

COVID-19 IMPACT ON PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN INDIA

JULY 2021

Extension of school closures due to the second wave of COVID-19 have exacerbated the negative impact on operations of all schools. Studies conducted by UNICEF¹, Oxfam India², Global Schools Forum³ and ASER Centre⁴ highlight the challenges faced by students, teachers and school administration of affordable private schools due to COVID-19. There has been a severe loss of learning among children due to the extended school closures. Schools faced challenges in transitioning to online learning with limited preparedness and infrastructure, and staying afloat in the absence of a stable source of revenue.

To understand the impact of COVID-19 on learning and school finances in private schools, Central Square Foundation and Omidyar Network India conducted a survey with 1100 stakeholders including parents, school administrators and teachers of non-elite private schools. The study was conducted across 20 states and Union Territories in December 2020-January 2021 through structured telephonic interviews and online survey forms. The survey does not capture the impact of the second wave of COVID-19 in April-May 2021.

Respondent Profile



Teachers surveyed: 478

About one-fifth of these teachers belonged to rural areas. On average, an urban teacher is paid ~ ₹20k to ₹27k per month, while a rural teacher is paid ~ ₹20k to ₹22k per month in roughly equal proportions.



School Administrators surveyed: 246

About two-fifth of these schools belonged to rural areas. Over one-third of the schools surveyed charge less than ₹800 as their monthly school fees.

Schools in our survey sample were sourced from online databases since COVID-19 limited the scope of in-person sourcing of school contact information. The sample under-represents schools that are not connected, where challenges faced because of COVID-19 may have been worse, and consequently, the findings of this study may under-state the severity of the impact of COVID-19 on access to learning and school finances in private schools.



Parents surveyed: 400

About two-fifth of these parents belonged to rural areas. For over half of these families the household income is less than ₹3 lakhs per annum. Most parents had at least one child in grades 1-8. Over 80% of the parents had an undergraduate degree, a diploma, or a postgraduate degree. Both the parents were employed in one-fourth of households.

¹ Alam, Andaleeb, and Priyamvada Tiwari. "Implications of COVID-19 for Low-Cost Private Schools." UNICEF, (March 2021): 11.


² Vyas, Ankit. "Status Report- Government and Private Schools during COVID-19." Oxfam India Schools (September 2020): 34.


³ Doorly, "Estimating the Impact of COVID-19 on the Non-State Education Sector in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Rapid Review." Global Schools Forum, (October 2020): 30.


⁴ ASER Centre, "Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2020 Wave 1" (February 2021): 177.


KEY FINDINGS


1) Schools attempted to continue education through online classes, however, parents and students found it difficult to adapt to the new normal


 The private school sector received hardly any support to move to a new normal. Teachers adapted to online classes with limited infrastructure and training for online education.


 Access to the Internet for students in private schools is overwhelmingly dependent on mobile data for 64% households. ~50% of parents highlighted poor internet connectivity as an obstacle to remote learning

 About 6% of parents reported that their child hasn't attended school since the lockdown

 Approximately 70% teachers reported using their personal devices to teach


 Over 50% of the schools conducted live video lectures and nearly 75% shared recorded video lectures; 70% of schools conducted subjective online tests


 Only 50-60% teachers received technical training to make online videos, pre-recorded content, and share content through various tools


 35% schools opened their labs to teachers so that they can demonstrate live lab classes


18% Schools focused on engagement initiatives to boost learning, attendance and enrolments, however, inputs delivered by schools have not translated to outcomes. Only 18% parents felt that online education had a positive impact on their child in the long term


2) Even as schools gasp for financial support, they continue to make concessions for parents who can't pay fees

 Most schools have reduced fees or extended payment deadlines to retain their students. Teachers suffered pay cuts and/or partial payment of salaries. Demand for private schools is unlikely to reduce in the medium term.

 Revenue decreased in the range of 20-50% for most schools but the costs have largely remained the same, thus making it difficult to continue operations seamlessly

 About 90% of schools collected fees in cash and 10% collected fees through online mode of payment such as Credit Card, Debit Card, Netbanking & UPI

 77% of schools were not interested in taking a loan to support school finances during COVID-19. This could be because of difficulties schools face in accessing formal credit⁵. Only 3% schools have successfully accessed loans

 78% parents expressed that they will continue to send their children to private schools despite their finding it difficult to afford fees

⁵ Garg, Riya. n.d. "Financial Need Analysis of a Budget Private School Owner." 33.

Parent involvement in learnings



Parents were forced to manage work disruptions in order to facilitate online classes for children and found themselves incapable of supporting their children with academics

30%

More than 30% of parents highlighted that students are not attentive and sincere in a home-based learning setup

Students' mental health



46% of parents reported children feeling lonely due to lack of interaction with friends/peers



Approximately 40% of teachers reported that lack of inter-student interaction is reducing students' social skills

44%

Lower productivity & motivation among students (distraction / only work and no play) also emerged as a key focus area among 44% of the parents

Crisis Policy Response



Short-term response



Active inclusion of private schools in dissemination of free EdTech products/State-led at-home learning programs (English/regional languages)



Access to state-run learning, teacher training, remediation and life-skills programs to private schools when schools reopen



Relaxation of pre-COVID-19 regulatory restrictions on operations to allow the sector to recover from losses



Ease credit availability to private schools by including them in loan guarantees made available to Micro, Small, or Medium enterprises (MSMEs)



Provide tax rebate on device purchase for families with school-going children



Medium-term response



Accelerate implementation of the National Education Policy, 2020 recommendations to improve quality in the private school sector:

- Include private schools in school examinations for grades 3, 5 and 8 to create a universal learning indicator to help parents compare learning performance across schools and make informed decisions
- Develop a pragmatic accreditation framework to ease operating environment for private schools while focussing on learning outcomes and child safety



ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS



**CENTRAL SQUARE
FOUNDATION**

Central Square Foundation (CSF) is a non-profit organisation working towards ensuring quality school education for all children in India. Since 2012, CSF has partnered with the government, the private sector, non-profit organisations, and other ecosystem stakeholders to improve the learning outcomes of children, especially from low-income communities. CSF is driven by its mission to enable the school education system to adopt solutions that are scalable, sustainable and effective so that all children get equal access to opportunities needed for leading a better life.

To learn more, please visit <http://www.centralsquarefoundation.org/>



**OMIDYAR
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Omidyar Network India (ONI) invests in bold entrepreneurs who help create a meaningful life for every Indian, especially the hundreds of millions of Indians in low-income and lower-middle-income populations, ranging from the poorest among us to the existing middle class. To drive empowerment and social impact at scale, ONI works with entrepreneurs in the private, non-profit and public sectors, who are tackling India's hardest and most chronic problems. Omidyar Network India makes equity investments in early stage enterprises and provides grants to non-profits in the areas of Digital Identity, Education, Emerging Tech, Financial inclusion, Governance & Citizen Engagement, and Property Rights. Omidyar Network India is part of the Omidyar Group, a diverse collection of companies, organisations and initiatives, supported by philanthropists Pam and Pierre Omidyar, founder of eBay.

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Comments or Questions

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The information contained in this report is prepared by Central Square Foundation in partnership with Omidyar Network India. The organizations have no conflicts of interest to declare. As full disclosure Central Square Foundation awards grants to 321 Education Foundation, Key Education Foundation, Saarthi Education, Alokit, and the Learning Curve Life Skills Foundation, which provide services to affordable private schools. Omidyar Network India has invested in Varthana, a non-banking financial company that provides credit to private schools. Imaginable Futures, a spin off from Omidyar Network global that focuses on the Americas and Africa, has invested in Bridge Academies, an international school chain. The report is furnished to the recipient(s) for free distribution and use. The authors have made their best efforts to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information in this report but make no representations or warranties therein and expressly disclaim any liabilities based on such information or omissions. Each recipient should, therefore, conduct her or his analysis of any information contained in this report.