

EDUCATION OF THE SLUM DWELLERS

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ABSTRACT

The existences of slums are prevalent not only in India but throughout the world in other countries also such as China, Japan, Korea and so forth. The main objective of this research paper is to focus upon the educational opportunities available for the slum dwellers in India. What is their lifestyle and how does acquiring of education influence their living. The main areas that have been emphasized upon in this research paper are existence of slum areas and population, problems faced by the slum children in achieving elementary education, understanding of significance of education by the slum dwellers, objectives to endorse education amongst the slum dwellers and factors affecting the demand and supply of education amongst the slum dwellers. Slum areas in India are in a very underdeveloped and a deprived state, the people who reside in slum areas, in other words who are slum dwellers are stated to be the most underprivileged, deprived and weaker sections of the population; they are isolated from the other sections of the population and the community. Some of the individuals residing in slum areas are sometimes fortunate to acquire a job of a domestic helper or a construction worker or a laborer so that they can make money and earn a living. On the other hand, slum dwellers are mostly not aware of the meaning and significance of education, therefore, this paper would focus upon the education of the slum dwellers.

Keywords: Education, Slum Dwellers, Population, Community, Development

INTRODUCTION

‘Education for All’ in India has been instigated since the 1990s. For example, outer assistance, especially the loans from the World Bank for primary education, considerably increased in the 1990s due to the accomplishment of ‘Adjustment with a Human Face’ under economic liberalization in 1991. There has been an increase in the political and constitutional dedication to elementary education in the past years. Decentralization and contribution of the community in the field of education was promoted in the 73rd and 74th amendments of the constitution in the early 1990s, and free and compulsory basic education from six to fourteen years of age, as a fundamental right, was added to the 86th Constitution of India in 2002, and was legislated at the national level in 2009 (Tsujita, 2009).

At the same time, since the 1980s, it has become progressively clearer that the de facto privatization of education, reflected in the growing number of private schools, has become well-known in a large number of states, including the educationally backward states. On the other hand, ‘Education for All’ is still in progress, since just about 17% of children aged between five

to fourteen years have dropped out from school, and 36% of the total populations of India were illiterate in the year 2004-05. This overall picture of education in India implies that educational opportunities and accomplishment for the urban deprived are much lower than for the wealthy and prosperous sections of the population (Tsujita, 2009). There have been less educational opportunities available amongst the slum dwellers of the country and they live in the conditions of poverty and backwardness.

EXISTENCE OF SLUM AREAS AND POPULATION

Slums are a worldwide occurrence and are present in almost all cities throughout the world. The disadvantaged children and the adults residing in the slums are denied of various necessary facilities and services that the other children and adults take pleasure in, those who reside in non-slum areas, hence the slum children need special attention. As per 2011 Census report in India approximately 1.37 crore households or 17.4% of urban households reside in slums, in Kolkata it was estimated to be 29.6%. Education plays a crucial part in placing an appropriate basis for the overall socio-economic development of any area. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 provides children the right to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. Urbanization accompanied by the sustained growth in the population due to large scale migration leads to expansion of slum dwellers (Nath, Maiti & Halder, n.d.).

In India, almost one in every six urban households resides in slums. Over a third of India's slum population resides in its 46 million plus cities. Of the four metro cities, Mumbai has the maximum proportion of slum dwelling households (41.3%) followed by Kolkata, which is 29.6% and Chennai which is 28.5%. Delhi, the capital of India has 14.6% of its households residing in slums. Among all million plus cities Vishakhapatnam has the highest population of slum dwellers that is 44.1%. Decadal growth over the period of 2001-11 shows that population has increased by more than 181 million, percentage of growth is 17.64, literacy has increased from 64.83% to 74.04% and slum population has increased from 75.26 million to 93.06 million (Nath, Maiti & Halder, n.d.).

It is crucial to center upon the slum population for the following three reasons. Firstly, insufficient access to safe drinking water and sanitation in slum areas can influence the benefit of residing in urban areas, thereby making slum dwellers an underprivileged group. Secondly, the population growth rate in slums is greater than in other urban locations. Thirdly, among the Millennium Development Goals, the one that unambiguously centers upon urban areas is goal number seven, that is to ensure environmental sustainability of which objective number eleven signifies that by the year 2020 an important development and enhancement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers should be achieved. The main problems of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and ill-health prove to be the major hindrances of the developing countries on the whole, and India in particular (Nath, Maiti & Halder, n.d.).

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE SLUM CHILDREN IN ACHIEVING ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Among various dilemmas experienced by the slum children belonging to six-fourteen years age group in attaining elementary education, the most important factors are large family size, unfortunate living conditions, deprived health, adverse house situation, and nearby environment, relocation, language problem, unbalanced occupation and economic condition, poor parental educational background and school setting. A large family size leads to higher dependency ratio. In a family consisting of a father, mother and three or four children of school going age where father is the only earning member, then it becomes difficult for him to send all the children to school. Getting employed in an unorganized sector with reduced and unsound income and where all other family members are economically dependent on him then in such a case, it becomes difficult to meet all the requirements of the family members and household. In such kind of a situation the ability of providing quality education to their children or even assisting them to maintain their studies gets influenced. The higher the number of children within the family, the lower becomes the percentage of children not being admitted or dropped out of school (Nath, Maiti & Halder, n.d.).

Majority of the families that account for 98.75% were found to dwell in a small single dark, humid, room without proper ventilation and electricity provisions which serves them for multi-purpose activities that is, living, dining, sleeping, storing, bathing, washing, cleaning, cooking and so forth. In slum areas, one single room is often used to hold all the family members and their varied day to day activities. A serene and calm environmental condition for focusing on the studies and reading at home is almost absent. The entire surrounding environment is usually found to be polluted, muddy, unhealthy and susceptible to various diseases like malaria, jaundice, dysentery, tuberculosis, asthma, respiratory infection and so on (Nath, Maiti & Halder, n.d.).

Slums areas present numerous geographical obstacles to the rendering of services. Most of them are constructed in low-lying areas and are prone to flooding; most do not have adequate drainage to avoid water-logging during the rainy season flooding included damp, water lodging, over-population, and narrow or muddy roads. Houses are normally made of fragile materials, and are susceptible to fire and to monsoonal rains. A very high population density, very poor environmental conditions and very low socioeconomic condition were practically omnipresent features. These are the crucial features that prove to be barriers to the system of education for the slum dwellers. Poor drainage, flooding and weak housing constitute most of the slum areas. Lack of electricity, cooking gas, tap water, garbage collection and NGO services each affected a minority of slums, as the apprehensive tenure system, intimidation of eviction and demolition of slums, and a need to share water sources and latrines with large numbers of other households (Cameron, 2010).

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDUCATION BY THE SLUM DWELLERS

Education in the present world has become a crucial area, for not only the wealthy people but they also carry significance for the slum dwellers. As it has been stated above slum dwellers encounter number of barriers and problems during the course of acquiring education. Construction of houses, buildings is common in all countries and cities, in India, when construction of a house takes place, the laborers come from their villages with their young children, and in cities normally there are schools nearby where education is provided to underprivileged children without charging the tuition fee. The laborers and other workers who are engaged in minority jobs send their children to schools so that they can learn the basic concepts. In the past, education and literacy was not considered important for the disadvantaged groups living in slum areas, the adult people are in most cases not educated, they are not able to read and write; they are mostly engaged in manual and minority jobs such as construction workers, domestic helpers, rag pickers, cleaners and so forth. They did not believe in acquiring education and held the viewpoint that they are supposed to work to earn their living and perform the household chores (Vedeld & Siddham, 2002).

In the present existence, even the slum dwellers have realized that education is vital for their enhancement and overall development, even though they have not acquired literacy skills, they are willing to send their children to schools so that they are able to acquire education. The people residing in slum areas have limited income, they have normally larger families with three to five children and they have to meet the requirements of all family members, therefore, they send their children to schools where they do not have to pay the fees such as anganwadis, and other schools where fees is not charged and education is provided free of cost. The slum dwellers who work as domestic helpers in the houses of wealthy people are dependent upon them for meeting their basic requirements such as providing tuitions to their children without charging them, giving them food or clothing and so forth. The main reason that slum dwellers have began to realize the significance of education is that, their condition as well as their status is in a disadvantaged position, acquisition of educational skills will enable them to progress in their living standards, enable them to have better job opportunities and a better lifestyle. In some cases, even adults are willing to learn how to at least read and write so that they can improve their existence and way of life (Vedeld & Siddham, 2002).

OBJECTIVES TO ENDORSE EDUCATION AMONGST THE SLUM DWELLERS

In order to make provision of educational opportunities to the slum dwellers, there are five conditions that are required to be satisfied at the same time and on sustainable basis (Aggarwal & Chugh, 2003).

1. Provision of manageable and easy access to an educational competence for all children in the eligible age group of six to fourteen years irrespective of the caste, creed, religion, gender, ethnicity or location.
2. All students who are admitted at the right age, implying universal learning through formal, non-formal or alternative means of educational capability.
3. Universal maintenance throughout the most important primary and upper primary education cycle, entailing absence of dropouts and reiteration of subjects once the students get admitted.
4. Universal conversion from primary to upper primary grades for all learners irrespective of the type of school from which they began to learn and acquire educational skills.
5. Equivalent and reasonable intensity of accomplishment by all the students on completion of primary and upper primary education.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF EDUCATION AMONGST THE SLUM DWELLERS

The following factors affect the demand and supply of education amongst the slum dwellers: (Aggarwal & Chugh, 2003).

1. The maintenance of the supply side limitations and discrimination in the provision of educational communications and infrastructure.
2. The inadequacies in the administration and management of education, teacher vigilance and employment of teaching and allied resources.
3. Underprivileged information management systems to prevent the actual dilemmas from being determined and undertaken in genuine instance.
4. Straightjacket tactic to the subject matter and progression of education for all. The significance of the regulated curriculum and teaching-learning methodologies for all objectives influence the rapidity and quality of output.
5. The demand side limitations include the child, as well as his family and the community responses to the public sector initiatives, which are also inherently connected to the religious, social and economic position of the family, the location of residence and the estimated substantial results from a specified level of education.

DISCUSSION

In India, in urban areas people who migrate from rural areas in search for better job opportunities, employment and look forward to have a better standard of living are homeless, they do not have proper shelter or they reside in slum areas under underprivileged and backward conditions and living standards. Throughout the country, there is a significant percentage of population that resides in slums. In

slum areas, there are many kinds of problems that contribute to making the living standards hopeless and despondent. There is absence of clean drinking water, electricity, people have large families, there are mostly three to five children in a family and all the family members reside in just one single dark room and carry out all the household chores in a single room including washing, bathing, cooking and so forth. The male member of the family in some cases is able to find a minority job such as a laborer or a domestic helper, these are low paying jobs, therefore this kind of a situation puts him under pressure to look after all the needs and requirements of his family.

Earlier the slum dwellers did not understand the meaning and significance of education, but with the initiation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 that provides all the children the right to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education and their residing in urban areas has made them realize the significance and meaning of education. There are schools that provide primary, upper primary education for the children particularly belonging to socio-economic backward sections of the society free of cost; the slum dwellers also have developed this viewpoint that they would send their children to schools so that they can at least acquire the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. The backward living conditions of the slum dwellers and absence of basic facilities and civic amenities have proved to be the major barriers and problems in their acquisition of education but strong determination, hard work and dedication is required on the part of the parents as well as their children to attain education and be able to read and write effectively. The slum conditions need to be improved and developed, children often get admitted into the school, but when they face problems and difficulties they even drop out, which may prove to be a barrier during the course of their development, hence it is vital to improve the living standards of the slum dwellers so that they can effectively acquire education and look for better job opportunities.

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