

SCHOOL RATING FOR PARENTS

With the rapid increase in the number of private schools, school choice is becoming difficult for parents. There are no valid and reliable methods available to make them informed about the performance of different schools. School rating is one tool through which different stakeholders can make informed decisions about schools. Even though school rating is conducted abroad and for elite schools in India a large proportion of children studying in budget private schools mostly from economically weaker sections do not have access to such data.

Before choosing schools such poor parents largely depend upon informal sources of information. Parents enquire about schools from friends, relatives and neighbours. This information is often inaccurate. Some information on fee structure, amount of fee and fee concessions are enquired from school authorities. Despite this parent feel the need for accessible information they can trust to help them make this important decision.

There are no valid methods and tools developed till date to assess budget private schools. It is essential to develop a proper rating mechanism to aid school choice as without it parents may choose wrong schools due to lack of information. Without such data parents frequently shift their children and have to pay high donation (admission fees) to gain admission. Moreover such a model could improve the standards and performance of schools by instituting competition in the delivery of education services.

The question of what makes parents choose a particular school over another is central to the design of a school rating model. Through research we found that parents are interested in schools with lesser fees and more flexibility in fee payment. As many parents do not have regular income they prefer schools with "loose" fees payment deadlines. Besides fees, parents want their children to score good marks in examinations especially in common board examinations. They want their children to learn good communication skills, presentation skills, improve their IQ and also learn basic computation. The parents also consider and therefore would like information on teacher qualifications and student-teacher ratio. They would like regular and proper feedback about their child's performance in studies and other activities, good infrastructure, conducive learning environment and other facilities like computer aided learning. All the above mentioned factors can be gauged and rated as they are tangible in nature.

Some expectations of parents constitute intangible parameters in school rating. These are that students should be well disciplined, self initiation to do homework; learning and values must be inculcated in them. Teachers should be friendly in dealing with students and parents and provide personal attention to their children's activities and performance. Moreover, the management should be sensitive to their economic background and respond accordingly.

These tangible and intangible requirements have helped us create a model to assess any school. This model includes the categories of academic achievements, fees structure and flexibilities, teachers, management, learning environment, facilities, discipline and values, extracurricular activities,

feedback and evaluation about student's performance and parents opinion about the school. We hope that this model can help parents in their quest for providing good education for their children.