

## Inside English Medium Kindergartens And Tutorials

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Parents generally want the best education their money can buy, which is why so many of them rush to gain admission into what have become known as the city's most prestigious schools—the English medium kindergartens and tutorials. This attempt to provide children with the best possible education as is within their means and often beyond, sends more than one set of parents rushing off in all directions to attain that precious seat in the belief they have found the right environment in which their children can grow up to be worthy citizens. Parents generally want more for their children than they had themselves. This desire extends quite naturally to schools and people are prepared to spend more and more, certainly in many cases more than they can afford, so as to attain the best. And for today's middle and upper classes this surely means the English medium kindergarten and tutorial.

Once they have gained their heart's desire they find they are hard pressed to pay the increasingly higher rate of fees for the privilege. But, more to the point is many of them have discovered that the superior education for which they pay so much often turns out to be a mirage. The education provided is very often sub-standard at best. Classes too are held in unhealthy surroundings, over-crowding in unventilated rooms is common although on paper the number in a class may not seem high. Often the space provided is far from adequate and, the children seem packed like "wet chickens in a hot coop".

In other words, with desks and benches arranged so as to take advantage of every inch of space that no room is left for the teacher to walk, not only the children suffer but the standard of teaching also for it means that the back-benchers can never be reached, with the result that they are left much to their own devices. Teachers are also heard to complain that, under such conditions, it is impossible to do justice to each and every child. That justice is not being done is evidenced from the fact that almost without exception, parents have to supplement classroom teaching by employing one or more private tutors.

A few schools boast air-conditioning but as most do not, the condition of the children can be imagined after hours sitting in cramped places in the heat for often the number of fans provided by the school are insufficient. The result of this unhealthy atmosphere is that children fall sick with remarkable frequency and in any case, under such conditions cannot concentrate on their lessons. Many "schools" also still use the old-fashioned blackboard and chalk as a teaching aid but as the chalk is usually of inferior quality, the result is that the dust flies about claiming many victims. It is no coincidence that there is a high number of asthma patients among the children. For the sake of maintaining a healthy environment, these blackboards should be dispensed with and white boards and markers be pressed into use in the way of most of the advanced institutions.

Another anxiety that has come to our notice and which rarely crosses the minds of concerned parents is the fact that the co-education imparted in such crowded circumstances leads to boys and girls having to sit in such close proximity that their legs often touch. The effect of this on young immature minds may not be always good.

The question is—what are we going to do about it? Or do we sit on our hands under the plea that these schools satisfy a demand the government cannot fulfil? To continue to turn a blind eye to what is happening inside these schools and refuse to take the responsibility for the standard of education imparted or to the fact that the classrooms are adequate enough to accommodate the number of students they are required to contain, is not only to do injustice to the parents who have to pay for it and whose only crime is to want the best for their children, but also to cheat the children, those who represent the leaders of the future.

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