
How “free” is Primary Education in India

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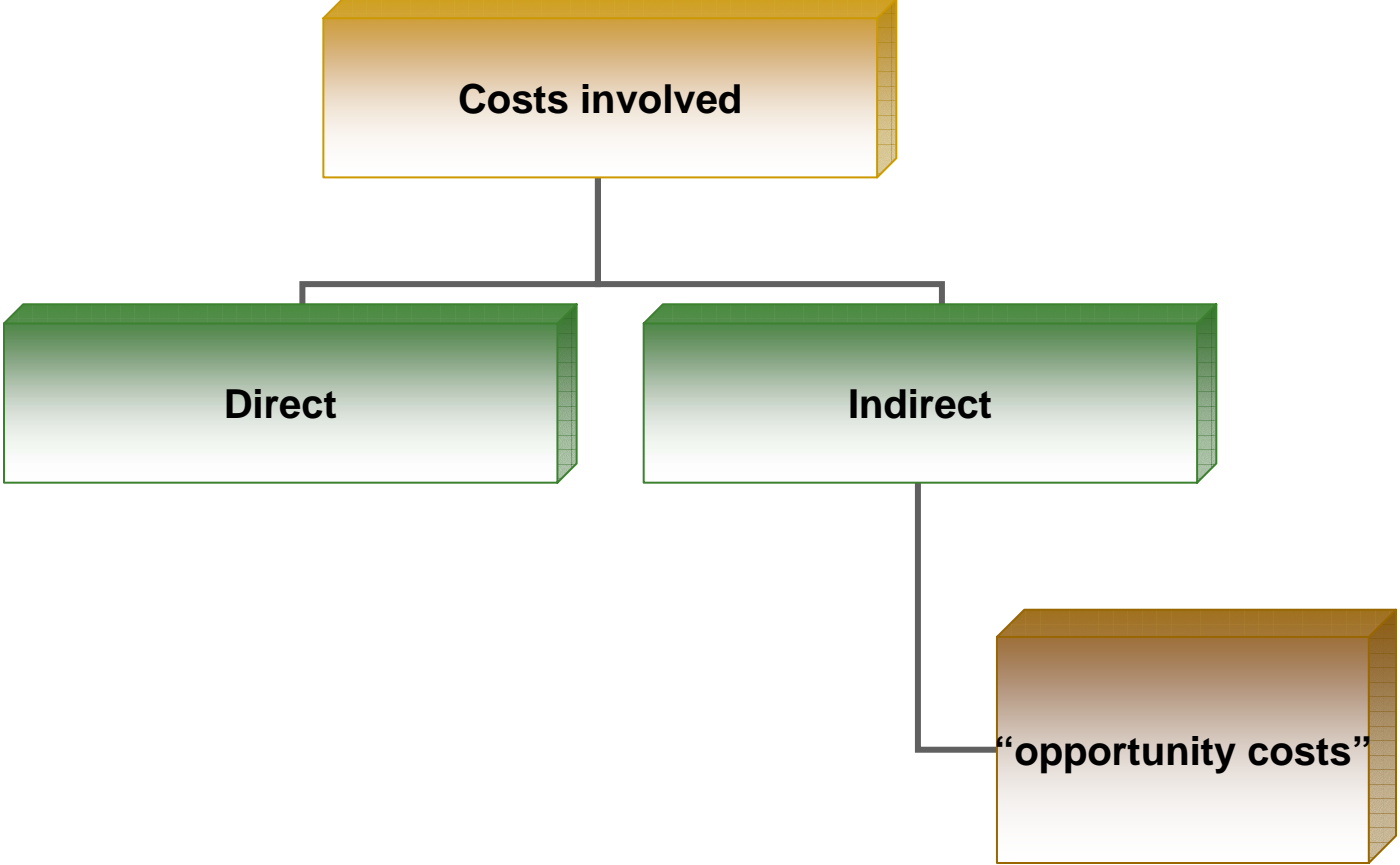
MIT India Reading group – 2nd Dec'06

References:

1. Report “The social context of elementary education in rural India”, October 2004, commissioned by Azim Premji Foundation.
 2. Primary Education as a Fundamental Right: Cost Implications, Economic and Political Weekly September 2, 2006
 3. User fees in primary education, The World Bank, July 2004.
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In an attempt to attain the goal of universal primary education,

the 86th amendment to the Indian Constitution enacted in December 2002, made **free** and compulsory **education** a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6 – 14 years.



Direct costs

Private coaching

Books, Stationary, uniforms

Transportation

Examination fees, sport fees

Tuition**

Government's incentive programs

- Provision of Free textbooks to target groups (poor, girls)
 - Free uniforms
 - Scholarships to SC/ST students
 - Mid-Day meals
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Free textbooks

- In rural Tamil Nadu, Free textbooks remained at block headquarters, and not collected from there. (1994)
- Guide books

In UP, most children bought them right from class I. Parents say that teachers insisted, teachers say that it is voluntary. So providing free textbooks has little consequences. (2003)

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Free uniforms

- In rural Tamil Nadu, free uniforms supplied did not reach in time, forcing parents to buy. (1997)
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Scholarship money

- In UP, teachers in govt. schools collected Rs. 5-10 during national festivals for issuing Transfer certificates or releasing scholarship money (2003)
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Mid-day meals has been a big success in improving attendance rates.

- Private coaching

In Karnataka, private tuitions cost Rs. 30/month. (2003)

To make up for Teacher absenteeism and negligent teaching.

Private tutoring

One mother said: ‘I send my child to a private tutor for 2 hours because it is better to have short time of concentrated learning than many hours of not learning at all!’

Guide Books

‘Most children had them in their school bags and copy the question and answers in their notebooks – some of the children could not even read what they had written!’

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- In 1995-96, the average expenditure per student pursuing primary education in rural India [NSSO 1998]

government school	Rs 219
local body schools	Rs 223
private aided schools	Rs 622
private unaided schools	Rs 911

Table 16: Average Cost of Sending a Child to School (Rs./year at constant 1996-97 prices)

Primary Level	Rs.
• NSS estimate, 1986-7*	212
• Probe estimate, 1996	318
Elementary Level	
• NCAER estimate, 1994	478

Table 2: Household Expenditure on Public Primary Education and Breakdown of Household Payments

Country	Household Expenditure as percentage of Total Public and Private Spending on Primary Education	Percent Shares						
		Tuition	Textbooks and Learning materials	Uniforms	Private Tutoring	School Contributions	Transport	Other
Cambodia	80		15	29	32	3	21	
China	21							
Ghana	30							
India*	43	13	76		8		2	1

Findings in World bank report (2004)

- “For these 79 countries, **tuition fees** are implemented in 30 countries (38%), though only 19 countries (63%) have legal tuition fees. In 11 countries **fees are implemented illegally** — Benin, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Vietnam, **India**, Nepal, Colombia, Bosnia, Latvia, Russia, Egypt.”
 - “**Textbook fees** are imposed in four (57%) countries—India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan— and these fees are **legally allowed except in India.**”
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- The government will have to incur, at the minimum, an additional expenditure of over Rs 2,900 crore every year in order to defray the basic or incompressible cost of attending school. (EPW,2006)
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