

Private School Revolution in Asia

Saturday, 20 February 2016

- Chair: Terry Kibbe, Free the People, USA
- Ekta Sodha, Sodha Schools, India
- Muhammad Adi Rahman, Centre for Indonesian Policy Studies (CIPS), Indonesia
- Rohan Joshi, National Independent Schools Alliance, India

This panel discussion featured some of the leading figures of the private school movement in Asia.

Ekta Sodha mentioned that since 2009 in India, private schools with 60 students or less have grown exponentially. With the rise of so many private schools, the challenge now lies in maintaining a high standard of education across the board. Miss Sodha emphasised the need to train teachers so that they are able to create holistic learning environments, and to formulate right pedagogy that revolves around the method of “search, analyse and appraise”. Through such focused and continuous effort, the private school network has been an effective force in empowering communities throughout India’s 29 states.

Muhammad Adi Rahman explained that Indonesia’s history of formal education has been dominated by private schools as a result of the work of Christian missionaries during Indonesia’s colonial period. Today, private schools receive generous subsidies from the government. However, Mr Rahman doubts the effectiveness of these subsidies in growing the size of existing private schools and improving the quality of education provided. The many years of subsidised schooling, has resulted in an expectation among Indonesians that education is very cheap.

Rohan Joshi, of the National Independent Schools Alliance, which has 39,000 schools across 22 states in India, compared the performance of private schools against government schools in the country. Data supports the notion that private schools provide better quality education. Learning outcomes and cost effectiveness in private schools tend to be better in comparison. Mr Joshi also mentioned that most poor families would often send their children to private schools, due to the better quality of education offered, as well as the cheaper costs and greater accessibility. This has done much to empower the poor with education and skills - which they can then utilise to improve their income status over time.