

INDIA'S HIGH-POTENTIAL BUDGET PRIVATE SCHOOLS

For the first time, budget private schools which have mushroomed countrywide as a response to dysfunctional government schools, are rated and ranked in EWISR 2015



Top-ranked Muni International, Delhi's promoter-principal Ashok Thakur

ONE OF THE GREATEST INJUSTICES that post-independence India's thoroughly discredited *netaji* network has visited upon India's estimated 200 million bottom-of-the-pyramid households is denial of the right to quality early childhood and primary education. The self-evident import of the observation that "it's better to teach a man how to fish than give him a fish" attributed to the revered Chinese sage Confucius (551-479 BC), seems to have eluded India's government economists and central planners.

As a response to persistent under-funding of education, particularly early childhood and elementary education by the Central and state governments for over six decades, the great majority of the country's 1.20 million government — especially state government — schools

have degenerated into dysfunctional hell-holes defined by crumbling infrastructure, multi-grade teaching, insufficient toilets, drinking water, electricity and pathetic learning outcomes. This elephant in the room is blithely ignored by the political and middle classes (and the media) who are uniquely divorced from the government/public school system and spare no expense to ensure their children are safely enrolled in the country's 237,000 private 'recognised' schools which dominate the annual EducationWorld India School Rankings (EWISR).

With private schools shaped and designed for India's 250-million-strong middle class unaffordable for the poor majority, budget private schools (BPS) — 'unrecognised' by the education ministries of the Central and state governments — have mushroomed countrywide

as an entrepreneurial response to dysfunctional government schools.

According to the **Centre for Civil Society**, a highly-respected Delhi-based think tank, the number of BPS — typically crammed into small premises (often rented), family homes, and even rooms above shops, charging tuition fees ranging from Rs.70-150 per month in rural areas, and Rs.200-600 in urban India — has risen to 300,000 with a staggering aggregate enrolment of 60 million children. While admittedly BPS tend to be over-crowded and under-provided, a growing number of poor but aspirational households obviously — as their massive aggregate enrolment testifies — prefer them to government schools.

Yet instead of helping BPS edupreneurs to improve and upgrade their institutions with financial aid, advice and soft loans, education ministry officials, invested with vast discretionary powers, are either shaking them down or closing them for non-compliance with s. 19 and the Schedule of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (aka RTE Act) which makes it mandatory for all schools to comply with minimal infrastructure and teacher-pupil ratio norms. "By authorising the shut-down of budget private schools which serve poor students, the RTE Act is taking away education instead of guaranteeing it," says **Dr. Parth Shah**, president of the Centre for Civil Society (CCS).

On the premise that India needs as many and as varied schools as possible, *EducationWorld* has strenuously opposed the discriminatory s.19 of the RTE Act whose penal provisions exempt government schools, and on the ground that parental choice — as ruled by the Supreme Court on

the medium of instruction issue — should be paramount (see *EW* report June 2014). Therefore to confer unofficial recognition and appreciation upon the best budget private schools, your editors sought the cooperation of CCS and the **National Independent Schools Alliance** (NISA estb. 2011), a representative organisation of budget private schools, to shortlist 25 well-managed BPS in several major cities.

Subsequently, field representatives of C fore interviewed 1,168 SEC (socio-economic category) C, D and E parents to rate them on 12 parameters of school education excellence. The ratings awarded were totalled to

rank India's best BPS *inter se*.

"CCS and NISA forwarded a list of NISA-member BPS in five major cities of India to C fore in June on the presumption that NISA member schools would be more aware than non-member schools of the various parameters of education excellence. Thereafter C fore quizzed a specially constituted base of sample respondents to rate the most well-reputed BPS under each parameter," says **Amit Chandra**, associate director (policy advisory) of CCS.

Adds **Premchand Palety**, promoter-CEO of C fore who personally visited several top-ranked BPS to double check: "Each list of 80-100 schools per city provided by

CCS/NISA was shown to a mix of 250 teachers and parents who were asked to rate budget private schools with which they were familiar. Schools rated by less than 25 respondents are not included in the league table. Typically, BPS are small schools promoted by committed edupreneurs who deliver progressive education, including English language learning. Given encouragement, they have the potential to flower into excellent institutions."

For the first time, a league table rating and ranking India's Top 25 budget private schools in five cities, which have the potential to bloom into excellent K-12 institutions, is set out below.

Rank		Teacher welfare & development	Competence of faculty (200)	Academic reputation	Co-curricular education	Sports education	Life skills education & conflict management	Individual attention to students	Leadership/management quality	Safety and hygiene	Infrastructure provision	Value for money	Community service	TOTAL SCORE (1300)
2015														
1	Muni International School, Delhi	59	112	64	67	62	72	61	70	63	55	86	61	832
2	St. Mary's High School, Kalyan, Mumbai	55	110	66	65	64	70	62	65	64	56	85	62	824
3	Little Flower Matriculation Hr Sec School, Chennai	56	109	68	65	60	65	61	66	61	68	80	61	820
4	SR Capital Public School, Delhi	58	108	62	64	63	68	54	69	68	67	73	63	817
5	Pragathi Vidyalaya, Hyderabad	55	108	61	55	62	67	65	67	64	62	77	62	805
6	Ashwini Public School, Bangalore	54	110	60	66	58	66	59	66	63	54	78	63	797
7	Angels Babyland Matriculation Hr Sec School, Chennai	55	107	61	62	61	71	56	61	60	62	73	61	790
8	St. Theresa Convent School, Mumbai	57	107	63	57	56	60	57	66	65	66	70	65	789
9	M.A. Ideal High School, Hyderabad	57	108	61	58	57	61	60	65	66	58	71	66	788
10	St. Theresa's Matriculation Hr Sec School, Chennai	54	107	63	61	54	65	64	59	61	61	72	60	781
11	St. Mary's English School & Jr. College, Kandivali, Mumbai	52	106	62	60	65	58	61	58	63	67	71	57	780
12	New Blossoms Education Society, Bangalore	56	105	60	61	55	68	57	61	62	53	77	62	777
13	Grace Model High School, Hyderabad	54	102	60	59	55	61	60	66	63	64	70	58	772
14	St. Mary's Nursery & Primary School, Chennai	53	105	59	58	56	65	62	59	63	58	72	61	771
15	Don Bosco High School, Dombivli (W), Mumbai	57	108	61	57	54	60	57	56	62	63	70	65	770
16	Milton Nursery & Primary School, Chennai	56	102	63	59	53	58	56	63	60	59	74	65	768
17	Sai Nath Public School, Delhi	55	106	61	55	54	61	60	58	61	59	72	60	762
18	Nandini Public School, Bangalore	54	107	59	60	57	66	55	57	60	51	75	59	760
19	Sun Rise Public School, Bangalore	51	106	62	58	59	65	57	58	61	53	72	57	759
20	Pioneer Public School, Delhi	54	100	60	54	60	62	61	57	62	57	70	61	758
21	Shri Shyula Vidya Samste, Bangalore	55	103	65	58	56	62	58	57	60	51	72	56	753
22	Monarch High School, Hyderabad	56	102	61	55	56	60	53	59	60	61	71	57	751
23	St. Moses Matriculation School, Chennai	54	103	59	53	55	67	54	58	62	59	64	62	750
24	Grace Matriculation School, Chennai	53	102	61	54	60	61	59	56	60	57	66	60	749
25	Genius Public School, Delhi	55	101	58	53	56	65	57	58	61	56	67	61	748