

# The Status of School Teachers in Contemporary Kolkata: A Study in Light of the Ban on Corporal Punishment

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**Abstract:** *With a variety of pro-child laws and policies implemented in India, especially the ban on corporal punishment in the Right to Education Act of 2009, the status and social position of teachers has begun to distinctly change. This study aims to understand how teachers experience the change in their status in the classrooms in schools of Kolkata. Using the qualitative methodology the study tries to show how the status of teachers has declined drastically since laws and policies have changed. The study also acknowledges the differences found in teachers' perceptions of their status based on the clientele served by the school. Teachers have identified three particular trends that best reflect their changing status – increased vulnerability, loss of control over student discipline and deterioration in teacher-student interaction. On the basis of these findings, the paper concludes that the fall in the status of school teachers in contemporary Kolkata is a major unintended consequence of the laws and policies in the field of education and child protection with significant repercussions in the everyday classroom environment and teacher-student relationships.*

**Key Words:** *Corporal Punishment ; Student Suicide ; Teacher-Student Relations ; Status ; Neo-Liberalism ; Organizational Culture ; Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 ; Child Rights ; UNCRC.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In 2010, a boy in the 8th standard of a well-known, elite school in Kolkata committed suicide due to alleged physical and mental harassment by the Principal and some teachers of the school. This incident made the entire city sit up and take notice of what goes on inside our schools in the name of disciplining and punishment. The Calcutta High Court ordered all schools in the city to ensure that such an incident is not repeated. Even before this order, the Indian government had passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (hereafter referred to as the Act) in 2009 which, among other things, banned the use of physical punishments and mental harassment of students in the name of disciplining inside the classroom. This Act was in line with the recommendations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which India had ratified in 1992, which, among other things, encourages the abolition of harsh punishments of children in school to protect them from violence. As a result of these endeavours, the issue of the general well-being of students, including the matter of punishment, have gained traction in the Indian educational system scenario. In their attempts to make education a more enjoyable and nurturing experience for students and to eliminate the fear of teachers and punishments that children have typically lived with in the Indian educational system, these laws and policies and especially the Act have greatly impacted the role of teachers in the education, disciplining and overall socialization of children in schools. The changed role has automatically had significant impact on their status in society at large as well as inside the classroom. This study aims to understand how teachers themselves perceive their changed status in terms of causes and effects as a result of the various changes in laws, especially the ban on corporal punishment which has aided in removing a central cause of fear which was at the root of respect for teachers inside Indian classrooms.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

In pre-colonial India, the status of teachers seems to have been very high. The ancient Indian mythologies and scriptures, for example, were replete with do's and don'ts for students vis-à-vis teachers in order to show adequate respect to them. Scriptures like the *Puranas*, the *Dharmasutras* and the *Manu-smṛiti* are important sources of such knowledge which have securely embedded the teacher or the *guru* as the father-figure in the life of the student or the *shishya*. As Chatterjee (1999) writes, the 'Smṛtis have always accepted the greatness of the teacher. The *Manu-smṛiti* states that both father and teacher called *pitā*, but the father who teaches the sacred Veda is superior to the father that gives physical birth' (100-101). The *Dharmasutras* clearly exemplified what must be the conduct of a student towards his teacher. Rules such as always sitting facing the guru, keeping the right arm uncovered in front of the guru, always speaking with utmost reverence to him, sitting down only with his permission, etc. convey to us very well that the relationship between the guru and the shishya was one of inequality upheld by utmost respect for the authority of the

teacher. If the teacher punished a student, he had to accept it calmly since the power and authority of the teacher was supreme in the institution. Not only students but the entire community looked up to teachers as they were the repositories of knowledge, especially Sanskrit verses, which was not accessible to all. The high status of teachers was, however, coupled with great responsibility towards the students, to the extent that if they failed to carry out their responsibilities properly, they were liable to be punished in the form of fines or confiscation of property (Chatterjee 1999). It would not be wrong to assume that the status of teachers in medieval India too would have been high. It was only with the colonization of the Indian nation and, consequently, of the Indian education system, that major changes came about in the status of teachers in India.

In the mass-schooling system that began with colonization of India, the caring and fatherly figure of the traditional Indian educational system gave way to the dictatorial schoolmasters who in reality were lowly clerks in the British regime, described by Kumar (2014) as the “meek dictator”. The status of the primary school teacher in these new formats of schooling was especially low and they were made to do a variety of duties for the English government for a measly salary. The teachers in colonial schools did not have any control over the students except in the area of discipline and punishment. Thus, the powerless schoolmasters began to resort to the use of brute physical force to discipline students to ensure an environment of fear inside the classroom because that alone was how the teachers could retain a high status at least in the eyes of the students. As Kumar (1991) described, ‘children do not know that their teacher is a feeble servant of the authorities...For them the teacher is the man on the spot with all the power in the world to force them to do what he wants. They do not know that the teacher hides his powerlessness behind the mask of being all-powerful’ (88). Thus, the status of the teacher fell drastically from a position of absolute reverence owing to their knowledge and care and concern for students to a fear-based reverence ensured through the use of harsh physical punishments inside the classroom. Harsh physical punishments coupled with fear based respect for teachers became the common hallmarks of the classroom environment in colonial India and the legacy continued even after independence. With time, however, there has been a growing awareness in the West about the harmful effects of harsh punishments on children and it has been discouraged more and more as ideas of child protection, child rights and children’s agency have struck deep roots among the Western intellectuals and activists. India was influenced by these new thoughts and the Indian government has been trying to create an environment in schools that is conducive to a fear-free and nurturing experience of growth and education. To that extent, the government has put various limits on the abilities and activities of teachers through various acts and policies, one of them being the abolition of corporal punishment through the Right to Education Act as mentioned before. Schools throughout the city have taken various steps to ensure that the Act is properly implemented, although some schools have done more than others in this respect. While colonial injustices in the field of classroom management may have been erased, more in some schools than in others, the status of the teacher has changed significantly in the contemporary Indian society as a result of these new pro-student laws and policies.

Based on this brief background of the status of teachers in pre-colonial and colonial India, the next sections will discuss how the status of teachers in contemporary, globalized Kolkata has changed due to the various laws and policies. Before we go into that, a brief outline of the methodology of the study has been given below.

### **3. METHOD:**

This study was carried out with the help of the qualitative methodology with grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006) being used as a sensitising guideline during stages of sampling and data analysis. Data were collected from teachers of primary and secondary sections of different schools in Kolkata. Two main categories of schools were considered on the basis of the clientele they served – low-cost schools, owned or sponsored by the government, serving the working class and lower middle class clientele (such as lower level government employees, small shop owners, etc.) and expensive/elite schools which are typically privately owned and serve the rich and upper-middle classes (high salaried employees). The sampling strategy used in this study was theoretical sampling which aimed at attaining theoretical and data saturation to arrive at the sample size. The sample size was 7 with 4 teachers working in low-cost schools catering to the lower-middle class and working class clientele and 3 working in expensive schools for the upper-middle class and the very rich. Of the 7 teachers, 4 taught in secondary sections of schools and 3 taught in primary sections. In terms of age and experience, 3 teachers were junior teachers and the rest were middle-aged senior teachers. Two of the teachers were male and the rest were female. Primary data were collected with the help of in-depth interviews conducted with a semi-structured interview schedule. Secondary data were collected from school websites and calendars, legal documents found online and journalistic material. Data were analysed by first transcribing interviews and then coding and categorising the data conceptually which were then explained with the help of relevant theories and concepts.

With this brief outline of the methods used to conduct this study, we now move on to the main findings of this study.

#### **4. FINDINGS:**

The overwhelming responses from teachers regarding their status in the education system of Kolkata were related to feelings of deterioration in the prestige and status of the whole teaching community. Three major trends emerged from the interviews regarding how teachers perceived their status. The first was related to rising feelings of vulnerability among teachers. The second trend that emerged was related to a sense of loss of control in the classroom. Finally, teachers lamented that the ban on punishments have affected their interactions and relations with their students by turning the tables of power inside the classroom. While these were the general trends, responses varied considerably depending on the school clientele. In fact, it was found that the variable of school clientele was far more important in determining teacher status than factors like age or sex. Over the next few pages, these findings have been elaborated upon.

(a) **Increased Vulnerability:** Teachers in all schools felt that the ban on corporal punishment and various avenues for students and parents to express grievances and complain against teachers have been the major causes behind the fall in respect for their community. Teachers felt that the fear of punishment that children had before the Act came into effect is now gone. It is this lack of fear and the simultaneous increase in space for agency and voice of the child aided by aware parents and protective laws which have led to a decline in the respect accorded to teachers while also making them vulnerable. Teachers of expensive schools are probably bearing the maximum brunt of the change since laws and rules are followed much more strictly in these schools where jobs are not permanent. Teachers in these schools are continuously monitored nowadays, especially with the help of CCTV cameras. This constant visibility has given birth to a never-before felt sense of fear among teachers while the fear felt by students is steadily declining due to greater legal protection. Teachers in these schools have to constantly keep changing themselves to keep up with the laws and new directives that come from the boards in order to be able to retain their jobs. This was found to be especially difficult for the senior teachers on the verge of retirement for whom the classrooms have suddenly changed to such a degree that they cannot relate their lifelong methods of teaching and disciplining with the new requirements. Not only do these new methods take away power from teachers to discipline students like before, they also give greater power to students and parents to lodge complaints against teachers which could lead to them losing their jobs in the worst case scenario. Therefore, it is not unnatural that teachers of these schools feel vulnerable in the current education system. In order to keep themselves safe, teachers unanimously said that they work mechanically, not expressing too much concern about students' problems and needs, lest students misread and misuse their concern. They follow the rules mechanically too, always aware that they are not of any use to control student misbehaviour or always guarantee a nurturing environment inside the school. Most students understand this powerlessness and vulnerability of teachers which is why teachers feel that students do not show respect to them anymore, thereby lowering their status inside the classroom.

Teachers of low-cost schools, however, typically do not feel as vulnerable as their counterparts in expensive schools. This is because these students and their parents are still largely uneducated and poor and they look up to the teachers as messiahs who can help their children break out of the cycle of poverty by giving them education. Therefore, respect for teachers is not as eroded in these schools as in the previous type and they do not fear students and parents as much as teachers in expensive schools. Two other factors emerged as important reasons for this lack of fear among teachers – the lack of monitoring in these schools and the political networks of many of these teachers which they use when complaints are made against them. Since these low-cost schools run on a tight budget, they have the most basic infrastructure due to which monitoring teacher activity through CCTV cameras or regular physical checks are not possible. As such, teachers get away with using fear-inducing methods of teaching and disciplining including harsh punishments. Therefore, students still do fear their teachers in these schools whereby the overall status of the teacher community has not fallen too much in these schools. This is not to say, however, that teachers in these schools did not feel vulnerable at all. They do fear the media and are wary of some parents who are more aware of their rights or are more resourceful and have the ability to bring in the media if they get to know of activities in school that are harmful for students, such as brutal punishments. Another factor that has added to this fear specifically in the case of male teachers is that of complaints of sexual misconduct and harassment by female students, allegedly often false. Such a fear, teachers said, is specifically because of the new laws that give greater protection to students. In general, however, the status of teachers in this category of schools is still higher although their vulnerability is increasing gradually. It is because of this vulnerability that most teachers have felt that the nobleness of their profession is lost and their status has reduced dramatically in contemporary society.

(b) **Loss of Control:** Most teachers, especially in expensive schools felt that the new laws regarding child protectionism including the ban on corporal punishment has led to them losing most of the previously enjoyed control in the classroom and simultaneously being increasingly controlled by the school authorities. This has meant that the power structure in the classroom has changed significantly, especially in high schools where the older students are well aware of their rights and the limits on teachers. Teachers in these schools have felt that their traditional control used to give them a substantial degree of power over the students who feared being disciplined by teachers. Today,

however, with the Act, schools are keeping a far greater tab on the activities of the teachers than before. This has led to teachers not only losing their freedom to take matters of education and discipline into their own hands and use their own judgments and methods in each classroom context but has also set off a process of reversal in the power dynamics of the classroom. Matters of classroom discipline are now usually directly handled by the higher authorities in the schools through means like CCTV surveillance, counselling or rules that require teachers to pass on most matters of indiscipline to the higher authorities rather than solving them themselves. These changes are seen much more frequently in expensive schools, such that it is now teachers who fear students and their parents lest they lodge complaints against them and jeopardize their careers, rather than the other way around. Due to this commonly found reversal of powers and fears, most frequently found in schools catering to the wealthy and elite sections of society, it is not surprising that teachers felt that their status in the eyes of students and parents has gone down. Once again, schools catering to the working classes and the lower middle classes were found to be far less in control of their teachers through means like regular monitoring or CCTV surveillance. Working with skeletal staff and poor infrastructure, these schools leave matters of discipline and punishment in the hands of individual teachers. Since teachers are allowed to take matters of discipline and punishment in their own hands and with the lack of monitoring of their activities, they still do retain power in these classrooms. As such, it is not surprising that these teachers do not feel their statuses have fallen too drastically even though they are well aware that the process has begun as indicated by rising complaints by parents against teachers to the schools and sometimes even to local media.

(c) Teacher-Student Interactions: This factor was often talked about by teachers of both categories of schools as being a good indicator of respect for teachers and therefore of their status. The increased accountability of teachers to parents and the school authorities for the well-being of students since the Act has put serious strains on how teachers behave with students. The opportunities that teachers nowadays have to interact with students are so limited and controlled by school authorities, as per most teachers especially in expensive and private schools, that they do not get a chance to get attached to the students. As such, they hardly interact with the students and only aim to finish the syllabus. This lack of attachment often makes students think of teachers in a negative sense. In the words of one respondent, teachers are seen as “villains” by many students these days. When they encounter classroom indiscipline, most of the time they either ignore it or refer the concerned students to higher authorities for disciplinary action. While teachers do lament about their inability to create a lasting bond with students, they have also said that there must be a distance between a teacher and a student which will allow respect to grow and keep relations healthy. They recognize that increased access to technology and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. and schools’ directives to teachers to always be available for students even after school hours by making WhatsApp groups for classes has reduced this distance exposing teachers to unwanted or unnecessary communication including complaints or even threats from parents regarding their children’s well-being or educational development. This fear of complaints is another reason why teachers have begun to distance themselves from students. As a result, the teacher-student relationship is now “superficial”, “interest-driven” and bereft of care and concern because and teachers seem to be well aware of it. This lack of attachment and increased protection by law has led students to gradually be less respectful of teachers according to the respondents and the status of teachers has automatically gone down, especially in private and elite schools where these problems are encountered far more frequently. The lack of attachment goes hand in hand with greater control and power of parents over what goes on inside the classrooms which were so long a sacred space where only teachers and students had the privilege of entry. With this new-found control and power, parents have a far greater say about what goes on inside classrooms and are willing to take matters to the court or make them public through the media something that they consider unpleasant is happening. This increased power of parents along with the loss of respect from students have caused a major dent in the high status traditionally enjoyed by the teacher community in India.

Once again, the teachers of low-cost schools have not felt a very significant dent in their status owing to almost exclusive control over classroom matters and also being the only sources of knowledge for the children of illiterate or semi-literate parents. Most of these parents still want teachers to use traditional methods of disciplining and punishing, including physical punishments, thus ensuring that the power relations are intact inside these classrooms. However, a gradual change is on the horizon as reflected in the response of one teacher. He said that in his school teachers are no longer allowed to carry canes or rulers to the classroom which were typically used to physically punish students. Even though physical punishments are still carried on without weapons, the teachers fear that a message of their powerlessness is slowly being sent across to the students, especially with the greater reach of news media and social media which will definitely reduce their prestige and status among the students and parents eventually. These three trends show that in the larger picture, there is a definite fall in the prestige of the teacher community in Kolkata, even though the fall is faster and more brutal in some schools than in others.

## 5. DISCUSSION:

The increased sense of vulnerability that teachers feel, which is tied to a sense of lowered status in society, is caused largely due to the changes in the organizational culture of schools that have resulted from the Act and other similar policies. The changed organizational cultures of schools have further affected the attachment relations between teachers and students (and also parents) as well as the control of teachers inside the classroom. Stoll (1998), quoting Schein (1985), defines organizational culture as ‘the deeper level of *basic assumptions* and *beliefs* that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic “taken-for-granted” fashion an organisation’s view of itself and its environment’ (9). The organizational culture includes the historical patterns of operation of the organization and the socio-economic-politico-legal context within which it operates, both of which play a significant role in determining the conduct of its members and the quality of their relationships. Different schools have different organizational cultures based on their rules, rituals, languages, their degree of adherence to laws, etc. all of which affect relations of interaction and therefore of attachment between members. For example, data show that in schools where laws are implemented more strictly, teachers keep a distance between themselves and students, not allowing the development of supportive, close relationships based on “affective tenor” or “responsivity” (Davis 2006) to students’ needs and demands mainly because of the fear that teachers have of being penalized. There is, thus, a lack of attachment between teachers and students in these schools. This lack of attachment usually does not allow mutually respectful relations to grow between teachers and students which, combined with the Act and other pro-child policies, makes a fall in the power and status of the teacher almost inevitable. In the organizational culture of schools for the privileged and elite that boast of test-based precision in pedagogy and increased control and surveillance over teachers, teacher-student attachment relations are strained since teachers are not allowed the freedom to interact in manners they want. This has led to the inability of teachers to reciprocate students’ needs since rules of the institution delineate expected behaviour of teachers and limit their interactions with students. As a result, ‘teachers formally complete the teaching requirements but students become disengaged and their needs are not considered ... The whole educational experience becomes mechanized, and the nurturing and social dimensions become a posteriority’ (Ibrahim & Zaatari 2020: 391). The organizational cultures of schools, especially the private schools, make it difficult for most teachers to move beyond the prescribed framework of norms, duties and expectations to build a relationship with students based on reciprocity and affect. It is because of this lack of attachment and reciprocity between teachers and students that students do not feel respectful towards teachers which along with laws and school rules that reign in teachers’ powers, has lowered the status of teachers in society while increasing the power of students and parents in the new educational system.

The loss of control that teachers feel in classrooms is closely related to the changing power dynamics due to the changing organizational cultures of schools. Teachers have traditionally had the sovereign authority to take control of disciplinary matters in their class. They had been given the prime responsibility of not only imparting curricular knowledge to the new generations but also moral values. In this, they had been free to use whatever methods they felt necessary without any strict surveillance over them. There was never an external agent that told teachers how to conduct themselves in the classroom. However, due to the new laws post the Act, control over students based on teachers’ own moralities and sense of rightness and wrongness have suddenly been put on the path of extinction. The sovereign control of teachers over students inside the classroom has been taken over by the sovereign nation state. As a result, the “age relation rituals” (Bernstein et al. 1966), which mark how different age groups will approach those in formal authority positions, are breaking down disturbing the relations between students and teachers. The acknowledgement of authority and distancing from the authority figure, which are common age relation rituals, have been at the root of teachers’ ability to control students. Since the rituals of distancing and using authority by teachers have been compromised to a great extent due to changing laws and technology, the control based on age relations and authority positions has also changed. The authority that teachers now have over students are often conditional to the norms of the institution rather than automatic and customary. Most control over students is now wielded by the institutional rules and codes of conduct rather than by the teachers in the context of the classroom and, as a result, teachers are no longer required or authorized to control students based on their own frameworks of right, wrong, moral and immoral. This has been exacerbated by the privatization of education in the neo-liberal era in which control has been turned into a matter of profitability by the better-off private schools serving the rich and elite. Apart from promises of good results, these schools sell ideas of student protection and a good environment to the parents by guaranteeing greater control over teachers among other things, making them accountable to parents. As Kumar (2011) explains, ‘the neo-liberal programme of “extending the scope of market institutions to the limits of political possibility” (Gray 2009: 165) naturally focuses on consumption’ (ibid.). Due to the effects of neo-liberalism in education, not only have schools ‘been colonized by a market ethos of “what counts” as important knowledge’ (McGregor 2009: 346), they have also been hierarchised on the basis of their internal environments as determined by the organizational cultures of schools.

The effects of neo-liberalism, however, have never been universal and equal and therefore the loss of control and consequent vulnerability are felt to different degrees by teachers in different types of schools. Such loss and vulnerability are not felt as strongly by teachers of low-cost schools that have remained outside the purview of neo-liberal, privatized development in education. Since schools catering to the poorer sections do not hold teachers accountable, let alone directly control their behaviour and activities, they are simply not considered in the running for good schools. Such schools do not run on profits and therefore there is no incentive to control teachers in these schools and ensure students' rights and freedoms as a selling point to parents. The students who pass out from these schools not only do not get the same quality of education as their more privileged counterparts do but are also not exposed to the same controlled environment of care and protection that most private schools boast of. Teachers' ability to control students does not seem to be considerably affected in schools catering to the poor and lower-middle class populations. Working with low funds and poor infrastructure and answerable only during rare inspections from external authorities, teachers in these schools are hardly monitored and thus continue to wield near-complete control over students, notwithstanding changes in laws. Even though it is too simplistic to say that teachers in these schools alone resort to violence, it is true that more often than not teachers in these schools are in a much better position to control their students, even using violence, compared to their colleagues in the expensive schools which also ensures that they are more respected in their circle.

Thus, the organizational cultures and the extent of neoliberal exposure of different schools are factors that need to be taken into consideration when studying the status of teachers in the current Indian educational system. While the Act and other similar policies aim at improving the experiences of students inside the classrooms, a major unintended consequence has taken birth – that of the downfall in the status of the teacher community in contemporary Kolkata. As we saw, this downfall is more rapid in some schools than in others, but it surely is happening.

## **6. CONCLUSION:**

The attempts made by the Indian nation-state and the Indian and international civil society to bring forth an era of change in the way children are treated in India have been numerous and multifarious of which the Act is only one. The ideologies of child rights, child protection, voice of children, agency of children, etc. have become common and hotly debated and pursued by us. What all these ideologies have in common, however, is a one-way transfer of ideas from the Western, developed countries to the non-Western, developing, countries. These ideologies are definitely needed to protect our children from abuse, injury and even death in school, as is still often reported in the media. However, what this study tries to show is that the way in the Act was created, without adequate research at the grassroots as alleged by all teachers, has caused significant unintended consequences in the educational system. The detachment in teacher-student interactions and relations or the loss of control of teachers over the disciplinary procedures of schools and instead themselves becoming targets of disciplining by the schools are all consequences of a very sudden imposition of an alien ideology into the Indian educational system. All these have led to a swift change in power relations inside the classrooms leading to a definitive fall in the status of the teaching community within Kolkata and making them vulnerable to the wishes of the parents, students and school authorities.

There is a need, however, to avoid any forms of generalizations since the situation is starkly different depending upon the type of school we are looking at as the study reveals. Those schools which have benefitted the most from privatization and neoliberalism have warmed up to the ideology of child protectionism, typically at the cost of the freedom and control of teachers. Yet, in case of those schools that have been left outside the ambit of neoliberal privatization, child protectionism is still not considered as an important aspect of education. In these schools, which typically cater to the economically weaker sections of society, western ideologies of child rights, agency of children, etc. are not important enough for most students or parents since the hope of getting out of the cycle of poverty through education is much stronger than needs for protecting children's rights. This hope of parents along with the lack of accountability of teachers has maintained the traditional power structure inside these classrooms. Teachers in these schools are still seen as authoritative and powerful figures by the students and parents and they cannot be easily punished due to their protective political connections in most cases. As such, the status of these teachers is still quite high in the community. Yet, the infiltration of knowledge about the Act has begun in this section of society too making these teachers take precautions from being excessive in matters of discipline and punishment. This shows that even for this category of teachers, power and high status are not absolute, even though it is relatively better for them than for their counterparts teaching in expensive and private schools in the city.

While the British had systematically destroyed the traditional Indian educational system and started the problematic practice of harsh punishments by powerless teachers, the post-colonial nation has created a different set of problems in trying to rectify the situation. In this post-colonial educational system, the teacher is still powerless but is also seen in less respectful eyes by students and parents unlike in colonial and precolonial times. Thus, the status of the teacher is far lower today due to their powerlessness compared to the status of teachers in the colonial times or before. In fact, the better the school, the worse the status of the teacher. The fall in the status of teachers due to

lowered prestige and respect offered to them goes hand-in-hand with higher powers of the students, parents and the school authorities thereby making teachers mere cogs in the machinery of education, entrusted with the responsibility of finishing the syllabus on time and ensuring that the basics of everyday discipline such as proper dress code and punctuality are maintained. The role of teachers as agents of socialization or guardians has been severely affected and is a direct effect of the Act and other such policies that aim at child protection, thus leading to the fall in their status in urban Kolkata. Thus, the Indian education system are having to deal with many unintended consequences that have resulted from laws that do not reflect the emotions and needs of the stakeholders, pointing to the need for greater in-depth, grassroot research with the concerned parties before laws are made and implemented. This article hopes to begin to generate conversations and debates not only about the creation and implementation of laws based on greater research but also regarding the monitoring of laws to look for unintended consequences that may have ill effects on the community and the system.

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