

Educational Opportunities, Access and Equity among Children: A Sociological Study of Lucknow Slums

**ABSTRACT OF
Thesis**

SUBMITTED TO THE
BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY
LUCKNOW



FOR AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
Doctor of Philosophy
IN
SOCIOLOGY

SUBMITTED BY
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ENROLLMENT NO. 1388/15

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
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UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA

2018

ABSTRACT

Education of the masses is one of the most crucial concerns all over the world. It is because of the indispensable nature of education in modern society which is increasingly becoming more scientific and technological. Education through which the standard of living of the people, their prosperity and security can be considerably improved is regarded as a very potent instrument of rapid and effective development of a nation. It furnishes the individual with basic knowledge and technical skills essential for work, productivity and economical survival. It serves as the base for the exercise of all rights and privileges of a citizen as also an absolutely essential precondition for the effective discharge of his duties. As such, it is the very foundation of a democracy. Further, education opens up to the individual the central experiences of a culture. Thus, personal growth, economic advancement and social effectiveness all are appreciably enhanced by education, which is indispensable for success in a competitive society. It would not be an exaggeration to say that education has become a sine-qua-non of useful existence in modern societies and has become the life-line of both the individual and the society.

India as a nation is wedded to the ideal of equal opportunity of every kind, including equal educational opportunity for all. Article 45 of the Indian Constitution has enjoined upon “the state to provide Universal Primary Education to all children in the age group of (6-14) years”. Article 46 emphasises “the state to protect with special care the economic and educational interests of the weaker sections of people”. In the last few decades there has been an unprecedented expansion of education opportunities at the primary level throughout the world and particularly in the developing countries like India. In India the policy makers have made primary education an integral part of the national development plan, policies and programmes for realising the goals of growth with equity, fairness and social justice. Since its independence, India is dedicated towards the fulfilment of educational goals by providing universal access to satisfactory quality of primary education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment recognizes primary education (6-14 years age group) as a fundamental right (Agarwal and Chugh, 2003).

The moves towards achieving the Universalisation of Elementary education has to be formulated in such a way that various types of inequalities and

discrimination do not increase in the meantime but rather constantly reduces social, economic, gender, and regional inequities in accessing and participating in education and achieving the goals.

There have been a plethora of recent studies on how children from extremely disadvantaged communities are caught in the web of exclusion. In order to have socially inclusive classrooms, the curriculum needs to bridge the family-school divide. The Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009 has defined children belonging to disadvantaged groups and weaker section as “those that belonged to the SC, ST, socially and economically backward class or such groups having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economic, geographical, linguist, gender or such other factors as may be.”

The enactment of RTE requires addressing gender and social equity within framework that is holistic and systematic. Approach in this regard as per revised SSA implementation framework is “Equity will mean not only equal opportunity, but also creation of conditions in which the disadvantaged sections of the society- children of SC, ST, Muslim minority, landless agricultural workers and children with special needs, etc. can avail of the opportunity.”

As per Census 2011, 31.16 per cent of the India’s population has been living in urban areas. In India, the urban areas are characterized by the existence of cities having varying population sizes. These cities vary from a huge number of small town areas that are not much different from their rural hinterlands or remote areas, to the big metropolitan cities, which are amongst the one of the largest cities of the world. During the era of nineties some of the Indian metropolitan cities have witnessed an exceptional population growth rate of 4 to 5 per cent per year. Thus, in India urbanization is a continuum process with extreme variations in the population as well as socio-economic characteristics. Thus, the contextual indicators in urban areas have severe implications for the design, formulation and implementation of educational planning and its framework. There is high possibility that what works best in one urban area might fail to give any positive result in other area due to extreme variation and differences in the socio-economic nature of various population groups.

The phenomenon called slum is almost universal and these slums exist practically in all the cities across the globe. The city of Lucknow alone has approximately 1,100 large and small unauthorised settlements constituting of six lakh jhuggies forming several clusters of notified and non-notified slums, with around 3.2 million population living in these squatter settlements. The slum dwellers are the poorest, the most miserable and hence the most highly vulnerable sections of community in urban areas. The most common denominators of the heterogeneous mass of slum dwellers are sub-standard housing and poverty with their concomitant social, cultural and psychological consequences. Apart from other differences from the dominant group, they have difference, in life-styles, values, child-rearing practices, skills for urban living and educational attainment.

From the point of view of education, people residing in slums sends the lowest number of children to school and their children exhibit the most severe academic retardation, the highest rate of failures, grade repetition and dropout, and the thinnest transition to upper levels of education. Schools in or near the slums are usually described as having low caste, lower class and retarded children who lack the basic necessities of life, overcrowded, dilapidated or poorly maintained buildings, inadequacy of essential school facilities.

Deficient home environment seems to be the principal reason for under-developed intelligence and low academic achievement of slum area children among whom the range of intellectual potential should be as normal as among other children. Intelligence grows out of experience with objects and people, but lower class homes fail to provide a variety of objects, play things and stimuli to the child sense of sight, hearing, touch, feeling and so on (Hunt, 1961 & 1964). This environmental deprivation in the lower class home results into a depression of cognitive development in the child (Deutsch, 1965). Bloom (1965) has shown that more than half the differences in performance on conventional intelligence tests found at the end of high school could be accounted for by differences at the age of 6 i.e. at the beginning of regular schooling. In other words, these differences are there when children first enter the school, and what is more, they go on increasing progressively with the passage of time eventually causing a “cumulative deficit”. Other scholars like (Bernstein, 1961) hold that the lower class children’s difficulties in the school stem chiefly from their

poor language development due to insufficient and defective verbal communication in the home where parents are uneducated and have little time or ability to develop the necessary language skills among their children through conversation, answering of questions and explanation of various phenomena. When new concept and transactional term are to be acquired verbally i.e., by definition and context from speech and reading rather than by abstraction from direct and concrete experiences. The lower class children would suffer from the paucity of abstractions in the everyday vocabulary of his elders, from the rarity of stimulating conversation in the home, from the relative absence of books, magazines and newspapers and from each example of a reading adult in the family (Ausubel, 1964).

The conceptual framework of the study largely constituted of educational opportunities, access and equity. Educational opportunity can be regarded as a goal or a set of guide-posts in the sense, the framing and implementation of educational policy should introduce the means that will contribute to an increased equalization, in terms of educational outcomes, economic status, participation in decision making process and so on. Universal access to education is the ability of all people to have equal opportunity in education, regardless of their social class, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background or physical and mental disabilities. Access to education can be of three kinds. Firstly, physical access which emphasizes that geographical distance between schools and households is to be minimized. Secondly, economic access which implies the financial capacity of households to send their wards to schools even when the facilities are easily accessible in a geographical sense. Thirdly, social access which means that social stratification based on caste, class, gender and religion has implications for access available public provisions. Equity in education is a measure of achievement, fairness and opportunities. Educational equity is dependent on two main factors. The first is fairness, which implies that factors specific to one's personal conditions should not interfere with the potential of academic success. The second important factor is inclusion, which refers to a comprehensive standard that applies to everyone in a certain education system. These two factors are closely related and are dependent on each other for true academic success of an education system.

The three social theoretical perspectives concerning education are Functionalism, Conflict Theory, and the Interpretivist Approach. The theme of education and societal inequality such as race, gender, class and ethnicity offers an excellent opportunity to compare the three theoretical perspectives. Functional theory stresses the functions that education serves in fulfilling a society's various needs. Perhaps the most important function of education is socialization. A second function of education is social integration. For a society to work, functionalists say, people must subscribe to a common set of beliefs and values. A third function of education is social placement. Beginning in grade school, students are identified by teachers and other school officials either as bright and motivated or as less bright and even educationally challenged. Depending on how they are identified, children are taught at the level that is thought to suit them best. In this way, they are presumably prepared for their later station in life. Social and cultural innovation is a fourth function of education. Education also involves several latent functions, functions that are by-products of going to school and receiving an education rather than a direct effect of the education itself. One of these is child care once a child starts kindergarten and then first grade, for several hours a day the child is taken care of for free. The establishment of peer relationships is another latent function of schooling. Education serves so many manifest and latent functions for society, problems in schooling ultimately harm society. For education to serve its many functions, various kinds of reforms are needed to make our schools and the process of education as effective as possible.

Conflict theory does not dispute the functions just described. However, it does give some of them a different slant by emphasizing how education also perpetuates social inequality. One example of this process involves the function of social placement. When most schools begin tracking their students in grade school, the students thought by their teachers to be bright are placed in the faster tracks (especially in reading and arithmetic), while the slower students are placed in the slower tracks; in high school, three common tracks are the college track, vocational track, and general track. Conflict theorists say that tracking also helps perpetuate social inequality by locking students into faster and lower tracks. Another critique of conflict theory involves the quality of schools. Schools differ mightily in their resources, learning conditions, and other aspects, all of which affect how much

students can learn in them. Simply put, schools are unequal, and their very inequality helps perpetuate inequality in the larger society. Children going to the worst schools in urban areas face many more obstacles to their learning than those going to well-funded schools in suburban areas. Their lack of learning helps ensure they remain trapped in poverty and its related problems.

Symbolic interactionist studies of education examine social interaction in the classroom, on the playground, and in other school venues. These studies help us understand what happens in the schools themselves, but they also help us understand how what occurs in school is relevant for the larger society. Some studies, for example, show how children's playground activities reinforce gender-role socialization. Girls tend to play more cooperative games, while boys play more competitive sports. Other research in the symbolic interactionist tradition focuses on how teachers treat girls and boys. Many studies find that teachers call on and praise boys more often. Teachers do not do this consciously, but their behavior nonetheless sends an implicit message to girls that math and science are not for them and that they are not suited to do well in these subjects. This body of research has stimulated efforts to educate teachers about the ways in which they may unwittingly send these messages and about strategies they could use to promote greater interest and achievement by girls in mathematics and science.

It is imperative to sum up the reviews made by the investigator. It is noted that more studies are related to primary schools and its facilities. There are some longitudinal studies which gave the historical development of primary education in different states. There are enough studies carried out to find out the relationship between facilities or provisions in primary education and child's learning achievement. The studies are heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. The studies can be divided broadly into facilities/provisions and tests/ evaluation (achievement of the school children.) Many studies were conducted in the areas of facilities or programmes in the primary schools with aim of attaining universalisation of elementary education. For instance studies carried by - John Ippolito, R. Sandra, Y.P. Agrawal & Sunita Chugh. Finally there are studies specifically on slums have been included in the literature. Though there are few in number but they portend the

direction for present study: Rana Ejaz, Alikhan & Tossef, Azid; Yuko Tsujita; Ratan Khasnabis & Tamia Chatterjee.

Statement of the Problem

The research is aimed at studying the educational opportunities available to the children of slum in Lucknow. The main objective of the research is to study the schooling facilities available in slum areas and the achievement level of the student at various level of primary stage. The research also tries to study the impact of socio-economic conditions on the education of the slum children. The focus of the study is to understand the issue of educational opportunities, access and equity at grass-root level. As not much work has been done earlier in the field of educational equity, the present study will provide a new dimension in understanding the concept of educational equity. It is also very pertinent to study whether the educational opportunities, access and equity of education extended to the slum children create any improvement.

Hence the research is titled as:

"Educational Opportunities, Access and Equity among Children: A Sociological Study of Lucknow Slums."

Objectives of the Study

A study of the problem in the way of full and equal opportunity, access and equity for all its children especially those of the resourceless and the socially excluded people provide an idea of the nature and magnitude of difficulties that beset the realization of equal educational opportunity.

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To understand the Government policy and programmes for Primary Education in India.
2. To analyze socio-economic and educational conditions of families in the slums.

3. To explore schooling facilities and the extent to which these facilities are being utilized by the slum dwellers.
4. To study the achievement level of the students at various levels of primary stage and its linkages with equity.
5. To assess the educational opportunities, access and equity among slum children.

Hypotheses of the Study

In order to realize the above objectives following hypotheses are formulated:

1. Awareness among parents about Government policies and programmes enhances the enrolment rate of slum children.
2. Poor socio-economic status of the family adversely affects the education of slum children.
3. Lack in schooling facilities lowers the educational opportunities and access among slum children.
4. Higher educational opportunities, access and equity leads to higher achievement level among slum children.
5. High level of equity reduces the gender gap.

Research Methodology

The present study aims at knowing the availability of educational opportunities, access and equity to the slum children in the Lucknow city. The study is focused at primary education (Class I-V). For the study, infrastructure facilities, socio-economic conditions and achievement level of children have been observed and assessed. In order to assess the relationship between the educational opportunities, access and equity and achievement level of children in slums exploratory research design has been used. The study is focused at grass-root level.

The area of study is four slums in Lucknow city, broadly taking two old slums (Pre-1990s) Broadly, two old slums (Pre-1990s) i.e. Sikandarnagar slum, Chintah bazaar slum and two new slums Rajajipuram slum and Vikasnagar slum have been selected for the study. Sampling technique for selection of area is simple random sampling. The slums having population over 1000 have been selected for the study.

The sample size consisted of 200 parents and their children who are studying between Class I-V, 60 teachers and 16 Principals. The respondents have been selected by using purposive sampling. The unit of the study is single household. Four schools from each slum have been selected for study i.e. study has been conducted in 16 schools. In the present study, both qualitative and quantitative techniques of data collection have been used. For collecting data primary as well as secondary sources have been used.

Primary Data

- i) Interview schedule
- ii) Non-participant observation
- iii) Achievement test in Hindi and Mathematics
- iv) Focused group discussion

The interview schedule chiefly meant to find out the extent and quality of educational inputs related to the children and their family. These inputs are very significant, because ultimately it is the children who have to utilize the available educational opportunity and it is their family and home which largely determine their capacity to profit from educational experiences. The schedule consisted of items on several aspects of the slum area: child's family, home environment and personal attributes viz. parental education, occupation, point of origin from where his family migrated to the slums, income affection, interest and help in aspirations for the child's education, occupation, and income of his brother's and sister's, material possessions, living space, reading materials and language spoken in the home, child's access to school and exposure to preschool education, his academic achievement, learning difficulties, time devoted to homework, participation in co-curricular activities, exposure to mass media and interest in studies, physical, academic and social self-concept of the children, social adjustment, their educational and occupational aspirations, present achievement and achievement motivation and perception of teacher attitudes and hindrances in learning, pupil-teacher ratio. The interview schedule will be conducted in four slums of Lucknow.

Non-participant observation method has also been used to collect data and it has been observed whether slum children are being provided equal educational opportunities, access, and equity. It has also been observed how they are being treated

in schools, whether they are facing any discrimination or not and what is the attitude of teachers towards them.

Focused group discussion has also been done in order to gather opinions of the parents about the educational facilities, opportunities, access and equity which their ward is being provided in the schools.

The achievement tests have been conducted in English, Hindi and Mathematics. The achievement tests are based on the syllabus of class-V and consisted of ten questions each. The content of these questions are rudimentary and practical in order to measure their accuracy.

Social, educational and gender equity have been measured using following determinants:

Social Equity

- Learning Achievement of children of slums belonging to different religion
- Learning Achievement of children of slums belonging to different castes
- Involvement of girls in household chores
- Attitude of parents towards girls' education

Educational Equity

- Awareness among parents about education
- Awareness among parents about Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE)
- Preference among parents in sending their wards to schools
- Expenditure of parents on tuition
- Overall expenditure of parents on education

Gender Equity

- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) of boys and girls
- Retention Rate of boys and girls
- Drop-out Rate of boys and girls
- Succession/Transition Rate of boys and girls
- Learning Achievement of boys and girls

- Attitude of teachers towards girls' education
- Gender Parity in the classroom

All these determinants would play an important role in measuring equity.

Secondary Data

- i.) Census report
- ii.) Journals
- iii.) SSA documents
- iv.) District diary/ Gazetter
- v.) SUDA and DUDA documents
- vi.) Perspective Plan of Lucknow district
- vii.) Annual Work Plan and Budget of Lucknow district (2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16)
- viii.) Data from NGOs working in the slums

After categorization and tabulation of all collected information they have been analyzed on the basis of statistics and reasoning. Statistical analysis of the data has been done to analyze the association between variables. Besides percentage, mean and standard deviation has also been used. All data analysis has been done using the statistical software SPSS. After analyzing data report writing has been done descriptively and useful solution has been provided.

Findings and Conclusion

Some of the major findings of my research work are as follows:

Majority of the parents (53.2%) were not aware about the educational programmes which have been launched by the government. Those parents who were aware (46.8%) about the educational programmes were keen on sending their wards to schools. But these parents were more interested in sending their boys to schools because they feel education is more important for boys as compared to girls. Hence, it can be said that the hypothesis one i.e. Awareness among parents about Government policies and programmes enhances the enrolment rate of slum children stands partially true.

Majority of the households lack basic civic amenities. Almost 34% of the households were not having individual taps in their households, 46% were devoid of individual toilet facilities. Almost 43.2% families were living in one-roomed households. Most of the families have their monthly income less than 5000 which makes it difficult for the parents to send their wards to schools. Due to poor economic conditions the parents often took their children for work along with them which severely hampers the educational status of the children. Hence, on the basis of above finding the second hypothesis i.e. Poor socio-economic status of the family adversely affects the education of slum children stands true.

The schools had poor infrastructure, over-crowded and teachers adequately were not trained to deal with the learners who reside in temporary settlement with poor physical facilities. The pupil-teacher ratio and student-classroom ratio was also one of the serious concerns. The use of teaching-learning equipment was less than satisfactory. The use of globe, maps, charts and flash cards was made by a small proportion of teachers. Nearly half of the Government school teachers and around 75% teachers of private schools were teaching more than one grade during the same academic session. Hence, it can be said that the hypothesis three i.e. Lack in schooling facilities lowers the educational opportunities and access among slum children stands true.

The data revealed significantly high irregularity (almost 53.7 per cent) in attendance among slum children. The data revealed that the performance of the slum children was much below the expected levels. The achievement in mathematics is significantly lower than the language in Grade V. This is true for most of the schools. The low achievement specially 'no response' is a matter of serious concern and needs special attention of curriculum developers and translators. The achievement scores based on competencies of Grade V were lower. Low educational qualifications of the teachers in mathematics could be one possible reason. When the achievement results of private schools were compared with that of government schools it is clear that with small and inadequate infrastructure, less financial resources and untrained teachers with low salaries, children of private schools were performing better especially in mathematics than those of the Government schools Hence, the fourth hypothesis- Higher educational opportunities, access and equity leads to higher achievement level among slum children stands partially true.

The enrolment rate was found to be low in girls as compared to boys. The data revealed that the enrolment rate of boys was 81.2 per cent whereas for girls it was 72.4%. The performance of boys in achievement test conducted during the research work was also better than boys. The drop-out rate was particularly high among the girl child which was 41.2 per cent. Hence, it can be said that the fifth hypothesis high level of equity reduces the gender gap stands false.

The data revealed that the performance of the slum children was much below the expected levels in both the subjects and in both the grades. Children of private schools have performed much better than the Government schools children in mathematics but not in language. Most of the unrecognised schools have English language as medium of instruction and probably these children could not get familiar with this language. The achievement in mathematics is significantly lower than the language in Grade V. This is true for most of the schools. The low achievement specially 'no response' is a matter of serious concern and needs special attention of curriculum developers and translators. The achievement scores based on competencies of Grade V were lower than those obtained by learners in Grade I. Besides the complexities of concepts and subjects, the transition from oral to written mode of communication and evaluation may be one of the factors responsible for this pattern of scoring. Low educational qualifications of the teachers in mathematics could be one possible reason. Low motivation of the teachers to teach the children of poor socio-economic background and low educational status of the mother could be another probable cause. The poor achievement in mathematics for a large proportion of children requires further probing and investigation. If the remedial measures are not initiated, the quality of education cannot be assured. The analysis of response patterns for individual questions has identified the competencies on which the special emphasis should be given in order to bring a conceptual clarity among the school children. There is a need to move from the traditional modes of teaching to modern methods of teaching. When we compare the achievement results of unrecognised schools with that of Government schools it is clear that with small and inadequate infrastructure, less financial resources and untrained teachers with low salaries, children of unrecognised schools are performing better especially in mathematics than those of the Government schools.

Various educational policies and programmes have been launched by the government in order to improve the scenario of educational opportunities, access and equity in India. However, the problems being faced by the slum dwellers, especially in context to the education is yet to be resolved. The educational policies and programmes need to be contextualised at the micro-level, so that the issues of educational opportunities, access and equity can be addressed in a better way. Moreover, these policies and programmes are required to be properly implemented and monitored for changing the current situation of primary education in India.

Policy Options

Usually, for the provision of primary education in the urban slum areas the responsibility is of municipal corporations because these slums come under the boundaries of municipal corporations and bodies. Generally, the policies and provisions for the education in urban areas are made from the financial budget of municipal corporations and in most of the municipalities these budgets are usually under severe constraints. Further, each municipality has its own set of rules, norms and regulations for providing any assistance to the primary schools. On the basis of the results obtained from this research work some suggestions have been proposed for improvement and effective working of the primary schools in the poor urban areas. Some of these suggestions are as follows:

- Establishment of definite set of rules and norms for the establishment and upgradation of primary schools, particularly within the proximity of the urban slums.
- Maintaining certain provisions for the recruitment of teachers especially in the schools near slums and providing infrastructural and other facilities to the schools falling within the limits of particular municipality.
- Measures should be taken to motivate teachers so that they can develop a better understanding of the problems being faced by the slum children.
- Special training programmes should be organized so that teachers can be trained to tackle the problems of urban slum children. The urban slum children are exposed to various problems such as of child abuse, sexual abuse, substance

abuse, social insecurity, unhygienic living conditions, several health problems, malnutrition, etc. Here the teachers can play a crucial role in making these children aware towards the importance of personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, etc.

- A network is required to be developed for proper mobilization and sharing of resources between the government and private schools. Mutual co-operation of teachers from private schools as well as volunteers is needed for increasing the level of basic competencies for these children.
- Proper mobilization of the NGOs and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) is required for organizing remedial coaching classes within the slums. This would be helpful in developing confidence among urban slum children so that they can keep pace with other children.
- In the current scenario it is important that teachers should made the slum children realize that the classrooms are safe place for the process of experimenting and learning.
- The teachers can work as assets as they are the ones who could make these children to explore new things. They can encourage these children to take risks and develop new horizons of thinking and this would in turn enhance their capacity.
- Efforts should be made that the children are provided with friendly environment in the schools. The learning achievement of the children can be enhanced through playful and joyous activities and attractive reading materials and textbooks. Developing an atmosphere where children could have direct and free interaction with their teacher as well as their peer group, would prove to be fruitful in improving the learning competencies of the children.
- One of the peculiar problems of the slum children is that they have to visit their hometown every year along with their parents during the harvesting season. Generally, these children tend to overstay in their hometown which leads to the loss of their academic session. One of the solutions for this problem is that special

remedial classes should be arranged for such children. Other solution is that the classes should be arranged accordingly.

- One of the findings from the field revealed that in the classes few of the concepts are not explained properly in the class or sometimes certain concepts are also not taught. The solution for this problem could be that some members from the community itself should be entrusted with the task of monitoring the coverage of the course/syllabus.
- Findings have shown that the learning achievement of children in mathematics is quite low. To improve the performance of the children it is essential that large-scale changes and modifications in the curriculum is required and the methodology of teaching is also a matter of concern on which the focus is to be given. Solved sample papers should be circulated among the children in order to develop a better understanding of the concepts.
- In order to improve performance of children in languages, the methods of audio and video-cassettes can be implemented in the classrooms. Simple story books should be provided to the children, this would improve their reading skills. Along with this, it is essential that teachers should try to get feedback from the students. Moreover, modification is required in the teaching method as well as curriculum of English.