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# Realizing the Right to Education: An Evaluation of Education Policy in Six States of India

Isabella Burch

*Claremont McKenna College*

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Claremont McKenna College

**Realizing the Right to Education: Evaluating Education Policy in Six States of India**

submitted to  
Professor William Ascher  
and  
Professor Aseema Sinha

by  
Isabella Burch

for Senior Thesis  
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## **Abstract**

*The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act is India's most recent national-level policy in pursuit of universalizing elementary education. While some states have been successful at increasing the number of students who attend school, reducing dropout rates, and reducing the rates of out of school children, others are still struggling to make progress. The states that are successful are surprising in some instances because they are not particularly wealthy, they have large rural populations, and some face larger socio-political issues. This thesis finds that the states succeeding in meeting RTE goals are not always the states that are the best at implementing RTE norms. States are often successful when they violate the RTE norms in order to suit their communities' educational needs. States are also successful when they introduce child welfare policies outside of education in order to address external issues that prevent children from attending school.*

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## **Chapter 1- Introduction**

International pressure to comply with human rights standards, in addition to historic constitutional goals, have driven the Indian government to aim for universal attainment of elementary education by its children. The Indian government introduced the Right to Education as a subset of the Right to Life in 2002, and passed a corresponding Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (commonly referred to as the RTE Act) in 2009. The policy is aimed towards the completion of a national level ideal, and it is done in a way that decentralizes responsibilities to the national, state, district, and sub-district levels of the government. This system for the delivery of resources and services is, ideally, more efficient, and stakeholders at all levels become engaged in the process. The act requires all children to attend school between the ages of six and fourteen, or complete the equivalent of eight years of education. The government also provides programs to achieve the equivalent level of education to students entering the education system later than the age of six.

The central government expected Indian states to comply with RTE Act norms and regulations by 2015. The result a year later is underwhelming. According to World Bank data, there are approximately 128 million school age children in India. Out of the total student population, 19 percent of girls and 14 percent of boys remain out of school (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2015). Not even one state can boast universal elementary attendance or completion of eighth grade by its students. It is a critical period of time to consider the successes and failures of each state with respect to education. Those successes and failures, and the factors at their core, are crucial for understanding how to move forward with education. Even without a completely new policy,

amendments and reforms could move the country closer to its goal of universal elementary education. Meeting the goal of universal educational attainment would require massive social reform- undoing a history of inequality driven by social and economic factors outside of the realm of education. As such, India's policy may be overly ambitious in order to maximize the number of students who are reached. In this case, the real goal is to get as close to universal elementary education as possible.

Granting that universal compliance with the RTE Act may be impossible, has India achieved an acceptable level of closeness to the RTE policy objective? The groups that the policy specifically must target include tribal communities (scheduled tribes), individuals from lower castes (scheduled castes), people living in poverty (a condition which often intersects with caste or tribal affiliation), women, and people with disabilities. Many other affirmative action policies to protect the same groups are mandated in the Fourteenth Amendment of India's constitution. Still, those that the RTE Act are meant to protect are still the ones excluded from education. The answer to the question of RTE's effectiveness is clearly negative. This is disappointing because India's Constitution and other areas of statutory law incorporate affirmative action programs and other means of assistance for these groups, but education is an important path towards equal opportunity. Disabled students are an excellent example of a group that still suffers exclusion in significant numbers. There are 32.19 lakh students reported to have a special need, but only slightly over 27 lakh had been enrolled as of 2014 (Rai 2014, 444). Additionally, the policy seems to be failing to include students who have been out of school and need to enter at a later age. With 22 lakh out-of-school children being accounted for, only 44 percent of training programs designed to incorporate those

students at the appropriate grade level were functional for the 2013-14 school year (Rai 2014, 444).

In such a large, diverse country, failure to implement the RTE Act comes in many forms. Factors on both the supply and demand sides are lacking. For example, while all states have notified their rules and 32 states have established enforcement bodies to oversee RTE provision compliance, only 10% of schools were compliant with all RTE norms as of 2014 (Rai 2014, 446). Schools are failing to meet certain norms including the reduction their pupil-teacher ratios, development of toilet facilities, and the establishment of complete school management committees. This is not only due to a lack of interest on behalf of politicians, nor is it solely the negligence of administrators. In many cases, schools struggle to afford the changes required of them within just a few years. Since efforts must be made to fund all aspects of the RTE Act, there are tradeoffs. These tradeoffs help to explain the incomplete compliance of elements of the policy like sufficient pupil-teacher ratio. Briefly consider one drastic change that occurred in the transition out of previous education policies in India and into RTE. In the early 2000s, in order for education (not necessarily formal schooling) to reach more children who were far from schools, affected by natural disasters, or were otherwise kept out of schools, the government funded para-teachers. Para-teachers were educators who had not received the same amount of training as a government school teacher, and were paid only one-fifth to one-half of the salary of a government school teacher, but could provide the basic minimum educational service to otherwise out-of-school children. Para-teachers were criticized as a cheap way out of making full teachers available to all students, and so the

RTE Act replaces them. This comes with serious financial tradeoffs and expects states to suddenly come up with money to build neighborhood schools and fund more teachers.

Many of the costs to cover RTE norms and provisions are covered by the states. National funding for elementary education is a fairly bleak picture in India. In 1985, the Kothari Commission for the improvement of education recommended that at least six percent of the national budget should be spent on primary education. Fast-forward to the 2011-12 budget after the implementation of RTE, which would have significantly grown the size of education as an institution, and India is barely spending four percent on education at the national level (Jha and Parvati 2014, 44). The national government's lack of drive to fund social programming is not unique to education, though. The push towards increased private spending in the social sector is happening across the board. In states with a less successful private industry, however, this type of funding is not always the best substitute to missing central government dollars. The regional variation in wealth and the explanation as to why many states cannot get their feet under them with respect to any social spending comes from India's history of living under British rule. India's independence from colonial powers is only decades old. Entrenchment of caste and the creation of regional centers of wealth by the British left great areas of poverty across the country that are apparent in per capita income, violence, the numbers of people living below the poverty line, and other social indicators.

Most importantly, India is home to the greatest number of the world's poor, leaving many states with large social ills and small budgets to address them. Not only have India's states been set up to fail in practice, but the governments on all levels are undermining the principled reason for the amendment and the policy. If the national

government and the state governments cannot be inspired to spend enough on education, and they are not providing individuals with a quality of education that is expected, they create apathy and reinforce the frustrations of the individuals who need equality of opportunity the most. The government appeals to private companies for funding, and allows for the private sector to have a greater influence in education. These private-public partnerships are becoming more common within India's social sector, and they are problematic due to their business interests. It may be the case that governments at all levels in India need more money to fund education. However, the extent to which business interests can now inform decisions in education while facing reduced regulation runs the risk of undermining education as a right even further. As is the case with businesses, their job is to meet the bottom line, not deliver on a fundamental right. Deliverance on projects for social and economic equality of opportunity is the job of governments who have at their core the will of their people.

This paper seeks to recognize states that have truly successful RTE policies and determine if they are applicable in other states as well. While states in India have a fairly stringent programming outline to follow, the paper will explore the types of decentralized policy that have been pursued, if at all, and gauge the conditions for their success. First, a model will be introduced that predicts how well states would be expected to do in terms of preventing school dropouts and reducing the percentage of children out of school in their state. Out of those models, states who have succeeded (and those who have underperformed most seriously) in the absence of control variables will become case studies to examine what decentralized policies to keep and which to avoid as India moves into its next five-year phase of RTE.

## **Chapter 2- The Puzzle**

Indian states have achieved varying levels of success with their RTE policies. This thesis seeks to highlight policy practices and state-level norms that are responsible for relative successes and failures, and this chapter will begin by establishing one method for determining success or failure in the implementation of RTE. Based on the model, case studies will be selected that provide insight both on best practices as well as policies that have been less successful. Ultimately, this thesis finds that the states succeeding in meeting RTE goals are not always the states that are the best at implementing RTE norms. States are often successful when they violate the RTE norms in order to suit their communities' educational needs. The national level policy establishes very specific norms for states to follow, although the policy is actually meant to decentralize power to states. The consequence of such a strict policy is that many states are not able to respond to local needs. States are also successful when they introduce child welfare policies outside of education in order to address external issues that prevent children from attending school.

Dropout rates and rates of out-of-school children demonstrate the success or failure a state has had in providing an education that stakeholders determine to be worthwhile. This thesis will use these two statistics as indicators of a state's success in achieving universal elementary education. There are multiple benefits to the use of these figures specifically. First, the data is most widely available for these two numbers, meaning that the data can be compared across different sources. Rates of out-of-school children are very difficult to determine because it requires the collection of data on populations that are nomadic, that live in hard to reach areas, and that are engaging in

practices that they prefer to hide from government agencies. The ability to compare the numbers across multiple data sets allows for the rejection of data that is inconsistent, and numbers that are consistent across studies are likely accurate enough for use.

Additionally, they provide a clear idea of the actual success of a state both in enrolling students and incentivizing them to remain in school. To address only one of these elements would be to ignore one of several key aims of RTE.

### **A Note on Data**

Before delving deeper into a presentation of “facts” on the status of education in India, transparency on methodology and available resources is required. Acquiring data about education in India is challenging and it often produces incomplete information. Several states are not included in tables or models for lack of data or for fear of incorrect data when it is given. In the interest of presenting the most accurate picture possible, several models using several data sets are provided. These sources mostly include government data, as most NGOs and international institutions seem to rely on the carrying capacity of the Indian government to obtain its own statistics. In other cases, comprehensive data only exists in one study or survey (such is the case with DISE data, the only available state-level and district-level educational data available in India), or the information is three to four years old due to its affiliation with India’s last census. In the worst case, there is chronically understated data, such as the number of out-of-school children. Given these hurdles and pitfalls, the recommendations and conclusions drawn in this paper are done so when there are consistencies across multiple sets of data and in the results of multiple models. In other cases, recent reports from credible international institutions and academics will be used to verify the legitimacy of the conclusions drawn

from the models. At the end of the day, this observation may be the most pertinent to improve the status of education in India. More information must be available to hold actors accountable and to avoid making generalized policy prescriptions that may miss out on crucial details for improved practices.

An understanding of inconsistencies in the data becomes important when running the regression model. Multiple inconsistent sets should be run through the regression model that this paper will utilize for the purpose of ruling out large variations in result. These data sets, both from 2014, produced slightly different results in determining which states provide the best puzzle to examine. States that supposedly greatly over-performed relative to expectations in one data set were barely performing at the expected level when the regression was run with different data. This is not uncommon when it comes to social science research in India. In one study examining disparities in growth rates across Indian states, the authors noted a “disturbing feature...for some of the states, such as Haryana, Orissa, and Jammu and Kashmir, the growth rates differed significantly across three data sets (Dasgupta et al. 2000).” It is possible that a similar phenomenon is faced here, and poses a challenge for the selection of cases studies.

This thesis predominantly employs DISE<sup>1</sup> data for its model. There are some exceptions to the use of DISE data, in the interest of checking the regression across multiple datasets, which will be discussed in the section that explains the regression model. Though the data is not perfect, it is the most comprehensive due to its national

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<sup>1</sup> District Information System for Education (DISE) Data was introduced under the District Primary Education Programme in order to have better information on educational attainment. DISE data collects information on education from the national level to the district level.

level implementation coupled with school level accountability. Definitions and algorithms are standardized nationally, reducing variability in datasets. Additionally, the original DISE project was a coordinated effort with UNICEF. Extensive training and higher level software is available through their sponsorship. The computerized system incorporates school level input with state level oversight, such that states are responsible for ensuring a five percent sample bias (DISE 2009). Since the data is meant to be captured by schools, and the system is able to present information at the district level, this is likely the closest to population data that educational statistics can come, and it avoids many of the issues associated with surveying a random sample of the population. Though the system is far from perfect, its use is consistent across India. Most educational experts and studies, including international organizations like the World Bank, UNICEF, and more refer to DISE data when examining state-wise trends. This paper will also move forward with the use of DISE information in the hopes of more accurate complete information for future research.

### **The Model**

A great deal of variation exists across regions in India, although some states are achieving better results with respect to children entering school and completing the eighth grade than would be expected. In other cases, states are underperforming relative to what would be expected of them, even when controlling for various social indicators while constructing those predictions. This section lays out a variety of indicators that will be used to examine the success of RTE state level policies throughout the paper. Overall, states seem to have accomplished at least some success in education, but the success has

been far from equally distributed. Table 1 demonstrates the current state-wise status of education on the basis of several indicators.

| State             | Rurality     | Per Capita Income | BPLUrban | BPLRural | Violence | Household Head Illiteracy |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------|----------|----------|---------------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 0.666365     | 88876             | 5.81     | 10.96    | 2717     | 15.31                     |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 0.7706418968 | 84,869            | 20.33    | 38.93    | 73       | 0                         |
| Assam             | 0.859046     | 46354             | 20.49    | 33.89    | 1368     | 14.26                     |
| Bihar             | 0.88705      | 31229             | 31.23    | 34.06    | 3566     | 50.38                     |
| Chattisgarh       | 0.767579     | 58297             | 24.75    | 44.61    | 998      | 28.56                     |
| Gujarat           | 0.574037     | 96,976            | 10.14    | 21.54    | 1126     | 12.53                     |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 0.8996952773 | 92,300            | 4.33     | 8.48     | 113      | 0                         |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 0.726245     | 58,593            | 7.2      | 11.54    | 124      | 38.74                     |
| Jharkhand         | 0.759518     | 46,131            | 24.83    | 40.84    | 1694     | 45.39                     |
| Karnataka         | 0.613293     | 84,709            | 15.25    | 24.53    | 1860     | 32.06                     |
| Kerala            | 0.522993     | 88,527            | 4.97     | 9.14     | 374      | 0.67                      |
| MP                | 0.723664     | 54,030            | 21       | 35.74    | 2373     | 42.12                     |
| Maharashtra       | 0.547777     | 114,392           | 9.12     | 24.22    | 2712     | 13.43                     |
| Manipur           | 0.60797      | 36,937            | 32.59    | 38.8     | 83       | 25.94                     |
| Meghalaya         | 0.799302     | 58,522            | 9.26     | 12.53    | 137      | 15.67                     |
| Mizoram           | 0.4788845486 | 63,413            | 6.36     | 35.43    | 30       | 0                         |
| Nagaland          | 0.711415     | 77,529            | 16.48    | 19.93    | 75       | 34.46                     |
| Orissa            | 0.833144     | 54,241            | 17.29    | 35.69    | 1548     | 19.27                     |
| Punjab            | 0.625166     | 92,638            | 9.24     | 7.66     | 855      | 26.53                     |
| Rajasthan         | 0.751299     | 65,098            | 10.69    | 16.05    | 1461     | 15.69                     |
| Tamil Nadu        | 0.516024     | 112,664           | 6.54     | 15.83    | 1949     | 10.78                     |
| Tripura           | 0.738303     | 60,963            | 7.42     | 16.53    | 124      | 15.53                     |
| UP                | 0.777316     | 37,630            | 26.06    | 30.4     | 4966     | 39                        |
| Uttarakhand       | 0.697675     | 103,349           | 10.48    | 11.62    | 217      | 25.2                      |
| West Bengal       | 0.681264     | 69,413            | 14.66    | 22.52    | 2252     | 42.65                     |

**Table 1. Development indicators across Indian states**

Very few states have dropout rates over ten percent, although some variation exists between states due to the fact that they are allowed to define “dropouts” and “out-of-school children in their own policies. Some of the worst performing states, states with dropout rates over ten percent, currently include Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh

Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland. Other states with dropout rates around seven percent, a level which is much higher than the nation aims for, include Assam, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh. Southern states like Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. States with a history of better social programming and higher levels of funding typically have dropout rates lower than three percent. This is not always the case with statistics for sixth grade through eighth grade, as these are the ages when children are most likely to drop out to work, get married, or raise siblings. In other instances, their families reach a point at which they simply cannot afford to keep them in school. Based on a comparison of dropout rates from the year before RTE was implemented, though, states seem to be improving on keeping students in school. Table 2 demonstrates this phenomenon. Unfortunately, dropout rates from sixth grade through eighth grade were not yet recorded at the time this study was completed, but trends in improvement are noticeable for most states between the 2008-09 data and the 2014-15 data.

The variation from state to state provides researchers with interesting questions. It is no surprise for experts on India that states across India are not performing at the same level. There are significant historical explanations for the type of economic and social inequality that plagues India, keeping poor states (and poor people) poor. These reasons are largely related to colonialism. British rule in India morphed the country regionally and socially to fit its needs and reap the benefits of its rule. Two powerful examples of this include the formal establishment of the caste system and the creation of powerhouse economic zones while the rest of the country suffered through poverty.

| State             | 14-15 I-V Dropout Rate | 14-15 VI-VIII Dropout Rate | 14-15 Grades I-V Total Enrollment | 14-15 Grades VI-VIII Total Enrollment | 14-15 Gross Enrollment Rate primary/u. primary |
|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Andhra Pradesh    | 4.35                   | 3.78                       | 3814756                           | 2119640                               | 88.21/79.47                                    |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 10.89                  | 5.59                       | 224044                            | 101249                                | 128.13/122.53                                  |
| Assam             | 7.44                   | 7.05                       | 4049643                           | 1803635                               | 114.96/95.86                                   |
| Bihar             | 0                      | 0                          | 15340469                          | 6792648                               | 101.09/98.07                                   |
| Chattisgarh       | 1.42                   | 3.8                        | 2887939                           | 1660741                               | 103.08/101.23                                  |
| Delhi             | 0                      | 0                          | 1875514                           | 1115553                               | 111.75/125.24                                  |
| Goa               | 0                      | 0                          | 123855                            | 72673                                 | 103.97/100.19                                  |
| Gujarat           | 0.76                   | 5.55                       | 5764682                           | 3377769                               | 98.72/93.56                                    |
| Haryana           | 0                      | 0                          | 2493578                           | 1460388                               | 97.57/96.03                                    |
| Himachal Pradesh  | 0.46                   | 0.78                       | 588761                            | 369970                                | 99.43/103.09                                   |
| Jammu and Kashmir | 5.46                   | 4.3                        | 1243923                           | 609123                                | 85.97/70.89                                    |
| Jharkhand         | 6.41                   | 7.42                       | 4463367                           | 2077422                               | 108.4/99.97                                    |
| Karnataka         | 2.32                   | 2.51                       | 5374024                           | 2971724                               | 101.86/93.18                                   |
| Kerala            | 0                      | 0                          | 2467280                           | 1582034                               | 95.11/96.89                                    |
| MP                | 10.14                  | 11.7                       | 8679685                           | 4822784                               | 101.11/96.63                                   |
| Maharashtra       | 0.55                   | 0.61                       | 10125716                          | 6046718                               | 98.95/98.82                                    |
| Manipur           | 18                     | 7.02                       | 355297                            | 152759                                | 134.37/118.77                                  |
| Meghalaya         | 10.34                  | 6.84                       | 539085                            | 217370                                | 138.4/122.03                                   |
| Mizoram           | 12.96                  | 6.02                       | 145210                            | 68965                                 | 122.66/126.83                                  |
| Nagaland          | 19.41                  | 17.86                      | 241103                            | 113207                                | 100.57/97.67                                   |
| Orissa            | 2.94                   | 2.8                        | 4223628                           | 2162855                               | 105.53/90.13                                   |
| Punjab            | 1.29                   | 2.85                       | 2568056                           | 1453523                               | 105.11/96.77                                   |
| Rajasthan         | 8.39                   | 6.03                       | 8140866                           | 3885336                               | 98.64/85.79                                    |
| Sikkim            | 4.57                   | 5.14                       | 66672                             | 44136                                 | 112.57/140.66                                  |
| Tamil Nadu        | 0.46                   | 4.52                       | 5753734                           | 3498733                               | 103.11/94.58                                   |
| Telagana          | 5.81                   | 4.71                       | 3191573                           | 1727617                               | 103.57/90.89                                   |
| Tripura           | 3.58                   | 2.72                       | 374462                            | 202753                                | 109.98/120.54                                  |
| UP                | 7.08                   | 0                          | 25806929                          | 11021791                              | 95/74.54                                       |
| Uttarakhand       | 3.07                   | 1.68                       | 1122802                           | 584655                                | 100.54/85.53                                   |
| West Bengal       | 2.91                   | 4.31                       | 8163021                           | 4852086                               | 102.33/103.17                                  |

**Table 2. DISE Data on the current state of education**

Those three seats of power were in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras (Ghosh and Das Gupta 2009). In Bombay and Madras (modern day Mumbai and Chennai), the historical

advantage has made a fairly significant impact. Social policy in the states of those regions tends to be considered more successful relative to other groups of states like the economically underdeveloped BIMARU states of northern India.<sup>2</sup> The disparities between the areas of economic importance and other states and cities in India was quite large at the time of independence, and by many measures, the economic disparities continue to widen. While some indicators, like per capita income, have technically risen across the board, the ranks in those indicators have not changed significantly state to state (Ghosh and Das Gupta 2009). As a result, it would seem reasonable to anticipate that in all cases, one could predict which states must be doing well with respect to a social policy like education.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility that there are other ways in which social policy works that might not be predictable on the basis of indicators including per capita income or rurality. Whatever the case may be, the model that will be used in the paper demonstrates that some states are performing much better than they would be expected to perform in terms of keeping students from dropping and reducing the numbers of out-of-school children in their states. Other cases that would be expected successes have not successfully incentivized children to participate in education or remain in the system once they enrolled. In each of these models, the same variables were controlled for: rurality (the percentage of a population living in a rural area in a state divided by the states total population), per capita income from India's 2011 census, the percentage of persons living below the poverty line (in rural areas and urban areas

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<sup>2</sup> The BIMARU states include Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. This categorization was given to them by an Indian economist in the 1980s on the basis of their poor economic standing.

separately), the rate of violence as measured by homicides in a national crime report from 2012, and finally, the rate of illiteracy amongst household heads. While factors like the illiteracy of the head of the house, per capita income, poverty, and life in a rural area could determine the extent to which a family could afford, have access to, or buy into education. Meanwhile, a factor like violence is important especially for physically being able to access schools. In areas affected by large amounts of violence against women and violence against or among tribals and government forces, children are either subject to that violence or have their means of traveling to school impeded upon. The use of each of these independent variable matches common assumptions that are made about the extent to which a state's policy can succeed. For example, a state with higher per capita income and lower rates of rurality and poverty would presumably have superior resources to invest in the best possible policy measures. The regression model acts as a tool to demonstrate these predicted rates in order to compare them to the actual rates in each state. States that have significantly higher or lower rates of success than the model predicted create the puzzle that this thesis seeks to answer. When states are performing significantly better or worse than expected, what strategies and conditions exist in that state? Are those strategies and conditions consistent across states that are performing similarly?

Ultimately, the states that produce puzzling results include Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. In the case of Andhra Pradesh specifically, the results of one set of data indicated that it performed much better than expected, while another found it to be falling slightly below expectations. One additional case is added to the list of successful state: Himachal

Pradesh. While this state was not able to be included in all iterations of the regression model, the world bank recently published a study suggesting that RTE, and social policy in general, is quite successful there. As such, it will provide an important example, and possible ground for recommendation, for other states to follow and improve their trajectory in implementing the RTE Act successfully.

### **Selected Case Studies and Background**

Many states on the list considered to be “performing beyond expectations” share characteristics with states “performing below expectations”. For example, it will not necessarily be the case that being a state with low human development indicators necessarily results in poor trajectory in achieving universal primary education. It might even be the case that what would initially be perceived as inconvenient geographical features (such as in Himachal Pradesh) can still be put aside in pursuit of ensuring that children have equal opportunities. Wealth, size, and context in general will not be the best indicators of what works for implementing education reforms. Manisha Priyam (2009) summarizes the puzzle well in her book when she claims, “While there may be differences in context between different states, these by themselves do not explain why seemingly irrational policies persist in some cases and states are unable to effect changes, whereas other states are able to do so.”

#### *Performing Beyond Expectations: Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh*

The three states selected out of the regression as states that perform relatively well in education include a wealthy southern state, a less wealthy southern state, and a poor northern state. In each of these cases, the most important question focuses on what it actually means to be succeeding with respect to the right to education. Maharashtra is

fairly successful in implementing RTE norms. For Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, however, success may not be defined in the way expected. In the introduction, the possibility of employing the RTE act, and the concept behind, it as exhortation policy means that success is about motivating the states of India to reduce dropout rates and rates of out-of-school children to a greater extent than previous policies motivated them to do. This could mean meeting the goal without following the policy. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra were cited in a UNICEF study as states that contribute significant numbers of children to the child labor force yearly, especially to produce cotton (New Concept 2014). The challenges that these states face in the realm of education also exist in a broader context that they must address. According to the regression model, they have done it well.

Andhra Pradesh is often compared with the much poorer northern states like Bihar. In her book *Contested Politics of Education Reform in India*, Priyam (2009) raises a question similar to the one in this paper: how is it that two demographically similar states can have such drastically different outcomes for the same policy? Andhra Pradesh is considered to be low on the spectrum of human development indicators. One study on regional disparity in India ranks districts and sub-districts within each state on a spectrum from lowest human development indicator standing to best human development indicator standing. Most of Andhra Pradesh's districts fell between the top 200 and 400, meaning that human development is in the low to mid-range relative to other states in India (Bakshi et al. 2015). While the districts within the state were not the very worst performers, they fall firmly in the middle and bottom half. Andhra Pradesh is among

states that have experienced fast growth in the past decade, but that growth has been hindered somewhat by areas that do not receive equal shares of that wealth.

On the whole, Himachal Pradesh struggles financially, and it has been classified as a special category state.<sup>3</sup> Whether this status has been an avenue sufficient for Himachal Pradesh to gain traction for social programming is up for debate, but generally the state has been considered to be very successful. This is not just the case in education, but also in health policy and the distribution of services to citizens. The World Bank published a report singling out Himachal Pradesh for its success, citing multiple academics who have gone to conduct interviews and see for themselves what conditions exist to provide more social goods. Himachal Pradesh is surrounded by the BIMARU states and takes in child labor refugees from surrounding states, such as Rajasthan. The balance between the success in Himachal Pradesh and the difficulties of its neighbors adds value to its place in the puzzle.

Maharashtra is one of the wealthiest states in India. Its relative superiority in meeting RTE norms may not appear surprising on face. Maharashtra faces severe social issues, though, that inhibit children from pursuing their education. Some of the greatest extremes of wealth and poverty exist in Maharashtra, which can be demonstrated by the extent to which the state has struggled with child labor. Historically, one of the largest populations of child laborers has come from Maharashtra. Finally, the state has a history of violent struggles between Hindus and Muslims, and it is generally one of the most violent states in India. These conditions are difficult to overcome, especially to convince

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<sup>3</sup> In India, “special category state” status is granted to states by the National Development Council. Once a state has been given special category status, it has access to special aid from the central government.

parents to allow their children to leave home. Wealth is not the only important factor in Maharashtra's journey towards universal elementary education.

*Falling Behind: Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh*

The three states selected as underperforming tend to fall on the spectrum of larger states with low HDI. Looking at the distribution of districts suffering from low HDI, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh appear frequently in the top 100, 200, and 300 districts for being "backward", to use the official designation given in economic policy terms. Rajasthan has a desert climate and nearly 75 percent of its population spread out over this harsh landscape is considered to be rural. Rajasthan provides an interesting contrast to Maharashtra in that it is actually ranked higher in success for meeting criteria under Section 12 (c) to include children living in poverty in the private school system. However, observations from conversations with administrators and instructors suggest that a great deal of this information tends to be overstated. Additionally, the flow of children out of Rajasthan and into Himachal Pradesh suggests that conditions for children's safety are not sufficient. Children are deprived of educational opportunities under these circumstances. Conversations with individuals in Madhya Pradesh demonstrated the same feelings of dissatisfaction with the state of education, although one of the greatest issues in Madhya Pradesh seems to be the lack of spending on education. Gujarat, the final unsuccessful case study, provides an example of a state that has produced strong political leadership and wealth, but it still finds its social policy to be quite weak. Child labor has been an especially large problem in Gujarat, like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. This demonstrates the variation in wealth across the state.

### **RTE: An Old Policy with a New Name?**

One of the great mysteries of RTE that will be unveiled over the course of its implementation is whether the Act is itself responsible for improvements and successes in education over the course of the last five years. The District Primary Education Project and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* programs created the conditions for better or worse progress on education leading up to RTE, and they likely deserve some credit in the current ranking of the states. The main differences come down to provisions that put more responsibility on states and districts, but makes those efforts more uniform. Specific guidelines for the establishment of school management committees, the elimination of para-teachers, Section 12 (c), and a few other specific clauses set RTE apart.

Interestingly, while these provisions place greater responsibilities and costs in the hands of states and districts, it may seem to require a larger effort to provide accountability through state Departments of Education and national institutions, so the policy is not necessarily the opportunity for higher branches of government to give districts too much autonomy. If it is the case that RTE is simply an old policy with a new name, then states who are falling behind or failing to implement provisions and rules in compliance with RTE may be forgiven because the massive expenditure associated with the policy may be unjustified.

Ultimately, it is difficult to look farther back than 2002 when examining education statistics. DISE systems were still being introduced and taught at the time, although data prior than 2002 does suggest a grim picture for education, and a brighter picture comparing it to current data. This DISE data from 2004-05 suggests that states have added tens of thousands of students over the last decade. Whether or not that

success comes purely from RTE policies is still in question, though. Examining DISE statistics between 2004-05 and 2008-09, a period of time prior to the RTE Act with national flagship policies like *Sarva Shikshah Abhiyan* in place, states seem to be losing large student populations. There is at least more variability of which states are maintaining students and which states are not. Individual case studies will help to illuminate whether or not it is the case that states have unique RTE policies, and if it is also true that some states continue to pursue policies that failed before the RTE Act.

### **Chapter 3- Case Study Analysis**

Six case studies of Indian states and their progress in implementing RTE will illuminate the reality behind the statistics. Three characteristics that cover some of the most important elements of education are compared across the states in order to understand how they vary. While teachers and the prioritization of public or private education are directly related to education, the structure of government has both a direct and indirect relationship. First and foremost, the structure of government within the state is related to how services are delivered, and how decision-making about curriculum takes place. Some states have very distinctive and complex structures for social programming as a larger institution that affect how education gets delivered. Many of these states have had to adapt their structures in light of the national RTE model structure for School Management Committees, focusing on a different form of decentralization. Whether or not these structures are more effective requires a comparison of historical growth to current circumstances in education.

Second, teachers the literature often asserts the role of teachers due to distinct RTE requirements for hiring and training. States hired many para-teachers prior to RTE for a variety of reasons, but the Act requires their pay, position, and training to match full-time government teachers.<sup>4</sup> The presence of teacher unions and the substantial pay received by teachers stimulates analysis about incentive structures for teacher

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<sup>4</sup> Para-teachers often have graduate or post-graduate degrees. Among para-teachers, 14.5 percent have academic qualification of “only secondary or less,” whereas 26.4 percent of regular teachers matched this characteristic. Para-teachers are often much younger and have less professional experience, making them susceptible to less pay and job security (Kingdon and Sipahimalani-Rao 2010, 60).

performance and whether or not education ought to be profit-making. The impact of these factors on teacher supply or quality is an important factor in maintaining schools that are worth attending. This analysis becomes illuminated through a comparative lens between public and private education

Third, private education practices under RTE are a crucial discussion element. Many references to RTE are specifically focused on Section 12 (c), which creates reservations at 25 percent of seats in private schools for disadvantaged children (which is defined state by state, ranging everywhere from caste to Other Backward Classes) and vouchers or scholarships for those students. Differences in teachers, test scores, infrastructure, quality, and amount of time in school varies greatly between government and private systems, and the clause itself is one of the most distinctive elements of RTE, setting it apart from past universal education schemes. Finally, it is worth examining programs that state governments highlight as their most important or most successful.

These three factors get the most attention because they have such a significant impact on students. Other programs have been successful on an individual basis, targeting specific groups of children. They receive less attention in this paper due to their specific applications, but they are worth noting to demonstrate the power that targeted government programming can have in the lives of individuals. The *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalya* initiative to educate girls in rural India is one example. Girls in states including Tripura, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, known for such issues as child labor, have experienced nearly 100 percent retention of girls in these schools. The students find sufficient resources and safety in the KGBV programs, and the students that benefit the most tend to come from *dalit* communities (European Union,

NUEPA, and Save the Children 2013, 7). A number of states have also implemented Computer Assisted Learning programs to improve the technological literacy of their students and expand the learning resources available to them. This program seems somewhat correlated with wealth. Wealthy states, with Maharashtra at the top, tend to have the largest number of computers in actual terms. While many of these specific programs, and in some states programs introduced by civil society and NGOs, supplement the education of Indian elementary school students, the foundational aspects of their education will make or break the overall system. An understanding of how states approach and structure the responsibility of elementary education, how teachers are trained, and how different types of education are incorporated will be the most important issues at the foundation of understanding India's current flagship program.

### **Andhra Pradesh**

#### *Structure*

There are many contesting viewpoints about the educational success of Andhra Pradesh relative to other states in India. However, its educational growth comes from a unique set of practices (some of which do not reflect the methods that the central government expected or mandated) that nonetheless are similar to the successful practices of other states. Additionally, it is important to keep the nature of the regression model signaling Andhra Pradesh's success in mind. The purpose of the model is to consider which states have developed a stronger trajectory than one might predict looking at the state's social indicators. Given that Andhra Pradesh has been compared frequently with the BIMARU states and considered to be "backward" in many respects, its educational attainment and strength is unexpected. Additionally, Andhra Pradesh appears to be doing

much worse in the data because the state recently separated from Telangana, which became India's newest state. About three million students are no longer included in Andhra Pradesh's educational data. Additionally, a slight decline in the population size of the state has taken place over the last decade.

The history of education in Andhra Pradesh demonstrates that the state gained a lot of traction in universalizing education through earlier iterations of universal education policies, including the District Primary Education Project and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Priyam 2014). Naidu's vision of decentralization differed significantly from the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments to India's Constitution, which established specific methods for decentralization within the context of the *panchayati raj* system. While he enforced the creation of Village Education Committees (VECs) and Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs) within schools, his vision of government differed from the Constitution's model regarding the district level. Whereas the amendments envisioned decentralization as a process of devolving powers down to Panchayat (village) level governments and block officials, Naidu wanted the district education office, which is technically part of the state Department of Education, and not strictly a decentralized decision-making body, to be the lowest level of government to administer education. In the system established by the central government, VECs and PTAs were meant to treat Panchayat and block level systems as first responders for grievances, and they were meant to have much more power for decisions of the distribution of materials for the students. This was executed through one of Naidu's pet projects, a system he referred to as the *Janmabhoomi* system.

The *Janmabhoomi* system created interest groups around social programming areas such as education, resource distribution, women's rights, child's rights, and more.

These groups, also referred to as self-help groups, organized groupings of villages and urban areas around an issue, and then they were encouraged to report to the relevant state agency to resolve issues or make requests to improve the system. Scholars speculate that this was a tactic for Naidu to organize people around his affiliation with the Congress Party to generate support for the the party's agenda in future elections. Others claim that he generally did not trust Panchayat or block level bodies to act effectively on behalf of citizens (Priyam 2009, 180). Regardless of his motivation, one benefit was that the state stayed fairly connected to local issues, and decentralization of a different sort could make the central decision-making of the state more effective (Priyam 2009, 180). Under RTE, schools have specific requirements for the formation of School Management Committees. This involves the inclusion of a member of the "decentralized" government agency to sit on the SMC and ensure that the most local form of government could act as a first responder to educational needs in the area before appealing to the state Department of Education. This is a fairly dramatic shift in policy within the state. However, very little literature exists about the situation on the ground about school management committees. If the Naidu government was willing to violate constitutional amendments to achieve what they believed was the best policy option available, it is quite possible that this variance is still practiced. That said, school management committees in Andhra Pradesh are said to have a great deal of license in incorporating civil society organizations within their communities and training out of school children. According to Manisha Priyam, this type of decentralization was quite effective in creating momentum for better social policy, especially education policy, in Andhra Pradesh. Priyam argues that the state's approach to decentralization, "not only put an end to the opportunities for political

patronage and rent-seeking in transfers and postings, but it also won over the loyalty of teachers (Priyam 2012, 260).” Andhra Pradesh was better able to take into account the specific needs of teachers, and the teachers responded with cooperation. More studies should be done about this shift to determine whether Naidu was correct not to trust local governments with so much social policy control, and instead leave it with state level departments with better access to resources.

### *Teachers*

One of the greatest difficulties associated with RTE was to transition away from the use of para-teachers, and pay for the training and salaries of full-time teachers. Teacher salaries comprise a significant amount of the budget in most states, making the payment of a greater volume of full-time time teachers an expensive affair. While *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* intervenes at the state level to help fund teacher trainings, the cost has jumped significantly with the introduction of RTE. The general practices of teachers, in addition to the public-private dichotomy, demonstrate areas where public education breaks down in Andhra Pradesh. While some of these issues may be unique to the state, it is also possible that certain outcomes are really the fault of the national level policy or enforcement, in which case states are simply trying to make policies that dampen the effects of burdens placed on them by the national government. Making the effort to introduce enough new teachers and school buildings of sufficient quality in Andhra Pradesh has been a very difficult challenge. Prior to RTE, Andhra Pradesh, as a poorer state, had a heavy reliance on para-teachers to reach students. This practice was particularly important in rural areas. The state hired tens of thousands of active para-teachers under the DPEP and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, which likely saved money while

establishing better education infrastructure for students. This likely created the conditions for continued educational improvement under RTE.

Studies of government and private teachers in Andhra Pradesh have generated mixed results. It is not clear that one produces better results long term, although studies demonstrate that private school teachers tend to cover more material day-to-day with their students. While this will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, drawing comparisons between private and public schools generally, the expectations put on private school teachers as compared to their government school counterparts deserves independent examination. Teacher practices reflect policy implementation decisions on behalf of state and national bodies, and they create decentralized policy-making decisions for local bodies. Government teachers tend to be paid much better than private school teachers, and they have much better job security than private school teachers.

Government positions in general are highly desirable because employees are almost never fired and the pay is much higher than other jobs in the private sector. Teachers unions aligned with government schools provide this same security for government school teachers, and they advocate in the interest of teachers, often at the expense of improvements to the education system. Priyam sees teacher unions as an inhibitor to the process of implementing RTE provisions because of competition between unions for teacher loyalty. Unions gain membership by offering teachers the most benefits and support, even when it means that the teachers incentives to perform in the classroom are compromised, in order to garner power over government education agencies. This amounts to control over certain areas of spending and political clout when the teachers' unions participate in other areas of politics.

The Center for Civil Society notes that unions have entrenched themselves against the push towards private education. In a system in which private schools and government schools were forced to compete, union leaders fear, the quality of education in the government schools might not be a worthy opponent to the quality of education in private schools. This notion is contested by several studies, but evidence does demonstrate the dedication of private school teachers more than government school teachers. For example, teachers in government and private schools were observed in order to understand the consistency with which they reviewed the work they assigned their students. In private schools, 82 percent of teachers returned their students' work with corrections. Only 40 percent of government teachers did the same (UNESCO 2014, 46). However, the state fights an uphill battle with respect to social attitudes towards the inclusion of poor children in the education system. As of 2013, children from the 40 percent of the poorest households in India composed 70 percent of the government school student population (UNESCO 2014, 47). Since many of these children attended school infrequently due to family financial issues, participation in child labor, or other reasons, teachers in government schools are often frustrated with the practices required of them to accommodate these students. Their classes get bigger and the variety of learning levels in their classrooms makes it challenging to structure curriculum.

Even though a private or pro-market approach to a social good takes responsibility off of the government to provide a social good, a comparison government and private school teachers demonstrates that it, in certain cases, this approach might

achieve the outcomes the government has aimed for better than government schools.<sup>5</sup>

Private school teachers often have less experience and education than their government school counterparts. Private school teachers do not have the incentive of higher pay, but the fact that their pay is lower means that the school can hire fewer teachers and provide smaller classes (UNESCO 2014, 47). The job of each teacher becomes easier. Even though they are paid less than government school teachers, the job is worth keeping.

Private school teachers tend to teach one grade at a time, and they teach one grade at a time. Government school teachers, however, are expected to work with multiple grades on a daily basis. The working conditions for private teachers (including the superiority of infrastructure and hygiene in their schools) prevents the earning of less pay from inhibiting their motivation to produce quality education for students.

#### *Private vs. Public*

Andhra Pradesh is an example of a state that has recently faced the difficulties of of competition between public and private schools. Some of this competition is driven by demographics, some by perception, and some by the fact that government schools in certain states, including Andhra Pradesh, may be failing relative to private schools.<sup>6</sup> First, trends emerge in the state determining the likelihood that a child attends a private school. To examine demographic characteristics of private education, a study from 2013 shows that living in an urban area of Andhra Pradesh is the most important factor in determining

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<sup>5</sup> The thesis will provide more insight on the private and public school systems overall in the next section

<sup>6</sup> The claim that private schools are generally better than government schools has been challenged by several studies, which will be introduced in later case studies. However, it may be the case that private education in some states is better than government-provided education.

whether a child attends a private school. This was followed by the importance of household wealth in whether a family could afford private education (McLoughlin 2013, 21). However, the nuance to this data is that the most recent growth in private education has taken place in rural areas. Comparing two generations of students in the state, only ten percent of the older generation in a rural area attended private schools, whereas 32 percent of the younger generation currently does (McLoughlin 2013, 25). Some of these children are likely attending private schools with the assistance of Section 12 (c), but Andhra Pradesh has not demonstrated a great participatory effort with respect to this provision. The State of the Nation Report on private education from 2015 regarding the extent to which states comply with this specific clause noted that Andhra Pradesh filled less than five percent of the seats available for eligible students. Students in Andhra Pradesh are Section 12 (c) eligible on the basis of caste (the determinant of an “economically weaker section”). Therefore, over 16 percent of the state population is eligible for entry into the lottery for a private school voucher on the basis of their Scheduled Caste designation (DISE Data 2014, 31). Regardless, private school enrollment remains higher in urban areas, where wealth tends to concentrate and the larger population can afford tuition.

Once children enter private schools in Andhra Pradesh, learning outcomes differ and they are unlikely to return to a government school. This phenomenon is partially determined by perceptions surrounding the productivity of private school, a perception that research supports with a twist. First of all, studies debunked the argument that private schools produce better test scores overall. The most prominent study on the subject compares four student groups over the course of several years. The four groups include

those who never applied for a private school voucher, children who had applied but not received the voucher, children who received the voucher, and finally children who began their education in a private school. Their scores were compared, and the research demonstrates that test scores in private schools might be better the first year, but not in any significant way after the first year (Muralidharan and Sundararaman 2013, 1). The same study also finds the conclusion that private schools might be producing higher test scores based on selection bias or the omission of certain student scores (Muralidharan and Sundararaman 2013, 1). Where private schools seem to be getting the advantage and producing better learning is that they cover more subjects, have longer school days and even longer school years. Students are paying for a more comprehensive education. While student test scores (theoretically demonstrating the quality of learning coming out of the school) are not different in a statistically significant way, students are achieving similar scores while having learned larger quantities of material, or having spent less time on the same material in favor of more diverse learning. Generally, private schools “perform better on most measures of effort,” which makes the cost acceptable. However, students generally performed better when their “medium of learning was not interrupted,” i.e. they did not transition out of a government school into the private sector. Private schools may not be able to add more value to the education of this specific group of students than government schools. All of this said, the literature is not clear on what happens to students who find private schools unsatisfactory based on the quality of learning, bullying, or cost. No reports exist on those students returning to government schools, although the sentiment that public schools in Andhra Pradesh have failed would suggest that the cost of labor and time would outweigh a government-provided education.

The cost associated with insufficient private school education may be far more detrimental because it is the form of education that families perceive to be worthwhile.

Private schools generally run more cost-effective programs. According to data from the Center for Civil Society, schools in Andhra Pradesh ran their operations for just one-third of the cost of a government school. Since the demand for private education exists, if the quality of education is actually higher than that in government schools, the cost of private schooling could be much higher than it is. Still, the cost is extremely high for many families in India. The willingness of parents to bear the cost of having children attend private school is significant since it is not just monetary. Making the sacrifice of sending a child to private school might mean sending one sibling over another, jeopardizing the future of the younger siblings or girls. Families generally expect a free education in government schools since allegations of corruption and under the table fees are not prominent in news media or scholarly writings on the major issues Andhra Pradesh faces. The state also seems to be complying with RTE norms by providing students with uniforms, books, transportation, and the Mid-Day Meal. All of these incentives to enroll children in government schools are on the line when parents still make the decision to fund private education for their children if they are not eligible for Section 12 (c) enrollment.

The public in Andhra Pradesh expresses the sentiment that government schools, especially teachers in government schools, have failed. A study from 2012 cited quality teaching as the most important decision-making factor when parents choose to send their children to private schools. This was also confirmed by a report from 2008 claiming that “the main deficiencies in the state sector cited by parents were the poor attitudes and

work practices of teachers. Parents were unhappy with the irregular attendance of teachers and their poor discipline in the classroom (Mcloughlin 2013). Even though fees increase over the years a child attends a private school, the tradeoff is perceived to be worthwhile. Drawing an analogy from Uttar Pradesh, parents who were surveyed responded that they would prefer to continue to send their children to government schools if quality improved, largely due to the lower cost of government schools (Mcloughlin 2013, 26). Only 13 percent of private school students total are coming from disadvantaged castes even though many of the students are eligible for voucher programs. Additionally, 65 percent of parents who placed their children in private schools had received primary education, increasing their chances of financial stability to send their children to private schools as well. Government schools in Andhra Pradesh and other states bear the brunt of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Therefore, it may be the case that the perception of educational quality is being conflated with the perception of the background of the students.

Other types of schooling exist throughout Andhra Pradesh, though not much research has been done to establish their effectiveness or relationship to RTE. The controversy over effective educational programming is centered on the distinction between government schools and private unaided schools. Other schools to consider include aided private schools, which receive a lump sum of money from the government in addition to private contributions as opposed to a system in which schools receive money per student. The attitude towards these schools is that the lump sum approach does not meet student needs. A major issue in Andhra Pradesh, however, with respect to educating minority populations, is providing resources for madrasa schools. Only

recently have more madrasa schools been recognized and given resources to provide more standard education in addition to the religious education offered. Initially, madrasa schools and religious schools generally were excluded from recognition at all. Many states, including Andhra Pradesh, are realizing the importance of these schools as being central in communities and including more students in the formal education process. The numbers are few and far between, and the progress is slow. Only two madrasas received guarantees of the Mid-Day Meal program and uniforms, with aid for computer-assisted learning potentially arriving in the future (Sridhar 2015). On a principled level, however, the idea that all children are being recognized as deserving of a better education lends credence to RTE, and gives hope that more local bodies and organizations will push to improve upon existing national expectations and programs.

## **Himachal Pradesh**

### *Structure*

Himachal Pradesh has been lauded for its development in social policy since the 1990s, especially since it has nearly achieved universal primary education. Notably, children have the highest rates of enrollment and attendance. The state has also massively expanded school infrastructure, which is impressive considering the lack of wealth Himachal Pradesh possesses relative to other states that are doing much worse in providing quality education (Mangla 2013, 68). Many social scientists are inclined to compare Himachal Pradesh's massive successes to those of Kerala's because they are arguably two of the best organized states about getting children into school. However, chapter two recognized the extent to which poverty and terrain make Himachal Pradesh a difficult state in which to have cohesive social policy, and so, according to Amartya Sen

and John Dreze, “Himachal Pradesh’s advancement in primary schooling is more remarkable than Kerala’s because the initial conditions were less favorable.” The state’s neighbors, including Haryana and Punjab, are much wealthier, but have still have less success with educational outcomes. Himachal Pradesh seems to be doing the most with what it has available by providing schools in areas that are hard to reach, better pupil-teacher ratios, and effective accountability mechanisms (Das et al. 2015).

Recently, the World Bank produced a report entitled “Scaling the Heights” that examines the structure of education and healthcare in the state. The most important discussion in article focuses on the bureaucratic norms that have been cultivated by state officials, local bodies, and the general population. The bureaucratic norms that exist in Himachal Pradesh resemble the central government’s definition of decentralization more than Andhra Pradesh’s model. For example, the district and block levels of local government have a great deal of power under Himachal Pradesh’s model. The block level is technically the lowest level of the Department of Education under the *panchayati raj* system, although it is not often perceived as having significant enough enforcement power to be trusted with responsibility. In Himachal Pradesh, this is not the case. Higher state officials view block officials as the foremost experts on their communities. Both block level government, and corresponding panchayat level governments, have close relationships with school management committees, and most citizens are aware of the existence of such systems when they are surveyed. Further case studies reveal that this is not true in many other states. Akshay Mangla, a professor and researcher from Harvard University, writes extensively on the state’s bureaucratic norms based on his observations from field work. When he visited Himachal Pradesh, he noted that district level officials

frequently referred him to relevant block officials to ask questions about the experiences that communities had as the recipients of social policy resources. In shadowing some of these block officials, Mangla describes how they frequently visited the schools in their communities, made observations, and then recommended immediate action to teachers and administrators. A specific example includes an incident in which Mangla witnessed a block official send a teacher to the home of two students who had missed several days of school. He asked the teacher to inform the parents about the Mid-Day Meal program and other benefits that the school could offer to incentivize their attendance (Mangla 2013).

The notable level of decentralization taking place in Himachal Pradesh within the context of the *panchayati raj* system is possible because state-level officials respond to recommendations made by block and district representatives. Since the established norm is to trust the relationship of low-level officials with their communities, there is faith that the recommendations will meet the needs of constituents. Obvious political benefits are associated with responding to constituent needs, but there also exists a culture in which a confident public, rather than a jaded one, can make requests of the state-level officials without fear that their voices will be ignored. When this culture has existed for a sustained period of time, children and young adults who were raised in it become the politicians who have engrained in their psyche the need for government to respond to individual concerns. One of the most prominent consequences is that Himachal Pradesh has established a corresponding norm in favor of independent action. State-level actors break the rules when they are confident that it will produce a positive outcome for their communities (Mangla 2013, 92).

A few examples from Mangla's field research demonstrate the extent to which the state innovates and acts independently to achieve universal primary education. One example of this decision-making is related to the rurality of Himachal Pradesh. According to the World Bank, nearly 90 percent of the state is considered rural (World Bank 2015). Many students would be required to cross dangerous natural features to reach the nearest city centers, and the population density is very low in their communities. Many other states would either expect these children to make the trip to attend a government school that meets the minimum size requirements under RTE. Otherwise, they would simply be out of school. In this case, locals approached their government representatives, and a school house was established to educate only two children! Community members are employed as staff to teach the children and cook for them. The students are recipients of regular benefits such as the Mid-Day Meal Program, free uniforms and free books. Technically, the school is not meeting all infrastructure requirements and, according to Mangla, it should not legally exist due to its size. When the central policies of RTE came in conflict with the end goal of universal elementary education, though, the state chose to pursue the goal rather than word of the law. In other cases, such as the small Gujjar nomadic tribe in the state, some populations are mobile. Despite the small size of the population and the lack of support for the program in national level policy, the state responded to their desires for mobile programming by training teachers, providing books, and sponsoring examinations. Gujjar children are now officially completing primary education. In order to demonstrate that this is not a common practice among Indian states, Mangla analyzed the policy-making of Uttarkhand, which is demographically similar to Himachal Pradesh and in the same

neighborhood of northern India. While the World Bank described Himachal Pradesh as “adapting central government criteria and norms to its topographic realities,” Mangla did not see this quality in its neighbor (Das et al. 2015). Mangla argued that Uttarkhand officials were more likely to make decisions consistent with the central mandates even if jeopardizing the goal of universal elementary education.

### *Teachers*

Even though Himachal Pradesh has violated some central government policy norms, they have met others with surprising success. The norms that the state has met tend to correspond with producing higher quality education. For example, even with small schoolhouses throughout the state, less than eight percent of schools are run by a single teacher (Mangla 2013). Given the rapid increase in the number of in-school children since the 1990s, the state has had to build a large number of schools and fill teaching positions. One program that met the need for teachers involved transitioning para-teachers into permanent positions. This complies with the expectation under RTE that all para-teachers become full-time, fully-trained teachers despite the enormous cost of training all of them and covering their significantly higher salaries. Himachal Pradesh had been hiring large number of para-teachers since the 1980s to reach rural children, and so the state was responsible for meeting the RTE requirements for a large number of teachers. One way that Himachal Pradesh worked with the large volume of para-teachers in the state was to phase them into full-time teaching positions as they became available. The state guarantees para-teachers a permanent position to replace a retiring permanent teacher once a teacher’s contract expires.

While Himachal Pradesh is meeting the demand for teachers, it is not clear that teacher quality is meeting the desires of the stakeholders. This may correspond to the complaints that were held against para-teachers prior to their inclusion as permanent staff, and it is a factor in providing a high-quality education that the state should examine moving forward. Another issue cited is one that plagues many other states: teacher unions and the permanence associated with work for the government. According to Mangla, Himachal Pradesh has not fully escaped the issue of teacher absenteeism that was also discussed in the case study from Andhra Pradesh (Mangla 2013, 70). Research from Andhra Pradesh also found that teachers in private schools had better records of attendance, but as the next section will discuss, private schooling is only beginning to appear in Himachal Pradesh.

#### *Private vs. Public*

Compared to other states, government education in Himachal Pradesh is viewed favorably (Mangla 2013, 71). However, more families are beginning to send their children to private school, even if it means traveling out of their village into larger urban centers on a daily basis. Discontent over government education has begun to surface in a more apparent way. Given the relative poverty and rurality in Himachal Pradesh, though, part of the perception that government schools are adequate may be related to the newness of any access to schools and other good provided by the government. Excellent social policy is a recent phenomenon in Himachal Pradesh, and it is responsible for alleviating poverty in the state. Lower rates of poverty and more urban concentration have also introduced consumerism and wealth as education helps people to better their prospects in life. Mangla demonstrates this phenomenon, including the positive and

negative consequences, in the village of Kandhar Ghat. In this village, individuals experienced an increase in their wealth and began to send their children out of the village to two private schools in the capital, Shimla. The group sending students out of the village includes government school teachers. Families whose children transitioned out of government schools reported that, comparatively, education in the government schools is not as strong. One headmaster of a government school complained that the “baseline of education” in government schools is not improving. Additionally, the teachers do not appear to put in sufficient effort. For example, children are not coming home from school with homework (Mangla 2013, 102). Wealthier families that make the decision to send their children into Shimla complain that the government schools in Kandhar Ghat are catering to children that belong to socially disadvantaged groups (Mangla 2013, 102). Interpreting that comment, the school is probably perceived as catering to a community in which students cannot complete their homework on time because they are expected to work after school or they do not have parents with formal education to help them complete the homework. Other times, these students have irregular attendance to work or care for siblings, and so the teacher also spends class time reviewing lessons with them rather than moving forward with the class as a whole. As a result, all students get behind.

Three separate trends confirm that this might be an issue. First, as another example of adapting independent norms to meet local needs, Himachal Pradesh organizes its school calendar around seasons for labor and dangerous weather conditions. The first of these concerns tailors to a population that must work to survive, and their families may perceive the importance of their education in a different way. Second, since students in Himachal Pradesh government schools are not paying for their education, missing school

is not as much of a loss. Given that students fall behind when they miss school, administrators and teachers may adjust the difficulty and amount of work to keep students from getting too discouraged. If the students were paying to be in a private school, the economic loss might receive more weight, keeping children in school for more days, and allowing teachers to push students more. Third, when tested, students in Himachal Pradesh demonstrated lower reading comprehension scores than most other states (Das et al. 58). Even though this is the case, the advancements that have been made in the state are surprising relative to the socio-economic conditions that exist. Reading comprehension scores and teacher effectiveness could be much worse. The progress that Himachal Pradesh has made relative to other states suggests the existence of successful policy practices that have established a positive trajectory for the future development of education.

## **Maharashtra**

### *Structure*

Maharashtra's high per capita income of 114,392 Rupees (approximately 1716 US Dollars) per capita from 2013-14 translates into high government expenditure per student for elementary education. According to reports from 2014, government expenditures on education in the state are much higher than other states in India. One report estimates 20,838 Rupees (approximately 312 US Dollars) per elementary school student, while the median for India rests at 14,615 Rupees (219 US Dollars) (Aiyar and Pritchett 2014, 11). The state's education budget only increased 37 percent between the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school year, which is significantly less than other states (PAISA 2011, 58). This level of expenditure that is possible, though, results in such benefits as

having over 50 percent of schools in the state equipped with computers (Mehta 2013, 15). Maharashtra receives the lowest amount of funding per student from *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. The state is paid only 2208 Rupees (33 US Dollars) per student (Dongre and Kapur 2014). Relative to other states in India, private investment is much lower, around 6000 Rupees (90 US Dollars) per student (Dongre and Kapur 2014). While it is impressive that other case studies demonstrate lower state-level expenditure per student but unexpectedly successful educational outcomes, Maharashtra spends significantly more and still achieves educational outcomes that exceed expectations for the level of spending.

This section examines Maharashtra expenditure to determine if the effective distribution of funds translates into a successful education system, or if other factors are contributing to relatively good quality and participation in schools. One of the most significant challenges that Maharashtra has to overcome is violence, having a significantly higher rate of homicides than most states in India according to 2012 crime statistics. Additionally, one of the three largest groups of child laborers historically comes from Maharashtra, an issue which had to be addressed separately from basic universal access to education. While nothing particularly stands out about the administration of elementary education in Maharashtra, the state's approach to these challenges will provide insight about how the state's actions outside of education policy directly affect progress in education. It is worth noting, however, that the state successfully decentralized elementary education management to the district level. In reference to the state RTE rules for Maharashtra, local authorities have successfully taken control of establishing neighborhood schools, providing transportation, monitoring the treatment of

students in schools, and they have become more involved in the training and recruiting of teachers. While it is notable that this sort of devolution is occurring, it does not seem to be the case that government bodies below the district level, such as village or block-level organizations, have a significant role in administering education. While oversight by district level officials might be held to higher standards of accountability, and they have more clear access to state level resources, it is also possible that the district, rather than any sub-district level of government, is less efficient in responding to local needs.

Community participation is significant relative to other states. Many schools across India struggle to compose school management committees beyond higher level school administration, but 95 percent of schools in Maharashtra reported that at least one community member of the committee participated in the creation of the school development plans. As a contrast, only 72 percent of schools in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh claimed such participation by parents (Accountability Initiative 2014, 6). Despite the large percentage of SMCs that have formed, the frequency of meetings is not necessarily a strength. In the Satara district, only 47 percent of SMCs met monthly (PAISA 2011, 65). This participation in Maharashtra also indicates an improvement within the state over the past 15 to 20 years. Village education committees in Maharashtra in the early 2000s were reported to be under-representative, though they are still likely to be far from perfect now. Just over one percent of Maharashtra's budget for education is allocated towards school management committee training, and only 14 percent of this amount is reported to be spent on the training (Accountability Initiative 2014, 4).

Given Maharashtra's child labor problem and the sheer extremes of wealth and poverty, the state has had to undertake a variety of schemes to keep track of the student population and bridge the gap between full-time and part-time students. With respect to child labor, reports of success in Maharashtra are mixed. According to a UNICEF report from 2013, Maharashtra was responsible for approximately five percent of child labor in cotton fields. The state also produces about 100,000 children between the ages of six and fourteen who work in sugar cane fields. Most of these children are considered to be out of school, as *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* changed the definition of "out-of-school" in the early 2000s to include migratory child laborers. Initial steps were taken to introduce bridge training, mobile schools, and more through the Educational Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (Hallmann 2016, 339). The state seems to have recognized, though, that simply incorporating children into education would not resolve the issue of child labor. Maharashtra participated in a UNICEF scheme to establish community awareness and schemes to stop the flow of child migratory labor during cotton season, keeping those students in schools. The state was more successful than others, like Gujarat and Rajasthan, that were also included in the initiative. Only Maharashtra advanced as far as developing greater advocacy to end child labor at the district level. This included district level meetings to recommend a process to outlaw child agricultural labor altogether at the state level (New Concept 2014, 8).

Other organizations and programs, meanwhile, have attempted to provide education to child laborers until the practice can be eradicated. Such programs include the *Mahatma Phule Siksham Hami Yojana*, which was incorporated through *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* in 2002 to offer bridge educational opportunity for child sugar cane laborers.

While the program offers a starting point to the solution, it only covers ten percent of qualified children (Hallmann 2016, 340). Other efforts are undertaken by NGOs, but the scope of their impact is not easily discernable from data or reports. According to Sandy Hallman (2016), the distinction between passing a law and having sound government practice makes the difference between educating migratory child laborers and not. While Maharashtra has not fully achieved the incorporation of child laborers into its education system, the fact that the laws and foundations for norms in government practice exist is far more than most states in India can claim, and the laws they do have seem to be in far more advanced stages. However, the state will need to introduce and enforce such programs and laws more rapidly, as the growth rate in labor participation is currently outpacing the rate at which targeted programs are getting children enrolled.

Moving forward, the state government is also introducing *Aadhaar* Cards. Registered officials will travel throughout the whole state photographing and thumb-printing children, in cities and villages alike, to collect more accurate data on children and ensure their attendance in school through a database. The program is still in its early stages, but it demonstrates an effort-intensive, expensive program that the state has been willing to undertake. Although Maharashtra has been criticized in the past for not decentralizing enough past the district level to allow block-level officials to participate in regulation and accountability measures, this program would largely be administered at the block level. Local governments would have the opportunity and momentum to participate in the pursuit for universal elementary education.

## *Teachers*

As a result of the state's large education budget, nearly all teachers in Maharashtra are appropriately certified and trained. They are paid well after three years of contractual work on an honorarium, with 75 percent of the education budget going to teacher salaries. However, the state does not encourage much creativity or innovative interaction with students in the classroom. This is partly the function of unions and the fact that teachers are offered job security to do the bare minimum (Bhattacharjea, Ramachandran and Sheshagiri 2008). They are not trained to self-evaluate or consider how they could adapt their classroom to improve on the learning outcomes of their students. One report noted that academic support institutions in Maharashtra, as well as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, did monitor and work with teachers. The monitoring appears to be effective. According to a PAISA survey from 2011, regular teachers in the Satara district attend school 91 percent of the time (PAISA 2011, 59). The extent of their support, though, was to ensure that to ensure that teachers complied with the base expectations set before them. It did not give them tools to create an innovative or exceptional classroom (Bhattacharjea, Ramachandran and Sheshagiri 2008, 13). Now, as private schools become more prevalent, the number of teachers being recruited and the number of government schools being established is decreasing. If this trend away from government education continues, one worry may be that funding for other areas of government-provided education will also decrease.

Teachers in Maharashtra are trained significantly more than teachers in most states. Aside from the two years of training required of them, which is typical of other states in India, they are also required to undertake a six-month internship before they

teach in their own classroom. However, the training and certification are often created and delivered by people who are not elementary level educators. The teacher trainees learn about rules and expectations, but they do not receive skills-based information how to apply their training. While teachers are paid well, Maharashtra still belongs to a group including Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, in which 20 percent of students are unable to read above a second-grade level. While most rural children make it at least through fifth grade, only 44 percent of them are able to do two-digit subtraction. Even though Maharashtra is doing better than most Indian states, and even the regression model suggests that it is performing better than you would expect given the status of certain development indicators, it could probably be spending money on more effective on in-depth, innovative training for teachers so that the current culture of minimum work effort, whatever its source, is less appealing. Considering that Maharashtra spends about 4,000 more Rupees (60 US Dollars) per child than Andhra Pradesh, but the difference in fifth grade reading comprehension scores between the two states in 2011 was only four percent, Maharashtra could stand to reevaluate its per student expenditure in certain areas of education policy to achieve significantly higher scores.

#### *Private vs. Public*

With relatively high enrollment in private schools, a moderate seat fill rate for Section 12(c) students, the launching of a successful online admission system, and reportedly high rates of civil society participation, Maharashtra is an active participant in private elementary education relative to its neighbors like Madhya Pradesh. The 2015 *State of the Nation* report reveals that enrollment in private schools has jumped from 18.2 percent to 36.9 percent since 2005. A different estimate from DISE data suggests that

over 28 percent of all students in Maharashtra attend private schools. Often, students who begin in government schools will attend private schools later in their elementary education. Meanwhile, government schools in Maharashtra remain a viable contender to private education, if not a surprisingly successful provider of quality education. The 2014 ASER survey concluded with a study comparing learning outcomes in government schools and private schools. After controlling for a range of factors that might affect the quality of education being produced (similar to the regression model introduced in this paper), researchers not only found that the learning gap was significantly reduced, but that government schools in Maharashtra outperform private schools on learning outcomes (Vivek 2015, 25).

The culture of inter-class and caste integration of private schools has not yet been completely cultivated. In Maharashtra, as well as Rajasthan, private schools “en masse” have attempted to manipulate rules to be qualified as a minority institution. As a minority institution, the 25 percent provision would not apply to their school, and they could maintain the current student composition. Additionally, some schools may be interested in avoiding extra regulations required of them once they offer seats to Section 12 (c) students. Estimates say that between 20 and 40 percent of Section 12 (c) seats are filled, and only 19 percent of schools in Maharashtra participate. Schools may not be opening themselves to the students, but the state, contrary to the main assessment of the program, has struggled to get information to families. Families whose students were qualified to register under RTE but did not reported that they were not aware that their child was eligible, they found the procedure difficult, or they were not persuaded that attending private school was a good choice for their student (OXFAM 2015, 3). Fortunately, data

suggests government schools are not a worse option for students, and so the trend towards greater enrollment in private schools may have to do with a bias towards nicer infrastructure or successful advertising rather than a fact-based discrepancy. Even if PTR tends to be over 30 in many government schools, the quality of teachers and general provision of resources is sufficient to compete with the private sector.

## **Rajasthan**

### *Structure*

Despite inconsistencies in data on out-of-school children, it seems likely that higher end estimates in Rajasthan reflect the reality of the situation on the ground. The National Survey on the Estimation of Out of School Children from 2014 states that five percent of students in the state are out of school. The proportion of out-of-school was 12 percent in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan from 2009, with a notable gender disparity between the percentage of boys and girls out of school. If the real statistic falls between either of these estimates, then Rajasthan has one of the highest percentages of out-of-school children in India. Rajasthan, part of the BIMARU group, has worked hard to overcome lacking economic development. Social issues including child labor and child marriage that are responsible for such high rates of children who are out of school are often associated with lacking economic development. Rajasthan children are known to migrate to Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh to engage in labor or escape it. As of 2013, eight percent of child laborers came from Rajasthan, and the state still has one of the highest rates of child marriage throughout India. Yet, Rajasthan has significantly improved in terms of development recently. Policies that make labor illegal below the age of 18 are steps taken by the state to establish better norms for human development, and

work in a complementary fashion alongside RTE. Other tools like ASER data have been known to be utilized by the state to direct its objectives on education. However, the regression still demonstrates that Rajasthan could be achieving better educational statistics related to school attendance and completion.

Rajasthan is ranked in the middle group of states with respect to state spending on education. For the 2010-11 school year, it was ranked eleventh in India, spending 984.4 Rupees (nearly 15 US Dollars) per student (Tilak 2002, 3). Rajasthan has a low population density, its students tend to be spread out across the state, and many children in Rajasthan do not attend school as the statistics showed. Unlike many other states in India, however, Rajasthan receives most of its education budget from the central government, and the states release some of the largest proportion of district budgets in a timely fashion. Within the state, there are disparities in the amounts that districts receive. States will sometimes take on costs for districts rather than distribute the money to them first (IDFC Foundation 2013, 68). This demonstrates multiple phenomena. First, on a general level, the fact that states are missing portions of their budgets highlights how centralized many spending decisions remain despite the inconsistency of such a practice in the larger vision for RTE (IDFC Foundation 2013). The rigidity associated with this practice makes it difficult for localities to spend the money in a way that is efficient for their constituents. The second important point is that Rajasthan should be doing much better spending the money that it has. The state does not need to spend more necessarily. The money that the state plans to spend is available, but by examining education outcomes and the rate at which children participate in education, it is clear that the

programs do not seem to be utilizing funds well. It is possible that the money gets tied up at the district.

Rajasthan has improved in its willingness to fund education, as the level of expenditure has increased overtime. This means that students who are in the education system are likely receiving some greater degree of resources than students from years past. For example, the state increased the amount of funds being utilized by increasing the hiring of para-teachers and investing more in school infrastructure. A better balance in spending could be struck in the future in other areas of need, though (Jha and Parvati 2014, 49). These areas include teacher training, accountability mechanisms, the availability of tools for learning in the classroom. Like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan spent about 5,000 more Rupees (slightly more than 74 US Dollars) per student than Bihar during the 2010-11 school year, but Bihar's educational outcomes were superior to those in Rajasthan (IDFC Foundation 2013).

There are inconsistencies in the descriptions of Rajasthan's decentralized political structure and how it relates to education. Historically, the tradition of the *Panchayati Raj* system has been strong in Rajasthan. It was the first to introduce the three-tier system in 1959. *Scaling the Heights*, the World Bank report referenced in the case study on Himachal Pradesh, likens the two states in terms of their localized powers. According to the paper, both states have worked with a greater degree of independence on the local level relative to other states in India (Das et al. 2015, 49). Since Rajasthan has had a developed *Panchayati Raj* system longer than Himachal Pradesh, one might even expect it to have been more innovative over time. To some extent, Rajasthan has utilized a decentralized system to benefit students. An assessment of the *Shiksha Karmi* program in

the state noted that educators and service agents tended to be more effective in their work when they lived in or near the areas where they worked. They developed a better understanding of the community. Comparable results were found in a program centered around community level micro-planning called *Lok Jumbhish*, which was meant to ensure universal education between 1989 and 2000. Through micro-planning, communities were meant to improve access to education with an emphasis on reducing gender disparities, keep enrolled students in school, improve the quality of learning through regular teacher in-service trainings, and provide additional assistance for disadvantaged students. Examples of micro-planning included the establishment of informal committees within villages to engage in educational planning. Individuals from villages assessed and gathered the needs of their communities, and they brought the information to *Lok Jumbhish* officials working in clusters of villages. Ultimately, the information worked up through the system to Rajasthan educational officers to deliver resources. *Lok Jumbhish* existed in nearly 2,000 villages throughout Rajasthan, and had fairly high participation rates for both boys and girls. The key element of the program not only provided materials and made decisions through transparent processes, but it created a demand for education in Rajasthan that had not previously existed.

Localized decision-making appears to have lost steam around the time that the DPEP scheme became the national flagship program for universal elementary education. Rajasthan attempted to introduce an EGS-style program, like the one in Madhya Pradesh, which Rajasthan officials named the *Rajiv Gandhi Pathashala*. The structure of the program was not successfully upheld in Rajasthan, though. Organizers in higher levels of government, who were meant to direct school requests through *panchayats* to small

organized committees, rarely acted within the required 90 days, and they often chose not to go through *panchayats*. Tension existed between different levels of government, and inefficiencies were the consequence of such bureaucratic behavior. By the time DPEP phased out and RTE appeared, the central and state governments (as can be seen in earlier case studies and testimonial from this case study) appeared to have taken steps to reverse a great deal of decentralization that had been achieved.

School management committees seem to be RTE's predominant mechanism for creating transparency and incorporating input from local groups with respect to their children's education. Unfortunately, they are insufficient. On paper, 93 percent of schools in Rajasthan have established such organizations. Conversations with respondents in Jaipur, however, reveals that the school management committees tend only to exist on paper. Even when a formal body exists, training is very inadequate. Only three to four members, out of an average of 20 members, receive funded training on how to organize and operate the committee, and very rarely do all of those members stay for the duration of the training (Accountability Initiative 2014, 4). The end result is that schools and school boards do not function properly because they are not held accountable. In the district of Jaipur, only 30 percent of schools had school boards that kept track of teacher attendance, and no schools in Jaipur or Udaipur had established School Development Plans (Accountability Initiative 2014, 6). If the school cannot produce a functioning board, then it also seems unlikely that teachers in the school are held accountable in a meaningful way.

## *Teachers*

Rajasthan continues to face several challenges in improving the quality of education delivered by teachers. Acquiring enough teachers, training them adequately, and detangling the political web around teacher appointments are all areas in which the state has had to make drastic improvements in a short period of time. It does not appear to be an area of education in which Rajasthan is performing particularly well. To the credit of teachers, the literacy rate since the 1990s demonstrates significant improvement in learning. Literacy may be a flawed measure of educational attainment, but the extent to which it has increased in Rajasthan suggests progress. Teachers who participated in early programs such as the *Shiksha Karmi Program* and the *Lok Jumbhish* program helped to spread education in Rajasthan, especially bringing it to rural areas, through community decision-making.

As national flagship programs have taken hold and teachers from earlier programs have been incrementally successful in keeping children enrolled, the demand for teachers has increased. The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the year 2012-17 recognized serious teacher shortages in Rajasthan that need to be filled, especially in the interest of providing quality education. As of 2010, nearly 26 percent of schools in Rajasthan were single-teacher schools (DISE Data 2010). The other issue facing teacher recruitment is related to the population density of Rajasthan. Even though the state has a fairly large population, it covers such a large geographical area that reaching all student populations is difficult. This is one way in which Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan are quite similar, though Rajasthan has adapted less successfully to the challenge.

Rajasthan's para-teacher hiring practices actually began in the 1980s. However, it picked up significantly to meet demand under the DPEP and RTE. Over the course of the *Shiksha Karmi* program, some schools even sought out local youth to train as teachers in response to teacher absenteeism. Of course, neither youth teachers nor para-teachers are meant to exist under RTE. In the short term, however, they seem to be one of the few tools available to make it feasible for more children to attend schools. However, the negative impacts that para-teachers have had on the quality of education, especially in Rajasthan where they have been so prevalent, is worrisome. The fault is not necessarily with the teachers themselves, but the fact that their training is extremely inadequate. *Economic and Political Weekly* (2010) highlighted a study revealing that para-teacher training focused mainly on rote learning. While rote learning is still more education than many children in India would receive otherwise, the quality of such an education is often not enough to persuade parents to keep their students enrolled. In other states, para-teachers performed at least as well as full-time teachers, suggesting that training could be adequate and para-teachers could be a better resource. Poor quality of education, as well as corporal punishment on the basis of caste in rural Rajasthani schools, was cited as a reason that parents stopped sending their children to school (Vasavi 2015). The Teacher Education Reform Programme was established in Rajasthan in 2010 to make teaching more responsive to student needs, but its impacts are not yet notable.

When interviewed, teachers expressed that school appointments are steeped in political decision-making, and they claim that recruitment is one of the main issues for both education quality and teacher accountability in Rajasthan. According to testimony by one teacher, district and state politicians are mostly interested in the political

affiliations of teachers and the ability of teachers to make data look good for existing rules. Their interest in changing rules and requirements to meet student needs and produce real results is minimal. The preference that state and district-level officials have for obedience means that teachers who express disagreement or question existing practices face transfers, and an unhealthy culture of unhappiness gets created in schools (Vasavi 2015, 42). Some teachers argued that the culture of political obedience over quality has developed only in the last 25 years, especially as flagship programs have become more centralized. The expectations associated with this change are incongruous with providing better education because teachers educational workloads have not increased, but their administrative workloads have. The bitterness that teachers feel due to their skills being misused and their concerns being ignored results in apathy towards their communities, and so the role of the teachers as community members has also grown worse.

#### *Private vs. Public*

Government schools in Rajasthan may actually perform worse and be less accessible than private schools. This does not mean that the situation in private schools is ideal, but government school culture in Rajasthan has very few supporters. It is expensive for the government and for households, but despite the cost, government schools do not produce results. The enrollment rate in unaided private schools in Rajasthan, especially since RTE, is astounding. The 2015 *State of the Nation* report claims that slightly less than 65 percent of unaided private schools in the state participate in Section 12 (c) on behalf of students living below the poverty line. Half of the students enrolled in private unaided schools under Section 12 (c) throughout India comes from either Rajasthan or

Madhya Pradesh. Just over 40 percent of rural children are enrolled in private unaided schools. Students in private schools, who both did and did not enroll in tuition classes, performed better academically than their counterparts in Rajasthan as of 2012 (IDFC Foundation 2013, 59). The DISE survey suggests that the mass enrollment in private schools is a result of the fact that the quality of education is simply better. Rajasthan has one of the largest government school populations in India, but the growth in private school enrollment suggests that the future educational landscape of the state may be quite different. To the credit of government schools since the implementation of RTE, the ratio of primary schools (first grade through fifth grade) to upper primary schools (sixth grade through eighth grade) has declined, and it is now less than the all-India average. This indicates that more students are transitioning into upper primary from primary than has been the case, and the rate of demand for the creation of upper primary schools has increased. Whether or not students will finish their education in government schools, rather than private schools, however, is still a question that requires examination.

Not only does the quality of education seem worse in government schools in Rajasthan, but the schools are more expensive to operate and to attend. Government schools in the state spend almost two and a half times the money as a private school does to operate, yet the learning outcomes are less impressive (Aiyar and Pritchett 2014, 10). As a state that has struggled with economic development, social services have come at some cost to households as well. In economically advanced states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, households pay very little out of pocket for their children to attend school (whether this includes providing their children's materials, transportation, etc.). In Rajasthan, poor households are spending far more than their counterparts in other states

to keep their children in school (Tilak 2002, 31). Surprisingly, households were willing to spend roughly equal amounts to keep both boys and girls attending school, which differs from the usual gender disparity in school attendance.

Within private schools, mixed reports exist regarding the quality of education and treatment of students. Administratively, the schools seem strong. The *State of the Nation* report for 2015 gave Rajasthan high marks, especially for its admission-to-reimbursement portal. Schools are paid back the tuition for Section 12 (c) students quickly, the portal provides a greater degree of transparency, and money disappears less often in the bureaucratic process, according to the 2015 *State of the Nation* report. However, respondents in Jaipur mentioned concerns about the treatment of Section 12 (c) students. These concerns involved allegations of abuse and second-class treatment that students in Bhopal expressed. Reports also reveal that, like private schools in Maharashtra, some have attempted to apply for minority status to avoid the 25 percent provision and the inclusion of more impoverished students in their communities. Whatever the case may be, the drastic shift towards private education in Rajasthan will require important short term adjustments by state officials to avoid inefficient spending and overlap between the two systems. Government schools, for example, have suffered as a result of large student groups leaving to private schools. This phenomenon produces schools that are too small to operate once the only students left are a small group that either cannot afford private school or did not win a Section 12 (c) lottery placement. When significant portions of students leave a local government school to attend a private school, the government school will shut down rather than operate for the small group that remains. If these

students do not have transportation to another government school or cannot obtain enrollment in a private school, then they drop out.

## **Madhya Pradesh**

### *Structure*

The education scenario in Madhya Pradesh is far from promising. Less than 90 percent of poor students reach fifth grade (UNESCO 2014, 3). While the state reports that only six percent of their students are out of school, an important reminder of the inconsistencies of such data accompanies that data. Alongside the low educational index ratings and literacy scores that the state receives, Madhya Pradesh remains one of the five states with the lowest expenditure levels on education and the state faces substantial corruption-related issues (Tilak 2002, 10).

Two elements of structure arise in the examination of Madhya Pradesh's educational programming. The first is the structure of government and devolution of powers that have taken place in the state. From the 1960s until the mid-1980s, law in Madhya Pradesh dictated the existence of a *Panchayati Raj* system. This system involves the election or appointment of village councils at three local levels, with the district being the highest level. While the *Panchayati Raj* system is meant to decentralize power to lower levels of government, the post-Independence era involved the appointment of officials to the available positions, and it was not until 1984 that representatives were elected by local people (Manor 2002, 61). Between 1999 and 2001, however, two major shifts took place. First, the *Panchayati Raj* system lost some degree of power when the *panchayats* at the district level fell to the control of a committee under the influence of the district collector. The move was meant to reflect more state decision-making at the

local levels of government (Manor 2002, 66). The second change came when *gram sabhas* assumed the decision-making powers of village level *panchayats*. Instead of elected officials making decisions with delegated power, the *gram sabhas* function as forums in which all voices are meant to be heard in pursuit of a group decision (Manor 2002). This policy moved in the direction of decentralization. However, the combination of policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s demonstrates that government structure in Madhya Pradesh may not be the most efficient when attempting to determine which level of government is an appropriate actor, or whose decision-making power carries more weight in a community.

The second aspect of structure is specific to education policy. A few basic characteristics affect education in the state, specifically how it can be structured. First, Madhya Pradesh is one of the most culturally diverse states in India, and it is geographically very large. Also, it has one of India's largest student populations. Moreover, Madhya Pradesh is one of India's least economically developed states, and it shares many child welfare problems with Rajasthan, including child marriage and child labor (Deb 2016). In light of all of these issues, and prior to RTE, the government of Madhya Pradesh recognized the need to improve access to education and reduce the numbers of out-of-school children. The state introduced the Educational Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in conjunction with the District Primary Education Program in the late 1990s. The program established schools within 90 days of a request from a community in an area where children lacked access to a regular government school. The state tried to avoid reliance on the central government for funding, although it used DPEP and SSA funds to set up schools and train teachers. Para-teachers, otherwise known as *Gurujis* in

the EGS schools, were paid less than half of the salary of a government school teacher. Yet, as it has been demonstrated in other states and studies, the teachers produced a quality of education similar to government schools (Ramachandran 2004). Additionally, groups of students transitioned into the EGS school from government schools out of convenience or dissatisfaction with the government school (Ramachandran 2004). The program was successful in introducing 26,571 schools and getting over one million students into schools. Nearly half of those students were girls, and 44 percent were students from scheduled tribes (Ramachandran 2004, 1).

Several administrative changes took place after the introduction of RTE. For example, Madhya Pradesh had a State Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Child prior to positing RTE rules, and has at least temporarily discontinued that practice in its state rules. Madhya Pradesh was not listed among the states continuing EGS programs in the year 2011-12, putting them in compliance with the national rule that alternative schools under this system had to transition into formal schools within two year. While the practice was functioning, and it was sustainable because the structure was developed such that states could be self-reliant for funding, the influence of the central government clearly demonstrates a lack of strong localized, decentralized bureaucratic norms.

### *Teachers*

Madhya Pradesh is not known for a successful deployment of teachers across the state. Teachers who are currently working in schools are often criticized for the poor quality of education that they produce. This is an odd phenomenon given the positive feedback that *Guruji*s received over the course of the EGS programs. These educators

were considered para-teachers, the sort of educators meant to be phased out by RTE. Given their equivalent status to para-teachers, their pay likely eased the expectations that the public had regarding the quality of education that they delivered. Meanwhile, *Gurujis* offered the same, if not similar, quality education to students in EGS schools, improving the public perception of this group (Aiyar and Pritchett 2014, 31).

Currently, Madhya Pradesh has one of the largest populations of untrained teachers in India (Jha and Parvati 2014, 47). Part of this is related to a policy decision in 2010. The state opted only to hire para-teachers for the year (Kingdon and Sipahimalani-Rao 2010). In order to comply with RTE, the state had to offer training immediately to those teachers, but this training was clearly not made available due to the proportion of untrained teachers and how much it would have cost to train them all. Madhya Pradesh is among states in India that have asked the central government for additional funds to complete RTE requirements. Since the state is so large and has faced such slow economic development, the challenge of complying with central government requirements for RTE has been particularly difficult. The failure to fund certain programs means that fewer qualified teachers are recruited. The number of schools being set up has decreased (Jha and Parvati 2014, 49). Among states with pupil-teacher ratios over the appropriate level of 30:1, one of the highest concentrations is in Madhya Pradesh (Mehta 2013, 18). Something has changed between the funding of EGS schools and formal schools for RTE because responsible parties are accused of an inability to manage funds coming from *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (Jha and Parvati 2014). The district of Sagar, for example, only spends 69 percent of the total budget it receives from *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (PAISA 2011, 52). Activities like teacher training across the state experience decreases in

funding, dropping from 69 percent of state spending on education to 61 percent (PAISA 2011, 48).

Teacher absenteeism and accountability are major issues in Madhya Pradesh. According to a PAISA district report from Sagar district, 26 percent of regular teachers did not experience teacher training in 2010. An additional 75 percent of contract teachers were also not trained (PAISA 2011, 49). Headmasters are present in school only 69 percent of the time, and regular teachers attend school 83 percent of the time (PAISA 2011, 49). One way to resolve teacher absence might involve grievance redressal mechanisms. School management committees are meant to report to grievance redressal bodies at the district level. While Madhya Pradesh has improved the availability of redressal officers, several issues still exist. Redressal officers are not comfortable reporting on each other, though in many cases they do not receive sufficient resources to conduct investigations (Robinson 2013, 15). This mirrors charges of corruption lodged against Madhya Pradesh across government agencies.

The most abhorrent reports on teachers in Madhya Pradesh involve their treatment of students in various areas of the state. Activities including corporal punishment have been officially outlawed under RTE. Yet, a report from rural Madhya Pradesh claims that children coming from lower caste families do not receive equal treatment in schools. They were beaten and treated as though they were incapable of being educated on the basis of their status as a first-time learners (Vasavi 2015, 45). This treatment was noticed predominantly in government schools. Ultimately, parents pull these children out of school for the bad quality of teaching and because their children are afraid of going to school. In a state like Madhya Pradesh that is rural, largely poor, and that struggles to

overcome child labor, a universal education policy will not work without creating an optimal environment in schools. Money must be invested in teacher training, but in many districts, this is not the priority. In Sagar, only 43 percent of the budget was invested in teacher training. This was considered by researchers of the Center for Policy Research to be disproportionately since the training is so important, and it is one of the main responsibilities of district-level officials (PAISA 2011, 52). Given the district's budget increased 162 percent between 2010 and 2011, a massive 126 percent of the increase went towards infrastructure rather than quality teaching (PAISA 2011, 54). Teacher training days have dropped in Sagar from 19 days on average per teacher to 14 days (PAISA 2011, 49).

#### *Private vs. Public*

Madhya Pradesh currently has one of the largest government school populations. However, the presence of private schooling has significantly increased with the introduction of RTE and Section 12 (c) (Thakur 2015, 79). Between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, half of the seats being filled under Section 12 (c) across India come from these states (Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad et al. 2015, 8). Madhya Pradesh alone has filled 88.4 percent of the seats made available under the act for students whose families are living below the poverty line, although only 31.4 percent of private schools are known to participate. Relative to other states, however, that have low Section 12 (c) seat fill rates but high private school participation. Madhya Pradesh is at least more inclusive with respect to RTE. While in other states, the perception of private education is favorable, it is unclear if there is consensus that private schools are succeeding over government schools.

The administration of private schools lacks efficacy. Although reports claim that Madhya Pradesh does not have effective methods for disseminating information on RTE, or even having established policy about the type of information to be shared, in light of the number of children admitted under Section 12 (c), this report seems inconsistent (Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad et al. 2015, 67). Other reported administrative failures include infrequency in calculating cost per student and difficulty calculating reimbursements to report to the state, all possibly stemming from the fact that methodologies and authorities in these areas have not yet been determined. Officers responsible for other administrative tasks have assumed responsibility for these jobs in addition to their other areas of interest. While Madhya Pradesh has not necessarily failed in these areas, according to the 2015 *State of the Nation* report, the state is inconsistent in announcing the date of the lottery for RTE seats, collecting paperwork, and establishing neighborhood criteria for private schools.

Is private schooling in Madhya Pradesh more worthwhile than participating in government schools? While the growth trend in private schooling might affirm that question, other factors point in the opposite direction. One of the most significant concerns is public perception of private schools. Through observational data, including conversations with respondents in the city of Bhopal, the public differs in their opinions on the topic. Many people expressed disdain for the private schools, with the exception of the very best private schools, because of the treatment of Section 12 (c) students. For example, students in English-medium schools struggled and received very little help from teachers. Teachers were more likely to recommend that the student transfer to a non-English medium section of the school rather than offer them assistance, as was the case in

other subject matters. Many students do not receive help with homework after school. Otherwise, they rely on NGO afterschool programs for such assistance rather than relying on their teachers. Other individuals reported that Section 12 (c) students, especially lower caste students, were required to eat in separate rooms during the Mid-Day meal, and they were often served last.

Widespread private schooling can only succeed if the appropriate mechanisms exist to reinforce quality and fair treatment, especially when the schools are unaided and subject to much less scrutiny by the central government. The trade-off for all students is that the money going to tuition reimbursements for private schools is money that could otherwise be going to improve government schools, and, equitably serving more children. Unfortunately, Madhya Pradesh's status as a less economically developed state makes those decisions difficult, and many people are making desperate decisions to escape the cycle of poverty rather than create long-term sustainable systems.

## **Gujarat**

### *Structure*

RTE in Gujarat did not start on strong footing. In 2012, Gujarat was one of three states that had failed to establish RTE rules at the state level. The lack of momentum around RTE is surprising considering its wealth and history of rapid economic growth. Since the 1990s, Gujarat has received significant investment from private companies, and the state has one of the highest per capital incomes in India. Economic growth has not translated into increased spending on human development in the state, and the phenomenon is not unique to education. Observations of health policy or the delivery of government sponsored grains in Gujarat demonstrate a general lack of consideration for

the poor and historically excluded that is not unique to education, but it certainly effects the extent to which education is treated as a valuable service.

The structure of Gujarat's legislature reveals how privilege on the basis of caste and class has affected policy outcomes. Joshi and Kathleen McGrath (2015) demonstrate how drastic these consequences have been by comparing Gujarat to Tamil Nadu, a similarly wealthy state, and how their policy decisions have affected areas such as education. To look at Gujarat and Tamil Nadu now, it would be shocking to learn that the two states had very similar human development index ratings from the 1970s. Based on data from the Ministry on Human Rights Development, Gujarat's gender ratio from first grade through twelfth grade was 83:100, whereas Tamil Nadu's was 97:100. Within Scheduled Caste groups, the difference was 87:100 as opposed to 98:100. Among Scheduled Tribes, the dropout in Gujarat was also far worse than in Tamil Nadu. The states were recorded to have dropout rates of 77.6 percent and 31.9 percent respectively (Joshi and McGrath 2015, 467). In 2012, Gujarat was one of three states that had not yet established rules for RTE (a violation of the period of time recommended to notify the central government), so the lag behind Tamil Nadu may be accounted for by the lack of organization around the aims of RTE itself. It may also be a reason that, according to the regression analysis, Gujarat is underperforming relative to other states. It has given itself less time to achieve objectives that other states began to work on immediately.

McGrath and Joshi identify another quality that is both an important similarity and difference between Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. Political contests in both states exist predominantly between two parties. In Gujarat, the fight tends to be between Congress, more left-leaning, and the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP), a neoliberal Hindu nationalist

party. The BJP has held at least 30 percent of seats in Gujarat's legislature since 1995, and it is much less egalitarian than parties in Tamil Nadu. Since the founding of Gujarat in 1960, this neoliberal business mindset has prevailed. The earliest iterations of the legislature in the state were dominated by upper caste individuals. They only included lower caste and class groups through small affirmative action requirements during elections when it was strategic for them. The middle class was rarely included. The legislature was dominated by this group until the 1980s when the Congress Party won an election. The election coincided with mass riots against Muslims, who were affiliated with an Congress Party scheme to improve the diversity of the legislature. Between 1983 and 1992, several Hindu nationalist movement mobilizations occurred that received popular support and damaged the credibility of the Congress Party. The movements launched the BJP into the next election, and they have remained powerful since, even producing such popular leaders as current Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The structure of government has, in this case, affected the quality of education in a detrimental way. The BJP maintains the upper caste and class privilege in the legislature, and adds to it an anti-Muslim agenda that Joshi and McGrath claim is aimed at suppressing women (Joshi and McGrath 2015). With this agenda in mind, it has historically exercised its power to manipulate the public through such actions as editing textbooks to favor its agenda. The BJP also make laws that limit funding for NGOs. NGOs become reliant on donors, then have to act on the donors' wishes in ways that are often counterproductive for the mission of the NGO. The state does not make its education websites accessible or functional, and it limits the scope of programs like the Mid-Day Meal to reach fewer children who need such assistance to remain in school.

Certain strategic decisions have been made to improve education, but those decisions are mostly related to infrastructure rather than the quality of education. For example, Gujarat successfully updated its infrastructure, becoming one of the top five states to provide students with classrooms (Gupta 2013, 26). In order to put teachers in these classrooms, the state also carried out a successful program for teacher recruitment, although these teachers were hired with lower pay for a period of five years, resembling para-teachers. Para-teachers are held to the same teaching standards as regular teachers in Gujarat, and they should be providing high quality education despite their pay. Still, their status as a contractual teacher is technically not in compliance with RTE, making the overall strategy unclear.

Despite excellent infrastructure and high expectations for teachers, Gujarat tends to be ranked much lower than equally wealthy states in educational indices. Educational attainment is not uniform across the state. Educational indicators like literacy rates are very high in some of the largest, wealthiest, most developed cities such as Surat, Ahmedabad, Anand, Gandhinagar, and Navsari (Gupta 2013). This likely demonstrates a bias away from rural areas when educational resources are allocated, whether that is through bureaucratic delay or simple negligence in providing assistance. One concern is that physical infrastructure development is formally a non-negotiable short-term expenditure under the central government's rules and norms. Since Gujarat is a wealthy state, they only receive 2214 Rupees (33 US Dollars) per student from *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, and the rest must come from the state. Developing infrastructure and quality and the same time is expensive, so Gujarat, in violation of central policy rules, offers schools relaxed guidelines on infrastructure if they are meeting learning outcome goals.

Unfortunately, this policy is not aimed at government schools as much as low-cost private schools, to encourage their development in the state. Considering the BJP's tilt towards economic liberalization, the intent may be more focused on driving out government schools populated by lower castes and classes in favor of developing a culture of private education, even if it is low cost.

### *Teachers*

Para-teachers and full-time teachers have been held to the same standard of training in Gujarat. Therefore, unless the training is insufficient, teachers in the state largely seem to lack enforcement. This is obvious in the fact that the teacher absenteeism rate sits at 17 percent (UNESCO 2014, 9). Although the state is heading towards a trend of increasing the number of private schools, Gujarat's elementary education system mostly consists of government schools, where teachers have job security as government employees and union members. As such, the security of their jobs does not provide them with an incentive to attend school on a day-to-day basis.

Two issues faced by teachers, however, are the pupil-teacher ratio and class sizes. The state chose not to enforce the RTE-mandated pupil-teacher ratios in order to allow schools, mostly low-cost private schools, to maintain their existing classroom sizes. Even if the classrooms are slightly smaller than the regulation size of 300 square feet, class size is instead adjusted to be smaller, forcing teachers with larger classrooms to increase their class sizes and pupil-teacher ratio (IDFC Foundation 2013, 119). This has mostly affected the larger classroom teachers, as Gujarat is always included in reports as a state that has a PTR over the 30:1 limit. Some applaud Gujarat for this innovative behavior, and they recognize that private schools predominantly serve students in urban and semi-urban

areas where land and construction are expensive. However, unlike other states that have innovated in education for the benefit of students, this practice has had more unintended consequences than benefits. The burden that it places on individual teachers does not seem to be considered, nor do the poor educational outcomes that the state reports.

Despite the apparent lack of teaching motivation in the state, Gujarati government school teachers perform at least as well as their counterparts in private schools, making the push by state-level officials towards more low-cost private school education seem questionable. The quality of teachers in both school systems is revealed by a study that examines learning outcomes of students in both private and government schools who are also enrolled in after-school tuition classes. The study began prior to RTE. Government school students who received additional support from tuition classes (only 11.3 percent did receive such classes in 2011), performed as well as or better than students in private schools who did not take tuitions. With the extra push, government school students could compete with students in private schools. Teachers in both systems could perform better, but government schools are not as far behind as they are advertised to be.

#### *Private vs. Public*

The overwhelming majority of students in Gujarat attend government schools. Primary school attendance has increased especially at the primary level. Between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, government school attendance fell in first through fifth grades, while private school attendance in those grades increased. In recent cases, reference to private school attendance may refer to the growth in the attendance of private-aided schools rather than private-unaided schools (Thakur 2015, 79). Private-aided schools are analogous to charter schools in the United States, receiving subsidies

from the state for teacher salaries while being organized by a private group. Like private unaided schools, they are also required to reserve 25 percent of seats for a certain group of students under Section 12 (c). In Gujarat, about one and a half percent of private schools for first through fifth grade are aided. This is also true of three percent of schools that teach grades six through eight.

Unaided-private schools in Gujarat filled 42.6 percent of available reservations under Section 12 (c) according to the 2015 *State of the Nation* report. This means that Gujarat is contributing a great deal of effort towards this one provision to benefit students living below the poverty line. The state also did remarkably when it was evaluated by a number of research organizations throughout India regarding the effectiveness of specific elements of Section 12 (c) provisions. According to the State of the Nation Report from 2015, the only areas in which Gujarat was not strongly responding to Section 12 (c) implementation protocol included establishing criteria and specificities for tuition reimbursement. This report is either incorrect, however, or suggests underperformance by the state when contrasted with an OXFAM report on the status of Section 12 (c) implementation. According to OXFAM, there were cities throughout Gujarat in which qualified families did not apply for admission under Section 12 (c). Ultimately, they reported that they were unaware of the fact that they were allowed to apply (OXFAM 2015, 3). This is inconsistent with the report that Gujarat received the highest possible classification for information dissemination and establishment of the type of information to be disseminated. However, once students are in private schools, the government of Gujarat is reported to successfully covers the cost of their education. This is not the case in other states. The calculation covers at least teacher salaries, if not other expensive

elements of a student's education. While the final cost to families is slightly over the calculated student need, the state does much better than the majority of states in India to alleviate the financial burden on these specific students.

## **Chapter 4- Analysis and Conclusion**

Upon examination, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act leaves a great deal wanting. Most criticisms of RTE point to the data on the results of RTE and say that it is bad. This chapter aims to give plausible explanations for the phenomena behind the failures (and sometimes successes) of RTE. Additionally, some strategy and understanding may be applicable to other states in India to improve RTE implementation for the sake of children who are still excluded from education. The case studies highlight multiple causes of failure that will be examined before picking out the policies that work against these failures.

### *Explanations for Breakdown*

First, state leaders need to realize that their internal socio-political problems carry over into education policy. The issue is two-fold. Internal problems, especially in states as large as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, vary across the state. Problem-solving must be tailored, or the result is disparity in educational attainment within the state, especially when the state is subject to caste violence, violence against other religions, extreme geological features, proneness to natural disasters, child marriage, and child labor. Local units of government need the authority and resources to address those issues when the state cannot adequately do so. If states are not allowed to devolve power to lower levels of government to establish policies that reflect the needs of their immediate communities, it becomes more difficult for families to keep their children in school. Often, the child is more likely to lose out on his or her education.

States also need to pass policies that are outside of the realm of education and supplement efforts to address systemic issues, including child labor. The reasons that students are often not in school are not always going to be changed by demanding that states get them into the system. The culture around practices like child labor or child marriage has to change, and laws are one way to reestablish norms. If the government does not stress that certain practices are either compulsory or unacceptable, enforcement of those norms does not exist. The result is the absence of pressure to change. Indian states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan will continue to have the greatest prevalence of child labor if laws related to the issue do not become clearer and more stringent. Education policy and practice can be an avenue for resources to stop practices that keep children out of school by developing advocacy for general child welfare through education, using the reach of schools to inform parents about school programs and welfare, and more. Education policy alone, however, will not be able to universalize elementary education.

Second, states that undertake surface-level reforms as a substitute for hard-hitting systematic change are not producing RTE's intended outcomes. Updating physical infrastructure as a substitute for larger level reforms will not be sufficient to improve education overall. While children certainly deserve a clean and safe learning environment, prioritizing physical infrastructure over elements of education like teacher training or school management committee training seems misplaced. In the long term, having nice classrooms does not matter if the quality of education is dismal and if there is not an organization at the school with a long term plan to maintain it. The infrastructure update becomes a one-time investment that will fall apart unless the other programs

actually deliver on the needs of children. Respondents in Jaipur and Bhopal both noted the dangers of emphasizing infrastructure rather than teacher training or accountability. They tended to be disappointed in the disparity between what their children had been promised in their academic programming and what they were actually achieving during the school day.

Third, a breakdown takes place between the national and state-level policy implementation processes. The national policy, though it is meant to encourage decentralization, is actually quite rigid. The national-level model rules for RTE, for example, spell out the exact number of kilometers within which neighborhood schools are meant to exist. Some policies offer the opportunity for exceptions, but in reality, central government officials expect compliance with the mainstream version of the policy. Consider the following provision from Rule 4, Subsection 4 of the national policy:

For children from small hamlets, as identified by the State Government/Local Authority, where no school exists within the area or limits of neighborhood specified under sub-Rule (1) above, the State Government/Local Authority shall make adequate arrangements, such as free transportation, residential facilities and other facilities, for providing elementary education in a school, in relaxation of the limits specified under sub- Rule (1).

Even in instances in which the government suggests willingness to consider relaxing the rules, mobile schools in Himachal Pradesh, for example, are still at risk of being shut down. In Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Chattisgarh, 23,900 government schools were shut down for having a pupil-teacher ratio of six students to seven teachers and for having less than 20 students enrolled (Kingdon, 2016). The practice seems counterproductive. Ultimately, the students suffer and remain out of school while they are relocated. The

schools may actually be offering a better education to the students than they would otherwise receive, but the national government argues that “inefficient” schools are not part of the overall RTE strategy. This is also true of private schools. As of March 2014, more than 4,300 private schools across India were shut down (Kingdon, 2016). Many private schools are not being recognized, and alternative schools for small groups of children have had to fight for their existence to fill a niche need.

Another element of the rigidity of RTE is the process for funding. One report by PAISA conducted in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and West Bengal observed the extent to which funding was based on central government priorities. The report states that there is “little discretion and decision-making power at the school management level,” and that the spending structure for the policy would require a complete reform in order to represent actual decentralization (IDFC Foundation 2013, 104). The case studies also portrayed the fact that many states and districts do not receive all of their funding, and they cannot carry out spending that was promised to schools and communities. Moreover, other studies have suggested that the top-down structure, which this thesis argues has become more strictly top down over time, is not focused on the needs of stakeholders, especially teachers. The move away from certain decentralized responsibilities in the early 2000s was justified by the fact that mismanagement of funds existed at local levels, largely because no one was trained or had experience distributing funds or resources as central and state government programs required. This probably could have easily been solved by better training to empower future generations of local administrators and decision-makers. The same study noted that teachers’ needs are also ignored in a top-down approach to funding. Even if

local decision-makers had funds to distribute to schools, they are unlikely to receive the resources required to teach students effectively.

Instead of empowering local communities to be more effective decision-makers over time, the central government continues to inaccurately label one of the goals of education flagship programs under the title of “decentralization”. In areas where states had successfully innovated, the resources were lost to carry out programs at the start of RTE for different goals such as infrastructure. For example, 120 NGO non-formal education centers, now eliminated under RTE, photographed teachers upon arrival at work each day. If teachers taught at least eight students for six hours each day, then they would receive their full pay. Teacher absenteeism in the program centers had been as high as 44 percent in 2003, but it dropped to 21 percent by 2006, as teachers learned that their pay was attached to doing their jobs. They also knew that they were held accountable during the photo sessions each morning. These are the kinds of practices that the central government has failed to capitalize on, and they missed opportunities to reform broken institutions like the teacher unions. In enforcing such a rigid policy, beneficial and harmful decisions have been made. Either way, the unintended consequence is that the policy imagined by the central government is not the policy that is ultimately implemented. Though it is counterintuitive, sometimes the good adaptations are the ones that break from the policy, and some of the bad adaptations are the ones that use the rigidity of the policy to pursue ulterior motives or ineffective policies.

Fourth and finally, the rigidity of RTE discourages states from being transparent about sharing the status of their progress. It is difficult to comply with rigid policies, and states are less willing to share accurate results and information with the central

government when they are struggling. This is also true at the school level. Since RTE is meant to make states the main agents of responsibility, clearly established mechanisms are lacking to punish states that do not comply with the national rules and timeline. For example, Gujarat failed to establish RTE rules by 2012, the time by which the national government expected all states to be participating in the act. Rather than a national court, the Gujarat High Court was ultimately responsible for issuing an injunction to the relevant departments to ensure that RTE rules were established. However, schools can be penalized by states. In some circumstances, if a school is not meeting a required provision under RTE, the penalty is a fine. However, the punishment for not meeting provisions required for recognition is often that the school gets shut down.

#### *Adoptable Solutions and Recommendations*

In the long term, a more studied approach is needed to share the responsibility of education not only between the national government and state governments, but also with the districts and sub-district bodies. The next iteration of a universal primary education policy should be less rigid. It should introduce language that gives decision-making power back to the people who know their communities best. It should alleviate the threat of punishment when states, districts, villages and NGOs take an innovative approach to improving student access and educational quality. The final section of this thesis provides specific examples and recommendations from states that have effectively responded to the problems of the broader trends.

Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra offer distinct but important lessons about the effects of government structure on education policy. The analysis on these states demonstrates that awareness of the factors that are indirectly related to

education often comes in the form of information from local communities. Attention to this information makes a large difference in the effectiveness of specific policy decisions. Even in Andhra Pradesh, where the state does have a great deal of power beyond the expectations outlined in the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments, the attention to user groups at the local level has been extremely important. Gujarat is clearly a state that needs to overcome more toxic social attitudes towards Muslims, lower caste and class individuals, and women, but the Janmabhoomi (user-group based) system of state government may be applicable. Power has been consolidated at the state level, rather than at the district or sub-district levels. However, Andhra Pradesh demonstrated that a dominant state does not preclude the inclusion of local-level requests and ideas. The creation of and respect for user groups would give historically oppressed groups in Gujarat, in addition to communities that generally feel their needs could be better met, a forum to describe their specific interests and foster better understanding of those needs in the legislature. The establishment of more effective user groups in Gujarat would also be beneficial for accountability because individuals would have an arena for grievance redressal. The development of improved grievance redressal is especially important for addressing school or district level concerns in the realm of education.

The bureaucratic norms around respect for local level officials also offers an example of the effects of decentralizing government responsibilities. The case study from Akshay Mangla demonstrates the extent to which block level officials were treated as experts on the needs of their communities. Not only does that mean that local communities benefit when their needs are met, but when the state government have confidence in sub-district officials to be effective in their jobs, it takes responsibility off

of the state. While this is a culture that takes time and specific conditions to foster, it is still worth noting the benefits and attempting to develop those conditions by changing certain social and governmental norms.

Himachal Pradesh offers the best example of innovative ways to address students who face physical challenges in entering schools. Recall that the geological situation in Himachal Pradesh makes it very difficult for some children to leave their communities, and they are required to attend schools that are smaller than legally permitted. Other times, students travel along with their nomadic tribes, and they cannot remain in a single school throughout the year. Rajasthan also faces difficulty with reaching students across geological features, such as expansive deserts. Many students in Rajasthan likely also attend schools that are too small, but the state needs to take a position on behalf of the existence of those schools in the same way that the government of Himachal Pradesh has. Many too-small schools continue to be shut down. If more states raised this concern with the central government, it would be possible to force a reconsideration on the purpose behind this norm. It might also be applicable in an urban context. Analysis on Rajasthan demonstrated that many government schools are shut down when too many students leave to attend private schools. In order to uphold the provision of neighborhood schools, it makes more sense for the state government to decide that the school should remain open until a better educational opportunity is available. Not only would this literally keep more students in school, but also many families would likely feel less coerced into participating in private schooling.

Finally, Maharashtra's fight against child labor demonstrates the importance of implementing policy outside of the realm of education to address issues that directly

affect enrollment and dropout rates. The existence of the policy is emblematic of a larger effort within the state to introduce successful social program, although, this is obviously easier given the Maharashtra's wealth. The state's policy is taking time to implement and reduce the numbers of children who are out of school, but Maharashtra is still doing relatively well in improving the numbers of children who have been out of school. Policies that address problematic social issues, including child marriage or the treatment of girls in other states, is certainly not harmful.

Regarding more specific programming, the central government and state governments need to collaborate and establish better practices. The state-level politicians, for example, ought to take a more stringent position in the legislature and in national forums, requesting that the central government reconsider elements of RTE. States that have been relatively successful in implementing RTE have violated portions of it to achieve the goal of achieving universal elementary education. The norms and provisions that states violate should guide the central government in considering which norms to rework. For example, the school size and pupil-teacher ratio requirements are one starting point. Perhaps the central government could instead work with the states to develop a program to make undersized schools more attractive, whether that means introducing more teachers into that school or finding a way to diversify the curriculum. More students might remain in government schools, rather leave to attend private schools. At the very least, the quality of education for the students that remain might be better. With respect to the number of teachers, the central government ought to reconsider the ban on para-teachers. The use of para-teachers to establish more schools was a crucial element of the strategy of north Indian states that many of them violate the law and continue to hire

these teachers. It is the most feasible way to open schools. Additionally, evidence was introduced earlier in the thesis that recognizes the effectiveness of para-teachers, claiming that they are at least as strong in terms of educational outcomes as full-time, full-pay teachers. The central government could, at a minimum, study this phenomenon more and reconsider the cost that they are placing on states. Teachers' salaries comprise such a large portion of the education budget of most states, and since the central government has been called out for underspending on education nationally, this requirement seems overreaching given the resources states receive.

The central government could relax a number of responsibilities associated with RTE while still providing for more substantial accountability. In fact, if requirements for spending on full-time teachers and infrastructure were relaxed, it would be more feasible for both states and the central government to invest in accountability. The likelihood that people would perform better under transparent conditions, and if they were held accountable to their respective tasks, is evident in examples provided earlier in the thesis. Practices to improve transparency and accountability would especially benefit students attending private schools under Section 12 (c). If the allegations about mistreatment of Section 12 (c) students in private schools are true, then the only way to justify continuing this promotion of private education in society would require that all students in those schools be treated equally.

### *Conclusion*

The status of education in India appears to be in a tough place. Even though significantly more students are included in schools than twenty years ago, and even though the infrastructure to deliver education has improved a great deal, maintaining that

momentum seems to be a failing effort in certain states. The need to include the final groups of students that remain out of school will be the most difficult. Yet, there is hope. Many excellent researchers, entrepreneurs, educators, and humanitarians on the ground are doing their best to improve the lives of students both in their communities and throughout India. If state governments and the central government can establish a better long-term view of their goals, as well as better vision of the overall political situation surrounding education, then future policies could be more responsive to the needs of stakeholders in education. Most importantly, policy-makers and those responsible for delivering educational services must remind themselves frequently that education is considered a fundamental right.

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