

# ***School education and the lack of parent information***

by

**Prashant Bhattacharji**

Data Scientist, Interviewstreet, Hyderabad

**Geeta Gandhi Kingdon\***

Professor and Chair of Education Economics and International Development

UCL Institute of Education, University of London

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\* **Corresponding author.** Address: UCL Institute of Education, University College London, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL. Email: [g.kingdon@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:g.kingdon@ioe.ac.uk)

## **Abstract**

Many OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries publish school rankings annually, based on the aggregated student performance of different schools in the (high-stakes) board examinations. The literature cites two reasons in favour of the public availability of information on school performance: first, the highly valued imperative of providing parents information that will enable them to make more informed school choices for their children, and, second, the idea that when parents are better informed, poorly performing schools are under greater pressure to be accountable for improving their quality in order to compete to attract students. Detractors fear that rankings reflect not only the schools' quality but also the family backgrounds of their students. This article examines evidence for the claim that when school rankings are published, school quality increases. It also examines the ways in which countries ensure that school rankings reflect school quality and not the home backgrounds of their students. The article shows how school rankings by subject performance can help principals diagnose the teaching of which subjects needs strengthening, and reveals how rankings can help parents choose from among all the schools in a neighbourhood of a city. The article also demonstrates that objective school rankings (based on exam results) and subjective school rankings (based on the perceptions of principals and parents of 'academic reputation') differ substantially, with a correlation coefficient of only around 0.6 to 0.7. This suggests that subjective 'academic reputation' rankings are not a good substitute for objective rankings, and that stakeholders are not well informed about the actual academic standards of schools, a situation that strengthens the case for the public provision of information about school results. The article argues for the need for a healthy debate in India about the efficacy and relevance of school rankings as a way of improving school accountability and raising standards.

## 1. Introduction

Concern about the poor quality of school education has increased in the recent past, as a number of tests of learning achievement by government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the private sector have made visible the low cognitive skills among Indian children.<sup>1</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan recognises the centrality of learning achievement, setting the goal to “Improve learning outcomes that are measured, monitored and reported independently at all levels of school education” (GoI’s 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, 2013: Box 21.1).<sup>[24]</sup> The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is also backing the drive to raise the standards of learning, as seen in the emphasis given to measuring learning and to ensuring good learning outcomes in its Joint Review Mission report of July 2012.

While the solutions typically sought for remedying low achievement and for achieving quality involve increasing the physical resources of schools, raising teacher–pupil ratios, improving teacher certification, and increasing teacher salaries, the failure of such inputs-based approaches is well documented internationally.<sup>2</sup> The literature based on global best practice emphasises the

reform of incentive and accountability structures in school systems as the best way of improving school effort and raising student-learning outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

It has been argued that one powerful way of improving the incentives for schools to apply greater effort (and thus improve student achievement) is the provision of *information* to parents and communities about the learning levels of their children, which can empower parents to hold teachers and schools accountable. In addition, sharing information with parents and communities about the attainment levels of students in the various schools in a city or area also introduces an element of competition between schools, which can lead to greater effort by schools and teachers.

Student performance can vary greatly from school to school. However, in the absence of school-level information about student performance, parents are left to judge the quality of schools on the basis of the school's physical appearance or visible facilities, such as the size of school grounds, infrastructure, use of Smart Boards, and availability of language and maths labs, which are inadequate and sometimes misleading indicators of school quality. This lack of information among parents hinders inter-school competition in the academic sphere, which could

lead to improved academic results. It is also argued that lack of information about the relative performance of different schools also prevents parents from being able to make informed school choices<sup>4</sup>. A survey of parents by *The Good Schools Guide* in the United Kingdom revealed that academic performance is the top criterion in choosing a school for their child, followed by proximity to home.<sup>[22, 23]</sup> While no comparable survey data were found for India, the situation is likely to be similar, based on anecdotal observations about the schools to which parents flock in most cities, which are typically schools with a good standing in standardised tests.

However, the benefits of inter-school competition and of parental choice have to be balanced against the potential dis-benefits of exam performance-based school league tables. What are these dis-benefits? What are the fears about making information about schools publicly available? Are these the fears of parents or of teachers or of education policy makers? Do these fears outweigh the supposed benefits of parental information and school competition? Has there been public debate on this topic in other countries? If so, what policy choices have other countries made on this issue? How accurate are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and principals about the relative academic strengths of different

schools? How well do perception-based (subjective) school rankings correspond with actual exam performance-based (objective) school rankings? This article explores these issues and presents some evidence based on Indian data for recent years (2012 and 2013) based on Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) board examination results.

## **2. Data-driven School Rankings**

The Indian school examination system at the high school level currently has an exclusive focus on testing individual students and on assessing their eligibility for undergraduate education. Something noticeably missing is the use of this examination data at the system (or meta) level, with a focus on identifying high- and low-performing schools, geographical regions, and socio-economic groups. This leads to the absence of *evidence-based decision making* of the kind that would enable remedial action to be taken in specific schools or regions or socio-economic groups. The magnitude of a problem needs to be measured before it

can be solved. Similarly, unless there is evidence that a school is underperforming relative to its peers, the school cannot get to know on its own that it needs to improve in certain areas.

One of the very simple forms of ‘information liberalisation’ in Indian school education could be the regular release of factual rankings of schools on the basis of their performance in the annual board examinations. Currently, people seek admission for their children purely on the basis of perception, or, at best, perceptual rankings, which are often unable to capture the reality (see evidence on this later in this article). The advantage of releasing detailed information about the relative performances of schools in the annual board examinations, and of releasing this information into the public domain, is that it makes available to parents the objective performance data about a school, rather than just perceptual information, and enables them to make an informed choice. This blows open competition among schools by creating for them a very real incentive to ensure the provision of high-quality teaching to their students.

An important caveat is that a ranking of schools in this manner is a reflection of not just the teaching standards of that school, but also of the home background

and family income of its students. Students in relatively affluent areas are predisposed to success, and keeping this fact in mind, it might be demoralising and discouraging to schools catering to a relatively underprivileged student population to find themselves at the bottom of such ranking tables for reasons that are not entirely within their control. While this concern is justified, there are reasonable workarounds to dealing with such undesirable consequences, as discussed in Section 4 of this article.

### **3. School-Ranking Tables in Different Countries and the Reasons for Releasing Them**

Many countries have been publishing school-level test performance data. The history of the liberalisation of school-level performance information in the UK shows that initially only media organisations used the data to produce rankings in the form of school league tables, but that from the mid-1990s onwards, the UK government's Department for Education began publishing tables, with a facility on its website that allows users to rank schools on the basis of different measures. The Statement of Intent on the website<sup>[22]</sup> emphasises that the



performance tables sit at the heart of the accountability framework by providing *'a reliable and accessible source of comparative information on pupil attainment and progress'*.

School performance league tables were abolished in Wales (one of the four major autonomous regions of the UK) in 2001, because of concerns that the tables were bureaucratic and made unfair comparisons between schools.<sup>[21]</sup> The data analysed after a couple of years indicated that after banning the publication of these league tables, the performance of students in the lower-ranked schools dropped dramatically, even though the top 25 per cent of schools continued to perform very well. Thus, abolishing the publication of school rankings had led to a significant increase in the level of performance inequality between the best- and worst-performing schools. The lack of pressure on poorly performing schools had removed the accountability pressure on them to improve the quality of education they imparted.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

Burgess et al.<sup>[9]</sup> at the University of Bristol compare schools in England and Wales before and after the abolition of school league tables in 2001. They demonstrate statistically that school effectiveness in Wales, after the abolition of the school

league tables, was lower than in England. They attribute the higher levels of student performance (before the abolition of school league tables) to the monitoring that is facilitated by such tables, through scrutiny by parents, who are likely to avoid low-performing schools. Schools, in turn, are under pressure to improve their performance, because of the public availability of these data to parents. Apart from the pressure by parents, it could also be the explicit pressure by administrative and governing authorities which might impose sanctions on such schools, based on their observed / monitored low student achievement levels.

Similarly, in the United States, regular collection of assessment data from schools is an essential measure or activity introduced under the "No Child Left Behind Act" of 2001,<sup>[10]</sup> and comparison of these test data across schools is a key to increasing accountability of schools and of their teachers. This increased accountability is a key purpose of the act. Chronically underperforming schools, as identified by these data, face decreased funding and other punishments. The act requires states and school districts to provide information to parents about the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of a school, which is a measurement of how a public school or a school district is performing academically on standardised tests.

These data-driven accountability systems of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) were found to result in the improvement of the average maths performance of fourth and eighth grade students, although no noticeable difference was found in the reading ability of fourth graders, according to an analysis by Dee and Jacob.<sup>[11]</sup>

At the same time, there have also been concerns about the "No Child Left Behind Act" promoting a tendency to 'teach to the test' and focusing on a narrow subset of skills, because of its heavy reliance on standardised testing.<sup>[20]</sup>

In the United States, California releases the Academic Performance Index (API), and its primary purpose is to help maintain clear targets on which all schools can focus. It “measures the academic performance and growth of schools on a variety of academic measures”. The website of the California Department of Education states, “The API is a single number, ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1000, which reflects a school’s, an LEA’s (Local Education Authority’s), or a student group’s performance level, based on the results of state-wide assessments. Its purpose is to measure the academic performance and improvement of schools.” The API was established by the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA), a landmark law passed in 1999.<sup>[3,4]</sup> The key word here is “**accountability**”. There is a

recognition that measuring, and acting on the basis of, objective data leads to greater accountability from schools.

In New York City, report cards for teachers have been generated, which identify and rank the extent to which the performance of students improves or worsens when taught by a particular teacher, while controlling for factors beyond the control of a teacher, such as poverty, pupil attendance, and class size. Even when there were apprehensions about the data collection not being entirely accurate, the Manhattan Supreme Court ruled in favour of media outlets that wanted to make these data available to the public in 2011, reinforcing the critical role played by these data in improving accountability of schools and teachers, notwithstanding their imperfections.<sup>[5]</sup>

Similarly, Australia also releases school-wise performance tables, though it clearly acknowledges that the home background of the school's student population is also a strong influencing factor. *The Canberra Times* publishes league tables, acknowledging similar imperfections, but highlighting the most significant argument in the debate—that a parent has a right to know and to make decisions accordingly.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### **4. Arguments against School League Tables**

The main complaints against the release of school league tables are made by teacher union groups. In Australia, for instance,<sup>[7]</sup> they complained that school league tables are an unreliable indicator of school quality, that they will harm education rather than improve it, and that they will lead to greater social segregation. While it is true that the socio-economic characteristics of the student body will influence the school's ranking, causing some wealthy and well-endowed schools to be ranked at the top, the teaching quality of schools is also captured in these data, and opening them up for public scrutiny creates pressure on lower-performing schools to improve. And, as was demonstrated with data in the Welsh example discussed previously, banning the publication of school league tables actually dramatically decreased student achievement levels among the lower-performing schools and increased the level of inter-school inequality in performance.

There are also criticisms that the school league tables have a uni-dimensional academic focus, create pressure on teachers, and make it harder for poorly ranked schools to attract good teachers.<sup>[8]</sup> While the focus on the academic results of schools is important, having academic league tables does not preclude the making of school league tables based on non-academic parameters, just as the world rankings of universities are also made on a range of different parameters other than academic reputation, for example, rankings based on levels of student satisfaction, rankings based on number of research citations, and rankings based on degree of internationalisation. In a school context, these parameters could be rankings based on sporting prowess; on musical activity; on the extent of community partnerships/service by students; on the degree of international exposure of students; and on the extent of attention paid to inclusive education of disabled children.

To remove the effect of the socio-economic background of students, different countries have adopted different strategies. For instance, schools with similar socio-economic demographics (schools in particular neighbourhoods) can be clubbed together and compared in separate groups for a fairer assessment of the contribution of that particular school. Some countries publish school league

tables based on a “value-added” score, which tracks the pupils’ *gain in* achievement over a period of time, thus greatly reducing the effect of pupils’ socio-economic background. Some countries use both a control for a child’s home context and for the value added by the school, for example, the so-called contextual value-added school league tables produced and published in the UK.<sup>5</sup>

However, none of the arguments against school league tables changes the fact that admissions to colleges and universities are dependent on the raw score levels. Since college entrance affects the life chances of students, many countries have taken the policy stance that parents have the right to accurate insights into an aggregated snapshot of the academic performance of students in a school, and should be able to compare this performance with that of other schools whose students may come from different socio-economic backgrounds.

## **5. Correlation between Perceptual and Academic Rankings of Schools**

The best-known school ranking in India is the annual ranking by *Education World* magazine in partnership with C-Fore survey company, which has been published every year since 2008. It assigns perception-based scores to schools across a variety of criteria related to academic reputation, teacher quality, student care, infrastructure, etc. Perceptions are gathered from a sample of educational stakeholders, mainly school principals and parents. On the basis of these subjective perception-based scores, a ranking of schools is generated. However, our own analysis of 96 schools affiliated to the CISCE, New Delhi, based on data for the 2013 examinations, leads us to confirm what we had hitherto only anecdotally suspected: there was poor correlation between the perception-based academic reputation scores and the actual academic performance of the students of those same schools in the board examinations at the class 12 level. The product-moment correlation coefficient between the perceptual scores and the mean actual academic scores (obtained by the students of the schools in the board exams) was only 0.58, indicating that perception is not successful in capturing the underlying reality, thereby strengthening the case for publishing objective school rankings based on data on actual exam performance.



A similar analysis of the perceived academic scores and the factual academic data for CBSE schools resulted in a correlation coefficient of 0.72, that is, the correlation is only moderate, and is not accurate enough for parents to base critical decisions on when it comes to choosing a school. The data tables have been provided in Appendices 1 and 2.

Of course, while we can compare school rankings based on subjectively rated academic reputations of schools with objectively rated school rankings based on actual academic performances of schools in board exams, we cannot make such a comparison in non-academic dimensions since we currently do not have data on *objective* measures of the extent of schools' extracurricular activities, global exposure, infrastructure, quality of teaching faculty, community service, etc., which are the various measures included in *Education World* magazine's subjective school rankings.

## **6. Improving Data Capture and Reporting**

Advanced and useful insights may be obtained from board examination data if the board also identifies the income-group and family-background characteristics of students as well as the fee structure of the school. Capturing this information can lead to finer insights about schools, beyond their absolute scores in examinations. For instance, in a given set of 10 schools in a particular neighbourhood, one may be able to clearly identify schools that cater to students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds and rank these schools relative to each other. This may be a fairer comparison than including them in the same ranking table as schools that cater to more affluent sections. It is also essential to segment the league tables based on school size. Small, medium, and large schools could be covered in separate league tables because the level of management and control required to deliver a similar (average) result is likely to be much more in a large school with a graduating batch of over 200 students compared to a school with a strength of 50 students. In general, smaller schools also have the luxury of selectivity in admitting students.

This is illustrated by Appendix Table 3a which shows the top 25 Indian School Certificate (ISC) schools of India in the class 12 2014 board exam, irrespective of school size (that is, taking all small and large schools), while Appendix Table 3b

shows the top 25 schools when including only the larger schools, those that had 70 or more students taking the ISC class 12 2014 board exam. This shows that 12 out of the top 25 schools – that is, about half the schools – had fewer than 70 students taking the board exam, that is, they were ‘small’ schools (probably with only one or two sections of class 12). For a country with 1.2 billion people, this highlights the importance of ensuring quality in quantity, that is, in terms of scale.

It might also be beneficial to report the examination result scores in a more fine-grained manner. For instance, physics, chemistry, and biology are three separately marked papers in the Indian School Certificate Examinations (ICSE) class 10 examination, but only their average score is reported, as the ‘science’ mark. Similarly, English language and literature are separately marked papers in the ICSE and ISC examinations, but only their average score is reported.

Such fine-grained reporting may help schools gain a more precise understanding of in which subjects their students are underperforming. For instance, it may be the case that the school is performing well above the national average in physics, but below the national average in maths, which may indicate that the maths teaching is possibly in need of improvement. To illustrate this, consider the

example of the Shri Ram School, Gurgaon, whose overall rank in the national league table of all ISC schools in 2014 was 10<sup>th</sup> (based on the average marks of its students in English, physics, chemistry, and maths). However, when we analyse its ranked position in each subject separately, we see that it is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in English, 8<sup>th</sup> in physics, 23<sup>rd</sup> in chemistry, and 54<sup>th</sup> in maths. Since the same students took maths and physics, and since these two subjects are quite similar in nature, the 8<sup>th</sup> rank in physics and the 54<sup>th</sup> rank in maths suggest that maths teaching in this school is significantly weaker than physics teaching, and needs attention. This type of diagnostic information is very valuable for school principals in guiding and mentoring subject teachers.

How can school-ranking data be helpful to parents in making informed school choices for their children? To illustrate this, consider Appendix, Table 4, which shows the ranking of all 64 ISC schools within Lucknow city, based on students' performance in English plus the best three subjects in the 2014 class 12 board exam. This shows that there are six schools in the (socio-economically quite homogeneous) Rajajipuram area of Lucknow city. Among all the schools within the Rajajipuram locality, City Montessori School is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> *in the city*; Lucknow Public College is ranked 22<sup>nd</sup>, SKD Academy is ranked 31<sup>st</sup>, Green Fields School is

ranked 32<sup>nd</sup>, New Public School is ranked 54<sup>th</sup>, and Modern Public School is ranked 59<sup>th</sup>, out of the total 64 ISC schools in the *city* as a whole. The *national* rank positions of these same six schools vary from 81<sup>st</sup> to 701<sup>st</sup>, suggesting that there is a vast difference in the quality of the ISC schools within this single locality of Lucknow – information that is highly valuable for the parents of that locality when making a school choice for their children.

Apart from the board examinations, it is also necessary to track school-wise performance data in competitive examinations such as the Joint Entrance Examinations (for science, technology, and engineering), pre-medical tests, and the CLAT (Common Law Aptitude Test). This is necessary because India has 42 examining boards with varying syllabi, examining patterns, and grading methods. It is hard to make a fair comparative assessment of schools affiliated to different boards without analysing the relative performance of their students in common ‘third-party’ tests, because the absolute scores obtained in examinations conducted by different boards are seldom comparable.

Many of these are high-stakes examinations, since entrance to the top institutes in the country is based primarily on performance in these tests—and is almost

entirely independent of board examination performance (beyond a basic criterion such as a first division or a distinction). The Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institute of Science, the Indian Statistical Institute, the National Law College, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, and the Birla Institute of Technology and Science are some of the institutes where admission is based on the entrance examination conducted by the college or institute itself. For the school-wise tracking of performance in these examinations, every school could be assigned a **unique identifier** which students could be required to fill up in their entrance examination forms, based on which tabulations could be generated showing the ranking of schools based on the success rate of their students in entering these prestigious colleges or institutes.

The last remaining cohort of major universities still relying on board examination scores for undergraduate admissions was a group of centrally funded universities such as those in Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. As per news reports, discussions are underway to de-link their admission process as well from the class 12 board examination scores and instead to conduct a common standardised entrance test for them.<sup>[12]</sup>

Since lakhs of students apply to these central universities, it will be useful to analyse the performance of students on a school-wise basis using the unique identifier for the given school.

Comparisons conducted in this manner, based not just on board examination scores, but on performance in national-level entrance examinations, will enable administrators, parents, and schools to estimate the relative standing of schools affiliated to different boards (for example, one affiliated to the CBSE, one to the CISCE, and another to the Uttar Pradesh State board)—something that is not possible based on school-wise league tables based on board examination data.

## **7. Inspiration from World University Rankings**

While preparing school-ranking tables, we could also take inspiration from international university rankings, such as the QS World University rankings, with regard to both the motivation behind the publication of such rankings and the factors they take into account. The primary aim of the QS World University rankings, as per the homepage, is *“to help students make informed comparisons*

*between their international study options”* (QS Top Universities, 11 September 2015, QS World University Rankings: Methodology.

<http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings-articles/world-university-rankings/qs-world-university-rankings-methodology?page=1> last accessed 6

October 2015). The rankings compare universities based on an assessment of research, teaching, employability, and international outlook. These four key areas are based on six indicators, each of which is assigned a weighting. Four are based on factual data and two are based on global surveys. The weighting is as follows:

Academic reputation: 40%

Employer reputation: 10%

Faculty–student ratio: 20%

Citations per faculty: 20%

International student ratio: 5%

International staff ratio: 5%

Naturally, these indicators will have to be modified appropriately while generating a score for high schools. The academic reputation could be replaced by a normalised score capturing the performance of the students in the annual board



examination or in standardised tests. It could factor in the number of subjects offered by a high school from which the students could choose. A school that permits its students to opt for either science or commerce or the humanities does deserve recognition for making available more offerings than a school that only offers the science stream at the class 12 level.

The employer reputation could be replaced by the reputation score of the colleges to which the students of the school typically end up getting admitted. The purpose of collecting these data should be to inform students and parents about the nature of the colleges attended by students of the school after completing class 12.

The faculty–student ratio could be used as is. This gives us an insight into the school’s capability of providing individual attention to students. It could also be tweaked to reflect how well the capacity of the laboratories in the school caters to the student population. For instance, parents might be interested in knowing that a particular school makes its students share computers in the computer lab, or in knowing that another school has enough equipment to permit students solo access to computers.

Assessment of the regularity of research citations does not make much sense at the high school level, but we could give credit for teachers publishing their work or for expressing their views at well-known conferences and in publications such as magazines or newspapers. The international student ratio and the international staff ratio could be modified to compute a ratio that factors in the number of out-station or transient teachers and students in the school, that is, a metric that attempts to factor in the extent to which a school welcomes a diverse student and teacher body from all over the country.

## **8. An Incentive and Penalty Structure to Ensure that School League Tables have an Impact**

Whether the publication of school rankings, and the naming and shaming of schools that are placed near the bottom of school rankings, will serve to put pressure on such schools to improve their quality will depend on whether there are any penalties for schools whose student numbers fall to non-viably low levels (because of parents abandoning them due to their poor quality and to their

consequent low rankings). If low-ranked schools become unpopular and start to lose students, and if this drop in student numbers triggers a reduction in the government funding of these schools (for example, if their funding is a per-student funding), then the publication of school rankings will put pressure for achieving qualitative improvements in low-quality schools. However, if schools continue to receive their full funding despite reduced enrolments (due to students leaving the school), then even if the school quality is very low, the publication of the school rankings will exert no pressure on low-quality schools to improve their performance. Private schools face an immediate financial penalty when student numbers fall, because this means a decline in fee revenue. However, in government schools in India, the funding is not per student. Government schools receive a block grant to cover teacher salaries. As a result, when student numbers fall in a government school, the total funding received by the school remains intact, and it faces no financial penalty.

## **9. Necessary Precautions: Possible Score Inflation and Question-Paper Leakage**

One of the negative consequences of information liberalisation related to schools could be an attempt to game the system by resorting to grade inflation of internal assessment scores to show off some less good schools in a better light. Such a trend was observed when the No Child Left Behind programme in the United States adopted methods that involved intense monitoring of student performance across schools in standardised tests.<sup>[13]</sup> Given the threat of their performance being under scrutiny, it might indeed be possible that certain unscrupulous school administrators or teachers would indulge in more blatant forms of malpractice such as question-paper leakage to their own students. Unfortunately, paper leakage occurs frequently in Indian board exams, and increasing competition among schools presents the very real possibility of these leaks becoming more frequent. Two of the major leaks in the 2014 board examinations occurred in the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education where the English paper was leaked, and in the CBSE examinations of class 12 where the physics question paper was released online more than a day before the examination.<sup>[14][15] [16][17]</sup>

The leakage of question papers is not a recent problem, but over the last decade, the distribution and reach of any leaked question paper has certainly widened manifold because of email and the Internet.

So it might be necessary to enforce tighter security and higher standards of conducting board examinations to pre-empt any malpractice to which schools or individual teachers might succumb, under the pressure of having to maintain or raise the school's ranking in the league tables. Similarly, the use of statistical techniques might be required to moderate internal assessment scores in order to correct them for any possible inflation. An example of a moderation scheme aimed at checking for inflation of internal assessment scores can be cited, which was a moderation scheme used for high school examinations in Australia.<sup>[18]</sup>

## **10. Conclusion**

India is increasingly moving towards more evidence-based education policy making, which is why it has invested in the District Information System on

Education (DISE) for elementary schools, and more recently in the Secondary Education Management Information System (SEMIS) for secondary schools—which are collectively called the Universal DISE, or uDISE. However, these data systems fall short of collecting and presenting information on student performance in externally assessed examinations, for example, SEMIS does not capture the board examination results of schools. Moreover, neither the national exam boards (CBSE and ICSE) nor the state exam boards make public the exam results aggregated for each school.

While some teacher unions have tended to oppose school rankings, this article shows that the governments of many countries have nevertheless chosen to persist with publishing school rankings, and have refined the rankings by using ‘value-added’ measures of achievement—in the belief that throwing this information open to the public increases school competition and enhances teacher effort and accountability via parental information, choice, and scrutiny. However, we have noted that in government and aided schools, where there is no system for penalising schools by reducing funding if enrolments fall (for example, where schools receive a block grant, irrespective of the number of students enrolled in it), publishing school rankings is less likely to improve the quality of

poorly performing schools. We have shown how school rankings within a city can enable parents to see how different schools perform within their own locality in the city, thus helping them to make informed school choices. Academic performance-based rankings in different subjects can also help a school to see the subject-wise performance of its students vis-à-vis the students of other schools, thus enabling a principal to strengthen the teaching of those subjects in which its ranked position is significantly lower than in other subjects.

Education policy makers and the school community in India need to debate the merits and drawbacks of school rankings, and judiciously consider the consequences for the maintenance and assessment of school quality. Based on this analysis, it is likely that India may decide to join the many countries that compile and disseminate information on the academic results of schools to assist parents in making decisions about their children's educational choices, just as the world rankings of universities assist students seeking college admissions. The publication of any such data could be done in a manner that takes into account the genuine concerns of education experts regarding the perverse incentives created for schools to 'teach to the test' or to play the system, a concern that has been expressed in the United Kingdom.<sup>[19]</sup>

## Notes

1. Tests include the National Achievement Survey (NAS) for class V by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2012; the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test by OECD in 2012; the test by Education Initiatives; and tests in the Annual Status of Education Report by the educational NGO Pratham, New Delhi.

2. Hanushek, E. A. (2003). The failure of input-based schooling policies. *Economic Journal*, 113(485), 64–98.

Glewwe, P. (2002). Schools and skills in developing countries: Education policies and socioeconomic outcomes. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 40(2), 436–482.

Altinok, N., & Kingdon, G. G. (2012). New evidence on class size effects: A pupil fixed effects approach, *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 74(2), 203–234.

3. The ideas here include the use of performance-related pay for teachers and the use of public-private partnerships to harness the better incentive structures of privately managed schools.

4. Hardly any states have board examinations at the end of elementary schooling, so DISE collects information only on the pass rates of students in each school, in the internally set and internally assessed annual test of the last class of primary school (which is class IV in some states and class V in other states).

5. In 2012, the UK discontinued the use of ‘contextual value-added’ school rankings and reverted to the use of simple value-added school rankings, on the grounds that taking into account the social background of children makes all schools appear



roughly equally effective. The government favoured the simple value-added measure because it believed that schools should add as much value to a poor child's learning in a year as they add to a well-off child's learning in a year. This measure shows more variation among schools in value-added terms than did the contextual value-added measure.

## External References

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### **Appendix 1: Correlation of Perceived Academic Scores with the Indian School Certificate (ISC) 2013 Examination Scores**

A listing of 96 CISCE schools in India: Comparing their perceived and factual academic performance. The average aggregate score was computed from a near-complete data set of results for the Indian School Certificate (ISC) class 12 examinations of 2013. For each student, the score is computed based on his/her marks in English and the three best subjects, out of the scores in three, four, or five elective subjects. This is popularly known as the score in the **best four**

**subjects including English** and is the commonly accepted performance metric across schools affiliated to the CISCE.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the perceived and factual academic scores was 0.58. The correlation is only moderate, and not accurate enough to base critical decisions on when it comes to parents choosing a school for their children.

To take one revealing example, the Sanskaar Valley School in Bhopal has a very high factual average achievement score of 83.81%, but, by on the basis of the perceptual academic reputation rankings, it is ranked one of the lowest—95<sup>th</sup> out of 96 schools, with a perceptual score of only 59. Similarly, Calcutta Girls' School and St. Thomas Residential School (Thiruvananthapuram), with very high factual achievement scores of 83.84% and 83.72% respectively, rank among the lowest—86<sup>th</sup> and 78<sup>th</sup> respectively, out of 96 schools, in the perceptual rankings. The Valley School's factual (board exam) average achievement score is a moderate 79.7%, but it has been given a very high subjective score of 88, making it a highly ranked school according to the subjective academic reputation rankings. Many other schools that have considerably higher board exam achievement scores have

received low subjectively given marks, for example, Loreto House in Kolkata has been given a perceptual score of just 80 (much lower than the 88 received by the Valley School Bangalore), even though its students' board exam average mark was significantly higher (87.3% compared with Valley School's 79.7%).

	<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Locality</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Average score (factual) in ISC 2013 board exam</b>	<b>Academic reputation score, Education World Sept 2013 issue (perceptual)</b>
1	Cathedral & John Connon School		Mumbai	88.75	95
2	Modern High School		Kolkata	88.59	86
3	La Martiniere Girls College		Lucknow	88.09	81
4	Ida Scudder School		Vellore	88.01	86
5	Sishya School	Adyar	Chennai	87.83	95
6	Shri Ram School	Moulsari	Delhi	87.80	93
7	Kuriakose Elias School		Kottayam	87.69	84
8	La Martiniere for Girls		Kolkata	87.45	85
9	Loreto House	Middleton	Kolkata	87.28	80
10	Lilavatibai Podar Sr. Secondary School	Santacruz	Mumbai	86.97	85
11	Vivekananda Mission School	Joka	Kolkata	86.94	84
12	International Sahaja Public School		Dharamsala	86.65	84
13	Rishi Valley School		Chittoor	86.64	90
14	Brightlands School		Dehradun	86.63	84
15	City Montessori School	Gomti Nagar	Lucknow	86.54	85
16	Assam Valley School		Balipara	86.51	85
17	Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhanian School	Thane	Mumbai	86.08	92
18	Future Foundation School		Kolkata	85.67	81
19	St. Mary's School		Pune	85.46	93
20	La Martiniere for Boys		Kolkata	85.26	85
21	Christ Nagar Higher Sec School		Trivandrum	85.05	82
22	M P Birla Foundation H. Sec School		Kolkata	85.03	80
23	Don Bosco School		Siliguri	84.48	77
24	Bethany High School		Bangalore	84.40	81
25	Heritage School		Kolkata	84.31	85
26	Bishop Cotton Boys School		Bangalore	83.87	81
27	Calcutta Girls School		Kolkata	83.84	69
28	Sanskaar Valley School		Bhopal	83.81	59
29	St. Joseph's Boys High School		Bangalore	83.75	81
30	St. Thomas Residential School		Trivandrum	83.72	72
31	NASR School	Khairatabad	Hyderabad	83.57	80

32	St. Joseph's Academy		Dehradun	83.54	82
33	Convent of Jesus & Mary High School		Dehradun	83.33	77
34	The School KFI	Adyar	Chennai	82.92	79
35	Hari Sri Vidya Nidhi School		Thrissur	82.83	80
36	Seth M R Jaipuria School		Lucknow	82.76	79
37	Modern English Academy	Barrackpore	Kolkata	82.66	80
38	St. Mary's Academy		Meerut	82.40	78
39	Loreto Convent High School		Lucknow	82.36	79
40	Scottish High International School		Gurgaon	82.04	85
41	Bishop Cotton Girls School		Bangalore	81.66	77
42	Sophia High School		Bangalore	81.30	79
43	Yadavindra Public School		Patiala	81.07	75
44	Clarence High School		Bangalore	81.05	82
45	Lord's Academy		Thrissur	81.05	77
46	Anand Niketan		Ahmedabad	81.04	73
47	Sacred Heart Convent School		Jamshedpur	81.02	77
48	Shikshantar School		Gurgaon	81.00	66
49	Loyola School		Jamshedpur	80.67	81
50	Adamas International School		Kolkata	80.64	75
51	Auxilium Convent	Bandel	Kolkata	80.50	81
52	St. Thomas School		Kanpur	80.35	77
53	Bishop's School		Pune	80.28	78
54	St. James School		Kolkata	80.17	84
55	Eklavya School		Ahmedabad	80.16	76
56	Holy Child		Ghaziabad	80.13	87
57	Sherwood College		Nainital	80.07	72
58	Atul Vidyalaya	Valsad	Gujarat	79.90	82
59	St. Xavier's School		Burdwan	79.89	80
60	Valley School		Bangalore	79.70	88
61	St. Gregorious High School	Chembur	Mumbai	79.63	73
62	Jamna Bai Narsee School		Mumbai	79.50	85
63	Little Flower School		Jamshedpur	79.48	78
64	Salt Lake School		Kolkata	79.46	63
65	La Martiniere Boys College		Lucknow	79.44	76
66	Gundecha Education Academy	Kandivali	Mumbai	79.34	76
67	Assembly of God Church		Kolkata	79.24	65
68	Frank Anthony Public School		Bangalore	79.22	79
69	Abacus Montessori School		Chennai	78.65	80
70	St. Joseph's Convent		Patna	78.50	78
71	St. Joseph Public School	Pattanakad	Hyderabad	78.45	78
72	St. Mary's Convent Inter College		Lucknow	77.94	76
73	Sheiling House School		Kanpur	77.80	75
74	St. Paul's School		Darjeeling	77.79	81
75	Amber Valley Residential School		Chikmagalur	77.63	67
76	Sarala Birla Academy		Bangalore	77.48	74
77	St. Xavier's Collegiate School		Kolkata	77.47	81
78	St. George's College		Mussoorie	77.02	79



79	Wynberg Allen School		Mussoorie	76.38	77
80	Hiranandani Foundation School	Powai	Mumbai	75.15	79
81	Hiranandani Foundation School	Thane	Mumbai	75.15	76
82	City Montessori School	Rajendra Nagar	Lucknow	75.15	76
83	Innisfree House School		Bangalore	71.08	65
84	Abhyasa Residential Public School	Toopran	Medak	70.03	74
85	Thakur International School	Kandivali	Mumbai	69.92	73
86	St. Augustine's School		Kalimpong	69.31	57
87	St. George's Girls Grammar School	Abids	Hyderabad	69.10	76
88	De Paul International Residential School		Mysore	68.64	61
89	Tashi Namgyal Academy		Gangtok	68.59	61
90	Julien Day School		Kalyani	68.34	76
91	River Dale International School		Pune	67.78	77
92	Trivandrum International School		Trivandrum	67.04	74
93	St. Joseph's School	North Point	Darjeeling	66.79	79
94	Himali Boarding School		Kurseong	63.15	72
95	Christ Church School	Clare Road	Mumbai	60.56	68
96	St. Paul's School		Agartala	54.59	72

**Source:** [www.thelearningpoint.net](http://www.thelearningpoint.net)

**Note:** Between the perceived and factual scores, Pearson product-moment correlation = 0.58

## **Appendix 2: Correlation of Perceived Academic Scores with CBSE 2012 Examination Scores**

A listing of 37 CBSE schools in Delhi: Comparing their perceived and factual academic performance. The average aggregate score was computed from a near-complete data set of results from the CBSE 2012 class 12 examinations.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the perceived and factual academic scores was 0.72, that is, there is a reasonable positive correlation, but it is not very strong, and it is not accurate enough to base critical decisions on when it comes to choosing a school. The aggregate score for each student is the average of his/her **scores in all five subjects**, in which a candidate needs to appear, as mandated by the CBSE. The average of this aggregate score has been computed for all students of the school, from our records.

Particularly noticeable cases of mismatches between factual and perceptual rankings are St. Mary's School in Safdarjung Enclave and Gyan Bharti, which have high factual achievement scores of 81.88% and 81.89% respectively, but rank

among the lowest in the group in terms of perceived academic reputation. Both rank in the bottom ten among the 37 schools.

	<b>Name of school</b>	<b>Average aggregate score (factual) in CBSE class 12<sup>th</sup> board exam, 2012</b>	<b>Academic reputation score, Sept 2013 issue (perceptual)</b>
1	Vasant Valley School, Delhi	86.40	93
2	DPS, Rohini, Delhi	85.76	91
3	Mother's International School, Delhi	85.66	91
4	Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, Delhi	85.53	89
5	DPS, Vasant Kunj, Delhi	84.58	91
6	Birla Vidya Niketan, Delhi	84.27	85
7	DPS, RK Puram, Delhi	84.13	93
8	Sanskriti School, Chanakyapuri, Delhi	84.07	84
9	DPS, Dwarka, Delhi	83.98	91
10	Heritage School, Rohini, Delhi	83.45	81
11	Apeejay, Pitampura, Delhi	83.39	92
12	Bal Bharati School, Pitampura, Delhi	83.29	87
13	Montfort School, Delhi	82.54	86
14	Gyan Bharati, Delhi	81.89	77
15	St. Mary's School, Safdarjung Enclave, Delhi	81.88	78
16	Springdales School, Dhaura Kuan, Delhi	81.80	82
17	Springdales Public School, Pusa Road, Delhi	81.77	83
18	Amity School, Saket, Delhi	81.28	87
19	DPS, Mathura Road, Delhi	80.96	85
20	Salwan Public School, Rajinder Nagar, Delhi	80.57	80
21	Mount Carmel School, Dwarka, Delhi	80.48	80
22	Modern School, Barakhamba Road, Delhi	80.22	79
23	St. Columba's School, Delhi	80.14	80
24	Blue Bells, Delhi	79.79	82
25	Modern School, Vasant Vihar, Delhi	79.00	78
26	Ahlcon International School, Delhi	78.82	78
27	Ahlcon Public School, Delhi	78.82	76
28	St. Francis De Sales School, Janakpuri, Delhi	78.36	82
29	Mount St. Mary's, Delhi Cantt., Delhi	77.68	75
30	Apeejay, Sheikh Sarai, Delhi	77.52	78
31	Venkateshwara International, Dwarka, Delhi	77.17	84
32	Sri Venkateshwara, Dwarka, Delhi	77.17	65
33	Tagore International, Vasant Vihar, Delhi	75.21	81
34	Hans Raj Model School, Punjabi Bagh, Delhi	74.70	79
35	Ryan International School, Vasant Kunj, Delhi	73.43	75
36	Laxman Public School, Delhi	70.69	70
37	Bloom Public School, Vasant Kunj, Delhi	70.56	81

**Source:** [www.thelearningpoint.net](http://www.thelearningpoint.net)

**Note:** Between the perceived and factual scores, Pearson product-moment correlation = 0.72

**Appendix Table 3a**  
**ISC 2014 Results (small and large schools)**  
**Of all 867 schools of India, the top 25 schools ranked by**  
**the average mark in English + Best Three Subjects**

Source: [www.thelearningpoint.net](http://www.thelearningpoint.net)

SN	Name of School	Number of students appeared	Average mark in English + Best 3 Subjects	National Rank
1	J. R. Cambridge School, Salem	5	91.75	1
2	Vidya Niketan School, Hebbal, Bangalore	58	91.23	2
3	Rishi Valley School, Rishi Valley, Chittoor	40	90.96	3
4	Mary Immaculate School, Berhampore	5	90.05	4
5	Lakshmi School, Madurai	23	89.88	5
6	Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer	106	89.76	6
7	City Montessori Inter College, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow	433	89.74	7
8	Loyola School, Thiruvananthapuram	47	89.54	8
9	La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow	176	89.37	9
10	Shri Ram School, Gurgaon	112	89.27	10
11	Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata	188	89.22	11
12	Garden High School, Kolkata	60	89.02	12
13	Chettinad Hari Shree Vidyalayam and Primary School, Chennai	3	88.58	13
14	Don Bosco School, Liluah, Howrah	159	88.54	14
15	St. Jude's Public School & Junior College, Kotagiri	63	88.44	15
16	Cathedral & John Connon School, Mumbai	108	88.43	16
17	Laidlaw Mem. Sch. & Jr. College, Ketti	42	88.32	17
18	Loreto House, Kolkata	143	88.31	18
19	Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhania School, Thane	254	88.19	19
20	Assam Valley School, Balipara, Sonitpur, Assam	93	88.17	20
21	Brightlands School, Dehra Dun	145	87.91	21

22	Disari Public School, Dist. Purba Medinipur	10	87.85	22
23	La Martiniere for Girls, Kolkata	145	87.50	23
24	Vivekananda Mission School, Joka, Kolkata	164	87.41	24
25	Bethany High School, Bangalore	44	87.17	25

**Appendix Table 3b**  
**ISC 2014 Results (only schools where 70 or more students sat the class 12 exam)**  
**Of all 867 ISC schools of India, the top 25 schools ranked by**  
**the average mark in English + Best Three Subjects**

Source: [www.thelearningpoint.net](http://www.thelearningpoint.net)

SN	Name of school	Number of students appeared	Average mark in English + Best 3 Subjects	National Rank
1	Mayo College Girls' School, Ajmer	106	89.76	6
2	City Montessori Inter College, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow	433	89.74	7
3	La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow	176	89.37	9
4	Shri Ram School, Gurgaon	112	89.27	10
5	Modern High School for Girls, Kolkata	188	89.22	11
6	Don Bosco School, Liluah, Howrah	159	88.54	14
7	Cathedral & John Connon School, Mumbai	108	88.43	16
8	Loreto House, Kolkata	143	88.31	18
9	Smt. Sulochanadevi Singhanian School, Thane	254	88.19	19
10	Assam Valley School, Balipara, Sonitpur, Assam	93	88.17	20
11	Brightlands School, Dehra Dun	145	87.91	21
12	La Martiniere for Girls, Kolkata	145	87.50	23
13	Vivekananda Mission School, Joka, Kolkata	164	87.41	24
14	St. Teresa's Secondary School, Kolkata	85	87.14	26
15	Welham Girls' School, Dehra Dun	78	87.10	28
16	City Montessori Inter College, Mahanagar, Lucknow	413	86.87	30
17	Sishya, Chennai	82	86.84	31
18	Our Lady Queen of the Missions School, Kolkata	163	86.74	33

19	Calcutta Girls' High School, Kolkata	192	86.64	34
20	City Montessori Inter College, Aliganj, Lucknow	306	86.44	35
21	Kuriakose Elias English Medium School, Kottayam	79	86.42	36
22	St. Thomas Residential School, Thiruvananthapuram	142	86.28	37
23	Dr. Virendra Swarup Education Centre, Kidwai Nagar, Kanpur	150	86.28	38
24	Christ Nagar Higher Sec. School, Thiruvananthapuram	87	86.26	39
25	Future Foundation School, Kolkata	105	86.01	43

**Appendix Table 4**

<b>ISC RESULTS 2014 - All ISC Schools in Lucknow</b> <b>Ranking by students' aggregate mark in English + Best 3 Subjects</b> <b>Source: thelearningpoint.net</b>					
No.	School Name	Candidates Appeared	Average in English + Best 3 Subjects	Rank	National Rank
1	City Montessori Inter College, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow	433	89.74	1	7
2	La Martiniere Girls' College, Lucknow	176	89.37	2	9
3	City Montessori Inter College, Mahanagar, Lucknow	413	86.87	3	31
4	City Montessori Inter College, Aliganj, Lucknow	306	86.44	4	35
5	City Montessori High School, Rajinder Nagar, Lucknow	286	85.03	5	55
6	Seth M.R. Jaipuria School, Lucknow	238	84.95	6	56
7	City Montessori Inter College, Rajajipuram, Lucknow	85	83.40	7	81
8	Loreto Convent Intermediate College, Lucknow	176	82.77	8	94
9	City Montessori Inter college, rd s o, Lucknow	78	82.75	9	95
10	City Montessori School, Kanpur Road, Lucknow	325	82.58	10	100
11	Stella Maris School, Lucknow	67	81.62	11	117
12	St. Paul's College, Lucknow	63	81.29	12	129
13	St. Mary's Convent Inter College, Lucknow	109	80.28	13	155
14	City Montessori Inter College, Station Road, Lucknow	152	80.04	14	165
15	Mount Carmel College, Mahanagar, Lucknow	50	79.44	15	172
16	St. Francis' College, Lucknow	153	78.70	16	196
17	St. Dominic Savio College, Lucknow	134	78.67	17	197
18	La Martiniere College, Lucknow	165	78.43	18	204
19	City Montessori Inter College, Chowk, Lucknow	179	78.35	19	206
20	St. Fidelis College, Lucknow	168	77.58	20	226
21	Lucknow Public College, Sahara States, Jankipuram, Lucknow	280	77.56	21	227
22	Lucknow Public College, Rajajipuram, Lucknow	337	76.50	22	247
23	Gurukul Academy, Indira Nagar, Lucknow	11	75.68	23	278
24	Hoerner College, Lucknow	40	75.58	24	281
25	St. Thomas College, Lucknow	75	75.39	25	288
26	St. Antony's Inter College, Lucknow	91	74.75	26	312
27	Spring Dale College, I.D.A. Colony, Lucknow	92	73.55	27	345
28	Career Convent College, Vikas Nagar, Lucknow	182	71.64	28	395
29	Nirmala Convent Inter College, Lucknow	67	71.55	29	399
30	Modern Academy, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow	369	71.36	30	405

31	S.K.D. Academy, Rajajipuram, Lucknow	311	70.58	31	423
32	Green Fields School, Rajajipuram, Lucknow	26	70.58	31	423
33	Spring Dale College, Indira Nagar, Lucknow	133	70.30	32	432
34	Scholars' Home, Lucknow	47	69.80	33	445
35	Modern School, Lucknow	128	69.09	34	460
36	Unity College, Lucknow	106	68.26	35	480
37	Emma Thompson School, Lucknow	150	68.19	36	482
38	Christ Church College, Lucknow	154	67.96	37	488
39	Career Convent Girl's College, Lucknow	89	67.64	38	493
40	Sherwood Academy, Lucknow	43	67.51	39	496
41	Lucknow Public Collegiate, Lucknow	65	67.33	40	503
42	Al-huda Model School, Lucknow	41	66.76	41	519
43	Dr. Virendra Swarup Public School, Lucknow	34	66.35	42	531
44	New Public College, Lucknow	54	66.30	43	533
45	St. Teresa's Day School, Lucknow	85	66.27	44	534
46	Raj Kumar Academy, Lucknow	45	66.13	45	538
47	St. Teresa's College, Lucknow	46	65.32	46	558
48	Riverside Academy Inter College, Lucknow	37	65.30	47	559
49	St. Joseph Montessori School, Lucknow	343	64.27	48	583
50	Dabble College, Lucknow	48	63.54	49	599
51	Jeevan Dhara Convent School, Lucknow	35	63.36	50	604
52	Seventh Day Adventist Senior Sec. School, Lucknow	67	63.02	51	616
53	St. Mary's School, Lucknow	30	62.17	52	629
54	New Public School, Rajajipuram, Lucknow	43	62.07	53	631
55	St. Antony's Inter College, Jankipuram Extn., Lucknow	31	59.82	54	660
56	King George College, Lucknow	68	59.06	55	668
57	St. John Bosco College, Lucknow	51	58.41	56	676
58	Brains Convent School, Lucknow	67	56.31	57	697
59	Modern Indian School, Rajajipuram, Lucknow	33	55.84	58	701
60	City Convent School, Lucknow	121	53.20	59	715
61	Colvin Taluqdars College, Lucknow	53	52.50	60	722
62	St. James Mission School, Lucknow	21	51.31	61	730
63	St. Mary's Inter College, Lucknow	33	50.31	62	739
64	Sarvangin Vikas Public College, Telibagh, Lucknow	7	48.11	63	745