

Slums, Open Learning and Its Effect on Socio Economic Upliftment: A Case Study of Guwahati Metropolis

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1. Introduction:

Education means an all round development of an individual i.e. mind, body and soul. A body will be healthy if its mind is healthy. A mind will be healthy if it gets quality education. A good character is formed by a sound mind. So, it is very important for a child to get the best education from an institution which fosters and promotes all round development of the child in all dimensions-physical, mental, social, emotional and moral. This can be achieved at early childhood care and education and all these are essential towards a “Healthy Nation Building.” With respect to civic amenities and educational services in the slum areas, the picture in Guwahati city is in a deplorable condition. Guwahati is the gateway of entire North Eastern Region and it is the major hub of economic activities in the entire North Eastern Region. Since, it is an economic hub there is a huge influx of illiterate and the unskilled poor people from the remote rural areas who search for better employment opportunities. A slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and squalor. Slums differ in size and other characteristics from cities to cities, country to country, most lack reliable sanitation services, supply of clean water, reliable electricity, timely enforcement and other basic services. Lack of adequate access to social justice to the inhabitants of the slum areas is a common phenomenon. Particularly the urban underprivileged deprived children belonging to these areas are most vulnerable and have little access to education and end up their lives on committing crimes begging on streets, cleaning up the dustbins, scavenging or rag picking. Education for children from 6-14 years remains a big challenge for the Central and State Government. Various steps, policies, programs have been taken to provide better education to the urban underprivileged children all across the country.

Hence, the study is concentrated on giving more privilege through some developmental interventions in the educational setup.

1.1 Objectives of the Study:

To undermine the causes leading to the low level of education among the underprivileged children and adolescents (age group 6-14 years) in slums of Greater Guwahati Metropolitan along with positive measures to check it as a part of total literacy programmes.

1.2 Significations of the Study:

The study has several areas of significance. Many of the studies of urban poverty in India are done in bigger cities but the characteristics of the urban poor areas in the big cities may not be same for smaller cities such as Guwahati Metropolitan. Thus, the significance of the study lies in understanding at the local level.

The 86th Amendment has made education a fundamental right under Article 21A of the Constitution of India. The Government has made various programs and policies for education but the development of urban underprivileged deprived children in achieving this right remains a challenge.

Therefore, this study tries to highlight the educational status of urban underprivileged deprived children of Guwahati city in keeping with the right to education of a child under the Convention of Child Rights 1989.

1.3 Research Questions:

- i. Whether the children of 6-14 years are receiving the essential requirements of education to come to the mainstream environment and prepare themselves to compete with the privileged children of urban areas?
- ii. Can the open learning institutions intervene and can provide them education at an early childhood and develop them in all dimensions – physical, mental, social, emotional and moral?

4.4 Methodology and Database:

In this study, multi stages random sampling has been applied. Specific survey methods are conducted for specific problems or for testing the validity of some theories. In the present study, schools of one area of Guwahati Metropolitan city has been surveyed to know the educational status of the children and to know the awareness of the parents and the children towards education in a time bound limit.

Tools used for data collection:

Each tool is appropriate for certain source of data, tools merely identify the presence or absence of certain aspects of a situation. Both the questionnaire and the schedule have been prepared incorporating necessary host of questions and were carried from door to door including the squatter temporary residences. Data thus collected have been compiled, tabulated and processed up to desired level and depicted accordingly. In this study, interview or schedule is taken as a tool for collecting data. Unstructured interview is applied as a tool. Interview is conducted in a face-to-face role situation in which one person (the interviewer) questions the person being interviewed (the respondent), in which questions designed to obtain answers pertinent to the research problem.

Therefore the unstructured interview is based on flexible and non pre-determined questions. The interviewer based his interview on the purpose rather than the form. The interview is adjusted to the level and conditions of the respondent. The wording and the sequence of questions are changed keeping in view the response pattern. The aim is at collecting the maximum information.

20% of parents and 62.5% of adolescents attending classes regularly were interviewed using the household schedule.

4.5 Review of Literature:

1. Education from a Global Perspective:

A. Article 26 of Universal Declaration of 1948 was proclaimed by the General Assembly as a Common Standard of achievement for all people and all Nations. This Article provides that education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Elementary education shall be compulsory.

B. International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1976.

Article 13 (1) of the Covenant provides that the State parties recognize the right to everyone to education.

Article 13 (2) recognizes that with the view to achieving full realization of the right to education, primary education shall be made compulsory and available free to all and the development of a system of schools to all levels should be actively pursued.

C. Convention on Rights of Child 1989.

Article 28 (1) of the Convention enjoins the State parties to make primary education free and compulsory for all and take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates.

Article 29 specifies that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of mental and physical abilities and overall all round development.

It also states that particular steps should be taken to make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children.

India has ratified to the Convention of Child Rights 1989.

5 Education Policy and Planning in India:

A. The National Policy of 1968 marked a significant step in the history of education in the post Independent India. It aimed to promote National progress, laying stress on the need for a radical reconstruction of the education system to improve its quality by giving much attention to science and technology by cultivating moral values and having a closure relation between education and the life of the people.

B. The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986. The policy of 1986 was the second policy on education since independence. It was regarded as a landmark. The Policy gave the highest importance to the Universal Primary Education (UPE).

The activities which foster and promote the all round balanced development of the child in the age group of 0-6 years in all dimensions – physical, mental, social, emotional and moral, has been collectively described as NPE 1986 as Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

The National Policy on Education 1986 has explicitly recognized the importance of early childhood care and education and emphasized for universalization of elementary education and women's development. While early childhood education per se is being provided to children in the 3-6 age group under these schemes.

3. Government Schemes and Programs in the field of elementary education in India:

A. Operation Black Board.

The Centrally sponsored scheme of Operation Black Board was launched in 1987 to address the task of providing educational facilities to all primary schools. (Bajpai, Asha. Pp 356-360)

B. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA).

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Mission is an Indian Government Program aimed at the universalization of elementary education, “in a time bound manner” as mandated by the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to the children between 6-14 years a fundamental right. The program was pioneered by the 13th Prime Minister of India Sri Atal Bihari

Vajpayee. SSA has been operational since 2001 to provide for a variety of interventions for universal elementary education and bridging of gender and social category gaps and also improving the quality of learning.

SSA interventions include, construction of schools and additional classrooms, toilets, supplying for textbooks and uniforms and to improve comprehensive early reading, writing.

These particular schemes realize the provisions of right to education RTE ACT which was formulated in the year 2009 and came into force on 1st April 2010.

“Padhe Bharat, Badha Bharat” is a Nation-wide sub-program of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan.

The RTE Act make various kinds of basic essential such as student-teacher ratio; minimum instructional hour; teachers training; and the presence of toilets; playgrounds and boundaries.

SSA has shown as great success in giving elementary education to children of age group 6-14 years. For 3-6 years the Anganbadi Kendras are set up under ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) for development of a child both mentally and physically. (as per Information received from Director, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Govt. of Assam.)

2. Spatial-environmental Basis:

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a special strategy focusing on the children to receive education from 6-14 years including children of the urban slum dwellers and to give them an environment to compete with the urban privileged children.

But the question arises how far SSA has reached its goals to provide good education to children of 6-14 years. Thus, the urban underprivileged deprived children are receiving the benefits under RTE Act. The questions that arise are whether the rights embodied in Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1976; the Convention on Child Rights 1989 has given wings of freedom and liberty to the urban underprivileged deprived children. Whether the rights have become a reality?

The 86th Amendment has made education a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. How far the children of these areas have realized these rights?

Are these schemes enough or we need some other interventions for the development of these children? Juvenile Delinquency including anti-social deeds like sex, liquor, drugs, etc in different forms is very common among the inmates of the slums. This is the geo-environment of the urban slum communities.

Can open learning institutions be a path breaking mode of education for the children of 6-14 years to develop themselves in all dimensions-physical, mental, social, emotional and moral?

1.1 Redressing of Socio-Economic Inequalities through Open Learning and Development Interventions:

We know about Open Learning Universities and Open Learning Schools. Also there are Open Learning Schools under Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) and the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC). The main aim of the open schools under SEBA and AHSEC is to provide education to all section of children from every nook and corner of the state of Assam. The intentions of open learning schools are to provide the opportunities of learning to the children who are deprived of basic education.

They set up classes every Sunday and give them the formal education. SEBA run open schools to stall school dropout rate in Assam.

SEBA has launched special open schools to help students who have been unsuccessful in clearing the high school final examination in the past.

Under the initiative-christened “State Institute of Open Schooling” students who have been unsuccessful in the past five years or who were compelled to drop out of schools for various reasons can join these centers.

The institute also provides rent books and self learning materials. Class IX dropouts can continue their studies at the open school, which will also help weaker students who have not been able to clear the exams in the regular system. Unsuccessful candidates can clear their matriculation (Class X) examination.

The same provision is there under AHSEC for class XI and XII.

Education is also in List III of the Seventh Schedule, which is a Concurrent Subject. So, both the Centre and the State should try to develop the children and help towards Nation building.

There is also National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). NIOS is a Board of Education under the Union Government of India. It was established by the Ministry of Human Resource Development of Government of India in 1989 to provide education to remote areas under the motive to increase literacy and aim forward for flexible learning. The NIOS is a National Board that administers examination for senior and secondary examinations of open schools similar to the CBSE and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) to increase literacy and education to rural areas. Despite being established for distant education, NIOS provides for a formal regular secondary and senior secondary program equivalent to CBSC.

For higher studies there are Open Learning Universities, under both Centre and State. The State Board has achieved to some extent to help the dropouts of the urban slum areas. But very little is known about the open learning schools and universities in these areas. More awareness is required to spread the benefits of education to the urban slum areas through these open learning institutions.

The paper seeks to find out the benefits of education to be given to the children from the age groups of 6-14 years. Here, we have to make a step for the open learning schools to intervene. We have to lift the urban underprivileged deprived children from their dustbins and bring them to the main stream and develop in them a sound body, mind and soul.

1.2 Analysis and Interpretation:

In order to avail more information, the data was collected from Uzan Bazaar Jahaj Ghat. Jahaj Ghat is situated near the mighty Brahmaputra in Uzan Bazaar at Guwahati city.

Survey of Institutions in Jahaj Ghat.

Jahaj Ghat L.P. School ward no. 34, Guwahati, Assam-781001.

Table 1 : Survey of Educational Status of Children

Establishment Year	1968
School Category	Primary Level (1-5)
Type of school	Co-education
Medium of Instruction	Assamese
Type of boundary wall	No boundary wall
Manage by	Department of Education
Head teacher	Yes

Facilities in School

Text books	Free
Library	Yes, inadequate infrastructure
Classrooms	Three
Playground	Yes, but not owned by the school
Medical checkup	Sometimes
Computer aided learning	Not available
Mid day meal	Yes
Drinking Water	Yes

Another survey was done for Mongolsandi Hindi Medium School which was established in 1968. In this school, there is no proper infrastructure, with no playground and no drinking water facilities. Text books are free and children get mid day meal but school premise lacks in having a school environment. There is a small gate to enter with residential houses surrounded by it. It has no boundary wall.

There are facilities for dropouts in Jahaj Ghat Assamese Medium L.P. School where a survey is made by the contractual teacher where they do the survey and bring the children to the school and give them formal education, giving them text books and mid day meals. There are four Anganbadi centers in Jahaj Ghat.

Table 2: Interview with an Anganbadi Worker Regarding Awareness of Education

Sl. No.	Item content	Response
1	How many centers are there for Anganbadi?	Four
2	What is the age group of children in Anganbadi?	Three to six years
3	What happen to the children after they go out from Anganbadi?	They join L.P. School
4	How do you get children to your centers?	We have to pull them to our centers
5	What is the awareness of the parents?	50% are aware and 50% are not aware
6	What is the nature of work their parents or guardians perform?	Some are fish sellers, some are domestic workers and some are labourers
7	Where do you get teaching aid for your centers?	ICDS provides us

Source: Personal Survey

1.3 Findings of the Study:

After the specific survey and the interview taken the data that is collected by this method and tools, the investigator is able to find out the result of the study the major finding from the study are as follows.

1. The children of urban slum of Guwahati city are receiving free text books and uniforms as well as mid day meals (MDM) regularly.
2. It is observed that children do to not like to go to school, they are motivated and convinced by the workers of Anganbadi as the school environment is not that attractive.

3. 50% parents are not aware of benefits of education and think less about their children. They are not aware of free and compulsory education as they are concerned about food; shelter and clothing are the immediate need of the hour.
4. Only a few numbers of parents are aware about Government policies which are related to education and health.
5. The infrastructure of the schools is not attractive and the facilities the children get are not up to the mark. These types of facilities will not allow them to compete with the privileged children.

3. Suggestions:

As a responsible citizen, we all people have some responsibilities towards the development of our societies. Our little steps can improve their education and health. For this purpose, following suggestions are provided:

1. The schools should be supervised regularly by the competent authority.
2. Education department under SEBA with the help of State Government can create certain open schools (SOS) for the children.
3. The open learning universities along with Sarva Siksha Abhiyan are giving teachers training in a large scale. They should also think about giving education to the children and adapt certain schools in the areas of the urban slum dwellers.
4. Awareness campaign should be organized in the slum areas regarding open schooling and the education facilities of the Government.
5. Provisions should be made for summer camps and mid-term camps by the open learning universities and the education department to educate their children and the parents. They should supply the study materials and should train the parents to prepare their children for exams.
6. There can be a face to face teaching technique every Sunday by the open schools.
7. The agencies of the United Nations like the UNICEF who is concerned about the children should assist the open learning institutions to get volunteers to educate the children and spread awareness among the parents towards education.

8. Open learning institutions through NGOs and taking the help of electronic media like television and radio, and printed media like newspapers and magazines should encourage the urban underprivileged deprived children to educate themselves and develop their mind, body and soul.
9. Urban underprivileged deprived children should be involved in any kind of social, educational, cultural programmes organized by Societies, Government and NGOs.
10. These can be extended to all the slum areas in Guwahati. Healthy education can be achieved through open learning by providing facilities for interactions in a formal manner, i.e. institutional setup.

4. Conclusion:

A child's growth is from 6-14 years. If we can give them education at an early age, we can say that 50% of our work is done for a "Healthy Nation Building".

Education is a right under the Convention of Child Rights 1989 and these human rights can be achieved if the work is done at the grass-root level.

Right to Education under Article 21A will become fundamental right of every child if every children of our country gets equal status and opportunity for development.

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Web Resources

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