

[A private schools revolution in Bihar, India](#) [1]

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Recent research carried out by the [India Institute](#) [3] and Newcastle University's [E.G. West Centre](#) [4] in the Indian city of Patna has produced some remarkable findings. The report, [The Private School Revolution In Bihar, India](#) [5], launched this week in New Delhi, and shows that government statistics are currently excluding three quarters of the schools in the city and 68% of school children. This means that 238,767 school children out of a total of 333,776 were missing from the official data.

Instead of the official 350 schools, the research located a total of 1,574 schools with 78% identified as private unaided, 21% government and 1% private aided. Therefore, approximately 65% of school children in Patna were attending private unaided schools, with just 34% attending government schools. According to Professor Tooley, "when plotting the location of 1,182 private schools and 111 government schools using GIS technology, we found that there existed hardly a road or a street in Patna without a private school?."

Based on the monthly fees being charged at each private school, the research also found that 69% of private unaided schools were low cost, 22% were affordable and only 9% higher cost. In other words, the vast majority of private unaided schools found in the city of Patna were low cost, charging fees of less £4 per month.

These findings have two important implications. First, if these findings reflect the real state of education across India and developing world, then the so called "global education crisis" is much less of a crisis than previously thought. Instead, the widespread under-reporting of the number of children in school may now be a deliberate policy of developing country governments to help attract more international aid.

Second, Article 18 of the 2009 Right to Education Act in India requires that all unrecognised schools in the country be closed down within three years of the Act coming into force. For the city of Patna this would involve forcing two thirds of the city's children out of school and onto the street ? all because of government legislation which is supposed to be increasing school enrolments and not dramatically reducing it.

Thankfully, it would appear that the [Bihar Education Minister P.K. Shahi](#) [6] has already read the report. Last Saturday he declared that "I can assure that the government will not implement the Right to Education Act

in Bihar and will not force private schools to follow rules under it.? I suppose the people of Bihar should be grateful to their Education Minister for not shutting down the majority of their schools. However, this does make me wonder ? do politicians around the world have any kind of positive impact on the education which children receive, or are they all bent on disrupting and distorting its natural growth and development?

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