Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices

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Abbreviations

ASER	:	Annual Status of Education Report
BRC	:	Block Resource Centre
CRC	:	Cluster Resource Centre
CWSN	:	Children With Special Needs
DIET	:	District Institute of Education and Training
DISE	:	District Information System for Education
EDI	:	Educational Development Index
EFA	:	Education for All
EWS	:	Economically Weaker Section
GER	:	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GPI	:	Gender Parity Index
GPS	:	Government Primary Schools
IDP	:	Internally Displaced Population
IMRB	:	Indian Market Research Bureau
IQ	:	Intelligence Quotient
MCD	:	Municipal Corporation of Delhi
MI	:	Multiple Intelligence
MMP	:	Mid-day Meal Programme
MoHRD	:	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MYS	:	Mean Years of Schooling
NCF	:	National Curriculum Framework
NCFTE	:	National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education
NFHS	:	National Family Health Survey
NSS	:	National Sample Survey
NUEPA	:	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
PTA	:	Parent Teacher Association
RTE	:	Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education
RTE	:	Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act
SCERT	:	State Council of Educational Research and Training
SEdBC	:	Socially and Educationally Backward Classes
SRC	:	Socio Religious Categories
SSA	:	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
UEE	:	Universalization of Elementary Education
VEC	:	Village Education Committee

Executive Summary

Elementary education in India has witnessed a steady growth over the years in enrolment of children from all sections of society, particularly from weaker and disadvantaged sections such as girls, SCs, STs, and linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities. Owing to the increased inflow of children from weaker and disadvantaged sections, classrooms and schools are becoming increasingly diverse. As a result, schools now have to address new issues and challenges and reorient their teaching-learning practices and processes to make classrooms and schools responsive to, and inclusive of, the learning needs and interests of diverse learners. The report *Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices* has sought to explore, identify and discuss key issues and challenges, and suggest inputs that need to be addressed by policymakers and practitioners to promote inclusive classrooms, ensure meaningful and successful school participation, and enhance the learning achievements of children from diverse backgrounds. The report has identified the following key areas that need to be focused on by policymakers and practitioners.

1. Recognizing the Increasing Diversity of Classrooms

There is first a need to recognize the changing social composition of learners in the classroom resulting from an inflow of children from diverse backgrounds in terms of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, language and religion. This increased diversity presents new issues and challenges in curriculum design, teaching-learning practices and processes, learning materials, and teacher education that meet the different learning needs of these children. These issues and challenges cannot be addressed unless they are first recognized by policymakers and practitioners.

2. Developing the Profiles of Diverse Learners

Without a clear understanding of the various socio-economic and cultural characteristics of diverse learners, it is difficult to evolve strategies and develop plans at classroom, school and system levels to teach children from diverse backgrounds. It is therefore necessary that relevant data and information on diverse learners is collected, examined and analysed in order to inform and shape policies and practices to make classrooms and schools inclusive and responsive to the learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds.

Child profiles can be an important and effective tool to promote inclusive classrooms. Child profiles can be created through school-community mapping by conducting a household survey in the villages of the schools' catchments area to determine how many members each household con-

tains, their ages, and their levels of education. These maps can be created by schools by enlisting the help of community members and elders, VEC members, village Panchayat representatives or even dedicated youth volunteers. This step will actually help to build stronger links between the school and the communities it serves.

The map can be shared with parents and community members and leaders to identify, discuss and analyse the various factors, especially school-based practices and processes that appear to cause exclusion of children from diverse backgrounds. Based on the analysis of the exclusionary practices and processes, a descriptive profile of each child can be created. This profile will help to identify, link, and analyse the factors that could affect children's learning. The child profiles can also be used to identify the differential learning needs and interests of children from diverse backgrounds.

3. Developing a Contextualized Understanding of School-based Practices and Processes

A contextualized understanding of teacher beliefs and behaviour as well as the teaching-learning practices and processes, and their impact on the educational experiences and outcomes of children from diverse backgrounds is a crucial prerequisite to develop inclusive classrooms that are responsive to the diverse learning needs and interests of these children. Without this, it will be difficult to assess the professional development needs of teachers, and evolve appropriate training curricula, practices and processes to prepare them to teach diverse classrooms. Therefore, there is a critical need for school-based ethnographic research which can better inform policy and practice.

4. Developing Inclusive Teaching-Learning Practices and Processes

Classrooms are diverse in terms of the types of children and the ways in which they learn. Children learn in different ways because of experience, environment and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, there is a need to use a variety of teaching methods and activities to meet the different learning needs of such children. We need to know the different ways that children learn, to help us develop teaching-learning practices and processes that are more meaningful for the children, and help them, especially those who have been historically excluded from learning, to learn better.

Students from all ethnic, cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds come to school with already-constructed knowledge, including their home languages and cultural values, acquired in their home and community environments. Such knowledge and skills should serve as the framework to construct new knowledge and understandings.

For classrooms to be fully inclusive, the learning materials and curriculum need to be made inclusive and responsive to the diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds of children. This would make it relevant for all children in terms of what is taught (content), how it is taught (method),

how the children learn best (process), and how it relates to the life experiences of the children and the environment in which they live and learn.

Instructional quality in a diverse classroom can be improved by using multi-cultural and multi-ethnic examples, scenarios and vignettes to illustrate academic concepts, ideas and skills. This is a powerful strategy to incorporate diversity into the heart of teaching, because examples are fundamental to, and consume much of the actual time, devoted to teaching in all subjects and school settings. Relevant examples can link school knowledge to the lived experiences of diverse students, and improve academic achievement.

5. Developing a System of Regular Evaluation and Feedback on the Impact of Teaching-Learning Practices

Teaching diverse classrooms requires a tremendous amount of flexibility to respond to the different learning needs and interests of students, and teachers need to constantly update their practices. However, without continuous and proper evaluation, teachers and school administrators cannot receive feedback from which to learn, and thus will lack the indicators of what works well, what does not, and why. While there may be several instances of good practices used by teachers in some schools, the lack of formal documentation, record and evaluation means that potentially good practices are lost. Therefore, there is a need to develop an institutional mechanism for continuous documentation, evaluation, sharing and feedback on the impact of teaching-learning practices on student learning, and its linkage with the teacher support and training system.

6. A Greater Focus on Diversity Issues in Teacher Education and Training Programmes

Though the social context of the classroom has been changing, teachers appear to have little understanding of issues of diversity, and are ill-prepared to teach increasingly diverse student populations. There is, therefore, a need for systematic efforts to make teaching for diversity an integral component of the curriculum for pre-service as well as in-service teacher training.

Teaching children from diverse backgrounds requires a tremendous amount of flexibility in teaching practices and processes as well as in curriculum design and learning materials to respond to their diverse learning needs and interests. It also crucially involves reflecting on and examining teachers' own personal and professional beliefs about diversity, based on caste, class, gender, ethnicity, language and religion, and analysing how they influence their behaviour and relationship with children from diverse backgrounds. However, the attitudinal awareness and skills to teach diverse classrooms cannot be simply developed and absorbed through a one-off course during initial teacher training or in-service training. Instead, continuous reflection and re-examination of beliefs and practices needs to be inbuilt in a system of teacher support and development throughout their careers.

Teaching and learning takes place in particular contexts. It is therefore important that pre-service and in-service training are oriented towards developing among teachers an understanding of the importance of con-

textual specificity and an ability to critically reflect on their own specific classroom contexts and practices. This will equip teachers with the abilities to apply general principles of teaching for diversity in ways that work for their specific classroom situations. Teachers would also greatly benefit, if training programmes include their participation in activities that expose them to practical situations of addressing diversity, especially classroom practice and placements in schools that are already recognized for their use of innovative practices to address diversity.

7. Promoting Diversity in the Elementary Teaching Workforce

Maintaining diversity in the teacher workforce is considered crucial to create inclusive schools. A teaching force that more closely mirrors the student population can benefit both students and teachers. Diverse teachers can serve as powerful role models for diverse students, potentially motivating them to strive further in their achievements. Diverse teachers also bring to the classroom their unique experiences and perspectives, which can help them to better relate to their diverse students. Diverse teachers may also be more inclined to view student diversity in the classroom as a resource.

However, data in this regard suggests that while there has been an increasing flow of diverse learners in the classroom, the social composition of teachers has not kept pace with it. The recruitment policy for elementary teachers, therefore, needs to be focussed towards promoting an increased intake of teachers from historically excluded groups such as women, SC/STs, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, etc.

8. Developing an Organic School-Community Relationship

There is growing evidence that involving parents and the community in school affairs can be an effective strategy to address diversity in the classroom. However, the current official mechanisms and structures (VECs, PTAs, etc.) prescribed to ensure community involvement do not seem to be working towards achieving the desired outcomes, particularly with regard to the participation of marginalized and excluded communities. They feel helpless to assert their voices and participate in the functioning of the schools in the local power structure, and, VECs become a platform for the powerful sections of the local society to promote their vested interests.

It needs to be recognized that in the changing context of increasing inflow of children from diverse backgrounds, it is important for schools to understand and articulate parent and community involvement in terms of diverse socio-economic, cultural and political contexts. The schools need to evolve programmatic activities in order to ensure the active involvement of the different communities in the local society. Through programmatic activities, communities can become active partners in developing a school-based plan to improve teaching-learning practices and processes. School-based plans to address the challenges of diversity in the classroom can provide many such opportunities for the active involvement of communities and parents.

The challenges of inclusive classrooms and diversity discussed by the Report may appear formidable, especially because mainstream policy and

practice in the elementary education sector have yet to adequately recognize and focus attention on them. However, the Report indicates that during recent decades these issues and concerns have already started receiving attention from a section of policymakers and practitioners. Several innovative experiments of school reforms have been taken up by civil society organizations as well as in the government sector in different parts of the country. These experiments have attempted at curriculum design, development of teaching-learning methods and materials, and teacher development from child-centred, inclusive perspectives, and have shown encouraging results in terms of the learning achievement of children from diverse backgrounds. The positive and critical lessons and insights from these initiatives need to be documented, shared and widely disseminated. Building on these lessons and insights, a perspective and concrete strategy can be developed to address the challenges of inclusive classrooms and diversity.

Based on the issues and challenges identified and discussed, the Report presents a set of recommendations, and suggests building a nation-wide network of civil society organizations (CSO) and forming a **National Forum on Inclusive Classrooms** as a major strategic initiative to develop and promote the agenda of inclusive classrooms and diversity. These recommendations are closely interrelated and complement each other, and, therefore, indicate the need for a multi-pronged approach to address these challenges.

It may not be easy to initiate the processes of change that are proposed by the Report. However, it is also important not to overestimate the challenges. Many components in the recommendations can be initiated by building on the processes that already exist, and revitalizing them in innovative ways. However, we need to finally emphasize that we would not succeed in initiating these processes of change unless there is decentralized planning. It would need a broad framework to plan upwards, beginning with schools; to identify focus areas and developing context specific intervention plans; and subsequently to consolidate these at the cluster and block levels. This could form a decentralized planning strategy at the district level. Only genuinely decentralized planning with school-based action plans at its core could make the agenda of inclusive classrooms feasible and achievable.

Introduction

The report has emerged from the persistent efforts and initiatives undertaken by Deshkal Society, in collaboration with UNICEF India and in partnership with regional partners across the states for dialogue generation and network building with various stakeholders in the elementary education sector on the agenda of inclusive classrooms and diversity. This was done by organizing regional consultations in seven states – Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. About seven hundred people and around hundred organizations participated in these processes of dialogue generation. The participants included representatives from multiple stakeholders in the education sector, such as civil society organizations, state councils of educational research and training (SCERTs), teacher training institutes, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), schoolteachers, teacher educators, textbook writers and reviewers, education experts, researchers, documentary filmmakers, journalists and members of the local intelligentsia[1].

Persisting Myths

The persistence of discriminatory practices by teachers, educators, school authorities and all of us in general about underachieving learners' socio-cultural identities, capabilities and potentialities are based on several problematic assumptions. Some of these pertain to pervading beliefs and common perceptions about the children's individual and collective identities and their capabilities and potentialities. These are often deeply rooted and shaped by varied socio-cultural contexts which have remained largely unspoken but understood by those who believe in diverse societal norms.

Some of the key myths that we have talked about are:

Myth I: Children are Children After All … They are the Same!

Myth II: Learning Achievements of Children are Determined by Heredity.

Myth III: "School Kids" Are Different from "Street Kids"!

Myth IV: Boys are for Schools, Girls are for Marriage.

Myth V: Children Learn Only from Textbook Transactions by Teachers in the Classroom!

Myth VI: Inclusive Education Means Enrolment of All Children in School

Child Development and Learning

It is a well-known fact that these myths about child-to-child and teacher-child relationships in the classroom have a deep and adverse impact on

the personality and learning of the children. This impact is most tangible and perceptible in those children who belong to the historically excluded communities. Consequently, the self-identity of the children are threatened, they are stigmatized and become victims of the prejudices inside the classroom. Needless to say, such an alienation of children and prejudiced environment in the classroom creates extremely difficult conditions for their learning and personality development. Asking questions, interacting with peers and teachers, taking initiative and volunteering for educational, cultural and sports activities in the classroom becomes very difficult for such children. It is not a coincidence, that in recent years, the learning achievements of children in government schools, in both the urban and rural areas have been reported as poor in official and non-official documents. It is in this context of learning that "deficient learning" has emerged as a key issue in the performance of children, teachers and the school. It is a matter of great concern that children, particularly those belonging to the marginalized communities are found in large number among the ones who are victims of the belief in "deficient learning". It is also notable that most of these children belong to families where parents were never enrolled in school, and in that sense, these children are first generation learners. Also, due to the poor economic condition of the parents of these children, they do not get the requisite home support which is necessary to successfully negotiate the current processes of schooling. As a result of such conditions in the classroom and the family, children belonging to the marginalized communities are "doubly deprived" for learning.

Developing a Perspective

It would be pertinent to learn about the perspective that underpins the dominant myths which have an adverse impact on the learning capabilities and potentialities of the children. Here we would like to indicate some of the salient features [2]:

- A child is recognized as a universal abstract category devoid of associations with caste, religion, class, culture, ethnicity and gender.
- Children from historically excluded communities are viewed as culturally deprived.
- Expectation from everyone capable of assimilation to attain middle-upper-middle-class standard.
- Focusing attention on the sameness of individuals from diverse groups.
- Arguing that individual difference results from lack of opportunity.
- The problems individuals experience due to their from divergent backgrounds face are considered individuals difficulties, not socially structured adversities.
- Claiming ideological neutrality on the plea that politics should be separated from education.
- Failure to account for the power dynamics in schools, and the socio-economic contexts that shape them.
- Not exposing the specific processes of domination and subordination of students as individuals.

This perspective provides the grounds for understanding the marginalization and alienation that emerges from the child-to-child and teacher-child relationships inside the classroom. It is notable that owing to the absence of such an understanding, more often than not, the marginalization and alienation in the classroom are attributed to the teachers, and in this sense, the teacher is seen as the "culprit". It is not surprising that a section of educationist, policymakers and practitioners are unable to understand that the problem is not only caused by the teachers' lack of the understanding and sensitivity, but that there are dominant social, economic and cultural reasons as well. Further, we tend to forget that the teacher, who is generally made responsible for the occurrence of such marginalizing and alienating processes in the classroom, is also a product of the contemporary social, economic, cultural and political processes. One of the reasons for the marginalizing and alienating processes in the classroom is the underlying fact that key concepts such as marginality and diversity and the processes that would address these are not part of the teacher education curricula. This became evident to us after analysing the teacher training materials in the seven states where regional consultations were held. We found a glaring absence of concerns for marginality and diversity in the toolkits and manuals that are used as part of the teacher education curricula.

There is an urgent need to address the following key questions to understand the marginalization and alienation processes in the classroom that have an adverse impact on the learning capability and potentiality of children.

- How do we engage with teaching-learning practices in an unequal classroom, where there are children of diverse backgrounds?

- How do we strengthen the capacity of the contemporary teaching-learning practices and processes to promote healthy relationships in teacher-children and children-children in a diverse classroom?

- How do we empower teachers and children to engage in dialogue – to listen; to talk – as a means of developing greater sensitivity to differences and understanding "others"?

- How do we nurture teachers' and children's abilities to respond to "other" children's needs with an attitude of reconciliation and respect for diversity?

However, the report does not analyse all these questions in detail. What it does, is to indicate the way forward to address these questions.

A Critical Diversity Perspective

In contemporary elementary education, there is an urgent need to understand children in their social, economic and cultural contexts and also to organically link the teaching learning practices and processes to broader social reality in order to make classrooms inclusive. Keeping the need to view children as rooted in their social economic and cultural context would certainly generate awareness and concern among teachers and policymakers that the social and educational profile of the classroom is multi-class,

multi-caste, multi-religious and gendered with disability as a significant dimension of the profile of children in classrooms. Considering this, understanding the needs and questions of diverse learners, we believe, is the first step to make classrooms inclusive. Consequently, children learn in different ways owing to their experiences, environment and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. There is a need to use innovative teaching methods and activities to meet the different learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds. We need to know the different ways that children learn in order to help us develop teaching-learning practices and processes that are more meaningful for these children, and assist all children to learn better especially those belonging to historically excluded communities.

The report emphasizes that a diverse classroom can have benefits for all learners, as every child can contribute and bring some ingredients to the learning "soup". Students from all ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds come to school with already-constructed knowledge, including their home languages and cultural values, acquired in their home and community environments. No child comes to school who has not learned anything at home or in their community. It is our responsibility to find out what the child knows and what skills he or she has learned already. Such knowledge and skills should serve as the framework to construct new knowledge and understanding.

For classrooms to be fully inclusive, it should be ensured that the curriculum is accessible to and relevant for all children in terms of what is taught (content), how it is taught (method), how the children learn best (process), and how it relates to the life experiences of the children and the environment in which they live and learn. In order to be inclusive of children with different backgrounds and abilities, curriculum material needs to be sensitive to the diversity of children and their circumstances.

Moving Ahead

The report in this context presents some recommendations for immediate consideration. The recommendations are designed with an approach that is cost effective and viable.

- Undertaking ethnographic studies in different parts of the country to develop contextualized understandings of school-based factors and teaching-learning practices and processes that act as barriers to the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds.

- Documentation and dissemination of innovative grass roots initiatives and experiments of inclusive curriculum designing, learning materials, and teaching-learning practices and processes.

- Developing context-specific toolkits for teacher education on diversity and inclusive classrooms in different states and regions.

- Establishing a network of interdisciplinary researchers to promote dialogue and the dissemination of research findings on challenges addressing diverse classrooms.

- Establishing dialogue, engagement and advocacy with government institutions and programmes at the district and state levels such as

SCERTs, DIETS, SSA, etc., as well as with national and international agencies working in the elementary education sector.

Conclusion

It is matter of moral and intellectual strength that in recent years we find indications to enhance and encourage the learning needs and potentiality of the children from the marginalized communities in important policy documents mainly NCF, RTE and NTECF. In the same way, in the Eleventh Plan document, there are indications to make classrooms inclusive and work on what happens inside classrooms[3]. Prior to this in the last two decades the focus of the state and central governments in the last two decades has been on addressing access and infrastructure deficits in elementary education. It is recognised now that there is a need to focus on the learning needs and quality education for children to realize the goal of quality elementary education in India.

Keeping the needs of diverse learners, several civil society organizations in the country have developed teaching learning programmes that certainly are part of the initiative to make classrooms inclusive. Such innovative examples contribute to enriching and deepening the perspective to make classrooms inclusive, by considering the needs and potentialities of the diverse learners. However, in this process, we have to be aware that these experiments are context-specific and attempts to replicate them exactly goes against the interests of diverse learners. In other words, we should be cautious about the "standardisation of context-specific innovations" in the field of teaching and learning and making classrooms inclusive and democratic.

We will be unable to attain the goals and expectations in elementary education if we do not move ahead in time to address reforms in the classroom processes, keeping in mind the contemporary changing realities, needs and potentialities of the diverse learners. We would also fail to justify the expenditure that is incurred to realize the goal of quality elementary education in India. We all know that school is not just a building where children assemble, but a space where children enjoy learning life skills and the art of negotiating the self, the other and the world. The desired achievements, therefore, will be based on the extent to which the needs and potentialities of the diverse learners, primarily, first generation learners, are addressed in the classroom and how the overall experience of learning is made joyful for these children.

Notes

[1]Appendix II contains the detailed list of the educationists, policy makers, scholar activists, civil society organisations, representatives of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyna and SCERT who contributed in the seven regional consultations.

[2]R.. Shirley Steimberg (2009), Diversity and Multiculturalism: A. Reader, New York, PETERLANG, PP. 4.

[3]Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-12, Volume-II, Social Sector, Planning Commission, Govt. of India, New Delhi, OUP, PP. 4

1

Inclusive Classroom and Social Diversity: Myths and Challenges

Today the increasing number of learners from diverse backgrounds entering elementary classrooms has reinforced the importance of making schools more inclusive. With a greater variation in the talents, and social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds of the learners, the elementary classroom in India faces a challenge to use this diversity constructively in order to democratize the teaching-learning processes and practices, and achieve the larger goals of social justice.

In this context the agenda of "inclusive education" has gained importance. There has been a further impetus with the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. The implementation of this Act will be considered successful only if it addresses the issue of making the children of marginalized communities "visible" within the four walls of the classroom.

Many of these children, across the country come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, such as Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities; ethnic and religious minorities, economically weaker sections (EWS), migrant labourers, nomadic and de-notified tribes, urban poor, children with special needs (CWSN) and so on. Although children of these communities are enrolled in school, they face the danger of dropping out. Many of them live in extremely vulnerable socio-economic conditions and face a serious threat to their universal rights, such as a school education. From a learner's point of view, RTE, 2009 provides a legal framework to make school admission, attendance and completion compulsory.

With physical access taken care of to a greater extent, it is no longer enough to talk merely about provision of universal access. Rather, the growing importance is to make school education free of anxiety, fear and stress for the diverse learners. In this context, the quality of teaching-learning practices and processes has attracted the attention of all the stakeholders of elementary education. It is now a widely recognized fact that glaring achievement gaps exist between the children of marginalized and non-marginalized communities. At the very heart of the issue that has occupied recent debates and discussion about making school education "stress free" and "child friendly" is the teacher and teaching practices (GOI, 2009, p. 9).

In fact, in recent decades, various studies, reports and documents have revealed that in the classroom, curriculum delivery and pedagogy in contemporary mainstream government schools in India, children—especially those belonging to the marginalized communities—are subjected to vari-

ous forms of discrimination and humiliation which severely affects their self-respect and self-confidence. Children have narrated painful stories of their experiences in the classroom and shown their resentment to this, as well as towards the teachers (Probe Report, 1999; Nambissan, 2001; Govinda, 2002). Some children have undergone violent experiences inflicted by teachers as well as their classmates from dominant castes. A study of schools in Uttar Pradesh by Dreze and Gazdar (1996) reported that teachers refused to touch SC children. They were subjected to verbal abuse and physical punishment by teachers, and were frequently beaten by their upper-caste classmates.

Recognizing the complex of issues regarding teacher-based practices the RTE Act, 2009 makes it obligatory to change the general perception of children as passive receivers of knowledge, and to move beyond the convention of using textbooks as the basis of examinations. Going beyond the issue of making elementary education legally compulsory, it talks about the pedagogic factors that prevent learners, especially those belonging to disadvantaged social backgrounds, from a comprehensive and continuous elementary education, in the context of ensuring quality education for all. The Act states that the curriculum should provide for learning through activities, exploration and discovery. It intends to address the pressing issue of teacher-based reforms in the classroom to hold teachers accountable for the violation of a child-friendly environment in the classroom. Further, it emphasizes an examination of the assessment system to redesign it to suit the needs of all learners.

Similarly, several years earlier, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 also attempted to address the issue of "child-friendly" teaching-learning. NCF, 2005 also notes the fact that learning has become a burden, causing immense stress to children and their parents, which are evidenced by the deep distortion in educational aims and quality. NCF 2005 makes a series of observations and suggestions about pedagogy, curriculum, teaching-learning material, and classroom and school environments. It notes that:

> Children's voices and experiences do not find expression in the classroom … [T]he curriculum must enable children to find their voices, nurture their curiosity to do things, to ask questions and to pursue investigations, sharing and integrating their experiences with school knowledge–rather than their ability to reproduce textual knowledge.

NCF 2005 thus recommends a child-centred pedagogy giving primacy to children's experiences, their voices and their active participation. However, the curriculum framework also observes that:

Box 1.1

My Right to Learn
By Robert Prouty

I do not have to earn
The right to learn.
It's mine.
And if because
Of faulty laws
And errors of design,
And far too many places where
Still far too many people do not care –
If because of all these things, and more,
For me, the classroom door,
With someone who can teach,
Is still beyond my reach,
Still out of sight,
Those wrongs do not remove my right.
So here I am. I too
Am one of you
And by God's grace,
And yours, I'll find my place.
We haven't met.
You do not know me yet
And so
You don't yet know
That there is much that I can
give you in return.
The future is my name
And all I claim
Is this: my right to learn

-Quoted in UNICEF and UNESCO, 2007. A Human Rights Based Approach for Education for All: A Framework for the Realization of Children's Right to Education and Rights within Education, Paris.

The Inclusive School

The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school.

Salamanca Framework for Action, 1994

This perspective on the learner may sound "obvious" but, in fact, many teachers, evaluators and textbook writers still lack the conviction that this can become a reality.

It also observes that many schools now have large numbers of first-generation learners whose parents cannot provide them direct support in their schooling, and therefore, the pedagogy must be reoriented to meet their schooling needs.

In fact, the necessity to address teacher-based practices in the changed circumstances of elementary education in India has been even more strongly emphasized in the recently released National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE), 2009:

One finds the situation on the ground ridden with difficulties. Regional, social and gender disparities continue to pose new challenges. This reality increases the challenge of implementing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act and, in particular, the role and place of the school teacher ... (p. 2)

NCTE, 2009 takes serious note of teacher education reform in connection with the increased intake of diverse learners in elementary classrooms. It envisions a teacher education framework that satisfies the needs of the time:

There is increasing recognition of the worth and potential of social context as a source for rejuvenating teaching and learning. Multi-cultural education and teaching for diversity are the needs of contemporary times. (p. 19)

Along with recognizing the issues to be addressed in the context of teacher education reform, the document stresses an urgency to provide due emphasis on developing reflective teachers with positive attitudes, values and perspective; developing teacher education curricula on the basis of the changing requirements of time; and develop skills in the art of teaching.

Despite such serious concerns it is still a fact that children belonging to marginalized communities and girl children have persistently "under-achieved" in school. In fact, not only in India but also at the global level, current strategies of educating children of marginalized communities have been severely questioned (UNESCO, 2003).

A significant aspect worth mentioning here is that much of the current debate on the underachievement of children of marginalized communities takes place at a level that treats the problem as a "technical issue". That is to say, the current debate treats the historical underachievement of children of marginalized communities as being caused by faulty and inadequate teaching-learning practices and processes. However, posing the problem in such a manner means that the only possible solution considered is the "right teaching methods" or finding the "best practices". This is a gross misrecognition of the issue and has compounded the problem further. As a result, considerable time has already been wasted in *crying out for a bagful of pedagogic tricks*. Perhaps we have only scratched the surface of a far more complex and deep-rooted problem.

Persisting Myths

The persistence of discriminatory practices by teachers, educators, school authorities and all of us in general about underachieving learners' socio-cultural identities and abilities are based on a number of problematic assumptions. Some of these pertain to pervading beliefs and common perceptions about the children's individual and collective identities and their abilities. These are often deeply rooted and shaped by varied socio-cultural contexts which have remained largely unspoken but understood by those who believe in diverse societal norms.

Myth I: Children Are Children After All … They Are the Same

No. Children have multiple and diverse identities. But why do children look similar? Imagine children at school with their school uniforms! Don't they look similar? In fact they do; not only in their physical appearances, but also with respect to certain perceptions about them. Generally, attributes like playfulness, innocence, purity, goodness, naiveté, etc. are used while talking about a child. A child is a child after all! And thus all children are tucked into a common blanket identity. Take the case of Mohit for instance. Mohit Bhalla is in Class IX and is 14 years old. He was born in Delhi and lives in a middle class housing colony.[1] The children with whom he plays are from different schools, and he is quite comfortable with them. But he considers them only playmates and does not discuss his problems with them.

Mohit wants to become a "pilot" when he grows up: "By becoming a pilot I will finish the enemies of the country and there won't be any in-filtration." Infiltration by Pakistani nationals worries Mohit a great deal and he constantly reiterates his desire to "protect" the nation from disloyal and vile enemies from across the border. Becoming a cricketer is another favourite: "By playing well I can make India win the game … I will change the whole structure/map (nakshaa) of the country."

Communication with his family members is somewhat restricted and it is only when they have dinner together that they talk about his school, his friends and teachers. Contrary to the school practice of "havan" and its attendant religious discourse, Mohit does not believe in outward religiosity and says, "Mind is temple itself. My mother asks me to go to the Hanuman temple every Tuesday but I personally feel that if we don't go to the temple and just remember God silently ("maun") then also he will listen." Mohit has participated in the havan twice, "I used to sit just because I am asked to sit.

Mohit's reference to the bomb blasts in cinema halls in Delhi is fraught with the circumstances of

What Inclusion IS About	What Inclusion is NOT About
• welcoming diversity	• reforms of special education alone, but reform of both the formal and non-formal education system
• benefiting all learners, not only targeting the excluded	• responding only to diversity, but also improving the quality of education for all learners
• children in school who may feel excluded	• special schools but perhaps additional support to students within the regular school system
• providing equal access to education or making certain provisions for certain categories of children without excluding them	• meeting the needs of children with disabilities only meeting one child's needs at the expense of another child
Courtesy UNESCO, 2005, *Guidelines for Inclusion*, Paris.	

Hindus and Muslims in the context of India and Pakistan. Interestingly, the newspapers later reported that the terrorists arrested for this act were in fact from the Punjab but this does not deter Mohit from expressing his strong views: "Yes I came to know about the incident from the TV news. Now these things will happen if we allow the bus service to Pakistan. And now they are saying that they will start a train from India to Pakistan. This will make the process of infiltration much easier for the terrorists. It very often comes in the daily newspaper about the infiltrators who come from Pakistan and are caught over here. There should be a strict vigil on the boundaries of our country, otherwise again there will be Muslim rule."

Mohit's narratives reflects the fact that while it is true that diverse learners in classrooms look similar in the eyes of a teacher, behind their common identity lies a "child", and each learner has a different interpersonal and collective identity. It is similar to a piece of ice floating on the water, wherein the major part is hidden below the water. The personal or collective identity of a learner is considered to be formed and moulded by the socio-economic and cultural milieu in which he or she grows up. For instance, the very socio-economic and cultural milieu under which a Dalit child grows up in India is significantly different from a non-marginalized child studying in an elite school in urban India.

Contemporary thinking in child development also points out that a child's identity is a complex one. Children begin to learn complex social realities around them at a very early stage which influences to a large extent, the way they perceive themselves and others. From this perspective, rather than children being empty vessels as generally perceived, their "social" identity and consciousness about their personal and collective identities are in fact to a large extent formed before they enter school.

However, it is observed that the mainstream perception of learners dominates those involved in educating children. Such a perception is widespread among people around whom these diverse learners grow up—teachers, parents, school authorities, community members, etc. The way these learners are perceived by other people around them informs to a large extent how they are expected to appear, behave and respond to others, more specifically in the context of the classroom.

The gap between the common perception about learners' identities and their actual reflection of their "social selves" is so wide that sometimes it becomes almost difficult to hold a discussion in the classroom. For instance, a female teacher who taught at the Gyansthali Public School in Jhansi, faced stiff challenges in teaching from the history textbook in the classroom after 9/11 (Chitalkar, 2007).[2] The students in the school were predominantly from the disadvantaged sections of society—Scheduled Castes and the OBCs. The Muslims in the school were present in the ratio of 1:10 with roughly four Muslims in a class of 40 children.

Lessons progressed smoothly and she enjoyed teaching, till she started teaching the chapter on India's struggle for independence, especially the portion on the Muslim League and communalism from the prescribed history book by NCERT for Class X. Media images of the hijacked planes crashing into the twin towers, fresh in the memory of the learners, became the central point of discussion in the classroom. The words, "communalism"

and "partition" were used to bait the Muslim students in the class. "See they are killers" said the non-Muslim learners. The teacher's response to the Gujarat riots was: "They deserve it."

Every history class degenerated into a verbal duel with possibilities of physical duels on the issue outside the class appearing very real. Attempts to mediate by the teacher were countered by scathing remarks by non-Muslim learners "Madam, are you Muslim?" The teacher finally decided to discontinue teaching that particular lesson, since neither severity on her part or attempts at resolving the issue had any effect on the learners. The prejudices ran too deep and the school authorities were not interested, and nor were they equipped to deal with the situation. Peace was finally restored when the teacher resorted to the safer geography portion of the syllabus.

This example illustrates that the myth that children are all the same is false, and that children come to school not only with their own individual identities and experiences, but also with a consciousness and identity formed while growing up as members of collectives.

Myth II: Learning Achievements of Children are Determined by Heredity

No. Learning achievements of children are not linked to heredity in any way. Stigmas and prejudices have influenced notions among teachers and school administrations about the learning potential of children from different backgrounds. Social experiences of children in elementary schools across India point towards the fact that such notions are often based on prejudices and stigmas regarding caste, class, religion, ethnicity and language.

The underachievement of marginalized children and the gap between their learning abilities and non-marginalized children are seen in the light of heredity-based factors such as caste. For instance, a study by a Delhi-based civil society organization in selected elementary schools in Gaya district, Bihar unearthed the fact that belief in the notion of "sanskara" and inherent "non-educability" of children from marginalized communities adversely affects the nature of teacher-student and teacher-community relationships as well as the overall school ethos and environment. Surveys carried out in the course of the study revealed that teachers generally do not indulge in any overt acts of discrimination against children from marginalized communities. Rather, social exclusion has taken on a "silent" nature which is characterized by the indifferent attitudes of teachers and school administrations towards the learning achievements of children of marginalized communities such as the Musahars.

Teachers in the elementary school in Gaya where Musahar children are being educated attribute their underachievement to their "impure" culture in which parents indulge in practices like rearing pigs and eating pork. They are considered to lack "sanskara" – the sociability to be eligible to learn. Although caste is not directly referred to by teachers during their interactions with the students, it is the apparent lack of "sanskara" which dominates their perception and attitudes towards the Musahar children. As stated by a teacher of Majhauli Primary School in Gaya: "Pigs eat

filth. Wherever they go they make the place filthy. Due to pig rearing, the children and parents of the Musahar community can never develop good 'sanskara'" (Singh and Kumar, p. 38).

A teacher in a primary school in Dhareya, Gaya even went on to explicitly state that "one cannot even dream of the mental development of those who are engaged in 'pig-rearing'" (Ibid). Caste has been substituted by the notion of "sanskara" to explain the educational failure of marginalized children and to their inherent or heredity-based non-educability. The teachers however are reluctant to discuss the caste factor directly. They assert that the caste identity of children does not matter in school and every child is treated equally.

Further, teachers' belief in the hereditary educability of children and their attitude of attributing the children's educational failure on their "sanskara" has also resulted in antagonistic relationships between teachers and parents, especially parents from marginalized communities. The latter openly blame the teachers for the failure of their children. They claim that the teachers show minimal interest in their children's learning and, therefore, do not make any effort to "discipline" them during school hours and keep them within the school premises. Ironically, these parents even go to the extent of saying that teachers should physically beat the children in order to inculcate discipline. On the other hand, teachers say that if they do this, these same parents will oppose it violently.

Within the classroom, the beliefs about hereditary educability of children are further reinforced by the teaching-learning methods which are dominated by the centrality and supremacy of the teacher and the textbook. Instead of encouraging students from different backgrounds to participate in co-constructing knowledge and building on what they already know from their life experiences, their knowledge is de-legitimized as something not worth knowing, and their initiative and enthusiasm for learning through co-construction of knowledge is cut short. Often, attempts by students at interactive engagements during the teaching transaction are rejected by teachers as violation of the moral order, standard behaviour and discipline in the classroom.

The dominating attitude and opinion among teachers in this regard is represented by what a female teacher said during an interview: "These children are all of low learning capability, and we (the teachers) have to make them learn the right things" (Sushila Prasad, teacher, Majhauli school, quoted in Singh and Kumar, 2009, p. 48). Implicit in this attitude is the view that what children already know from their everyday experiences is not the right knowledge to learn in the context of formal education, and that, in any case, children's ability to learn is determined by heredity rather than by what happens in the classroom.

Myth III: 'School Kids' Are Different from 'Street Kids'

No. Children are not born with any prescribed identities. Rather they are given these or they gradually acquire them. It is often observed that among different learners "school identity" and "social identity" do not match in the perception of teachers and educators. For instance, the salience of school kids is often found in perceiving them as "homely", "good" and "obedient".

They are "silent", "serious" and do their homework properly, and generally listen to the teachers. They dress smartly, are neat and clean, maintain good hygiene and their parents take a keen interest in their education.

On the contrary the identity of street kids is relegated to "non-serious" learners in the classroom. Street children often suffer from poor motor control. Their restlessness, the "adult-like" orientation in their behaviour is stigmatized in a diverse classroom as having "deviant" characters. They are frequently identified as not having the traits of a "child". Teachers and school authorities tend to develop a poor opinion about them. Ultimately, these children feel like "fish out of water" in a diverse classroom. Their alienation from the classroom and its teaching-learning practices and processes finally leads them to drop out from school.

Teachers in particular and school authorities in general perceive that street children come to school to "pass time" by playing with their friends rather than to study. Those who are unruly and play pranks, are the "bad ones" and those who are "silent" and "serious" who generally abide by what the teachers say, are the "good ones". Such labelling in fact makes the difference as to who can "make it" in the eyes of the teachers and who cannot. This prejudice emerges from the fact that "school children" have a different identity from those who come only to pass time – the "trouble makers", the street children. Their parents are perceived to lack any interest in whether their children learn or not as they will shortly follow what their parents do. Their parents send them to school to get rid of them during their working hours.

Street children are often engaged in daily survival. They develop resourcefulness, self-reliance and independence and other survival skills in a hostile environment. Alienated from mainstream life, they have no social status in the larger society where their existence is tolerated, but not trusted, as their background is unknown. Because their contacts in society are mainly casual, street children rarely develop any "protective relationship" with non-street people. They live in their own world, seeking the support and protection of the local gangs for companionship or to learn the ways of street life. They sometimes develop a group identity, and occasionally a spirit of camaraderie, which meets, however imperfectly, their emotional and psychosocial needs (Bose, 1992, p. 52).

The failure to understand the emotional and psychosocial needs of street children within the classroom is a major factor in their dropping out. For instance, the teachers and administrators of schools managed by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) were quite enthusiastic when large numbers of street children participated in the introduction of balsakhis in school. However, as the days passed several of them had dropped out of the schools. Under the scheme, the initial attractions for the street children were the free clothes and study material provided by the schools.

Raju (11 years) used the free distribution policy to take care of his wardrobe for the next six months. He first enrolled in a school at Mahalakshmi. Within a week, he changed his "address" and landed on the streets at Dadar, where he was enrolled in a civic school. His final stop was Borivili (E), where he was registered for the third time in 35 days. In all, Raju collected three sets of uniforms. "He even got free books from the second school, sold them and earned a neat Rs. 100", says his friend

Chotu (11 years), his tone tinged with awe and envy. Attendance dwindled and finally petered out. "Didi (the balsakhi) ne bola ke agar mei school jau toh mujhe pehne ko kapde milenge, esiliye mei school mei bharti hua (Didi told me that if I go to school, I'll get free clothes and that is why I enrolled)," says Rasik (10 years), who lives on the streets near Haji Ali *(Express News Service,* September 8, 2000).

Principals in civic schools concede that the plan has its inherent difficulties. Says Ram Sharma, principal of a Hindi-medium school at Mahalakshmi: "Street children don't even inform the school that they are moving out of the area and are going some place else. And it is very easy for them to register in another school in a different ward with the balsakhis and teachers so enthusiastic about enrolling yet another child in their school." Other principals agree. Says Meena Phondge, principal of a Marathi-medium school: "The children who continue schooling have a permanent home and a more or less stable home background. It is the street child who will not take the school curriculum for more than five days straight. Take any attendance register and it is as clear as day that a majority of students who play truant live on the streets," she confirms.

The children, on the other hand, blame the teachers for their disinterest. Most of them complain that they are either rude or ignore them completely, because of which they don't feel as though they "belong". Some of them are also beaten, they claim. Parroting alien rhymes like "Twinkle, twinkle little star" and "A for apple" is the clincher. So, they simply leave; free uniforms notwithstanding. Says Imran (7 years), "I might as well continue begging at traffic signals. That way, I earn at least Rs. 40 and don't have to take orders from a teacher" (Ibid).

Such instances clearly indicate that teachers and school administrations lack a proper social understanding of street children. While the identity of those marked as school children poses no conflict with their corresponding social backgrounds it is not so in the case of street children. Their family backgrounds and social associations are not perceived to fit in with the school children's social backgrounds. Street children's peer associations are viewed with suspicion. Their "street" identity acts as an impediment in developing meaningful relationships with their teachers, co-learners and the school in general. In fact, inside the classroom their "street" identity is reinforced by their poor academic achievements, and is further legitimized in the perception of teachers and educators.

Myth IV: Boys Are for Schools, Girls Are for Marriage

No. It is a traditionally created male viewpoint. So far, schools have also represented and reproduced such a conservative perception about the girl child. For instance, take the case of the Meo Muslim girl children of Rajasthan who are first-generation learners. A comparative study between two villages, one in which a school intervention was conducted and the other where it was not, revealed minimal school participation and integration by the Meo Muslim girl child. Her daily routine remained almost similar to what it was before the school intervention programme.

A typical day for the Meo girl child starts at dawn and ends late in the evening. She prepares breakfast, milks the cattle, fetches water from the

pond, cooks the lunch food, washes clothes, collects dry wood and leaves, feeds the cattle, takes care of her younger siblings and helps members of the house with other chores "Savere se shaam tak kaam hoe hai, ladke to na karen (we work from early morning to evening but boys don't work)" says Afsana (14 years), a first-generation Meo Muslim learner. In between she manages to go to school. She wishes she could be a boy! "Ladka ho to itna kaam na karna paro... ladke ko baat sunna pado jab koi kam no baro, yo saver mein uthe to bhi baat sunna pado (if I were a boy I would not have to work so much...boys are scolded when they do not complete their assigned jobs, but girls are scolded from the moment they leave the bed" (Ahmad, 2005, p. 78).

Within the classroom, the Meo Muslim girl faces stiff challenges. Owing to the traditional values held by the community which bars girls from coming into contact with males, they hesitate to interact with the teachers. The regular absenteeism of teachers from the classroom is perceived as a risk factor by the community members where girls are left un-chaperoned in the presence of their male co-learners. The girls are unable to participate in the reading and writing exercises within the classroom. In fact, community members see their participation in school in a poor light.

The community members maintain school education almost as a waste of time as they find Madarasa education more suitable for them compared to boys who are regarded as the future wage earners of the family. This is well reflected while interacting with the male and female parents and grandparents of Meo girl children. "School education" is given low emphasis as a criterion for a "good girl". In their views, other socio-religious criteria such as observing religious rituals, early marriage and lending a helping hand in household chores are given more emphasis. For girls, more than school education, Madarsa education is considered suitable for their proper upbringing within the mores of the Meo community.

The social values held by the community are also reflected in the Meo girls' self-perception. They too differentiate between "good" and "bad". This is reflected in Afasana's view when asked why she preferred a Madarsa to a regular school: "Ladke wale puche hai ladki dini talim aur Urdu jane ya na (the groom's side mostly inquires if the bride is properly educated in religious education and Urdu)" (Ibid, p. 78). A similar opinion is hold by young Meo co-learners like Asim who maintains: "Ladke kamao hain. School mein padhai ke baad, ladki to shaadi ho jai hai. Padhai zaroori na ho utni (Boys earn! What is the point of girls going to school since they will get married soon? School is not so important for them)" (Ibid., p. 77).

Like Afsana, Champa (12 years) is a bright Dalit learner studying in her village school in Class VI. Both her parents are landless farm workers. Their income was so meagre that they decided to ask Champa to drop out of school. She protested vehemently as she wanted to continue. To console and please Champa her parents told her, "We will make you happy my child by getting you married.." Champa responded, "You do not want to make me happy by letting me attend school." The grandmother tried, "Don't feel bad, my child, we will find you a good boy." Champa asked, "How am I to get a good boy when I am not going to be educated?" (Macwan, p. 17). Even if girls do happen to go to school they are discriminated against in

the choice of school. An interesting phenomenon of social discrimination was noticed in a family of the Berwa tribes in Ujjain, which preferred to send their boys to private schools but their girls to low quality government schools.

The voices of girls such as Afsana and Champa amply reflect the social experiences of girls growing up in disadvantaged backgrounds where their education is widely perceived as having less value than that of boys. Their involvement in sharing the burden of household chores starts from childhood and continues throughout their school years, and this is never acknowledged. In a Hindu-dominated social upbringing, the arrival of a son is greeted with happiness, whereas the birth of a daughter brings forth uninhibited expressions of melancholy or indifference (Kakar, 1978).

A similar moment arrives when a girl reaches puberty. She loses her role in festive rituals on account of having become "impure" due to the onset of menstruation. The development of the "negative self" is built up in successive years of social experiences eroding the very autonomy of the "self". Traditional practices such as early marriage add another layer of disadvantage to this. In fact, the customs and rituals under which girls are brought up and gendered into womanhood constitute a regime which is incompatible with the normative view of a childhood which is implicit in child-centred policies of education. In this regard, child-friendly and special strategies to educate the girl child in the future will only gain in reality and value when such approaches to education take into account the larger cultural context of girlhood (Kumar, 2010).

Myth V: Children Learn Only from Textbook Transaction by Teachers in the Classroom!

No. Children learn more outside the four wall of the classroom by interacting within the socio-cultural milieu in which they are born and brought up. There is a widespread belief that children learn more from school textbooks and teachers. Intelligent learners are held to be those who can better remember what is in the textbook and reproduce it in examinations. They receive accolades not only from their teachers, but also from their parents and community. It is frequently seen that instead of encouraging students' participation in the co-construction of knowledge and building on what students already know from their life experiences, their knowledge is de-legitimized as not worth knowing, and their initiative and enthusiasm to learn through co-construction of knowledge is eliminated.

Let us examine a day's teaching transaction in a school in Gaya, Bihar where a large number of Dalit children, especially Musahar children, are being educated in rural elementary schools. A teacher asked students in Class IV to write an essay on a village, in accordance to the exercise given at the end of the lesson 'Halwaha Rajkumar'. Some of the students, particularly those from the marginalized communities, wrote about the common features of their own villages from their everyday experiences, describing the crops grown in their village; how their parents work for landowners; how if the paddy crops are not good, they are bound to starve; if a chamar (SC) touches utensils belonging to other castes, the utensils

have to be washed. These are everyday realities experienced by children in their social world (Singh and Kumar, 2009).

However, although the teacher himself was aware of these realities, since he is part of the same social world, he not only rejected these essays, but also passed derogatory comments on the low mental abilities and worth of these students. The teacher then gave instructions to the students to strictly follow the content and language of the lesson in the textbook while describing the village, which is as follows:

> Second person (telling the first person): 'This is really a wonderful place. The son of the king holds the plough, no one is a servant of anyone, all are brothers.'
>
> First person: 'Well Prince! What is the difference between you and the other citizens?'
>
> Balram (Prince): 'The only difference is that we have some more land and a few more cows.' (Ibid., p. 48).

This image of the village presented in the lesson contradicts the reality of everyday life faced by children from marginalized as well as non-marginalized communities. It is difficult for children to relate to the imagined description in the lesson, where the son of a king tills the land with his own hands, and where all the people live like brothers. Every day, Dalit children see their landless parents working on other people's land. They also see that people are divided into low and high castes and that low-caste people work for the higher castes. Rejecting this knowledge that these children have gained from their everyday experience, as irrelevant, and passing derogatory remarks about their inability to understand and learn the "standard" knowledge contained in textbooks, adversely affects their perception of self-worth and alienates them from the learning process.

On the other hand, when the children can relate their life to the contents of a lesson, they are mentally and emotionally involved in the learning process. This was observed very clearly by the researchers during a reading session in Class IV in Badka Bandh school in Gaya, Bihar. The lesson concerned a story about a peasant, Jhuri, and his two bullocks Heera and Moti. As the children related to the content, they listened to the story with rapt attention, their facial expression changing with every turn in the story. However, due to the teacher and text-centred transaction method, the students had no opportunity to engage in interactive discussion and develop critical thinking.

Teachers' devaluing learners' knowledge, especially of children of marginalized communities, do not communicate respect and dignity for the learners' socio-cultural milieu. Teachers and school authorities tend to put more value on caste, class, religion, ethnicity, language to recognize learners' knowledge in the classroom. Such biases and prejudices often damage children's educational opportunities, leading to alienation of learners from the teaching-learning environment of the elementary classrooms.

Children often put forward difficult questions directly related to the complex realities that they encounter in everyday life. Rather than encouraging a dialogue, their voices are muted in the classroom. A common perception held by teachers, school administrations and parents is that teachers

need to keep a safe "distance" from the learners in day-to-day classroom transactions. The learners are required to respond only to what teachers teach in the classroom. Any other kind of engagement in a dialogue with the teacher is considered as a threat to the integrity and knowledge of the teacher. It is perceived that if teachers become too friendly with learners, they could take undue advantage, and the teachers would "lose" control over the learners leading to gross indiscipline in the classroom.

The non-recognition of the learners' knowledge leads to confrontation between the teachers and learners in the classroom. Such a confrontation results in violence by the teacher since it appears to them that the learners are questioning the authority of the teacher. Learners are caned in the guise of disciplining them and make them more attentive to their studies. Moreover, parents also complain when teachers are friendly with learners and do not beat them. A classroom with pin-drop silence is what teachers and principals of most elementary schools expect. The dilemma between the emphasis on "learning through activity" and a "disciplined classroom" is shared by a teacher of an MCD school in Delhi:

> Agar hum sochte hai ki bacche group work karein ... pairs mein team karein ... toh bahar walon ko lagta hai class humse sambhal nahi rahi..ab agar headmaster/headmistress bhi isi soch ki aur usse thodi bahut awaz theek na lage ... toh problem ho jatein hai
>
> (If we think that children should learn in groups and pairs and the teacher does so, people tend to think that the teacher is unable to control the class. If the principal also thinks so, then the teacher is in a real mess!)" (Quoted in Jain, 2006, p. 137).

Myth VI: Inclusive Education Means Enrolment of All Children in School

In the dominant discourse on elementary education in India, the meaning of inclusive education appears to be limited to merely school enrolment of children from all sections of society. However, several studies indicate that children from diverse socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious backgrounds have different learning experiences and outcomes when they come to school. Inclusive education, therefore, needs to move beyond just enrolment to denote a feeling among all learners of "belonging equally" to the school, irrespective of their backgrounds. Inclusive classrooms and schools in this sense would mean a place where diversity among learners is appreciated and considered a learning resource rather than a problem; where children from diverse background are valued for what they are, and can feel safe enough to express whatever they know, without fear or discrimination; and where the curriculum, teaching-learning methods and materials are culturally responsive to meet the different learning needs and interests of children from diverse backgrounds.

Contemporary Challenges

The myths discussed in the previous section provide a glimpse of how formidable the challenge to educate diverse learners has become. In fact, as the school system becomes increasingly diverse, relationships inherent

Box 1.3

Loreto Day School, Sealdah
A school that believes passionately in inclusion

Loreto Day School at Sealdah in Kolkata, West Bengal is an example of an innovative experiment whereby a privately managed school has gone beyond the norm to successfully integrate the schooling of middle class and poor children through a creative and flexible use of pedagogy, curriculum and resources. The school has 1,400 regular students, of which 700 pay fees to provide stability to teachers' salaries, and 700 come from impoverished slums. Children are admitted through a lottery system at the age of four. They learn together, wear the same uniform, and play, work, study and eat together as equals.

Besides the regular school, three other programmes for street children, domestic child labourers and rural children are also run by the school. The Rainbows is a programme for street children. They are allowed to drop into school whenever they are free, from early morning till late afternoon. When they come, they always find a regular student free and prepared to teach them. This is made possible by a creative structure of the curriculum. Regular children have Work Education for two periods a week which ensures that throughout the day there is a reservoir of 50 potential "teachers" free and prepared to teach whoever comes. The street children are brought to a level for a class appropriate to their age and then slotted into school according to her age level.

Loreto children are also encouraged to make contact with domestic child labourers, to play and talk to them, listen to their stories and even interact with their employers to persuade them to get the children to school. Loreto has admitted 239 such children in this way. The regular Loreto children also interact with and teach 3,500 primary school children in rural areas every Thursday (school holiday) in an ongoing child-to-child programme.

The school uses a variety of teaching and learning methods to ensure that all children can learn intelligently in the classroom. Activity-based learning methods and use of local resources are emphasized. The school ensures that all activities are creative rather than money-based so that poor children do not feel excluded because they cannot afford to take part in them. It also provides head start / remedial / alternative programmes to meet the needs of academically weaker children. There is no academic ranking or competition, no pitting children against each other for marks. Children are trained to compete with their own best performances and all prizes are effort-based; talent per se is not rewarded, as it is considered a gift.

Child-to-child tutoring and peer learning in Rainbow, domestic child labour and rural schools programme encourage reflection and enrichment of teaching methods. Children are challenged to reflect on what they do and why they do it, to analyse what they have experienced and become aware of some of the burning socio- economic issues facing Indian society today.

The school is sensitive to the various cultures of the children coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and promotes appreciation of and pride in each one. It recognizes the injustices poor children are subjected to and is flexible enough to give them first priority. The school is deeply concerned for the dignity of every child and monitors carefully all existing structures. It removes or re-orients those which might make a child feel inferior. The curriculum encourages children to mix and have relationships with the poor, and exposes them to a variety of life experiences that children from diverse backgrounds bring from their homes or the streets. Even middle class parents understand the educational value of mixing children of several different backgrounds, and parent-teacher meetings are geared towards reflection on various aspects of education rather than reporting on individual children's shortcomings. The school thus exposes teachers, children and parents alike to a variety of socio-economic experiences and issues, and practically makes it possible for everyone to make their contribution in the successful implementation of its vision and purpose.

(Based on a presentation by Sister Cyrril, Principal, Loreto Day School, in an International Conference organized by Deshkal Society in partnership with DFID, UNICEF, NUEPA an ADRI in 2007 in Delhi.)

in its structure (student-to-student, teacher-to-teacher, administrator-to-teacher, school boards-to-administrators, parent-to-teacher, etc.) also become more complex. By bringing together myriad social affiliations, gender orientations, economic levels, belief systems, and cultural norms, the institution of schooling poses a plethora of challenges which are not limited only to classrooms but also include the space outside the formal classroom. Some of the specific challenges in this regard are:

Challenge I: Recognizing the Increasing Diversity of Classrooms

There is a need to recognize the changing social composition of learners in the classroom resulting from the increased flow of children from varied backgrounds in terms of caste, class, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, etc. This diversity also presents new issues and challenges to change curriculum design, teaching-learning practices and processes, learning materials, teacher education, etc. so that they meet the different learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds. In order to address these issues and challenges, policymakers and practitioners need to first recognize the different learning needs and interests of the diverse learners.

Challenge II: Developing and Maintaining Disaggregated Databases on Diverse Learners

The increasing participation of diverse learners in the classroom has radically altered the social composition of elementary schools in India. Data on learning achievement, however, reveals a significant gap between children from different backgrounds. But, without a clear understanding of the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of these diverse learners, it is difficult to evolve strategies and develop plans at the classroom, school and system levels to teach these children. It is therefore necessary to collect relevant disaggregated data on diverse learners, and examine and analyse it in order to inform and shape policies and practices to make classrooms and schools inclusive and responsive to the learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds.

Challenge III: Developing Ethnographic Research Focused on Teacher Beliefs and Practices

A contextualized understanding of teacher beliefs and behaviour as well as the teaching-learning practices and processes, and their impact on the educational experiences and outcomes of children from diverse backgrounds is a crucial prerequisite to develop inclusive classrooms that are responsive to these children's learning needs and interests. Without this, it will be difficult to assess the professional development needs of teachers, and evolve appropriate training curriculum, practices and processes for them. Therefore, there is a critical need for school-based ethnographic research which can better inform policy and practice. As teaching and learning takes place in particular contexts, such research will also provide inputs to orient teacher training towards an understanding of the importance of contextual specificity and an ability to critically reflect on their own specific classroom contexts and practice. This will equip teachers with abilities to

apply general principles of teaching for diversity in ways that work for their specific classroom situations.

Challenge IV: Need For a Greater Focus on Diversity Issues in Teacher Training and Teacher Education Programmes

An effective and meaningful framework for teacher training and teacher education programmes would identify several professional development needs of teachers. To be effective, the framework should be linked to the changing social landscape of the contemporary elementary classroom in India. Teaching children from diverse backgrounds requires a tremendous amount of flexibility in teaching practices and processes as well as in curriculum design and learning materials. It also crucially involves reflecting on and examining teachers' personal and professional beliefs about diversity based on caste, class, gender, ethnicity language, religion, etc., and analyzing how these influence their behaviour and relationships with children from diverse backgrounds. However, as evidence suggests, the ongoing programmes on teacher training and teacher education are yet to recognize and focus attention on the need to adequately address teachers' professional developmental needs to prepare them to teach diverse learners.

Challenge V: Maintaining Teacher Diversity in the Elementary Teaching Workforce

Maintaining diversity in the teacher workforce is considered crucial for creating inclusive schools. A teaching force that more closely mirrors the student population can benefit both students and teachers. Diverse teachers can serve as powerful role models for diverse students, potentially motivating them to strive further in their achievements. They also bring to the classroom their unique experiences and perspectives, which can help them to better relate to their diverse students. They may also be more inclined to view student diversity in the classroom as a resource.

However, data in this regard suggests that while there has been an increasing flow of diverse learners in the classroom, the social profile of teachers has almost remained the same. The participation of the excluded groups in the teaching force, such a women, SC/STs, and religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities have remained lopsided within the recruitment processes. Moreover, a majority of the teachers recruited from these social categories in recent years are para-teachers who have remained out of the formal teacher training structure (Govinda, 2005), and their lower educational qualification and lack of professional training debars them from developing their professional careers.

Challenge VI: Developing Organic School-Community Relationships

Involving parents and communities in school functioning can be an effective strategy to address diversity in the classroom. It also needs to be recognized that in the changing context of the increasing inflow of children from diverse backgrounds, it is important for schools to understand and articulate parent and community involvement in terms of socio-economic, cultural and political contexts. The current official mechanisms and struc-

Box 1.4

Enhancing Learning Achievement
by Addressing Diversity in the Classroom

An innovative school reform programme was initiated by Deshkal Society in two government rural primary schools, the Badka Bandh Primary School and the Majhauli Primary School, located in the Wazirganj block of Gaya district in Bihar. The Badka Bandh School is situated in a Musahar community village, and all the children enrolled belong to marginalized communities, particularly, Dalits, Musahars, and other lower castes. The Majhauli School is located in an upper caste village, and 79.53 per cent of the children enrolled in the school belong to the marginalized communities. The proportion of boys and girls in Badka Bandh School is 44 per cent and 56 per cent respectively, whereas in Majhauli School it is 57 per cent and 43 per cent respectively. The Badka Bandh School has seven teachers, and the Majhauli School has four.

This is an ongoing action research programme which emerged from a pilot study in the two schools that focused on developing a contextualized understanding and explanation of school-based processes and practices behind the educational failure of children, especially those from marginalized communities. The programme aims to enhance school participation and the learning achievement of children, particularly from marginalized communities, by focusing on two major issues: i) enhancing teachers' understanding of diversity and marginality within the classroom and preparing them to deal with differing needs and abilities of children from diverse backgrounds; and ii) evolving and implementing inclusive teaching-learning practices and processes that are child-centred, context-specific and relate to the children's life experiences and socio-economic contexts.

Teacher Education on Diversity and Marginality

The pilot study revealed that most teachers believe in the ascribed learning ability of children based on their hereditary "sanskara". Based on this belief, teachers perceive children from marginalized communities as being "learning deficient" or "uneducable". As a result, they have very low or no expectation of learning achievement from these children. The belief in the notion of "sanskara" and the inherent "ineducability" of the children adversely affects the nature of teacher-student and teacher-community relationships as well as the overall school ethos and environment.

Teachers appear to have little understanding of marginality and its socio-historical context. They do not recognize the reality of socio-economic differentiation and diversity within the classroom. A key focus of the programme, therefore, is to work with the teachers to help them develop an understanding of the existing reality of social context and differentiation in the classroom, and enhance their skills to enable them to deal with the differential needs, abilities and interests of the socially diverse children.

Inclusive Classroom Teaching-Learning Practices and Processes

A major focus of the programme is on improving the classroom practices and processes of teaching and learning. The pilot study revealed that the current classroom transaction processes of teaching and learning are characterized by the centrality of the teacher and the textbook whereby rote-learning and memorization, copying and repetition form the basic learning activities. The textbooks are largely based on the socio-cultural frame of references of the urban middle class and dominant castes. Children from marginalized communities do not find any familiarity between the contexts of the textbooks and their own life-world and experiences, and therefore, are unable to relate to them. There is often little effort on the part of teachers to draw parallels or give examples from local socio-economic contexts while teaching the texts. This teaching-learning process alienates children from the learning process, de-motivates them, adversely affects their learning potential and achievement, and gradually pushes them out of school.

The programme works with teachers, children, parents, and community members to evolve context-specific teaching-learning practices and processes which are child-centred and inclusive, and relate to the diverse socio-economic and cultural background of the children. Issues and methods of intervention in this regard are discussed and identified through classroom observations and workshops and meetings with various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, children and community members. Teachers are helped to first

develop an understanding of children's life experiences and knowledge of their socio-economic and cultural contexts and environment. In this process, instead of testing their knowledge and competencies through the textbooks, children are asked by the teachers to write about their knowledge and experience on various issues related to their daily life and surroundings. Children's experiences and knowledge from these exercises are documented, discussed and analysed by the teachers and the project team to identify issues to evolve context-specific teaching-learning methods in different subjects such as mathematics and language, to further build their knowledge and enhance their competencies.

Community Participation

The pilot study indicated that the teachers' beliefs in the hereditary educability of children and their attitude of attributing their educational failure to their "sanskara" also resulted in an antagonistic relationship between teachers and parents, especially parents from marginalized communities. Developing an organic school-community relationship is, therefore, considered an important component of the programme.

Owing to the initiatives taken by the programme, parents and community members, especially from the marginalized communities, have started taking active interest in decision-making processes in the planning and management of school affairs. Because of their active participation, the programme is successful in ensuring that provisions of midday meals and drinking water facilities which were not functioning are now properly implemented in both schools. VECs in both schools were defunct for a long time. With the initiative of the programme, new VECs were formed in both schools, and their members are involved in regular monitoring of the functioning of the schools. The positive impact of these developments is clearly visible in a significant increase in the regular school attendance of children in both schools.

Learning Support Centres

A major assumption behind current teaching practices is that children will get academic support from parents/ home in developing reading and writing skills. However, as first-generation learners from poor and illiterate wage-labourer families, children from the marginalized communities lack this home support. These children need extra learning support, at least initially, to enable them to cope with the learning processes. This support is provided by the programme through four Learning Support Centres (LSCs). The LSCs have been set up and are run with the active involvement and support of the communities and parents. All the four Education Volunteers (EVs) appointed to look after the functioning of the LSCs belong to Dalit communities and three are from the most marginalized Musahar community. There is an overwhelming response to the LSCs from both marginalized as well as non-marginalized communities, and interestingly, parents from both communities insisted on these EVs being appointed to the LSCs. These positive developments will help in breaking caste and community barriers among the children. The LSCs focus on enhancing learning competencies of children, mainly in language and mathematics. The EVs focus on three aspects: as the learners are from diverse backgrounds, those falling back in performance have to be given special attention; learning activities in LSCs complement learning in school; and EVs should identify children not attending school regularly, and motivate them and their parents so that they start going to school regularly.

Development of a Toolkit for Teacher Education

Development of a toolkit for teacher education on diversity and marginality will be one of the major outcomes at the end of the programme. Thematic issues related to various aspects of diversity and marginality in the classroom, how these are manifested in the teaching-learning and other school-based practices and processes, the relationship and entrenchment of these issues with the larger society are discussed, documented and analysed through fortnightly workshops with various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, children, community representatives, VECs, and Panchayat representatives. The toolkit will focus not only on developing a perspective and explanation which enhances the awareness and understanding of teachers on these issues, but also on developing context-specific practical inputs which help teachers to implement this understanding in actual classroom situations and make classrooms and schools inclusive.

(Based on an ongoing programme of Deshkal Society, Delhi, on Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning: An Innovative Action Research in Two Rural Government Primary Schools in Gaya District of Bihar, supported by DFID India.)

tures (VECs and PTAs, etc.) prescribed to ensure community involvement do not appear to achieve the desired outcomes, particularly with regard to participation of the marginalized and excluded communities. In several villages, the local people are not even aware of the existence of VECs and their roles and responsibilities. In many cases, VECs become platforms for the powerful sections of the local society, and the marginalized and excluded communities feel powerless to assert their voices and participate in the functioning of the schools.

Silver Lining to the Clouds

The challenges of inclusive classrooms and diversity discussed above appear formidable, especially because the mainstream policy and practice in the elementary education sector have yet to adequately recognize and focus attention on them. On the other hand, it is fortunate that during the recent decades, these issues and concerns have started getting the attention of a section of policymakers and practitioners. Various innovative experiments in school reforms have also been taken up by civil society organizations as well as in the government sector in different parts of the country. These experiments have attempted curriculum design, development of teaching-learning methods and materials, and teacher development with child-centred inclusive perspectives. These have shown encouraging results in terms of the learning achievement of children from diverse backgrounds. For instance, the Loreto Day School in Sealdah, West Bengal uses a variety of teaching and learning methods to ensure that all children can learn intelligently in the classroom. Activity-based learning methods and the uses of local resources are emphasized. The school is sensitive to the children's different cultures and promotes appreciation and pride for each one. It recognizes the injustices poor children are subjected to and is flexible enough to give them first priority. The school is deeply concerned about the dignity of every child and carefully monitors all existing structures, eliminating or re-orienting those which could make a child feel inferior. The curriculum encourages the affluent children to mingle with children from the weaker sections of society and develop relationships. This exposes them to a variety of life experiences that children from diverse backgrounds bring from their homes or from the streets.

Care India has taken initiatives to promote inclusive and equitable classrooms in a few schools in Uttar Pradesh. The programme, implemented by civil society organizations, is based on the identification and analysis of the practices and processes of marginalization in actual classroom situations. A specifically designed tool of classroom observation from an equity perspective is used to capture the quality of teaching-learning and children's experiences; teacher behaviour in the classroom; peer behaviour among children; use of teaching-learning materials; and the varied learning needs of children. Based on the feedback of classroom observations, teachers are given onsite support through class demonstrations to ensure that they understand how to facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes. Regular feedback from classroom observations and demonstrations are discussed and analysed in monthly meetings with teachers in order to keep improvising these practices and processes.

Another innovative school reform programme was initiated by Deshkal Society in two government rural primary schools in the Gaya district of Bihar. A major focus of the programme is on improving classroom practices and processes of teaching and learning. The programme works with teachers, children, parents and community members to evolve context specific teaching-learning practices and processes which are child-centred, inclusive and relate to the diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the children. Issues and methods of intervention are discussed and identified through classroom observations, workshops and meetings with various stakeholders such as teachers, parents, children and community members. Teachers are helped to first develop an understanding of the children's life experiences and knowledge of their socio-economic and cultural environment. In this process, instead of testing their knowledge and competencies through textbooks, children are asked by the teachers to write about their knowledge and experience on various issues related to their daily life and surroundings. Children's experiences and knowledge from these exercises are documented, discussed and analysed by the teachers and the project team to identify issues to evolve context specific teaching-learning methods in different subjects, such as mathematics and language, to further build their knowledge and enhance their competencies.

In the area of teacher training, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has developed and implemented an innovative four-day training model, "Rupantar", for primary school teachers in the tribal areas of Orissa. The model focuses on attitudinal training of teachers and their sensitization to tribal language, culture and knowledge systems. In the government sector, the Activity Based Learning (ABL) programme introduced by SSA in the primary schools of Tamil Nadu has received considerable acclaim in recent times for its comprehensive and holistic approach in enhancing the quality of education at the school level. The ABL methodology was introduced in response to the poor learning levels amongst children and uninteresting classroom processes. The most notable feature of the reform is its focus on changing classrooms, in terms of methodology, the role of teachers, classroom organization and classroom environment as a whole.

The innovative experiments initiated in different parts of the country present a silver lining to the clouds. The positive and critical awareness from these initiatives need to be documented, shared and widely disseminated, and a perspective and strategy needs to be developed to address the challenges of inclusive classrooms and diversity.

Notes

[1]This narrative is adopted from a research study by Meenakshi Thapan (2006).

[2]This experience was shared by the author in her paper presentation at an international conference entitled School Education, Pluralism and Marginality: Comparative Perspectives, 2007, New Delhi.

Diverse Learners, Differential Reach and Uneven Attainments: Recent Trends

1. Introduction

Historically, school education in India used to be the privilege of a few. But over the years, concerted efforts have resulted in a manifold increase in schools, teachers, and learners and have thereby increased the outreach of school education. In fact, in post-independent India, the expansion and democratization of the education system was sought under two egalitarian goals of the universalization of elementary education and the educational "upliftment" of disadvantaged groups.[1] In its effort to offset educational and socio-historical disadvantages, the state-led efforts are being conceived through a range of enabling provisions that facilitate accesses to, and ensure retention of, children in school. For instance the Midday Meal Programme (MMP) was aimed at eliminating learners' classroom hunger and is often cited as having a major impact on overall school enrolment in primary schools.[2] The Jomtien Conference,[3] held in 1990, accelerated the process of Education for All (EFA) in India during the decade that followed. It received a further fillip with the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000.[4] The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) emerged as a major initiative adopted at the national level with the objective of achieving the goal of Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE)[5] as well as to implement the fundamental right to free and compulsory education for children in the age group of 6-14 years. It is being implemented in partnership with the state governments to cover the entire country and address the needs of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations.

The goal of UEE is expected to receive a further boost by the Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 which came into force in April, 2010.The RTE, 2009 aims to provide education to all children aged 6-14 as a fundamental right under Article 21A of the Constitution. Under this provision, children with disabilities will also be educated in mainstream schools. According to RTE, 2009, all private schools shall be required to enrol children from the weaker sections of society and disadvantaged communities in to the extent of 25 per cent of their enrolment, by a simple random selection. No seats in this quota will be left vacant. These children will be treated on a par with all other children in the school and will be subsidized by the state at the rate of average per learner costs in government schools. In fact, a ruling by the Delhi High Court in 2007 had instructed 390 private schools run on land allotted by the government

to reserve 15 per cent of their seats – 10 per cent for children belonging to economically weaker sections (EWS) and 5 per cent for children of school staff. If the 5 per cent staff quota wasn't filled, those seats would be released for EWS children (Sinha, 2007).[6] Besides this, one of the key objectives of SSA has been to provide quality elementary education, including life skills, especially with regard to disadvantaged learners such as the girl child, children with special needs (CWSN), children of Dalit communities, children of Muslim minorities, street children and children belonging to other religious minorities, etc.

As a result of these concerted efforts there has been a phenomenal expansion of school education in India. But the greater question which arises here is: What are the growing trends in school participation over the years? What do these trends and patterns indicate to us, especially with regard to the social landscape of the classroom? Using recent quantitative data, this chapter attempts to explore the undercurrents of the recent trends and patterns of school participation and their educational implications.

2. The Changing Classroom: Recent Trends

In the recent past the most significant aspect observed in school education is the increase in the flow of students. It is reflected in various educational indicators. This section briefly deals with the trend and patterns observed with regard to the flow of students in elementary schools, especially after the initiation of free and compulsory education for all.

2.1 Increased Flow of Diverse Learners:

Primary education in India has expanded by leaps and bounds. There has been a steady growth of enrolment in elementary education in India over the decades (refer to Fig: 2.1).[7] In fact, at present, half of India's five-year-olds are enrolled in primary school (Pratham, 2010). This is mainly in government schools which still have the largest intake of students, especially in rural areas (refer to Fig: 2.2).[8] A larger share of this growth is concentrated among first-generation learners. Almost a quarter of all children who are presently studying in Classes I-V are in government schools (Ibid., p. 14). An important aspect of this growth is that it has taken place in most states which are identified as educationally disadvantageous.[9]

A cursory reflection on the various aspects of the growth in elementary education is that it is also spread across learners belonging to disadvantageous groups. This is borne out by contemporary available statistics. Today, we find higher participation of girls in schools. According to available statistics, since 1950-51 girls' participation increased in primary and middle schools from 28.1 per cent to 46.7 per cent and
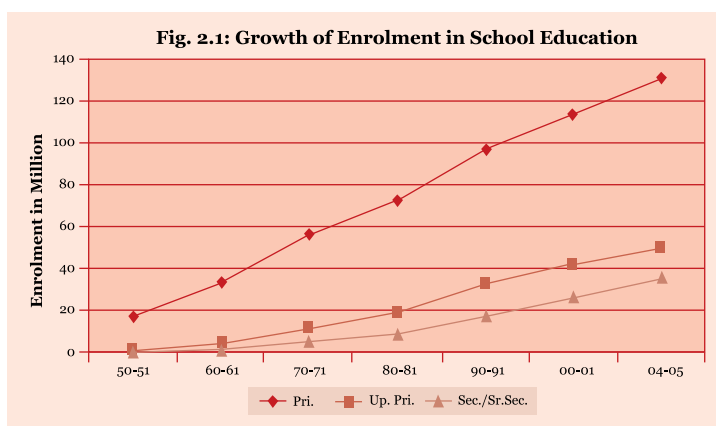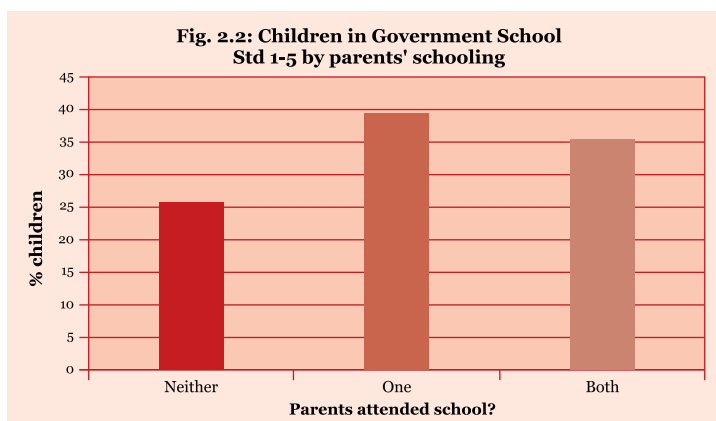
Fig. 2.1: Growth of Enrolment in School Education

Source: GOI. 2007. Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05;

Fig. 2.2: Children in Government School Std 1-5 by parents' schooling

Source: Pratham, 2010. ASER (Rural) 2009.

Fig. 2.3: Percentage of Girls Enrolment to Total Enrolment

Source: GOI, 2007. Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05, p. 9

Fig. 2.4: Percentage of Girls' Enrolment to Total Enrolment in elementary School

Source: Enumerated from DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09

Fig. 2.5: Enrolment of SC Children in Elementary Schools (in '000')

Fig. 2.6: Enrolment of ST Children in Elementary Schools (in '000')
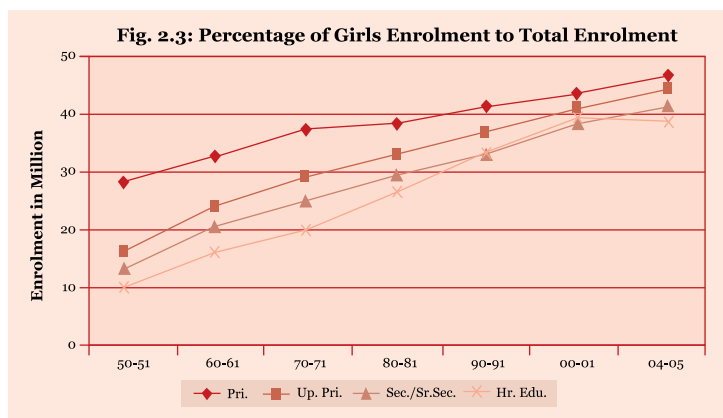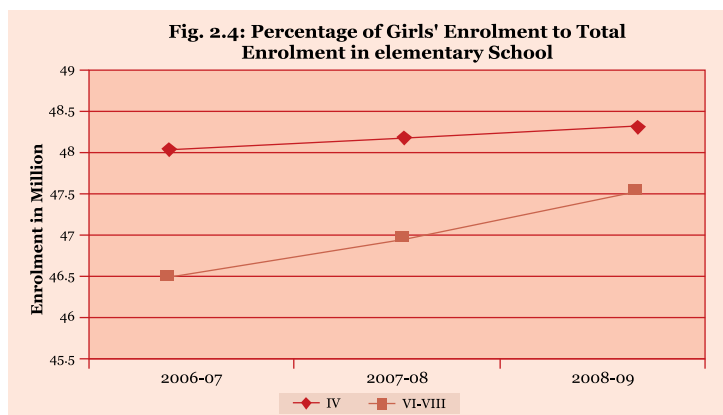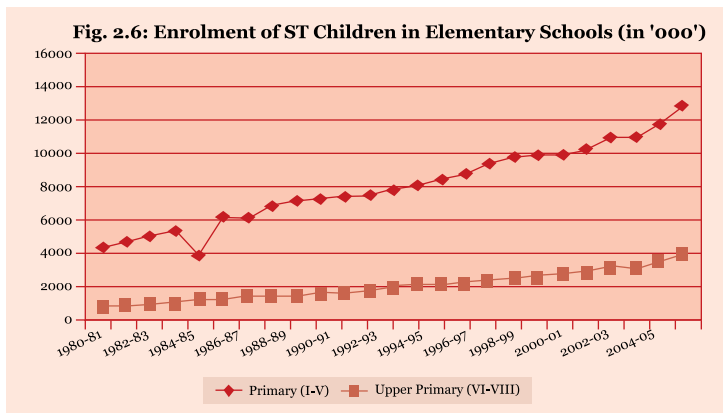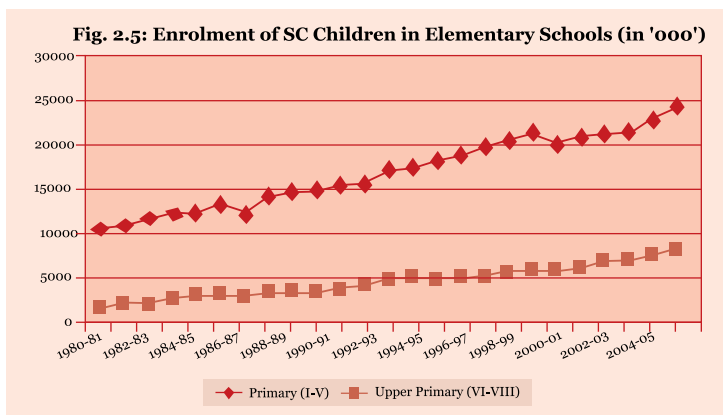
Source: Enumerated from GOI, 2007, Selected Educational Statistics, 2004-05

from 16.1 per cent to 44.4 per cent respectively (GOI, 2007, p. 9; refer to Fig: 2.3 and 2.4). This trend is successfully sustained if one looks at the latest statistics as well.[10]

Apart from the girl child in general, children of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities have also witnessed significant growth in terms of participation in schools. If one looks at the time series data on enrolment in elementary schools with regard to SC children, it reflects an increasing trend (GOI, 2006a, pp. 15-16; refer to Fig: 2.5).[11] ST children have also shown a gradual increase in enrolment in elementary schools (Ibid., p. 16; refer to Fig: 2.6).[12] This increase is also reflected in the gross enrolment rate (GER) that has witnessed steady growth over the years (Ibid., p. 18; refer to Fig: 2.8).[13] The increase in enrolment has also influenced the drop-out trends of SC and ST children which have significantly declined over the period (Ibid., pp. 18-19; refer to Fig. 2.7).[14]

There has also been a significant presence of children belonging to other disadvantaged backgrounds, such as religious and ethnic minorities and children challenged with disabilities. Although statistical data in this regard is scanty, an increasing growth is observed. For instance, the percentage share of Muslim children enrolled in primary schools has increased moderately from 9.39 per cent in 2006-07 to 11.03 per cent in 2008-09 (NUEPA and MoHRD, 2010, p. 26).[15] Similarly, children with special needs (CWSN) also witnessed better enrolment in schools. According to the data maintained under the SSA programme, around 65.76 per cent (19,97,777) CWSN are now enrolled in schools across India. In states such as Andhra Pradesh (92.33 per cent), Chhattisgarh (99.28 per cent), Kerala (98.32 per cent), Rajasthan (97.38 per cent), Karnataka (90.66 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (98.74%) a majority of CWSN have been identified and are presently enrolled in schools (SSA, accessed from website).[16] So far, about 47 per cent of the schools in India have been made barrier-free. Around 40.39 per cent of schools in the country now have ramp facilities which was a merely 5 per cent in 2003-04 (NUEPA and MoHRD, p.18).

From this discussion it is clear that the social landscape of classrooms in the country is in the

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process of diversifying. Schools are now accessible to those learners who have historically been denied their educational rights. These changes have taken place owing to various reasons. An important aspect is the growing consciousness among parents about the importance of school education, especially with regard to those who had hitherto being denied access to school. The PROBE team investigating the status of primary education across India found that nearly 98 per cent of rural parents believe that it is important to send their children to school (PROBE Team, 1999). Most of the marginalized communities have realized that education is the only advantage they can give their children in the absence of any other benefits.

The changing policy thrust will definitely lead to participation of more diverse learners in schools, especially in the government schools in India. In fact, the government schools were already relatively diverse compared to privately managed schools in India especially those located in urban centres. It is a well-known fact that post-independence, private schools could not integrate into the new social and political order. Their educational objectives were in conflict with the philosophy of a socialist pattern of society oriented to the reduction of existing social and economic inequalities and wider participation of people from all classes. Eventually, private school created a situation where differential access to occupational opportunities was determined by the criteria of class and income rather than ability (De Souza, 1971).

2.2 The Differential Reach

Our discussion in the previous section pointed towards the increasing participation of diverse learners. The promotional efforts of the changing policy thrust, especially in regions where policy implementation was combined with the dynamism of reform, have undoubtedly resulted in greater educational participation. In fact, one can plough through numerous available statistics to establish this growing participation. However, an important aspect of this growth and progress in elementary education in India is that it is still unequal.

The most fundamental aspect of the differential reach of learners is that classrooms in India are still averse to the girl child in general. Whatever the cause may be, there is a gap between the enrolment of the girl

Fig. 2.7: Drop-Out Rate of SC and ST Children in Elementary Schools (1990-91 to 2004-05)

Source: Enumerated from GOI (2007) Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05

Fig. 2.8: GER of SC and ST Children in elementary Schools (1986-87 and 2004-05)
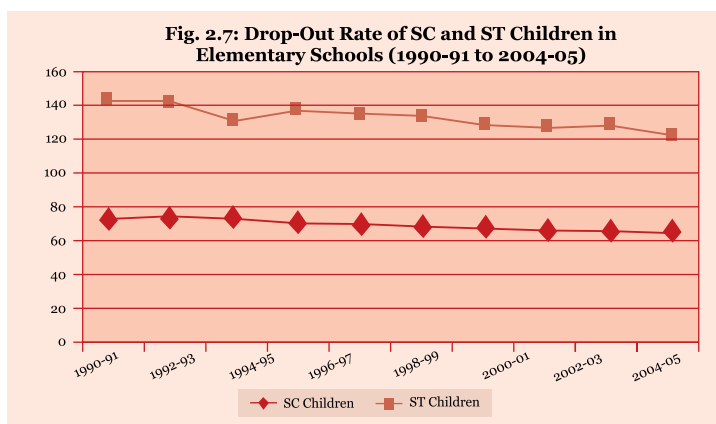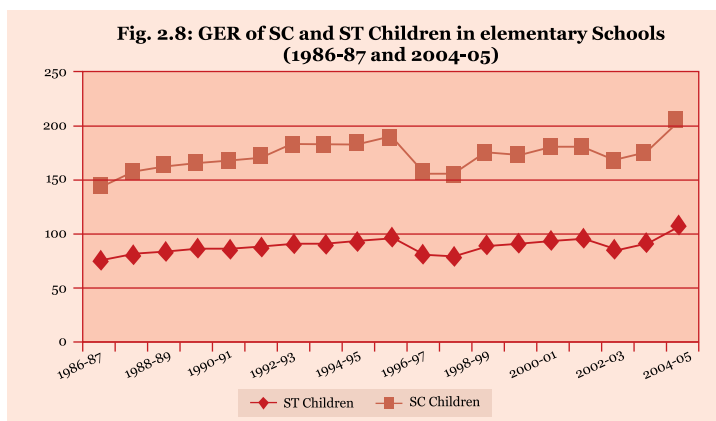
Source: Enumerated from GOI (2007) Selected Educational Statistics 2004-05

Source: The Hindu, April 1, 2010

Fig. 2.9: Comparative Decline in Enrolment of Boys and Girls from the Tea Garden Communities of Assam

Cohort I - Class I to Class IV
- 34% decrease in number of students between Class I and Class IV
- More girls in the cohort leave the school - 37% against 31% boys
- Drop out highest between Classes I & II - 2,590
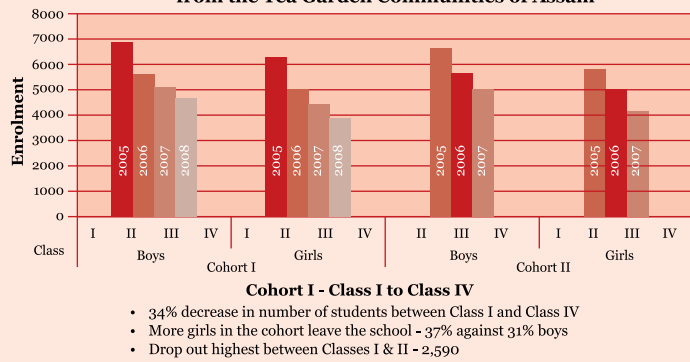
Source: Deepa Das, paper presented in the workshop Classroom Curriculum, Pluralism and Social inclusion organised by Deshkal society in collaboration with UNICEF, 11-12the Nov., 2009, NEIBM, Guwahati.

Fig. 2.10: Percentage of Enrolment by Social Categories: Classes I-VII/VIII
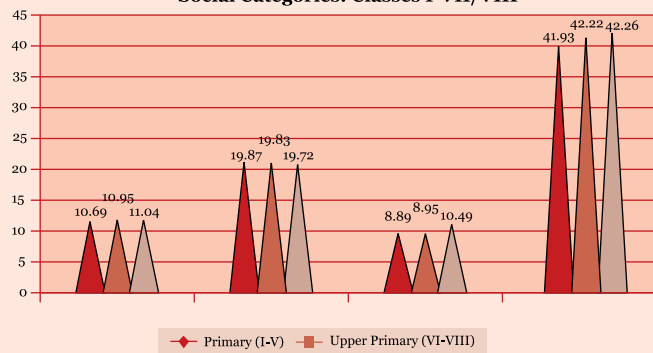
Source: Enumerated from DISE Flash Statistics 2008-09

Fig. 2.11: Enrolment Rates by Social Categories 1990-00 and 2004-05
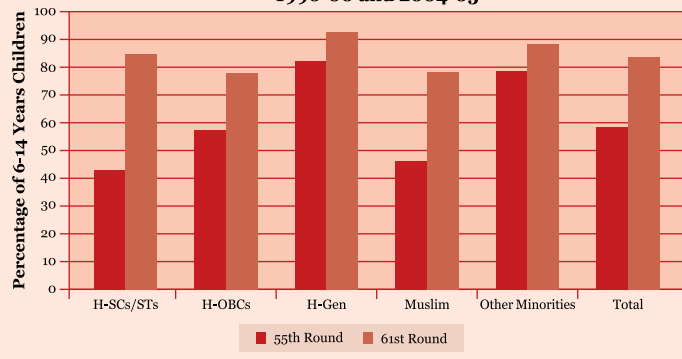
Source: Sachar Committee Report, p. 56

child and the boy child. At the all-India level, girls' enrolment is still below 50 per cent.[17] This Source: The Hindu, April 1, 2010 figure is not uniform across India, and this depicts significant inter-state and regional variations. In this regard, states like Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Haryana lag far behind Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Meghalaya and Lakshadweep.

Similarly, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) which is currently 0.91 inevitably reflects that classrooms are skewed against the girl child. More importantly, gender as a category cuts across other discriminatory aspects such as religion, caste, ethnicity, etc. There is a greater likelihood that within disadvantaged groups, girls' educational participation has stayed behind that of boys. For instance, a cohort analysis of dropouts in primary schools among girl children within a disadvantaged community – the Tea Garden communities of Assam – found the discrimination comparatively higher. There has been a decline from 2005 to 2008 of almost 34 per cent in the learners belonging to the Tea Garden communities in Class I to Class IV. Within this, more girls in the cohort are found to leave the school – 37 per cent as against 31 per cent of boys (Das, 2009; refer to Fig: 2.9).

Similarly, school education has remained beyond the reach of religious minorities such as the Muslims.[18] While there has been a surge in enrolment in different socio-religious categories (SRCs)[19] as we have seen in the previous section, a comparative reflection on the enrolment trend of Muslim children compared to other disadvantaged groups like the SC, ST and OBC, reveals that there is still a large gap between Muslim children and those belonging to other SRCs. While there is significant state-wise and regional (GOI, 2006b; p.58; refer to Fig: 2.10).[20] variation among Muslims according to NSSO data, 25 per cent of Muslim children in the 6-14 year age group have either never attended school or dropped out (GOI, 2006b; p. 58, refer to Fig: 2.10). Interestingly, even among the Hindus – the enrolment of SC and ST children lag behind the OBC and other Hindu children (refer to Fig: 2.11)

Apart from exclusion discussed above, location and livelihood backgrounds of learners remains one of the most crucial factors influencing who goes to school. Household poverty still remains one of the most critical barriers. Hardships created by poverty influence families' efforts

to raise their children and prepare them for school. Child labour ranges from young girls fetching water and firewood with their mothers, to young boys tending cattle and engaged in labour that is often extremely hazardous and dangerous. A higher proportion of girls than boys leave schools owing to their engagement in domestic chores. Several studies have reported on this aspect.[21]

It is often argued that the children who are out of school are the potential child labourers (Sinha, 1996). In fact, work participation is found to be much higher among the lower caste households than the upper caste ones (Unni, 1996). The older children in a family are mostly more vulnerable, since as they grow up they are expected to enhance family income or labour.[22] This is mainly reflected in the rural/urban differentiation among marginalized communities. Such geographic inequalities, rather than operating in isolation, overlap with wider social inequalities. For instance, among the Muslims, more than in any other SRC the disparities between urban and rural children's mean years of schooling (MYS) are quite sharp (GOI, 2006b, p. 56). Similarly, the lower economic household of SC and ST learners located in rural areas are found to be the most excluded groups compared with other learners who belong to higher income groups. This shows that learners belonging to the disadvantaged SRCs especially girls and those living in remote rural areas suffer from multiple forms of exclusions and disadvantages in accessing school education (refer to Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Percentage of Children in the 10-12 Year Age Group Who have Completed at Least Five Years of Schooling Across Economic Groups and Gender in Rural Areas (RCHS, 2002–04)

	Male			
Rural	SC	ST	Others	Total
Poorest 20%	23.5	22.9	22.2	22.5
Richest 20%	50	56.9	54.2	52.9
	Female			
Poorest 20%	17.4	15.5	18.5	16.5
Richest 20%	52.5	45.4	55.1	53

Source: Adopted from Barr et. al (2007), p. 9

On a similar footing children of seasonal migrant labourers, slum dwellers with unstable economic conditions whose families are mostly involved in the informal sector doing petty jobs such as labourers, tailors, rickshaw pullers, electricians, vegetable sellers, carpenters, drivers, washer men, barbers, painters, mechanics, etc form another set of marginalized groups. Often put under the category of "street children"[23] their poverty is transmitted into the differential reach of school education in the absence of restricted entitlements. For many of them, the street is their home and source of livelihood. The few who get an opportunity to enrol in government-run Municipal Corporation schools eventually drop out to support household incomes. This is reflected in the survival rate of children in schools which becomes thinner as one goes to the higher classes. For instance, a study conducted in the municipal schools of Mumbai and Delhi revealed the sorry state of survival of learners of the lower income groups (refer to Table 2.2).

Box 2.1

Where Child Labour and Migration Are a Way of Life

Mardi (Maharashtra): The wooden door of Surekha Rathod's house is held together by small strips of coloured ribbons. This is no decoration. Some days ago, Surekha's drunken father, who was locked out, tried to break in with an axe and broke the door. "I had a narrow escape, even though I was inside the house," says her mother, Sunanda. "My husband drinks all day and gets very abusive. As a result, I have to send my daughter to work to run the home." A school dropout, Surekha, 13, has been working as labourer for the past few years. She has no hope of returning to school. Her father has ensured that. Her two siblings are in Class III. "There is no one to help me and even though my neighbours are all my relatives, they don't say a word in my support," says Sunanda. There is no question of her seeking police help and no one at Mardi (Tivsa taluk) has heard of the Domestic Violence Act.

from The Hindu, December 27, 2007.

Box 2.2

Activity-Based Learning for Primary School Children
An Innovative Initiative of SSA Tamil Nadu

The Activity-Based Learning (ABL) programme introduced by SSA Tamil Nadu in primary schools has received considerable acclaim in recent times for its comprehensive and holistic approach to enhance the quality of education at the school level. With a growing focus on improving the quality of education and classroom processes, the Tamil Nadu model has also been projected as an initiative that could be adapted and replicated by other states.

The ABL methodology was introduced in response to poor learning levels amongst children and uninteresting classroom processes. The most notable feature of the reform is its focus on changing classrooms, in terms of methodology, teachers' roles, classroom organization, and the classroom environment as a whole.

Initially, this methodology was taken up as a pilot project in a few Chennai Corporation schools. By 2003, all schools of Chennai Corporation had begun to adopt the ABL method in their classrooms. ABL was further expanded to 10 schools in every rural block of Tamil Nadu and, from the 2007 academic year, it has been scaled up to all the 37,500-odd schools run by the Panchayat Union in the entire state.

Features of the Activity-Based Learning Method

The ABL method has been designed essentially with a focus on classroom reform. It enables individualized, self-learning in an interesting and interactive manner, and is based on the model of the NGO Rishi Valley Rural Education Centre, well known for their experiments with joyful learning programmes and intensive teacher training.

The ABL method rests on an integrated Grades I-IV structure in a multi-grade classroom organization, enabling both vertical and horizontal groupings within the classroom. Children sit together according to their learning levels, irrespective of their age-appropriate grade. The school timetable operates on half-day or even full-day units, rather than the conventional 45-minute periods per subject. This allows children to persevere and complete the tasks on hand and get a sense of closure. They can concentrate longer and without any interruption or pressure to complete the task. The ABL teacher in the classroom is a facilitator of learning; she does not lecture to the class or direct the learning of the whole class in a uniform pattern. The burden on the teacher is reduced and learning by children does not depend totally on the teacher.

A key feature of the ABL methodology is that each child is aware of his/her own progress in the learning ladder. In each class, a child is typically able to show where in the learning ladder he/she is situated and the corresponding self-learning cards that need to be used. An ABL classroom has a wide variety of cards and material which enable a structured learning process amongst children at different levels of competencies. The ABL methodology allows for individually-paced learning through sets of graded learning materials, along a well-defined learning continuum. Every child's learning follows the defined milestones for each curricular area, which are depicted in a pictorial manner through a learning ladder that is displayed in the classroom. In addition, every child's learning progress is monitored and displayed on an achievement chart. Every child is able to check his/her location on the chart and identify the corresponding activity card on the learning ladder and thus initiate his /her own learning activity for the day. Every activity is done three times over by each child for reinforcement and mastery, once in his/her own exercise book, then in his/her designated slot on the low blackboard and then finally in the activity book. The sets of activities are divided into introductory activities, practice activities and evaluation. The teacher's role is clearly that of a facilitator who takes a more active role only with the "introductory" activities. The learning materials are arranged in an orderly manner and each child is able to access the card specific to her or him. Textbooks, although brought into the classrooms are not directly used to

avoid teacher-centred pedagogy. Freed from the intimidating exams and tests, children self-evaluate their learning as the last step in a series of activities, which is then ultimately reviewed by the teacher.

The learning materials have been developed in a graded manner so that these not only cover the entire process of learning (from introduction to extension to reinforcement to evaluation), but are also very engaging for children. The methodology provides consistent tracking of every child's progress, on a continuous basis. In addition, the self-learning skills that are developed in children are cognitively stimulating. Children become adept at the methodology of self-learning, and develop the ability to read materials other than their own texts, including newspapers and do mathematics with complex materials in a concrete mode.

The use of the ABL methodology has thus constituted a paradigm shift in the process of learning in the classrooms. This has been made possible through intensive teacher training and on-site support and the development of appropriate teaching and learning materials for every curricular aspect in the textbooks. The method has brought out the potential of multi-grade classroom situations for child-centred teaching-learning.

Factors Contributing to the Success of the Initiative

The quality improvement model adopted by Tamil Nadu has the potential to inspire similar initiatives in other states. While the model may not be amenable to being replicated exactly the same way in other states with different baseline conditions, the key factors that appear to have contributed to the success of the initiative are worth exploring:

- The state took the plunge to raise the scale in quality-improving measures and addressed all elements of the quality support chain, from teachers, to teacher educators and supervisors.

- The state made innovative use of finance available through SSA to implement quality improvement measures at scale – e.g. teacher grants, teacher training, TLM, learning enhancement funds.

- As part of the comprehensive reform, the state created a separate cadre of block resource teachers (BRTs) who were selected from the open market to ensure motivation and merit. Most BRTs are experienced teachers from private schools for whom the government job and salary offered job security and better pay. Each BRT has not more than 6-7 schools in his/her charge, allowing for at least one visit to each school per week. This ratio along with the availability of adequately trained mentors allows for an effective on-site support system.

- The master trainers, BRTs and the teachers are all trained through direct hands-on experience in ABL classrooms with children, allowing for intensive and experiential learning. The training is in a cascade mode, but provides enough checks and balances to avoid message loss.

- The dynamic leadership of the of the previous SSA State Project Director who championed the entire reform, coupled with a strong political will in the Government of Tamil Nadu which provided significant autonomy to the State Project Officer and the comprehensive reform process that was followed of involving some major stakeholders like teachers, unions, etc were significant facilitating factors.

- The teachers have been unequivocally enabled to address the real learning levels of children without the pressures of targets in student learning within specific timeframes.

- While it is remarkable how rapidly the reforms were scaled up across the state, the sustainability in terms of political will, resources, motivation and social pressure need to be strategically thought through. Important dimensions that may need consideration in this context could be (a) addressing pre-service teacher training to make it in tune with the new philosophy of the classroom, (b) wider sharing and the buy-in of the private sector which is the pace setter for any reform and is presently positively inclined; and (c) inclusion of state nodal agencies like DTERT, DIETs and other state structures, which are at present excluded.

(Adapted from the Report of a Field Visit by a Team from the World Bank and European Commission to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Tamil Nadu in 2008; accessed at http://www.ssa.tn.nic.in/Docu/World_Bank_Team%20_Report.pdf on June 14, 2010.)

Table 2.2: Survival through the Primary Stage in Delhi Municipal Schools 1989-92

Years in Which Cohort Started	Size of Cohort or Enrolment	Percentage of Cohort		
	Class I	Surviving to Class II	Surviving to Class III	Surviving to Class III
Boys				
1989	82298	91.3	86.5	84.7
1990	89427	90.2	84.8	-
1991	94850	86.1	-	-
Girls				
1989	82347	90.5	83.7	79.5
1990	90088	89.94	84.9	-
1991	94114	88.5	-	-

Source: Municipal Corporation of Delhi Enrolment Data, 1989-92 quoted in Banerjee, 2000, p. 797.

Fig. 2.12

INDIA RURAL

STD. I-II READING

STATEWISE MAP SHOWING % CHILDREN IN STD. I-II WHO CANNOT EVEN RECOGNISE LETTERS

% CHILDREN IN STD. I-II WHO CANNOT EVEN RECOGNISE LETTERS
- ABOVE 20
- 15-20
- 10-15
- 5-10
- 3-5
- 0-3

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Fig. 2.13

INDIA RURAL

STD. I-II MATHS

STATEWISE MAP SHOWING % CHILDREN IN STD. I-II WHO CANNOT EVEN RECOGNISE NUMBERS 1 TO 9

% CHILDREN IN STD. I-II WHO CANNOT EVEN RECOGNISE NUMBER 1 TO 9
- ABOVE 20
- 15-20
- 10-15
- 5-10
- 3-5
- 0-3

ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS

Source: Pratham, 2010. ASER (Rural) 2009, pp. 48-9

Further, children belonging to communities with specific livelihood backgrounds such as those belonging to the pastoral and fishing communities face extreme disadvantages in accessing school education. Children of pastoral communities with their mobile lifestyles are often excluded as the school does not move along with them. These communities, at a larger social level, also face livelihood threats owing to environmental degradation, natural calamities and an increased pressure of population. For instance, pastoral and transhumance communities like the Rabaris of Kutch are faced with the gradual erosion of their livelihoods, and changing cultural mores, and struggle to educate their children (Dyer, 2008). Besides these, the children of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and those affected by violence, form another category afflicted with social disadvantages with regard to participating in school education. In fact, in states such as Assam, in several of the conflict hit areas the entire education system appears to have collapsed (Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2005).[24]

3. Uneven Learning Attainments: The Challenge of Quality

The foundation of a child's learning is built during the early grades. According to recent data, the percentage of children across rural India in Class I who can recognize letters has increased from 65.1 per cent in 2008 to 68.8 per cent in 2009. Similarly, there is an increase in number recognition, with the percentage of children recognizing numbers increasing from 65.3 per cent in 2008 to 69.3 per cent in 2009. If one looks at Class I students in government schools in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Orissa there is an increase of 10 percentage points or more from 2008 to 2009, in their ability to at least recognize letters and numbers up to 9. In Tamil Nadu and Goa, there is an improvement in both reading and maths of over 5 percentage points. Similar improvements are visible in Uttarakhand and Maharashtra in maths, and in Karnataka, in letter recognition (Pratham, 2010; refer to Fig: 2.12 and 2.13).

This trend points towards a gradual increase in learning skills across India. But the pertinent question that emerges is, whether this qualitative improvement has been uniform. A deeper look into the spectrum of the learning achievement of children belonging to disadvantaged social backgrounds shows another picture. The variation gets sharper as one looks into the learners' abilities in the higher grades. For instance, the percentage of children in Class V in government schools who can read Class II level textbooks varies from 76 per cent in Madhya Pradesh to 20 per cent in Jammu and Kashmir. Similarly, states like Uttar Pradesh (16 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (11 per cent) and Assam (22 per cent) trail behind other states with regard to the percentage of Class V children in rural government schools who can correctly solve a division problem. Beside the interregional variations within rural government schools, the most striking aspect is the rural-urban divide in terms of differential learning achievements. For instance, a comparison between government and private schools on the learning levels of children in Class III who can at least read Class I level textbooks and children of Class V who can do division sums during the period 2006-09 reveals that there still remains wide learning gap (Ibid.; refer to Fig 2.14 and 2.15).

Not only is there a wide rural-urban anomaly in the level of achievement in basic reading and mathematical skills, a sharper variation is observed across social categories. In fact, the segregated data on learning achievement across SCs, STs, OBCs and others, reveals that within disadvantaged communities there are layers of differential achievements. For instance, a study of the desegregated data by caste (NSSO, 2005, that also includes tribal children) on the percentage of children between 6-14 years who can read and write, shows a wider difference between SC children (58.2 per cent) and children from other caste (72 per cent); (refer to Fig: 2.16).

Most importantly, within the social categories, the aspect which is often ignored is the class angle when considering learning achievements. It is observed that although the process of change within the marginalized communities such as the Dalits has been rather slow after the post-independent period, Dalit children are generally ahead of ST children in backward regions, but in economically advanced regions, they are also ahead of OBC and upper caste Hindus. Various factors such as changed
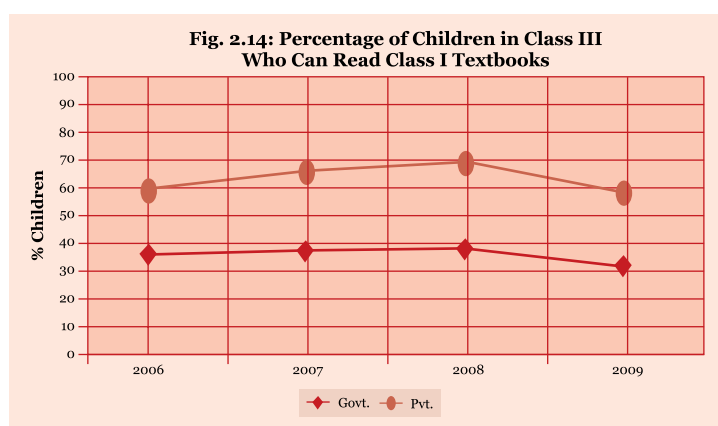
Fig. 2.14: Percentage of Children in Class III Who Can Read Class I Textbooks

Source: Pratham, 2010. ASER (Rural) 2009, p.62

Fig. 2.15: Percentage of Children in Class V Who Can Read Class I Textbooks

Source: Pratham, 2010. ASER (Rural) 2009, p.62

Fig. 2.16: Percentage of Children (6-14 yrs) Who Can Read and Write
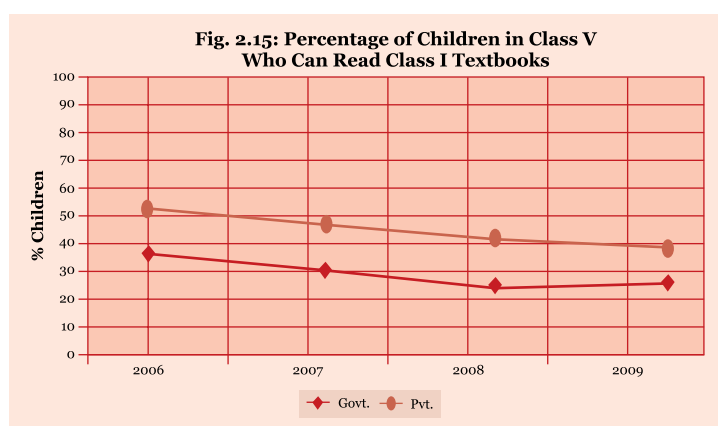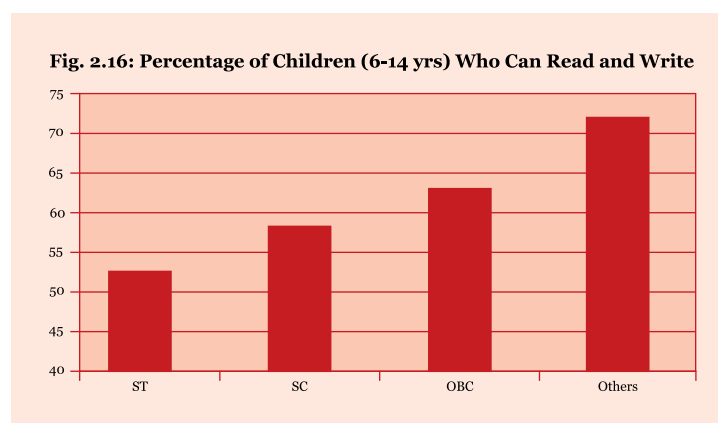
Source: Quoted in Barr et. al (2007), p. 10

Box 2.3

Sulabh Public School- School with a difference

Sulabh International Social Service Organization, Delhi has established a Sulabh School in Delhi which is distinct from the remaining schools in the country, as out of 362 children in the school 189 children belong to the scavenger community (untouchables who are called so as they manually clear the excreta of others) while the rest belonging to the non-scavenger community. Established in 1992, the school was founded with four major objectives, which govern the functioning of the school: (i) Provide educational opportunities to children irrespective of the class, creed, religion, gender or social status to which they belong; (ii) To educate children of the weaker sections of society, especially the wards of the scavengers; (iii) To build confidence amongst them to compete with children of upper castes and classes of society; and (iv) Promote social integration through the intermingling of these children with those belonging to the upper castes and classes.

Several practices and processes have been adopted to achieve these objectives. The school provides an education in a special environment for the children of the scavenger community that enables them to pursue professional and academic careers, and most importantly, achieve a status in society that ensures dignity. It consistently works to provide an educational co-learning atmosphere, where through dialogue, interactions, designing co-curricular and extra-curricular activities where children of the both scavenger and non-scavenger communities have a forum to share aspirations, challenges, concerns and dreams.

As the teachers impart education, they endeavour to inculcate moral values without making any distinctions between the different classes or groups. An inclusive culture is promoted through cultural activities by organizing festivals and sports where the children attain the feeling of togetherness and unity. The school has regular interactions with children of other schools. Workshops are organized in the school with the participation of children from other schools to ensure that the children of Sulabh School do not suffer from inferiority complexes vis-à-vis children of affluent classes from other public schools.

Regular parent teacher meetings are held where parents are given the opportunity to share their views and vent their feelings. Teachers listen carefully to the parent's views about the school and their opinions on what their wards are learning or the way they are being influenced by the school. Parents participate in these meetings quite enthusiastically. They respond and react in a positive and cooperative manner to suggestions and advice given by teachers about their wards. In fact, it is a healthy two-way process.

Sanitation is being taught through the formation of the Sulabh Sanitation Club whose members, mainly children and some of the staff undertake sanitation activities by cleaning the school premises and toilets themselves. This club has close interactions with similar sanitation clubs in schools in other states, such as the one in Orissa.

The main lesson taught, inculcated and learned through the inclusive classroom system of education is that no one is high or low on the basis of caste, creed, birth or religion. What is vital and should be the determinant is the contribution that a person makes for the general welfare of society.

(Prepared by Ms. Anita Jha, Senior Vice-President, Sulabh International Social Service Organization, Delhi)

equations with local landlords, reduced uncertainties and improved income are reflected in the shape of a positive change in aspirations, increased interest in schooling and school functioning (Jha and Jhingran, 2005, p. 118).

A recently published report based a study on selected primary schools in West Bengal during 2001-02. It observes that a wide difference in learning outcome of children of disadvantaged social categories, such as the SCs, STs and minority Muslims. About13 per cent of SC children in Class III and IV, 25 per cent of Muslim children and 29 per cent of ST children could not read. For the rest of the population this proportion is merely 8 per cent. Similarly, compared to the 8 per cent of children belonging to the "others" category who could write, in Class III and IV, 13 per cent of SC children, 27 per cent of Muslim children and 43 per cent of ST children could not write. This highlights that though class distinctions have a clear connection with caste, they actually go much beyond what is seen in the conventional caste-based categorization. In fact, children of SC, ST and Muslim families do not merely indicate caste or community backgrounds, they are also statistically, something of a proxy for class-related handicaps (The Pratichi India Trust; 2009; pp.11-16).

Over the years, privately managed, English medium schools, mostly catering to the needs of the middle class have mushroomed in India. A major reason for this is the perception that government schools provide a poor quality of education. In fact, in the popular perception, good quality education is identified with instructions in English in schools. A related phenomenon is

the declining quality of instruction in government schools. Similarly, the popularity of "home tasks" as part of effective education in the classroom and the subsequent menace of "tuition" emerging from such practices has lead to divisive classrooms and economic pressure on poor households, especially in rural India. Interestingly, policy research in India has failed to reflect the other side of the coin that education creates dominance and advantages to certain sections in India (Nambissan, 2010).[25] It is crucial to understand the exclusion created by the "class" factor which has guided the popular perception of "good education" in India.

The overall trend that is observed over the decades is that affluent classes and castes did not go to government schools in India. A detailed qualitative micro study of one panchayat in each of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Haryana was conducted to assess the primary education programme in the selected study areas. It also observed the growing polarization (Ramachandran, 2002). A wide gap was seen in Andhra Pradesh between the Government Primary School (GPS) located in a Dalit basti where the majority of the SC students were enrolled and the GPS located in an upper caste hamlet. The youth in the SC colony in the village categorically stated that even if children from the colony tried to seek admission in the other GPS, they are discouraged and told to attend the school in their own colony. A similar divide was observed in Tamil Nadu between the GPS and the school run by the Adi-Dravida Welfare Board. Madhya Pradesh presents different dynamics — the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) schools cater to children from the tribal community and two well-endowed government primary schools — one for boys and one for girls — cater to the locally dominant Kurmi community (OBC).

4. Conclusion

During recent years, there has been significant improvement in school enrolment of children from all sections of society, particularly from the weaker and disadvantaged sections, although wide gaps in terms of gender, caste, class, ethnicity, religion, region, etc. still persist. However, data on retention, drop-out rates and learning achievements indicates that meaningful school participation and learning of children, primarily from the weaker and disadvantaged sections, who were historically excluded from education, remains an issue of serious concern. Therefore, there is an urgent need to focus our attention on the classroom and identify school-based practices and processes that act as barriers to meaningful school participation and learning of these children.

In this context, there is a growing need to recognize that schools and classrooms now comprise increasingly diverse student populations as a result of higher enrolment rates of children from the different sections of society. These developments have thrown up major challenges before the elementary education sector as the schools now have to prepare themselves to teach diverse student populations and reorient their teaching-learning practices and processes to make classrooms and schools responsive to and inclusive of the learning needs and interests of children from diverse backgrounds.

Notes

[1]The state commitment to the education of SC/ST children is contained in Article 15(4), 45 and 46 of the Indian Constitution. Article 15(4) underscores the state's basic commitment to positive discrimination in favour of the socially and educationally backward classes and/or the SCs and STs. Article 46 declares the state's endeavour to provide free and compulsory education for all children till they complete 14 years. Article 46 expresses the specific aim to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of SCs/STs. In its effort to offset educational and socio-historical disadvantage, the Indian state conceived of a range of enabling provisions to facilitate accesses to and ensure retention of SC and ST children in school

[2]The Midday Meal Programme (MMP) which was initially introduced with its success story in Tamil Nadu was subsequently adopted as an important component of school intervention. In a landmark decision, the Supreme Court of India directed all state governments to introduce MMP in all primary schools within six months. Many studies have highlighted the surge in school enrolment especially in rural areas. A study by Dreze and Kingdom (2001) estimates that introduction of MMP in local schools is associated with a 50 per cent reduction in the proportion of girls who were out of school. Similarly, in another survey by Dreze and Goyal (2003), in the states of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Karnataka covering 81 schools, Class 1 enrolment rose by 15 per cent between July 2001 and July 2002. This surge in enrolment was found to be driven mainly by impressive increases in female enrolment in Chhattisgarh (17 per cent) and Rajasthan (29 per cent).

[3]The Jomtein Conference held in 1990, emphasized education as a fundamental right for all people, women and men, of all ages, throughout the world.

[4]It originated in the World Education Forum held at Dakar in April 2000. The Dakar Framework focuses on six goals to enhance access to education and to improve the quality of education for all children.

[5]The important aspects of UEE has been access, enrolment and retention of all children in the 6-14-year age group.

[6]Accessed from http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/right-to-education-may-increase-quota-to-40-per-cent-in-schools/520333/ on 12.02.2010.

[7]According to the data maintained by MoHRD the total enrolment at the primary stage has increased 7 times, from 19.2 million in 1950-51 to 130.8 million in 2004-05. At the upper primary stage, it increased 17 times, from 3.1 million in 1950-51 to 51.2 million in 2004-05. The latest DISE flash statistics show the increase in the absolute numbers of enrolment of Class I-V as 1,103,941,128 in 2003-04 to 131,853,637 in 2006-07. Similarly, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) another important indicator of growth of enrolment from the same data source shows that it rose from 88.83 (2003-04) to 115.31(2008-09).

[8]Data collected under the survey by (ASER) in 2005 by Pratham and Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB) reveals that government schools still harbour the larger chunk of students at the primary level compared to other types of private or trust-managed schools across the selected age groups of 6-14, 6-10 and 11-14 that comprises lower and upper primary school levels (quoted in Mehta, 2007). According to the ASER, 2005 data about 75 per cent of children in the age group 6-14 years studying in rural areas are concentrated in government schools. The number of secondary government school (Class V-VIII) has also increased significantly as reflected in the Flash Statistics maintained under DISE from 32498650 (2007-08) to 33722832 (2008-09); (See Annexure A1A and A1B).

[9]For instance, the latest DISE Flash Statistics (2008-09) reflect that the percentage of enrolment in all government managed schools from Class I-V has taken place in educationally disadvantageous states such as Jharkhand (92 per cent), Assam

(91 per cent), Orissa (94 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (70 per cent); (See annexure A2A and A2B.). These states are characterized by poor rankings in the Educational Development Index (EDI) prepared by NUEPA under DISE. These states occupies the following EDI ranks for lower and upper primary schools Jharkhand (35), Assam (33), Orissa (28) and Uttar Pradesh (23); (See Annexure A3.).

[10]According to the latest statistics of the all-India average of girls' enrolment in Classes I-V and VI-VIII, now stands at 48.38 per cent and 47.58 per cent respectively (see DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 and Annexure A4)

[11]At the primary stage, Scheduled Caste enrolment increased from 1.1 crores accounting for 14.88 per cent in 1980-81 to 2.31 crores, accounting for 18.03 per cent of the total enrolment at primary stage in 2003-04. The enrolment of Scheduled Caste girls increased from 13.2 per cent in 1980-81 to 17.3 per cent in 2003-04, while enrolment of Scheduled Caste boys increased from 15.92 per cent in 1980-81 to 18.66 per cent in 2003-04.

[12]Similarly, Scheduled Tribe enrolment in primary school increased from 46.60 lakhs in 1980-81 to 125.17 lakhs in 2003-04. The enrolment of Scheduled Tribe girls considerably increased from 15.27 lakhs in 1980-81 to 57.41 lakhs in 2003-04 while the enrolment of Scheduled Tribe boys increased from 31.33 lakhs in 1980-81 to 67.76 lakhs in 2003-04.

[13]The Gross Enrolment Ratio of all categories increased from 80.5 per cent in 1980-81 to 98.2 per cent in 2003-04 registering an increase of 17.7 per cent at the primary stage over a period of 24 years. The comparative Gross Enrolment Ratio of Scheduled Castes is 82.2 per cent in 1980-81 and 88.3 per cent in 2003-04 registering an increase of 6.1 per cent, while that of Scheduled Tribes rose from 70 per cent in 1980-81 to 91.3 per cent in 2003-04 registering an increase of 21.3 per cent. There is thus a significant increase in the Gross Enrolment Ratio of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

[14]At the primary level, the drop-out rate among the Scheduled Castes in 1990-91 was 49.4 per cent, which declined to 36.6 per cent in 2003-04. At the upper primary level, the drop-out rate declined from 67.8 per cent in 1990-91 to 59.4 per cent in 2003-04. At the primary level, the drop-out rate among Scheduled Tribes in 1990-91 was 62.5 per cent, which reduced to 48.9 per cent in 2003-04. At the upper primary level, the drop-out rate, which was 78.6 per cent in 1990-91 decreased to 70.1 per cent in 2003-04. The drop-out rate for girls have declined year after year, in the primary classes from 64.9 per cent in 1960-61to 31.47 per cent in 2003-04. Similarly in the upper primary classes, the dropout rate decreased from 78.3 per cent in 1960-61 to 52.3 per cent in 2003-04.

[15]Some states with a high Muslim concentration such as J & K, Assam, West Bengal and Kerala witnessed moderate to high growth of enrolment in primary schools. For instance, in Kerala, the percentage increase was quite significant, rising from 10.13 per cent to 26.22 per cent from 2006-07 to 2008-09 respectively.

[16]Accessed from http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/India/India_Inclusive_ Education.pdf on 2.02.2010

[17]According to the latest data maintained by DISE for the period 2008-09 it stands 48.38 per cent for Class I-V and 47.58 per cent for Class V-VIII (see Annexure A4A & A4B for details).

[18]It has remained almost negligible at 10.19 per cent (see DISE Flash Statistics 2008-09).

[19]The increase was highest among the SCs/STs (95 per cent) followed by the Muslims (65 per cent) (based on NSSO data 55th and 61st round).

[20]As enumerated by the Sacchar Committee Report, based on NSSO data, the gross enrolment ratio is found to be above 90 per cent in Kerala and Tamil Nadu and satisfactory at above 80 per cent in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Delhi. On the

other hand, there is a significant difference in enrolment rates in states like West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Andhra Pradesh and some other smaller states.

[21]A study of two MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) schools of Delhi focusing on the educational aspects of children of the urban poor observed that there is significant difference between the drop-out percentage between boys and girls (almost 33 per cent for Class V)which is about 7 per cent (See Saksena, 2003).

[22]The NFHS II (1998-99) survey found that 38 per cent of boys and 32 per cent of girls dropped out because they were engaged in work at home or outside. According to the 52nd NSS, 1998 an important reason for dropping out of boys was "paid work" or "required for outside for payment in kind or cash".

[23]India is home to the world's largest population of street children, estimated at 18 million. Most of them are "boys". Girls are often difficult to trace and the most vulnerable. These children are often the product of "broken homes" and they are basically left to their own fate.

[24]In the worst hit districts, such as Karbi Anlgong district an estimated 20,000 students were affected as the schools were used to house internally displaced persons.

[25]In a recent article she explores how lower middle class family practices – mothering, their perception of the quality of education based on an "English" medium of instruction, their hold over private and English-medium schools, – facilitate the creation of a dominant position in education which guides the popular perception of socio-economic mobility negotiating class hierarchies in India. It argues that the educationally advantageous position of the middle class, based on the apparently "merit-based" success, accrues from the cultural, social and economic capital of the middle class built over successive decades of accumulation.

3

Teacher, Teacher-Based Practices and the Changing Mosaic of Social Identities of Learners in Elementary Classrooms: The Diversity Challenges

1. Introduction

> The role of education is to uphold equity and tolerance ... these are all-important in a country like ours which has diversities, to emerge as a strong nation ... we salute our teachers on this day and the fundamental values of life which they teach. We are a country of various philosophies and doctrines and out of this diversity we have to formulate a policy that takes India on the path of progress.
>
> *-The Prime Minister of India in his Teachers'*
> *Day Speech, September 2009*

Teachers are the nation builders who shape the minds of the children who are the future citizens of our country. The present Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's speech on Teachers' Day reflects the importance that teachers get in a diverse country like India. The Prime Minister, a former teacher, shared on the occasion that teaching was his "first love". Notwithstanding his remarks on the occasion, as indicated in an earlier chapter, with the changing mosaic of social identities of learners in elementary classrooms in India, the awareness of equity, social justice and tolerance are strongly felt in contemporary India.

Interestingly, the changed social realities of the classroom have increasingly influenced the nature of debates on elementary education in India. With physical access to the classroom ensured to a greater extent, teacher and teacher-based practices are being increasingly drawn into such debates in the recent past. It is well reflected in the recent policy space where such voices are becoming stronger:

> The fundamental question is whether first generation learners and those from very disadvantaged communities are getting appropriate attention and care to surmount the barrier of social deprivation and illiteracy.
>
> *-Aide Memoire, Sixteenth DPEP JRM, November 2002*

The conference has acknowledged the fact that the low social status of teachers coupled with low self-esteem and lack of understanding

of the diversity of the student population, more specifically belonging to the marginalized sector are the major challenges faced by the government schools.

- In a Report at a recent conference on "Teacher Development and Management", Jaipur, February, 2009 (quoted in GOI, 2009).

Despite the fact that teacher and teacher-based practices have been increasingly drawn into the contemporary debates on elementary education, these debates have just touched the surface rather than going deeper into the roots of the issues of teacher beliefs, perceptions and values, based on the exclusionary forces of gender, caste, religion, language and ethnicity. These forces, to a greater extent, create the rules for what goes into actual classroom practices and influences the vital aspects of teacher-student and teacher-community relationships.

With the classroom becoming more diverse and polarized, relationships inherent in its structure (teacher-learner, parent-teacher and teacher-teacher) are becoming more complex and challenging. Today, the need to integrate the diverse learners into the classroom processes and practices equitably and justly has made diversity a tension-laden issue for elementary teachers and teacher-based practices in India. Bringing together myriad social factors – caste, gender, religion, language, ethnicity, economic levels, belief systems and cultural norms – the elementary classroom in India should be ready to recognize learners' diverse interpersonal and collective social, cultural, economic and political identities.

Focusing on teacher narratives of encounters with diverse learners, this chapter explores how these encounters are mirrored by teacher-based beliefs and teacher-based practices that are inalienably linked to the learners' under-achievements, especially those belonging to marginalized communities. The discussion is based on secondary sources comprising both academic and action-based research. The basic objective of the chapter is to explore how teacher beliefs, perceptions and values, based on the exclusionary forces of gender, caste, religion, language and ethnicity ghettoize the diverse abilities and identities of learners in actual classroom practices. The chapter concludes by identifying some of the crucial challenges involved in preparing elementary school teachers for diverse classrooms in India.

2. Learners' Social Identities and Teachers' Perceptions and Beliefs

Teachers' construction of children's ascribed learning potential is acknowledged by education theorists as an essential part of understanding children's educational experience. Referred to as "educability", this is considered particularly useful in understanding the educational experiences of children from marginalized communities such as Dalits in government primary schools (Sayed et al., 2007).

Although the social landscape of the classroom to a large extent has changed, many of its aspects are unchanged. A prominent feature of this unchanged phenomenon is the elementary teachers' perceptions and beliefs about the learners' diverse social identities and their abilities, especially of those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. This section briefly high-

lights diverse learners' social encounters with teachers and their practices in elementary classrooms in different contexts.

2.1 Lower the "Caste Hierarchy" Less is the "Educability"

Historically, the caste system formed the social and economic framework for the life of the people in India. It is integral to social identity and recognition in public and private spaces. But how do caste-based beliefs percolate down to teachers' perceptions and beliefs and influence teacher-based practices? In a recent micro-study in the Gaya District among the Musahar children, the concept of innate or hereditary "educability" of children was seen in schools through the belief among teachers in the notion of "sanskara" (Chapter 3, Singh and Kumar, 2010). When asked for the reason why children from marginalized communities fail, particularly those from the Musahar community, the majority of the teachers responded that the "sanskara" of the Musahar children and their parents was responsible for this. A common response was "How can these children study when they do not have 'sanskara'." As Rajendra Sharma, a primary school teacher in Wazirgunj block puts it:

> Due to lack of "sanskara", parents from the Musahar community are not disposed towards educating their children. They suffer from a pervasive sense of inferiority and wonder what they will gain by getting education. They do not understand the importance of education (quoted on p. 34).

When asked to explain how "sanskara" plays a role in the education of these children, the teachers used various connotations such as lack of education among the parents, poverty, the home environment, lack of cleanliness, and so on. The following response is illustrative in this regard:

> Children of the Musahar community are not able to succeed in education because their parents are illiterate. Even when these parents want to give education to their children, they are not able to do so due to poverty. The "sanskara" of these parents is such that instead of sending their children to school, they send them to work (quoted on p. 34).
>
> *-Nirmala Kumari, Teacher, Primary School, Badka Bandh.*

These attitudes and beliefs are common not only among teachers from non-marginalized communities but even from marginalized ones. A Dalit teacher, Ramraj Manjhi said:

> Due to their "sanskara", parents from the marginalized communities do not take interest in their children's education. Due to poverty, they think that it is not necessary to educate their children. Their "sanskara" is also reflected in this attitude. Lack of education among these parents is related to their "sanskara" from the beginning (quoted on p. 35).

What is noteworthy in the responses of the teachers while explaining the reasons for the educational failure of children from the marginalized communities is factors such as poverty, lack of education of the parents

Living with Stigma: The Rat Catchers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar

'The higher-caste students tell us that we smell bad," one girl said. Another added, "The ridicule we face prevents us from coming to school and sitting with higher-caste children." These girls from the hamlet of Khalispur, near the city of Varanasi, belong to the Musahar or rat catcher community of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Khalispur has a government primary school. Despite an entitlement to receive a stipend, midday meals and uniforms, few Musahar girls attend the school. Some of their testimonies demonstrate powerfully the social attitudes that create disadvantages. For these girls, school is a place where they experience social exclusion, as stigmatization undermines the self-esteem vital to effective learning. Subtle forms of discrimination reinforce caste hierarchies in the classroom. "We are forced to sit on the floor," one girl said. "The desks and benches in the classroom are meant for children from the higher castes."

The Musahar community, which spans eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, has high levels of poverty and low levels of literacy among adults. Apart from catching rats in rice fields, the livelihoods of the Musahar typically revolve around crushing and carrying stones, supplying brick kilns, making leaf plates and performing other casual day labour. In contrast to some other low-caste groups, the Musahar have a weak political voice.

According to Musahar elders, government policies have improved but social attitudes have not: "They do admit our children to school and we now have legal rights, but the behaviour of the children from other castes and the teachers is a problem. Our children do not dare attend the school."

Adapted from Global Monitoring Report, UNESCO, 2010 (p. 171)

and lack of a proper home environment. But instead of relating these factors directly to poor performance in school, the teachers relate these factors to the resultant "sanskara" which is not conducive to education and learning, and then argue that the lack of "sanskara" is responsible for the failure of these children.

The study further unearths ambiguity and duality in the teachers' responses. This duality is manifested in the Bal Panjika (the children's register) which is the official record kept by the school on the number of children in the 6-14-year age group in the village. In the Bal Panjika of Majhauli Primary School, Gaya, the only reason recorded by the school for the drop out of children is poverty; "sanskara" is never mentioned. Thus, teachers appear to maintain a duality between their response in public and private.

A study on teacher motivation in Rajasthan finds similar perceptions and prejudices based on caste. Most of the teachers interviewed during the course of the study complained about teaching SC children who they considered "dirty". Teachers expressed dissatisfaction about the fact that they were given dirty children to teach. What seemed to irk most of them was to have to walk around the village and visit the homes of the very poor –"the lower caste people who are dirty" (Ramachandran et. al, 2005, p. 29).

2.2 They Don't Even Have a Proper Language. How Can They Learn Other Things?

The degree of alignment between the home and school language has a critical bearing on whether children are socially accepted among their peers and teachers in the classroom. India being one of the most linguistically diverse countries, the issue of linguistic minority learners and the recognition of their linguistic identity in elementary schools are of immense importance.[1] Beside caste-based prejudices, linguistic associations and the identity of the learners forms another basis for exclusion/inclusion in teacher-based practices in elementary classrooms. As revealed in a study based on classroom observations of the tribal-populated schools, the dilemmas of home and school language are writ large in the day-to-day classroom experiences of the Adivasi learners like the Korkus (Ojha et. al, 2003; p. 24).

Like thousands of tribal children in India, the home language of the Korkus is a hallmark of their cultural identity and they are socialized in their family settings. On the contrary, the schools where the Korku children are educated generally use Hindi as a medium of instruction. Their linguistic identity often becomes the basis of humiliation by their teachers in day-to-day classroom activities. Take the case of Shivsharan – a Korku learner of Class VI. He is considered to be the

Box 3.2

RUPANTAR
An Innovative Teacher Training Model on Tribal Education in Odisha

Rupantar is a four-day training model for primary school teachers in the tribal areas of Odisha. The model focuses on attitudinal training of teachers and their sensitization to tribal language, culture and knowledge systems. The model was built on the premise that a child-centred classroom is one where:

- There is space for children's creativity through learning activities.
- Children have the freedom to speak and interact without fear and hesitation.
- A child speaks and understands in her mother tongue, since the child sees her world in her own language.
- The child's experiences are reflected in the learning and teaching.
- Learning is connected with the child's experiences.
- The medium of instruction is the language in which the child sees her world, identifies the objects, and expresses her feelings.

Why Rupantar?

Out of 1, 98,000 elementary school teachers in Odisha, 19,600 teachers belong to tribal communities. They have been taught and trained in the mainstream education system where their culture and language was ignored. Thus, they were prepared from the education of mainstream and also for the mainstreaming of children in education. Besides, the non-tribal teachers teaching in tribal areas constituting one third of the total Blocks (118 Blocks out of 314 Blocks belong to tribal sub plan) in the state, have their own prejudiced attitude and beliefs about the tribal community which does not support them to pursue the educational needs of the tribal children.

Many of the teachers have little knowledge and understanding about tribal culture and language. They bring their own cultural prejudices against tribal languages, culture and communities to the classroom and have a negative attitude and perception of tribal children. Tribal children are considered to be docile, lacking intelligence and slow in learning and comprehension. Tribal children's mother tongue is considered inferior and they are not allowed to use it in the classroom. There is thus a gap and mismatch between values, culture and language of teachers and tribal children which leads to an invisible conflict in their minds and promotes a culture of silence among tribal children in the classroom. These prejudiced attitudes and perceptions are reflected in the teaching and learning practices and processes, and adversely affect the learning experiences of tribal children leading to poor achievement and retention.

Teacher training in Odisha does not cover the issues related to the learning difficulties of tribal children and the teaching difficulties of tribal area teachers. Besides, the language, culture, and values of tribal society are not considered as a positive pedagogical support in the school, and there is a huge gap between the home language of tribal children and the school language.

Training needs

- Attitudinal training of teachers to remove prejudices against and stereotyping of tribal children.
- Sensitization to language, culture and behavioural strengths of tribal children.
- Orientation of teachers on local tribal dialects and use of local material for teaching-learning.
- Increasing motivation and professional skills of teachers to link the contents of the curriculum with the existing realities of tribal communities.

Training Objectives:

- To assess the attitude of teachers towards tribal children as learners and also as a cultural group. The attitude objects are language, culture, children and parents.

- To identify the socio-cultural bias against tribal education and its reflection in the textbook and transactional strategies.
- To examine the beliefs, assumptions and stereotypes prevalent among teachers about tribal children and their culture, and make them examine these beliefs and assumptions.
- To acknowledge and realize that it is not the tribal child, but the school and classroom transactions, which create problems in tribal children's growth and their learning outcomes.
- To understand and make use of tribal language, culture and customs in the learning processes of the children.
- To identify strategies to link the language resources of tribal children with the medium of instruction at school and to understand the processes in which a child learns a language.
- To develop basic approaches towards language, arithmetic, EVS, using the knowledge base from the natural and cultural environment of tribal children.
- To enable teachers to use tribal folklore in the learning process to make the classroom contextual (in language, EVS and mathematics).

Training Content

- Knowing the strengths of tribal societies, culture and language.
- Knowing how local knowledge and experience can be put into the school curriculum.
- Realizing the importance of the mother tongue in early primary classes.
- Methods and processes to acquire second language skills.
- Discovering learning methods and processes of tribal communities (language learning processes, counting system, units of measures, etc.)
- Use of folklore and the oral traditions of tribal communities.
- Learning through processes of story-telling, singing, dancing, games, arts and crafts, etc.
- Creating a community-based pedagogy that starts from tribal culture that is connected to their life experiences and practical use of knowledge.

(Rupantar was developed by Dr Mahendra Kumar Mishra, Ex-State Tribal Education Coordinator, Primary Education Programme Authority Odisha, Email: mkmfolk@gmail.com)

weakest child in the class because of the way he pronounces Hindi words. He pronounces them in the accent of his home language and this often leads to spelling mistakes. Whenever he speaks in Hindi, the entire class laughs at his accent.

Shivsharan's class teacher identifies nine children who, he thought, were like him. They are labelled by the teacher as the Navratan (The Nine Precious Stones) of the class. Whenever the class teacher asks a question it comes with a special instruction: "Except the Navratan anyone can answer." The nine Korku children sit in the last benches and watch silently as the classroom activities proceed. The teachers draw equivalence between the knowledge of Hindi and the Korku learners' abilities. It is clearly reflected in their perception of the educability of these children:

The Korku children are poor in all disciplines...when they have failed to pick up Hindi how you can expect them to learn English and Mathematics (quoted on p. 24).

-A teacher in a Korku-populated school in Madhya Pradesh

While the knowledge of Hindi was the prime indicator of the educability of the Korku children in the perception of the teachers in Madhya Pradesh, Marathi and Gujarati become the prime indicator of educability for Adivasi children studying in schools opened in the rehabilitation sites of the Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP). As indicated in a research study on the differential impact of rehabilitation of the population of the submerged sites spread across the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat on school education, where earlier the children of the submerged villages were taught in the Adivasi mother tongue, this was now replaced by Marathi or Gujarati as a medium of instruction.

The newly recruited trained teachers in the schools of the rehabilitation sites in areas adjacent to the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat often cited the lack of knowledge of Marathi or Gujarati for the Adivasi children's underachievement. Teachers in the schools who were trained believed that mastery over the regional language, Marathi or Gujarati held the key for Adivasi learners (Patwardhan, 2000). As a teacher of a school in a Maharashtra site puts it:

> There is no use of teaching in the Adivasi language. Here I speak to children only in Marathi, so that they can catch up. We have to speak only in Marathi. In Bellari village where I taught earlier, I used to talk to the children in the Adivasi language but Marathi is not fixed in their minds properly... (quoted on p .93).

> *-A teacher in a rehabilitation site school, Maharashtra*

In the changed circumstances with the initiation of the SSP and the Adivasis being settled at the rehabilitation sites, the regional language became the prime characteristic of an "educated person" and learners' educability came to be judged on this notion (Ibid., p. 95). As observed during the study, the ability to speak proper Marathi or Gujarati became an important part of the identity of an educated person, and the easiest way to ensure its mastery was early and complete immersion in the regional language in the school. Even after all these efforts, the Marathi or Gujarati that the children managed to master was usually judged to be not good/sophisticated enough. It is well reflected in the observation of a new teacher who came from Pune to teach at a school rehabilitation site:

> Even their Marathi is not as "pure" as the Marathi spoken in Pune. (Ibid.)

None of the non-tribal teachers, who lived with and taught the Adivasi community, felt the need to learn the language the children spoke. The onus of learning the regional language, so that children can communicate with them, was thought to be on the children:

> We don't follow the children's language, they don't make the effort to learn Marathi. We have passed a resolution that no one will speak their language. Only then will they pick up (quoted on p. 95).

> *- A teacher in a rehabilitation site school, Maharashtra*

The changed circumstances in the rehabilitation sites with the initiation of SSP had such a far-reaching impact that it even changed the Adivasi

perception of school education. The most shocking fact unearthed in the course of the study was that even the Adivasi teachers were vehemently against the introduction of their mother tongue in the schools. Parents and Adivasi teachers were found to be in favour of children learning Hindi, Marathi and Gujarati. A clear consensus seemed to have emerged among the teachers of the schools in the rehabilitation sites on the issue of language. Such perceptions were based on the underachievement of the Adivasi children of not being able to pick up Marathi properly. A number of reasons were put forth to argue that teaching in the mother tongue was neither practical nor desirable. In fact, there was a proposal to bring out books in local dialects in 1995. However, the Adivasi Teachers' Association at the Taluka opposed this very idea (Ibid., p. 94).

Many teachers said that they were aware of the view that recommended the use of the tribal language in the early years, but that was considered impractical and undesirable. In the rehabilitation sites, teachers pointed out that children belong to different tribal communities – Tadui, Vasava, Paura – had their distinct languages and hence it would be difficult to choose one tribal language out of the many for classroom instruction. Instead, they thought it to much better to teach in the regional language (Ibid., p.95).

The parents of the Adivasi children blame the teachers for the poor state of learning. "Teachers only collect their salaries...they don't work." On the other hand, teachers blame the home environment of the Adivasi children as the main cause. Their perception about their way of living is replete with negative feelings:

> We don't maintain any contract with the village. The illiterates' main interest is in eating and drinking. They have no education. What they will understand? ...They were barbaric people...there was a terrible condition here. Now work on Narmada (the dam) has started and officers come on jeeps. Now these children can speak in Marathi. Isn't this development (quoted on p. 115).
>
> *-A teacher in a rehabilitation site school, Maharashtra*

> Parents are not all right (barabar nahi hai). They are not educated. They are vanavasi praja (forest people). The parents don't care. They don't look after their children like we do. They just want to make merry, eat, drink and celebrate weddings. But in the rehabilitation site there is some sudhar (improvement). Now they are living like us (quoted on p. 116).
>
> *- An anganwadi worker in a rehabilitation site in Maharashtra*

2.3 "Street" Children Work; "School" Children Study

Besides the caste and linguistic identity of the diverse learners in today's elementary classrooms, teachers' perception and beliefs about the children's abilities and the teachers' expectations are seen to be influenced by the economic status of the learners in the schools. As reflected by various studies, the perception and beliefs of teachers of MCD schools in Delhi, indicate that the teachers have poor expectations and perceptions about

the success of learners coming to school from the economically weaker sections (EWS). In one such study a researcher carrying out her fieldwork encountered a scene where Class IV girls in an MCD school were busy writing a single sentence repeatedly in their copies:

Mein Nikamma aur Nakara Hoon (I am dumb and worthless)

(Saksena, 2003, p. 91).

The school caters to children from poor families with unstable economic conditions. Being a Muslim-dominated area, the families belong to the Saifi, Ansari, Sayyad and Pathan caste groups. The school record revealed that they are migrants from Bihar, UP and Haryana, but are now permanently settled in the city. Fathers' occupations include labourers, tailors, rickshaw pullers, electricians, vegetable sellers, carpenters, drivers, washer men, barbers, painters, mechanics, etc. Most of the mothers are housewives. A small percentage comprises home-based workers. They stitch factory materials and earn piece-rate wages. Some women also work as domestic help in the neighbouring households of middle-income groups.

The girls of Class IV were given the punishment to write the sentence a hundred times, as the teacher found them making a noise while the teacher was absent from the classroom. They continued to write the sentence even after going home, fearing further punishment if they did not complete the task by the next day. All the class teachers, both male and female, were found to carry a stick, often gesturing at the learners to hit them and addressing them as "donkeys" (Ibid., p. 90). The principal as well as the teachers were constantly asking some of the students to fetch tea and snacks from outside the school. This happened even while the classes were being conducted. Throughout the day, the girls and boys jumped over the boundary wall to fetch tea. But unlike the boys, the girls did not escape from school. The teachers made the girls wash the utensils after lunch during the recess (Ibid., p. 73).

The teachers explained the futility of having any expectations from the children as they did not even bother to do their homework. "They tear pages out of their copies." They added, with some humour, that some children had sold their books and returned to the class after the summer vacations with mice in their bags (Ibid., p. 78). Opinions were divided as to why the children attended school. A few teachers said that the learners wanted to escape the responsibility of caring for their siblings and doing other work. But most of the teachers shared that "they like to play and be with their friends".

The school had high drop-out rates, especially girls. The teachers blamed the parents for the learners' underachievement. They alleged that the parents entered the school only when they had to collect bags and uniforms for their children or when they were called to explain their child's rude behaviour (Ibid., p. 79). Interestingly, the teachers felt that being unable to afford an education was not the reason why children were not sent to school or chose to drop out (Ibid., p. 86). In fact, in several instances the blame game led to violence between teachers and parents as revealed in a study based on an MCD school in Gandhi Nagar Delhi (Banerjee, 1997, p. 2058).

Notwithstanding the blame game between the teachers and the economically poor parents, the learners studying in such schools bear the brunt of the teachers and suffer silently. A similar story is repeated if one looks at the findings of another study of an MCD school in a slum in Delhi. Here again, most of the teachers agreed that the home environment is the single most important factor (Jain, 2006). As reflected during conversations with the teachers, their perception and beliefs about the educability of the learners was found to be profoundly influenced by prejudices about their socio-economic backgrounds:

> Inke gharo mein padhai ki koi kadar nahi..aise hi families se aatein hai yeh log..inke yeahn toh bass papa ne sharab pili...mummy ko mara...roz ki kahani hoti hai yeh. (There is no value of education in the home environment of these children...their drunk fathers beating their mothers is an everyday phenomenon.)

> *-A male teacher interviewed during the study (Ibid., quoted on p. 156).*

> Inko bilkul environment nahi mila padhai ka.....bahut mushkil ho jata hai phir inko padhana. (These children do not have a proper home environment...it is very difficult to teach these children.)

> *-A female teacher interviewed during the study (Ibid., quoted on p. 157).*

> These children are incapable of learning...Sir aap manage nahi .. kabhi kabhi to mein khud hairan ho jata hoon ki kal jo inhe itni aachi tarah se samjh gaya tha yeh log aaj bhul kaise gaye. (You will not believe it Sir!...These children are incapable of learning.... Sometimes it is surprising that after teaching them so well they forget everything on the next day.)

> *- A male teacher interviewed during the study (Ibid., quoted on p. 157).*

The teachers' prejudices about the learners' working class background reflects that the "street" identity overpowers their "school" identity as learners. The ghettoization of the learners into a "street identity" is often reflected in teachers' classroom practices where they often segregate children from the economically weaker sections (EWS) to save "others" who they believe have a chance to "make it" from the street children's "bad influence". Teachers indulge in such practices with a fear that the "other" learners could affected by the influences of the street children. The slums and pavements they live in, the language that they use, and their parents' livelihood become the criteria to judge whether the learners will become "stayers", "leavers" or "returners" in the classroom.

The teachers' prejudices are often translated into physical violence where they think "beatings" can improve their intelligence. For instance, in one month's observation of teaching-learning practices in two MCD schools in Delhi, almost all the teachers were noticed punishing children. The type of punishment given is physical as well as verbal. Boys are called names, shouted at, caned, hit on the back and slapped. Girls are however given milder punishments. They are slapped, shouted at, called names, their ears are twisted but they are not caned (Saksena, 2003, p. 88).

2.4 In Their Family Nobody Has Ever Been to School...How Can These Children Learn?

The contemporary elementary classroom in India is now characterized by a sizeable presence of first generation learners. Going to school has been a historic opportunity for these children, their parents and fellow community members. Most of these learners are spread across marginalized communities such as Dalits, minority Muslims, STs and children of EWS. Their distinguishing identity of being first-generation learners sometimes becomes the basis of teachers' prejudices and beliefs that they are "not going to make it" no matter what they do. Such an attitude, replete with negativities about the learners' identity is reflected in teachers' narratives in a recent research study done in Rajasthan:

"Padh le, toro ghar mein koi na padhyo ho"[2]
(Study lad! No one in your family has ever been to school!)

-*A Teacher in a Meo Muslim populated School in Rajasthan*
(quoted in Ahmad, 2005, p. 74).

This remark was hurled at Asim, a first generation learner, by his teacher. Asim is a first generation Meo-Muslim learner who received the opportunity to go to a local school after years of struggle by the Meos of Mewat[3] in Rajasthan. He was caught conversing with his friends in the Mathematics class where the children were given a sum to solve. The scathing remark hurt him so much that despite the rebuke he did not solve the sum. Rather he stared angrily at the teacher. It could be easily assessed from his attitude that he felt infuriated and humiliated in front of friends and co-learners. Unlike the majority of the learners in Asim's classroom, the teacher belonged to a different social background – upper caste Hindu. Most of the children coming to schools are children of owner cultivators, agriculture labourers, quarrying and construction labourers, animal husbandry, etc. (Repetition in intro)

The teacher was running the school with occasional visits rather than residing in the village. The day-to-day classroom observation revealed that the teacher's interaction with the students was confined to certain students. He rarely asked the other children questions during the course of teaching. The group of students with whom the teacher had regular interactions was identified as the more "talkative ones". These students were often sent to perform the teacher's personal work, such as bringing water, fetching tobacco, etc. On asking who these students were, the teacher replied:

"Ye padhne wale bacche hai"
(they are the good students).

- *A Teacher in a Meo Muslim populated*
School in Rajasthan (Ibid., quoted on p. 74).

The teaching and learning processes in the classroom did not involve any routine activity except for checking the daily attendance and recording it regularly. The teaching and learning was passive where most of the time the teacher spoke and the children carried out his instructions in the classroom. While students were reading or writing, teachers were observed to leave the classroom.

In the segregated classroom, the Meo girls were found to be the most excluded. They were often seen to form small groups who sat side by side along with the rows of boys and did not mix. The interactions of the teachers with the Meo girls were negligible. As revealed while talking to the Meo girls, they do want to go to school. They blame the teachers for their apathy in holding regular classes. As Kheirun, a Meo girl child, said:

> Padhai to howe na hai, baithe rahe sara din. Master saab to khana banewo ho. Utne deir mein to kam kar loon.
>
> (No study takes place in the classroom...we sit idly for the whole day.... While the teacher is engaged in preparing the school meal it is better to go home and do some work and return when the class is functioning)
>
> *- (Ibid., quoted on pp. 76-77).*

Having been brought up in religious and orthodox settings, the Meo girls avoided going to school, and when they did their interactions with the male teachers were minimal. The teachers, with their own prejudices towards the Meo learners in the classroom, did not pay any attention or make any effort to attract the meaningful participation of the girls in the teaching-learning processes. Teachers were often absent or came late to the classroom and community members felt the "risk" of girls coming into contact with the boys in unattended classrooms, which could bring a bad name to the Meo families (Ibid., p. 105).

Interaction with the community members during the course of the study revealed that they had more faith in the education provided by the Maktabs rather than government primary schools. Comments a community member during conversation:

> "School mein humko ka pata ka padho na padho...Madrasa mein to Maulvi saab to rozana batwao ho."
>
> (We do not know whether children learn anything in school or not... But in the Madrasa we get regular feedback from the Maulvi saab)
>
> *- (Ibid., quoted on p. 82).*

The teachers in turn cited the passivity of the learners and their own greater engagement with non-teaching tasks for the underachievement of the Meo learners. As mentioned during a conversation with a teacher:

> "Saab paper ke kam ke saath class lagana kathin hai, din mein khana bhi banwana parta hai. Khana na banwao to inquiry mein phaso."
>
> (It is difficult to teach while doing lots of paper work. We have to prepare the meal for the afternoon also...if we fail to do so we face inquiries from above.)
>
> *- (Ibid., quoted on p. 80).*

3. Preparing Teachers for Diverse Learners: Issues and Concerns

With regard to the changing social diversity of learners in school, the elementary classroom today faces several challenges to meet their needs. A prominent challenge in this regard has been to prepare teachers for such

a classroom. As discussed in the previous section, elementary teachers' perception and beliefs about the diverse learners reflects various kinds of prejudices and social stigmas. The challenge in this regard is considerably wider, and is multidimensional in nature. This section briefly discusses the major challenges in preparing teachers for today's diverse classrooms, based on an analysis of the teachers' narratives in the previous section.

As evident from the analysis of the quantitative data given in the previous chapter, learners' social diversity is on the rise in the elementary classroom, especially in government schools, with respect to caste, class, gender, religion, language, culture, etc. But to what extent does teacher diversity exist with respect to their workforce? To answer this crucial question one needs disaggregated data related to teachers' diverse social background. Unfortunately, this is one of the most widely recognized research areas where significant gaps exist.

The social composition of the teaching community is compiled only in the periodic All India Educational Surveys. The last three surveys were done in 1986, 1993 and 2003. While the 2003 survey is complete and provisional state-wise tables are available, NCERT has yet to release a comprehensive report. As a result, the latest information available on the social composition is from the 1993 survey. One in every 11 teachers belonged to the Scheduled Castes (SCs – a socially disadvantaged group, also known as "untouchables" before 1951) in 1993. The percentage of SC teachers was 10.34 per cent in rural areas and 6.14 per cent in urban areas in 1993, and they comprised 22 per cent of

Meos left in the lurch: Lok Jumbish moves on...

Two images stand out in sharp contrast. Here, very little has changed. Villages look the same as they did way back probably, in the 1920s or 30s. Yet, the conservative elders are keen to educate their daughters. They are crying out to get the only primary school upgraded to the middle level so that the girls are kept busy till they find a match for them. Kamaa, Alwari, Pahari and many others are all Meo Muslim dominated villages of Rajasthan. Untouched by "development", they are caught in a time warp. Access is next to impossible. There is nothing that could be remotely called a road. Endless ditches, rocks and dust have to be endured before encountering the semi-bricked homes.

The rest of the world is far, far away Television is not allowed. Few have radio sets and these are rarely switched on "because most of the day we are busy cultivating the field or tending to our buffaloes" says Akbari, a 50-year-old who proudly points out all the girls who have studied up to Class V but are now wandering around the fields aimlessly. The middle school is a 3-km walk through unsafe paths. Boys are allowed to study further if they want to, but the girls help their mothers in the mustard and wheat fields.

"Seven years ago," says Shreephul Meena, headmaster of the primary school, now on census duty, "five girls went to school in Pahari village (mainly from the minority Brahmin families). Today 134 children attend school, of which 64 are girls and 70 boys, and only five children are not in school. Fourteen km away in Alwari village, where not a single girl went to school, today the attendance is 100 per cent."

"And all this is because the Maulana is teaching Urdu at the primary school run by Lok Jumbish," says Pehlu Khan, member Gram Panchayat. Lok Jumbish, the popular primary education People's Movement project was to have shut down last year, but unexpectedly, a new lease of life was granted, though for one year only because the administration delayed in switching over these schools to DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) run by the Rajasthan government with a World Bank loan. The villagers find themselves once again left in the lurch. Continued education at even the primary level is now uncertain.

The Lok Jumbish project faced a major setback after the Pokhran nuclear experiments, when the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) pulled out of India. The project lost almost three-fourths of the funds (the rest is a contribution by the Centre and the state) It was some time before Britain stepped in with a grant aid to continue the project. A team from South Africa came unexpectedly to study the project two weeks ago to replicate it back home. However, the bell tolls on April 1 when Lok Jumbish moves out of this area in Rajasthan. But the good news is that the project now shifts to some of the most backward regions of the state. Naval Khan, Rashid, Ali Mian are all distressed. "What happens to the education of our children?" Those who had resisted education earlier arc now despondent. It is evident that the experiment to encourage primary education is a success.

-Vichitra Sharma, Grasroots, March, 2001

Box 3.4

An Innovative Experiment to
Address Marginalisation Inside the Classroom: CARE's Experience

The institution of school, by its very structure and processes, can provide necessary means and exposure to children to develop their critical faculty and abilities. To achieve this, children must go through an enabling classroom process which has the potential to examine the conditioned responses of self and others in relation to many aspects of learning including social norms and values. However, the realities show different picture as classrooms are dull and inactive especially in rural areas and children from marginalised communities do not get opportunities to gain meaningful experience.

Processes of marginalization

A study on Understanding issues of girls' marginalization in school and home environment in Shraravsti district, Uttar Pradesh, Situational Analysis conducted by CARE India (2009) revealed that school facilitates and promotes discriminatory practices There is an atmosphere of fear in the school where it was seen that the teachers were punishing children by making them stand on one side of the playground, or light beating with stick in case they were not able to perform in the school related tasks or in the class. In some schools, teachers scolded children who came late and made discouraging comments, affecting the confidence and self-image of the child. Light beating with stick or banging the stick on the desk was also observed by both male and female teachers to control children, in case children were found to be making a noise.

It was observed that, teachers made derogatory remarks on children's learning related performance was due to their gender or caste affiliation which was common across schools. This practice not only depicted the insensitiveness of the teacher towards the child but also wrongly locates the reasons for learning related problems which could be teachers biased behaviour among others. Many teachers had biased and prejudiced attitude towards marginalised children, particularly girls, and children from poor communities. Their biases were about children's ability to learn, participate in meaningful tasks, their behaviour and skills etc which had negative impact on the classroom processes. Therefore, the classrooms were generally dull where children were given limited opportunities to actively participate in the classroom. Besides, majority of teachers used one way communication. Apart from teachers' own biases, subject content often, as indicated by textbook analysis, were written in standard language. However children need to start with home language and gradually learn the standard language and this is mostly missing in schools. Therefore, the content is not understood by the child due to their limited exposure to 'formal' language. Moreover, there seem to be limited effort by the teacher to decode the textbook content for the children in the home language. Hence such subject content and language not only hampers the learning level but also affect the child's confidence and self-image adversely.

The critical analysis of classrooms indicate that children who get marginalized most often in the classroom can be identified as: girls; children from lower castes and classes, and from linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities; children with poor performance and irregular attendance; and children not properly dressed who are mainly from poorer backgrounds. The classroom, thus, generally marginalises the most marginalised children which is mirror image of the society at large. Certain societal norms and discriminatory practices followed in the society, especially with regard to girls and children from lower castes are also visible in the whole school environment.

Teachers as Change agent- Initiating a dialogue through
Classroom Observation Tool

Inclusive Classroom: To address issues of inequities inside classroom and school envrionment, CARE designed certain intervention to make inclusive classroom. The first step was to describe a meaningful and inclusive classroom. The initiative defined a meaningful and inclusive classroom as one where children are allowed to bring their experience and their learning is built upon this experience through interaction with teachers and peers. It should have the following essential characteristics:

- Learners' experiences are incorporated in the learning processes.
- Learners are given opportunity to construct their own knowledge.
- Children/learners actively engage in construction of knowledge.
- Variety of situations and teaching-learning methods adopted to create diverse and meaningful learning experiences.
- An enabling teacher-child relationship.

Observing equity and quality in classroom/Innovative Classroom Observation Tool: Based on the analysis of the practices and processes of marginalization, it was considered that teacher is the main anchor who not only facilitates the classroom but also shapes ideas and thoughts of the children by his/her biases and attitudes. Therefore teacher plays an important role in the formation of an inclusive classroom as classroom is a 'crucible' around which school life revolves. It is the place where teachers and students bring their own abilities, perspectives, biases and attitudes to bear upon what they learn from each other and do with textbooks and other materials. It was also important to understand that in the classroom, meaning-making is more often 'hidden' and not overtly available to an untrained eye. If one wants to understand the nuances of marginalization in the classroom and develop deeper insights into how the 'teaching and learning' unfolds, one needs to be quite perceptive and observe the teachers and students and the nuances of their relationship closely. Therefore, a specific tool was designed to observe these practices which can then be shared to initiative reflective process on equitable practices among teachers. The tool has two sections; section one requires observer to write narrative about the on-going classroom activities like concept being taught, the process of teaching, role of teachers, children's participation, nature of opportunities in which children are required to participate, sitting arrangement etc. The second section is more focused where different sections are assessed on five point scale based on observations. The most equitable behaviour or practice gets score of 5 on the scale. Main five observational areas are - teachers' planning, teaching learning processes, children' behaviour, equitable opportunities and areas for teachers' support. Each section is further detailed out having key indicators of inclusive practices like *children's interaction with teacher and other children is free and uninhibited*. This tool is used regularly by field coordinators to make sense of a live classroom so that they could help teachers' to reflect on their actions and behaviour.

Creating Space for Reflective discussion: Based on data collected through classroom observations, issues were discussed with teachers to enable meaningful reflection and then support extended through class demonstrations, to ensure that teachers' understand factors and behaviours which promote unequal classroom practices as well as ways to facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes. The suggestions could be around inclusive sitting arrangement of children, identification of children, peer-behaviour, teachers' language and use of corporal punishment etc. All the classroom observations are further analysed to identify areas of support and best practices. The findings of the tool are shared in monthly meetings with teachers in order to keep improvising the practices and processes and encouraging best practices. The emphasis is on developing a fear free classroom and school environment where each child gets ample opportunities to learn. The challenge remains in use of tool with its spirit since it is meant to be a peer-reflective tool. Any compromise in the same will not have true impact on the teachers. The tool is regularly used in the govt. primary and residential schools where technical support is being provided by CARE in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa and Bihar. The internal report suggests that quite a large number of teachers in all the states have introduced activities and practices to make classroom and the school more equitable. The children irrespective of their caster or gender, etc are given opportunities as per their need to learn effectively in the classroom. Other forums are also created so as they could have self-confidence and self-image.

(Based on a presentation by Geeta Verma, CARE India, in a regional consultation on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Pluralism held in Jaipur on 4-5 September, 2009.)

all new appointments made between 1994 and 2003. (The proportion of SCs in the population is 16.2, Census of India 2001.)

Equally significant is that the percentage of teachers (all teachers, including para-teachers and contract teachers) from indigenous tribes, or the Scheduled Tribes (STs), was only 5.74 per cent in 1993 though they constituted 22 per cent of all new appointments made between 1994 and 2003. This sharp increase in the percentage of tribal teachers could be attributed to an exponential increase in the number of schools (formal as well as alternative schools) in rural and tribal areas. It is, indeed, noteworthy that a significant proportion of para-teachers and contract teachers belong to SC and ST communities. (The proportion of STs in the population is 8.2 per cent, Census of India 2001).

Across India, men outnumber women in the teaching workforce. But there are significant regional differences as evident from recent DISE data. The percentage of women teachers is 71.64 per cent in Kerala and only 19.19 per cent in Bihar. The general level of socio-economic development and the status of women can partially explain inter-state variations. Till recently, the non-availability of trained women, and the social practices that prevent women from seeking employment were cited as plausible reasons for the low percentage of women teachers in the North Indian states. However, the proportion of women teachers in private schools is higher at close to 50 per cent. It may be noted that an overwhelming proportion of private aided and unaided schools are located in urban areas, where social restrictions on women are far less, and mobility as well as access is better. The difference is visible also in the percentage of women teachers in urban areas where they make up 55 per cent of the total as against only 23.5 per cent in the rural areas.

The available data on the overall social composition of teachers in India reveals that it is in sharp contrast to the social composition of learners in elementary classrooms in India. As discussed in the previous section, the contemporary classroom composition reveals a more complex nature, where during recent years there has been a sharp increase in the participation of children of marginalized communities.

As the narratives discussed above indicate, teachers are often found to ruthlessly place the abilities of learners, especially children of marginalized communities, in hierarchies and tend to ghettoize them. Elementary class teachers largely feel that they have to follow the prescribed practices of evaluation in the classroom. It is well reflected in the strong belief on the profiling of the abilities of the learners based on "intelligence":

> "Jaaise aadmi aur Bandar mein fark hota hai ..insaan soch samajh kar kam karta hai ..aur phir us ka jo bhi result ho result woh usse aapna le."

> (There is a difference between human beings and monkeys...Human beings do things intelligibly... So they should accept the result of their efforts."

> *-A female teacher in an MCD School (quoted in Jain, 2006,p. 137).*

In labelling the learners from diverse social backgrounds as dumb, slow, etc. the common yardstick in the classroom inevitably is based on exclusion-

ary elements such as caste, class, religion, ethnicity, disability, etc. Such labelling is internalized not only by the teachers and parents but also by the learners. Says Sanju a disabled child studying in a mainstream school in a conversation with the interviewer: "I am special. I am a special child. That's why I study in a special section. I come to this class for a little while. In the Hindi class I come here." Suresh, another disabled child sharing his abilities says: "I can't do long answers. I only do short answers. There is a problem in my writing. I have a learning disability." Children when asked why they were being called "mental retards", "mental" or "MR", Suresh mentioned that children who have a "kamzor dimag" (weak mind) study in the special section because they cannot study on their own (Joshi, p.188).

The consciousness of being recognized as dumb and slow inevitably affects the learning outcome of the children in the classroom. An experiment carried out among 321 high-caste and 321 low-caste junior high school male students across India involving simple puzzles to solve, revealed the fact the there was no difference between the performance of learners when their caste identity was concealed, in comparison to a strong difference between the lower-caste and upper-caste learners when their caste identities were publicly known (Hoff and Pandey, 2004).

Experiments such as these in fact provide enough information to show how narrow is the popularly employed Intelligence Quotient (IQ)[4] across India, which is considered to provide an index of measurement of learners' creative and critical learning skills. The cultivation of positive self-esteem is often neglected in the classroom in ability profiling as children are judged solely by their marks in scholastic tasks. Children who are well equipped with diverse abilities, especially those belonging to disadvantaged social and cultural backgrounds, do not get due recognition. More importantly, such quotients overlook the contribution of socio-cultural factors in the development of intelligence. As a culture, the classroom tends to view "intelligence" as being more innate, and does not give due recognition to the external factors that are as important as, if not more than, the learner's biological endowments.

In the absence of more democratic and culturally informed evaluative practices, teachers also face a dilemma on how to recognize the abilities of the diverse learners. Such dilemmas are writ large in every encounter of the diverse abilities of the learners in the classroom. As felt by a teacher about placing the abilities of the children of EWS in the classroom practices:

> Bahut si chezein inhe itne chote umar mein aati hai...jaise hisab lagana mausam ke bare mein aati hai...jaise hisab lagana...aap us cheez ke liye aapko yeh batana parega ki aap kitabi bhasha and sawal roz marra ki batein karo?
>
> (There are so many things that come naturally to these children. For example, calculation of money...if we go by what they know then we have to focus on the mundane things of everyday life rather than teaching what is in the textbooks.)
>
> *- A Teacher of an MCD school in Delhi (quoted in Jain, 2006, pp. 156-7).*

Though there are individual stories of teachers, such as the above, who are facilitating the democratization of teacher-based practices in the class-

room, the majority of classroom experiences, especially those belonging to the diverse and socially disadvantaged learners, indicate a very disappointing scenario. As noted in detail earlier in the chapter, most of the teacher-student interactions were focused around discipline and teachers' perceptions were based on what the students "couldn't" or "wouldn't" do versus what they expected the students to achieve. These teachers demonstrated both open and subtle negative attitudes towards children belonging to diverse and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. These are also often coupled with negative non-verbal communications such as lack of eye contact, distancing themselves from the children, and refusing to call on them even when they are prepared to engage academically. The teachers were also more likely to relate the students' lack of academic achievement to their home environment versus the actual academic environment of the school and classroom. The usual feeling is that children of marginalized communities do not achieve because they "give up too easily and don't try".

Another major characteristic demonstrated by teachers with ineffective classroom social systems was a phenomenon called "scape-goating", in which a teacher chooses one child of a marginalized community and use him as an example to show how much "power" he or she has as a teacher. It is reflected in teacher practices in the tribal dominated schools where Korku children are educated in Madhya Pradesh. In this phenomenon it is generally found that the teacher publicly confronts a marginalized child; questions his ability; uses him as a public example for punitive discipline to quieten the class and make the children pay attention. The teacher continues this pattern of interactions till the student simply explodes emotionally, becomes a discipline issue, and/or refuses to engage academically. At this point, the teacher then writes him up as a behaviour referral and has him removed from the classroom. The Meo boy, Asim's confrontation with his teacher in the mathematics class discussed earlier, provides a perfect example of the potential of turning into an incidence of violence. Both examples clearly illustrate the impact of teacher-student interactions in the classroom's social system. Both teachers chose, consciously or unconsciously, to use their personal power to either help or hinder academic progress.

In most cases building teacher-student relationships show overwhelmingly discipline-oriented overtones. As evident from research on comparative studies by DIET and B.Ed. trained teachers in MCD schools disciplining the students emerges as a major factor in classroom management and is an essential aspect for effective teaching-learning practices. However, interestingly there was a wide difference and variability in the interpretation and understanding of the term "discipline" between DIET and B.Ed teachers. DIET teachers defined discipline in terms of classes that "listen to the teachers, do what the teacher wants them to .and wishes the visitor to the classes." Two teachers Mahesh and Ajay of an MCD school explained:

> A disciplined class, I would say, is the one which really listens to the teacher and completes the work on time... they should pay attention to what the teacher is saying...should know that another teacher has come into the class and we should wish her (quoted in Jain, 2006, p. 137).

4. Conclusion

Teachers' beliefs and perceptions about their students, their abilities, knowledge and potentialities are critical to teaching and learning that occurs in a particular context. They have a crucial impact on how they develop the curriculum, formulate questions, what they are willing to try differently and more innovatively, and how they deliver the curriculum (pedagogy).

A visible connection which emerges between the teachers' perception and beliefs of educability and the underachievement of children of marginal communities during the discussion in the chapter is that of a deficit model of learning. Teachers' beliefs in the deficit model of learning shapes their perceptions that children of marginalized communities do not possess the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to succeed and learn, and negatively impacts on the academic achievements of diverse learners.

As the narratives of teacher-based practices in everyday classroom interactions indicate, being different and diverse is generally equated with "deficient, inferior, and substandard". Such teacher-based practices has led to the further gheottoization of the diverse learners' identities, and their learning abilities and achievements. Looking beyond the deficit model and the "blame the victim" approach in contemporary teacher-based practices, the increasingly diverse social, cultural, economic, linguistic, ethnic and religious mosaic of the identities of the learners, calls for a reorientation of our approach to teacher education in order to prepare teachers to teach diverse classrooms.

Notes

[1]In fact, globally about 221 million school-aged children speak languages at home that are not recognized in schools and official settings (UNESCO, p. 173).

[2]A remark made by a teacher in a remote school located in a Meo Muslim dominated area of Rajasthan. This classroom narrative is adapted from a research study by Sajjad Ahmad (2005).

[3]The Meo Muslims are socially, economically and educationally one of the most disadvantaged communities of Rajasthan chiefly engaged in pastoral activities. Their habitations are spread across the Mewat region of Rajasthan.

[4]In India, the Standford-Binet test has been adapted as the Binet-Kamath Test. Most intelligence tests are designed to provide an I.Q. (intelligence quotient) score, which is defined as: IQ = Mental Age/Chronological Age x 100. Thus, a ten-year old child who has a mental age of a 14 year-old, will have an IQ of 140. The mental age is based on a set of norms that have been devised by collecting data on a fairly large sample of children of different ages, whom the test makers believe are representative of a population at large. One of the criticisms of IQ tests is that most of them are not truly representative, especially regarding lower income and minority groups. Even if IQ tests are truly representative, they have some drawbacks. The foremost is that traditional psychometric tests of intelligence are based on the supposition that human beings are endowed with a single, "general faculty" for acquiring information. Secondly, as a person is given a fixed IQ score, his/her intelligence is taken to be a fixed, unchanging entity. Traditional tests of intelligence do not take situational and contextual information into account. Thirdly, they penalize a child for a creative or unconventional answer (quoted in The Hindu, July 22, 2003).

4

Learning Together, Moving Ahead: Recommendations and Strategies for the Future

While elementary education in India has witnessed significant improvements in recent times in terms of school enrolment of children, especially from historically marginalized and excluded communities, large gaps still persist in retention, completion rates and learning achievements among children from different castes, classes, gender, and ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

Due to the increased inflow of children from various sections of society, the classrooms today have become increasingly diverse. This growing diversity of the class room has made it necessary that teaching as a process and learning as a continuum needs to be inclusive and responsive to the diverse learning needs and interests of children from different backgrounds. Teaching in such classrooms presents new issues and challenges at wide ranging levels from curriculum development, teaching-learning practices and processes, teacher beliefs and practices, school-community relationships, teacher education and development. This report attempts to identify and discuss the major issues and challenges in this regard. These need to be addressed by policymakers and practitioners to achieve inclusive classrooms, ensure meaningful and successful school participation, and enhance the learning achievements of children from diverse backgrounds. In the light of these issues and challenges, the report makes the following recommendations, and suggests a strategy to realize these recommendations in order to achieve the goal of inclusive classrooms.

Recommendations

1. School-Community Mapping

Child profile is an effective tool to promote inclusive classrooms. A child profile shows the diversity of children in terms of their individual characteristics and those of their families and communities; assists teachers and community members to identify which children are not coming to school and why, and who are at risk of dropping out. It helps to identify factors that exclude children from school and to plan programmes to overcome these factors.

Child profiles can be created through school-community mapping by conducting a household survey in the villages of the schools' catchments areas to determine how many members each household contains, their ages, and their levels of education. These maps can be created by the schools with the help of community members and elders, VEC members,

village Panchayat representatives or even dedicated youth volunteers. This step helps build stronger links between the school and the communities it serves. This involvement of the community can also assist the school to promote community ownership of the maps and the inclusive learning programmes that come out of the mapping and planning process. On the basis of the information so collected, a final map of the village/communities should be prepared showing the households, their members, ages and educational levels.

The mapping activity can be undertaken with a "child-to-child" approach and can be an extremely effective way to mobilize children's participation. Mapping could be integrated as a joyful learning activity even in their class room lessons thus making it an important activity in children's learning process.

These maps should be shared with parents, community members and leaders to identify out-of-school children, dropouts as well as slow learners in school. Brainstorming sessions/workshops with teachers, parents, community members, VEC members and village Panchayat representatives should be held to discuss, identify and analyse the various factors of the state of the school and education., Special focus should be on discussing thoroughly the school-based practices and processes that exclude children from diverse backgrounds.

Based on the analysis of the exclusionary practices and processes, a descriptive profile of each child should be created. This profile will help to identify, link, and analyse the factors that may affect children's learning. The child profiles can also be used to identify the differential learning needs and interests of children from diverse backgrounds.

Meetings can be held with school administrators to assess school facilities, availability and need of other resources. Discussions needs to be initiated on activities that need to be undertaken to make teaching learning-friendly and inclusive.

2. Developing Learner-friendly Inclusive Teaching-Learning Practices and Processes

Classrooms are diverse in terms of the types of children and the ways in which they learn. Children learn in different ways owing to their experiences, environment and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Consequently, there is a need to use a variety of teaching methods and activities to meet the different learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds. We need to know the different ways in which children learn to help us develop teaching-learning practices and processes that are more meaningful for the children, and assist all children. In doing so special focus should be on children from communities who have been historically excluded from education. A diverse classroom can have positive benefits for all learners, as every child can contribute and bring some ingredients to the learning "soup".

Inclusive schools are those that embrace diversity and cherish differences. Children should be valued for who they are. They should feel safe and able to express their views without fear. This helps children to enjoy learning, and teachers can reinforce this enjoyment through creating a more joyful

classroom. Such a classroom is one where children's self-esteem is promoted through praise; where cooperative and friendly groupings are encouraged; and where children feel successful and have fun learning new things.

Teaching children is best done through "learning by doing", that is, through actually performing activities and gaining experience. This is what we really mean when we talk about "active learning", "children's participation in learning", or "participatory learning". It means getting children to learn new information through different activities and teaching methods. These activities should be linked to children's practical experiences in everyday life.

Children also learn better through cooperative learning ("we can do this together") rather than competitive ways ("I'm better at this task than you because you are ...."). If organized well, small work groups encourage children to work and learn together. This interaction is especially important when the groups contain children with diverse backgrounds and abilities

Students from all ethnic/racial, cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds come to school with already-constructed knowledge, including their home languages and cultural values, acquired in their home and community environments. No child comes to school who has not learned anything at home or in their community. It is our responsibility to find out what the child knows and what skills he or she has learned already. Such knowledge and skills should serve as the framework for constructing new knowledge and understanding.

Prejudice and discrimination can be reflected in our curriculum and learning materials. For classrooms to be fully inclusive, it should be ensured that the curriculum is accessible to and relevant for all children in terms of what is taught (content), how it is taught (method), how the children learn best (process), and how it relates to the life experiences of the children and the environment in which they live and learn. In order to be inclusive of children with different backgrounds and abilities, curriculum material needs to be sensitive to the diversity of children and their circumstances.

The teaching materials need to be made inclusive by making them responsive to the diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds of all the children and relevant to their learning needs, abilities and interests. The school community needs to work with parents and community members to modify material and classroom lessons to represent the diverse cultures and experiences of the communities. Local stories, oral histories, legends, songs, and poems should be used in developing classroom lessons. Community walks/visits can be incorporated into lesson plans, where children visit the communities to learn diverse experiences and activities, and their importance in the daily life of communities and society. For children who do not speak the language of instruction in the classroom, schools should work with bilingual teachers to develop an appropriate language-training curriculum for the classroom.

Instructional quality in a diverse classroom can be improved by using multi-cultural and multi-ethnic examples, scenarios and vignettes to illustrate academic concepts, ideas, and skills. This is a powerful strategy for incorporating diversity into the heart of teaching, because examples are fundamental to and consume much of the actual time devoted to

teaching in all subjects and school settings. Relevant examples can link school knowledge to the lived experiences of diverse students, and improve academic achievement.

3. Developing a System of Regular Data Collection, Evaluation and Feedback on the Impact of Teaching-Learning Practices on Children's Learning

Teaching diverse classrooms requires a tremendous amount of flexibility to respond to their different learning needs and interests, and teachers need to constantly update their practices. However, without continuous and proper evaluation, teachers and school administrators cannot get feedback from which to discover the indicators, showing what works well, what does not, and why. While there may be many instances of good practices used by teachers in some schools, the lack of formal documentation, records and evaluation means that potentially good practices are lost.

A potential, and usually unexpected, problem with emphasizing the importance of valuing diversity in the classroom is that teachers may become prone to substitute cultural celebration work in the classroom for academic teaching. This mostly happens when the teachers continue to harbour low expectations of the children's academic abilities. As a result, instead of using the diverse experiences, knowledge, and socio-cultural resources, which children from different backgrounds bring into the classroom, to build inclusive intellectual challenges and enhance their academic achievement, the school curriculum may slip into being more "fun" and cultural celebration in the classroom. Regular data collection and proper evaluation of teaching practices will help us to learn "what works" in practice, enable knowledge to be transferred back into schools and systems, and guard against poor practices becoming widespread. Therefore, there is a need to develop an institutional mechanism for continuous documentation, evaluation, sharing and feedback on the impact of teaching-learning practices on student learning, and its linkage with the teacher support and training system.

4. Teacher Education on Diversity and Inclusive Classroom

Though the social context of the classroom has been changing, teachers appear to have little understanding of the issues of diversity, and are ill-prepared to teach increasingly diverse student populations. There is, therefore, a need for systematic efforts to make teaching for diversity an integral component of the curriculum for both pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Teachers' personal and professional beliefs about diversity, based on culture, ethnicity, caste, gender, language, social class, etc., are crucial in shaping instructional behaviours. A vital component of teaching for diversity, therefore, lies in reflecting on and examining one's own beliefs, and critically analysing how they influence behaviour and relationships with these children. The attitudinal awareness and skills for teaching and motivating diverse classrooms cannot be simply developed and absorbed through a one-time course during initial teacher training or in-service

training. Instead, continuous reflection and re-examination of beliefs and practices need to be inbuilt in a system of teacher support and development throughout their careers.

Teaching and learning takes place in particular contexts. While general principles of teaching for diversity can transcend context, it is extremely important that particular classroom strategies are tailored to the learners in question. Determining universal best practices is thus neither possible nor desirable. It is, therefore, important that pre-service and in-service training are oriented towards developing among teachers an understanding of the importance of contextual specificity and an ability to critically reflect on their own particular classroom contexts and practices. This will equip teachers with abilities to apply general principles of teaching for diversity in ways that work for their specific classroom situations.

Firsthand experience in dealing with diversity issues can be a tremendous asset for teaching, curriculum design and inclusive classroom development. Teachers would greatly benefit if training programmes include their participation in activities that expose them to practical situations in addressing diversity. This could be most meaningfully done during classroom practice, by placing them in schools that are already recognized for their use of innovative practices to address diversity.

Maintaining diversity in the teacher workforce is considered crucial to create inclusive schools. While there has been an increasing flow of diverse learners in the classroom, the social composition of teachers has not kept pace. The recruitment policy for teachers, therefore, needs to be geared towards promoting an increased intake of teachers from historically excluded groups such women, SC/STs, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, etc. A teaching force that more closely mirrors the student population can benefit both students and teachers. Diverse teachers can serve as powerful role models for diverse students, potentially motivating them to strive further in their achievements. Diverse teachers also bring to the classroom their unique experiences and perspectives, which can help them to better relate to their diverse students. Diverse teachers may also be more inclined to view student diversity in the classroom as a resource rather than a problem.

There is also a need to encourage and support relevant research, especially empirical research, on initial and ongoing teacher education as well as classroom practices for diversity in order to develop a richer knowledge base. Without rigorous empirical research on the key elements of teacher education for diversity, policymakers will not be able to answer crucial questions about what works and what does not. Better teacher education for diverse student populations is a topic that requires learning from multidisciplinary evidence. But too often, relevant research results remain in their original field without further dissemination, making it difficult to create links between research findings. The dissemination of research results among relevant disciplines should be a planned and systematic process to allow for an interdisciplinary knowledge base that can better inform practice and policy. This can be fostered through the establishment of networks to stimulate dialogue and build communities among researchers themselves.

5. Developing Organic School-Community Relationships

There is growing evidence that involving parents and the community can be an effective strategy to address diversity in the classroom. However, "community" is not a homogeneous notion. Various communities are unequally and differently placed in the socio-economic and political structure of society. Experience shows that the lack of a perspective that understands and appreciates social differentiation and diversity often leads to mistrust and even antagonistic relationships between the school and communities, particularly the marginalized ones. Therefore, formation of such bodies as VECs or PTAs does not in itself ensure participation of all sections of the local society in the functioning of the school. In the specific context of primary education, it is important to first recognize that community involvement and participation should primarily mean involvement and participation of those communities that have largely been left out.

The schools need to evolve programmatic activities to ensure the active involvement of various communities from within the local society. School-based plans to address the challenges of diversity in the classroom can provide many such opportunities for the active involvement of communities and parents. As discussed earlier, participation of communities in preparing child profiles and discussing and identifying barriers to their children's meaningful school participation can help in forging a partnership between school and community. Through programmatic activities, communities can become active partners in developing a school-based plan to improve teaching-learning practices and processes.

Community members can be involved by the school in developing an understanding of different learning needs as well as the learning processes and styles of children from diverse communities. This would help in developing instructional methods appropriate to address diversity in the classroom.

The school can also work with parents and community members to modify materials and class lessons to represent the diverse cultures and experiences of the communities. Communities' knowledge of local stories, oral histories, legends, songs and poems can be used to develop appropriate class lessons for diverse children.

The pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes need to develop and integrate effect tools within its curriculum to enhance teachers' skills for setting up and strengthening communication channels between parents, communities, especially marginalized communities, and schools.

Strategy

Deshkal Society, in collaboration with UNICEF India, has taken initiatives and made persistent efforts for generation of dialogue and network building on the agenda of inclusive classrooms and diversity with various stakeholders in the elementary education sector. This was done by organizing regional consultations in seven states – Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. About 691 people and 100 organizations participated in the processes of dialogue generation

through state consultations. The participants included representatives from the multiple stakeholders in the education sector, such as civil society organizations, state councils of educational research and training (SCERTs), teacher training institutes, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), schoolteachers, teacher educators, textbook writers and reviewers, education experts, researchers, documentary filmmakers, journalists and members of the local intelligentsia. As a part of these processes, a vibrant e-group discussion forum called *Deshkal for Inclusive Classrooms* was also established to share learning and experiences, and to promote discussion and dialogue among key stakeholders in the education sector. The e-group currently has over 400 members from the different regions of the country and across the world.

Through these processes of regional consultations, a network of civil society organizations (CSOs) to promote the agenda of inclusive classrooms and diversity has already been built in the seven states. A National Consultation is to be held in Delhi on 7-8 September 2010, which aims to consolidate and strengthen the outputs and gains during these regional consultations as well as to develop the future plan and strategy. In this regard, it is proposed that the exisiting network of CSOs should be expanded and strengthened, and a *National Forum on Inclusive Classroom* should be established. This should be seen as a strategic initiative to develop and promote the agenda of inclusive classroom and diversity in a more consistent manner with the different levels of the state.

The National Forum can focus its activities on the following:

• Undertaking ethnographic studies in different parts of the country to develop contextualized understandings of school-based factors and teaching-learning practices and processes that act as barriers to the inclusion of children from diverse backgrounds.

• Documentation and dissemination of innovative grass root initiatives and experiments of inclusive curriculum designing, learning materials, and teaching- learning practices and processes.

• Developing context specific toolkits for teacher education on diversity and inclusive classrooms in different states and regions of the country.

• Establishing a network of interdisciplinary researchers to promote dialogue and the dissemination of research findings on challenges in addressing diverse classrooms.

• Establishing dialogue, engagement and advocacy with the government institutions and programmes at the district and state levels such as SCERTs, DIETS, and SSA, etc. as well as with national and international agencies working in the elementary education sector.

It is proposed that a national meeting of the forum should be held every year to share experiences, critical reflection, and development, planning and strengthening of future strategies and programmes.

The recommendations proposed above are closely interrelated and complementary to each other, and, therefore, indicate the need for a multi-pronged approach to address the challenges. For instance, developing inclusive teaching-learning practices and integrating teaching for diversity

in teacher training and support systems are closely related. Similarly, school-community mapping, building organic school-community relationship, and developing inclusive school curriculum, learning materials and lesson plans are all correlated and complementary to each other.

It may not be easy to initiate the processes of change that are proposed. However, it is also important not to overestimate the challenges. Many components in the recommendations can be initiated by building on the processes that already exist, and revitalizing them in a new way. For example, the processes of school-community mapping and creation of child profiles can be built on the already existing provision for schools to collect information and maintain a record in the Child Register of all the children of school-going age in the village. Similarly, the existing Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) and Block Resource Centres (BRCs) can be revitalized to initiate processes to discuss and reflect on teacher beliefs and practices. However, we need to finally emphasize that we would not succeed in initiating these processes of change unless there is decentralized planning in which a broad framework for planning upwards, beginning with schools, for identifying focus areas and developing context-specific intervention plans, with the subsequent consolidation at the cluster and block levels. This could form a decentralized planning strategy at the district level. Only genuinely decentralized planning with school-based action plans at its core would be able to make the agenda of inclusive classrooms feasible and achievable.

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Annexure A1A
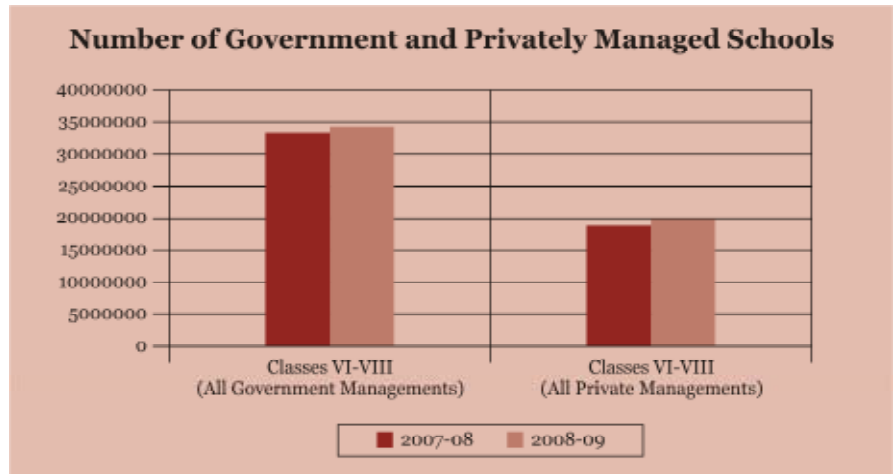
Number of Government and Privately Managed Schools

Source: NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Annexure A1B

Percentage Share of Government Schools to Total Schools

Source: NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Enrolment in Class I-V by School Management, 2008-09

Source: NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Children by Type of Schools in Rural Areas, 2005
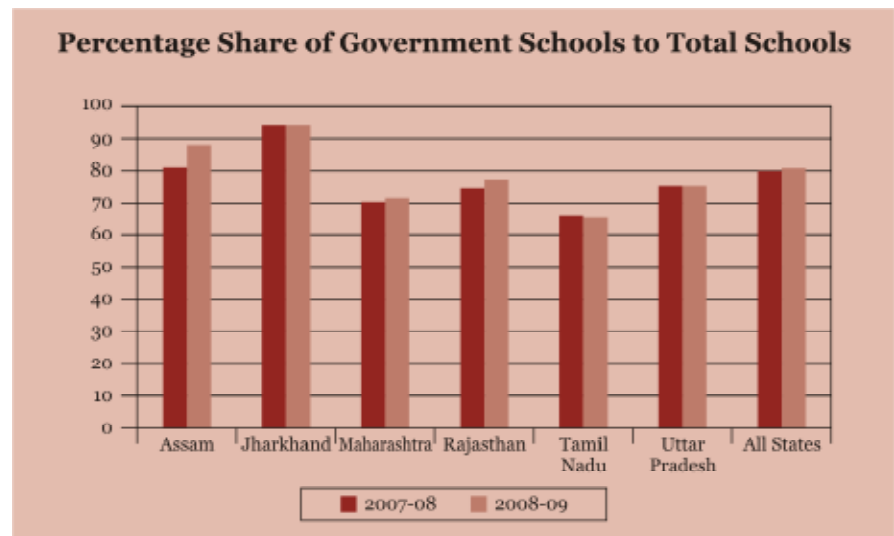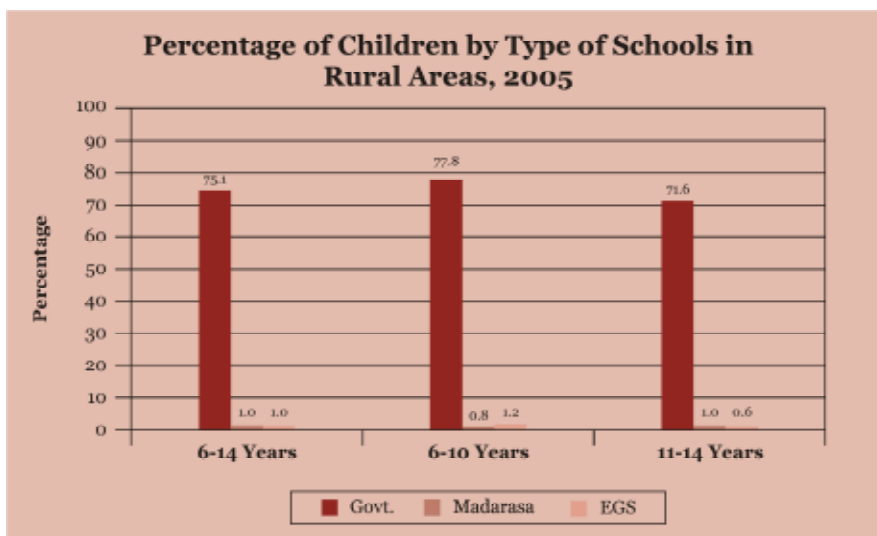
Source: Mehta, C. 2007. Student Flow at Primary Level: An Analysis Based on DISE data, NEUPA, New Delhi, p. 13.

Annexure- A3

Educational Development Index:
Upper Primary level All Schools: All managements

Sl.No	States/UT	Teacher Index & Rank				Outcomes Index & Rank			
		2007-08		2008-09		2007-08		2008-09	
1	A & N Islands	0.900	6	0.965	4	0.669	12	0.759	8
2	Andhra Pradesh	0.851	10	0.871	8	0.780	3	0.744	11
3	Arunachal Pradesh	0.701	24	0.582	25	0.613	19	0.660	17
4	Assam	0.659	27	0.625	24	0.648	14	0.620	22
5	Chandigarh	0.412	34	0.363	33	0.485	30	0.411	35
6	Chattisgarh	0.998	1	0.976	1	0.561	27	0.563	27
7	D & N Haveli	0.473	33	0.549	26	0.461	34	0.651	19
8	Daman & Diu	0.848	11	0.626	23	0.602	22	0.575	25
9	Delhi	0.858	9	0.827	11	0.640	16	0.774	5
10	Goa	0.935	3	0.908	6	0.526	28	0.685	15
11	Gujrat	0.911	4	0.905	7	0.563	26	0.431	33
12	Haryana	0.818	12	0.673	21	0.672	11	0.638	20
13	Himachal Pradesh	0.763	19	0.737	15	0.605	20	0.734	12
14	Jammu & Kashmir	0.803	15	0.783	12	0.648	15	0.753	9
15	Jharkhand	0.798	16	0.695	19	0.662	13	0.706	14
16	Karnataka	0.555	30	0.278	34	0.578	25	0.634	21
17	Kerala	0.795	17	0.662	22	0.819	2	0.749	10
18	Lakshadweep	0.950	2	0.909	5	0.764	4	0.809	3
19	Madhya Pradesh	0.867	8	0.970	3	0.756	5	0.801	4
20	Maharastra	0.501	32	0.427	31	0.451	35	0.527	30
21	Manipur	0.807	14	0.708	17	0.720	7	0.763	7
22	Meghalaya	0.752	20	0.707	18	0.734	6	0.657	18
23	Mizoram	0.746	21	0.689	20	0.604	21	0.584	24
24	Nagaland	0.723	23	0.764	13	0.636	17	0.669	16
25	Orissa	0.733	22	0.716	16	0.690	8	0.725	13
26	Nagaland	0.615	28	0.425	32	0.463	33	0.505	31
27	Puducherry	0.910	5	0.972	2	0.685	10	0.829	2
28	Punjab	0.810	13	0.865	9	0.498	29	0.542	29
29	Rajasthan	0.885	25	0.495	20	0.593	24	0.543	28
30	Sikkim	0.792	18	0.844	10	0.484	31	0.459	32
31	Tamil Nandu	0.876	7	0.738	14	0.833	1	0.907	1
32	Tripura	0.681	26	0.521	28	0.594	23	0.590	23
33	Uttar Pradesh	0.265	35	0.254	35	0.690	9	0.569	26
34	Uttarakhand	0.572	29	0.513	29	0.634	18	0.765	6
35	West Bengal	0.539	31	0.544	27	0.469	32	0.416	34

Source: NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Girls' Enrolment

	Percentage of Girls' Enrolment					
	Classes I-V			Classes VI-VIII		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
A & N Islands	49.08	48.76	48.97	47.58	47.5	47.45
Andhra Pradesh	49.29	49.26	49.35	48.2	48.57	48.91
Arunachal Pradesh	47.66	47.91	48.02	47.15	47.2	47.34
Assam	49.27	49.35	49.36	49.4	50.14	50.68
Bihar	45.89	46.56	47.45	41.66	43.04	45.19
Chandigarh	44.58	44.72	45.04	45.19	44.63	44.81
Chhattisgarh	48.88	48.88	48.87	47.29	47.99	48.27
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	47.65	47.68	47.73	41.62	43.03	44.03
Daman & Diu	47.88	46.73	46.53	47.68	44.23	49.6
Delhi	46.73	46.92	46.78	46.82	46.08	46.19
Goa	48.01	48.46	48.34	46.66	45.92	46.17
Gujarat	46.81	46.7	46.76	44.68	45.31	45.73
Haryana	47.31	46.06	47.24	48.18	46.63	47.93
Himachal Pradesh	47.29	47.3	47.36	47.16	47.24	47.28
Jammu & Kashmir	46.15	46.47	47.38	44.81	45.02	45.62
Jharkhand	48.59	49.02	49.32	45.24	46.39	47.31
Karnataka	48.4	48.44	48.4	47.96	48.28	48.21
Kerala	49.46	49.62	49.54	48.25	48.93	48.85
Lakshadweep	47.94	49.27	50.5	49.92	46.73	48.72
Madhya Pradesh	48.75	48.91	49.28	45.03	45.71	47.2
Maharashtra	47.31	47.13	47.1	47.07	46.81	47
Manipur	49.84	49.69	49.93	49.33	49	49.85
Meghalaya	50.35	50.18	50.35	52.44	52.37	53.37
Mizoram	48.22	48.62	48.41	48.83	49.09	49.19
Nagaland	49.07	49.01	49.03	48.78	48.67	48.79
Orissa	47.64	48.83	48.87	46.39	47.58	48.08
Puducherry	48.42	49.58	48.49	47.83	49	47.96
Punjab	45.87	45.97	45.45	46.05	46.27	45.7
Rajasthan	46.78	46.66	46.39	39.88	40.84	41.76
Sikkim	49.64	49.45	49.4	53.1	54.07	53.81
Tamil Nadu	48.39	48.43	48.52	48.14	48.07	48.03
Tripura	47.85	48.33	48.69	48.78	49.05	48.99
Uttar Pradesh	48.86	49.21	49.38	47.29	48.52	49.23
Uttarakhand	48.84	48.79	48.25	48.56	48.83	48.63
West Bengal	49.3	49.09	49.22	49.56	49.62	50.25
All States	48.09	48.22	48.38	46.51	46.99	47.58

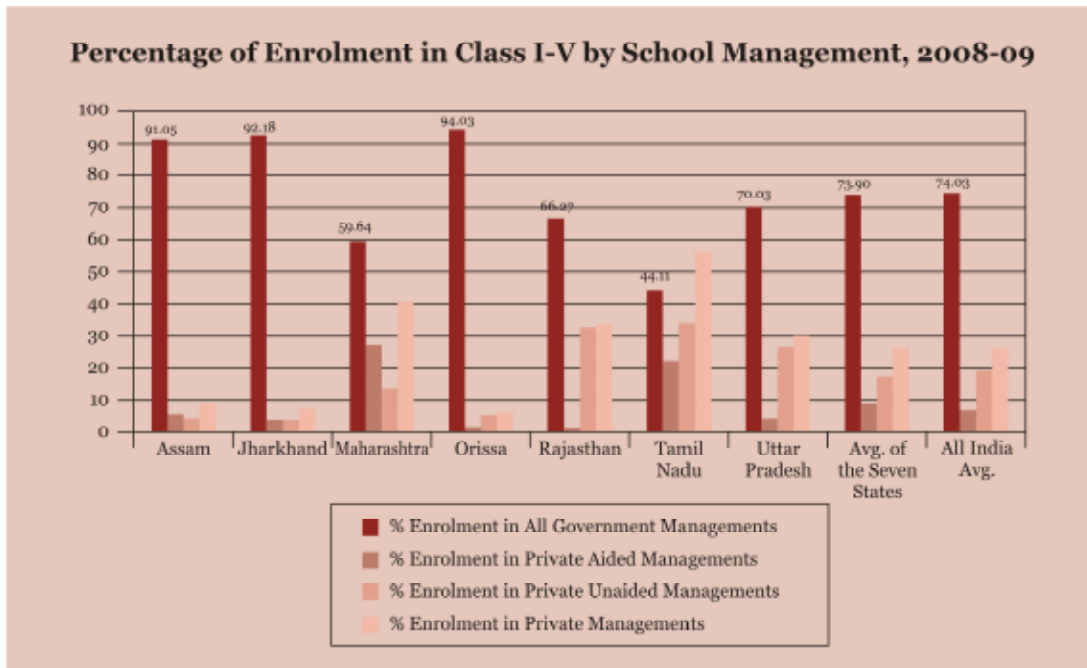**Annexure A4A**

Percentage of Girls' Enrolment in Class I-V

NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Annexure A4B

Percentage of Girls' Enrolment in Class V-VIII

NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of ST/SC/OBC Teachers to All Teachers in India

Category	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
ST to Total	8.82	9.14	9.46
SC to Total	12.2	12.25	12.31
OBC to Total	6.48	6.68	6.95

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of ST/SC/OBC Teachers to Total Teachers in India
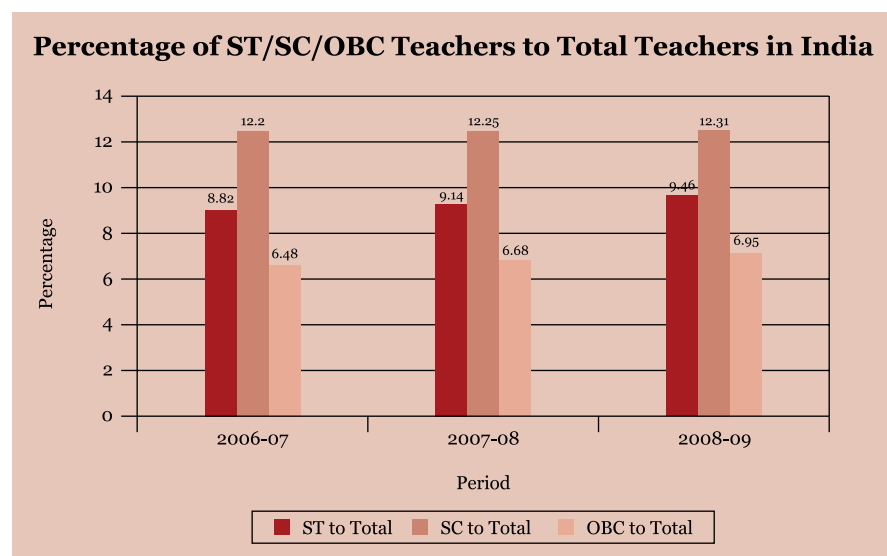
Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Teachers by Social Categories to Total Teacher in Selected States

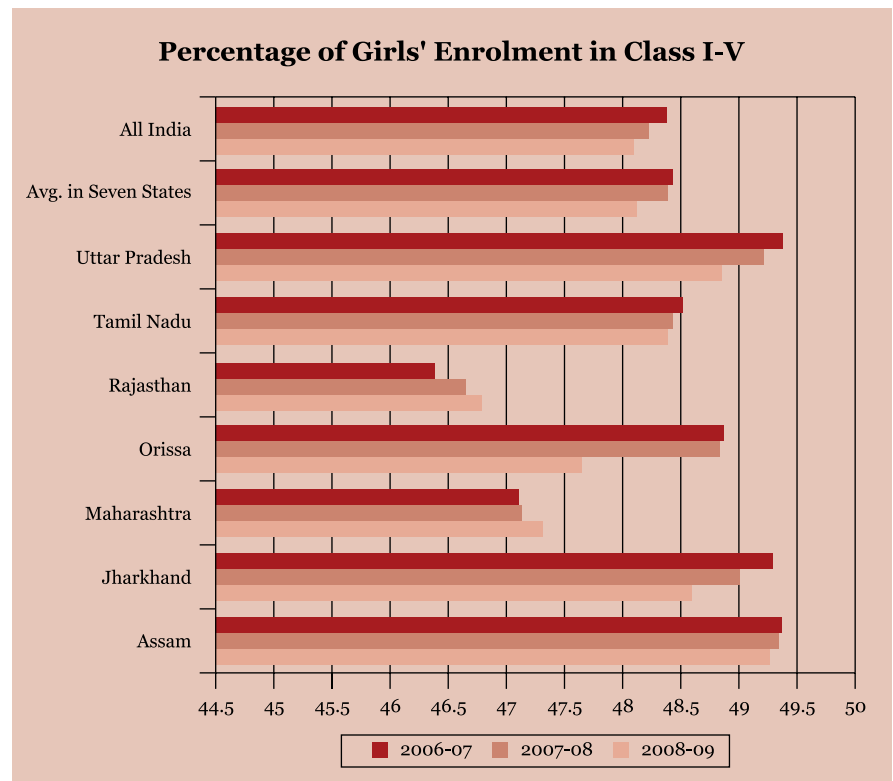| State	ST			SC			OBC		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Assam	16.99	17.02	16.77	5.78	5.8	5.66	29.88	29.63	29.51
Jharkhand	28.34	26.99	26.3	8.96	8.48	8.34	38.88	40.16	40.61
Maharashtra	6.2	6.33	6.66	11.2	11.22	11.41	28.12	31.25	33.31
Orissa	11.14	11.57	12.44	11.17	11.97	11.97	28.23	36.64	37.92
Rajasthan	6.26	7.95	8.95	16.47	15.07	14.55	36.49	36.72	37.16
Tamil Nadu	0.63	0.7	0.74	12.57	13.16	13.57	76.76	76.68	76.66
Uttar Pradesh	0.74	0.77	0.77	13.98	14.05	14.2	35.87	36.48	37.24
All States	8.82	9.14	9.46	12.2	12.25	12.31	32	32.76	34.23

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

State/UT	% Schools with Female Teachers (All Schools)		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
A & N Islands	87.43	85.79	100
Andhra Pradesh	77.71	78.11	78.68
Arunachal Pradesh	80.19	83.84	83.7
Assam	71.63	71.43	71.52
Bihar	64.18	79.11	80.2
Chandigarh	100	100	99.44
Chhattisgarh	63.25	65.46	66.51
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	81.88	84.87	84.74
Daman & Diu	94.19	97.96	93.94
Delhi	92.05	93.97	92.37
Goa	97.54	97.6	97.7
Gujarat	83.14	83.39	83.61
Haryana	74.98	77.93	79.3
Himachal Pradesh	71.14	72.43	73.1
Jammu & Kashmir	70.11	70.84	73.13
Jharkhand	59.27	54.63	54.49
Karnataka	79.62	80.18	81.42
Kerala	99.29	99.51	99.38
Lakshadweep	96.67	94.59	92.31
Madhya Pradesh	66.62	65.26	66.65
Maharashtra	69.78	69.72	70.94
Manipur	78.39	79.41	79.99
Meghalaya	79.02	80.25	80.95
Mizoram	81.42	80.78	82.48
Nagaland	84.59	84.34	85.2
Orissa	64.43	63.88	63.73
Puducherry	96.41	95.73	95.81
Punjab	90.18	89.97	91.86
Rajasthan	67.61	65.93	63.81
Sikkim	92.82	88.96	88.55
Tamil Nadu	92.8	93.5	93.88
Tripura	51.94	52.76	53.83
Uttar Pradesh	71.31	73.54	75.63
Uttarakhand	73.86	72.54	74.3
West Bengal	62.42	68.46	70.38
All States	71.74	72.88	73.66

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Schools With Female Teachers in Selected States

Annexure: A8
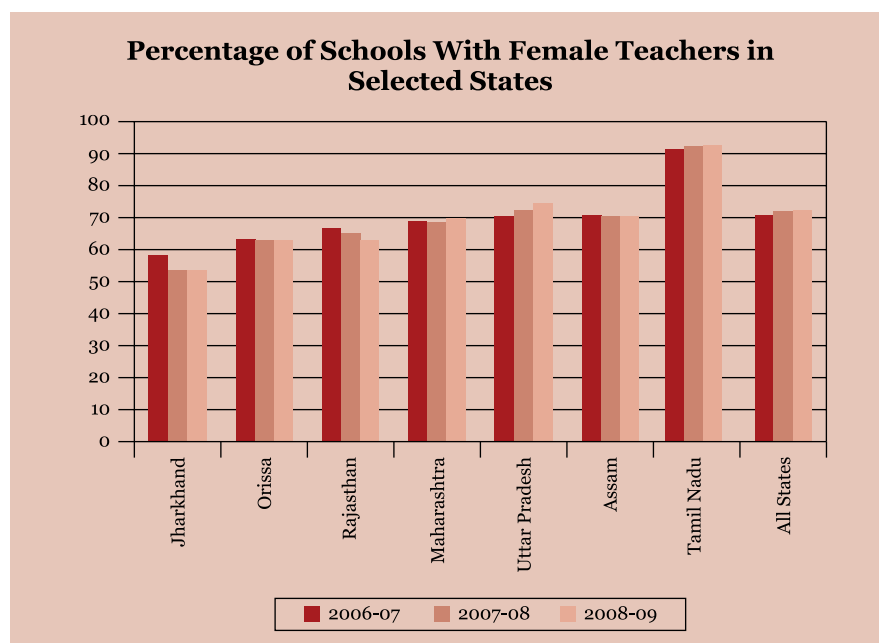
Number of Para Teachers in Elementary Schools in Selected States

	Para Teachers			
	Male	Female		
	Primary Only	Primary Only	Primary with Upper Primary	Upper Primary Only
ASSAM	10504	6728	123	390
JHARKHAND	29409	10463	6513	52
MAHARASHTRA	507	481	972	9
ORISSA	15657	10016	9048	873
RAJASTHAN	19970	4632	3698	115
TAMIL NADU	75	580	178	480
UTTAR PRADESH	76681	89083	221	154

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA. 2008. Elementary Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2006-07, New Delhi.

Percentage of Single-Teacher Primary Schools

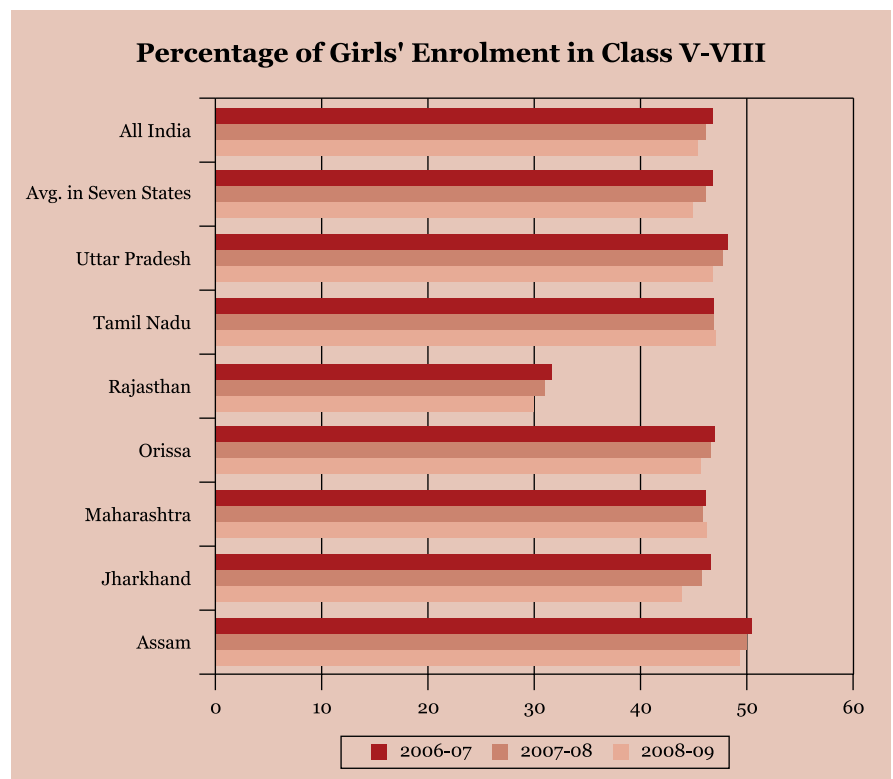| State	2007-08	2008-09
A & N Islands	0.5	5
Andhra Pradesh	11.22	13.28
Arunachal Pradesh	66.96	63.98
Assam	35.06	33.31
Bihar	7.86	6.22
Chandigarh	0	0
Chhattisgarh	18.19	15.18
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	37.29	38.51
Daman & Diu	0	0
Delhi	0	0.12
Goa	34.75	31.2
Gujarat	4.52	5.54
Haryana	4.24	4.23
Himachal Pradesh	9.95	13.43
Jammu & Kashmir	7.56	20.79
Jharkhand	11.24	10.24
Karnataka	18.77	16.31
Kerala	0.49	0.65
Lakshadweep	0	0
Madhya Pradesh	18.94	17.44
Maharashtra	7.51	14.21
Manipur	17.67	18
Meghalaya	18.25	18.05
Mizoram	2.38	0.93
Nagaland	3.65	3.69
Orissa	17.46	12.22
Puducherry	4.25	0
Punjab	11.18	8.12
Rajasthan	37.07	31.42
Sikkim	1	0.5
Tamil Nadu	4.13	3.11
Tripura	0.97	1.19
Uttar Pradesh	2.96	3.65
Uttarakhand	18.47	19.85
West Bengal	3.79	4.75
All States	13.73	13.25

Source: NUEPA and MHRD.2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

State/UT	Percentage of Schools with Pupil-Teacher Ratio>60				
	Primary Schools			All Schools	
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2007-08	2008-09
A & N Islands	0.31	0	0		0
Andhra Pradesh	1.7	1.4	1.56		1.41
Arunachal Pradesh	4.07	3.12	2.44		2.4
Assam	15	13.7	12.77		10.64
Bihar	48.85	38.39	42.16		42.12
Chandigarh	3.11	1.86	1.16		1.13
Chhattisgarh	10.63	10.98	7.87		6.46
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	18.32	2.42	4.44		4.55
Daman & Diu	10.53	5.56	1.75		4.04
Delhi	5.02	5.66	5.03		4.42
Goa	0.95	0.16	0.3		0.45
Gujarat	5.03	2.55	3.1		3.17
Haryana	13.96	7.02	8.83		7.34
Himachal Pradesh	1.19	0.97	1.17		1.08
Jammu & Kashmir	0.73	0.83	1.19		1.17
Jharkhand	29.64	23.72	20.67		20.34
Karnataka	6.83	5.99	3.73		3.82
Kerala	0.87	0.43	0.78		1.76
Lakshadweep	0	0	0		0
Madhya Pradesh	24.14	19.54	17.75		16.55
Maharashtra	4.02	2.65	2.7		2.6
Manipur	6.29	5.57	4.35		4.17
Meghalaya	3.16	2.05	1.27		1.12
Mizoram	1.77	2.23	1.16		0.96
Nagaland	6.55	3.58	2.65		2.72
Orissa	11.59	8.81	5.63		5.23
Puducherry	2.46	0.77	0.5		0.43
Punjab	13.03	12.1	8.11		6.6
Rajasthan	15.05	11.69	8.25		7.92
Sikkim	0.66	1.14	0.97		0.96
Tamil Nadu	3.1	3.88	3.21		4.47
Tripura	4.55	3.97	5.93		5.86
Uttar Pradesh	38.11	34.67	34.76		32.17
Uttarakhand	7.02	7.65	7.3		6.29
West Bengal	13.5	11.02	11.36		14.02
All States	16.55	14.22	13.32		12.96

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Annexure: A10B

Primary Schools with Pupil-Teacher Ratio >60 in Selected States (%)

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Annexure: A11A

	% Distribution of Teachers Who Received in-Service Training during Previous Academic Year*		
	2006-07	**2007-08**	**2008-09**
All Schools	31.45	36.81	35.08
All Government Schools	40.46	43.44	46.06
All Aided Schools	26.25	27.8	30.17
All Un-aided Schools	2.51	2.32	1.93
*including para teachers			

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Teachers Who Received in-Service Training during Previous Academic Year in Selected States

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Assam	38.63	29.95	39.72
Jharkhand	40.34	18.52	31.07
Maharashtra	36.37	24.73	32.24
Orissa	52.63	35.71	46.32
Rajasthan	0.27	56.52	53.06
Tamil Nadu	66.51	81.96	84.17
Uttar Pradesh	22.24	11.85	23.48
Av. Of the Seven States	36.71286	37.03429	44.29429
All States	40.46	43.44	46.06

Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Percentage of Government School Teachers Who Received In-Service Training During Previous Academic Year
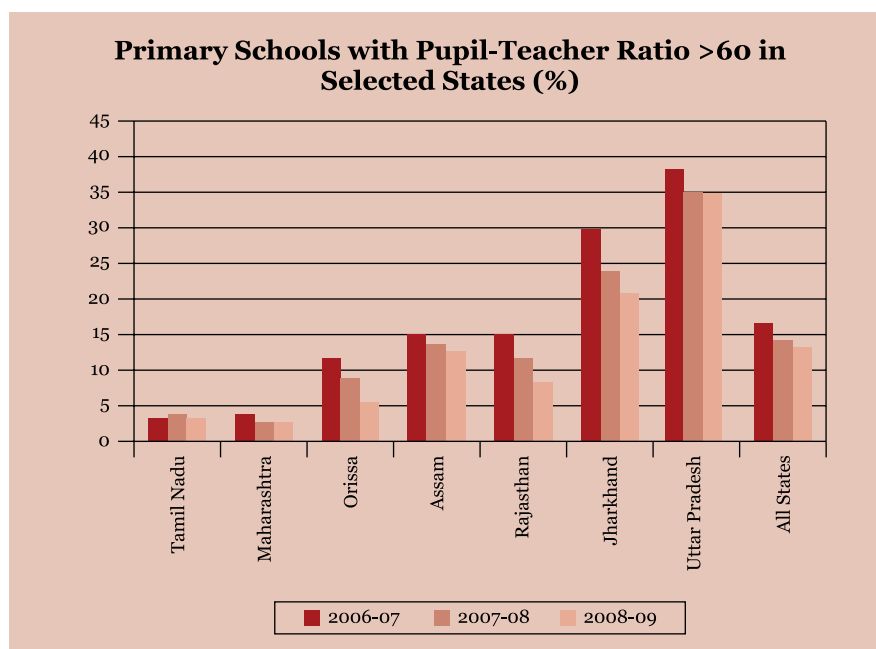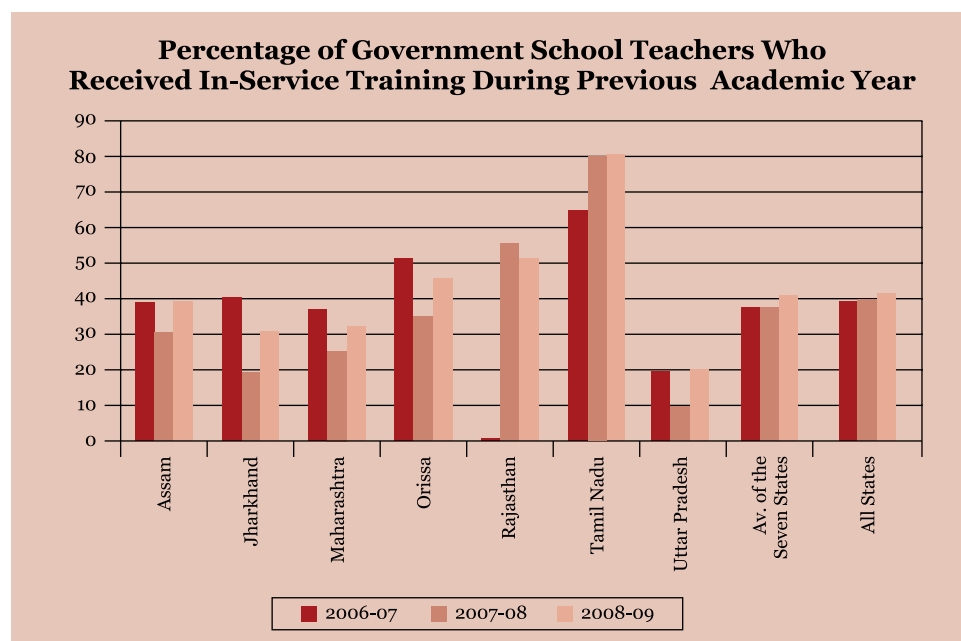
Source: Enumerated from NUEPA and MHRD. 2010. Education in India: Progress Towards UEE: DISE Flash Statistics, 2008-09 (Provisional), New Delhi: NUEPA and MHRD, Department of School Education and Literacy.

Questionnaire for
Socio-economic Profile of Children

A. Information to be obtained from school

Name of the Child: ....

School: .... Class/Std.:................

Age: ....Gender: ....Caste: ....

Village: ....

Father's Name & Address: ....

....

B. Information to be obtained from households

1. Education of adults members (above 14 years)

Sl. No.	Name	Relationship with child	Age	Sex	Education			Marital Status
					Never enrolled in school	No. of years attended school	Class/ std	
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								

2. Occupation and income of household members (above 14 years)

2.1 Land ownership and cultivation

Land owned	Land leased in	Land leased out

2.2 Occupation and Income

Sl.No.	Occupation during last one year		Income during last one year	
	Main	Other	Source	Income (in Rs. per year)
1.		1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3. Total	
2.		1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3. Total	
3.		1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3. Total	
4.		1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3. Total	

3. Migration status of the parents and children

Migration for work during last one year: Yes/No

Place of migration:

Duration in a year:

Type of work:

Income (in Rs. per year):

Migration in Family: Only father/Father and mother/Father, mother and non school going children/ Father,mother,and all children

Do children attend school at the place of migration: Yes/No

If no,What are the reasons:

Whether children attend the same class or the higher class after coming back

4. Educational profile of children (0-14 years)

Part-I

Sl. No.	Name of Child	Age	Sex	Relation with Child	Child enrolled in school	Which class/ std (if yes)	Reasons (if no)
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							

Part-II

Sl. No.	Attendance	Reasons (if irregular)	Attendance in a month (in days)	Drop Out			
				Class/Std.	Year	Reason	Current activity/work
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							

Response Code for: Child enrolled in school: Yes/No, Attendance: Regular/Irregular

Developed by Deshkal Society, Delhi, for its ongoing programme on Enhancing School Effectiveness through Inclusive Teaching and Learning: An Innovative Action Research in Two Rural Government Primary Schools in Gaya District of Bihar, supported by DFID India.

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Voices from the Margins**

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Appendix-III

List of Organizations associated with the Regional Consultations including those who joined later[1]

1.   Adaiyaalam, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

2.   ADRI, Patna, Bihar

3.   Agragamee, Kashipur, Rayagada, Orissa

4.   Ajmal Foundation, Hojai, Assam

5.   Anand Niketan, Nai Talim Samiti, Vardha, Maharastra

6.   BISWA Research and Innovation Centre, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

7.   Beti Foundation, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

8.   Centre for Learning Resources, Pune, Maharastra

9.   Centre for Social Education and Development, Avinasi, Tamil Nadu

10. CULP, Jaipur, Rajsthan

11. DRPAN, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

12. Ehasaas, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

13. Grassroot Foundation, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

14. Hand in Hand, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

15. Indian Institute of Education, Pune, Maharastra

16. Institute of Human Rights Education, Madurai, Tamil Nandu

17. Jagriti Vihar, Daltenganj, Jharkhand

18. Markazul Maarif, Hojai, Assam

19. Nalanda Education Trust, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

20. Prabhat Khabar, Ranchi, Jharkhand

21. Purvanchal Rural Development & Training Institute, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh

22. Saajhi Duniya, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

23. Sakti Vidiyal, Madurai, Tamil Nadu

24. Sarvarth, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

25. Shishu Sarothi, Guwahati, Assam

26. Shristhi Solutions,Ranchi, Jharkhand

27. Sikshasandhan, Bhubaneswar, Orissa

28. Sulabh International Social Service Organisation, Delhi

29. Thrust Resource for Alternative Education, Trichi, Tamil Nadu

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[1]Most of the organizations are the network partners of the programme and in the case of some organizations their representatives participated in the regional consultation. Kindly see details in Appendix-II.

List of partner International and National Organizations for the National Consultation on Inclusive Classroom, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices

1. Care India

2. Department for International Development (DFID)

3. European Union

4. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

5. National Foundation of India (NFI)

6. National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA)

7. Room to Read

8. Save the Children

9. UNICEF, India