sales & marketing to editorial to operations. After CricInfo and Wisden merged in February 2003, he continued with Wisden CricInfo's Indian operations in Chennai till December 2005, with responsibility for business development and finance. He co-founded New Horizon Media, a publishing company, in early 2004 with a focus on publishing in Indian languages and is currently a Director there. His longer term interest is to create affordable, sustainable, replicable school education models (K-12) by working with and around the existing education system, with the goal of providing ample opportunities for every individual to live up to his/her highest potential.

## **SESSION BRIEFS**

### **SESSION 1: RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT: CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Comparison of State Rules**

This session aims to present an overview and analysis of and comparison between the various final and draft state rules under the RTE Act. An understanding of the state rules is essential since the manner in which states implement the RTE Act will determine whether the Act will have the envisaged impact. The nuances of the state rules will determine to a large extent how this implementation will take place. As of now only two states have come out with their final rules. Most other states are in the process of drafting their rules.

#### **Monitoring of RTE in Government and Private Schools**

The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has been entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring the RTE Act at the Central level. However, most states are yet to form their State Commissions for the Protection of Child Rights and the monitoring structures at lower levels are even hazier. This session presents the monitoring processes and structures put in place by NCPCR along with an outline of the people and hierarchies involved. The monitoring of the RTE Act is an enormous challenge in a large and diverse country like India. This monitoring will necessarily encompass private schools whose admission (including admission under 25% reservation) and examination processes require close scrutiny.

#### **Impact of RTE on Alternative Education**

Although the RTE Act has been widely discussed and debated, not much attention has been paid to the impact of RTE Act on alternative education. Currently the schooling system in India covers various providers of alternative education like National Institute of Open Schooling, NGOs, providers of bridge courses, etc. who will all be impacted by the RTE Act, mostly negatively. It is necessary to incorporate these stakeholders as well into the discourse on RTE Act in order to ensure that the legislation does not give with one hand and take away with another.

### **SESSION 2: FRAMEWORK OF IDEAL SCHOL ECO SYSTEM**

#### **Encouraging Edupreneurs**

This session aims to examine ways and means to encourage entrepreneurship in the education sector. Despite the existence of significant entry barriers in the form of restrictive regulation and the prohibition of for-profit education in most states, the engagement of private players in the school education space is growing at a rapid pace. This calls for a need to re-examine ways to make this space more conducive to edupreneurs by easing regulation, providing them access to finance and forming associations to represent their demands.

#### **Innovative Policies and Programs**

The objective of this session is to present innovative policies from other countries (with a special focus on South Asia) that have contributed to creating ideal school ecosystems. In order to create such an ecosystem in India, it is necessary for stakeholders to draw on experiences of and best practices from other countries in the areas of partnerships, pedagogical approaches and ways of improving accountability and quality.

### **Italian School Voucher Program**

The objective of this session will provide an overview of the Dote Scuola program in Italy. Launched in 2008, Dote Scuola is a school voucher provided by Lombardia Region (Northern Italy) to support students attending primary and secondary schools. The aid is given to students provided their families prove to have certain income characteristics. The program employs a finalised voucher system through paper and e-vouchers in order to reinforce the demand, close control the correct spending (only for school equipments, school fees and services) and monitor the results.

## **SESSION 3: ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION**

### **Towards Informed Choice: School Ratings**

This session will provide an overview of the school rating project undertaken by Gray Matters Capital along with MCriI to increase transparency and accountability. Availability of information is key to creating a transparent and accountable education system. It is essential that stakeholders, especially parents are armed with relevant information to make decisions about their children's schooling, and that schools have information about themselves in order to benchmark themselves against competitors. School rating systems are important in creating competition amongst schools and address the information gap that parents face.

### **Teacher Effort and Teacher Accountability in India**

This session will examine the role of teacher effort and teacher accountability in delivering quality education. In any school ecosystem teachers are the main agents of service delivery and therefore at the core of any proposal to introduce accountability into the education system. Unless teachers are held accountable for delivering high-quality instruction, all efforts towards reforming the education ecosystem will be futile. In India, this problem is particularly acute in government schools where there is an absence of performance based compensation structures and accountability mechanisms.

### **School Accountability: Models and Practices**

The objective of this sub-session is to examine how accountability models can be built at the school-level to ensure efficient delivery of quality education. Such accountability models need to include not merely physical infrastructure requirements but also financial accountability and low-stakes testing to assess children's learning levels. The formation of School Management Committees (SMCs) as prescribed by the RTE Act is a step in this direction but a lot still needs to be done in terms of capacity building in order to make these SMCs effective.

## SESSION 1

# RIGHT TO EDUCATION ACT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



**Chair: Amitav Virmani**



**Panel**

### **SPEAKERS**



**Vinod Raina**



**Kiran Bhatta**



**Sitanshu S Jena**

Amitav Virmani started the session with a short introduction of the RTE Act and its important aspects. Some of these included the compulsion on local authorities to ensure that all children get access to education, the stress on inclusion, monitoring structures and definition of minimum norms and the concurrent financial responsibility of the central and state governments. He also highlighted some of the challenges facing the RTE Act such as the closure of unrecognised schools, the exclusion of children in the 0-6 age bracket, and the definition of economically weaker sections.

**Comparison of State Rules:** Vinod Raina presented a Comparison of the State Rules under the RTE Act. He reminded the audience that Acts are capable of being amended and also set out the context of the right to education. The right is justiciable and therefore he cautioned against treating government advisories, rules and orders under the RTE Act as final, since the final word is with the courts. In terms of progress on the RTE Rules, only four states have passed their Rules; Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa and Manipur. Two union territories, Chandigarh and Andaman and Nicobar have adopted the Model Rules. Most of the other states have only prepared their draft Rules. The prohibition of detention and expulsion have been circulated through government orders by 25 states, the prohibition on corporal punishment and mental harassment by 27 states, and no board examination till completion of elementary education by 25 states. He stated that we have 60 million children of elementary education age out of school. The biggest challenge is to get these children enrolled and ensure their sustained attendance and completion. Ensuring learning within schools is another big challenge. He clarified a few issues on the impact of the RTE Act on private schools. The obligation to set up neighbourhood schools is on the state and this cannot be passed on to the private sector. The neighbourhood criterion in the RTE Act does not apply to the 75%, however

the requirement of random selection applies to all students uniformly. The reason for the randomness criterion is that children cannot be profiled in terms of their potential to learn at the age of three. He also stated that the MHRD defined categories are against the spirit of the RTE Act.

**Monitoring of RTE in Government and Private Schools:** Kiran Bhatta said that the separation of the monitoring agency and the implementing agency under the RTE Act is a welcome step. The biggest challenge for the NCPCR is that it is located in Delhi but has to reach out to every school and every child in the country. There needs to be a grievance redressal process in place to ensure that not only are violations of the Act reported, but that action is taken on the same. She admitted that one of the gaps in the Act is that it does not lay down such a grievance redressal procedure. NCPCR is part of the dialogue between local authorities and the government in order to put a grievance redressal procedure in place. The NCPCR has set up a separate division which solely focuses on RTE. NCPCR has also appointed 18 state advisors who will act as the Commission's eyes and ears in the states. These advisors have two main roles, one is to obtain information from the ground by creating a coalition of civil society organisations, and the other is to pass such information to the NCPCR. They are also responsible for facilitating a dialogue between the civil society groups and the state governments. This initiative is a first of its kind. The Commission has also set up a cell for complaints in relation to the RTE Act. People can call, mail or send complaints by post and the Commission will take cognizance of the same. There is a protocol for how to respond to complaints, which may include summoning the authority concerned. Bhatta gave a couple of examples of the Commission's interventions in response to complaints received. In one instance after the Commission intervened in Haryana, Rs 10 crores collected as development fees were returned to students. Another initiative of the NCPCR has been public hearings. Three such public hearings have been held in three states. The Commission has also undertaken an awareness drive around the right to education. It has developed and disseminated publicity material to the ground and to SMCs (School Management Committees). The NCPCR sees the SMCs as the basic unit through which the Act can be monitored, and it will be involved in developing their capacities. NCPCR is also going to pilot a social monitoring mechanism in 10 states to enable people to raise issues and sort them out at the ground-level. The Commission wants to develop a mechanism through local organisations and SMCs for regular, continuous and concurrent implementation of the Act. An online complaint mechanism will be set up through which people can file and track their complaints online. The Commission is aware of the fact that it needs to knock the doors of the courts in certain cases like it did in the case of La Martiniere School, Kolkata. She clarified that the State Commissions and the National Commission are independent agencies and that the National Commission is not an appellate body for the State Commissions.

**Impact of RTE on Alternative Education:** Sitanshu S Jena gave an introduction to the open schooling system and elaborated on how it will supplement the RTE Act. There has been a paradigm from classroom learning to open learning systems. The open schooling system has no fixed age, no qualification for admission, no prescribed pace of learning, freedom to study from anywhere, freedom to choose one's subjects, on-demand assessment and certification and cumulative credit. Target groups for open schooling are people striving for continuing education, out of school children, children from backward communities, rural and urban poor, unemployed and partly employed people, differently abled children and minority groups. He pointed out that there is limited scope for RTE in open schooling. However there are certain

activities which open schooling can take up in the context of RTE. For example special programmes for admission of children to age appropriate classes, including development of age appropriate curriculum and disseminating the same, community mobilisation programmes and providing teacher training. He reminded the audience that the open schooling system is not a challenge to the formal school system but a complementary to it. The challenges for the open schooling system include creation of group activities for parents and students, and development of e-governance systems.

During the question answer round Kiran Bhatti clarified that the composition of the SMCs was designed in such a manner as to avoid domination of local elites. 75% of the SMCs comprise parents and even the chairmanship of the committee vests with the parents. She admitted the need for orientation and training of the parents on the SMCs and emphasised the need to carry out a massive campaign on a war footing to make sure the message of RTE goes out. Vinod Raina clarified an important point about applicability of the norms and standards on government schools. Section 19 of the RTE Act states that both government and private schools have to meet norms and standards for recognition. However, the requirement of recognition is only for private schools since no regulator of government schools has been set up under the Act. One of the tasks of the NCPCR and SCPCR (State Commission for Protection of Child Rights) is to ensure that government schools meet these standards. With respect to representation of elected representatives on the SMCs, he clarified that government schools cannot run without the support from the *panchayats* and therefore it is difficult to do without its representative on the SMC. It is important to ensure that *panchayat* members are trained in behaviour and transparent functioning rather than doing away with their representation in SMCs. He clarified that under the Act it is now the duty of the academic authority (NCERT at the Central level and to be appointed by the states at their level) to set academic standards.



## SESSION II

### FRAMEWORK OF IDEAL SCHOOL ECOSYSTEM



**Chair: Parth J Shah**



**Panel**

#### **SPEAKERS**



**Manish Sabharwal**



**Baela Raza Jamil**



**Monica Grazia Boni**

**Encouraging Edupreneurs:** Manish Sabharwal spoke about how the ovarian lottery determines people's educational levels and skills. Where you are born has such an influence on where you can get to in the labour market. He clarified that he was at the conference not to talk about skills, but as a first-generation entrepreneur. Drawing from his own experience, he spoke about how entrepreneurs like him depend on third-party financing. However when viewing the education sector what is striking is that there is no environment for third party financing for first-generation entrepreneurs. The education sector faces both quality and quantity challenges. The sector faces a cost-quality-scale challenge that is difficult to meet in current circumstances. The regulatory cholesterol in education leads to an adverse selection among education entrepreneurs, leading to a situation where most education entrepreneurs are politicians, criminals or land mafia. Someone without land, government connections and money would not be able to start a school under current circumstances. By keeping up the charade of education institutions being not-for-profit, we are in effect legislating adverse selection among edupreneurs. This is despite the fact that 90% of the capacity in schools over the last ten years has been for-profit. He emphasised five points in his speech. The first is the difference between education and training. Life skills imparted through education such as creativity, team spirit and enterprise cannot be taught in short training modules. What needs to be taught over fifteen years cannot be taught in six months. The second point is that India's scale is different. India has one million people entering the labour force every month for the next twenty years. No country has dealt with this kind of scale, and therefore we need to be cautious before adopting western models. The third point was about competition. He pointed out how many engineering and management colleges were finding it difficult to fill places. Competition is forcing institutes to offer additional benefits such as

free hostels, ragging free campus etc. Performance management is key to enduring excellence. Hard infrastructure like roads is difficult to build, but easy to operate, but soft infrastructure like schools, is easy to build but hard to operate because performance management is key to operation. Performance management is difficult to implement in the government. Finally a bad school is better than no school. The case for the private sector is not based on better quality, it is based on capacity. It is essential to legitimise private schools in order to increase the number of schools. There is a need to separate financing from delivery, and to encourage government spending for private provision of education. The debate needs to be shifted from public vs private to good vs. bad schools. We need to have biodiversity in the provision of education. What we have today is a hostile habitat for entrepreneurs.

**Innovative Policies and Programs:** Baela Raza Jamil spoke about innovations in education systems in Pakistan and Bangladesh. She started with the example of Greg Mortenson, author of the book *Three Cups of Tea*. She cited him as an example of someone who brought about change, with the involvement of the community while facing an often hostile government. Both Pakistan and Bangladesh experimented with nationalisation in 1972 and both reversed these policies over the decades. 54% of primary education providers in Bangladesh are non-state providers. At the secondary level this figure is 98%. However private education in Bangladesh is partly financed by the government. This funding is for teacher salaries, textbooks, stipends for girls, infrastructure, strengthening of school management committees etc. however the drop-out rate is still high in the country with 50% of children dropping out before reaching class 10. The government remains mistrustful of non-state actors in the sector. The resource allocation for education in terms of percentage of GDP has also been declining. In terms of the policy vision there is the 2021 Vision that is quite progressive and the recently passed National Education Policy. Pakistan has its own champions of education, Akhtar Hameed Khan, Shoaib Sultan Khan, Greg Mortenson etc and has seen large-scale partnerships between state and non-state actors. Like India, Pakistan has recently made the right to education a fundamental right, and by April 2011 will have a right to education legislation. However key indicators are not heartening, literacy rate is 57%, net enrolment rate at primary level is 61% and worse at the secondary level. Despite promises, expenditure on education does not cross 2% of GDP. Learning levels studies like the LEAP study and the ASER Pakistan show that learning levels are not high, but private schools are performing better than government schools. The number of private institutions especially at post-primary level is growing, a fact recognised by the government. The private sector has been included in national policy to meet its targets. Remarking on the debate over public vs private she said that instead of seeing systems as separated one must see them as blended. Through the creation of six education foundations there has been a revival of the grant-in-aid system in Pakistan. Government support is now being given to schools for teacher training, quality improvement programs, assessments. Around 5000-6000 schools are covered by these foundations. Not only is the sector expanding but there is also a growth of lending by micro-credit institutions. The challenges are such that there is no choice but to work in partnership and collaboration.

**Italian School Voucher Program:** Monica Grazia Boni began with an introduction of Edenred. Edenred is a voucher company that provides vouchers to both the private and the public sector. Her work is in Lombardy a northern province of Italy. In the last ten years there has been change in the manner in which regions have been governed in Italy. The policy has changed from top-down to a more participatory approach. Italy, with its high public debt, is



moving away from the idea of a welfare state. As a result, some public programs are being managed by private actors. The word 'dote' means dowry as well as talent. The 'dote' system has three levels, education, training and labour. The dote system rationalised the existing maze of measures in the area of education. It also integrated several different kinds of aids given to families in the form of subsidies, support for disabled children, special support for high performing students. It is a pre-paid support rather than a reimbursement. Under the scheme there are three kinds of support given, service tickets, school tickets and training tickets depending on income levels. Payment for school equipment is through paper tickets accepted in a range of stores. The payment of school fees is done through electronic vouchers. Edenred's responsibility is to print the vouchers, distribute them to the municipalities, send detailed reports on usage to the Regione Lombardia and reimburse affiliated shops and services. It is an efficient and easily comprehensible system. Very few vouchers remain unredeemed. Vouchers are a via-media between giving cash and giving benefits in kind, like textbooks. The system ensures traceability of the subsidies. It increases the sense of responsibility in beneficiaries and expands their choices. The analysis carried out for Regione Lombardia enables comparison among different years and tools, analysis of geographical distribution of the vouchers, type of spending in terms of merceology.

During the question and answer session Manish Sabharwal spoke about the need to increase biodiversity in the education space. The current thought world among many educationists is that they know what is right. This is not the correct approach, we need to allow different statistically independent tries to figure out which system works. When asked his views on RTE he said he feels it fights yesterday's war. The Act makes the school an ATM machine for the Block Education Officer. Private sector is not the solution to everything but neither is RTE since it breeds adverse selection. He emphasised the need to remove the restriction of schools only being run by trusts. The trust structure is appropriate for some schools not all. Large companies generally figure out ways to getting around such restrictions.



## SESSION III

### ACCOUNTABILITY IN EDUCATION



**Chair: Urmila Sarkar**



**Panel**

#### **SPEAKERS**



**Pradeep Sharma**



**Geeta G Kingdon**



**Yamini Aiyar**

Urmila Sarkar opened this session by providing insight into accountability in Education. In her opinion, it is important to remove any barrier that may emerge in trying to provide good quality education for children, may it be financial, social or cultural. With the implementation of RTE, approximately 8 million children would be brought back into education. Thus it is important to re-look at the age criteria present in the education sector today. She also gave an insight into the number of students who drop out each year. Thus according to her, apart from enrollment it is extremely critical to look into completion as well. In understanding the act we also need to look into the rights and entitlements of the children. She felt that it was important to understand how each stakeholder should support the Act, be the govt, schools, or parents. There is also a need to clearly outline the responsibilities that each body must undertake. Bodies such as NCERT, and NUEPA must understand their role in the education system and work towards building a good framework. She then spoke of the responsibilities at different levels may it be the state, the district, the block or at the school. She also spoke of teacher accountability that needs to be present at each level. Thus it is important for all the different levels and the different stakeholders to come together to create an environment best suited for education.

**Towards Informed Choice: School Ratings:** Pradeep Sharma, Country Director for Grey Matters Capital in India, addressed the session on informed choice. He gave a brief introduction to Grey Matters Capital that works on affordable private schools as well as performance in the education sector. Private schools which were earlier only available to the upper and the middle class of society are now available and affordable to

the lower class as well. According to Sharma a new paradigm has emerged called Affordable Public School (APS) which manifests the quintessential entrepreneurial trait based on consumer demand. This sector has seen a scalable and sustainable model emerge based on the parents who are willing to pay for what they perceive as good quality education. Thus these schools, enroll around 300-500 students at Rs 300-500 per month. The question of accountability is raised with reference to the lack of standards that exist in this sector. There exists an information gap and apart from that there are also limited resources available in this sector which results in low performance. According to him we need to unlock the system by making the system more transparent in nature. Mr Sharma focused his discussion on accountability to parents. The APS parents are those that work as auto rikshaw drivers, plumbers, carpenters etc. They gather their information through their social network and despite the rumors they have a fairly good idea about good or bad schools. They also prioritized education, and school fee is not the only criteria that they look for. They actively seek good schools and are for school ratings. He then gave an account of the problems that are faced in accountability. In this, he saw that reliable data and lack of research was the key concerning areas.

**Teacher Effort and Teacher Accountability in India:** Geeta Kingdon addressed the session. She spoke on teacher effort and teacher accountability in Uttar Pradesh. Recently according to her, there have been steps taken to measure teacher effort which is based on time on task and absence rates of teachers. Teacher performance according to her is based on a variety of factors such as school governance, environment, rewards and incentives etc. It is seen that there is better performance when accountability exists. However according to Geeta Kingdon it is important to re-look at the existing accountability measures as well as to see the different factors that influence teacher effort. It is important to at look at the implementability of accountability measures. Teachers often try and influence their governance environment by joining politics and by joining teacher unions. Teachers constitute about 13%- 23%, of the total members of the legislative assemblies and thus use their power to influence their and the teacher unions accountability measures. She then went to talk about the different types of teacher unions which exist today for example the Rajkiya Shiksha Sangh etc. These unions in her opinion often influence the exam procedures of the students. It was seen that when under scrutiny, not even 15% of the students pass their examinations. There is a high degree of cheating that takes place among students and often it is seen that teachers aid the students in the cheating. There is a high level of corruption is present. Geeta kingdom in her closing remarks said that, it was the presence of these strong teacher unions and their presence in legislatures that resulted in the lack of teacher accountability. In order to combat this situation, she gave a couple of suggestions such as removal of guaranteed representation of teachers the legislative assemblies etc.

**School Accountability: Models and Practices:** Yamini Aiyar spoke on accountability in education. She highlighted the aspects in RTE section 21 which deals with teacher accountability. It asks for management committees which include parents, to monitor school activities, make plans etc. This, according to Yamini Aiyar is not new. All public policies, legislatives etc have provisions for greater citizen participation of various kinds through various committees etc. The monitoring and functionality of these committees is what is questionable. It is seen that these committees often do not work in reality. They only function on paper. Thus she stressed upon finding the problems which come up during the implementation and to find

a workable solution to that. By giving the example of 'Bhatti' (village), Yamini Aiyar showcased the technical and administrative problems that exist which make it difficult for these committees to function. She also brought to light to the rules that are given by the state and central government which doesn't allow for freedom. In her opinion it is important to make an effort to allow the agents of the government to be a part of the process of policy making. It is only then that, implementation can take place successfully. There is a strong need to give these committees the information and basic training so as to help the function better. She also felt that with the coming in of RTE, we need to figure out a way to balance out the designing process of policies.

During the question answer session Pradeep Sharma informed us that there are no teacher unions present in the APS model schools. He further explained that there was a need for them as the teachers had no one collective voice. He also explained that the purpose of rating was so that the market ensures the quality of education. Geeta Kingdon gave further insight into the teacher unions which have many divisions within themselves. She also spoke about teacher quality which is based on certification, experience and training. However there is very little evidence to show that these are good measures for teacher quality. She suggested that a good way to judge teacher quality would be to judge the gains of the students at the end of the year. Urmila Sarkar told us about how the corporate sector was slowly getting interested in education and that it was one of the important stakeholders for the improvement in the education sector. Yamini Aiyer gave an explanation regarding the roadblocks. In her opinion roadblocks such as untied funds, lack of capacity building among parents and teachers etc are very important issues that need to be addressed. There should exist an environment, where all the stakeholders interact with each other and come up with good solutions to the present problem. There needs to be a radical change in the everyday workings of the government with regard to accountability so that they can implement the accountability policy suggestions made.



## CLOSING ADDRESS

### RE-VISIONING INDIAN EDUCATION



**Chair: Premila Nazareth**



**Panel**

#### **SPEAKERS**



**Gowri Ishwaran**



**T K Mathew**



**K Satyanarayan**

Premila Nazareth, the chair for this session introduced the session by giving an account of her experiences with and ideas about education. She felt that there was a need to think “rural” in the conference. 78% students are from rural India and around 60% of the teachers are also from rural India. Keeping that in mind, she felt that we needed to find a way to capacitate this population. She emphasised on a strong need for teacher certification in rural India and the need for local teachers. She also proposed the idea of having para teachers at primary levels, as even school graduates have the necessary skills to handle primary level teaching. There is a need to unlock our school system and remove the age criteria for admission in a particular class and allow people the flexibility to take exams as per their convenience.

T K Mathew, Chief Executive and Secretary, Deepalaya, addressed the conference. He called the RTE a regressive act. He felt that it is elitist in nature as it only gives importance to formal education, which does not reach out to the poor. The central and state governments, in his opinion do not have the necessary coordination which is required to make this act a success. There is also a certain amount of dependence on civil society which is an unwilling partner. In the education sector today every institution has to be either recognised or affiliated to another institution, this increases bureaucracy. He criticised the PIL which asked for the closing of all unrecognised institutions. He then further explained the recognition process, which is arduous and complex. He felt that there is a need for de-regularisation and making the process of recognition less complex.

He criticised the 25% model as under it a parent would need to spend approx Rs 22,000 per annum. This price would be too high for a poor parent. He felt that under the current scenario the concept, “free and compulsory education” would remain just a concept. He also raised the issue of quality of education. Most of the government schools are unable to provide good quality education and Mr Mathew felt that the Act does not in any way address this issue. Concluding his speech he highlighted the urgency of educating the poor which is the bulk of the population.

Gowri Ishwaran, founder principal of Sanskrit School, addressed the event. She questioned the RTE act. In her opinion is important to address the way in which good quality education can be imparted. The past methods of the government to impart good quality education have been failures. Thus it is important for the act to look into that. She then, highlighted the fact the world is constantly changing. Thus it’s important to constantly re-look at education so as to impart the best possible knowledge to students.

Teachers, according to Gowri Ishwaran, now need to become facilitators of knowledge. To make this transition the correct training is required. There is a need for an attitudinal change among teachers. She also highlighted the fact that today, students need more than textual knowledge. They need to learn to be curious, learn to innovate etc. thus a more comprehensive training program for teachers is required There is also a need for capacity building programs for the students. She also feels that the teachers in this country are underpaid and undervalued and that we need to look more into that. She ended with an appeal to take another look at our education sector.

K Satyanarayan, owner of New Horizon Media, addressed the event. He spoke about the entry of the private sector into the education sector. He gave his insight into the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana which provides health insurance to all families below the poverty line. The government pays Rs 400–500 per person to an insurance company. Each individual can claim this insurance at any of the 2,000 govt hospitals, and 5,000 private hospitals across the country.



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- Expanding choice and competition through school vouchers
- Pedagogical and operational autonomy to government schools
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*For details visit [www.schoolchoice.in](http://www.schoolchoice.in) Email: [schoolchoice@ccs.in](mailto:schoolchoice@ccs.in)*

### **[www.righttoeducation.in](http://www.righttoeducation.in)**



This portal is a one stop resource on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in India. You can find news, events, blog discussions, legislation and analysis. Behind the RTE Portal is the RTE Coalition – a collaborative effort that wants to nurture a democratic space where each coalition partner and interested citizen/teacher/parent/stakeholder will be able to strategize and contribute to make universal elementary education a reality in India. *For details visit: [www.righttoeducation.in](http://www.righttoeducation.in) Email: [info@righttoeducation.in](mailto:info@righttoeducation.in)*



### **Social Change through Public Policy**

Established on 15 August 1997, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) is an independent, non-profit public policy think tank devoted to improving the quality of life for all citizens of India by reviving and reinvigorating civil society. Through its award winning programs, CCS is a resource for innovative community and market based ideas for sound public policy solutions, particularly in the areas of education, livelihood, governance and environment. By bringing these ideas to current and future leaders, CCS is advancing opportunity and prosperity for all Indians.

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## School Choice Campaign

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