NUEPA Occasional Paper 40

Occasional Papers

Indian Small Schools

A Review of Issues and Related Concerns

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2012

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February, 2012

Contents

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Abstract

The contribution of small schools to provision of schooling to children especially in remote rural areas and scattered habitations in India is unquestionable; but the absence of essential facilities is of serious concern. The monograph presents national picture of select parameters presumed to be more marked in understanding small schools in India. At the same time, it also provides for a justification that size has a limited perception of small schools and, therefore, also brings to the fore diversity of contexts in which small schools in India function; and contexts vary inherently. Each parameter is supplemented by evidence from the field observation of small schools in Rewa and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh[1] *to unfold real situations faced by small schools to justify that though these schools work in isolation, they are influenced by a set of forces operating in the milieu. The study also provides evidence on caste dynamics impacting lives of the poor in the village where the upper caste dominates the lower castes, forcing them to wreath in poverty and impelling them to go to small-sized school located in the neighbourhood. The inside stories of small schools depict realities, likely to have long-term implications on teacher absence and non-working days, teacher presence and no classes, dynamics between PTA representative and the Head Teacher, management of schools, as well as commitment to the profession etc. The monograph finally attempts to address the core policy issues and find answers to the prospects of small schools in India, especially in the light of the recently announced Right to Education Act, 2009. The Act specifies the norms for facilities in schools as per entitlements, legitimizing the right of each child to have access to quality schooling. It may be envisaged at this juncture that the implementation of this Act as per provisions will have larger implications on the large sector of small schools in the country.*

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The author would like to thank the anonymous referee of the NUEPA Occasional Paper series for their suggestions to revise the paper.

[1] The study on small schools in India is a part of a larger research study taken under the auspices of the Consortium for Research in Educational Access, Transition and Equity, Institute of Education, University of London and National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

Introduction

Small schools have been providing access to large segments of rural, remote and inaccessible locations. With the passage of time, these schools have largely remained excluded from the mainstream since these schools have not been able to transform and cater to the needs and demands of its stake-holders. Today, the country is poised with a situation where small schools, created as short term solutions for providing access to large number of children who were devoid of basic need of a school, have become challenging when it comes to bringing fundamental changes in the management of these schools. Unfortunately, the issue has got further compounded by the absence of an exclusive policy on small schools so far. If small schools continue to be neglected, there will be a long-term impact on transition, retention and learning among tens of millions of children in India.

Proliferation of Small Schools and Increase in Access

Expansion of the primary education system in the country has been quite substantial during the last five decades. In fact, during the first two Five-Year Plans (1951-1956 and 1956-61), the focus was essentially on expanding schooling facilities as the main means of achieving universalisation of elementary education (UEE). By the Third Plan (1961-66), it had become clear that mere expansion will not suffice; it had to be coupled with other incentives and compensatory measures to ensure that children did not drop out. It was only in the 1970s, based on the findings of the Second All India Educational Survey (AIES) conducted by the NCERT that planners drew up basic distance and population norms for opening primary schools. The norms continue even now as the main guiding framework for expansion of the school system. In addition to five year plans and All India Surveys, the concerted efforts of government through various schemes and programmes such as Operation Blackboard (1987-88), District Primary Education Programme (1992) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001), a large number of schools were built in the previously neglected communities. This led to reach out in educational access through proliferation of small schools, several of them with very limited physical and human resources.

In addition, the early 1990s brought in another phase of small schools with the introduction of educational programmes and incentives for formal and non-formal channels of learning as an approach for UEE. Most of the non-formal schools were simple small-sized flexible units which adjusted schooling hours (not more than 3 hours a day) according to local conditions. As a result of this, the launch of Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) by the Government of India added to the growth of small schools in inaccessible habitations.

During the last sixty years, small schools have increased manifold. From the 24% of 1.25 million elementary schools covered under DISE 2007-08 (Mehta, 2007-08), 7.83% are functioning with an enrolment of 1 to 25 children. Similarly, 16.57% of these schools have 26 to 50 children. DISE 2006-07 (Mehta, 2006-07) has confirmed that one-third of the elementary schools (305,283 out of 1,250,775 total elementary schools) have 50 or less children and 14.99% of primary schools have only one teacher. While government-managed formal schools with limited resources are one category of small schools, the single teacher Education Guarantee Scheme Centres[2], Bridge Course Centres[3], Alternative and Innovative Education Centres[4] and any other Alternative Schools[5], established to provide a school on demand of 15-25 children and even on special demand for a school from 10 children in difficult locations make another form of small schools. Despite majority of these schools upgraded to formal primary schools, still 29,938 EGS and AIE centres (as per the Government records, MHRD, 2007-08,p. D.79) functioning in the country cannot be ignored. Today, with over '98 per cent of children having access to primary education within one kilometre and almost 92 per cent to an upper primary school within three kilometers of their habitation' (MHRD, April,

[2] Centres established under Education Guarantee and AIE scheme of MHRD, GOI

[3] Bridge course Centers prepare children for formal schooling

[4] Centres set up for very specific, difficult groups of 'out of school' children for mainstreaming or otherwise, under the AIE component of the EGS & AIE scheme. Some of the examples of AIE Centres are seasonal hostels for migrating children, condensed/ bridge courses/ back to school camps for mainstreaming out of school children and to achieve competencies appropriate for their age in a short period, residential camps/drop–in centres for street and slum children.

[5] Schools set up in unserved habitations (with no schooling facilities within one Km) under the EGS & AIE Scheme to provide education to out of school children. These centres are termed as Alternative Schools with different names. EGS schools in the States of Madhya Pradesh ,Orissa, Uttar Pradesh; Maavadi in Andhra Pradesh; Multi-grade learning centers in Kerala; Shishu Shiksha Karamsuchi Kendras in West Bengal; Contract schools in Maharashtra; Rajiv Gandhi Swarna Jayanti Pathshalas in Rajasthan.

2010), it may be apt to say that small schools have made immense contribution to the provision of primary schooling in India.

Small Schools and the Exclusion

Historically, small schools created to solve the issue of access in scattered and deprived habitations, have over the years been struggling with limited resources and low enrolment, thereby, acting as one of the factors for exclusion and inequity. The inequity of the education system is revealed through at glance at the whole lot of a large number of small schools, many of which are deprived of basic physical and human resources. Small schools are a crucial part of the challenge of providing Education for All in India and tackling educational exclusion.

The study focuses on issues of access and exclusion from the primary stage (grades 1-5) by examining the case of small, multi-grade primary schools in India. Despite important roles small schools play in providing access to children for education, the study brings to the fore, the fundamental challenges these schools face due to limited resources, on the one hand, and limited learning, on the other. The study explains about small schools more through facts than figures.

These schools serve the most marginalised groups of Indian society and their poor quality serves, in turn, to further marginalise the deprived and the disadvantaged as such these issues are clearly coming to be the core concern in this study. The village dynamics of compelling forces driving children to wreath in poverty and to have access to a non-welcoming and unattractive environment tend to exclusion of children in social context. These children enter primary schooling but are at the risk of dropping out before completing the primary cycle. Many of the poorest do not even go to school (Lewin 2007; zone 0 and zone 1) and among those enrolled many are at constant risk of dropping out before completing the primary cycle (zone 2). Irregular attendance by pupils and teachers, repetition and low learning levels lead to ‘silent exclusion’ among children (zone 3). High incidence of irregularity among teachers comes clearly from unannounced visits to these schools. Transition from primary to secondary schooling (zone 4) is left beyond the scope of this study. What happens inside small and what really impinges, on performance of children in these schools has been discussed, but the pedagogical and

classroom concerns are beyond its scope. Therefore, this study also presents a learning level of pupils in mathematics and Hindi language test in 1-25 in single teacher schools, small schools and large schools in Rewa and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh.

Facing multiple challenges, there seems to be little hope for improvement in small schools in the coming years. With the recently announced Right to Education Act, 2009, which legitimises the right of each child to have access to quality schooling, there may be some possibility for change, especially in terms of provision of facilities in schools vis-a-vis expectation of accountability on the part teachers and the system as such, in the midst of the precise modalities for implementation of the Act still being worked out by the States respectively.

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted keeping three prime objectives in view:

(i) Examining whether understanding of small schools is limited to size or is it beyond that in Indian context?

(ii) Unfolding ground realities by exploring what happens inside the small schools and how are these schools influenced by outside forces?

(iii) Understanding where children in small schools stand in terms of performance in tests?

Format of the study

This study, organized into five sections, draws inferences from the following framework which is supposed to be a complete package of quantitative and qualitative information:

(i) Quantitative analysis using educational data from DISE, Seventh All India Educational Survey to identify key parameters, facilities, enrolment and teacher profiles in small schools.

(ii) Qualitative research based on field observations, focused group discussions with community and interviews with CRCs and BRCs managing small schools in Rewa and Dindori Districts of Madhya Pradesh

(iii) Giving small schools a contextual meaning beyond size in terms of enrolment, number of teachers etc

(iv) Performance in Mathematics and Hindi Language competency Tests in Grade IV and V in small government, single teacher, large schools and private schools in Rewa and Dindori districts

Understanding Indian Small Schools in Multiple Contexts

In most parts of India, small schools characterize single/two teacher schools established in scattered habitations in multi-grade and multi-age situations. The diversity in small schools can be seen with change in the surroundings like those located in far flung remote, sparsely populated locations like desert, flood prone or earthquake prone areas or border schools, functioning with 10-25 children in contexts different from each other. Considering the diversity in different-sized schools, even among small schools, defining small schools in India is not as simple as it looks. An explicit clarity on what constitutes a small-sized school has not been agreed upon. So far, one may come to an understanding that parameters which characterise small schools are low enrolment with, a single or two-teacher set up and poor academic facilities, besides a host of extremely fragile contextual framework in which each small school functions.

Small Schools, a Matter of Size

Taking low enrolment as one of the determinants of size to describe small schools, a set of studies (Raywid, Mary Anne, 1999; Fine and Somerville, 1998; Lee and Smith 1996 and 1997; The Small Schools Project6; Cotton 1996 and 2001; Cushman, 1997; Aimee Howley and Craig Howley, 2006; Perry Theresa, 2003; P. Wasley, M. Fine, M. Gladden, N. Holland, S. King, E. Mosak, and L. Powell, 2000; Center for Collaborative Education, 2001) while reporting size as a vital predictor of smallness of schools, quoted limits as low as 250 and as high a range as 600 through 800 and beyond to be considered as small. Angela Little (2008) points out a relative definition the size of schools when variations in size are observed, from 'very small' with 50 or fewer pupils to small elementary schools in USA with 300-400 students. Size of a small school, so far, may be fixed up to enrolment 150 –200 for other countries of the globe but in the Indian context, this size seems to be too large. Indian studies so far classify small schools with different enrolment categories. DISE (2005) suggested enrolment upto 25. Govinda (1995) considered enrolment less than 100. Aggarwal (1997) reports small schools to be with less than enrolment 60 and by definition two-teacher schools, handling multi-grade

[6] *http://www.smallschoolsproject.org*

and multi-level classes. Taking clues from these studies, the present research identifies small schools with two enrolment classifications as 1-25 and 26-50 pupils.

Another way to examine small schools from the perspective of size is to look at single or two- teacher schools. The small school study brought to view certain realities which showed that small schools are not all about size restricted to single or two teachers in multi-grade, multi level and multi-age situations. Functioning of single teacher schools solely depends on the presence of a teacher. No school opens in case teacher does not show up. These schools were seen mostly closed at times due to officially announced meetings at the block/district headquarters and unofficially when the teacher takes an off unannounced. In two teacher schools, chances of presence of both teachers at one time were seen to be remote, but there remained an 'agreement' between the two. On any surprise inspection visit, a leave application is produced, which is in the school with no date. This has been a regular practice reported by inspection officers.

Following the policy decision of Madhya Pradesh State Government, most of the Education Guarantee Schools (EGS), upgraded to formal primary schools (UEGS), were posing another challenge in understanding the internal functioning of small schools. The teachers of upgraded schools were demanding revised pay scales. Their frequent strikes during the span of three months at the time of field survey in January-March 2008 disturbed school functioning on the pretext of teacher strike. One such upgraded two teacher school did not open for days due to wedding celebrations in the village. In another two-teacher middle government school, one teacher who comes from a distance was seen spending the day in her sister's house, when she was required to be in the school. This school is the only one in the village with 41 pupils functioning from Grade I-VII. The dust and filth in the school narrates the story of negligence on the part of teachers. Despite sufficient space in the school, when or if the school opens, all the five grades are combined in one classroom.

The size based on two enrolment classifications of small schools as 1-25 and 26-50, as indicated earlier, the present study taking clues from management of small schools by single or two teachers, further considers small schools to be managed by a single teacher operating mainly in multi, mono or quasi mono grade and multi-age settings with

limited resources. At the same time, teacher management issues of these schools between two teachers cannot be ignored.

Small schools, Paradigm of Situational Governance with a Contextual Meaning

Going beyond size, a set of studies 7 view small schools as much more than size, when it states "Size is one determining characteristic of a small school, yet small schools are about much more than size." Size in terms of low enrolment or single or two-teacher schools seems to be a restricted perception of a small school in India. Can we say that a school with more than 200 children managed by two teachers (one regular and another on contract) is not a small school? Single teacher, one-classroom schools accommodating more than 100 children of different age-groups tell one story while two teachers involved in multi-grade teaching of 30 enrolled children from five grades is quite different. This provides sufficient reason to understand that each small school needs to be understood in a context.

Field observations as part of the CREATE small school survey have given sufficient evidence to prove that small schools are not all about low enrolment, limited teachers and physical infrastructure but a matter much beyond size. One such experience justifies that even if a school has adequate teaching faculty and proper infrastructure, but has low enrolment, despite being small in size, it operates with certain other elements in the surroundings.

Considering low enrolment as one of the parameters to describe a small school, this school is becoming smaller, in terms of enrolment. But, there are other kinds of internal and external politics taking place in shaping the size of the school. From this perspective, one may discern that it is not sufficient to define a small school as a low enrolment school. For instance, in several other villages, the government schools are becoming smaller when better off families send their children especially boys to private schools, leaving small neighbourhood schools for girls and the poor only, making it inherently small.

[7] www.smallschoolsworkshop.org/info1.htm

Box 1
The Case of declining enrolment but adequate human and physical resources

This is a small school situated at distance of 15 kilometres from Rewa city, the school is at a distance of 4 kilometres from the main road. The majority of children to this school belong to Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Communities. The schools, function from Grade 1 to VIII. It is interesting to find that Grade in I, II, III and V have no students. The teacher-student ratio comes to 1:3, which is the lowest among several schools visited. This reflects that the teacher deployment pattern in the selected schools of Rewa is not done on a rational basis. There are schools in the same locations with high teacher-student ratio (1:87). The enrolment is declining with only marginal increase during 2005-06 and 2006-07. In 2002-03, where 48 children were enrolled in this school, in the consecutive years, the number constantly declined to 25, 18, 20, 25 respectively and in 2007-08 academic session, it dropped to 11, while still further in 2009-10, it dropped to 9. Considering low enrolment as one of the parameters to describe a small school, this school is becoming smaller due to certain internal and external factors. Internally, teachers do not teach seriously, and even if present in the school, hardly take classes regularly. On each day of the visit to this school, CREATE team never found all the four teachers present in the school. Every time either one or two teachers were seen to be taking classes mainly in multi-grade settings. Externally, political links of teachers have left the School Head helpless and neither do they get transferred. Due to teachers' attitudes, villagers prefer to send their children to an Education Guarantee School, slightly further from the village. After qualifying Grade V from that school, they join a school in another village located at a distance of 2-3 kilometres (1.6-2 miles) walking through the agricultural fields. In such circumstances, one cannot claim that there is no demand for education.

Source: Based on observations as part of the CREATE School Survey, February, 2008

A small school is also a soft target of the community in which it is situated. The social composition and politics of the village has impact on the functioning of a small school because of its location either in the village or close to community to which it relates integrally. In one of the focus group discussions with the community and PTA members in a school of the habitation (Tola), lot of hostility was seen among community members towards an EGS teacher (guru ji). There were complaints about his late coming to school, irregularity in taking classes and the low quality of food provided to children. But, the teacher was defended by the lady head (the sarpanch) of the village Panchayat who were finding fault within the community. In this habitation most of the children, especially boys, are sent to a private school at a distance but this EGS school is where girls and children from families who could not afford the private school's fees go. The community accused the head teacher of collaborating with the village head in the misuse

of school funds and claimed that if the EGS centre closes down, it will not make much difference to them. Much later, after several visits to the same Tola, the CREATE team came to know that the lady head of the village and the EGS teacher are close family relatives.

The corrupt practices so rampant in smaller habitations also affect small schools in more forceful ways than the larger schools in the villages. This comes clearly from observations, especially in small schools when a head teacher strong in the village community dominates the Parent Teacher representatives because they belong to poor and lower caste communities. The head teacher in such schools leave the PTA representatives with complete ignorance about the funds received by the school for incentives, scholarships, mid-day meals and other benefits from the government. In villages with active PTA representatives however, the power can be balanced quite differently. The head teacher is at the mercy of this local body. The head teacher has to repeatedly plead with them to get documents endorsed for withdrawal of money for mid-day meals provided in the school. Such head teachers claimed that they sign on the documents with an agreement that some share will be given to them out of the sanctioned amount. The grassroot dynamics shapes the destiny of small schools because of their small size and location in scattered or sparsely populated hamlets.

Finally, one may discern at this juncture that size can be a determinant to understand a small school but not a stand-alone factor. Small schools are definitely not restricted to numbers, rather need to be understood in the context of situations governing their functioning, making each school unique and distinctive. This is the final inference drawn for the conduct of the present study.

Key Parameters and Related Concerns: The National Picture

This section identifies small schools through select parameters, supplemented by related issues of concerns accruing from grassroot realities of small schools in 18 villages of Rewa and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh. The inferences are drawn from DISE[8] data sets on two fronts: (i) Five year data sets which record national trends; and (ii) three-

[8] District Information System for Education is an EMIS Programme designed for collection of large scale school information. The data generated through DISE has been accorded official status.

year deeper analysis of schools with enrolments of 1-25 and 26-50 pupils in rural and urban locations of ten selected States of India. These states include Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Orissa and Karnataka.

Location

As per established norms put up by the Government of India, there should be a primary school within one kilometer radius and an upper primary school within three kilometer radius of each Cluster Resource Centre (CRC). It is significant to understand the geographical location of the small schools which results in likelihood of children to drop out either before completion of primary cycle or sub-cycles of transition from primary to upper primary schooling stage. The presumption is that the steady growth in rural schools provides space to small schools in different locations of the country. As schools multiply, there is more possibility of establishment of small schools and their closeness to Cluster Resource Centres and that this will ensure academic guidance from CRC coordinators. DISE 2007-08 (Mehta, 2007) elaborates that the percentage of independent primary schools within one kilometre of CRC is low (20.11% in comparison to 25.71 % independent upper primary schools). Assuming exclusion for those devoid of either a primary school or an alternative school within the established norms in rural habitations, probability of smaller schools is greater in SC and ST habitations because of its smaller size in comparison to other habitations. Today, of the 24, 333 SC-dominated habitations which do not have primary school facility within one kilometer, only 11.0 8 per cent (2697) have an alternative school, which are essentially small sized schools. Of the 50,369 ST-dominated habitations not served by primary school/section within one kilometer, 24.24 per cent have an alternative school. This provides basis to state that probability of establishment of small schools under-resourced in all respects in SC and ST dominated habitations is higher than other parts of rural areas.

Low Enrolment

Taking low enrolment as one of the parameters to identify small schools, the study considers two categories of schools as small: (i) those with enrolment 1-25 as ultra-small schools and (ii) those with enrolment 26-50 as second category of small schools.

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of Primary Schools by Enrolment: The National Trends

Year	Enrolment 1-25	Enrolment 26-50	Enrolment 51-100
2005-06	8.18	19.94	28.15
2006-07	10.38	20.74	27.77
2007-08	10.52	21.44	28

Source: DISE data of three years

In a span of three years, the national trends between 2005 and 2008 show increase in enrolment even in ultra-small schools (Table 1). The 10 states study on small schools, however, indicates an overall shrinking trend in rural small schools in both the categories of low enrolment (1-25 and 26-50) schools. The other picture is also coming clearly is the growing trend in 1-25 enrolment schools in five out of 10 states of India. However, the picture is not one of universal increases in enrolments in small schools, different states may have different trends also supports the assumption that there is a demand for schools in smaller locations of the country.

Physical Resources

The foremost necessity for a school is the building and in India schools are still functioning in open spaces, tents and temporary structures, though their number is on the decline. Confirming this, the Seventh All India Survey (Annex Tables 2A and 2B) reported that primary schools functioning without buildings in urban areas have declined from 4.20% (1993) to 2.58% (2002) and in rural areas from 4.41% (1993) to 2.63% (2002). The other side of the story is that the number of schools in the country constructed with mud has increased in the last three years. Among the ten states, J&K has the highest number of partially and mud constructed building even for small schools while the majority of schools in Chhattisgarh function without buildings.

Similarly, the three year-trend from DISE 2004 to 2006 (Mehta 2005, 2006 and 2007) shows an overall improvement in basic facilities for all categories of elementary schools, the ten states study on two categories of low enrolment small schools (1-25 and 26-50) presents a picture as shown in the Table given below:

Table 2

Basic Facilities: Trends in Ten Selected States of India

Major Inferences	**Rural**		**Urban**		**Over all comments**
	Enrolment 1-25 Schools	*Enrolment 26-50 Schools*	*Enrolment 1-25 Schools*	*Enrolment 26-50 Schools*	
Overall better basic facilities (water, BB, Single Classroom and Two Classroom Schools)	Basic facilities in schools with enrolment 26-50 slightly better than schools with enrolment 1-25. J&K. and H.P. show gap of almost 10 per cent points in all facilities between two categories of small schools. Punjab, Rajasthan, Orissa, A.P., M.P., Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Karnataka show variation of 5 per cent points in the basic facilities between two categories of small schools		J&K, H.P. and Punjab progressing in single and two classroom schools	J&K (Provision of water slightly better) H.P. and Punjab (all facilities barring single classrooms) Rajasthan, Orissa, A.P., M.P., Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Karnataka (variation of 4-5% in all facilities among two categories of small schools)	Punjab: Higher 0 classroom schools in enrolment 26-50 schools and single classroom schools on the increase in both category schools Rajasthan: Better facilities in rural than urban schools in enrolment 1-25 category schools
Limited/ Absence of Facilities	*Almost all facilities limited in Enrolment 1-25 schools in all the ten states* *Overall deterioration in facilities in both the categories of small schools in rural and urban locations*				

Source: Inferences drawn tables generated (Annex Tables 1) from raw data of two enrolment categories of small schools in ten select State of India (DISE 2005-08)

A deeper analysis of the study though supports that there has been overall improvement in facilities in the past three years yet schools with enrolment 1-25 have remained deprived of most of the facilities (like water, blackboard in usable condition, single classroom and two classrooms) as compared to schools with enrolment 26-50 in all the ten states. (Refer Table 2)

Concerns on Limited School Infrastructure

The Seventh All India Survey reports decline in schools functioning without building from 4.20 per cent (1993) to 2.58 per cent (2002) and in rural areas from 4.40 per cent (1993) to 2.63 per cent (2002). In Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh, a number of EGS and UEGS schools function without an official building or land provided by the State government. There are schools that function in the houses of teachers, while others in small huts with roof covered with plastic sheets. The private land/building provided by community to be utilized as EGS school at the time of establishment still continues to function in the same manner. Despite upgradation of EGS schools to formal primary schools, the situation of school buildings has not changed much, except few where SSA has taken over and a new infrastructure is created. DISE reports decline in single classroom schools from 10.37% of rural schools in 2005-06 to 9.19% in 2007-08 and from 3.99% of urban schools in 2005-06 to 3.62% in 2007-08. Opening of new schools in a span of one year in urban areas contributed to surge in the number of schools, but small schools in rural areas have not changed much. Poor infrastructure leads to lack of interest in attending schools with higher rates of absenteeism both from teachers and students. DISE (Mehta, 2002 to 2005) confirms decline in the percentage share of enrolment in rural schools without buildings in rural and urban locations.

Concerns for Comforts of Children in the Classrooms

The national picture, as DISE 2006-07 (Mehta, 2007) reports is that, 70% of classrooms in primary schools are in good condition and the remaining 30% need either minor or major repairs. However, it remains that the number looks impressive but comfort in the classrooms is a major concern in small schools. Several small schools in Rewa district function in single classrooms with a gloomy, unhygienic, dark and dingy atmosphere. Children are made to sit on the floor without proper mats during winter. The floor in the veranda is hard and cold, with practically no mats to sit on the floor, despite special grants from the government for such equipments. Children are made to sit on newspapers or plastic sacks which they had brought from their homes. These schools were visited in February, 2008 when winters were retreating. Children did not have enough clothes to protect themselves from cold. It is appalling for anyone to see children

shivering and struggling to concentrate on studies. In very few schools, benches without support at the back or tables on the front were provided to children makes difficult for them to sit straight for 5-6 hours. In few schools, classrooms were also used for other purposes, such as to store mid-day meal supplies which makes impossible for children to be accommodated inside the school even during rainy season.

Concerns on Lack of Teaching Facilities

Govinda (1995) revealed that nearly 14% of primary classes in urban areas did not have usable blackboards. DISE 2006 (Mehta, 2007) reported primary schools as most affected among all categories of elementary schools which do not have usable blackboards. In several visits in February 2008 to small schools in Dindori and Rewa districts, the same content was found written on the blackboard, with a change in dates in several small schools while in others, blackboards had never been used since classes were held outside the school building. There were schools with blackboards but painted in white to show to the inspectors that they are well maintained, leaving all non-usable.

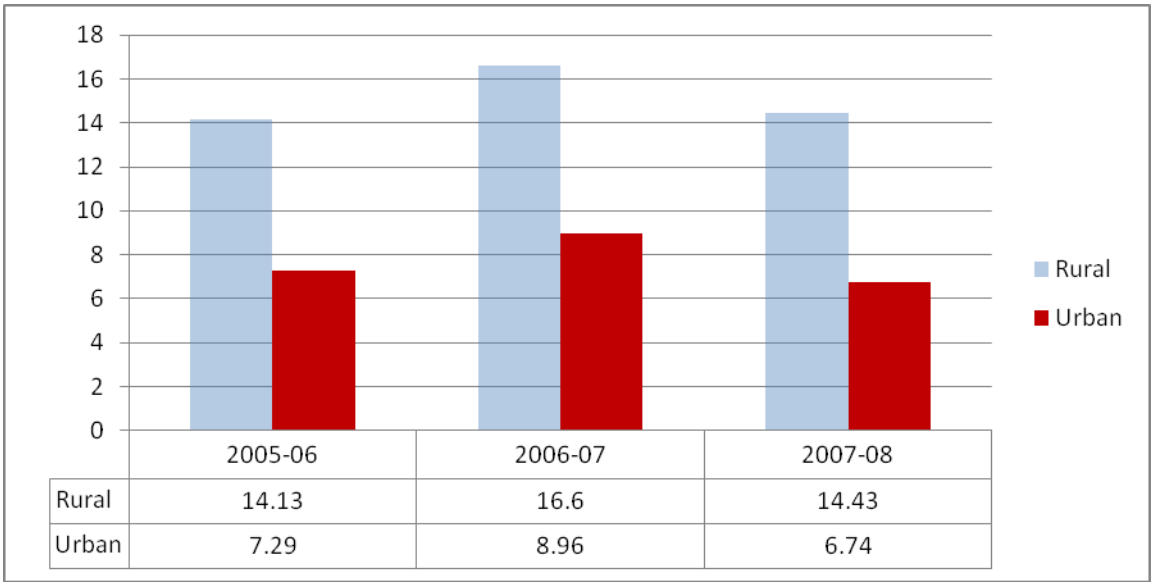
Single and Two-teacher Schools

The job of teaching is far more complex in remotely located schools in comparison to urban schools due to poor connectivity, lack of interaction with peer group of teachers and lack of need-based training to teachers coupled with inadequate and poor quality of school facilities. A large number of single teachers handle multi-grade and diverse age-group children in classroom situation. Govinda (2007) draws serious attention to the one-fourth of the total number of primary schools in the country which are very small with only one teacher and/or one classroom, generally located in their small habitations.

The study on ten states mentioned earlier shows that despite decline in single teacher schools in both categories of small schools, barring one state having highest percentage of single teacher schools in all both categories of small schools in rural and urban areas, there are sizeable number of ultra-small schools in nine states managed by single teachers appointed in regular capacity in rural locations. The Seventh Survey reports (2002) that five Indian states, Gujarat, J&K, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Orissa

have more than one-fifth of the primary schools managed by a single teacher. At the same time, DISE 2007-08 confirms 14.43 % of single teacher schools in the rural areas of India, which are double than urban counterparts (7.29). The chart below shows a comparative picture of single teacher primary schools in rural and urban areas in India.

Chart 1
Area-wise Percentage of Single Teacher Primary Schools in India



	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Rural	14.13	16.6	14.43
Urban	7.29	8.96	6.74

Source: Percentages computed from figures reported in DISE Analytical Reports for the years 2005-06, 2005-06 and 2007-08

DISE analytical reports (2005 through 2008) also reveal that the share of enrolment in rural single teacher schools has been on the rise from 2003 onwards at all levels, with highest share of enrolment in single teacher independent primary schools. Limited number of children (say 30-50 while 10-15 in certain cases across five grades) demanding attention of a single teacher should be a serious concern for addressing quality in small schools. These issues become bigger in small schools when one looks at the single teacher struggling with several activities is unable to give sufficient time to teaching in a multi-age and multi-grade classroom.

Certain issues relate more closely with two-teacher small schools like sharing of roles and responsibilities, division of time between different activities in multi-grade settings due to the absence of one out of two allotted teachers, which happens most frequently in small schools wherein one teacher manages all classes in the school, while the other is running errands outside to make arrangements of several school items, which

heavily constrict teaching time. Schools with limited human resources specifically deal with problems which big schools do not face.

Concerns on Low Teacher Motivation and Case of Para Teachers

Appointment of para teachers (contract) with low salaries is posing another threat to the planning process and policy framework of small schools. Nature of teacher appointment impacts teacher motivation levels and the degree to which they own the school where they have worked for several years. This becomes more critical among teachers in small schools wherein a cadre of teachers were appointed on contract (called para teachers) in the State of Madhya Pradesh as an interim arrangement for provision of teachers (with same qualifications as regular teachers) in rural areas of the state. Over the years, the government have continued to depend more on this cadre as it is much cheaper than the regular ones. The impact on functioning of small schools in particular (since most are dependent on para teachers) of late began showing up because of unfavourable conditions for their regularization on upgradation in the state. There was no provision at all of their absorption into the regular school system. One may say that the system itself created de-motivated teachers. The State took a policy decision for upgradation of EGS schools into formal government schools and in the process regularised para teachers as such in these schools. The demand for revision of salary structure of these teachers (EGS gurujis in most cases) led to large scale strike in the state. Around this time, the CREATE school survey in Rewa began. In one the two-teacher schools, one regular and another para teacher was visited. This para teacher has been providing free service to the school for almost 12 years with a hope that one day she will be upgraded as a regular teacher. On discussing this matter with the Block Resource Coordinator, (the officer incharge of disbursing salaries to schools), the investigator came to know that there was a remote possibility of upgradation of those para teachers into the regular system whose names did not appear in the list of contract teachers prepared about 12 years ago, in the state of Madhya Pradesh. The list has never been updated since then.

Compelling Concerns on Compressing Teaching Time

Among several compulsions for cutting on teaching time, one of the major concerns is for teachers who are most cases follow the mono-quasi model of multi-grade

teaching, dividing their class (es) into grade groups and then dividing teaching time amongst them. Often this means that some grades get more neglected than others. Study in Rajasthan made by Deepa Sankar revealed that the Grades 1 and 2 are often the most neglected, for almost 66 per cent time during school hours, their children are left free. Teachers tend to give more attention to Grade 5 children to bring better school results. In the process, Grade III students also get ignored and, therefore, the study records more failures in this grade with greater chances of dropping out. This means that younger students – who often need much more support, especially the first generation learners – are not getting it. There is absolutely no evidence to state that the multi-grade comes as a support for small schools.

Another compulsion is related to the recent shift in policy focus from attention to inputs to greater attention to assessment, teachers are required to examine students at regular intervals, which entails great deal of more work, also means additional responsibility that takes more of the teachers' time. It is a situational irony that multi grade students are still examined by the state system, as they will still need to pass examination for Grade V to get their certificates. Besides, assessing and keeping track of records on a more regular or frequent basis is just one more added responsibility for teachers and that, too, without any proper training and induction, which is telling heavily on their working in one hand reducing their teaching time on the other.

In two-teacher schools, ideally speaking teaching responsibilities should be equitably shared between both the teachers. In almost all two-teacher schools visited in Rewa and Dindori districts, one teacher was seen to be managing all the five grades. The other teacher would have either taken long leave or remained occupied in the management of either mid-day meal or other administrative tasks, taxing heavily on teaching time affecting small schools as a matter of practice than for a bigger or medium-sized school. Multi-tasking in single teacher schools also has serious implications for paying any equal attention to all children across grades. In one such school, children confided, while interviewing them, that while they are left with one teacher all the time, no proper teaching takes place in the school. They also revealed that subjects like mathematics and science are never taught, despite these subjects being very important for

them and they expressed keen interest in them. They felt that they were deprived of good teaching and denied to learn a subject of their choice.

This raises serious questions on the incidence of irregular attendance, withdrawal, ignorance and silent exclusion is high. These children are always at risk of push out when they do not find learning in schools attractive or meaningful.

Small Schools in Rewa and Dindori Districts of Madhya Pradesh: Drawing the Context

The section attempts to draw the contextual contours of the scenario obtaining in the situations under which the small schools function in the villages of Rewa and Dindori districts of Madhya Pradesh and discusses about the physical, infrastructural and social dynamics impacting small schools and also about the caste, education and occupational background of families of children enrolled in these small schools.

Areas under Study

In Rewa district, the villages with small schools are situated within 12 km radius from the main city of the district. All villages are well connected but inner lanes from the main highway are narrow and one can see bicycles or motor cycles to be the most convenient transport on the roads. Despite feasibility in mobility across villages, the average distance of Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) and Block Resource Centre (BRC) is almost 8-9 kms and the nearest primary school falls within one km radius. Physical access may not be an issue, but frequency of visits by concerned officials like Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCCs) and Block Resource Coordinators (BRCs) responsible for providing academic guidance is quite an issue. Reports from schools confirmed that CRC visits schools but is not equipped to give proper guidance. They are frequently called at Block Headquarters for meetings but BRCCs hardly ever visit small schools. The ignorance is to the extent that they hardly know the location of a small school. While accompanying the investigator to the small schools, their dependency to trace a small school was seen to be high on CRCC. Exclusion of small schools begins right from this very point.

Unlike the Rewa district, the topography of the tribal belt of Dindori district, with no roads across villages, tracking through the forest, tells the story of hardships of

inhabitants. Physical access to any of the vital sites appears to be bad since most fall at a distance beyond 20 kms from all the 9 villages taken up for the study. The Cluster Resource Centre is situated at a distance of 18 kms and District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) at a distance of 101 kms. In such circumstances, the question of academic guidance, training for teachers, monitoring of school functioning etc is a distant dream in this district. Small schools in particular remain excluded from the benefits they have every right to avail. Physical inaccessibility during rainy season adds to the miseries, making it all the more difficult for teachers and children to reach a school and as such school opens only when the teacher is present. Most of the school in Dindori district are single teacher schools.

Village Small Schools

Small schools in Rewa and Dindori districts were identified on the basis of three parameters: (i) schools with enrolment up to 50; (ii) schools with enrolment up to 50 managed by a single teacher; and (iii) schools with enrolment over 50 managed by single teacher. In Rewa district, 15 small schools were selected from 9 villages, out of total 11 villages and 35 schools taken up for larger study under CREATE. In Dindori district, 11 small schools were identified from 9 villages, out of 23 schools in 13 villages selected for the larger study. The study is primarily on 25 small schools from 18 villages of both the districts.

Table 3
An Overview of Different Categories of Small Schools

	All Schools	**Small Schools**	**Enrolment 1-25 schools**	**Enrolment 26-50 schools**	**Enrolment <50 single teacher schools**	**Enrolment >50 single teacher schools**
Rewa	35	15	02	10	07	03
Dindori	23	11	01	10	05	03
Total	58	26	02	20	12	06

Source: based on exercise on identification of small schools with three parameters

Table 3 indicates that small schools with enrolment 26-50 are almost five times more than ultra- small schools with enrolment 1-25. The details of small schools village-wise in both the districts are reflected as presented in Table 4 and 5.

Table 4
Village-wise Break up of Small Schools in Rewa

S.No	Village	Total Number of Schools	No. of Small Schools
1.	Amiliki	10 (2 GPMS, 6 UEGS, 2 Private)	5 (4 UEGS, 1 Private)
2.	Bahmangawan	1 GPMS	
3.	Dhowkhari	4(1GPMS,1MSC, 2UEGS)	1 UEGS
4.	Dihiya	7 (2 GPS,1 GHSS,2 UEGS,2 Private)	2 (1 UEGS, 1 Private)
5.	Hardi	4 (1 GHS,1 GPS, 2 UEGS)	1 UEGS
6.	Jitauhi	-	-
7.	Khirama	1 GPS	1GPS
8.	Kolhuwaro	2 (1 GPMS, 1 UEGS)	2(GPMS, UEGS)
9.	Pipara	1 GPMS	1 GPMS
10.	Raura	3 (1 GPS,1 UEGS,1 Private)	1 (UEGS)
11.	Sahijana	2 (1 EGS, 1 GPMS)	1(EGS)
	Total Villages=11	35	15 small schools in 9 villages

Source: Identified by the investigator based on three parameters

The children residing in Rewa villages are not totally dependent on small schools since there are other schools available in different locations of the district. Despite existence of private schools in Rewa district, the participation of children in the villages is higher in government and EGS/UEGS schools. Jitauhi, one of such village with 11 households does not have a single school in the same village, but has access to a government middle school and a Private school in Dovkhari which is at the walkable distance of one km. The children from this village are enrolled in the private school despite existance of government middle school in its neighbourhood. UEGS Laukapur, Amiliki caters to highest number of OBC children, but also enrolls children from SC and ST communities.

But this is not the case in the villages of Dindori district. Out of 13 villages in Dindori, 9 villages have small schools. Dindori is replete with government and EGS/UEGS schools. Small schools seem to be well represented in all the villages of Dindori, except Chanda, which seems to be bigger than all other 10 villages. While Chanda does not have any small school, one primary and one middle school with UEGS in Tarach is identified as small sized school.

Table 5
Village-wise Break up of Small Schools in the Villages of Dindori

S.No.	Village	Total Number of Schools	Number of Small Schools
1	Chakrar	1 (P.S)	1P.S.
2	Chanda	4 (2 PS, 1MS, 1 HS)	-
3	Kandatola	1 P.S	-
4	Kendara Bahara	1 (P.S)	1P.S.
5	Ladradadar	1 UEGS	1 UEGS
6	Neemtola	1 P.S.	-
7	Pandripani	3 (1P.S, 2 M.S, 1UEGS)	1 UEGS
8	Piparpani	1 P.S	-
9	Silpidi	2 (1 P.S., 1 UEGS)	2 (P.S. and UEGS)
10	Tantar	1 P.S.	-
11	Tarach	3 (1 P.S., 1 M.S., 1 UEGS)	1 UEGS
12	Thadhpathara	2 (Primary and Middle)	2 (Pry and Midde)
13	Uddhor	2 (Primary and Middle)	2 (Pry and Middle)
	Total Villages=13	23	11 small schools in 9 villages

Source: Identified by the investigator based on three parameters

Viability of small schools implies the need to understand physical and social access in the context of situations around. Village Silpidi is populated with 90.9 per cent ST and 3per cent OBC groups, with 93.3 per cent literacy for ST category and 3 per cent literacy for OBC category. There are 33 children in the age group 3-15 in the village who depend entirely on two schools, UEGS, Tiklideodar and a government primary school. In the same village, 3 children in the same age group belonging to OBC category do not hold BPL cards, while all children from ST group belong to below poverty line families. All ST children and one OBC child are enrolled in P.S Silpidi but UEGS, Tiklikherodadar is showing additional enrolment of 15 children belonging to ST category. In all probability, two children from OBC community have moved out of the village for studies to some other location or have discontinued their studies . With respect to over-enrolment in UEGS, Tiklikherodadar, there is a possibility that children from other neighbouring hamlets, which does not have a school, must have joined this school. Unlike Jitauhi in Dhovkhari village in Rewa, children in Dindori district do not have any other choice except government schools.

Table 6
Physical Infrastructure in Small and Large Schools in Rewa and Dindori Districts

	Small schools			Large schools
Availability of School Building	**Enrolment 1-25 (2 schools)**	**Enrolment 26-50 (18 schools)**	**More than enrolment 50 managed by a single teacher (6 schools)**	**More than Enrolment 50 (32 Schools)**
Constructed	One school	Twelve schools	Three schools	Twenty seven schools
Mud/Plastic sheets		One school	One school	
Tent		One school		
Semi-constructed	One school	Two schools	One school	Six schools
Good Condition School Building	One school	Eleven schools	Three schools	Twenty seven schools
Availability of a playground	One school	Five schools	Four schools	Fifteen schools
Availability of a toilet	One school	Four schools	Three schools	Eleven schools

Source: School Survey, 2008

There are only two ultra small schools (enrolment <25), out of which one is a government and the other one is a private school. While the government school is endowed with physical facilities in terms of constructed building, a playground, a toilet and safe drinking water, the private school in contrast does not have a toilet or a play ground. Among the government small schools with enrolment 26-50 (out of 18 schools), 13 have no playground, 14 has no toilets, 7 have a building, but in bad condition while one school is functioning in a tent and one in mud constructed school and two schools are partially constructed. One or two facilities in each small school is found missing. But five schools in this category are functioning in the absence of all the basic facilities of toilet, safe drinking water, in a dilapidated building including absence of a playground with majority of four in Dindori district of M.P. On the whole this indicates the deficiency in one or the other way in these schools. Three schools out of 6 (50%) with less than enrolment 50 managed by a single teacher have no facilities of a playground and a toilet. No single teacher school has a toilet in Dindori district and in six out of nine single teacher schools in Dindori district, there are no toilets, no playground and majority with

building are in bad condition. The situation in bigger schools looked better wherein maximum schools had well constructed and semi constructed infrastructure in good condition with availability of a playground in almost 50% schools and a toilet in less than 50%. Still the condition of these schools seemed to be slightly better. In majority of small schools in both the districts, basic teaching aids like map and globe are also not available to the teachers. The teaching materials, science kits, mathematics kit are much less in small schools of Dindori in comparison to small schools of Rewa. There is hardly any small school which provides benches for children.

The calculated PTR in small, large and single teacher schools is 49, 33 and 59 respectively. High PTR in single teacher schools indicates to the seriousness with which this needs to be taken as a policy matter. PTR in small schools is not better either. Comparing with the established norm of 1: 40 (RTE Act specifies 1:30), one can understand what amount of workload and pressure a single teacher and that too in a multi-grade setting goes through. Can the teacher do justice to attend to all children alike and ensure that each child learns in the class and does not recede into silent exclusion?

Who Goes To Small Schools and Why?

The story of exclusion begins from the deprivation of the disempowered to basic needs including health, education as a result of caste politics, percolating down on access of poor children to poor schools. The field survey supports that caste hegemony in most villages of Rewa district leads to caste prejudices, discriminatory practices like humiliation, biases etc., and it is the Scheduled Caste who are deprived of primary needs by the upper caste communities. They are forced to work in the agricultural fields belonging to them. Their children are allowed to a school where children of upper caste do not study, therefore, driving children of the disadvantaged to get further marginalized by enrolling them in schools, mostly neglected and under-resourced. The benefits which should go to children in these schools do not reach them. This provides sufficient evidence to prove that a small school remains excluded from other schools in a village. As such, caste is a significant factor in determining the choice of a school in villages with mixed caste groups which comes clearly in the box discussed below in Box 2.

Box2
Caste Politics and Management of Small Schools

A village inhabited by upper castes in the majority and lower castes, from the Scheduled Castes in the minority is located at a distance of about 9 miles from the main town. The two-mile approach road to the village from the national highway is muddy, bumpy and uneasy. The village is also not well connected to other villages. Therefore whatever happens in this village never gets exposed to the outside world. There is complete suppression by the upper castes over the Scheduled Caste population in this village. The upper castes occupy the major area of the village. One finds a wide sprawling agricultural land as one enters the village with a streak of houses in a better condition and a small portion at one corner for the huts alloted for the lower castes. The area is surrounded with upper caste houses. The upper class families employ the lower class population for farming and other agricultural activities. Their intervention in school activities goes to the extent that a parent representative belonging to the Scheduled Caste of the same village is selected to avoid any questions concerning school administration. The school Head takes full freedom in exploiting government funds the school receives. This representative had no say in school matters and showed his ignorance when asked whether he knows expenditure incurred on mid-day meal, scholarships and other incentives etc meant for children.

Several matters concerning livelihood, education etc were discussed with SC parents in the village. The drudgery of poverty and hunger was apparent on meeting this class ., who were made to work as bonded labourers, depending entirely on the resources like land, shelter, drinking water (from the village pond) claimed to be under the custody of the upper castes. They shared the agony they face when they go against the wishes of the upper castes. If they dare to go against them, they are stopped on the way and harassed to the extent possible till they bow. Their basic requirement of water is stopped and they are threatened with their huts being burned. While children of upper caste attend a private school at a distance, the SC are allowed to send their children to a nearby two-teacher primary school attached to an upper primary school. Focus group discussions with SC group brought to view several flaws in this school. The teachers while away their school time in gossiping or playing carom board or paper reading. This was verified by students as well. In spite of the official school timings from 10.30 am, the school starts around 11 a.m. since the teachers commute to this school from the main city. On the first day of the school visit by the investigator, while one teacher was taking two different classes in the absence of the other teacher, there was no leave application of the teacher who was absent from the school. The team was informed that he had gone for official work to the headquarters. The villagers confided that when the team entered school premises, a person was sent to the teacher's house to inform him about the visit to prepare him to come with a valid reason when he comes to school on the second day. On the second day of visit to the same school, all teachers were found to be gossiping and several students were seen to be going back to their homes-- for the simple reason that they were asked to do so by the teachers since they were required to do additional work of providing data to the CREATE team .

During the entire course of interaction, the Head Teacher looked withdrawn and did not show enthusiasm for school improvement, except that when the team visited the school on the second day, the layout of the school looked different and it was informed by the villagers that the school was white washed after the team left on the previous day. It was also observed that several girls were without uniform and the Head master of the school excused himself by saying that the uniforms have gone for stitching. The CREATE team visited this school in the month of February, the entire year had gone away and still the uniforms were not made available to the deserving. The school records showed timely distribution of scholarships and incentives.

Source: Based on observations and interview with the lower caste in a village in February, 2008

The issues of inequality and access particularly arise from harsh social and economic realities of the contexts in which small schools are located (Blum and Diwan, 2007). Box 2 makes this point clearer by providing a context in which children of the

poor are driven to schools that become smaller by compulsion, which otherwise would not have happened if all children from all caste categories were in the same school. The danger in this situation is that children from marginalized will further get marginalized. Such situation may not be arise in Dindori, given the fact that it is tribal dominated district, the case of Rewa district is different because of other caste groups living in its villages despite higher representation of other backward communities (OBC). The dynamics in the background sufficiently justifies that a rural small school is not all about size.

Children in small schools have hardly any future except joining labour force or taking to farming when they grow up like their parents did. During discussions with women in several villages with only EGS schools confided that they send their children to feed themselves from the meals provided in the school. They made it clear that “Small schools are like waiting rooms in the railway stations” till they become old enough to become earning members for the family. These are the families for whom making two ends meet is of prime necessity than desire to see their child at school. Practically, in every small school visited, there were constant complaints from teachers that most of the time children ignored what is taught in the class; instead they keep on moving their heads towards cooking place to check when the food will be served. This is one example of silent exclusion of children, who come from families for whom making two ends meet is the prime necessity than desire to see their child at school. At this juncture one may contend that children in small schools belong to poor families in Rewa and Dindori districts. These are the children from different family backgrounds and caste categories and are mostly holding BPL cards.

Table 7
Families earning up to Rs 1000
Holding B.P.L. Cards in Different Kinds of Schools (%)

	SC	ST	OBC	General
Rewa (Large Schools)	67.4	20.0	27.0	35.5
Rewa (Small Schools)	63.8	42.9	39.6	60.9
Dindori (Large Schools)	77.8	77.8	66.7	0
Dindori (Small Schools)	100.0	96.4	100.0	-
All Small Schools	66.0	90.3	44.2	60.0

Source : HH CREATE Survey in 2008

Table 7 highlights that in Rewa, small schools are accessed mostly by children from ST , OBC and General categories, mainly belonging to families with earnings, not exceeding Rs 1000 (US $ 22.22). In Dindori district, most of the children coming to small achools from SC,ST and OBC categories belong to families not earning more than Rs 1000 (US $ 22.22). Looking at the occupational background of these families, 71.5% of illiterate mothers and almost the same number of illiterate fathers (72.5%) send their children to EGS/UEGS, but 71.4 % of fathers among them are unemployed in Rewa district. In Dindori district, majority of parents (94.1% mothers and 83.3% fathers) who are mostly primary school graduates, send their children to small government schools. 6.5% of farm labourers send their children to EGS schools. These must be the pockets which do not have any other school except an EGS in the neighbourhood. In both districts, the farm labourers and those engaged in self-farming residing in scattered hamlet have fewer options. They get their children enrolled in schools available in the neighbourhood and as such are not left with any other choice except sending their children to a nearby school, which has low enrolment and is under-resourced in several respects.

Two major inferences:

a). Small schools are poor schools for the poor
b). Small schools are more a matter of compulsion than choice

The danger in this situation is that the marginalized children further get marginalized. Such situation may not arise in Dindori given the fact that it is tribal-dominated district, the case of Rewa district is different because of other caste groups living in its villages despite higher representation of other backward communities (OBC).

Student Participation Patterns

In addition to focussing on the deeper issues on gender and caste of children in small government, private and EGS schools, this section also attempts to explain duration and reasons of student absence in different management schools, grade-specific repetitions among them and overall teachers' perception about performance of children from different caste categories.

Table 8
Caste and Gender-wise Children in Small Schools *(Percentages in brackets)*

	Caste				Gender		Total
	SC	*ST*	*OBC*	*General*	*Boys*	*Girls*	
Private	0(.0)	0(.0)	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)	10 (76.9)	3 (23.1)	13
Govt.	28 15.6)	112 (62.2)	35 (19.4)	5 (2.8)	83 (46.1)	97 (53.9)	180
EGS/ UEGS	63 22.3)	70 (24.7)	109(38.5)	41 (14.5)	130 (45.9)	153 (54.1)	283
Total	91(19.1)	182 (38.2)	156(32.8)	47 (9.9)	223 (46.8)	253 (53.2)	476

Source : HH CREATE Survey in 2008

Table 8 shows that the participation of boys (76.9%), in particular of ST boys is much higher, almost three times than girls (23.1%) in the private small schools of both the districts. Participation of girls is higher in small government schools (53.9% against 46.1% boys) and EGS/UEGS (54.1% against 45.9% boys).

Major inference:

Small government schools and EGS/UEGS schools are accessed more by girls than boys.

Table 9
Period of Absence in the Month Prior to School Survey in District Rewa
(Percentages in brackets)

	Period of absence during last month					
	1 to 3 days	**4 to 7 days**	**8 to 15 days**	**More than 15 days**	**Child was not absent**	**Total**
Private	13(100.0)	0 (.0)	0(.0)	0(.0)	0(.0)	13
Govt.	28 (37.3)	18 (24.0)	5 (6.7)	6 (8.0)	18 (24.0)	75
EGS/ UEGS	90 (43.1)	14 (6.7)	2 (1.0)	0 (.0)	103 (49.3)	209
Total	131 (44.1)	32 (10.8)	7 (2.4)	6 (2.0)	121 (40.7)	297

Source: School Survey in 2008

Table 10
Main Reason of Absence in District Rewa *(Percentages in brackets)*

	Children at relatives' house	**Children unwell**	**Fear in going to school**	**Engaged in domestic work**	**Others**	**Children not absent**	**Total**
Private	3 (23.1)	10 (76.9)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0 (.0)	0(.0)	13
Govt.	16 (21.3)	21 (28.0)	6 (8.0)	12 (16.0)	3 (4.0)	17 (22.7)	75
EGS/ UEGS	29 (13.9)	75 (35.9)	1 (.5)	1 (.5)	0 (.0)	103 (49.3)	209
Total	48 (16.2)	106 (35.7)	7 (2.4)	13 (4.4)	3 (1.0)	120 (40.4)	297

Source: School Survey in 2008

So far as the period of absence of children from small schools and reasons thereof is concerned; Tables 9 and 10 reveal that in Rewa district, there were higher levels of absenteeism of more than 15 days in a month in government schools which in comparison to either EGS schools or private schools. One of the reasons for long absenteeism (8%) could be due to their engagement in agricultural lands, where their parents work as labourers. Almost 16% of children were also reported to be absent in government schools due to engagement in domestic work, which was not found among children in private schools. This could be one of the reasons for their absence from school for long periods. Illness among children has also been found to be another main reason for their absence. Children were also moving out of the village to relatives' places for specified days in all the three management schools. In fact, this phenomenon was seen to be more frequent among children in EGS and UEGS schools. One will have to understand migratory patterns and reasons of these children moving often from their native village to relative's house.

Major inference

a). Short duration absenteeism due to illness among children in EGS/UEGS schools
b). Long duration absenteeism due to engagement in household chores

Table 11
Period of absence during the Month Prior to School Survey in District Dindori
(Percentages in brackets)

	1 to 3 days	4 to 7 days	8 to 15 days	Child was not absent	Total
Govt.	42(40.8)	25(24.3)	3(2.9)	33(32.0)	103
EGS/UEGS	12(44.4)	3(11.1)	0(.0)	12(44.4)	27
Total	54(41.5)	28(21.5)	3(2.3)	45(34.6)	130

Source: School Survey in 2008

Table 12
Main Reason of Absence in District Dindori
(Percentages in brackets)

	Children at relatives' house	Children un well	Fear in going to school	Engaged in domestic work	Others	Child was not absent	Total
Govt.	18(17.5)	35(34.0)	6(5.8)	8(7.8)	3(2.9)	33(32.0)	103
EGS/UEGS	5(18.5)	10(37.0)	0(.0)	1(3.7)	0(.0)	11(40.7)	27
Total	23(17.7)	45(34.6)	6(4.6)	9(6.9)	3(2.3)	44(33.8)	130

Source: School Survey in 2008

In Dindori district Tables 11 and 12, reveal that majority of children remained absent from EGS and government schools for short duration of 1 to 3 days. The main reason for their absence was sickness in both the categories of small schools. The children were also engaged in domestic work (7.8% in government schools and 3.7% in EGS/UEGS schools) and also required to work outside home (2.9% of children in government schools).

Major Inference

a). The main reason for short duration absenteeism of children in small government and EGS schools is mainly due to illness and

b). Fear is one of the inhibiting factors for student regularity in small schools

Student Performance

Two tests were administered on Grade IV and V students on Mathematical ability and Hindi Language in Dindori and Rewa districts. The test items were developed corresponding to the three levels of competencies identified in the 1992 study on Quality of Primary Schooling in India: a Case Study of Madhya Pradesh by Prof R Govinda and Prof N.V. Varghese. The Mathematics test consisted of 34 items and Hindi Language test consisted of 21 items. The maximum score for test in Mathematics was 60 and for Hindi language was 55. The administration of the test details one shown in the Table No.13.

In Dindori district, the learning level in Mathematics and Hindi language of Grade IV and V students is significantly below the requisite pass percentage of 40 in 8 out of 10 small schools (UEGS Tiklikherodadar, UEGS Nilkhona (Tarach), P.S. Chakrar, P.S. Tharpathara, P.S. Udhoor, UEGS ladradadar, UEGS Trichhula and P.S Kendrabahara) and a look into the accompanying standard deviations show that majority of students are failing and or are at the risk of dropping out. Learning levels for students of two schools (P.S. Piparpani and P.S. Pandripani) seem to be meeting somewhat the requisite minimum standards in both the subjects but the trend of improvement is not significant as the majority of students during three years are showing average performance. These are borderline cases, placing serious uncertainties on their continuity in studies.

Table 13
Administration of Tests in Mathematics and Hindi Language

		REWA				DINDORI			
		Grade IV		Grade V		Grade IV		Grade V	
		No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils	No. of Schools	No. of Pupils
Large Schools (Govt)	Maths	17	156	16	220	6	47	7	49
	Hindi	16	152	18	223	8	47	7	49
Small Schools (Govt)	Maths	7	42	9	68	10	40	10	40
	Hindi	7	42	8	65	9	48	10	40
Single Teacher Schools (Govt)	Maths	7	36	8	60	9	36	9	36
	Hindi	6	39	7	57	7	36	8	34
Private schools (Small and Large schools)	Maths	2 small and 2 large schools	2 in small and 33 in large schools	1 small and 2large schools	4 in small and 23 in large schools	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	Hindi	2 small schools and 2 large schools	2 in small and 4 in large school	2 small and 1 large school	8 in small and 15 in large schools	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Source: Tests conducted in Maths and Hindi Language in Schools of Rewa and Dindori Districts

Inter-School Analysis

This section takes view of the terms of a trend in mean and SD of schools for three consecutive years beginning 2008-2010.

In Rewa district, out of 15 small schools selected for the study, the average learning level on Mathematics and Hindi language is significantly low in Grade IV in 5 schools (UEGS-Indira Awas, GPS Khirama, UEGS-Nayatola, UEGS-Chauratola and UEGS-Banktola) and for Grade V in 2 schools (UEGS-Chauratola and UEGS-Banktola) while the standard deviation shows that rarely a student has secured(requisite 40%) in these subjects marks in these schools, showing every possibility of student at risk of dropping out from the system unless some emergent measures are taken to improve them.

Four schools (UEGS-Loukapur, EGS-Sahijana, UEGS-Aharitola and GPMS Pipara) show themselves to be somewhat fair in learning of Maths and Hindi as majority of the students of Grade IV and V seem to be obtaining the requisite pass percentage on the average if we look at the standard deviation too, but still hardly any outstanding

performance. Two schools (UEGS-Santadastola and UEGS-Kolhuwaro) seem to be the outstanding schools in this area as the average pass percentage in Grade IV and V is significantly high and viewing the variability, it seems majority of students are doing quite well in both the subjects and have potential to continue and excel at higher stages of schooling. (see annex Tables 3 and 4)

Performance in Mathematics in Dindori District

The scores of the tests conducted in 2010 have been taken up in this section.

The average attainment level of children in Mathematics for Grade IV is 20.35, 11.79 and 29.37, respectively, and for Grade V are 33.004, 30.58 and 30.32, respectively in large, small and single teacher schools in Dindori. On the one hand, where one observes a better attainment level in Grade V Mathematics, on the other, a lot of variation in performance in Grade IV is seen between the schools. All the differences in attainment levels of Mathematics in Grade IV are statistically significant as depicted in Table 14.

Table 14
Performance in Mathematics for Grade IV in Dindori District

Large Vs Small Schools	t = 2.670, p = 0.009	Significant difference
Large Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 2.461, p= 0.015	Significant difference
Small Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 4.290, p= 0.000	Significant difference

Source: based on scores attained in Mathematics and Hindi language tests

The differences in attainment levels in Grade V Mathematics in Dindori are statistically insignificant as depicted in Table 15.

Table 15
Performance in Mathematics for Grade V in Dindori District

Large Vs Small Schools	t = .6417, p = 0.522	Insignificant difference
Large Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 0.6911, p= 0.4914	Insignificant difference
Small Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= .0677, p= 0.9462	Insignificant difference

Source: based on scores attained in Mathematics and Hindi language tests

The average scores in large, small and single teacher schools indicate that single teacher schools are emerging as slightly better performing schools in comparison to large schools so far Grade IV Mathematics is concerned. But the level of attainment in all these

schools as indicated by the two Tables is too low, and therefore, is in a high risk zone as majority of the students are likely to drop out in Dindori district.

Performance in Hindi Language in Dindori District

The average attainment level of children of Grade IV in Hindi is 17.56, 22.23, and 22.07, respectively, and for Grade V are 24.23, 30.13 and 32.94, respectively, for large, small and single teacher schools in Dindori for large, small and single teacher schools in Dindori. All the differences in attainment levels in these schools are statistically insignificant as depicted in Table 16

Table 16
Performance in Hindi Language in Grade IV and V of Dindori District

	Grade IV	**Grade V**	
Large Vs Small Schools	t = 1.425, p = 0.157	t = 1.186, p = 0.2388	Insignificant difference
Large Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 1.216, p= 0.228	t= 1.671, p= 0.0974	Insignificant difference
Small Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 0.038, p= 0.969	t= 0.527, p= 0.6042	Insignificant difference

Source: based on scores attained in Mathematics and Hindi language tests

On an average, performance in Hindi language is too low as compared to Mathematics in all the categories of schools of Dindori. From the Tables, one may also infer that average attainment levels in single teacher schools in Hindi for both the grades are better than the other two categories of schools, but still majority of children in Dindori are likely to drop out.

Performance in Mathematics in Rewa District

The overall average attainment levels of school children of Grade IV in Maths is 37.36, 37.53, 38.46 and 65.45, respectively, and for Grade V are 43.94, 46.71, 47.97 and 80.58, respectively, for large, small , single teacher and private schools in Rewa . The difference in attainment levels in large, small and single teacher schools is not statistically significant but difference between government and private schools, though quite less in number does give a significant message that the differences are statistically significant.

Table 17
Performance in Mathematics for Grade IV and V in Rewa District

	Grade IV	Grade V	
Large Vs Small Schools	t= 0.049, p = 0.961	t = .5650, p = 0.572	Insignificant difference
Large Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 0.293, p= 0.769	t= 0.798, p= 0.4214	Insignificant difference
Small Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 0.205, p= 0.837	t= .0244, p= 0.807	Insignificant difference
Govt. Vs Private Schools	t = 6.591, p= 0.000	t = 7.055, p= 0.000	Highly Significant

Source: based on scores attained in Mathematics and Hindi language tests

In all government schools in Rewa, on an average, there seems to be a likelihood that almost half of these children would pass Grade IV, though they fall much below private schools students.

The attainment levels in all categories of govt. schools including small and single teacher schools in Rewa is better than that in Dindori and the picture for drop out/failures is not that gloomy as more than 60% students seem to pass Grade V, although they fall much below private schools students in performance.

Performance in Hindi Language in Rewa District

The overall average attainment levels of school children of Grade IV in Hindi is 20.62, 28.57, 30.44 and 58.07, respectively, while of Grade V are 31.40, 35.32, 35.13 and 66.64, respectively, for large, small , single teacher and private schools in Rewa. The differences in the attainment levels in Hindi in different categories of schools are depicted in Table 18.

Table 18
Performance in Hindi Language for Grade IV in Rewa District

Large Vs Small Schools	t = 2.621, p = 0.010	Significant difference
Large Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 3.411, p= 0.001	Significant difference
Small Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 0.615, p= 0.541	Insignificant difference
Govt. Vs Private Schools	t =10.01, p= 0.000	Highly Significant

Source: based on scores attained in Mathematics and Hindi language tests

The difference in attainment/performance levels between small and single teacher schools is not statistically significant but the differences between large and small/single teacher schools and Government and Private schools is statistically significant (Table 7).

Table 19
Performance in Hindi Language for Grade V in Rewa District

Large Vs Small Schools	t = 1.341, p = 0.1791	Insignificant difference
Large Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 1.233, p= 0.2183	Insignificant difference
Small Vs Single Teacher Schools	t= 0.041, p= 0.9614	Insignificant difference
Govt. Vs Private Schools	t = 5.618, p= 0.000	Highly Significant

Source: based on scores attained in Mathematics and Hindi language tests

The differences in attainment/performance levels in large, small and single teacher schools is not statistically significant.

Major Inferences:

a). On an average, the attainment levels in all government schools in Rewa is a borderline case and only 40-50% students seem to pass class V, in future, although their performance falls much below that of the private school students.

b). On the whole, pupils in Dindori schools remain at a very high risk zone as majority are failing and there is every possibility that majority may discontinue or drop out. In Rewa there is a possibility that 20 % may pass out Grade V in small schools and 40% may improve while others may be left behind who have remote chance of continuing their studies.

Policy Questions and Some Tentative Answers

Expansion brings unequal schooling and social hierarchy. Whenever any system expands, it is only the privileged who take the benefit. Small schools are a response to community demand and, therefore, cater to large segments of society for whom as school could have meant meaningful education despite the fact that there will always be multi-grade schools, wherein it may not be feasible to have five teachers. But over the years these schools are losing identity and have become isolated divisions of a bureaucratically run system. Certain issues do raise questions concerning policies and decentralized governance, and also about their viability, sustainability and predictability. The section attempts to look at some of these issues with a few workable propositions.

Is Access to Small Schools Meaningful?

In a country where one-fourth of all primary schools are very small with only one teacher and/or one classroom and generally located in small habitations (Govinda, 2007) and where every second school is a single-room and a school with a one teacher only (Kaura, 2003), one can easily specify how meaningful is it to have access to such a school. In other words, these are a kind of the struggling schools mainly accessed by the

poor. The problems are further compounded by constant decline in the percentage share of enrolment in such schools. It is time to come out with clear policies at two fronts:

Resolving Resource Diversity?

At the first instance, a major challenge before India is to equip such schools with at least minimum physical and human resources that provide a decent education to its children in rural, remote and inaccessible areas, where there are no other opportunities for growth. Therefore, there is a need to gear up single teacher schools to create enabling conditions for longer retention and participation of children. This calls for major policy decisions in the country. The 'small school' agenda appeared for the first time as part of SSA activities in the eleventh five year plan its draft report but was unfortunately dropped later. Now Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009) announced by the Government of India has shown a silver lining when it legitimises the right of each child to have access to good quality education. The Act through Section 8 (P.4) ensure that the child belonging to weaker section and the child belonging to disadvantaged group are not discriminated against and prevented from pursuing and completing elementary education on any grounds, and provide infrastructure including school building, teaching staff and learning equipment. The section of the Act indicates the need for establishment of schools equipped with a specified level of physical and human resources. According to the Act, no recognition will be given to a school unless it is adequately equipped as per the entitlements. This is expected to place serious implications for small schools suffering from inadequate resources in urban and rural locations.

Cadre-Conflict?

The second instance relates to a cadre of teachers produced in this category of schools. Learning climate in small schools seems to be totally lost due to de-motivated, high absence, low morale and low paid teachers, ill-equipped in the absence of professional training to handle multi-age, multi-level and multi-grade classroom settings and the like. In the state of Madhya Pradesh, where majority of small schools are managed by para teachers, has itself created another cadre of de-motivated teaching class. Renewal of interest to teaching profession would require policy interventions not only from the state but Central Government as well. The report of the Committee on the

Implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and the Resultant Revamp of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (MHRD, 2010) recommends one uniform salary and service conditions for teachers, improving recruitment policies, exploring possibilities for improving career advancement for teachers and appropriate measures to create an environment for attracting talented persons to the teaching profession (MHRD, 2010:53). Teachers will be supported with well-designed training and professional development activities. In the context of small schools, teachers should be able to function effectively only if they are trained for handling diversified groups of children and have the skills to handle multi-grade classes. There also needs to be an arrangement for training teachers in improvising and use of low cost locally made teaching aids to help improving small schools. Curriculum also needs to be designed to meet specific needs of small schools, though National Curriculum Framework of NCERT indicates a relook to the importance of looking at social, emotional life of children of all schools. The RTE Act (2009) specifies that teachers should not be left in isolation as is seen in the present arrangement in many single or two-teacher remote, rural schools. Here there will be provisions for teachers to get support through several measures, such as arrangement for redressal of grievances for them (clauses 2 and 3 of Section 24; P.8), manageable teacher-pupil ratio (Section 25, p.8), liberation of teachers from non-educational activities, other than the decennial population census, disaster relief duties or duties relating to elections etc.

How Sustainable Are Small Schools?

Small schools function unnoticed and perish ignored. The grassroot realities are so different when one goes to the field. This holds true for small schools visited in 2008 Rewa and Dindori districts. In the second year of school survey in 2009, two schools were found to be closed in Rewa district. One school was located in a village exclusively inhabited by SC population, where children belonging to better off families were going to a private school while this school was left for the poor among this class who could not afford fees charged by the private school. Since no land was provided by the State government for this school, it was functioning in a personal house of guruji (the teacher in EGS school). The teacher was totally devoted to deprived children of the village, not only utilized his house as school but also taught with full zeal. Even during focus group

discussions, the community confirmed love and sincerity of the teacher towards children in his school. Another single teacher school often remained closed mainly due to either teacher absence or coming late to school. The sources confirmed that because teacher owned another private school situated across the road, he did not take this school seriously. No administrator took any action against him because of his links with local politicians. In a span of one year, both the schools were found to be closed down. The reason ascribed by officials is that the teachers have been employed in permanent capacity in some other job. When one teacher could forgo his personal possessions for the benefit of children from educational and financially deprived families while the other teacher was more committed to a nearby private school, one wonders why these schools were closed. Why could not Education Department take up the responsibility of engaging a teacher in these schools? No policy mentions about how the issue of sustenance can be addressed when a small school is a necessity for those who do not have other options.

How Vital is the Social Audit?

Community can make a big difference to a small school to which it is integrally linked in a village setting. Changes have been happening in small schools through active involvement of the community in various forms and there is ample evidence available of their contributions to an small-sized schools through donation of land and personal house, cultivating trees and plants, provision of drinking water, mothers working as community teachers to pay special attention to health and hygiene practices and ensure regularity among children to attend school, providing help in the managing children in the absence of guruji in the absence of whom there can be no school etc. There are also few instances where community has a major role in managing Sall village schools in the RTE Act is expected to ensure smooth functioning of a school by their active involvement in all decisions concerning a school. The success of SMCs will depend more on how closely a small school is monitored and to the degree of transparency and honesty in taking decisions concerning improvement of a school, which is so close to them. A word of caution, especially in the management of small school is that in case SMCs become instruments in the hands of already empowered and driven by local politics and domination of upper caste groups, small schools would continue to wreath in same abysmal conditions observed in previous sections. One silver lining may be seen here

concerning parents mostly labourers or BPL families and other disempowered weaker and disadvantaged groups who did not have time to visit schools or have a say in school decisions, formation of official SMCs may provide opportunity to them to become members which might heighten their sense of responsibility and belongingness towards the school and check its inadequacies.

Will it be Viable to Consolidate Unviable Small Schools?

Government of Madhya Pradesh have clearly defined educational policies specifically on establishment of EGS schools. In the initial years, EGS centres were established without a strict mapping out for requirement based on norms. The resultant factor was that in Rewa district, EGS schools mushroomed in every one km distance. The policy decision by the state government brought in upgradation of most of EGS schools to regular primary schools. Their struggle with limited resources continued, and eventually a large sector of unviable schools could be seen during school survey in the district. One could see the necessity of consolidation of small schools wherein all resources in a school could be pooled together to create enabling conditions for children to continue from Grade 1 through Grade VIII in the same school and ensure completion of the entire elementary school cycle. Govinda in 2007 recommended consolidation of neighbourhood schools and the RTE Act has also proposed an education system that stands as a pyramid, merging small independent structures into one single unit, sufficiently equipped with teachers and teaching-learning materials, infrastructure and other physical facilities as per the entitlements of a full-fledged school.

The School Management Committees (SMC) as articulated in RTE Act 2009 can take charge for the preparation of a School Development Plan for each school and ensure the composite school to be complete in facilities. This would call for an exercise to map and consolidate small unviable schools within a specified area and attach with a lead school well-equipped with facilities, enabling children in feeder schools to have access to best possible facilities which otherwise is difficult for the government to provide to each small school. This move is beneficial but if rights of each child to have access to schools as well recognised. Community acceptance will be a major factor to decide about child-wise/school-wise alternative plans and not taken as an administrative decision. Merger

plans will have to take into account quality of parents to send their children aged 5/6/7 and especially girls in the age group 6 through 12/13 to the emerging schools at a distance. Ultimately, it is the child and its rights for a quality schooling that is important in the dynamics of continuation or merger of small schools. The process of consolidation of schools may also be supplemented by opening larger schools at convenient locations with boarding facilities for Grade III and IV students

Can Community Involvement Bring Improvement in Small Schools?

Changes in small schools have been happening through active involvement of community in various forms and there are ample evidences available on contributions of community through donation of land, landscaping the school grounds, cultivating trees and plants, developing the school into a village resource centre, participating in activities with children and encouraging them in their learning, mothers as community teachers paying special attention to health and hygiene practices, providing help in the organization of classrooms and the school, organizing story writing workshops, helping teachers in preparing aids, etc. - more pronounced in rural settings.

The Act provides for empowerment of School Management Committee (SMC) in the preparation of School Development Plan and monitoring the functioning and progress of a school. Section 21 (1) of the Act firmly recommends constitution of School Management Committee (SMC) visualized to be instrumental in bringing improvement from within. The structure of SMC specified in the Section (P.7.) would consist of elected representatives of local authority, parents and guardians of children admitted in such schools and teachers, with 50 per cent membership for women and proportionate representation to the parents and guardians of children belonging to disadvantaged group and weaker sections. The official declaration of the constitution of SMC will ensure smooth functioning of a school by their active involvement in all decisions concerning the school. This is going to place larger implications for small schools. In villages where community has been playing either an adversary or a non-committal role in school affairs, but as part of clearly defined functions, in Section 21 (2) (P.7.), the accountability of monitoring the working of the school will lie with the SMC. This move will empower them to own the school and check its inadequacies. Those parents who hardly had time to visit the school or had voice per se in school affairs, when given opportunity to become

the members of SMC, their sense of belongingness to the school will heighten. The success of Mother Teacher Association (MTA) of Kerala, the practice of women facilitators in the schools of Rajasthan is well known. Their close involvement with school and community has yielded positive results in student enrolment, attendance, retention along with improved quality of life at home. Similarly, a fairly large representation of women is expected to bring a sea change in the landscape of the school.

The SMC will also be responsible for monitoring the utilization of grants received for the school. The dominating School Teacher as seen today will not share the details of grants and incentives received by the school with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) representatives. This has given enough space to corruption at the local level. Each detail on utilization of funds will instil transparency in the system unlike the share demanded from the grants for mid-day meal or other incentives by either PTA representative and other inspecting officials from a School Head Teacher before signing or disbursing the funds to the school--- as such reported in earlier sections based on experiences in the field study of Rewa district of M.P. The formation of SMC for each school, it is hoped, perhaps may diffuse such practices, which have become so much a part of school sector since each school is integrally associated with the community around. It is in fact the community that can make a big difference to the school, only right people with positive approach need to be tapped. SMCs should not become an instrument in the hands of the already empowered, driven by local politics and Upper Caste groups, more closely seen in rural and remote habitations.

Summing Up: Is the system fair in its attempt at creating equality of access?

The National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1992) stresses on the need for removal of disparities in education along with an attempt to equalize educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far. The Working Group Report on Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2006, observes that single teacher schools, multi-age grade schools characterizing much of the existing school system reveals several systemic gaps.

Access to schooling is no doubt almost universal, but the disparity in facilities across schools is well recognized in India. The educational authorities looking after rural and remote communities face unique challenges in providing meaningful education to students who attend small schools which do not have adequate resources and there are associated problems like problems in recruiting and retaining teachers, even if teachers are appointed, nothing much can be done when they do not teach etc. A small primary school with few students in each class will hardly be able to sustain and attract the resources it requires to meet the demands of millions who are below poverty line in the country. The term "choice" does not necessarily have a positive connotation here, for it brings certain impediments about restricted access of children from lower caste groups. Unfortunately, these schools have been seen as a short term solution for the country. Small schools in India in a government set up, though initially established to provide access, are losing their identity. The western literature attributes small schools as *not only better but the best*—because of non-threatening environment that these schools hold. The case with Indian government-managed small schools is just the opposite; depicting the reality that small is the worst. Here, these schools function as isolated divisions of a bureaucratically run system corroding the common ground on which a self-governing system of private education depends. Not to mention about urban primary school system, even the rural primary school scenario is marked by privately managed primary schools which reproduce inequality in the name of reform. Looking at this emerging dimension where people who can afford expensive education for their children are more drawn towards private schools and government system is left for those who are from low income group; small rural primary schools are the most affected ones reaching out to the *poor* and, therefore, no concerted effort is taken up to bring a change in the way these schools are functioning.

There is a need to follow a systematic approach to develop a long-term vision for improving the planning and management of small schools. If West Virginia stands on the premise that small schools provide best education to low income group children, then why can India not start with this move? In the present set up, ideally, the immediate concern of the government should be to make commitments to come out with a policy

that benefits small schools in particular, followed by a well thought out plan to combat inequity among schools. In order to facilitate the process of improvement in small schools, including multi-grade schools with innovations followed within and countries abroad, one exchange could be Escuela Nueva schools in Columbia; another could be Bodh Shikha Samiti schools of Rajasthan, Rishi Valley schools in Andhra Pradesh and several other states of India. In order to make practical applications of such innovations, the second step is to create a platform for intensive national consultation on the options and ways by which the innovations can be implemented. This entire programme will call for a well thought out plan and policy on small schools which takes into consideration the diversity in small schools and right of a child to have access to a quality school and in turn to quality Education. This implies that in order the right of the child is to be protected, more important, it is to make small schools functional in the right spirit to uphold their goal.

The RTE Act, 2009, has come as a hope for the poor to have access to a quality school. The model rules by the States within the broader framework of RTE Act are in the process of formulation. The foremost steps towards this movement will be multi-faceted: fostering linkages and partnerships of different stakeholders, both public and private, dialogue among varied groups, constitution of School management Committees, chalking out greater details on the issue of autonomy, school-based budgeting, decision making, redefining roles and responsibilities, need-based and on location training and capacity building exercises etc. that benefit essentially small schools and the community at large. Collaborative decision making by the planners and administrators that substantiates with a well-thought out plan to combat inequity among schools is the necessity of the time to address policy for consolidation of large sector of non-viable small schools to bring different sized schools in the threshold of improvement and sustenance.

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Annexure - I

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of Facilities in Small Rural Schools

			Enrolment 1-25 Schools					Enrolment 26-50 Schools				
State		**All Schools**	**Water**	**BB**	**0 CLS**	**Single CLS**	**Two CLS**	**Water**	**BB**	**0 CLS**	**Single CLS**	**Two CLS**
J&K	2005-06	17185	13.09	20.39	2.47	5.63	11.30	15.76	25.51	1.95	4.28	11.34
	2006-07	18196	14.26	21.81	2.86	5.12	10.46	19.06	27.30	2.13	4.15	11.02
	2007-08	18301	15.73	23.30	1.36	4.19	10.66	20.77	29.51	1.07	3.79	11.18
H.P	2005-06	15318	17.45	19.65	1.12	2.08	8.78	27.69	29.98	1.23	1.68	9.83
	2006-07	15869	19.61	21.90	0.27	2.12	10.06	29.55	32.07	0.28	1.55	10.54
	2007-08	16445	21.89	24.54	0.00	3.67	11.39	29.91	32.34	0.00	1.92	11.18
Punjab	2005-06	18123	5.42	5.38	0.14	0.82	3.54	14.78	14.11	0.29	1.14	8.20
	2006-07	18417	5.78	5.44	0.13	0.68	3.98	16.00	14.97	0.24	1.06	9.17
	2007-08	17771	5.47	5.31	0.08	0.73	3.83	16.64	16.06	0.25	1.18	9.55
Rajasthan	2005-06	83498	2.09	2.22	0.86	0.20	1.57	12.72	15.17	3.40	1.36	10.06
	2006-07	87839	2.57	2.51	0.59	0.31	2.04	14.41	15.39	2.56	1.80	10.92
	2007-08	89765	3.79	4.84	0.45	0.44	3.04	17.34	21.54	1.24	1.73	13.05
West Bengal	2005-06	49892	0.57	0.76	0.04	0.32	0.27	5.53	7.10	0.18	2.69	2.75
	2006-07	55314	0.72	0.94	1.33	0.37	0.33	5.93	7.17	2.08	2.42	2.88
	2007-08	57359	0.80	0.95	1.14	0.37	0.37	6.59	7.37	2.40	1.79	3.26
Orissa	2005-06	47735	3.32	4.03	0.38	0.96	2.60	15.15	17.63	1.35	3.03	11.46
	2006-07	47570	10.22	12.50	0.54	1.01	7.57	16.99	20.29	0.70	1.20	11.61
	2007-08	55349	4.60	5.72	0.72	1.09	3.15	18.99	22.91	2.29	2.53	11.43
Chhattis-garh	2005-06	46665	4.85	4.63	3.87	0.33	1.39	18.66	20.73	6.85	2.90	7.46
	2006-07	45064	8.12	7.22	7.11	0.61	1.97	18.66	19.76	6.03	2.22	7.33
	2007-08	45876	8.46	9.95	4.17	0.71	2.89	20.27	23.21	4.10	1.89	8.39
Madhya Pradesh	2005-06	105505	2.43	2.62	1.37	0.25	0.70	14.75	16.54	6.62	2.21	5.11
	2006-07	109583	2.93	3.40	1.28	0.35	0.96	15.24	17.94	3.83	2.42	6.26
	2007-08	112218	2.78	3.07	0.11	0.23	1.31	16.20	18.13	0.20	1.40	8.12
Andhra Pradesh	2005-06	79037	8.42	12.85	1.64	9.42	2.74	17.08	23.53	1.62	13.24	8.47
	2006-07	83810	10.69	14.27	2.81	10.46	2.83	18.91	24.37	1.62	13.53	8.76
	2007-08	83263	14.72	17.88	2.09	11.52	3.50	23.25	26.87	1.15	12.90	9.54
Karnataka	2005-06	43095	7.84	13.29	0.23	6.41	5.87	13.76	19.24	0.23	3.20	12.43
	2006-07	44939	9.93	16.02	0.54	6.76	8.01	15.19	20.79	0.55	2.97	13.36
	2007-08	46621	10.62	17.56	0.04	6.53	9.33	15.49	21.59	0.04	2.49	13.59

Annexure - II

Table 2A
Rural Primary Schools without Building in VIth AIES (1993) and VIIth AIES (2002)

State	1993			2002		
	Total No. of Schools	**No. of Rural Primary Schools without building**	**Percentage without building**	**Total No. of Schools**	**Rural**	**Percentage without building**
Andhra Pradesh	44412	2262	5.09	53196	3991	7.50
Assam	27584	1050	3.81	28630	502	1.75
Bihar	34697	4124	11.89	38428	2562	6.67
Chhattisgarh	19843	867	4.37	22477	0	0.00
Gujarat	12081	356	2.95	5862	271	4.62
Haryana	4680	110	2.35	8510	31	0.36
Himachal Pradesh	7470	121	1.62	10614	108	1.02
J&K	8091	555	6.86	9745	500	5.13
Jharkhand	15193	1381	9.09	16164	664	4.11
Karnataka	20198	32	0.16	23450	440	1.88
Kerala	4727	4	0.08	5251	3	0.06
Madhya Pradesh	44153	3626	8.21	47383	2337	4.93
Maharashtra	34732	1586	4.57	34560	238	0.69
Orissa	34221	883	2.58	34541	539	1.56
Punjab	11605	299	2.58	12042	66	0.55
Rajasthan	29168	937	3.21	29438	367	1.25
Tamil Nadu	26620	97	0.36	26341	141	0.54
Uttar Pradesh	64989	2175	3.35	96331	1265	1.31
Uttaranchal	9094	255	2.80	12466	228	1.83
West Bengal	40435	1569	3.88	41845	713	1.70
Delhi	304	13	4.28	222	9	4.05
All India	**507581**	**22365**	**4.41**	**573091**	**15084**	**2.63**

Source: VII All India School Education Survey, School Education in India, at a glance as on 30.09.2002, NCERT, New Delhi

Annexure - III

Table 2B
Urban Primary Schools without Building in VI AIES (1993) and VII AIES (2002)

State	1993			2002		
	Total No. of Schools	**No. of Urban Primary Schools without building**	**Percentage without building**	**Total No. of Schools**	**No. of Urban Primary schools without building**	**Percentage without building**
Andhra Pradesh	4729	72	1.52	7251	232	3.20
Assam	1306	11	0.84	1415	12	0.85
Bihar	1990	476	23.92	2083	414	19.88
Chhattisgarh	1155	27	2.34	1474	0	0.00
Gujarat	1501	31	2.07	1383	32	2.31
Haryana	526	16	3.04	1109	14	1.26
Himachal Pradesh	251	11	4.38	254	4	1.57
J&K	652	27	4.14	743	43	5.79
Jharkhand	943	109	11.56	895	41	4.58
Karnataka	1758	5	0.28	2804	52	1.85
Kerala	1192	1	0.08	1446	0	0.00
Madhya Pradesh	7074	213	3.01	6850	157	2.29
Maharashtra	5217	48	0.92	6290	26	0.41
Orissa	2085	116	5.56	2136	61	2.86
Punjab	1134	58	5.11	1298	21	1.62
Rajasthan	4181	212	5.07	3515	107	3.04
Tamil Nadu	3465	9	0.26	7053	33	0.47
Uttar Pradesh	11568	0	0.00	17215	300	1.74
Uttaranchal	888	0	0.00	1436	10	0.70
West Bengal	8122	87	1.07	8006	63	0.79
Delhi	1664	53	3.19	1889	66	3.49
All India	**62874**	**1583**	**2.52**	**78290**	**1693**	**2.16**

Source: VII All India School Education Survey, School Education in India, at a glance as on 30.09.2002, NCERT, New Delhi

Annexure - IV

Table 3
School-wise Learning Attainments in Hindi Language and Mathematics in Dindori district

Name of the School	**Mathematics**						**Hindi**					
	Mean			**SD**			**Mean**			**SD**		
Grade IV	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*
UEGS Tiklikherodadar	0	26.67	43.5	0	2.887	4.4	0	13.94	18.0	0	5.844	6.7
UEGS Nilkhona (Tarach)	7.51		31.7	2.045		4.6	25.48		35.6	5.148		6.9
P.S. Chakrar	10.44	32.13	8.7	5.411	3.951	7.5	16.15	28.76	9.2	7.373	8.52	8.8
P.S. Tharpathara	7.93	6.11	3.9	6.155	5.093	3.0	4.55	8.48	11.1	1.909	1.05	2.4
P.S. Udhoor	4.18	3.33	11.2	1.181		6.6	4.55	1.82	3.6	1.287		3.4
UEGS ladradadar	4.18			2.893			9.1			5.358		
P.S. Piparpani	9.6	40.01	38.4	5.845		15.0	0	12.73	38.5	0		22.2
P .S. Pandripani	11.36	41.12	48.2	9.538	5.341	7.1	19.84	36.97	43.7	8.976	5.594	9.2
UEGS Trichhula	3.34	23.34	43.2		7.639	9.5	14.56	7.88	24.8		2.777	3.7
P.S Kendrabahara	11.69	14.17	28.8		5.453		18.2	19.09	23.4		6.58	

Name of the school	**Mathematics**						**Hindi**					
	Mean			**SD**			**Mean**			**SD**		
Grade V	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*
UEGS Tiklikherodadar	10.86	25.01	40.8	10.43		1.13	3.64	10.91	31.5	1.486		1.27
UEGS Nilkhona (Tarach)	10.35	37.39	28.4	1.397	15.634	2.0	29.12	35.32	27.5	2.574	6.951	5.9
P.S. Chakrar	20.74	26.43	25.1	6.19	8.247	5.9	25.33	36.1	14.2	6.651	17.42	3.4
P.S. Tharpathara	9.02	9.34	12.8	4.36	7.511	2.3	8.49	25.09	8.1	3.579	24.166	3.8
P.S. Udhoor	1.67	42.79	31.6	1.67	1.925	20.3	2.43	36.97	17.1	2.102	4.198	18.6
UEGS ladradadar	7.93	11.11	33.6	4.80	9.624		16.83	17.57	18.0	0.91	7.347	
P.S. Piparpani	18.37	39.17	36.8		10.931	4.2		18.63	26.6		3.105	4.7
P .S. Pandripani	17.7	43.34	48.5	6.83	9.834	4.59	25.66	30.6	73.5	7.15	10.933	11.9
UEGS Trichhula	8.77	18.75	39.5	6.87	4.167	5.6	17.29	5.91	24.6	6.036	3.105	5.2
P.S Kendrabahara	0	18.34	41.2	0	7.639	3.8	0	24	23.9	0	6.605	12.1

Table 4
School-wise Learning Attainments in Hindi Language and Mathematics in Rewa district

	Mathematics						Hindi					
Name of the School	**Mean**			**SD**			**Mean**			**SD**		
Grade IV	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*
UEGS-Indira Awas	18.5			12.47			19.41			17.43		
GPS Khirama	21.9		32.53	21.72		14.108	23.96		30.6	21.05		10.99
UEGS-Nayatola	26.3			7.00			15.92			4.79		
EGS-Sahijana	24.1	42.93	47.8	12.40	14.235	11.925	26.57	28.63	25.8	17.44	5.63	14.46
UEGS-Loukapur	61.1		24.53	21.10		13.608	33.09		4.2	16.03		5.79
UEGS-Chauratola	12.3		28.4	9.20		14.569	6.07		20.25	2.10		6.95
UEGS-Banktola	22.3			6.22			16.38			5.15		
UEGS-Santadastola	66.8	65.85	67.73	13.66	11.748	12	66.43	57.95	22.05	9.56	6.90	7.55
UEGS-Kolhuwaro	56.8		42	40.15		6.58	49.14		45	15.44		6.40
UEGS-Aharitola	26.7		35	9.30		18.13	46.11		35.4	11.70		12.44
UEGS-299	0.0			0.00			0			0.00		
GPMS Pipara	61.8		36.8	8.84			52.33		21.6	12.82		

Grade V	**Mathematics**						**Hindi**					
	Mean			**SD**			**Mean**				**SD**	
	2008	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*
UEGS-Indira Awas	40.92			23.8			40.69			26.43		
GPS Khirama	58.03		49.2	21.2		26.0	40.5		37.65	20.01		19.84
UEGS-Nayatola	53.2		25.6	27.3		14.4	43.94		17.4	28.84		8.49
EGS-Sahijana	51.64	61.89	79.52	19.3	12.647	9.2	62.86	46.93	55.98	25.11	10.306	12.85
UEGS-Loukapur	81.83		35.8	18.9		21.9	52		50.85	25.28		59.78
UEGS-Chauratola	45.33		24.32	17.9		9.4	28.86		11.16	5.09		8.86
UEGS-Banktola	28.81			13.7			22.45			11.84		
UEGS-Santadastola	83.17	66.68	59.02	15.1	12.363	20.1	76.44	63.83	50.2	9.10	14.5	17.46
UEGS-Kolhuwaro	74.94		53.71	15.1		27.9	67.57		48.6	12.25		28.78
UEGS-Aharitola	29.64		35.2	6.3		8.5	52.78		35.4	9.04		7.5
GPMS Pipara	63.83		40.53	8.5		6.0	52.33		18.6	3.86		10.959

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