



RETENTION & LEARNING SURVEY-2019

Abstract

The report throws light on retention trends among children belonging to economically weaker and disadvantaged families, who were admitted to private schools over the last six years (2015- 2019). Respondents were parents of children who were eligible and admitted in a private school under RTE Section 12.1.c or EWS Freeship scheme through the lottery process. The survey sought to understand if the children were still attending school or if they have discontinued schooling and reasons thereof. The survey questions ranged from inquiring about student retention in the school in which they were admitted, access to smart phones to cope up with the current modality of education support, to the experience of the families in the light of financial impact on household and the learning journey of the child. Since the eligible category included Children with Special Needs, the survey also inquired about support services for such students, parental support and grievances, if any. At the end of the report, recommendations have been provided for next steps. Additionally, grievances of parents are being followed up and appropriate course of action will be taken up in support from Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights.



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Introduction

The report discusses two schemes broadly, R.T.E 12.1.c and EWS Freeship. RTE 12.1.c, which is a part of the Right to Education Act 2009, states that 25 percent seats in private schools are to be reserved for children from EWS (Economically Weaker sections) and DG (Disadvantaged groups) category of the society. DG is further divided into sub categories which will be defined further on. Through this scheme, children are allotted only at entry grade level (age group: 3-7). The EWS Freeship scheme was announced by Delhi Government in 2019 to admit children from the EWS category, to seats which had been left vacant under RTE 12.1.c, across grades II to IX. Education is completely free under both the provisions.

Indus Action began its work on RTE 12.1.c in 2013 under Project Eklavya. Since 2013, Project Eklavya has supported thousands of children to obtain admission into private unaided schools and bolster the implementation of Section 12(1)(c) of Right to Education Act, 2009. In 2017, the organization conducted its first Retention Survey to assess whether the children admitted over previous five academic years, were still study in their respective private schools. The purpose of this study is to (1) to determine the retention trends among children belonging to EWS/DG categories who have been admitted to private school under RTE Section 12.1.c and EWS Freeship scheme (2)to determine the major challenges faced by these children and provide necessary recommendations for improving the experiences of continuing students.(3) to understand/evaluate learning experiences during the lockdown and through the pandemic, given the modality of education has shifted.

Given the lockdown due to the COVID pandemic, the survey also focuses on the impact it has had on families with respect to education. With classes shifting online, respondents were asked about their experiences during the lockdown and post lockdown and their experience of online classes. The survey was conducted for all categories of 12.1.c candidates and also students who were admitted through freeship.

Several studies across countries have acknowledged that the recent pandemic has led to significant disruption in education. As many countries have initiated nationwide lockdowns, the number of students that remain out of school is alarming. Although education authorities have attempted to account for this disruption by promoting online or remote education, this initiative unfortunately remains out of reach for many. Robinson et. al (2020) have shown that while the pandemic causes disruption to education, the risks of this disruption are not distributed equally. In particular, they show that vulnerable groups such as socially isolated, economically poor and digitally disadvantaged students are exposed to undue risk. In education, this could mean that people with more economic resources are better placed to continue with education. Onyema et. al (2020) have shown that online education in particular, is unequally distributed due to accessibility issues and poor digital skills. Drane, Vernon and O'Shea (2020) report that in Australia, 20% of students are economically disadvantaged, leading to extreme digital exclusion. They argue that this is then likely to lead to 'long-term educational disengagement', widening the learning gap between those who have access to digital resources and those who do not. This is strikingly similar to the Indian context. Wong, Ming, Maslow and Gifford (2020) broaden upon the impact of pandemics to the education of disadvantaged groups by showing that school closures can particularly impact those with behavioral needs and adverse family circumstances.

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A paper by Haeck and Lefebvre (2020) in Canada also shows how achievement gaps are likely to be widened due to these digital inequalities. In Ghana, Owusu-Fordjour et. al (2020) have found that parents specifically, are incapable of helping their children with online education at home due to a lack of time and resources. This inevitably puts these children at a disadvantage. In Nepal, Dawadi et. al (2020) have shown that the pandemic and digital education have had serious impacts on the equitability of education. In particular, they have unfairly affected students from economically weaker section and disadvantaged categories who are admitted under the 12.1.c quota. However, there needs to be context-specific research in order to understand the impact on a particular country. In line with this, Indus Action's survey delves into the possible disruptions that can occur to children's rights to education at this time in India. The survey explores the specific hurdles that parents have had to cross in ensuring their children's right to education, while also touching upon how the pandemic has affected the education under RTE.



Methodology

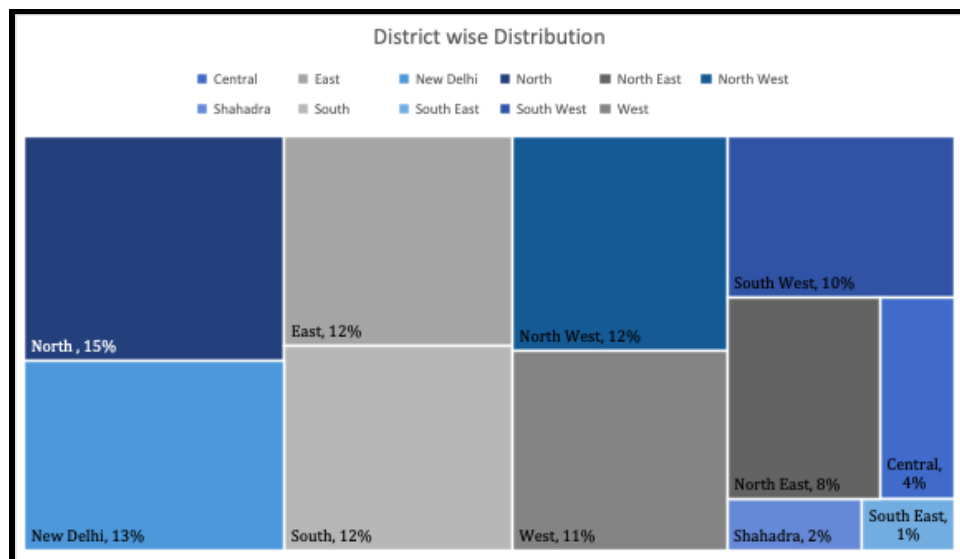
For the purpose of this survey, data was collected by telephonically surveying 1500 families. Data of these families was provided by DCPCR to assess the retention and their schooling experience so far. The categories of families surveyed ranged from EWS, DG, SC (Schedule Caste), ST (Schedule Tribe), OBC (Other Backward caste) and CWSN (Children with special needs). Children from the EWS Freeship scheme belonged to just EWS category.

For the purpose of the survey, we had onboarded volunteers to support us through the process. We had a total of 51 callers who had signed up. The callers included Volunteers, Indus Action's Shiksha Sayoginis and few employees within Indus Action. From the 51, we had 35 active volunteers making calls on a daily basis. The survey was conducted for 13 days, and 1500 successful responses were recorded. Three training sessions were conducted and three debriefing sessions in total across two weeks. Since the calls were routed through a call masking facility, a random sample of recorded calls were checked for quality on a regular basis by the internal team.

*Consent has been taken from parents before the start of the survey. No parents names/ school names have been mentioned in the report, to ensure anonymity.

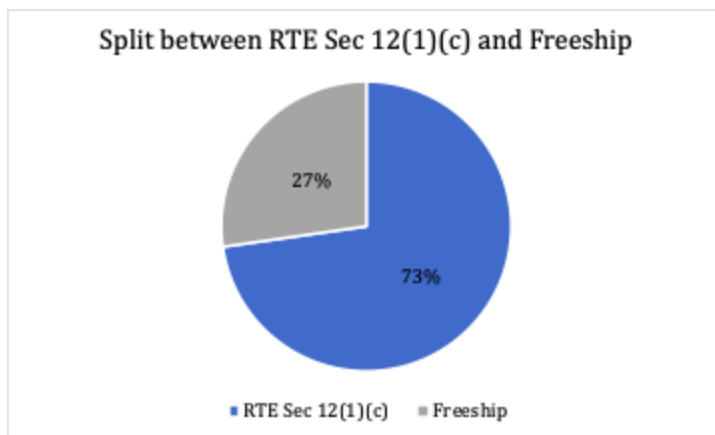
Demographics

Sample set of respondents were geographically distributed across the state.



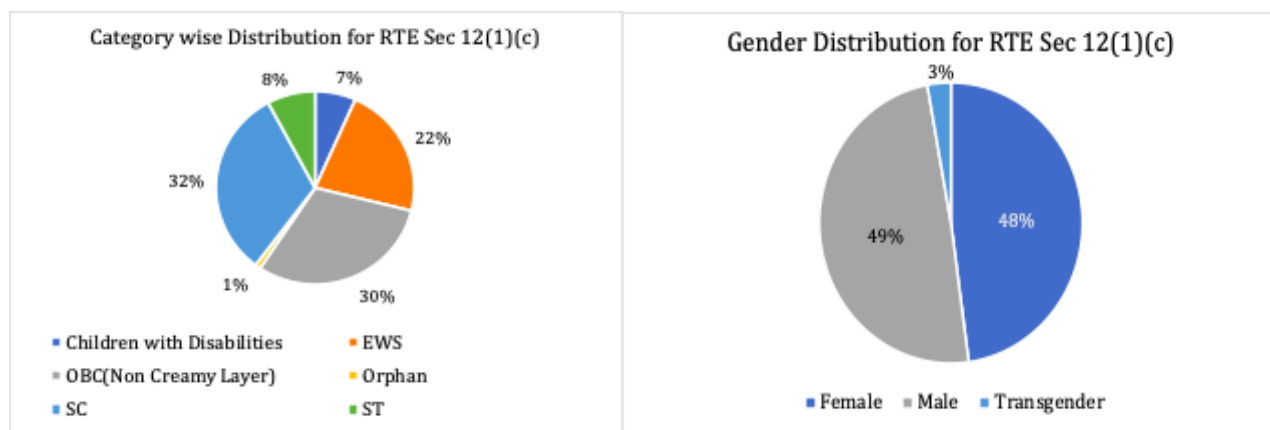


RTE 12.1.c and Freeship admissions



Out of the total families surveyed, 73% were admitted through 12.1.c and 27% were admitted through Freeship EWS quota.

Category-wise distribution of 12.1.c families / Gender Distribution

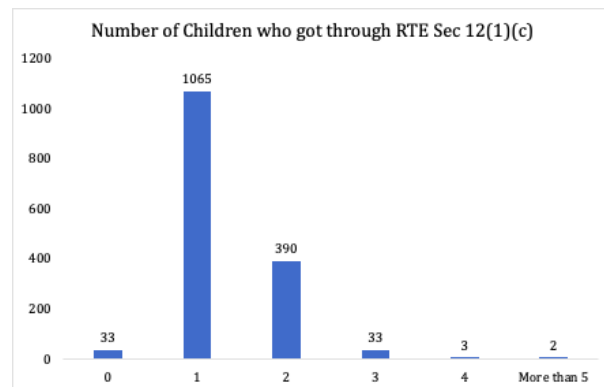
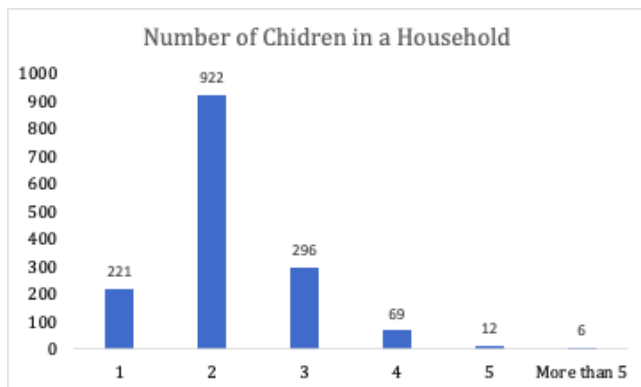
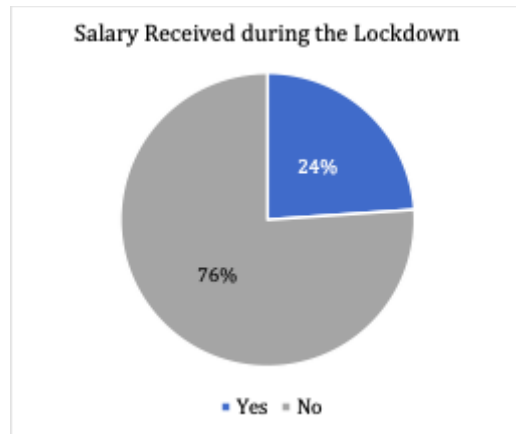


Through Freeship, only families through EWS secured admission. Gender distribution of children through Freeship, included 52% female and 48% male. No children from CWSN or Transgender or other categories secured admission through freeship



Financial Stability

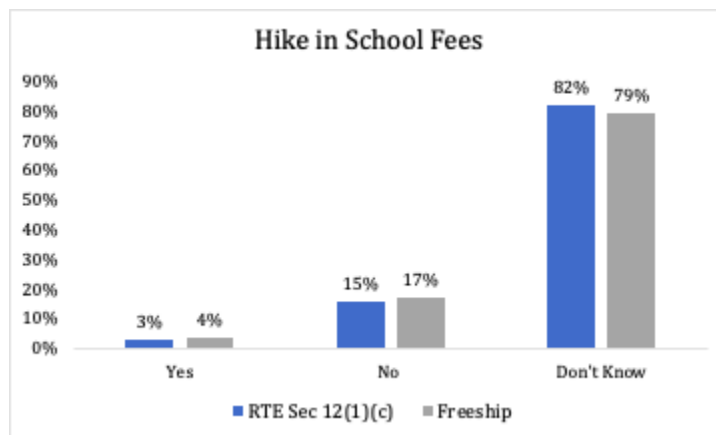
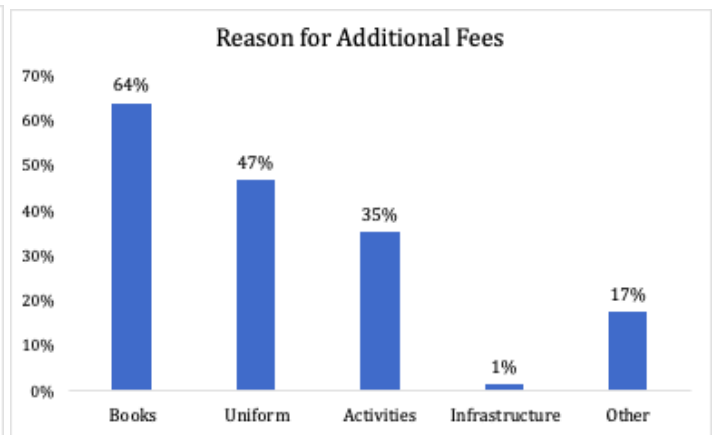
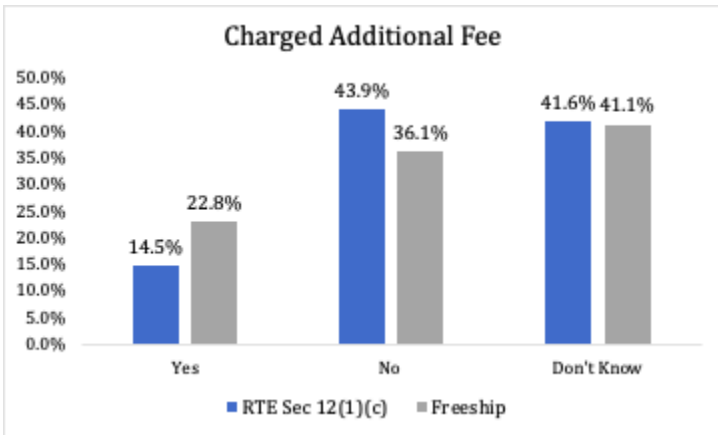
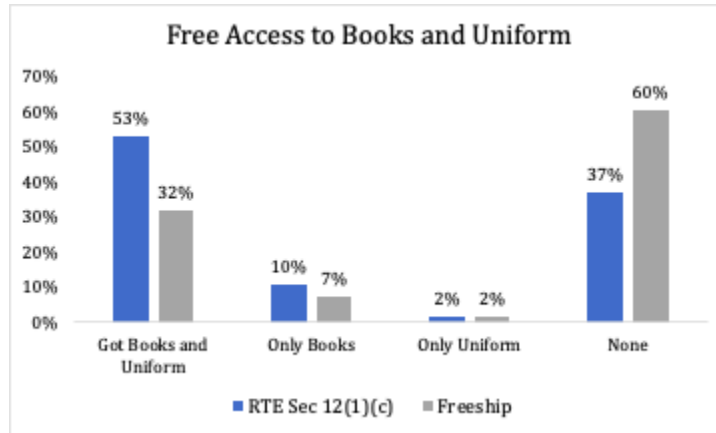
Due to the breakout of pandemic, most of the families have lost their regular source of income and families have been finding it difficult to make ends meet. Around 24 percent parents reported that they had not received salary during the lockdown (March- June)





Benefits through 12.1.c

As a part of the policy, children are eligible for free books and uniform in addition to zero tuition fee. Given below is the distribution of benefits received/not received by families over the year. There were several instances of parents being charged additional fees for books, uniform, extracurricular activities, infrastructure etc.





Retention

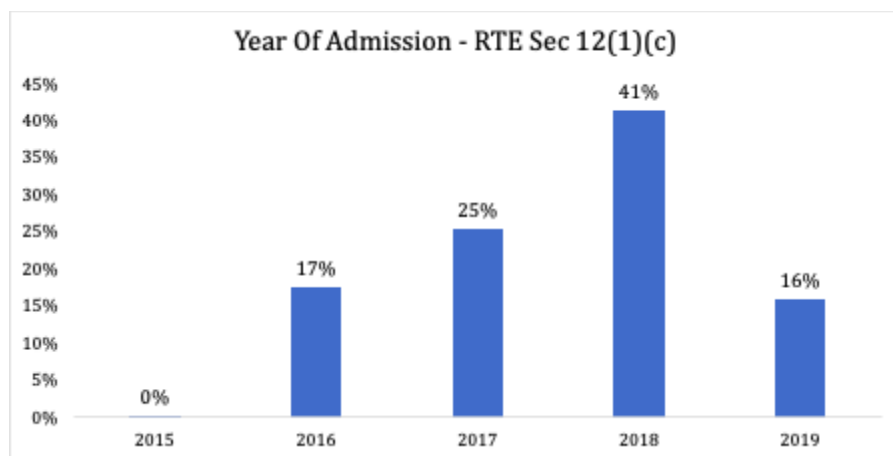
Retention: If the child has taken admission in the school allotted and is continuing in the same school

Attrition: If the child is no longer admitted as per 12.1.c.

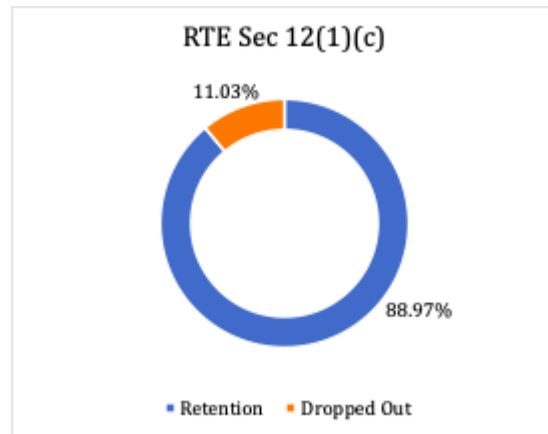
Case 1: Child has dropped out from school.

Case 2: Child has taken admission in other schools.

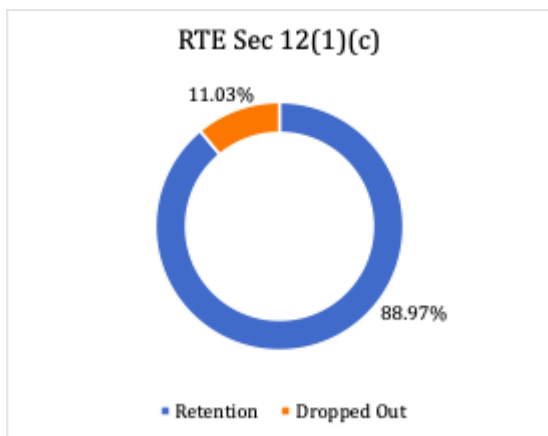
Case 3: Child will shift school in the coming academic year (2020-21).



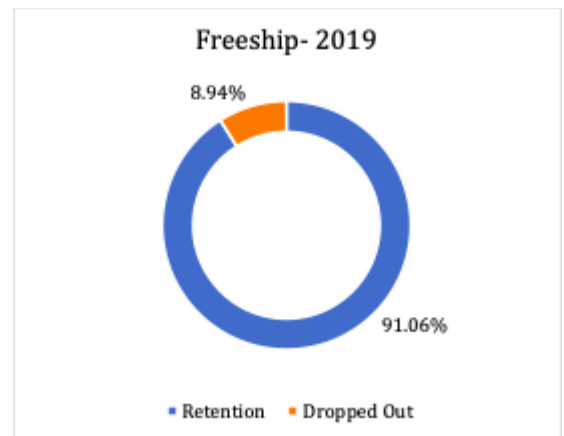
Out of a total sample of 1522, 1106 (RTE Section 12.1.c) and 416 (EWS Freeship), the graph denotes 12.1.c admissions across the years. Since the distribution is unequal, the admission for 2019 is low in the graph.



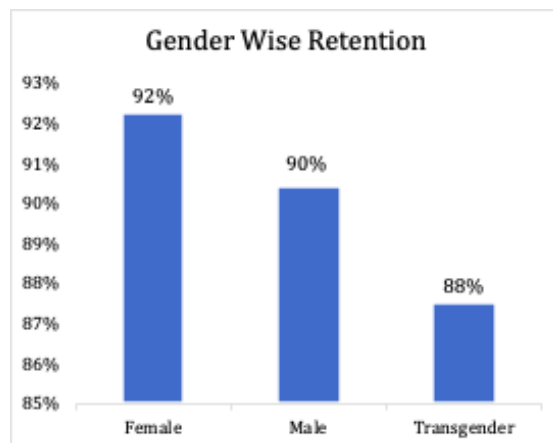
Retention: 2015-2019

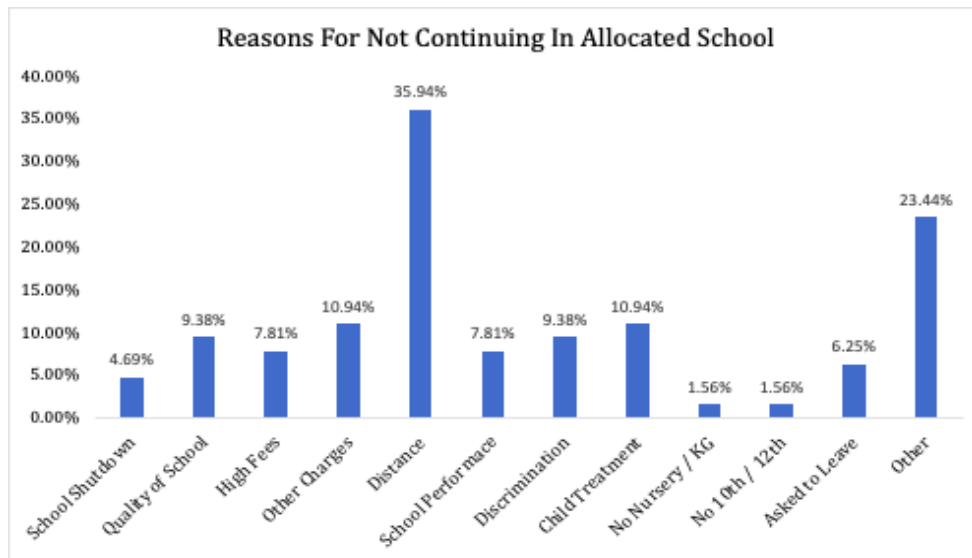


Retention: 2019.



Retention: 2019





“This month the school charged Rs.800 for some annual fee” However, the parent was not aware if they were being charged for books & notebooks or something else [Survey,2020]

“School is asking money for books and uniforms, while there is no source of income. Only problem is school has said they will not provide books and uniform and they won't reimburse even if I purchase at my own cost” [Survey,2020]

School charges for books and uniform every year and family hasn't been able to purchase books for the child for this academic year yet [Survey,2020]

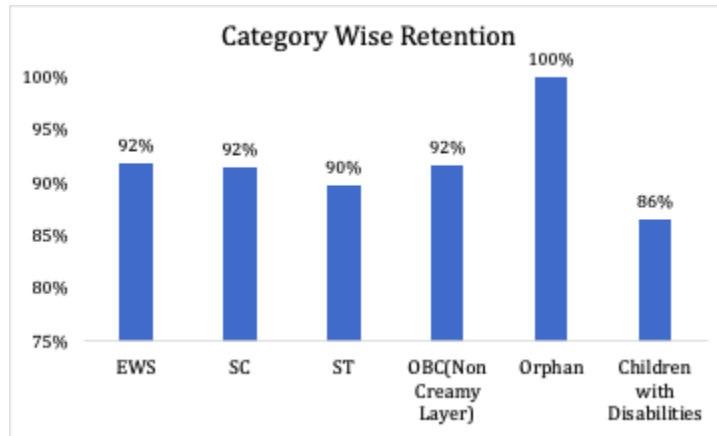
School takes charges Rs.190 for smart class every month and for books & uniform Rs. 6500 per year. Family is economically very weak and was even struggling for regular meals. [Survey,2020]

“School is charging Rs.5000 for books, uniform and infra fees. It stops report cards if EWS children if they are unable to pay the extra fees. Also, they do not provide any written evidence for such charges, even on being asked for it multiple times” [Survey,2020]

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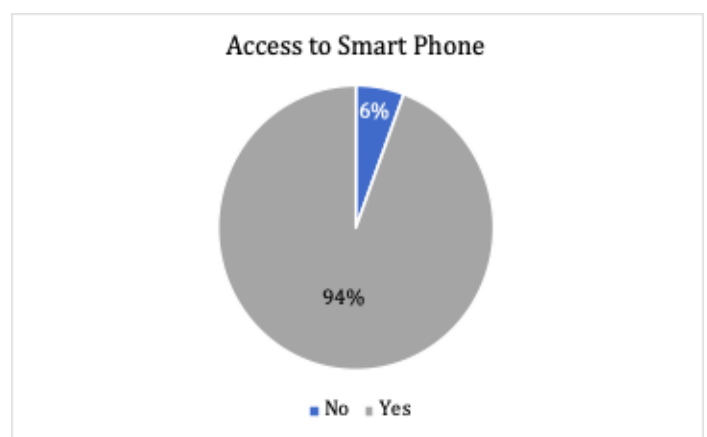
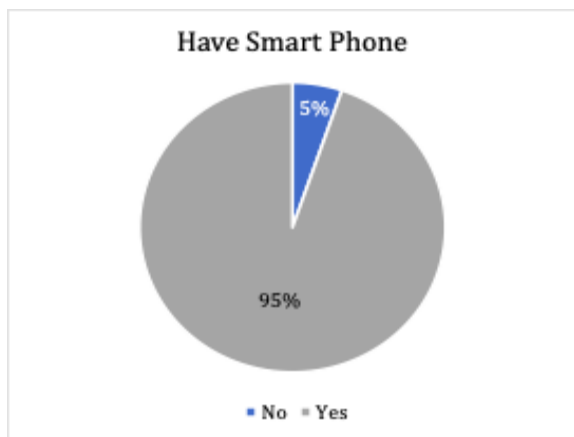


The retention was fairly proportional across most categories except CWSN. The reasons for low rate of retention among CWSN students has been further elaborated in a later section.

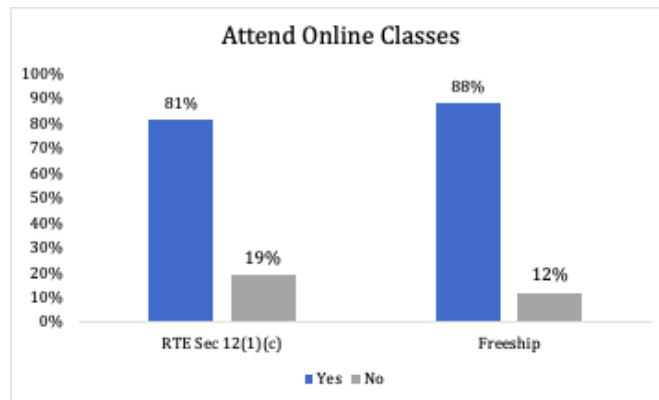
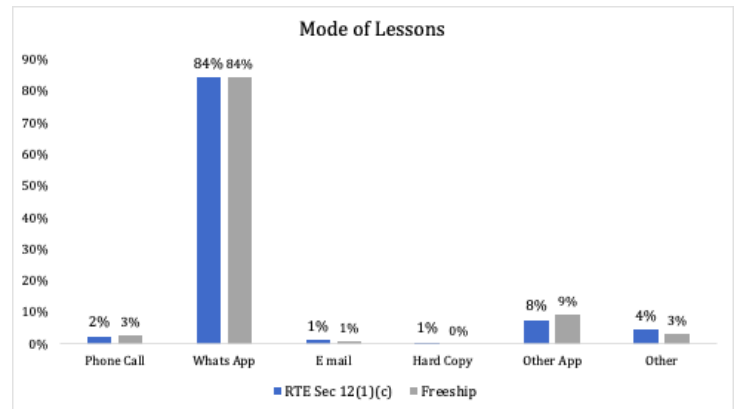
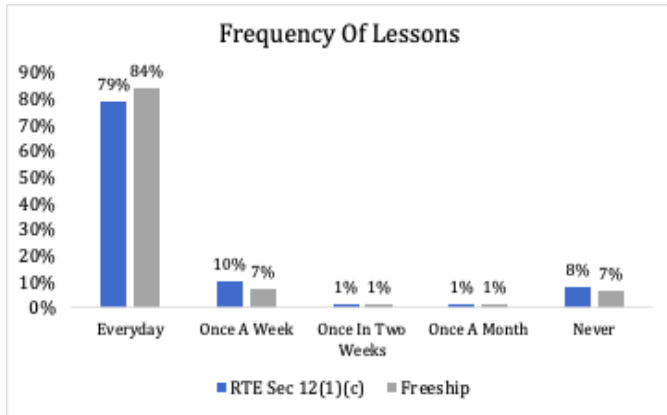


Learning Experience: During Lockdown

The shift to online mode of education has excluded several students from regular access to classes. While 95 percent of the families possessed a smart phone to provide their children access to online classes, almost 19 percent students admitted under Section 12(1)(c) had not been attending regular online classes. Close to 79 percent schools were providing lessons everyday through WhatsApp or other digital mediums. However, almost 8 percent students had not received a single lesson from their school since the lockdown.

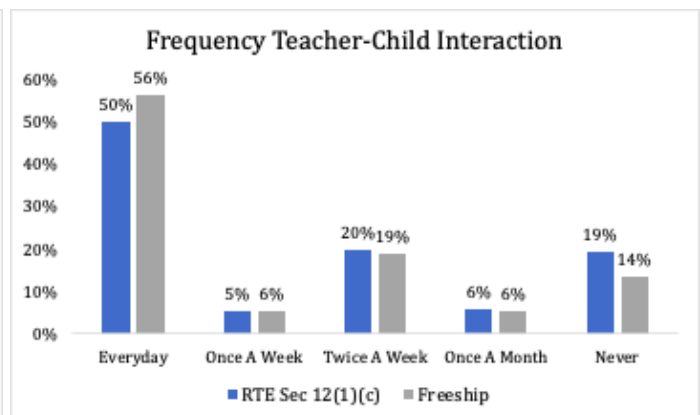
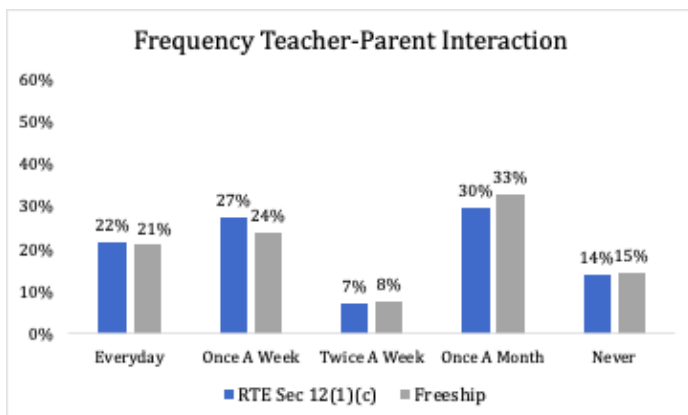


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School Support

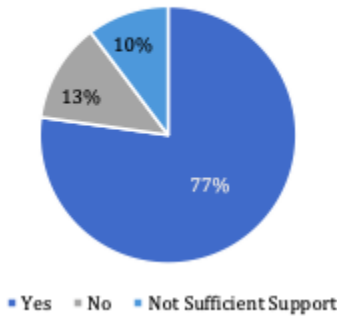
About 86 percent parents reported that they had an opportunity to meet the teacher at least once a month which was mostly at a Parent-Teacher meeting. Only half of the students reported interacting with the teacher outside the class hours. Almost 10 percent of the parents felt that there was not sufficient support from the teacher.



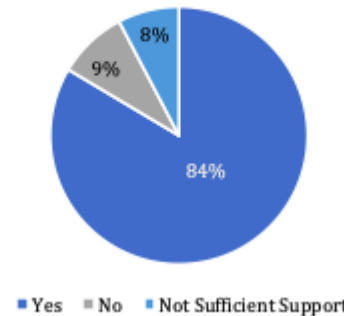
Indus Action Initiatives



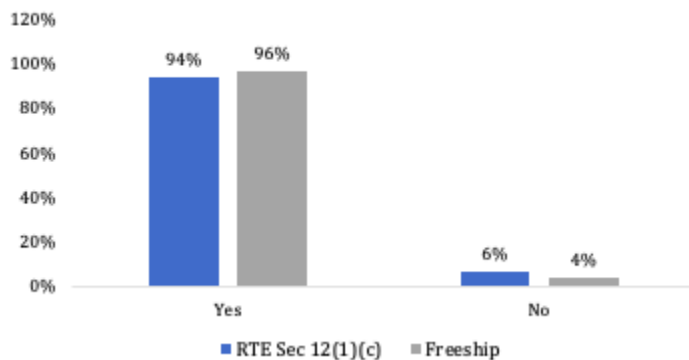
Support From Teacher For Students in RTE Sec 12(1)(c)



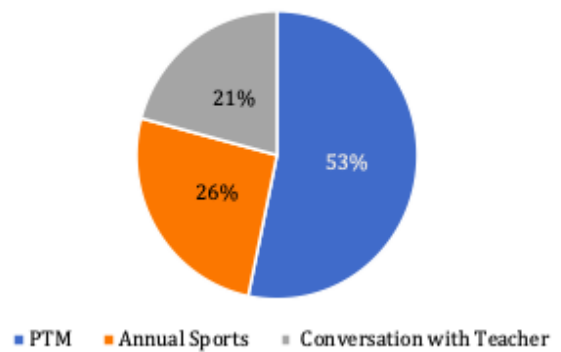
Support From Teacher For Students Under Freeship



Satisfied With Child Performance



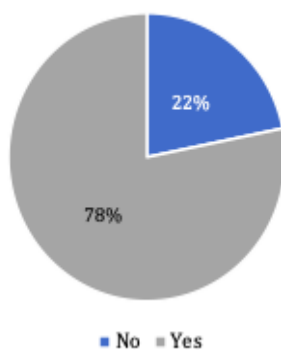
Parent Engagement



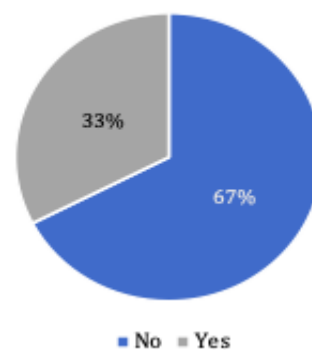
Parent Support & Engagement

The children mostly depended on their parents for support in education since ability to afford tuition is limited in these families. During the COVID lockdown, the dependence has increased since tuitions have been suspended.

Parent Supports with Education



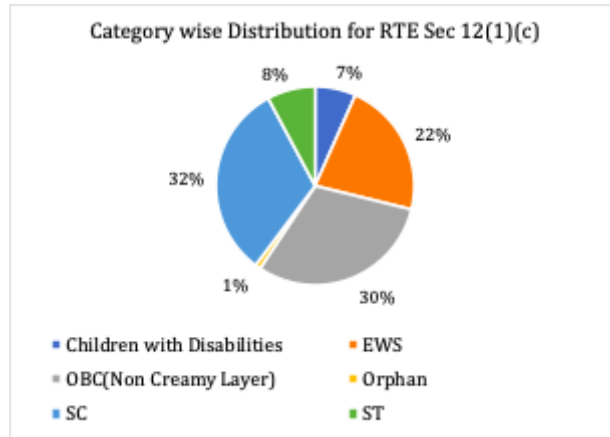
Attend Tuitions





CWSN – Children with Special Needs

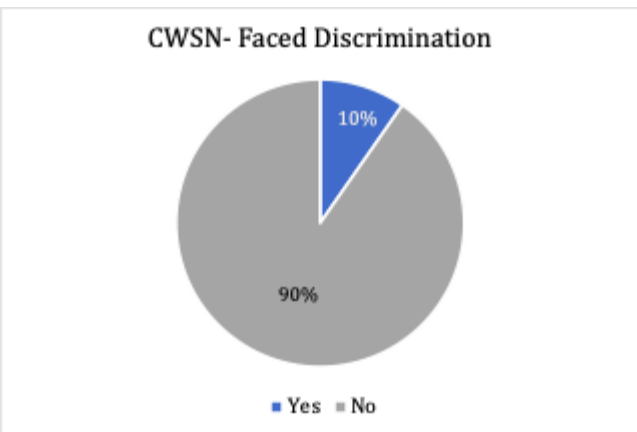
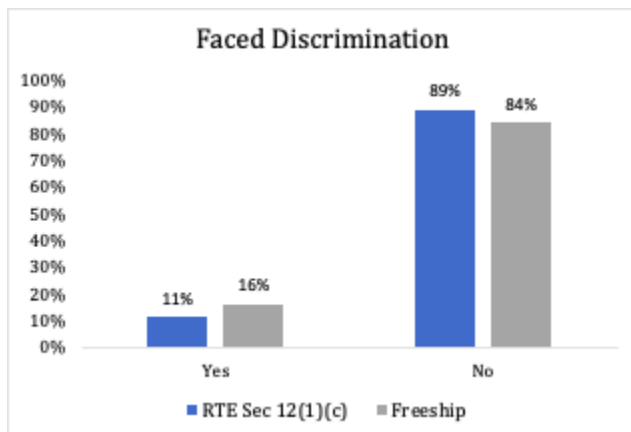
3% seats are made available for children with disabilities from the 25 % seats that are reserved through RTE Section 12(1)(c). 7% of the sample size were children with disabilities who had been admitted under Section 12(1)(c) since 2016.



“School did not have any special educators that could tailor learning for my child”
(Survey, 2020)

A parent reported, his child with special needs was not allocated to an appropriate school that could meet his specialized needs, exposing the bigger challenge of lack of enough schools which can accommodate children with special needs (Survey, 2020)

Some of the major challenges reported by the parents of CWSN students included lack of special educators in schools and discrimination against the child or parent. The access has worsened due to the shift to online education.



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While school levies extra charges for cultural activities, notebooks as well as uniform, teachers are not invested to teach the CWSN children with learning ability. Children and parents face too much discrimination in school (Survey, 2020)

“My child has learning disabilities, and the school has not made any arrangements to help the child. Instead, they discriminated against the child, indicating that schools see these students as deficits” (Survey,2020)

“The teachers talk rudely to the parents. They discriminate between the kids and say that the child doesn't know as much as she should know.” (Survey, 2020)

“School charging extra money for other activities and when not payed they are not involving the child in those activities” (Survey, 2020)

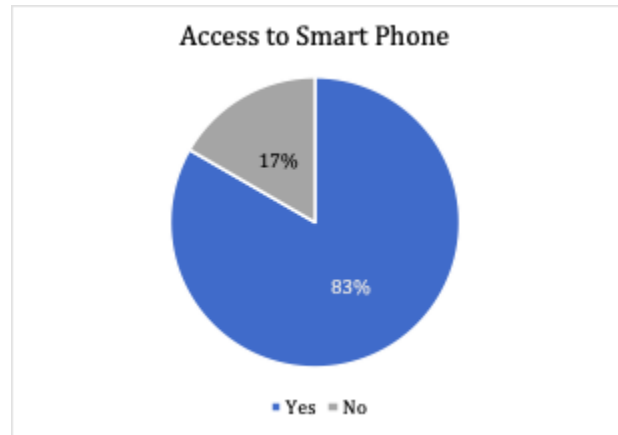
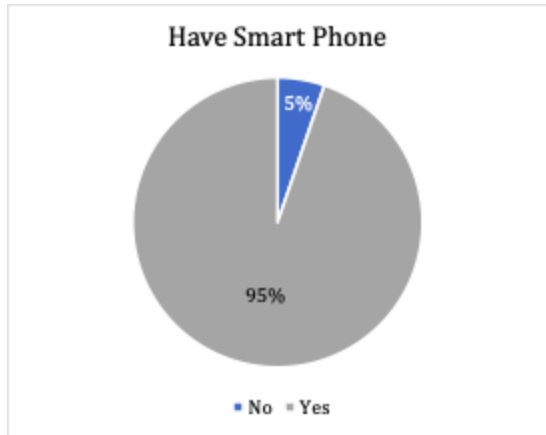
The child got into the school through RTE but he only went for 1-2 months. After that he refused to go to the school. He said it was difficult because he didn't get along and all children there spoke English (Survey, 2020)

The teachers talk rudely to the parents. They discriminate between the kids and say that the child doesn't know as much as she should know. The kids are unwilling to go to the same school now. The parent said the will be getting their child's school changed this year.

Facing discrimination in school regarding uniform as Child with special needs and also, they asked that after submitting document of special needs they were not allotted school according to the child so the child is not able to study (Survey,2020)

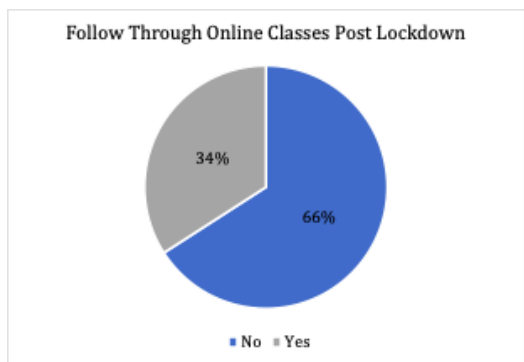


Learning Experience: Post lockdown



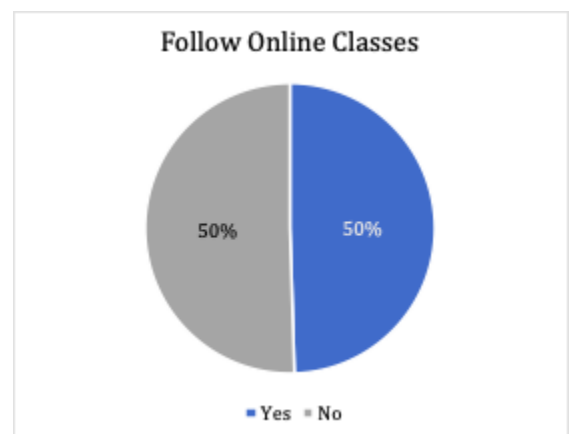
The access to smart phone has reduced post the lockdown period since parent/s are not available at home mostly because they have resumed work and carry the phone along.

With classes shifting online, children with disabilities have found it especially difficult to follow through classes.

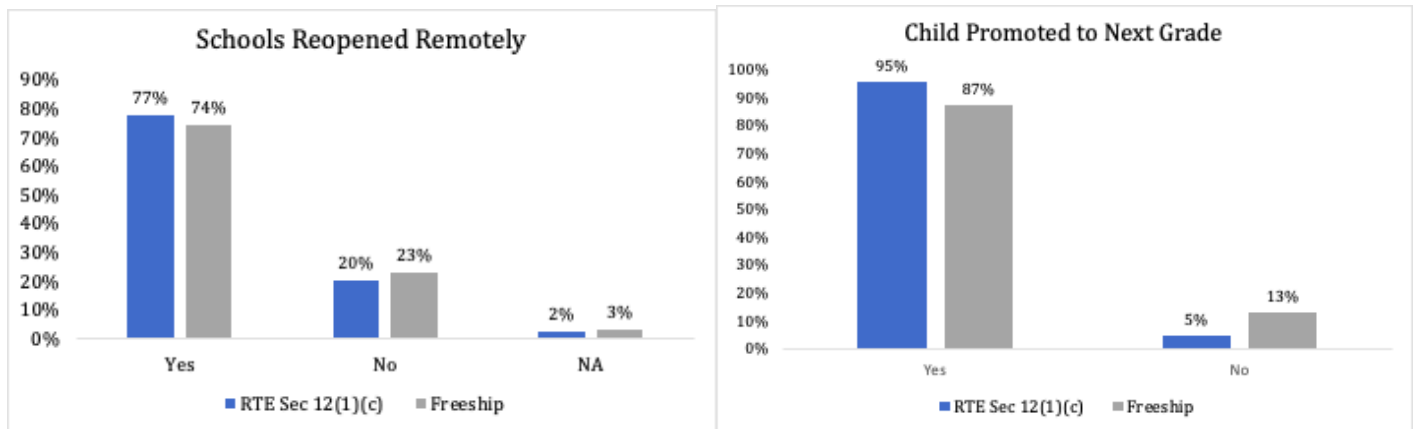


79% of children with special needs have access to online classes, however, **66%** of children aren't able to follow through classes in the new academic year. (CWSN survey, 2020)

With the beginning of the new academic (2020-21) year, 50% of children from the other categories are able to follow online classes (Survey, 2020)



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The access to smartphone has become a major challenge post the lockdown since most families possessed only one smartphone in the family which is taken to work by the working parent. Some students also have to share the access with their siblings during the classes which means they have to coordinate their class schedules. One of the parents also mentioned that he was being charged Rs.190 every month by the school for smart class and Rs.6500 for books and uniform. This becomes especially difficult for these families since many of them have lost their jobs or have received their salaries during the lockdown. Some parents also reported that limited access to online classes has also had an impact on the home environment since children are constructively engaged.



Conclusion – Parents seek support

Books & Uniform

- Parents request relaxation in fee charges
- Parents request for free books and uniform
- Books not received for the new academic year

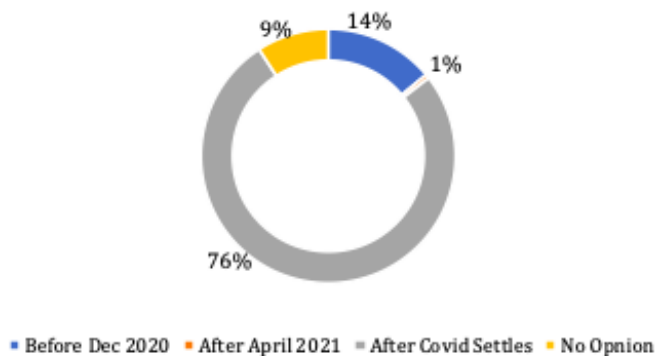
CWSN

- Parents request therapy for children
- Request for special educators
- Request for free support services within the school
- Online classes need more support

Online Classes

- No smart phone at home
- One smart phone & Multiple children
- Children are unable to follow online classes

When Should Schools Reopen



Most parents preferred that school should re-open only once COVID situation is under control



Key Takeaways



With classes going online, children are finding it difficult to follow the sessions and engage constructively. Parents are also finding it financially difficult to support the child.



The retention rate has been stable at 88% since 2015.



Request for special educators for Children with special needs.



The pandemic has resulted in loss of income for many families as a result additional school charges, books and uniform (charged by schools) need to be relaxed.