

Exclusion of Children from Primary School System: A Micro Level Study of Lucknow Urban

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Submission Date: 24th March 2015
Acceptance Date: 28th March 2015

Abstract

In a neo-liberal country like India, the primary school education system has been under the control of the governing elite, mostly comprised of the upper classes. From the level of policy formulation up to the level of actual execution, such dominance plays a hidden yet a pivotal role. The entire gamut of Government schooling system made available for ‘masses’ tends to enforce, produce and reproduce the elite class ethics, values, culture and ideology. The system of class-biased curriculum transaction is likely to influence cognitive skill of children hailing from poor economic background. Major findings of this field based micro level study reveal that there was no involvement of the community in policy formulation at the school level. Preparation of District Perspective Plan also denied the role of actual stake-holders. Hence it might be regarded as a deliberate exclusion by the system. Similarly, preparation of text books and selection of course content was found highly centralised and bureaucratic in nature, leaving a little space for them whose children are continuing in schooling system. Contrary to governments claim, the role of the local community in planning and organizing school activities was found nil. School originated factors concomitant with structural reality of the family altogether influence the overall quality leading to exclusion of poor children from the schooling system, often reflected in high drop-out, poor cognitive skills and inferior quality learning outcomes.

Keywords: District Perspective Plan, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-Day Meal, caste, exclusion

Introduction

Our country has made considerable progress in the field of school education in the post 1990s precisely because of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). With an aim to Universalise Primary Education by reforming and revamping the school system, DPEP was launched in 1994 and gradually got extended to nearly 300 rural districts of India. This programme had resulted into quantitative expansion of schooling facilities including increase in the access, physical and academic infrastructure, Gross

Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) as well as strengthening of staff position. In order to sustain the progress made by DPEP, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was introduced in 2001 to Universalise Elementary Education (Classes 1 to 8) by the year 2010. At present, all the districts of India are being covered under SSA and the focus has been on the completion of eight years of schooling and improving school quality. The endeavour of Government of India (GoI) in the field of school education has also been supported by the suitable amendments in the Constitutional Provisions. The 86th amendment (2002) has made education free and compulsory for all children in 6-14 yrs age group and is further supported by free and compulsory education Act, 2009, which has become effective from April 1, 2010.

The population of urban slum dwellers in India is more than 78 million who belong to the low income category. Urban poor live in slums which lack basic amenities such as access to water, electricity, sanitation, housing, health facilities and school. It is often felt that the urban planners have generally not been responsive to the needs of the urban poor and have not bothered to readjust the planning and implementation of urban programmes so as to be sensitive to the basic needs of the poor sections (Govinda,1999). With regard to school education of the urban deprived children, it has been noted that the structural reality like caste, class, poverty, unemployment, poor availability of resources etc. heavily influence learning experience as well as learning outcomes. “Very high opportunity cost among urban poor households not only discourages community participation, it also works as a catalyst in keeping children away from school and at times pushing/pulling them out of school”. (SSA, XIth Plan Report). No doubt caste, poverty, economic deprivation, illiteracy, educational level of parents and other structural issues do influence schooling of children but sometimes it is the education policy and programme which affect the whole system of education. In this regard, Vimla Ramachandran, an expert on school education system in India, writes “mired in apathy and prejudice, policies and programmes designed to ensure universal elementary education have failed to capture the specific situation of urban children. Despite the provision of schools, deprived children in urban areas face systematic and schematic barriers in accessing education opportunities, even as the quality of education offered leaves much to be desired” (2008).

Against this backdrop, this paper attempts to understand the primary education system in urban India with a focus on the SSA programme and processes of exclusion at the grass root level. The assumption is that the Indian education system has been highly centralised and controlled by the bureaucratic set up on one hand and the upper caste educational elites on the other. This group is likely to enforce such value and ideology, which might promote exclusion of children belonging to the weaker sections and lower castes like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This paper is an outcome of a micro-level empirical study of five government primary schools of Lucknow city which is the state capital of Uttar Pradesh.

This paper is divided into seven parts. The very first section after the introduction is about a framework of educational exclusion in India. The second section provides educational profile of Lucknow urban. The next section explores the planning process of SSA including planning of activities at school level. Caste based analysis of the textbook preparation process has been done in the fourth section followed by discussion on the incentives for children i.e. free textbooks, uniform, scholarship and Mid-Day Meal in the next. Section sixth deals with the process of transaction of cognitive knowledge in the classroom and its linkages with exclusion. Section seven before concluding remarks, highlights the role of Ward Education Committee.

Section I. Educational Exclusion in India: A Framework

Social exclusion is a complex process and usually determined by a single factor or combination of forces and factors. Social exclusion can be defined as outcome of processes of discrimination against specific groups of people, leading to their systematic disadvantage in relation to economic assets and livelihoods, human resources such as health and education services and political and social participation (DFID, 2007). Social exclusion reflects the multiple and overlapping nature of the disadvantages experienced by certain groups and categories of the population, with social identity as the central axis of their exclusion (Kabeer, 2006). The educational set up is an integral part of larger society and it reflects various forms of social hierarchy and exclusion. Denial of educational opportunities to large masses has been an age old phenomenon in India. Professor Sukhdeo Thorat, the present Chairperson of the University Grants Commission writes “in India the exclusion revolves around the societal interrelations and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate and deprive some groups on the basis of group identities like caste and ethnicity” (2008). Historically, caste system has been a major source of social and educational discrimination and exclusion where lower castes including untouchables were not allowed to study and acquire knowledge from the formal system of education. Introduction of modern system of education by the Colonial Powers provided limited access and space to the lower caste-class individuals but had to face stiff resistance from the then educational elites, mostly from the upper castes.

Educational planners in the Independent India have tried to expand and transform the education system through administrative efforts but “it was not easy to dismantle the legacies of the colonial system of education left behind by the British rulers, one perceived to be essentially elite oriented, and suited to the interests of the ruling class” (Govinda, 1999). Provision of Article 45 of the Directive Principles, Abolition of Untouchability by the Act of 1955 and adoption of the policy of protective discrimination through reservation in educational system and employment in government sector have been some of the serious efforts to promote equality and bridge the educational gap between the privileged and the underprivileged sections but the system of mass education remains favourable for those who are already privileged. Unfortunately, the system has been operating within the bureaucratic

trap and dynamics of the caste system, which still discriminates, denies access, checks mobility, poses various kinds of impediments and restrictions for the marginalised and lower castes.

Section II. Educational Profile: Lucknow Urban

As per the Census of 2011, the total population of Lucknow urban is 28.15 lakh. Nearly 10.25 percent population is of Scheduled Castes but literacy among them significantly low as compared to non-SC population (71.29%) Female literacy across all the caste categories is less as compared to the male. Lucknow urban has two educational blocks, 110 wards, 900 slum dwellings, more than 400 unauthorised colonies, 225 government primary schools, 20 Cluster Resource Centres, 02 Block Resource Centres. In addition, there are 793 recognised and 694 un-recognised private primary schools (SSA, AWP&B, 2010-11). Data available on physical infra-structure reveal that a total of 161 government schools have ‘pucca’ (concrete) buildings, 37 run in rented premises and 27 schools are being managed in houses donated by rich people. Staff position in government schools appears to be less satisfactory as there are 136 head-teachers, 423 teachers and 311 para-teachers (contractual teachers) for 225 schools. Enrolment status till September, 2009 shows that total enrolment in primary schools including private is 215830. It is also crucial to mention that the government schools in urban set up like Lucknow generally cater to the need of poor families who cannot afford costly education for their children in the private schools. Altogether, a total of 98463 children are enrolled in the government primary schools and SCs constitute 48% of the total enrolment. GER and NER have been recorded as 93.91% and 92.97% respectively which reflect gradual increase over the previous years. Out-of-school is an important group and it has a total of 13980 children (25% SCs). Though detailed statistical figures are not available, girls, cutting across caste categories are likely to be more in number in the group of out-of-school. On the basis of SSA data, it becomes clear that approximately half of the school goers in the government schools are SCs, while they constitute just 10.25% of the entire urban population.

Data collected from the five government primary schools, selected for the empirical study of South Lucknow highlight that each school has concrete building but insufficient number of classrooms. Many of the schools lack basic amenities also. Altogether, there are 5 permanent teachers (all female), 6 para-teachers (4 female and 2 male) and 653 students (46.4% SC, 28% BC, 13.4% Minority and 12.2% students from other castes). While all the permanent teachers are from the upper castes, a few of para-teachers belong to SC category. From 2007-08 to 2009-10, the enrolment status shows marginal increase but the drop-out rate remains the same (12%).

Section III.a SSA Programme and Planning Process

SSA programme guideline highlights the problem of urban poor children and has identified ‘key issues’ affecting Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE). Suggestions for deprived children focus on formation of urban cell, preparation of city level education

perspective plan, promotion of NGOs participation, special focus on SCs, STs and minority children, remedial teaching, community based coaching and school community interface. Planning process envisages a bottom-up approach and perspective plans are supposed to be based on habitation wise data through consultative process. Similarly, Annual Work plan and Budget is to be prepared reflecting specific need of the context prevailing in the district and its blocks.

Reflection from the field does not corroborate with what has been visualised, thought and executed under SSA. Parents and other members of the local community where the government primary schools are situated, reveal that they have never been consulted on school related surveys or school planning. They could not recall that any official or teacher has ever contacted them on issues related to school. However, district education officials deny such claims. They blame local people for being illiterate and showing little interest in such exercise. Caste issues surface as another prominent factor mentioned by the officials. They opine that majority of poor families belong to lower castes and people are more bothered about their immediate needs and not the education.

III.b School level Planning and Community Involvement

School level planning includes preparation of a blue print for orderly and systematic way to perform curricular and co-curricular activities. It is the management of interplay of organisational and process variables to facilitate day-to-day functioning of school. In the empirical situation, the headmistress alone decides the strategies for school. It appears quite ritualistic in nature. Every year, School Chalo Abhiyan i.e Enrolment drive is being organised by the government in the month of June/July. The head-teacher is made in-charge of such drive and she has to approach each and every household to get children enrolled in the school. This exercise is done mechanically without any help from the local community. At times, over and under age children are shown enrolled. In order to avoid action and punishment (show cause notice, transfer to other school, stopping the annual increment etc.) from the education department, the head teachers even enrol those children who are already enrolled elsewhere. Feedback from the field indicates towards a weak linkage and relationship between the school and local community. Though there is formal provision of a Ward Education Committee for monitoring and supervision, such new structure has yet to affect the school level planning and every day functioning of the school.

Section IV. Preparation of Textbooks: An Analysis

Sociologists, like Pierre Bourdieu, Michael Young and Michael Apple, have argued that the classroom knowledge is directly linked with the nature and distribution of economic, political and cultural power in the society as a whole. Bourdieu maintains that the major role of education system is reproduction of culture of the ‘dominant classes’. As they have power to impose meaning and to impose their knowledge as legitimate, such dominant groups have ‘cultural capital’. Similarly, Michael Young claims that those in position of power will

attempt to define what is taken as knowledge. They will tend to define their own knowledge as superior, to institutionalise it in educational establishments (Haralambos, 1998, p 217). Uncovering the complicated connections among knowledge, teaching and power in education, Michael Apple argues that there exists very real set of relationship among those who have economic, political and cultural power in the society on one hand and the ways in which education is thought about, organised and evaluated on the other (2004, p vii).

With reference to the textbooks preparation for the government primary schools, our focus has been on the structure of textbook committee only. The education department/state level office of SSA had constituted a committee comprising of administrators, national level consultants on pedagogy, subject experts from academics and State Council for Educational Research and Training in the year 2005. A close scrutiny of such committee reveals that majority of members were scholars from the upper castes. This group has traditionally been powerful and claimed to have their legacy over knowledge. Thus, such group endowed with ‘cultural capital’ is likely to produce and select such knowledge, which is thought to be suitable and good enough for others. In this way selection of knowledge is likely to reflect their value system and caste ideology.

Main subjects of study are Hindi, Sanskrit, English, Mathematics, Science and Environmental Science. The structure of subject based committees shows that many members and positions are common to all the subjects. While the chief patron (1), patron (1), co-ordinator (1), members of review committee (3) and consultation and edition committee (6) remain the same, the authors vary from one to another subject. Altogether, three languages and literature are taught from Classes III-V. A group of almost the same scholars have authored books on Sanskrit, Hindi and English. More than eighty percent of them belong to upper castes and the trend is more or less found to be similar for the rest of the subjects like Maths, Science and Environmental Science. Dominance of already powerful and dominant upper castes, particularly Brahmins, indicates that they are still powerful in managing the system of knowledge. More important is the fact that the contribution of the authors belonging to underprivileged and socially lower caste-class has been insignificant in textbook preparation.

Section V. Transaction of Knowledge and Invisible Exclusion

Teaching-learning process is quite complex and is shaped by a number of factors. Teaching, for example, is influenced by educational qualification and training of teachers (Choudhury et.al 1997), method of teaching, medium of instruction (Nambissan, 1996), course content and interaction between students and teachers. Learning process is also determined by pre-school experience of children (Das Gupta, 1963), their motivational level, normative atmosphere at home and socio-economic and educational status of parents (Mishra, 1996; Punalekar, 1985). Effective teaching is also linked with planning and management of day-to-day activities and leadership quality of the head teacher (Govinda and Varghese,1993). In addition, physical and academic infrastructure also influences teaching-learning quality.

Infrastructure available in all the five government schools of Lucknow urban appears to be grossly inadequate and of poor quality. Three out of five schools did not have basic amenities like potable water and urinal for girls. Classrooms were insufficient in number and found to be small in size without any electrical appliances. No sitting material for the students (table chair, benches, wooden planks etc.) was available in any of the schools. Generally, students sit on the floor of classroom or corridor. Toilet doors were found locked in all the schools. Students were observed going to open space for nature's call. A considerable amount of time, actually meant for learning, gets wasted in this exercise. School library, though existing on paper, remained missing in the empirical situation. None of the schools had proper facilities to keep registers and teaching learning materials.

School timing is a matter of the Education department but in general, schools function from 10am- 4pm during winter (October to March) and 7am-12am during summer (April to September). It has been observed that schools are opened late and gets closed early and function only for less than four hours (on an average) excluding recess. Generally, schools start with non academic activities wherein the students are made to clean and dust the school premises as well as the classroom, which is followed by dusting of chairs and tables of the teachers.

Pupil Teacher Ratio as per State norms is 40:1 but it is found as high as 52:1. Observation of class room reveals that almost all the teachers follow the old pattern of teaching without a lesson plan and prior preparation. Instead of making the course content clear to the students, teachers assign them some exercise from the book. In this way students are kept engaged in writing. Frequency of using wallboard by the teacher was found less and, even subjects like maths and science were observed being taught verbally without using the board. Use of teaching-aids was not really seen in any school or classroom. Generally, home work is not given by the teachers. Students are instructed to do complete class work in the school itself but correction of class work is not completed by the permanent teachers. Absence of any remarks and signature on the registers of most of the students shows that teachers are less committed towards their professional ethics. At times, the head teachers were spotted sitting in the classroom and doing some official work instead of teaching the students. When asked they said that they were overburdened because of non-academic work assigned by the education department. In addition, they had to maintain as many as twenty four registers and prepare as many reports for the education department hence they could not spare enough time for teaching. As compared to the permanent teachers, the para-teachers were found relatively more serious in teaching and managing classroom activities. Despite their underprivileged position (meagre salary, non-permanent position, no pre-service training and previous experience of teaching etc.), the para-teachers were at least seen in the classrooms.

The teacher's attitude towards students is an important dimension of educational exclusion. Teachers assign non-academic tasks to the students and remain silent spectator. This type of exclusion begins when students start cleaning, dusting and brooming after reaching the school in the morning. Another dimension of such exclusion is related to the mindset of the

teachers. Most of the permanent teachers from the upper caste-class background had less positive and promotional attitude towards the students hailing from lower caste-class strata. During discussion, the teachers blamed illiterate parents as well as ‘bad family environment’ for poor learning of the students. Though corporal punishment is banned by the education department, it continues as a strategy to make students disciplined. A small wooden/bamboo stick was seen on the table of all the teachers. While teachers denied its use on children, many students revealed that it was being used regularly.

The head teachers apathy and indifference towards their basic duty of teaching and motivating poor children to study gets reflected when valuable time for teaching is deliberately wasted in school in the pretext of official work. Poor infrastructure compounded with inferior quality teaching and learning process indicates that the empirical situation of quality in the urban area government schools is as worse as the rural and remote pockets. The students of urban area suffer because of the education set up and poor delivery mechanism of knowledge transaction controlled by the upper caste teachers. In this way, it might be regarded as deliberate exclusion of the children from the system which is reflected in the form of irregular attendance, absenteeism, dropping out and poor reading and writing skill.

Section VI. Incentives for Students: Free Textbooks, Uniform, Scholarship and Mid-Day Meal

As per the existing policy of incentives, all the girls across caste lines are supposed to be getting uniforms, school bags and textbooks free of cost. A sum of Rs. 300 (\$7 approx) per year is given to all students belonging to SC, BC and minority communities. Regarding various types of incentives, it is learnt that the supply has been irregular and insufficient. The problem of inferior quality uniforms, school bags and delay in textbooks supply has always been there. Session commences in the month of July but textbooks seldom reach in time. In fact, some of the books are never provided to the students. This has become regular feature. News related to such situation is regularly covered by the local and national media but the story remains the same every year.

Mid-Day Meal (MDM) is another issue that needs to be explored thoroughly because this scheme has led to a lot of controversy since its inception in 2001. The scheme provides lunch to about 120 million children every day and, as such, is the largest school meal in the world. (Kingdom, 2007). Observation in the government schools has enriched our understanding on various fronts. Increase in the attendance during distribution of MDM and sharp decline after that was a common phenomenon in all schools. Many students are seen leaving the school during recess to bring utensil, usually a plate, to eat cooked food provided in the school. After having whatever has been served, they go home to return the utensil. Many of them are not likely to come back to the classroom. In this way, not only does the recess time extend to almost one hour, attendance in the post recess gets negatively affected. Ideally, MDM is meant for enhancement of the nutritional intake of the poor children (minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 grams protein each day) and ensure their presence in the school during

school hours. But field observation indicates that poor management of distribution system of MDM leads to the colossal wastage of teaching learning time in the primary schools. Similarly, free textbooks, uniform and scholarship are noble ideas but irregular and insufficient supply defeats the purpose. Because of the highly centralised bureaucratic set up, weak linkages and networking among the government departments, the whole effort of the state to ensure quality education that too free and compulsory, gets hampered and often lead to exclusion of urban children from the system.

Section VII. Role of Ward Education Committee

Decentralisation and community participation remains an important intervention of SSA. In accordance with SSA aim, the state government has formed a new structure i.e. Village Education Committee (VEC) or Ward Education Committee (WEC). The Basic Education Act, 2000 clearly mentions its structure and function. WEC is a five member committee comprising of the head-teacher, three parents and a ward member. Ward member is an elected representative of local body and can be a member of more than one school committee. WEC is expected to meet at least once in a month to discuss matters related to the attendance of teachers and students, preparation of basic schemes for school development, planning for better and smooth functioning of the school, and recommending minor punishments for irregular teachers. Recruitment of para-teachers is also done by WEC. There is a provision of minor grant also. Each WEC gets Rs. 2000 (\$ 45 approx) per year for minor work and repairing.

WEC meeting records from each of the five primary schools reveal that frequency of meetings has been less than the norms. Register of WEC meetings is generally kept in the school under supervision of the headmistress. It has been learnt that the headmistress herself decides the agenda, writes down it on the register and gets it signed by the members. When asked it was informed that most of the WEC members, despite prior intimation, fail to turn up for the meetings. The agenda mentioned in WEC registers seems to be general in nature like, problem of hand pumps and getting potable water; repair of floor or windows; boundary wall; white washing of the school and classrooms; labelling of school premises; distribution of scholarships, uniforms and textbooks; and recruitment of para-teacher. Crucial issues directly related to improvement in the teachers and students attendance, reducing number of drop outs, better quality teaching and learning, planning for school development and parents' help in MDM distribution are yet to become a part of WEC agenda.

It seems that WEC is a new structure created by the government but it has not been properly integrated with other institutions of the society. One of the reasons could be related to the formation process of WEC. The education department has mechanically created WEC without adequate planning and consultation of the local community members. In the empirical situation, the local people are found to be ignorant of such a committee for school. Had it been formed following democratic way with vigour on government behalf and adequate sensitisation of the actual stakeholders, the output and working pattern of WEC

could have certainly been different. Deliberate denial of the community sensitisation and mobilisation by the system indicates towards the traditional mind set, which tends to prevent and curve the scope WEC.

Conclusion

Main objective of this paper was to understand and explore the nature of educational exclusion among deprived community children continuing in the government schools. We proceeded with an assumption that the government education system in India has been dominated by the governing elite and the powerful social castes, which usually discriminate and exclude marginalised communities. Such dominance plays a deterministic role in the formulation of educational policy, selection of textbook knowledge and controlling the system of education. To analyse the complex nature of educational exclusion at the grassroots level, the paper has focused on the five primary schools which are being covered under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. These schools are situated in southern part of Lucknow city and cater to the need of urban poor groups like, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, minorities and migrant labourers.

SSA programme guideline recognises the problem of providing education to the urban poor but planning processes adopted by the officials at the ground level has ignored the actual stakeholders. Poor economic condition, lower caste status of the people and lack of awareness emerged as major bases for indirect discrimination of the community by the system. On the issue of preparation of the district level perspective plan, Annual Work Plan & Budget and school development plan, probably the education department has failed to recognise the specific contexts and varied nature of deprived communities in urban area. It reflects in the approach adopted by the officials to address educational needs of the poor. We find similar strategies for all the government primary schools despite considerable degree of heterogeneity across local communities.

Classroom knowledge is directly linked with distribution of economic, political and cultural power in the society. This notion of Bourdieu, Michael Young and Michael Apple was proved to be true when we analysed the structure of textbook preparation committee set up by the state government in the year 2005. Findings reveal that majority of the scholars and authors (more than eighty percent) engaged in developing textbook for government schools, belonged to the upper castes. Dominance of already powerful caste groups like Brahmins, shows that they still enjoy hegemony in selection of textbook knowledge. Though there is no dearth of eminent scholars and authors belonging to the marginalised sections, surprisingly they have not been provided enough space to play a significant role. Such situation is possible only when the state promotes and patronises one group and discriminates the other.

Findings from the government schools show that inadequate infrastructure and lack of basic amenities also contribute to the exclusion of students. Every morning, many students in the primary schools were observed engaged in sweeping, cleaning, dusting, mopping classrooms,

fetching potable water and putting attendance registers on the teachers table. Teachers, partially because of their traditional mind set, fail to find anything wrong engaging students in such activities. Another dimension of invisible exclusion was the negative social attitude of teachers. Filled with stereo-type notion against SC, BC and minority communities, the upper caste teachers were found to be less interested and committed for teaching the lower caste children. Manifestation of such notion got reflected in their casual approach of managing school affairs as well as transaction of knowledge in the classrooms. Thus, teacher's attitude emerged as an important aspect of exclusion in primary schools.

Incentives in the form of free textbooks, uniform, school bags and scholarship, are given to all the students belonging to SC, OBC and Minorities but irregular and insufficient supply often create confusion and tension among students as well as parents. With respect to Mid-Day Meal scheme, findings reveal that poor management of distribution system and flexible timings for lunch leads to colossal wastage of valuable time, otherwise meant for teaching and learning. Because of highly centralised system and lack of interface and coordination among various departments of the government, the concept of free incentives fails to create much visible impact. In turn, it tends to alienate underprivileged children from the education system.

SSA programme emphasises on establishing a strong relationship between school and local community through creation of Ward Education Committee but empirical situation was found to be just opposite to what had been envisaged. Except the head teacher, none of the WEC members had any significant contribution in enrolment drive, monitoring of teachers and students attendance, improving retention of girls and making school development plan. Local people were found ignorant of such a committee for primary school because the formation of WEC had mechanically been completed by the government officials. Deliberate denial of community sensitisation and mobilisation during process of WEC creation indicates the callous attitude of the system which is reluctant to act as facilitator.

On the basis of micro level study, it could be argued that the notion of exclusion is not only concerned with access to the government schools in urban Lucknow but is directly linked with other factors also. Social caste and class emerged as a major source of indirect discrimination. In addition, the system of knowledge transaction available in the primary schools was found to be biased and prejudiced, leading to further marginalisation and alienation of learners. This study shows that the system of schooling and various processes inside the school, provided by SSA, remain almost static in nature and replica of conservative system which does not ensure inclusion of underprivileged children.

Though there are certain limitations to go for broader generalisation, a few suggestions have been made to minimise discrimination and exclusion of poor and marginalised urban community children continuing in the government schools. These include- adequate financial provisions for infrastructure in schools; need based planning with community centric meaningful interventions; close monitoring of teachers' and students' attendance; sufficient

and timely supply of incentives for students; inclusion of scholars and authors belonging to underprivileged sections on formulation of Educational Plans and preparation of textbooks; recruitment of other caste teachers and ensuring their posting in urban schools; exclusive in-service training of teachers on the issue of exclusion; provision for relevant and progressive education system; and finally some measures to curb caste based discriminatory pedagogical practices adopted by the teachers.

Notes

This paper is based on a micro level sociological study of five government primary schools - Ambedkarnagar, Haiwatmau, Panchamkheda, Telibagh and Utrethia, randomly selected from South Lucknow. The study is basically qualitative in nature. Data have been collected in the year 2010 with the help of post-graduate level students (Sociology) of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University. Non-participant observation of the classroom activities; formal interview of the teachers, officials of the education department, Block and Cluster Resource Centre and SSA State Office, Lucknow and Ward Education members of the concerned localities; Focussed Group Discussion with the community members and in-depth discussion with the parents and children have been the main techniques of data collection. A total of 383 respondents comprised of 11 teachers, 156 parents, 3 Ward members, 4 consultants at the state level office of SSA, 1 District level project coordinator, 1 Block coordinator, 3 Cluster coordinators, 3 district level consultants, 26 members of Five Ward Education Committees and 175 students have been covered. To understand policy issues the study has relied mainly on secondary sources like SSA documents, Perspective plan of the state, District perspective plan and Annual Work Plan and Budget 2009-10 & 2010-2011 of Lucknow urban. In addition to this, school-based records and attendance registers of teachers and students, meeting registers of Ward Education Committees, Mid-Day Meal records, civil works activities, and circulars from the government and education department have thoroughly been analysed. The presenter wishes to thank all the respondents including the stakeholders for their co-operation and help.

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