

**A Study of Problems and Concerns of EWS Students in Private Unaided Schools**

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**Abstract**

As per the section 12 of Right of children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, 25% reservation of seats is mandated at the entry level in private schools for weaker sections and disadvantaged groups. It is a step ahead by government towards the way to inclusion and quality education. After the implementation of this act, EWS students are admitted and studying in various private unaided schools. As there exist a big gap between the financial condition of these EWS students and other students in the class, there may exist some problems for EWS students. In the present study, the researchers have made an attempt to find out social adjustment & learning problems and concerns faced by EWS students in private unaided schools. To fulfill the objectives, structured interviews and standardized questionnaires were used as tool of the study. Four private unaided schools, 88 EWS students, 76 teachers and 70 parents were the sample of the study. Sample was selected randomly and the study is descriptive in nature.

**1. Introduction:**

**What Is Economically Weaker Section?**

“Economically weaker section is a term used to refer to those citizens or households with income below a certain threshold level. Though there may be other economic factors in deciding on the economic weaknesses of the citizen/household, income is the dominant criterion. In public policy domain the term has to be appreciated in the context of the preamble to India’s constitution which seeks justice –social, economic and political.”(www. Arthapedia.in)

Although we are living in a democratic country where each one is treated equally but still there exist various strata in the

society which eventually affect our education system also, “The stratification in Indian educational system are easily discernible just like the stratification in the Indian society. Access to quality education has, to a great extent, been class-based, wherein people belonging to upper and middle class send their children to high-fee charging private unaided schools. Contrary to this, a majority of parents belonging to lower socio-economic strata have been observed attending to government schools. (Tooley, Dixon and Gomathi 2007; De et al 2002)

Under section 2(e) of Right To Education Act (2009) a child belonging to weaker section , means a child belonging to such parent or guardian whose annual income is

lower than the minimum limit specified by the appropriate Government, by notification. For instance Delhi Government has specified the EWS child as a child resident in Delhi for last three years with annual parental income of less than Rs 1 Lakh. They are given 25% reservation in seat allotment. ([www.arthapedia.in](http://www.arthapedia.in))

No doubt these initiatives have promoted inclusion in education and made quality education accessible to economically weaker section of the society also but its effective implementation is based on many factors such as the social acceptance of these students by other students of the class, initiatives and steps taken by school and teachers to overcome problems and concerns faced by these students. All these factors reflect the effective implementation of this Act. The present study is an attempt to find out problems and concerns faced by EWS students in private unaided schools.

## **2. Rationale of the Study:**

Education of the underprivileged sections of a society is related to social mobility of that section and hence social equality and equity. Right to Education (RTE) Act mandated reservation of a minimum of 25% of the seats at the entry level class for children belonging to economically weaker sections (EWS) and disadvantaged groups in all private unaided schools. It is tough assignment to bring together children from varying economic and social backgrounds on the same platform. It is proving challenging for the teachers to maintain balance and create fair environment for them to blend together. Need of the hour is to work out modalities to maintain the balance among students belonging to varied economic classes and to provide quality education.

There are 68,951 EWS students in Delhi (Indian Express 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015). Present research aims at exploring the challenges faced by EWS students and also their teachers in the classrooms with both general students and EWS students. This research can prove significant in preparing a set of model rules for effective implementation of the right to education with respect to inclusion of EWS category students.

## **3. Objectives:**

1. To find out the social adjustment problems of EWS students with peers.
2. To find out learning problems of EWS students in classroom.

## **4. Research Questions:**

1. What are the specific areas of problems: adjustment with peers/ adjustment with teachers / adjustment with co-curricular activities, school environment etc. specific to EWS students?
2. What are the learning problems faced by EWS students?

## **5. Operational Definition**

EWS – Economically Weaker Section of Society consists of families whose annual income is less than 1Lakh

## **6. Literature Review**

Many researches and studies have established that unless a child adjusts to his environment, he is not able to imbibe much. L.N. Jha (1969) summarises in his study that scholastic achievement is dependent on the total adjustment of the student, i.e., if a student is well adjusted he will be showing good performance. Various psychologists and scholars view adjustment as an important aspect in the growth of personality of children.

'Conflict between the Socio-economic background of the Learner and the School Culture with respect to the Teaching-Learning Processes' by Anjali Chhugani (2008) claims that the student from the EWS finds himself to be a misfit among other children who are better off than him, in terms of materialistic possessions and other kinds of facilities like tuitions and parental support. She argues that he/she is not able to relate to the culture of the peer and the school, which not only affects his/her teaching-learning process inside the classroom, but at times leads/ tempts/lures him into evil habits and stealing.

Adjustment patterns of economically weaker section students in private school. M.Ed. (2009-10), Avantika Mathur. She emphasised total inclusion. She found that there are some adjustment problems faced by E.W.S. children in language .Language deficiency impacts their academic performance, interpersonal relationship lowers their self confidence and self esteem. The weak foundations of these children, difficult syllabus and high pace of teaching in private schools affect their academic performance. These children hesitate to approach teachers. She suggested that for the total inclusion of EWS children they should be sensitized through peer collaboration and buddy system. Having group activities in class will help. While talking about learning and assessment she suggested graded worksheets and assignments and learning centre. She also described the role of school counselor as a support system

'Identity Development of students from EWS in a private elite school' Dissertation, M.Ed, Kritika Kapoor, D.U., (2011-12). The researcher built up case profiles of participants admitted to a private school through EWS category. She

studied various aspects of adjustment problems in EWS students like --

How the children define their sense of identity.

Language is an important means to communicate and it cuts across all the subjects. It is seen that Participation of such students in the classroom is minimal and they are generally reluctant to take part in oral discussion. These children do not come up openly with their problems. Present study shows that peer generally react to each other on personal traits rather than family background or proficiency in English. They are seen to participate fully in co-curricular activities.

The achievements and strengths of children

Researcher found most EWS students are not academically brilliant-average or below average. The school is making an effort to build up social and cultural capital in them.

Relationship of EWS children with peers

Mostly EWS students are friendly with their peers.

Perspective of Parents towards the Policy and Implementation by school

Many of them expressed both indirectly as well as directly their assessment and evaluation of students from poor families as failing to do well in studies because of their "home environment". They said that most such families have a "hand-to-mouth existence" with the parents being largely illiterate and not finding the time to devote towards their children's education (not coming to see teachers to enquire about their child's progress etc), it is this lack of a supportive home environment, according to them, that is responsible for the low level of school performance of such children.

A study from NUEPA (K.Sujata, 2016) states, "Another major challenge in the classroom was to strike a balance between general and EWS children as the class differences were very stark. In the words of teacher sometimes EWS students feel left out when general students talk about holidays abroad, birthday celebrations, parties, cars, houses, clothes etc. At times these children feel isolated when they are not able to contribute during peer group interactions due to a very different life style back home.

According to teachers, EWS students do well in co-scholastic activities, especially in sports. They were active and had more stamina than general category students. Thus, they were very experimental with physical pursuits. They described them as curious and friendly kids.

A study from India Today reveals, "As most of the schools across the nation are opting for computer based education, the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) students of the society are still not able to compete with other private school. As compared to other students, it is like a dream for EWS students to use internet and computer for completing their home assignments."([www.indiatoday.in](http://www.indiatoday.in))

### 7. Design of the Study

In the present study researchers have made an attempt to find out various adjustment and learning problems faced by EWS students in private unaided schools. Four private unaided schools of district North (Delhi) were chosen as sample.

- Type of study: Descriptive research: Survey
- Sample: 88 EWS students, 76 teachers and 70 Parents of EWS students selected randomly from 4 private unaided schools of District North,

Since EWS seat quota was implemented from 2005 in Delhi, and the EWS students admitted under this quota are in class 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>. Hence 88 students from classes 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> were part of the sample.

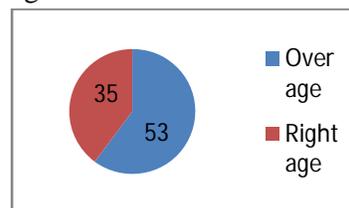
- Tools: Group Discussions, Interviews with parents, teachers and students. Standardized & non-standardized questionnaires (developed by the researchers and validated by a team of experts from the Universities) were used. Tools were administered in 4 schools by the researcher in intact classes not isolating any student .Interview was taken of many parents not isolating any parent and teachers.
- Analysis of the Data/Statistical Technique: The data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

### 8. Data Analysis

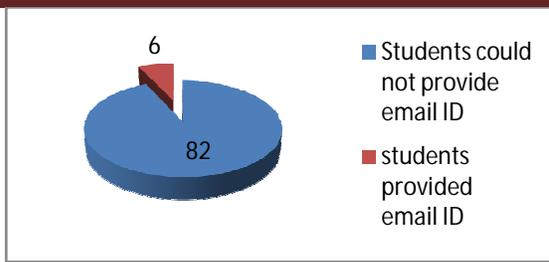
#### Students' Views about their Problems and Concerns:

Eighty eight students were provided with questionnaires in the sample schools to know if the EWS students had any problem of adjustment with their peers, teachers or in learning. Questions were semi-structured to discuss relevant issues. Care was taken not to isolate our target students from among others.

**Students' Profile:** Out of 88 students, 53 were overage and the rest were in the right age bracket.

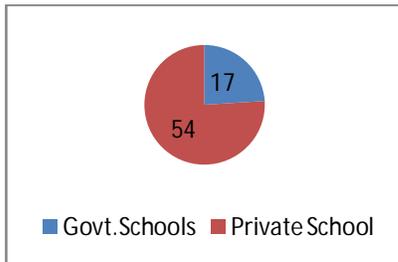


82 out of 88 students said their parents did not have email id. Only 6 students could provide their parents' email ids.

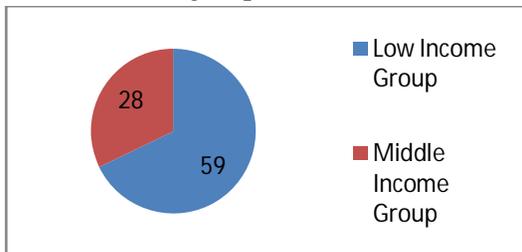


All students spoke Hindi at home.

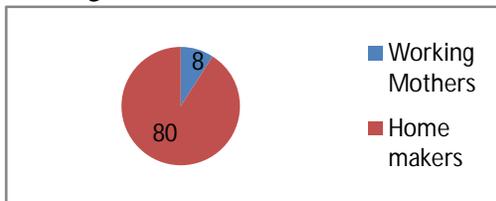
As many as 17 students have siblings in Govt. Or Govt. Aided schools. 54 students have their siblings in private unaided schools.



59 out of the sample belonged to actual low income group as per the occupation details given by them. The rest belonged to middle income group it seems.



Only 8 out of the 88 students have working mothers and rest are housewives.

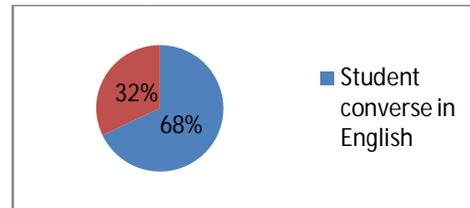


**Aspirations of students:** All the students have high aspiration to become doctor, civil servant, teacher or other professionals. Their parents too seem to have similar aspirations and expectations from them. Like all young students, these students have aspiration to have a respectable professional career and have

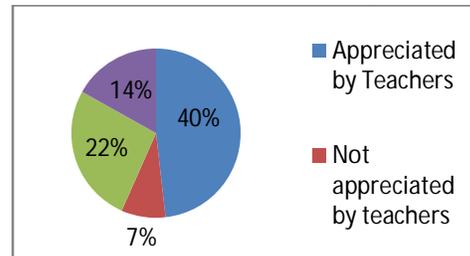
sense of achievement for themselves and their parents.

**Reason for joining the school:** Most of the students joined the school because their parents liked the school. 25% students also joined school because of its good academic record.

**Anything they would like to change about themselves:** When students were asked if they would like to change anything about themselves, maximum at 68% students wanted to converse fluently in English followed by their wish to have more money.



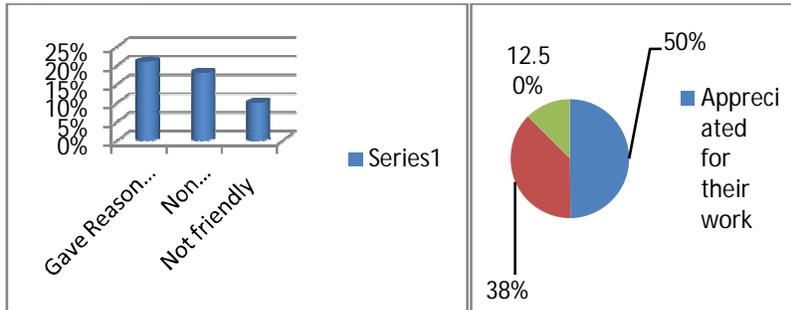
**Whether they felt appreciated by teachers and reason for not being appreciated:** Approximately, 40% students felt that they were appreciated by their teachers always while only 7% felt they were not appreciated by their teachers ever. When EWS students were asked the reason why they were not appreciated by teacher 22% students felt that they were unable to grasp what teachers teach, 14% each felt that teachers were biased or that the student himself did not pay attention.



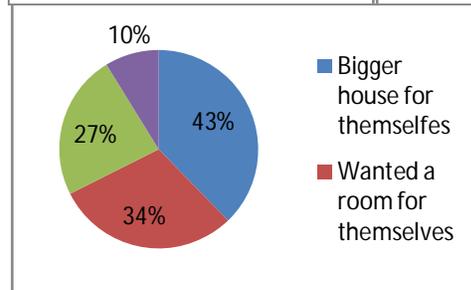
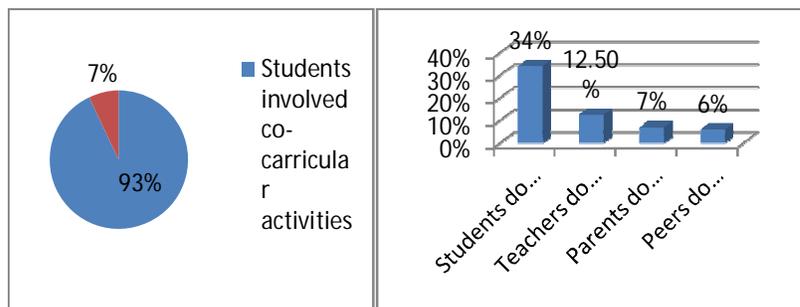
**Whether they felt appreciated by peers and reason for not being appreciated:** Around 50% students felt that they were appreciated for their work by their peers; around 38% felt that they were appreciated sometimes by their peers and 12.5% felt

that they were never appreciated by peers. Around 21% gave the reason for non-appreciation by peers as peers do not care

followed by 18% who say that their peers are not friendly and 10% feel their dislike is mutual.

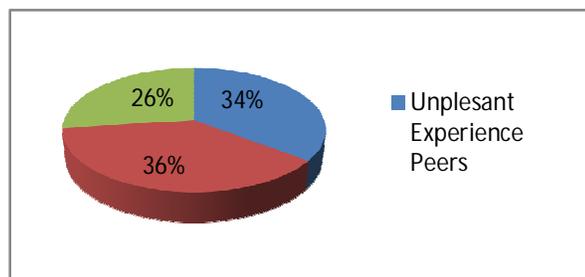


**Participation in co-curricular activities and reason for not participating:** Around 93 % of students reported about participating in co-curricular activities sometime, only less than 7% students have never participated in any co-curricular activities. They attributed reasons like: most of those students themselves do not like to participate (34%), 12.5% felt their teachers do not select/ allow these students to participate, 7% said their parents do not allow and 6% felt that their peers do not like these students.

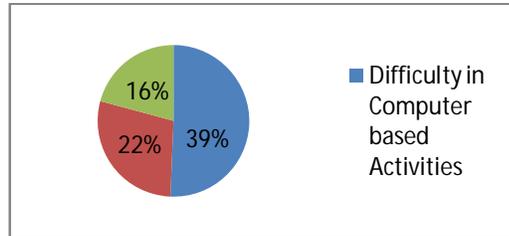


**What more facilities they wish to have at home:** When these students were asked if they wanted additional facilities at home to find out if they suffered from any inferiority compared to their peers 43% said they wanted bigger house for themselves, 34% wanted a room for themselves, 27% wanted their own laptop/desktop and 10% wanted physical amenities like AC etc.

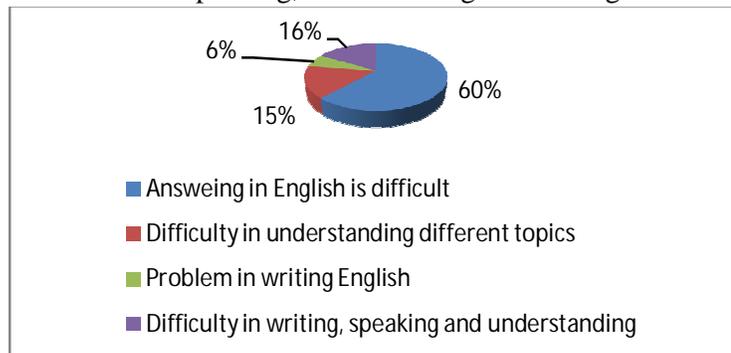
**Whether they faced in unpleasant situation with schoolmates in school:** They were asked if they faced any unpleasant situation with schoolmates in school to know if they were not adjusted well with peers. While 34% answered they never had any unpleasant experience with their peers, 36% said that they faced unpleasant situation sometimes. Around 26% admitted to having unpleasant situation with schoolmates often.



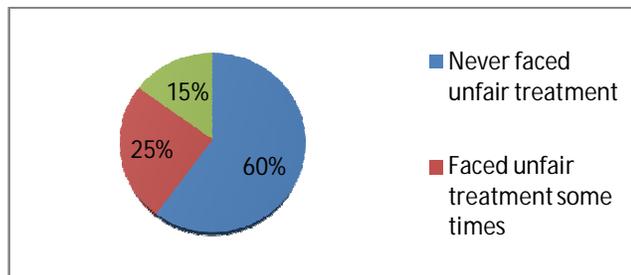
**What activities are difficult for them in school? :** EWS students were required to identify tasks/activities according to difficulty they faced in doing at school. Almost 39% felt that computer-based activities were difficult for them; almost 22% felt that sports activities were difficult while 16% each felt hobby classes like music/craft/cooking etc. and excursions were difficult for them.



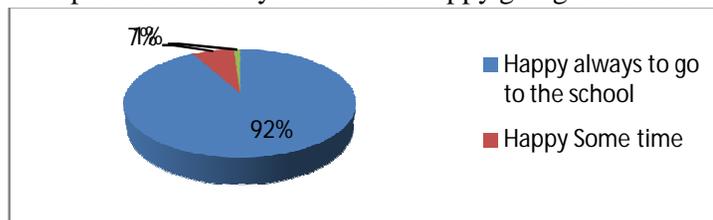
**What problems they face with English:** It was asked if they faced any problems with regard to English. Majority of them at 60% answered that answering orally in English was problematic for them, 15% felt that they had problem regarding understanding different topics for different subjects, 6% felt they had problems in writing in English while 16% felt they problems in all areas such as speaking, understanding and writing.



**How often they are treated unfairly at school:** Students were required to mention whether they faced any unfair treatment at school, 60% students felt that they never faced any unfair treatment, 25% said they faced unfair treatment sometimes while the rest (15%) felt they were treated unfairly often.



**Whether they are happy going to school:** On being asked whether they were happy going to school, a large majority at 92% felt they were happy always, 7% felt they were happy sometimes and rest 1% expressed that they were never happy going to school.



**Parents Views about the Problems and Concerns of their wards:** Seventy parents were interviewed in the sample schools during PTM to know if their wards had any problem of adjustment with their peers, teachers or in learning. Questions were semi-structured to discuss relevant issues. Care was taken not to isolate our target interviewees from among all parents.

**Loneliness of EWS students:** Seventy parents of EWS children studying in sample schools were asked if their wards complained about loneliness in schools to find if they suffered from any isolation among other children. All parents answered negatively. It shows that their wards had friends in respective schools probably.

#### **Fights with Peers**

To the question whether their wards complained about fights with peers most parents (approx.90%) denied their wards having fights with peer group. Rest parents replied that other students picked fights because of teasing etc., but none of the parents reported any serious reason for cause of fights.

**Adjustment to School Environment:** Parents' observation about whether their ward goes to school happily will indicate how well-adjusted the student is to the school environment. Almost all parents except those of 2 young students of IInd Class said that their wards go to school happily.

**Difficulty in any School Subject:** Parents were asked if their wards found any school subject difficult around 30% of parents said their wards did not find any subject difficult while around 70% parents described that their wards found

mathematics, Science/EVS, English and Computer Science as difficult. Only two parents felt that their wards found all subjects difficult. The students needed help in assignments of Maths, English, EVS/Science and Computer Science.

**Members who help them with difficulties in subjects:** Mostly parents and specially mothers help these students with difficulties in subjects. Few of the students also get help from siblings. Approximately 30% students also get help from tuition teachers.

**Difficulty in any activity classes like SUPW/Music/Computer:** More than half parents say that their ward does not face any difficulty in participating in any activity classes. Rest of the parents feel that their wards do not take interest in participating in activities. Few parents (10%) report that their wards face difficulty in computer classes. Mostly, their difficulty is that students find it difficult to understand the theory aspect of computer fundamentals.

#### **Teachers views about problems and concerns of EWS students**

Around 63% teachers says that these students don't feel lonely in the class and are having friends neither they fight with their peers. Around 54% teachers say that these students actively participate in co-curricular activities. Majority of teachers say that these students are not comfortable in English and Maths and find it difficult to work on computer related assignments. Mostly, these students do not get any help or guidance from their parents in their studies or assignments; only a few of them are given guidance by their siblings. Conversation in English is found difficult by most of these students.

## 9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The review of related literature has pointed out to an important conclusion that in the initial years of implementation of the Supreme Court's judgment followed by the Delhi Govt.'s notification of reservation of 25% seats to the EWS and DG by recognised private unaided schools in Delhi, there was a tremendous resentment against the order on the part of non-EWS parents, management and teachers of these schools. With passage of time, the reality has been accepted and the EWS students also have become an integral part of the student profile and the school system; socio-economic status (SES) is not a criterion at all to judge the students comprehensively.

Administrators have reported that teachers (except class teachers) most often do not know EWS students from non-EWS students.

**A.** Analysis of the data collected from students reveals that students have high aspirations to become a doctor or civil servant etc. Majority of students want to converse in English. Majority of students were appreciated by teachers and peers. A large number of students, i.e. 93% students participate in co-curricular activities. 60% students find it difficult to speak orally in English. A majority of students have problem in computer based activities. 92% students are happy going to school. Results shows that as the students are appreciated by their peers and teachers and they are happy going to school it indicates that they are well adjusted in the school and are not facing social adjustment problems. Data from parents, teachers and students shows that English and computer based activities pose challenges before them.

**B.** From the analysis of the interview data from the parents it can be concluded that EWS students do not feel loneliness in school which indicates that they have friends in school and a majority of students i.e.90% do not have fight with their peers. Almost all parents agree with the statement that their ward go to school happily. Results indicate that EWS students are well adjusted in the schools and they are not having social adjustment problems. 70% parents says that their wards found mathematics, science/EVS, English, computer science difficult and some students find it difficult to participate in activities which are computer related. Some parents told their wards do not take interest in participating in activities.

Results of data collected from parents and students too indicates that students are happy going to school .Hence it can be concluded that there do not lie social adjustment problems with these students. Computer based activities, English language, mathematics, science subjects seems to be difficult for these students. Majority of students participate in co-curricular activities too. Parents of majority of students are not having an e-mail id this could be a reason that students find computer or computer based activities difficult as they do not have computer or access to internet at home.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

**A. Regarding curriculum development:** Results shows that majority of students are having difficulty in subjects English language, Mathematics, EVS/science as these students are not having facilities of tuitions and hardly get any support from their family . So, the curriculum developers can develop special

support material for all students who need help with existing text material.

**B. Regarding school administration:** As these students are not in a condition to avail tuition facility or any support from family so extra classes/tutorials should be arranged for these students for the specific subjects or topics in which they are facing difficulty.

Majority of students are facing problems in computer based activities or in finishing computer based assignment; one of the reason for the same is that these students do not have internet or computer access at home. The schools should provide ample opportunities and time for students so that they can prepare their assignments in schools. In order to make these students digitally literate teachers should provide them extra attention or extra classes.

Since many students cannot get help for doing assignments/projects from home the objective and nature of assignments may be reconsidered by teachers.

Although a majority of students are of opinion that they do not get biased treatment in the school, still results shows that some students complain for the same.

In this regard frequent workshops in the school should be organised to train the teachers to teach in inclusive classrooms and change their outlook towards these students. These workshops can also include various methodologies through which teachers can solve various subject related difficulties of these students.

Workshop on issues like social exclusion, equality and inclusion may be held with parents, teachers and students in separate groups and combined groups to create a healthy socio-emotional environment where universal goal of creating a productive citizenry is realised.

**C. Regarding Government Policy:** Literature review indicates that although provision has been made to admit EWS student living in 1km area of the schools but in many areas there are no private schools and the nearest one is between 3-4 km and hence in such a situation this provision is of no use. So government should make some provisions for the benefit of such students: either the range of nearby schools should be increased because many private schools are far away from EWS localities.

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