

**EDUCATING THE URBAN POOR CHILD:  
A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF TWO  
SCHOOLS IN DELHI**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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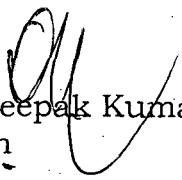



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**CERTIFICATE**

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "**Educating the Urban Poor Child: A Sociological Study of Two Schools in Delhi**" submitted by me, Ketaki Saxena, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is my original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any other degree or diploma in any other University. This may be placed before the examiners for the evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

  
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*In the  
memory  
of  
my father*

July 29, 2003

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## *Introduction*

## **CHAPTER - I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Primary education in itself and as the threshold level is an essential component for raising the quality of life (Dreze and Sen 1995). By providing access to the written word and the ability to handle simple calculations it makes a critical difference to the opportunities available to an individual irrespective of the income benefits (Tilak 1996). This decisive difference between literacy and illiteracy obliterated by completing the primary stage in education overshadows the monetary benefit from this level of education. (Acharya 1994) An educated person is better equipped to overcome vulnerability and marginalization in modern society and it is in this sense that education has considerable empowerment value (Banerjee 1998).

Provision of free and compulsory education to all children until they complete the age of 14 years is a Directive Principle of the Constitution. Since 1950 determined efforts have been made towards the achievement of this goal. Over the years there has been an increase in the number and spread of primary schools as well as enrolment. The enrolment at the primary stage of education increased to 49.8 percent for girls and 64 percent for boys (India 2002). However, drop out rates continue to be significant at 41.9 percent for girls and 39.7 percent for boys (India 2002). Exclusion from the schooling system

is overwhelmingly concentrated among girls and disadvantaged communities. Improving educational opportunities for the underprivileged is an essential precondition of social equity.

Due to the benefits from education, improvement of primary education continues to demand attention as a matter of urgent priority. Thus, a major concern has been to provide formal education that will give all children regardless of their family background equal access to meaningful and rewarding social roles. In spite of the effort that desirable positions are made equally available to everyone, most people still end up in a relative social position close to that of their parents (Turner 1996).

This is due to a number of complex factors. Among the most significant are the differential access that children have to quality education, the varying experiences that family life provides and the prejudicial treatment often received by children from low income and ethnic minority groups. These factors intertwine and in combination enhance or inhibit childrens' subsequent opportunities (Schwartz 1975).

As a result there is a high incidence of non participation among poor families which implies that the issue of education of the poor needs to be studied in the specific context of low income neighbourhoods and the process that impact on schooling related decisions in such families (Dreze and Sen 1995). This is evident from



figures that show that only 59 percent of the very poor children in urban areas in India in the age group of 6-13 years attend school regularly (India 2002).

Poverty and forced livelihood options create severe restrictions on the opportunities available to the urban poor. Studies show a strong correlation between poverty and school participation. As they are from the low income group they live in slums and are affected by all the disadvantages of living in slums (Desai 1989). They live in overcrowded rooms and suffer from physical debility, where infections cause recurring illness (Gore 2003, World Bank 1990). According to Shukla et.al. 1994 two major ways in which poverty can lower children's achievement level are (a) reduced capability to learn in school because of malnourishment and poor health and (b) sporadic attendance at school because of frequent illness and the value of child labour at home.

It is important to redress the effects of poverty if the aim is to provide education for the poor. Kerala is a case in point. It is well known that Kerala has the highest literacy rate among the Indian states but it also has the highest life expectancy, lowest mortality rate, highest rate of immunization and the best managed public distribution system (Dreze and Sen 1995; Tyagi 1990). All of the above indicate that in Kerala children are protected from the most debilitating effects of poverty. Kerala has the most favourable sex ratio of women, lowest birth rate and highest average age for women (Ramachandran 1996).

The first seminal study on urban poverty was made by Dandekar and Rath in 1971. They observed a continuous deterioration in the conditions of the urban poor and stressed that this was the consequence of the continuous migration of the rural poor into urban areas in search of livelihood, their failure to find adequate means to support themselves there and the resulting growth of roadside and slum life in the cities.

Theories about the educational "failure" of poor children have tried to shift the blame from the children to their parents. One such theory propagates that poor children "fail" because of inappropriate traditions or deficits in the subcultures of their homes, communities or ethnic groups. This notion was first posed by anthropologist Lewis in 'La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty' (1968). Lewis states that "by the time slum children are 6 or 7 years they have usually absorbed the basic attitudes and values of their sub cultures. Thereafter they are psychologically unready to take full advantage of changing conditions or improving opportunities that may develop in their lifetime". Moynihan (1969) argues that Black youngsters were disadvantaged in education not because of inherited shortcomings but rather because of traditions within the African American community which did not support education. Similar arguments have since been advanced to explain problems experienced by other ethnic minorities like Hispanics and native Americans.

The culture of poverty theory has come under attack from those who are offended by cultural snobbery and other theorists have suggested that subcultures associated with poverty are not “deficient” but are merely “different” (Rao, Bhat and Kadekar 1991). In the Indian context Siddique(1969), Lynch(1975) and Wiebe (1974) have rejected some of the negative assumptions about the urban poor that they suffer from the culture of poverty, that slum life is socially disorganized and that there is a duality between slum and non slum people. They confirm the existence of organized social and political life among the slum dwellers.

A recent compilation of educational research by NCERT (2001) put forward the following reasons for the poor educational experience of disadvantaged children. Firstly, the schools that they attend have poor facilities and secondly due to their background they are not able to derive enough benefit from such facilities as are available. According to Boocock (1973) the school related causal factors that lead to educational failure of the poor are (a) external to the school and also (b) internal to the school. The factors that are external to the school are: socialization process in the family, socio-economic status and gender differences. The factors that are internal to the school include infrastructure, teachers, teacher pupil ratio, teaching aids, curriculum and the punishment meted out to students etc. This study concentrates on infrastructure, teachers and punishment. The above factors (internal) gives rise to a ‘discouragement effect’. As many

observers have noted the initial disposition of children towards school is positive. If the school environment is lively and supportive children enjoy going to school. (Dreze and Sen 2002).

### **External Factors**

The long term commitment that schooling demands is difficult for families living in a context of continued poverty and economic deprivation. The social aspect of schooling impact on access, drop out and also on the performance of children in schools. Majumdar and Madan (1986) states that all children every where get their early instructions in the family. Thus, it is the family which initiates the child into a culture. Murdock (1949) defines the primary function of the family as reproduction, socialization and economic cooperation. The family is a powerful institution and early family experiences have a lasting impact.

Socialization process in the family as stated by Giddens (1980) described it as a process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self aware knowledgeable person skilled in the ways of the culture in which he/she is born. Parsons (1951) combined two conceptualization of the process in his work. As the internalization of social norms that is they are self imposed and, thus, become a part of the individual's personality and, secondly, as an essential element of social intervention, that is, individuals become socialized as they guide their actions to accord with expectations of others.

The socio-economic status of the family is the most powerful predictor of school performance so much that it overshadows improved school level inputs. Lack of stimulation and low level of motivation can render even a good school ineffective (Sharma 1998). Socio economic status is also referred to as 'social class', 'home background' or 'family background'. It indicates the resources the family have at their disposal. In case of disadvantaged it can be the prime barrier to opportunities. It is the cause of unequal educational opportunities in the sense of unequal access to educational institutions (Floud 1970).

Studies emphasise on the socio-economic background as affecting school experience. Douglas(1964) based his study on the children born in one week of March 1946 who took their grammar school selection test eleven years later. The sample consisted of families that were considered to be educationally least promising coming from the lower manual working class. The conclusions were based on information collected over eleven years. This information included houses in which the children lived, the social background and education of their parents, the views of mothers on the childrens' education and the characteristics of the schools they attended. Douglas (1970) states that home circumstances and parental encouragement have a combined effect leading to a considerable waste of talent. There is evidence that extreme poverty of environment leads to progressive deterioration in academic ability. This was evident from the increase in

chances of going to grammar school for children who moved from slum to better houses.

Weber (1983) has reasoned that parents of higher socio-economic status are able to provide certain advantages to their children like pleasant surroundings to live in. Thus these children do receive better 'life chances' as compared to the children of poorer parents. Kirchhofer (1998) states that the educational system presumes that education is the major work of children and the family can provide the necessary supports to achieve it. However this premise does not operate in low income families. Joining the school at the appropriate time at the beginning of the academic year, regularity in attendance and providing opportunity for the child to have uninterrupted learning are presumed in the family of the privileged classes (Desai 1989).

Many studies have used measures of 'social class' or socio-economic status as indicator of family advantage or disadvantage (White 1982, Elliott 1998). Measure of socio-economic status often involves scales that rate not only family income but also the educational levels and occupation of parents as effecting education.

Halsey, Floud and Martin (1956) classify the social origins of grammar school pupils according to the occupation followed by their fathers. Working class children tend to leave early and are underrepresented in the upper forms of the school. There were considerable disparities in the educational chances of boys from

different social classes. In general the sons of manual workers had a chance below average and sons of non manual workers a chance above average of being selected for grammar schools. Duraiswamy's study in Tamil Nadu based on data from National Sample Survey (1986-87) restricted to 6-11 years found that increase in parents' schooling by one year increases probability of enrolment of a child by 2-3 percent. Also, parent's level of education has a bigger effect on girls than on boy's enrolment.

At the all India level less than half of all children aged 15-19 years had completed the upper primary cycle in 1998-99 (National Family Health Survey 2000). The Indian Year Book of Education (1962) defines drop out or wastage as the premature withdrawal of children from school at any stage before the completion of the primary course. Prakasha (1964) explain that from the above definition every child who leaves the school before completing the age of 11 is a case of wastage. About 65 percent of the causes of wastage are economic in origin. After he becomes an economic asset to the family he is withdrawn from school.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> round of National Sample Survey in regard to causes of drop out and non enrolment mentions lack of interest as the single most important reason for both non-enrolment and drop-out. Other factors being household work and work outside the house for economic reasons.

## **Gender Discrimination in the Family**

The most important of the external factors to the school is the gender specific socialization process at home. Gender has psychological as well as cultural connotations and can be independent of biological sex. It is the differentiation between the biological from the psychological and socio cultural attributes of human beings. This distinction helps to make clear the differences between men and women in society and to indicate why these differences exist (Nambissan 1995).

Gender differentiation differs according to social class. Within the family it results in differential acquisition of abilities and aptitudes among boys and girls. Research suggests that from the moment of birth parents and elders interact with children on the basis of the perceived gender and organize socialization processes accordingly. Children learn that acting and thinking in ways appropriate to their sex meets with approval (Chapman 1986). Chanana (1990) notes that so far as girls and women are concerned access is culturally defined and relevance for formal education is determined by societal normative structures and expectations of what is feminine.

Sopher(1980) undertakes a socio-geographic analysis of female literacy in the four metropolitan cities of India. He states that in terms of literacy females are indeed a "depressed class". Raza and Aggarwal (1983) say that the relative deprivation of women is particularly



significant as it underlies all other attributes of deprivation. The poor are deprived but poor women are more deprived than their men folk.

Access of girls to schooling and their continued participation is inextricably linked with the status of women and value accorded to female children (Acker1984). Studies concerned with the education of girls in India notes that families provide different academic environments for boys and girls in terms of resources invested in their education. According to NCAER (1994) gender disparities are high in household expenditure. Households spend less on the education of girls than on boys which is attributable to parental expenditure against spending on girls (Tilak 1987, Schultz 1993).

Though the gender gap in primary gross enrolment ratio has narrowed significantly from 32 percent in 1980-81 to 19 percent in 2000-01 (India 2002) differences remain. These differences in enrolment ratio are linked to the way parent's value a son's education for its effect on his earning potential and on the family status. Also an investment in son's education is preferable as the returns will remain with the family. On the other hand, a daughter's education is viewed as consumption by the family as it gets no returns to them. (Chanana 1990, Dreze and Saran 1995). This pattern is also evident from the Probe survey (1999) carried out using a random sample in the 300-3000 population range in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh which states that 87 percent parents

mentioned improved employment and income opportunities as a major reason for educating sons, as for girls 40 percent did so.

The external factors are important and decisive in determining a child's school experiences. However, parallel research in developing countries found the variable of school quality also significant.

### **Internal Factors**

Scholars have suggested that the socialization practices in the life of a child is a deciding factor when it comes to their schooling experience. According to Parsons (1986) school class is a social system and is an important agency of socialization wherein the individual personality is trained to be motivationally and technically adequate to the performance of adult roles. There are two aspects of schools as a social system. A school has its ethos, value system, expected norms, patterns of behaviour, language and communication within class and outside and expectations from children. The other aspect of schooling is that the child brings to school a number of characteristics which determine the nature of his school experience which either reinforces or comes into conflict with the background he/she comes from. This is evident from several studies which show that children from poor homes enter school with a disadvantage that affects their academic success.

Sexton (1961) states that poverty and poor education go hand in hand. Not only are the disadvantaged poor not ready for schools but the schools by and large are not ready for them. When the child enters

school he moves into a different world - one which mirrors the society from which he/she is cut off and which evaluates him/her in the same degrading terms he/she has come to accept as his/her lot. Poverty is a stigma that the school often unwillingly takes as sign of personal unworthiness.

The quality of schooling and school effectiveness are of great importance. Schools exert a major influence on their students. As formal organizations they expose students to different forms of authority (Denscombe 1965). Woods (1979) in his study on the processes in the schools states that there are two broad ways or 'perspectives' by which pupils look at their world. These perspectives are associated with the cultural properties of the social class background and the school according to him tends to foster these differences. Talib (1998) attempts to represent the school experience of disadvantaged children in a school located in an urban village on the southern outskirts of New Delhi. The children interpreted their failure at school as a lack of potential for learning. Most of the children could not recall a word of what they had learnt from their teachers. In class they would ignore the teachers pedagogic authority and indulge in activities that would disrupt the class.

Jackson and Marsden (1962) studied 88 working class boys and girls who completed grammar school. The author conclude that every custom every movement of judgement informs the working class children that the school does not belong to them. For them the

education system needed is one which accepts and develops the best qualities of working class living and brings them to meet our central culture.

Some influences of the school are specific and overt through defined instructions while others are diffused but they do affect the child. The National Policy on Education (1986) recommends a child centred approach in not only building academic performance but also in other social activities of the child. Every school needs to have the basic infrastructure for it to function efficiently. This includes pucca building, separate classrooms, safe drinking water, toilet facilities and basic teaching aids. Basic infrastructure requirements are far from being met in most states.

According to the 'District Information system for Education' initiated under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 18 states in India 58 percent of India's Primary schools have at least two teachers (20 percent have a single teacher) (2) 61 percent of primary schools have no female teachers (3) 26 percent have a teacher pupil ratio above 60. The DPEP data also states that these and related inadequacies are not confined to a few states but 13 major states in India. However, it has been estimated that these facilities are only 30 percent influential (Acharya 1994). Thus the focus shifts to the teachers. The role of the teacher is instrumental in determining a child's schooling experience.

This is also evident from a study by Banerji (2000). She based her study on a series of household and school surveys in low income localities in Delhi and Mumbai. Her paper suggests that the reason why children are not in school or why they are not learning has more to do with adequate number of teachers than with the economic circumstances of their families. While school enrolment has risen dramatically in cities the ability of the government school system to retain and adequately educate children has been inadequate. This is evident from her findings in Delhi where despite a high enrolment in Class I a substantial proportion does not survive through the primary stage. Teacher shortage comes out to be one of the major reasons for the high rate of wastage in government schools.

The importance of the teacher is also evident from a study conducted by Govinda and Varghese (1993) in clusters of 11 to 12 elementary schools in Indore. This study concludes that in India though the schools were well equipped but had low mean achievement score. The study concluded that variation in the mean achievement score was a function of different teaching styles. The performance of the teacher her/his commitment to the school and the quality and quantity of his/her effort were the cause for variation in achievement scores. As they state that free lunch may attract students but it is not a substitute for teaching. Hammersley and Wood (1984) state that a good teacher will be sensitive to the child's need and yet maintain a position of sure authority.

Another study states that internal factors (excluding that of teachers) are not significant. Sharma and Sapra (1991) studied the causes of dropping out in relation to certain school variable following correlation analysis. They found some relation between rate of drop out and certain school variables like qualification of teachers, extra curricular activities and teacher pupil ratio. However, they found no relation with any other variable like availability of school building, furniture and drop-out.

The teacher is the prime socializing agents within schools since they are the only personnel in continuous contact with pupils and disadvantaged child interacts with biased teachers unwilling to consider the context in which the child's education is to begin (Ozmon 1972).

This is because most studies have shown that teachers come from middle class homes with middle class values and expectations towards behaviour, language and attitude to studies. Thus children are judged according to a scale of values of the educated classes which many teachers owe to their own social origin (Mehan 1972). Reynolds (1976) based his study on nine working class schools in South Wales. He describes schools as sites of social class conflict between middle class teachers and working class pupils.

The expectations and prejudices which the teacher brings to the classroom are reflected in teacher pupil interaction in the classroom

and they tend to produce differential responses in the children thus fulfilling the teachers' predictions. According to Levine (1972) all teachers form opinion of their pupils. The child perceives these directly or indirectly and reacts accordingly. Having values and orientations to life different from that of the children the teacher develops a tendency to group together the children as disadvantaged and foster a stereotype view of them. The classmates of the child also perceive these reactions of the teachers. This would in turn effect the interaction of the classmates with the particular child. It is likely that this would enhance or hinder the child's adjustment to school (Kumar 1993).

Rist (1970) states that some teachers associate poverty and minority status with lack of intelligence. This results in discrimination against disadvantaged students in a classroom. He reports the results of an observational study on one class of ghetto children during their first and second grade years. The teacher placed the children in reading groups which reflected the social class composition of the class.

### **Gender Bias in Schools**

Acker (1984) states that to make facilities available is not enough to attract girls to school. What is needed is socially acceptable location of schools, whether they are mixed or single sex schools, whether there are women teachers in them, whether school timings are convenient for girls etc. Studies show that gender bias that originates in the family is reproduced in schools. Bhattacharjee in 1999 based her study on first

generation urban migrants from the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. Bhattacharjee observed continuities between family and school socialization. Chanana (1990) has provided an insight into how the twin processes of socialization and formal schooling or education interact and react with each other which is different for boys and girls. According to her socialization tends to become or is expected to become an extension of education for the girls of the middle and higher strata of society. On the contrary the lower strata perceive education as irrelevant and even dysfunctional to the roles required of their daughters.

Teaching practices that discriminate against girls communicate lower expectations for them than from boys. Classroom interaction is one area of continuing unequal treatment. Boys show a more assertive style of commenting in class and teachers tend to give more attention to them. Also they allow boys to interrupt more often than they do girls (Nambissan 1995).

### **Discipline and Punishment**

The behaviour of children is often controlled and modified by adults in the child's environment by different ways. Punishment is disapproval shown against a given conduct. All punishment must be preceded by a warning, reproach or disapproval by a glance, a gesture or silence (Pickering 1998).



According to Collins Thesaurus (1986) discipline in the school set up is looked upon as an act of responding to misbehaving students in an effort to restore order. Discipline can be through punishment or through reinforcement and reasoning. Also it could be either through corporal or psychological means (Kaul 1989).

Psychological punishment includes reproof, ridicule and social rejection. The impact of these kinds of punishment is unpredictable. It could have negative or undesirable side effect. On the other hand, the impact of reasoning and reinforcement are more predictable and positive (Majumdar 1951). Durkheim in his Moral education (1968) condemned corporal punishment for its demoralizing effect.

According to Rule 33 of the Delhi School Education Act 1973 Corporal Punishment could be given by the head of the school in cases of persisting impertinence or rude behaviour towards the teacher, physical violence and serious forms of misbehaviour with other students. The National Policy on Education (1986) states that all states in India have banned corporal punishment in schools.

In their study 'Deviance in Classrooms' by D.H.Hargreaves et.al. (1975) note that rules exist in schools in different levels and in different forms. Their research in two comprehensive schools makes it clear that though formal school rules normally exist they are supplemented by a variety of informal rules. In one sense these informal rules are much more localized than general school rules. They operate in particular

classrooms at particular times and with particular people. They are context specific. As for example the amount of noise that is permissible will depend on the kind of lesson being taught. Even then these rules can be altered, suspended or renegotiated depending on the circumstances.

Attitude of teachers regarding punishment is likely to affect their behaviour in the classroom. Sarangapani (1999) based her ethnographic study on children (primarily boys) of grade IV and V (between 9 and 13 years) of a government primary school in North Delhi. The school teacher explained that they beat up children for the children's good. It was the responsibility of the teacher to compel them to study by disciplining them. For children discipline was the defining feature of a good school. One of her subjects (child) suggested that without strict discipline the school will be as good as a marketplace. In every class "failures" were there as a constant reminder of the consequences of being disobedient, of those who would not submit themselves to being disciplined and who would never learn. Thus, a teacher who believes strongly that punishment should be used to correct erring students is likely to depend too much on punishment in maintaining classroom discipline.

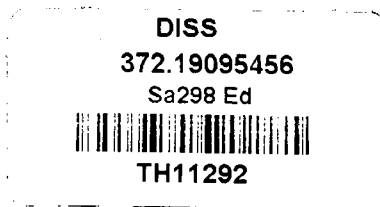
There is a difference in the type of punishment meted out to boys and girls in the schools. Girls are normally not given corporal punishment. Also, boys receive more beatings than girls. Punishment

can affect a child's psychology to an extent that he/she may stop going to school. Thus, it could lead to drop out. (Guilford 1959).

Quite often the stifling nature of the school environment saps the initial enthusiasm of going to school. It is not uncommon for instance for children to drop out after traumatizing experiences of physical punishment. Even when the discouragement effect does not take that brutal form children are often put off by the schools alienating curriculum, inactive classrooms and indifferent teaching. Social discrimination in the classroom is another common cause of child discouragement (Probe Team 1999, Talib 1998, Nambissan, 1995). Recent National Family Health Survey data support the notion that the school environment often saps the motivation of children and lack of interest in studies on the part of the child is the most prominent cause of dropout.

In conclusion it can be said that the absorption of educational inputs will be poor if a large number of children are simply not capable of deriving benefits from improved educational facilities. At the same time if some children are classified as poor achievers because of their socio economic background then their education may play a role that is the reverse of empowering. They may be getting ready to become a problem 'educationally' in the future (Sharma 1998). This is a danger which is specifically acute for children belonging to disadvantaged groups. Thus apart from the need to criticize the education system the

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external factors that prepare children for education and facilitate the process of learning are also to be studied.

### **The Study**

The study focusses on the schooling of the urban poor child in two schools in South Delhi, one for boys' and one for girls'. Three dimensions are highlighted namely access, drop out and punishment. Teachers' opinions regarding these dimensions constitute an important part of the study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. What is the socio-economic background of the children that is who goes to school in terms of access and enrolment?
2. What is the drop out pattern and the reasons for it?
3. What is the punishment (physical as well as verbal) meted out to students'?
4. To ascertain teachers' opinions regarding access, drop out and punishment in the school.
5. To compare girls' and boys' vis-à-vis access, drop out and punishment.

### **The Sample**

The selected schools are run by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. As mentioned earlier there are two schools which are located in

the same building but with separate administration. These are popularly referred to as shift schools. Based on the medium of instruction, Urdu or Hindi, both the schools are further divided into two schools. Thus, there are two shifts each in the morning and the afternoon , majority of children in the schools are from a minority community.

The schools are from Class I-V. In addition, the girls' school also has a nursery. Each class has a maximum of three sections with two in Urdu and one in Hindi. One section consists of 50 students. All the children as well as teachers and headmaster/headmistress live within a radius of one and a half to two kilometers of the schools.

### **Methodology and Tools**

The study is descriptive and qualitative in nature. An observation schedule was used to look at the way discipline is enforced and the types of punishment meted out to the students.

An interview guide was used to elicit the views of the teachers and the headmaster/headmistress on the dimensions to be studied. Twenty eight teachers and four headmaster/headmistress were interviewed.

Eight children from class IV and V (of both schools) were informally interviewed. This was done to elicit their views and opinions in comparison to the teachers.

## **Process of Data Collection**

The schools were approached after obtaining permission from the head office. The school visit took place throughout the month of February 2003 from the beginning of the morning school (7.30 a.m.) to the end of afternoon school (5.30 p.m.).

On an average two classes (from each school) were observed everyday (both supervised and unsupervised). No one class was observed on a continuous basis. The researcher switched between classes so that the teacher would not feel uncomfortable. The researcher stayed outside the classroom during recess as the entire school would be in the play ground.

The next chapter presents a few theoretical perspectives on schooling. These perspectives are concentrated on educational experience of disadvantaged children which is conditioned by class, culture, gender and language. The third chapter presents the findings of fieldwork conducted in the two schools in Delhi that caters to poor children. Finally the study will draw a few conclusions based on the findings of the schools studied

*Theoretical Perspectives on Schooling*

## CHAPTER II

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Schooling**

This chapter deals with a few theoretical paradigms that speak of failure of children from disadvantaged backgrounds from succeeding in school. Sociologists working in the field of education have used the mainstream theoretical frameworks to explain the influence of social origins in giving rise to unequal life chances and education contributing to it rather than nullifying it. Education is seen in terms of the way in which it contributes to the maintenance of the status quo (Blackledge and Hunt 1985).

Durkheim set the stage for the conservative functional approach to education. He is considered to be the first social scientist to recommend that a sociological approach be used in the study of education. He alone among the figures of classical sociology offered an analysis of the educational process as a crucial part of his general theory of society (Karabel and Halsey 1977).

Education was the means by which society perpetuated itself. Durkheim believed that educational system was not only an important reflection of underlying structural and cultural changes but also an active agent in that process. From this perspective no analysis of stability and change in a given society could be complete without a careful examination of its educational system (Gordon 1991).



Durkheim was concerned with the origins and consequences of those moral values that were, in his view, the foundation of social order and he studied educational institutions in order to illuminate the process that held society together (Karabel and Halsey 1977). He was interested in the internalization of social morals through education and more generally through socialization (Ritzer 1992). Education and socialization were defined by Durkheim as the process by which individual learns the ways of a given group in society, by acquiring the physical, intellectual and moral tools needed to function in society.

Thus, in his *Moral Education* (1961) he underlines three important aspects. First, education is to provide individuals with the discipline they need to restrain the passions that threaten to engulf them. Second, individuals are provided with a sense of autonomy which is characteristically atypical in which the child understands the reasons why the rules prescribing certain forms of behaviour should be 'willingly accepted' by virtue of 'enlightened assent'. Finally, the process of socialization aims at developing a sense of devotion to society and to its moral system. These aspects of moral education are efforts to combat the pathological loosening of the grip of collective morality on the individual in modern society.

Durkheim viewed the school rather than the home as the main institution through which the child should receive moral education as well as his training in intellectual skills. (Gordon 1991). In *Moral Education* (1961) Durkheim outlines his beliefs about the function of

schools and their relationship to society. Moral values are for Durkheim the foundation of the social order and society is perpetuated through its educational institutions. Any change in society reflects a change in education and vice-versa, in fact education is an active part of the process of change. In his work he analysis classrooms as “small societies”, agents of socialization. The school seems as an intermediary between the affective morality of the family and the rigorous morality of life in society. Discipline is the morality of the classroom and without it the class is like a mob.

In the Education and Sociology (1956) he wrote “education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. The objective is to arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined”.

Durkheim continues his analysis of the place of the educational system within the large social structure. For Durkheim it is impossible to understand changes in curriculum and pedagogy without analyzing the broader social movements that generated them. Though he sees changes in educational ideals and practices as originating in the larger society but this is not incompatible with the view that educational changes have important social consequences. If educational change is

ultimately rooted outside the educational system its consequences also extend far beyond the school. A proper sociological analysis of the content of schooling, however detailed, its attention to the texture of daily life in the classroom must never lose sight of the social structure in which the school is located. As Durkheim (1969) says "Educational transformations are always the result of and the symptom of the social transformation in terms of which they are to be explained.'

The educational system cannot be separated from society for they reflect each other especially the values and beliefs of society at that point in history. Many of the issues about which Durkheim spoke are relevant even today. The needs of different segments of society in relation to education and the role of schools in preparing young people for social life.

Among the thinkers influenced by Durkheim, Bernstein (1997), provides a theoretical framework to objectively measure social class differences. Language is crucial for the performance and retention of a child in school (Musgrove, 1987). Language structures, inhibits or facilitates certain kinds of expression. Differences in the linguistic behaviour of adults will have a direct effect on the perceptions of their children (Bernstein, 1977). He suggested that speech could be divided into two codes: restricted and elaborate. These two codes are seen as functions of different social situations (Bernstein and Henderson, 1974).

Restricted code is used by both the lower and middle classes. It is the mode or expression adopted for communication between individuals who have clearly shared identities. Thus it is the means of communication among family members. The content of this kind of conversation will be concrete rather than abstract (Bernstein and Henderson, 1974). The elaborate code is used between individuals in a less close relationship. It is a medium of communicating complicated information and requires a high level of verbal planning.

According to Bernstein (1977) those who belong to a privileged class can switch from restricted to elaborated code according to the social context but the poor will be limited to the restricted code by reason of their position in the social structure. This verbal limitation impacts negatively on the performance of the disadvantaged children. They face difficulty in communicating with teachers. These children are accustomed to make immediate responses and tend to display a low level of curiosity especially in abstract problems.

Parsons now classic essay "The School class as a Social System" (1959) owes an enormous debt to Durkheim's Education and Sociology (1956), Parsons views the functions of education as socialization and selection. It is Parsons view that without an efficient mechanism of socialization social order is not possible. He explains how education inculcates the belief that inequalities of income and status which are consequences of differences of educational attainment are acceptable;

that it is proper for those who do well in education to be highly rewarded. Thus, education ends up legitimating the inequality it engenders.

According to Parsons differential rewards are recognized as fair for different levels of achievement as long as there is equal access to opportunity. There is, thus, a basic sense in which the elementary social class is an embodiment of the fundamental value of equality of opportunity in that it places value on both initial equality and on differential achievement.

School is opposite to the family in terms of the basic principles it is based on. In Parsonian terms the school relies on universalism and non affectivity as opposed to the family which relies on particularism and affectability. Families favour nepotism, schools promote merit. There is a presumption that individuals should be treated equally according to a codified set of rules (Halsey, Lauder, Wells, Brown 1997) Schools are based on the notion that individuals are in principle treated according to ability rather than on the basis of ascribed characteristics like social class or gender. This gives rise to the notion of equality of opportunity. It provides the means by which the heterogeneous people of a nation in terms of class and ethnicity could aspire to and achieve common prizes offered in industrial society. In doing so it helps to create a single measure of personal success in individualistic industrial societies (Halsey et.al. 1997).

Thus, the functionalists emphasise that education cannot be independent of the society of which it is a part. In other words it mirrors the inequality in society. The functionalist, assume that change when it does occur is slow and does not upset the balance of the system (Ritzer 1992). The conflict theorists, too, say the same the only difference being that they propose radical changes to remove the unequal life chance.

Thus, conflict theory assumes a tension in society and its parts created by the competing interests of individuals and groups. Variations of this approach stem from the writings of Marx. Contrary to the claims of liberal theorists that education offers possibilities for individual development and social mobility to the disadvantaged, radical educators have argued that the main function of schools is the reproduction of the dominant ideology, its forms of knowledge and the distribution of skills needed to reproduce the social division of labour. In the radical perspective schools as institutions function as agencies of social and cultural reproduction that legitimates capitalist rationality and sustains dominant social practice (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997).

In contrast to the liberal view of education as the great equalizer radical educators saw the objectives of schooling quite differently. Education main purpose of social integration of a class society could be achieved only by preparing most children for an unequal future and by ensuring this personal underdevelopment. Far from productive roles in

the economy simply waiting to be 'fairly' filled by the products of education the 'reproduction' perspective reversed this to suggest that capitalist production and its role required certain educational outcomes (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997).

However, when it comes to functions of education the conflict theorists also regard the function of education as socialization and legitimation. But they believe that inequalities of all kind are simply reflections of existing patterns of privilege and power. (Tyler 1977) Children from advantaged backgrounds will, therefore, be more likely to have a rewarding school life.

The inequality due to social class has a bearing on education in two principal ways. In the first place, social class origins of children have some connection with how well they do in their school. Secondly, social class influence the way schools operate as agencies of 'social control' (Musgrove 1979). As a result monitoring the correlation between social class and schooling has been a preoccupation of the sociology of education and rightly so because the facility with which more fortunate social classes turn the advantage of the parental into the opportunities of the filial generation is one of the main ways by which members of these classes pass on their positions to their children. (Halsey, Heath, Ridge 1980).

The class structure can be said to have a tendency to restrict opportunity. Children from poor backgrounds never have an equal

opportunity to acquire intelligence. They are more often than not labelled as 'ineducable'. (Tyler 1979). Halsey (1978) suggests that "over the century so far the unequal relative chances of children from different class origins has been relatively stable and that the conventional picture of a steady state towards equality has been an optimistic myth, the underlying issue is the social reproduction of generations.

The Marxist analysis has been extensively used to explain theories of reproduction. Blackledge and Hunt (1985) divide these into theories of direct reproduction and theories of resistance. Aronowitz and Giroux (1997) divide these into the Economic – reproductive model and the Cultural – reproductive model respectively.

Social Reproduction Theory began in Europe as a critique of the social class biases in the schooling system (Brint 1998). Bowles and Gintis (1976) both, neo-marxist employ the economic reproductive model to offer a conflict theory that places social class squarely at the centre of its analysis of the educational system. In their book 'Schooling in Capitalist America' (1976) they provide a comprehensive critique of the functionalist view of the role of schooling in advanced capitalist society. They provide a structural analysis of the educational system in American society. The focus of this particular study is on the role of schooling in the reproduction of the social division of labour. They argue that class inequality is perpetuated from generation to



generation by class linked differences in the family and the school that correspond to hierarchical social relations at the workplace.

Bowles and Gintis describe education to be “an integral element in the reproduction of the prevailing class structure of society as it justifies or legitimates the class structure and inequality by fostering the belief that economic success depends essentially on the possession of ability and the appropriate skills or education”. (Blackledge and Hunt 1985).

They have constructed a correspondence model of social reproduction which proposes that the hierarchically structured patterns of values, norms and skills that characterize the work force and the dynamics of class interaction under capitalism are closely associated with the social dynamics of classroom encounter. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997).

It is suggested that students are oriented in schools to develop dispositions and attitudes that make them docile and receptive to the social and economic imperatives of capitalist economies. Not only does the mode of production produce commodities but it also “produces” people. Thus education can not act as a force for social change.

Theories of social reproduction have certain limitations as they fail to provide adequate explanations of the complex and often contradictory roles that schools have in mediating and reproducing existing social orders (Brint 1998). To overcome these limitations theory

of cultural reproduction have been proposed. Theories of cultural reproduction are also concerned with the question of how capitalist societies are able to reproduce themselves. Central to these theories is a sustained effort to develop a sociology of schooling that links culture, class and domination. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997). The mediating role of culture in reproducing class societies is given priority over the study of related issues such as the source and consequences of economic inequality.

The work of Bourdieu represents the most important perspective among the theories of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu explains reproduction through a cultural reproductive model. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997). His theory begins with the assumption that class divided societies and the ideological and material configurations on which they rest are partially mediated and reproduced through what he calls 'symbolic violence.' (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997). This means that class control is constituted through the subtle exercise of symbolic power waged by ruling class in order "to impose a definition of the social world that is consistent with its interests." Culture becomes the mediating link between ruling class interests and every day life. It functions to portray the economic and political interests of the dominant classes not as arbitrary and historically contingent but as necessary and natural elements of the social order. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997).

Bourdieu emphasizes on the importance of school especially for the upper classes because they convert a child's family advantage into cultural symbols and scholastic credentials which are a legitimate basis for high social position. (Musgrove 1979). Knowledge is not only more accessible to the upper classes but also functions to confirm and legitimate their privileged position in schools. The importance of the hegemonic curriculum lies in both what it includes with its emphasis on western history, science and so forth and what it excludes: feminist history and forms of knowledge important to the working class and other subordinate groups. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997)

Social position in the family and age were the main determinants of social relationships and so of the social order. Formerly an individual's social rank was probably of great significance than either his wealth or his 'office'. But Bourdieu points to education as the crucial property of the social order as it is one of the main effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern. It has this remarkable power because of its transformational properties : it can arrange for a social gift to be treated as a natural one (Musgrove 1979).

Bourdieu places importance on the cultural processes in the maintenance of existing social and economic structures. His first concern is to discover the 'laws' to explain why structures tend to reproduce themselves (Blackledge and Hunt 1985). Secondly he attempts to explain how education acts as a system of transmitting knowledge and ideas.

Bourdieu (1977) offers a distinctive theory of the relationship between agency and structure within the context of a concern for a dialectical relationship between the habitus and the field. The upper class are well endowed with 'cultural capital' which they hand over to their children as they are sent to school. This capital is invested in schooling which is organized to reward precisely the kind of literary and abstract culture that upper class children have inherited. Bourdieu calls this very useful family endowment the 'habitus'. (Musgrove 1979).

By explaining the concepts of habitus and field Bourdieu explains the relationship between social structure and mental structures. His concept of habitus and field exist in and outside the mind. (Ritzer 1992). Dialectically habitus are the "products of the internalization of the structures of the social world" thus they are "internalized embodied social structures". They reflect objective divisions in the social structure such as age group, gender and social class. (Ritzer 1992). →

A habitus is acquired as a result of long term association of a position within the social world. Thus habitus varies depending on the nature of ones position in that world, not everyone has the same habitus (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997). However those who occupy the same position within the social world tend to have similar habitus. The habitus allow people to make sense out of the social world but the existence of a multitude of habitus means that the social world and its structures do not impose themselves uniformly on all actors. (Ritzer 1992).

While we are not conscious of habitus and its operation it manifests itself in our most practical activities such as the way we speak, eat etc. Practice mediates between habitus and the social world. On the one hand it is through practice that the habitus is created on the other hand it is a result of practice that the social world is created. While practice tends to shape habitus, habitus in turn serves to both unify and generate practice. (Aronowitz and Giroux 1997).

The field is a network of relations which exist apart from individual consciousness and will. The occupants of positions may be either agents or institutions and they are constrained by the structure of the field. There are a number of fields in the social world (example, religious, economic etc). Bourdieu sees the field as an arena of struggle. It is the structure of the field as an arena that guides the strategies whereby the occupants of these positions seek individually or

collectively to safeguard or improve their position and to impose the principle of hierarchisation most favourable to their own products. The field is a type of competitive marketplace in which various kinds of capital (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic) are employed and deployed. The positions of various agents in the field are determined by the amount and relative weight of the capital they possess (Ritzer 1992).

Bourdieu sees the relationship between habitus and field operating in two main ways. On the one hand the field conditions the habitus and on the other hand the habitus constitutes the field as something that is meaningful, has sense and value and is worth the investment of energy (Ritzer 1992). It is out of the relationship between habitus and field that practices, cultural practices in particular are established. Bourdieu sees culture as a kind of economy or marketplace. In this marketplace people utilize cultural rather than economic capital. This capital is the result of people's social class origins and their educational experience (Bourdieu 1973).

In the marketplace individuals accrue more or less capital and either expend it to improve their position or lose it thereby causing their position within the economy to deteriorate. The disadvantaged sections of society lack this cultural capital. (Blackledge and Hunt 1985). As children from this section of society begin schooling they are at a disadvantage as compared to those children whose background

enables them to internalize the cultural capital that helps in school success.

The school legitimizes certain forms of knowledge ways of speaking and relating to the world that only certain students have received from their family background. As the school transmits this culture it also simultaneously disconfirms the culture of the disadvantaged groups. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). The cultural arbitraries the education system adopts are variants of the cultural arbitraries of the dominant group. Thus children coming from this social class find education 'intelligible' helping them excel in school. (Mehan 1992, Blackledge and Hunt 1985).

According to Bourdieu the school fails to take into account the unequal life chances of children of different social classes. In other words, by treating all children however unequal equally they give a defacto sanction to initial inequalities which is due to the child's background. Thus, Bourdieu (1974) explains that the school gives the impression that the disadvantaged lack the natural ability to do well when it is only a result of cultural reproduction. Those few who manage to perform well despite their disadvantage justify the educational selection and give credence to the myth of the school as a liberating force. In other words school in the garb of claiming to provide equality of opportunity ends up reproducing the inequality in society (Bourdieu 1973).

Bourdieu advances a new theory of rights. Power has to be seen as legitimate if it is to be acceptable; in the past theories of 'natural rights' safeguarded perhaps in a 'social contract' have given the powerful their legitimacy. Neither 'rights of nature' nor 'rights of birth' any longer suffice. Power to be legitimate requires culture. Culture is for bourgeoisie society in the present phase what other modes of legitimation of the social order and transmission of privilege were for other dominant groups in the past (Musgrave 1979).

The contribution of Bourdieu is seminal in highlighting the reproduction of inequalities within the school and the continuity in the socialization process in the family, school and society. This analysis is pertinent in providing insights into the role of socialization in reproduction of inequality through the school.

The sociological view of the world as represented by macro theories was an over simplification of the world running smoothly with agreed norms of behaviour and with institutions and individuals performing functions that maintained society. Starting in the mid 1970's serious questions were raised about these macro approaches. Status attainment models were criticised for not being able to explain differential academic achievement (Karabel and Halsey 1977). The macro approaches were criticized as they explained role of education by locating it within the wider society. They fail to grasp the reality of life in school. (Blackledge and Hunt 1985). Rise of new sociology and



interpretive paradigms fills the gap of looking at school classroom processes.

Max Weber's unique approach to education combines the study of the macro-school organization with an interpretative view of who or what bring about a situation and how we interpret and define these situations. A Weberian perspective suggests that if members of certain social status groups have the power to determine what is valued in the educational system at a particular time in history then members of subordinated status groups are disadvantaged in relation to the criteria set by the dominant group (Karabel and Halsey 1977).

Weber writes that the "main activity of schools is to teach particular status cultures both in and outside the classroom". Power relationships and the conflicting interests of individuals and groups in society influence educational systems for it is the interests and purposes of the dominant groups in society that shape the schools. (Mehan 1992). Within the school there are "insiders" whose status culture is reinforced and "outsiders" who face barriers. These groups differ in property ownership or cultural status such as religious group. Education is used as a means to attain desired ends.

Randall Collins follows a Weberian route to a conflict theory of education. (Karabel and Halsey 1977). Collins (1997) examines relationship between educational developments and competition between status groups (Blackledge and Hunt 1985).

He proposed that the basic unit of society are status groups which are associational groups showing cultures or sub cultures. The core of such groups are families but they may be extended to religious, educational or ethnic communities. A status group comprises of all persons who share a sense of status equality based on participation in a common culture (Blackledge and Hunt 1985).

Collins explains that the main activity in school is to teach particular status cultures both in and outside the classroom. Thus schools function to teach styles of dress, values and manners. Educational requirements for employment serves both to select new members for elite positions who share the elite cultures and at the lower level of education to hire lower class employees who have acquired a general respect for those elite values and styles. (Karabel and Halsey 1977).

The micro-interpretative approaches lay stress on day-to-day classroom encounters. Jencks (1972) talks of limitations of large scale surveys of schooling when he says "we have ignored not only attitudes and values but the internal life of schools. We have been preoccupied with the effects of schooling especially the ones that persist into adulthood. This had led us to adopt a "factory metaphor" in which schools are seen primarily as places that alter the characteristics of their alumni".

A number of studies focus on classroom processes. Hargreaves, Hester and Mellor (1975) in 'Deviance in Classrooms' argues that 'typing' pupils are a way of getting to know them. Teachers' expectations of their pupils are derived from stereotypes about such things as age, sex, religion and home background. Stereotyped expectations are those which teachers have even before they encounter the pupil.

Teachers' while not perhaps consciously biased against lower class children nevertheless evaluate the cultural styles of middle class children very differently from those of poorer children. As a result teachers and counselors act as "gatekeepers" to the path of school success assigning lower grades to students whose manner or deportment or choice of words is not to their middle class taste. (Hurn 1993).

Teachers' expectations are also conditioned by deservng and interpreting pupils' action in class. The teacher develops a system of categories into which pupil action may be interpreted. For example the category of ability is used to interpret pupils as 'bright or dull'. In reaction to the 'old' sociology of education the 'new' sociology of education states that the schools' conception of 'what it is to be educated is socially constructed. Young (1971) attempts to explore how the forms of knowledge that makes up the school curriculum are related to the interests of particular classes and professional groups.

Further, the concept of 'ability' and 'intelligence' are also socially constructed and educational failure can be seen to derive from them. According to Esland (1971) the unexamined assumptions that the teachers hold have a 'self-fulfilling nature'. He says that what "problem pupils" are so because of the premises on which the differentiation is made. In other words it is the teacher's view of what counts as a "problem pupil" or "ability" that matters (Blackledge and Hunt 1985).

Nell Keddie (1971) explains how educational failure is explained in terms of pupils ethnic and social class antecedents. Her study is based on empirical data collected from a large mixed comprehensive school with a fairly heterogeneous social class intake. According to her the proposed remedies for the educational failure of the working class child will be ineffective if 'hierarchical categories of ability and knowledge persist'. In other words it is the teachers' notion of 'high and low ability' and their view of the nature of knowledge which are at fault (Blackledge and Hunt 1985). She points out that ability is conceptualized in terms of whether or not pupils can manage material or knowledge appropriate to a particular ability band. The pupils who need illustrative material rooted in experience are judged by the teacher as unable to master the subject. Thus she adjusts her expectations of them accordingly. Keddie says that teachers' expectations of pupils most effectively operate to set levels of pupil achievement. In other words the teachers create failure.

All the above approaches focus on class based inequality or inequality in educational outcomes, due to different cultural background. Giddens (1991) explains that a cohesive totality has been replaced by a multiplicity of sites of social reproduction.

Postmodernism brings to light these multiple sites namely social, ethnic and religious groups that have been ignored so far. The term is something that denotes the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The term is understood as distinguishing the contemporary scene from the modern. First used in 1917 by Pannwitz postmodernism regards certain principle methods of ideas characteristic of modern western culture as obsolete. In this sense postmodernism is the latest wave in the critique of the Enlightenment.

When most philosophers use the word “postmodernism” they refer to a movement that developed in France in the 1960’s called “post structuralism”. Post structuralism denies the possibility of objective knowledge of the real world, “univocal” (single or primary meaning of words). They regard it as reflecting most of the fundamental intellectual pillars of modern western civilization. In the 1960’s and 70’s their critique had a political meaning. It served to undermine the claims to legitimacy of academic authorities and the state and was connected to the feminist critique of male power (Cahoone 1993). They regard the rejected notions as the ideology of the privileged group and aim to undermine established educational and political authorities and transfer their power to the previously disenfranchised.

In examining any social system characterized by class or ethnic division post modernist discover that the privileged group actively produce and maintain their position by representing or picturing themselves as not having the properties ascribed to the under privileged groups and must represent those groups as lacking the properties of the privileged group. They claim that the process of exclusion or repression is false, unstable and immoral as it is a lie and because sooner or later repression has to be admitted forcing an acceptance of the excluded factors in the representation of the privileged unit. It is also immoral as when it takes the form of social oppression. (Cahoone 1993). Marginalisation on the basis of gender, religion or ethnicity is to be removed. Some postmodernist believe that there is no escape from it and hope to render repressive forces more diverse and fluid so that none becomes monopolistic (Cahoone 1993, Kumar 1997).

The social sciences is grounded in the ancient world and upon a set of 'objective' empirical observations, but postmodernism questions the very possibility of making objective observations. They believe that empirical qualifications have served to hide the sexist, racist and social elitist assumptions. (Meighan and Blatchford 1997; Kumar 1997).

Postmodernism raises questions regarding what pedagogical practices need to be employed that allow students to affirm, interrogate and extend their understanding of themselves and the global context in

which they live. Such a position recognizes that a student has several or multiple identities.

The membership of a particular ethnic group is one of the most important aspects of an individual's identity vis-à-vis in how he/she is perceived by others. In terms of ethnicity there are contradictions within these categories as well as between these and other categories such as gender and class (Meighan and Blatchford 1997). Postmodernists suggest that what is important is offering students a language that allows them to reconstruct their normal and political energies in the service of creating a more just and equitable social order, one that undermines relations of hierarchy and domination (Cahoone 1993). Postmodernists regard all current bases of defining ability as arbitrary. No particular choice of curriculum could be demonstrated to be superior to any other. (Meighan and Blatchford 1997).

Giroux (1991) proposes a "broader pedagogy" that rejects the traditional aims of education. Education for Giroux is intrinsically a political process aimed at producing a democratic egalitarian society. The primary contemporary obstacle to this end is the marginalisation of social groups by sexism and racism. In response "broader pedagogy" aims to bring students to an experiential understanding of those deemed "other" by their official culture.

Giroux (1991) analysis that critical pedagogy must link public education to the imperatives of a critical democracy. Critical pedagogy needs to be informed by a public philosophy dedicated to returning schools to their primary task : as places of critical evaluation in the service of creating a public sphere of citizens who are able to exercise power over their own lives and especially over the conditions of knowledge production and acquisition. According to Giroux (1991) educators need to develop a critical pedagogy in which knowledge, habits and skills of critical rather than simply good citizenship are taught and practised.

This would provide students with the opportunity to develop critical capacity to challenge and transform existing social and political forms rather than simply adapt to them. It also means providing students with the skills they need to locate themselves in history find their own voices and provide the convictions and compassion necessary for exercising civic courage, taking risks and furthering the habits, customs and social relations that are essential to democratic public forms.

Apple (1997) provides a critique to some of the postmodern and post-structuralist ideas. He explains that the above two paradigms tend to move too quickly away from tradition that are still vital and provide an insight into the nature of the curriculum and pedagogy that dominate schools at all levels. Taking the example of class, Apple states that just by saying that class does not explain all, one cannot



deny its power. Class as an analytic construct needs to be continually deconstructed and rethought (Apple 1997). It would be wrong to assume that since people do not identify with their class position that class does not exist. Many may not think and act in ways predicted by class essentializing theories but this does not mean that social, sexual and class divisions have disappeared.

Sociologists of education until recently paid little attention to the issues of inequality between the sexes. Beginning in the late 1970's precisely at the moment that Marxian sociology gained acceptance among sociologists, a new theoretical outsider issued a challenge to established sociological theories and even to Marxian sociology itself (Ritzer 1992). This latest brand of radical social thought is contemporary feminist theory.

In Western societies one can trace the record of critical feminist writings back by almost 400 years and there has been an organized political movement by and for women for more than 150 years. A large number of texts, readers, articles and reports became available on 'women and education' (Karabel and Halsey 1977).

In one sense there has always been a feminist perspective wherever women have been subordinated they seem to have recognized and protested that situation in some form. Feminist theory looks at the world from the vantage point of hitherto unrecognized and invisible minority, women with an eye to discovering the significant but

unacknowledged ways in which the activities of that minority help to create our world. This viewpoint dramatically reworks our understanding of social life.

Feminist theory is critical and works on behalf of women seeking to produce a better world for them. Feminist know not only that women are invisibly and unequally present in social situations and that they are in roles significant but different from those of the visible and privileged men but the particularities of invisibility are profoundly affected by a women's social location that is by her class, race, age, religion and global location.

Feminist approaches can be broadly divided into Theories of Gender Inequality (Liberal and Marxian feminism) and Theories of Gender Oppression (Radical and Socialist feminism) (Ritzer 1992). In this chapter three of the main approaches as stated by Acker (1994) are discussed.

Acker (1994) talks of three types of feminist approaches that have made the most impact on education. These are more offshoots of the macro approaches than being original in nature. Different feminisms have prioritized different aspects of womens' struggle against oppressive forces. It has been common in recent years to categorize each feminism according to its particular ideological source in order to show the differences within feminism as well as the shared commitment to womens' advancement.

Acker (1994) enumerates three approaches that have made most impact on education. These are the liberal, the radical and the Marxist/socialist approaches. Weiner (1997) terms these as 'Equal Right in Education' (Liberal feminism), 'Patriarchal relations' (Radical feminism) and 'Class, Race and Gender: structure and ideologies' (Marxist/socialist feminism). Liberal feminism can be said to be a theory of gender inequality whereas the other two are said to be theories of gender oppression. (Brantley and Legermann 1992). With all its diversity this body of theory was consistently critical of existing social arrangements and focused on such essential sociological variables as social inequality, social change, power, interests and belief and social institutions of religion, family and education.

Liberal feminism propagates that men and women are not differently situated in society but also unequally situated. Women get less of the material resources, social status and opportunities for self actualization than men who share their social location be it based on class, race, religion or education. This inequality results from the organization of society and not from any significant biological or personality differences between women and men. Liberal feminist also believe that although individual human beings may vary in potential and traits no significant pattern of natural variation distinguishes the sexes. (Brantley and Lengermann 1992).

They believe that all human beings are characterized by a deep need for freedom and seek self actualization by a fundamental

malleability that leads them to adapt to the constraints or opportunities of the situation in which they find themselves. To say that there is gender inequality then is to claim that women are situationally less empowered than men to realize the need they share with men for self actualization. Finally theory of gender inequality also assume that both women and men will respond fairly easily and naturally to more egalitarian social structures and situations. They affirm that it is possible to change the situation (Brantley and Lengermann 1992).

Liberal feminism is the most widely diffused approach as it under girds much popular writing on equal parenting and the need for gender free schooling for young children. Their explanation of gender inequality begins with an identification of the sexual division of labour, existence of separate private and public spheres of social activity with mens' primary location in latter and womens' in the former and the systematic socialization of children so that they can move into adult roles and spheres appropriate to their gender.

Liberal feminist point to sexism which consists of prejudices and discriminatory practices against women and partly of taken-for-granted beliefs about the "natural" differences between women and men that select them to their different social destinies. Sexism results in girls from childhood being socialized so that they can move into their adult roles and drift into their gender specified roles. (Brantley and Lengermann 1992).

Liberal feminist assert that women should be free to determine their social, political and educational roles. Also, any laws, traditions or activities that inhibit equal rights and opportunities should be abolished (Weiner 1997). Access to education is fundamental to this perspective since it claims that by providing equal education for both sexes an environment would be created in which individual women's potential can be developed (Weiner 1997). Liberal feminists stress on three major themes the first one being equal opportunity. Eillen Byrne argues that separate educational provisions for girls' has implied inferior facilities. The second major concern is socialization, sex roles and sex stereotyping. Girls are socialized into traditional attitudes that limit their future to sex stereotyped occupations and family roles. (Acker, Megarry, Nisbet, Hoyle 1984). The third theme centres around notions of discrimination, justice and fairness.

Liberal feminists argue that the ideal gender arrangement is one in which each individual chooses the life style most suitable to her/him and has that choice respected and accepted. Liberal feminists assume that equality for women can be achieved from democratic reforms without the need for revolutionary changes in economic, political or cultural life.

Theories of Gender Oppression (Radical and Socialist) describe womens' situation as the consequence of a direct power relationship between men and women in which men who have fundamental and concrete interests in controlling and subjugating women effectively

implement those interests. Brantley and Lengermann (1992) argue that women's situation is centrally that of being controlled by men. This pattern of oppression is incorporated in the deepest and most pervasive ways. Radical feminism speaks of a basic structure of domination most commonly called patriarchy. Patriarchy is not the unintended and secondary consequences of some other set of factors be it biological, socialization or the class system. It is a primary power structure sustained by strong and deliberate intention. To most theorists of oppression gender differences and gender inequality are by products of patriarchy.

Radical feminists see all society as characterized by oppression. Every institution is a system by which some people dominate others and in society most basic structures in the associational patterns between broad groups or categories of people one perceives a continuous pattern of domination and submission between classes, caste, racial, ethnic and religious groups; age and gender categories. Of all these systems of domination and subordination the most fundamental structure of oppression is gender: the system of patriarchy.

Not only was Patriarchy, as Engels (1884) describes - the first structure of domination but it continues as the most pervasive and enduring system of inequality, the basic societal model of domination. Within patriarchy men see and women learn what subordination looks

like. Patriarchy to radical feminists is the least noticed and yet the most significant structure of social inequality.

Radical feminists attempt to relate school life to the economic structure or the family. They use the concept of reproduction to show that what has been reproduced are domination of men over women. Spender delineates two aspects of sexual politics of everyday life in educational institutions namely teacher attention unequally divided between sexes to the advantage of boys and the potential benefits of single sex schooling. The latter was due to British radical feminist writings about boys harassing girls in school. (Acker 1994).

Socialist feminism is a highly diverse cluster of theoretical writings unified by a theoretical agenda. They focus on womens' oppression and on understanding it in a way that brings together knowledge of class and gender oppression. The term most frequently used by these theorists is capitalist patriarchy. The second characteristic of socialist feminism sets to describe and explain all forms of social oppression using knowledge of class and gender hierarchy as a base from which to explore system of oppression centering not only on class and gender but also on race, ethnicity, age and sexual preference. The terms most frequently used by these theorists for the system they describe is domination. (Brantley and Lenger mann 1992).

Socialist feminism aims to remove oppression by abolishing capitalism. Thus, they focus on women's position within the economy and family (Acker 1994). They take historical materialism to be an analytical strategy linking it to their focus on domination. Socialist feminists attempt to realize their goal of a theory that probes the broadest of human social arrangements, domination, and yet remains firmly committed to precise, historically concrete analysis of the material and social arrangements that frame particular situations of domination.

More recently, influenced by neo-Marxist trends within the sociology of education they have analysed how schooling perpetuates (reproduces) class divisions within the workforce. They pay attention to the schools role in reproducing a sexual as well as a social division of labour. This wider body of feminist work (Liberal, Radical and Socialist feminists) has been criticized for inadequate appreciation of the significance of ethnic differences and inequalities (Walby 1994). The strongest criticism has been reserved for the concept of 'patriarchy' with its implicit theory of gender inequality.

The concept of patriarchy is criticized for being unable to deal with the differences between women especially those based on class and ethnicity. (Thamban 2001). Analysis from the perspective of women of colour has made it important that differences between women on the basis of ethnicity need to be taken into account. Arguments about the difference between women have been taken a step



further in the work of post structuralist theories (Walby 1999). Postmodern feminists draw theoretically upon the work of Derrida and Lyotard. For instance there are considered to be a number of overlapping, cross cutting discourses of feminities which are historically and culturally variable. (Sim 2001).

### **Conclusion:**

This chapter briefly outlines the debate around the social context of schooling. The determination of social mobility through education has been intricately linked to social class, family background, cultural milieu of the child and the school as a cultural reality besides being an institution.

Early sociology largely dominated by the functionalists was pre-occupied with the role of school in socialization and selection. It ignored the role of social class in influencing school performance. Marxist and conflict thinkers are credited with looking at schooling in terms of modes of social domination and reproduction of social inequality in capitalist societies. Class, language, culture are brought into the debate of how education reinforces the existing social inequities rather than annihilating it. The post-modernist and feminist theories have expanded the scope of critical analyses. Class and gender are brought into the ambit of analyzing social exclusion.

The next chapter aims at bringing out the factors which lead to poor performance and wastage of urban poor school children in Delhi. The insights offered by the theoretical perspectives authored above have informed the study.

*Primary Schooling in Delhi*

## **Chapter- III**

### **Primary Schooling in Delhi**

Delhi, one of the four largest metros of India presents a blend of population from various regions, castes, religions and occupations giving it a unique character of multi ethnic and a socially stratified society. Studies show that about 30 percent of city's population live in slums which do not have proper facilities for education and health. (Aggarwal 1997). Delhi, is also characterised by the presence of a large number of educational institutions. With a literacy rate of about 75 percent, the quality of primary education in government schools leaves much to be desired.(India 2000)

It is estimated that there are 3,600 schools and 3.2 million children attending formal education in Delhi in 1996-97, which accounted for nearly 28 percent of the city's total population (India 1996). Assuming this ratio to remain constant the estimated enrolment in the year 2005 in Delhi will be 3.8 million reflecting an addition of about 18.8 percent in educational places at various levels. The low enrolment rate for six year old children may be due to late entry especially among deprived children. However 10-15 percent of children seem to be out of school in the primary school going age group. Further increase in school/college seats will take place due to increased coverage at the low levels of school education.(Gopalan1998)

The schools in general fall in three categories namely primary, middle and high/senior secondary schools. The primary education in Delhi follows a system of five years of schooling. Delhi is characterized by the existence of a variegated system of education ranging from the most prestigious and best equipped schools in the country on the one hand to the most dilapidated schools without adequate facilities for teaching learning and totally unmotivated and unionised teachers on the other. No detention policy is operative at primary stage whereby the students are not evaluated at the end of grades I and II but are promoted on the basis of satisfactory attendance. Annual written examinations are held at the end of Grade III, IV and V. Despite no detention policy the drop out rate continues to be high for Delhi. It is estimated that 25-30 children drop out between Grade I and V. However there are no reliable estimates/research studies on drop-out students.(Ahmad1995)

At present the primary education in Delhi is controlled by the following agencies:- Delhi Administration, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Cantonment Board, New Delhi Municipal Corporation, Management of the Private Schools, Department of the central government and other agencies like Kendriya Vidyalaya Sansthan, Indian Army etc. While some schools receive grant-in-aid from the government others fall under the category of unaided school and generate their own resources to run the schools.

The private management runs more than 37 percent of the recognized primary schools in Delhi. In addition there is a large number of unrecognized primary schools where number, enrolment, teachers profile and others are not known. Their contribution in the area of primary education is enormous. The NSS estimates for 1995-96 indicate that 5.6 percent children are studying in unrecognized schools in Delhi.(Aggarwal2000)

Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act 1970 the provision of facilities for primary education is an obligatory function of the MCD. It is the only effective self government in the country at the local level(Bhagwan 1975). The Corporation is empowered to undertake other measures for educational development. Prior to 1970 the MCD in addition to primary schools was also running some middle and secondary schools. However since July 1970 the Delhi Administration took over the middle and senior secondary schools from the corporation so that MCD would exclusively look after the development of primary education in Delhi. The MCD not only runs its own primary schools but also provides grant-in-aid to voluntary and other organizations running primary schools recognized by it. Delhi is divided into 12 zones. The latest data collected in August 2002 puts enrolment of children including scheduled castes in all the 12 zones to 450048 for boys and 436754 for girls (total is 886802). Primary teachers at present are 6172 male and 11976 female (total 18148). Headmaster

are 991 male and 725 female making it a total of 1716 (MCD, Education Department 2002).

The rest of the chapter is based on fieldwork in the two schools. One of which is for boys and one for girls. The study is comparative in so far as it looks at the differences between boys and girls on the studied dimensions. It is divided into two sections. It begins with a description of the basic infrastructure and other amenities. The second section discusses teachers' opinions on dropout and punishment.

### **SECTION I : The Schools**

The sample schools are run by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The schools are housed in the same building but they are separate functional units. Both the schools have separate teaching and non-teaching staff as well as provision like teaching aids etc. There are four principals (two in each school), 28 teachers (15 and 13 in the girls' and boys' schools respectively), 585 girls and 540 boys students, 3 peons (1 in the girls' school and 2 in the boys' school) and 2 sweepers (one in each of the schools). Children live within walking distance of a few meters to one kilometer from the school. Each school has five classes with 3 sections each. The single grade teaching method is followed in both the schools, that is, one batch is assigned to one teacher for full five years (Class I – V).

Established as a co-ed in January 1988 the school was divided into two shifts from September 1996 onwards. Thus, the schools run at separate timings: for the girls in the morning and for the boys in the afternoon. From September 2001 onwards the two shifts were further divided into four shifts on the basis of medium of instruction that is Hindi and Urdu. Presently the school is functioning as two shifts with both the morning and afternoon shifts having one Hindi and one Urdu medium each. In this chapter the schools are referred to as functioning in two shifts: morning and afternoon. The study has treated both the Hindi and Urdu shifts running simultaneously as one school. The schools undertake a survey every five years to determine how many children in the age group of 5-11 years are not going to school. Before the survey begins the MCD prepares a scheme that divides areas according to location of schools that fall within a one kilometer radius. The survey is conducted in a one kilometer radius around the school.

Posters informing the people are put up before the survey begins. This door-to-door survey is done by the school teachers. During the survey the teachers persuade parents to enrol their children. They explain to them that education is free of cost and tell them about the opportunities that will open up for their children if they educate them. Admission forms are filled up while the survey is being conducted. The schools also prepare notices for the children who are already studying. They are to show these notices in their neighborhoods making people aware of a school near their homes.



The admission procedure as specified by the MCD is common to both the schools. The school requires some proof of the child's age. If the parents are not able to provide a birth certificate then an affidavit is to be submitted. The minimum age for admission is 6 years. However, there are children in Class I who are 10 or 12 years old. With regard to primary education the MCD adopts an 'open door policy'. As the headmistress of the girls' school puts it "No child is denied admission even if he/she comes one day before the examinations".

This is evident as in the case of a boy who was readmitted in Class V in the month of February after an absence of three months. Transfer cases are admitted after an assessment of the child's level of learning through an interview. The interview is used to assess the level of academic learning so that it can be ascertained in which grade a student is to be admitted. Generally most children are admitted in the same class as they were in the previous school. The parent/guardian who accompanies the student is also interviewed. In some cases, however, a student may be admitted to a lower or higher class than the one indicated in the school leaving certificate. However the interview matters more if he/she is to be admitted in the fourth or fifth class. The National Sample Survey Organisation states that education is considered 'free' if no tuition fee is to be paid, that is free for all students even if some other payments are to be made by some

or all of them. Forty three percent children in government primary schools in urban areas receive tuition fee free education (Tilak 1996).

A study carried out by National Council of Applied Economic Research (1994) states that examination fee and other fee account for 35 percent of household expenditure in Delhi. Books and stationary absorb the major part of the total household expenditure on primary education. In addition, students spend on private coaching and transport which come to a sizeable amount (Tilak 1996).

In government primary schools students pay a variety of fees – admission, examination and tuition fees. There is also a fund for parent – teacher meeting which is to be paid annually. (Tilak 1996). The fee in an MCD school includes 0.50 paise for games, 0.50 paise for medical facilities and Rs. 2.00 as hobby fund. This amounts to Rs.3.00 per month. This amount is Rs.2.50/- for the SC,ST category. Another Rs.10.00 is taken as yearly PTA fund.

The Programme of Action states that “a comprehensive system of incentives and support services will be provided for girls and children of the economically weaker sections of society”. Certain welfare scheme are run by the MCD to facilitate childrens’ retention in school. These welfare schemes include provision of free uniforms, textbooks, mid day meals and medical facilities. The last three are available to all the children. Uniforms are provided to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students on priority basis.

The doctors and nurses of the school health scheme pay regular visits to the schools for medical check up of the children. Children are checked for any disease, short sightedness, tonsil, hard of hearing and oral dental health. Spectacles and hearing aid are prescribed and given free of cost to the student who is brought to the MCD health centre. Deworming of children is done regularly by providing medicine and supervising that the children take it in the school itself. Both the schools maintain first aid boxes. If any student gets seriously hurt or falls sick he/she is sent home with another student who stays in the same neighbourhood.

**The School Building:** The National Policy on education (1986) states that “unattractive school environment, unsatisfactory condition of buildings and insufficiency of instructional material function to demotivate both children and parents”. The building is a pucca building but the roof is covered with asbestos sheets. It has a spacious courtyard in front of it. This courtyard is large enough to be used as a playground. It has dual purpose as the assembly (for both the schools) is also held here.

There are three toilets in the school premises. There is one sweeper each for the morning and afternoon schools who clean them only once when the school begins. Therefore, they are not clean and are foul smelling. There are two water tanks that are cleaned annually. One is for drinking water and the other for washing hands. These are right in front of the toilet which is not a healthy location.

Small children can not reach the taps as a result the area is always wet and muddy.

Both the schools have separate offices for their headmaster/ headmistress (these henceforth shall be referred to as principal unless otherwise mentioned). These are large rooms with six fans and two lights. The office double up as storage rooms with furniture, boxes containing mid day meal packets, almirahs storing teaching aids, registers, library books that are kept in a trunk and other material. The principal's chairs and desks are chained together so that they cannot be moved. Three chairs are also chained together for visitors.

The walls of the office have several charts on them showing the number of teachers and their respective classes and other facilities that are available in the school. There are also charts with sketches of monuments, different colours, animals and geometrical shapes. The school have indoor games such as ludo, snakes and ladder and puzzles. Skipping rope and throw ball are outdoor games. In one month of observation none of these games were played. The children play their own games which are described later.

**Assembly:** There is a short 15 minutes assembly in both the schools. All students and teachers have to be present for the assembly. Absence is permitted with special permission from the principal. The principal and teachers stand on a raised platform. If the principal is

not present then the senior most teacher generally conducts the assembly.

In the girls' schools the peon and the teachers have to shout at the girls to assemble at one place. The girls stand in vertical rows in the presence of the principal and teachers. The girls who come late can be seen running to their respective class row. Five girls lead the others in prayer, song and national anthem. After this the principal urges girls to develop good manners and respect for elders. Some girl students are out of uniform and some are also untidy but this is not checked by the principal. If there is a holiday approaching for example Independence Day or Republic Day the principal speaks on the significance of the day. After the assembly is over the girls go back to their classes. Under the supervision of the teachers and the peon they are not able to run or shout.

In the boys' school, before the assembly begins the peon has to literally run after the boys to make them stand in rows. The teachers and the peon run around with sticks in hand to assemble the boys in one place. As in the girls' school, here too, the national anthem is sung after which the principal checks whether the boys have come in uniform and whether they are tidy. Those boys who are not in uniform and are untidy are made to stand in front till the assembly is over after which the principal explains how important it is to be neat and in uniform before one comes to school. The dismissal is chaotic. The boys talk and shout some run into their classrooms others fight

outside. The ones who remain outside even after the class has begun are then pulled inside by the class monitors.

Though the assembly in both the schools follows a routine pattern the difference lies in the behaviour and conduct of the boys and girls. The boys have to be scolded and hit at whereas the girls are more obedient and follow instructions readily.

**Classrooms:** There are 13 classrooms which are joined by a corridor. In the morning the teachers send the class monitors with two or three more students from their respective classes to bring a chair and a table from the principal's office to the classroom. They also get the attendance register from the office almirah which is submitted to the principal after the teacher has signed it. The girls also get durries for the students. The desk and the chairs of principal are also brought out in the open ground in the winter months. These are then carried inside as the school comes to an end. The wooden furniture is heavy and need three to four students to carry it. The same ritual is also performed in the boys' school.

The classrooms are spacious but only for 35-40 students. When the class strength touches 60 students the rooms get so cramped that the teacher finds it difficult to walk between the rows. As mentioned earlier there are 15 sections which require 15 class rooms therefore there is acute shortage of classrooms. When sections split due to overcrowding this further aggravates the situation. The

remaining classes are held in the corridor. Remedial classes for both the schools are also held in the corridor.

Each classroom has only two tube lights and two fans which are not functional. In almost all the classrooms there is poor lighting. In addition, there are frequent power cuts. The teachers say that these turn the classrooms into dark suffocating rooms especially in the hot summer months. This makes it difficult for both the teachers and the students. In winters, as the researcher observed, by the time the afternoon school draws to a close it is evening and without electricity children are unable to see the blackboard. To avoid this a few classes in both the schools are held in the playground. All classrooms have storage space in cupboards for registers and other material but these are rarely used by the teacher.

**Classroom Management:** As the class begins the children sit in horizontal rows on durries. Since the children are constantly moving and are restless only half the students in any one class are on the durries while the other half are on the floor. This, as the teacher explains, make the children uncomfortable in winter months as they are without socks and shoes.

The children in both the schools use their bags as desks to keep their books/copies on. The teacher uses a table and a chair. Within a few minutes the class is in complete chaos as children keep hopping around even when the teacher is there. This happens in all the

classes. Even when the class is in progress the students talk to their classmates and at times also hit each other. They throw scraps of paper, balls on one another, call each other names and keep complaining about one another to the teacher. In the lower classes (Class I and II) they soon pile up on each other in a fight and also sometimes playfully. All this goes on in front of the teacher. The teacher do not get upset over it. In fact teaching and non stop horseplay take place simultaneously.

The class monitor has considerable amount of authority as is evident in all unsupervised classes. A class III teacher explains the qualities required to be a class monitor. He/she has to be good in studies, obedient and capable of keeping the class in control.

**Recess:** There is a 35 minute break in both the schools. Students combine eating and playing during recess. A lot of activity takes place during recess. Children enjoy this time the most as they come out of their classes impatiently and are not supervised by the teachers. Five minutes before the recess begins the class monitors distribute the mid day meal packets to their respective classes. These consist of sweetened wheat puffs which the students refer to as 'gehu' (wheat). Only very few younger children bring tiffins from home. Some bring one or two rupees daily to buy some snacks from the vendor at the entrance gate.



The girls do not play rough games though they do run around. They play stapu by making boxes on the floor with red bricks and numbering them and kho-kho. They run around playfully hitting each other. They play physically active games like running, jumping. During recess the girls do all sorts of odd jobs. The principal as well as the teachers are constantly asking some students to get tea and snacks from outside the school. This happens even when the classes are on. Throughout the day the girls and boys jump in and out of the broken boundary wall to get tea. But unlike the boys they do not escape from school. The teachers make the girls wash utensils after they have finished lunch. Also, the beginning and end of school and recess is indicated by ringing the bell (this is a heavy round iron disc that is hit by a wooden hammer). This is done four times in a day. This is the job of the peon which is done by the students instead. The girls enjoy doing this work and they fight to get a hold on the bell. Sometimes they ring the bell even before the school is over. As the school comes to a close the girls sweep the floor of their classrooms as well as the corridor. The boys when they come in the afternoon find the classroom clean.

In the boys' school too the mid day meal packets are distributed five minutes before the recess begins. The boys are so busy playing that hardly any are seen eating. They play more rough games than the girls. This includes cricket, gilli danda and lattu (spinning top) and hitting the ball below the knee. At times they also race from one end

of the playground to the other. Like the girls they also do odd jobs like getting tea and water, ringing the bell etc. The differences being that the boys do not wash utensils and do not sweep the floor. The older boys have the task of emptying out garbage.

The boundary wall of the school is in poor condition it has several cracks on it. Thus, even before the school comes to an end many boys are seen escaping from the broken boundary wall in to the narrow lane behind the classrooms and outside the school gates. The school premises are left dirty for the girls to clean in the morning. The girls leave the school only after the bell rings. They leave in small groups talking loudly and sometimes running.

**The Teachers:** Teachers are instrumental in determining the nature of a child's schooling experience. As one of the teacher puts it "they introduce the written word to the children". In the opinion of all the teachers in both schools "the primary function of a teacher is to teach properly". The need is to understand the life situation of these children and be sensitive about it. A few teachers state that they are actually foster parents to the children as they teach them about personal hygiene, diet and good behaviour.

They are considerate to any student who is unable to continue studies for some reasons. As one teacher explains that she is putting proxy attendance for a girl who has to urgently go home or giving small rewards for good performance that may encourage others to do

well. Ten teachers have distributed socks to students in winter months. Some teachers help students by paying their exam fees. This the researcher observed herself.

In spite of all the above help that the teachers provide to the students the researcher noticed that teachers in general lack motivation. Very often they can be seen chatting outside while children make noise inside. They also do not regularly correct assignments. This is evident from a few copies that the students show. Copies are signed without pointing out the mistakes by the teachers. In the opinion of the headmaster (afternoon school) the teachers have inhibitions about freely interacting with the children due to their untidy appearance. But the way the teachers spoke about their respective classes this does not seem to be the case. As mentioned earlier the teacher student ratio is around 1:40 in both the schools. This reaches 1:60 when sections are combined. Most teachers find it difficult to manage such a huge class. It is generally agreed that a lower student teacher ratio is better for the management of the class. A favourable student teacher ratio also facilitates learning. The teacher is able to devote more time to every student, is able to maintain classroom order and also follow the performance of every student. This helps the teacher keep track of the weak points of every child which is possible only when the teacher does not have to manage a large class.

As mentioned earlier the two schools follow the single grade teaching method, that is, one teacher takes up all subjects for one class for a period of five years. Opinions were divided as to the benefits of this teaching method. In the opinion of a few teachers and the headmaster this method is to the disadvantage of children as one class is completely dependant on one teacher. If the teacher takes leave the class suffers. Any given day there are at least a few classes without teachers. In the absence of the teacher the children fight and run out of the class disturbing other classes. In such a situation the teacher of the next class is asked to handle two classes. This is a loss for the children in both the classes as the teacher is not able devote time to either of them.

In the opinion of the teachers, teaching should be done subject wise. Then the absence of any one teacher would not have adverse effect. This will ensure that all subjects get equal attention and teaching becomes more systematic and methodical.

The flipside to the above disadvantage is that as a single class is with one teacher for five years the teacher knows his/her class well. For example, she/he comes to know the strength and weakness of each student and their background (including fathers occupation, place of residence, siblings in the other school and which student is staying in the city with their relatives). But most teachers are of the opinion that this teaching method has more disadvantages than advantage.

Both the schools have the following teaching aids: Science kit, Maths kit, Blackboard, maps, charts and Radio for English language (for class IV only). These are stored in the principals' office and are never used by the teachers. The only teaching aid that is used is the blackboard. For all the classes the rote method of learning is adopted. Children are asked to recite aloud maths tables and lessons from books endlessly. After a while it looks like a mindless parrot like memorization. At times one child is asked to stand in front of the class and the rest repeat after him/her. Most teachers agree that this kind of learning has a short span and children forget what they have learnt the previous day. They also agree that recalling is easier if the students try to analyse and understand what he/she is learning. But sadly much of the learning in both the schools take place through rote method.

The only exceptions to the above method of teaching is the teacher who is the headmistress of the girls school. She uses innovative methods of teaching once in a while by using puppets and small cardboard cut-outs of textbook characters and animals that can be worn in the hand as gloves. These she makes with the help of other teachers. In one case she used paper plates to show moon, sun, stars. Students were able to recall what was taught to them by her. She finds this method effective in introducing learning to students in Class I and II. A playful approach in the beginning makes learning interesting which helps the student to develop interest. Another

exception is the class III lady teacher of the boys' school. She teaches Urdu by using wooden blocks carved in the shape of alphabets.

The teachers enumerate a few difficulties in their work. These can be put in three categories namely teaching related, student related and administrative in nature. Teaching related difficulties include teaching grammar. A few teachers in both the schools find grammar difficult to teach. The syllabus is never completed and there is always backlog that is carried over to the next year. Teaching Maths and Science in Urdu is also difficult. The researcher went through the Urdu medium textbooks for Class I. The level of these books is way above what it should be for first grade. The books have full sentences, short stories and poems in place of alphabets.

Student related problems include lack of support from the parents of the students. Parental apathy results in children coming unprepared for class. Teachers in the girls school explain the futility of having any expectations from children as they do not bother to even do their homework. They tear off pages from their copies. Some children have even sold off their books and come to the class after summer vacations with mice in their bags. Opinions were divided on the question as to why children come to school. A few teachers say to be away from responsibility of siblings and work. But a majority of teachers say that "they like to play and be with friends". Parents also have their reasons for sending children to school. To avoid chaos at

home and to be free from responsibility so that they can work. This especially applies to those families where both parents are working.

Administrative difficulties include maintaining registers. There are at least three registers that have to be updated on a daily basis. These include students attendance, teacher attendance and mid day meal register (other registers include new admissions, children who are struck off the rolls along with the reasons, number of children in a class at the end of the month and collection of fee from the students). Teachers also take children for scholarship exam and also find out their whereabouts once they stop coming to school. The teachers have to go to the childrens' homes and find out the reason for their absence. A few teachers state that so much administrative work reduces them to "clerks". To them the fallout of all their non teaching activities is to the disadvantage of students as there is little time left for teaching after they have completed all their administrative duties.

**School and Parents:** The teachers do not interact with the parents. Parents enter school only when they have to collect bags and uniforms for their children or when they are called to explain their child's rude behaviour.

In these two schools parent teachers meeting could have established communication with the parents but not a single parent teaching meeting has been held in the past five years.

While the researcher was conducting fieldwork a parent (father) came to enquire from the headmaster (girls school) when he intends to hold a parent teacher meeting. The headmaster said that one will be held soon. This is the only piece of conversation between them. Students from Class IV and V in both the schools affirm that a parent teacher meeting does not take place.

**Childrens' Background:** 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 records reveal that they are migrants from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana but now permanently settled in the city. Father's occupation include labourer, tailor, rickshaw puller, electrician, vegetable seller, carpenter, driver, washer man, barber, painter, mechanic etc. Most of the mothers are housewives. A small percentage are home based workers. They stitch factory material and earn piece wage. Some women also work as domestic help. Their children are first generation learners with a very small percentage having literate parents.

In the city these families live in slums or they build one room on vacant plots. In a few cases children also belong to families that are stable financially. This is due to permanent place of residence and comparatively better income. For example, some fathers run a small business (example shopkeeper) or are class IV government employee. They build pucca houses on small plots of land.



**Performance:** Studies show that an alarmingly large number of children do not become literate even after five years of schooling. (Sharma 1998, Acharya 1994). This points to the importance of school effectiveness and actual learning which depends on school quality. In 1994 NCERT made a countrywide assessment of the efficacy of the vast network of elementary schools in teaching children basic reading, writing and numerical skills. In this study 65,861 children studying in fourth grade were tested in elementary academic skills. The results of the study presented a dismal picture. On two basic tests, arithmetic and reading comprehension in the mother tongue the scores showed that many children were not capable of answering even half the questions correctly, that is, they were nowhere near mastering basic reading and numerical skills. For example on the same test in Karnataka 90.6 percent children scored below 50 percent while it was 39.1 percent for Punjab.

The survey concluded that between one third to 90 percent children in India cannot be literate in the real sense of the term. A few factors that favour children from disadvantaged background are: literate parents and educated siblings and in some cases good quality education in a private school in the beginning years. They perform well as their initial education has been good. This is evident from the performance of two students in the boys' school.

The teachers state that there is a combination of factors that work in favour of children who perform well. Their parents are

committed to their education. This results in the children taking their studies seriously. They study at home and are prepared for class. The poor performers are distracted to other activities which may be illegal (like stealing and gambling in case of boys). The girls skip school to play video games in the market. Even when teachers are present in class girls and boys are busy in indulging in horseplay.

The difference in performance of students is reflected in their classroom participation. In class IV of the boys school three students seem to be bright. They answer questions, are quiet and busy doing class work. On the other hand, two boys (they are twins) are so disinterested in studies that they are unable to answer any questions which the teacher asks them. In all the classes there are two-three children who perform above average. A few (around ten) perform poorly and the majority get average result. Remedial classes are held for weak children in two time slots in both the schools. When it comes to performance it is difficult to judge how the children fare because till class III students are promoted without examination. Even after that there is little check on how much the children actually learn. Though the school declares 100 percent results every year a majority of the students can barely read or write. Most teachers agree that home environment is the single most important factor that gives rise to difference in performance. The children come from more or less similar socio-economic backgrounds and yet some perform better than others.

## Section II – Teachers opinion

**Drop out:** The drop out pattern as recorded from secondary sources of school registers has been calculated from 1997-2002.

**Table I**  
**Drop Out Pattern (April 1997 – March 2002)**

<b>Girls' School</b>				
Class I 1997-98	Class II 1998-99	Class III 1999-2000	Class IV 2000-2001	Class V 2001-2002
160				
	115 (-28%)			
		118(-26%)		
			111(-31%)	
				107(-33%)

<b>Boys' School</b>				
Class I 1997-98	Class II 1998-99	Class III 1999-2000	Class IV 2000-2001	Class V 2001-2002
139				
	147 (+6%)			
		128 (-8%)		
			117 (-16%)	
				103(-26%)

- ‘+’ sign denotes an increase in enrolment  
 ‘-’ sign denotes drop out.

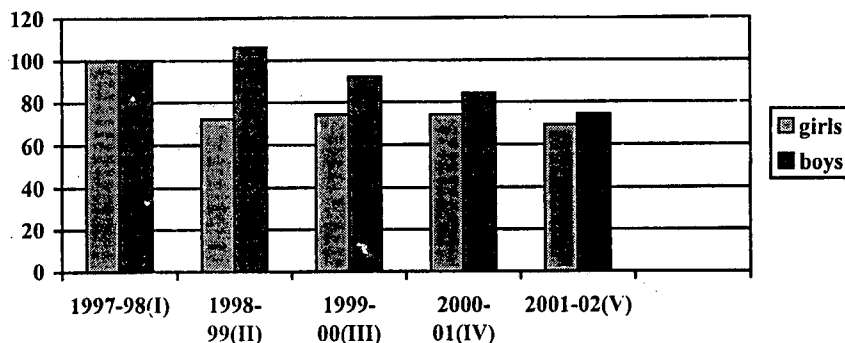
The base year for the calculation of percentage is class I

In case of the girls the enrolment figure stands at 160 in 1997-98. After a steady decline over the next five years 107 girls finish primary school. Thus the drop out percentage is 33.12 percent for the girls.

In the boys' case 139 enrol in Class I. This number increases to 147 in Class II with no drop out and more enrolment. At the end of

five years 103 boys reach class V. Thus, the drop out percentage is 25.89 percent for boys.

Comparing the drop out pattern of boys and girls it seems that there is a difference of 7.23 percent. The graphical presentation of the drop out pattern is given below.



Teachers give different factors as causes for drop out. The opinions varied with respect to which of the factors they considered as contributing the most to drop out (see table).

**Table - II**

Sl.No.	Reasons for drop out	No. of Respondent		Total
		YES	No	
1.	Guardian can not afford	4	22	26
2.	Scared of punishment	6	20	26
3.	Failure	5	21	26
4.	Home Environment	16	10	26
5.	Not interested in education/ study	9	17	26
6.	Engaged in housework	10	16	26
7.	Lack of facilities like toilet, drinking water etc.	2	24	26
8.	Frequently shifting residence due to fathers occupation	15	11	26
9.	Language constraints	2	24	26
10.	Social norms against sending daughters to school	3	23	26
11.	Irrelevant school curriculum	2	24	26

The factor which was considered as most important in determining a child's stay in school in both the schools is home environment. As many as 16 out of a total of 26 teachers consider home environment to be a crucial factor in determining a child's school experience.

The second most important factor is their temporary residing place within the city as well as their links with their native place. In the girls' school an equal number of teachers consider frequent shifting and home environment to be equally important.

The third factor is linked to the children taking up home responsibility at a very early age. Interestingly teachers say that boys and girls are equally involved in housework. Boys run errands while girls do housework that requires less venturing outside their homes.

Most teachers regard the fourth factor of norms against sending daughters to school of little significance. In their opinion the parents just fail to realize that even girls need to be educated. They find learning housework as more important and relevant for them. But the teachers also state that since the boys are given more freedom the boys are also send to wage work at an early age. Thus, if it is housework for girls, working to add to the family income works to the disadvantage of boys.

Another factor is their general disinterest in studies. Education does not figure prominently among the things they consider

important. Teachers explain that at the slightest pretext the children avoid school citing reasons as poor health, lack of motivation as causes to discontinue. Teachers explain that parents have everything to do with why the children are not interested in studies. Parents themselves feel education is not relevant. One of the teachers in the girls school stated how a girl studying in her class is persuaded by her mother to miss school saying “mat jaa bhai-behan ko dekh, ghar ka kaam kar de, mujhe kaam par jaana hai” (Do not go, look after siblings, do housework, I have to go to work). The example shows that the girl has to relieve her mother from child care and housework so that she can earn.

A few other factors though less important can also be reasons for drop out. Teachers in the boys' school consider failure, language constraints and irrelevant curriculum as other factors that lead to drop out. Two teachers find lack of facilities like drinking water, toilet as a deterrent to girl's studies. Six teachers (4 in the girls' school) regard punishment as a potential cause for drop out.

An interesting finding is that teachers in both schools feel that not being able to afford their children's education is not one of the reasons why children are not sent to school or they drop out. Only 4 out of a total of 26 teachers find this factor to be of some relevance.

The teachers along with the principal make an effort to reduce drop out. It is important to ascertain the reason for a student's absence as the reason for removing someone from the rolls has to be

recorded. The student is removed only when it is confirmed that the student has left the school. If a child is absent from class his/her peers who live near his/her place are asked to find out why the student is not coming. If the family has not shifted and the child will soon start coming then the name is not removed from the rolls. If it is found out that the parents are not willing to send their children to school and want him/her to discontinue studies the teacher is sent to persuade parents not to do so. A teacher in the girls' school told me about a bright girl of Class V who stopped coming five months ago. Her parents have separated and the father does not want that she should interact with her mother in school (during recess she would come to meet her daughter). The teacher has tried to reason with him but all in vain. However, these efforts cannot be made for every student who is a drop out. The parents can be contacted only if they give an address which is traceable.

**Discipline and Punishment:** The National Policy on Education (1986) states that punishment is banned in all schools throughout India. The teachers of both the schools are aware that punishment is prohibited in schools. On answering a direct question like "Did they punish students?" They replied in the negative. To them scolding and beating up students in both the schools did not constitute punishment. In the one month of observation almost all teachers were noticed punishing children. The type of punishment given is both physical as well as verbal. Boys are called names, shouted at,

caned, hit on the back and slapped, i.e., they suffer both verbal and physical punishment. Girls are, however given milder punishment. For example, they are slapped, shouted at, called names their ears are pulled but they are not caned. The younger children (Classes I and II) are also punished but not as severely as the older ones.

The figures given below describe the types and frequency of punishment and the difference in punishing boys and girls.

**Table - III**  
**Frequency of Punishment**

<b>Types of Punishment</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
<b>Voice Modulation:</b>		
Verbal abuse	10	8
Shouting (using foul language)	5	2
<b>Body Language:</b>		
Pointing out accusingly, ridiculing	-	-
Gesturing as if to throw duster, chalk	7	12
<b>Physical Reprimanding:</b>		
Pulling ears	8	13
Slap	12	15
Caning	12	0
Thrown out of class, written punishment	0	7

Note: These observations were made over a period of one month.

Examples are given below to illustrate the kind of punishment given to boys and girls, the reasons thereof, the role of the principals and the teachers and their attitudes towards punishment.

Almost all teachers (male and female) carry sticks in hand gesturing to hit the children. The teachers would not talk without raising their sticks. Two boys continue to talk when the school is



observing one minute silence on Mahatma Gandhi's Death Anniversary. They are slapped by the office attendant (female).

There is an half an hour gap between the two schools. There is no teacher or peon during this time. Hence, boys are not supervised. One of the boys (Class IV) verbally abuses his classmate inside the classroom and then the fight begins. He threatens to call his uncle. One of them is bleeding ; the other has a swollen head. The researcher tries to mediate; in the meanwhile the teacher arrives. By this time both the boys are weeping. The teacher hits them both on the back when she arrives.

The headmaster slaps a boy who is caught stealing "sariya" (iron pipes) from a construction site next to the school with his classmate. His mother is called. She complains about her husband who drinks and gambles and her son who stays out the whole day returning only in the night. She wants to take the boy home but the headmaster insists on keeping him in school.

A handicapped boy (class V) is forced to beg outside the school by three boys of his own class. He complains to the headmaster. The boys are slapped by the headmaster and made to apologise to him.

A class IV teacher (female) comes with a boy asking the headmaster "to burn his tongue" as he is using foul language. The boy begins to cry. The headmaster lets him go after a warning.

One boy in class V is severely caned thrice on the back by a male teacher for making noise. The class is overcrowded and disorderly with two sections combined increasing the class strength to 60. The boy weeps bitterly till the class is over.

A boy studying in class IV is slapped by the teacher (female) as he insisted that he has to go to buy medicines for his mother.

The class monitor (Class IV) repeatedly hits children with clenched fists on the back and brings them to the teacher who is standing outside and chatting after giving some work to the class. The monitor moves all over the class hitting boys who are talking or fighting. The boys do not seem to mind his beatings. Though they protest saying "kyon maar raha hai" (why are you hitting?) but that does not deter him from hitting them as if he has the authority to do so. The monitor is the "undeclared dada" of the class and seem to be older than his peers.

While taking a combined class of 60 students the class V male teacher refers to two boys as "donkey" saying that they will never improve.

The teacher (male) scolds two boys (class V) who are one hour late. They are made to stand in class till the school is over.

**Girls' School:** On finding out the girls' father has not stitched her clothes a teacher (female) teaching class IV slaps the girl several times

on the ear. The girl runs away from school and informs her father. He comes to meet the headmaster and tells him that he wants to confront the teacher. The headmaster pacifies him and asks him to file a written complaint against the teacher and assures him that he will forward it to the higher authorities.

The class IV girls were making a lot of noise and had begun fighting in the absence of the teacher. The teacher punishes them making them write "main nikkami aur nakkara hoon" a hundred times. The girls continue to write even after going home. Next day a few parents come and demand an explanation. The headmaster apologises.

The headmaster pulls ears of three girls in class I as they are making noise and answering questions out of turn.

In class III, the monitor is asked to supervise the class in the absence of the teacher. Soon the class is noisy with none of the girls sitting in their places. The monitor hits the girls on the head, pulls ears and drags them back to their respective places, warning them not to get up.

There is a great deal of difference in the way girls and boys are punished. Also the degree and kind of punishment varies between male and female teachers. The punishment given to boys and girls varies. The above observations also make it clear that punishment

given to boys outnumber that given to girls. This is due to their general behaviour.

Boys are violent and rash while the girls are noisy and violent at times but are easily controlled and are not rowdy. Boys of all age groups beat and abuse each other even in front of the teacher. They have serious fights that are dangerous as they physically hurt each other. The nature of their fights can be psychologically damaging as in the case of the handicapped boy who was forced to beg. Girls are given mild punishment they are verbally scolded or shouted at. Teachers make them stand up in class or isolate them from the rest by making them sit separately. They warn them by saying "I will call your parents" or "I will not let you go till you finish your work".

The teacher of both the schools are divided in their opinion on the benefits from punishment, if any. Lady teachers remain calm even when the class is in utter chaos. This applies to lady teachers (around three in number) in both the schools put together. The male teachers give even general instruction in a high pitched tone and frequently beat up children. This, they say, is necessary as boys are so stubborn that without punishment they never understand. However, they also agree that the effect of punishment does not last long. A few teachers punish to make the message clear to other students as to what will happen if they misbehave. This according to them keeps the class in control. Lady teachers in both the schools disagree with the above view. They are of the opinion that

punishment does not help. It is better to reason with children. Any strictness only backfires. Teachers in both the schools tell the researcher how the parents literally hand over their children to them saying “gosht aapka bus haddi hamaari hain”.

### **Conclusion**

The school reinforces the socialization patterns instead of breaking them. This is evident in the way there is a gender difference in the labour that children do in school. Girls are made to sweep the floor and wash utensils which the boys abstain from.

In general the teaching and non teaching staff neglect their duties. The teachers are not serious about their responsibility. The fact that some do not even use a blackboard while teaching reflects their lack of commitment. The non teaching staff (peon and sweeper) too run away from their duties. The work that the students do like girls sweep the floor and get tea from outside the school and boys empty out garbage is actually the peon and sweepers job. They are so lackadaisical that even when the boys are running away from school in front of them they refuse to do anything about it.

### **Notes:**

Kho-kho – a running game in which the players sit in a straight row and run by taking turns. One of the players who is not a part of the

row has to catch the player who is running around the row before he/she sits.

Gilli danda – a wooden elongated small object is hit with a wooden stick after raising it from the ground with the help of the stick.

Stapu – boxes are made on the floor with the help of a brick in which the players jump dragging a small stone from one box to the next.

*Conclusion*

## **Conclusions**

The universalisation of primary education and making education a fundamental right has failed to serve the broader promises of social justice and empowerment for the poor. Despite the constitutional commitment to universalise education the inclusion of deprived sections remains a distant dream. Schools remain sites of selective inclusion and exclusion. The exclusion of deprived communities is reproduced through the practices of the formal educational system.

Alienation of the poor sections of society in relation to the schooling environment is evident from their experience in school. There is a wide social and cultural distance between the world of the school which is largely run by the members of privileged section of the community and the life situation of the children of disadvantaged communities. The very constitution of the schools, their rules and regulations makes the education of children from such communities a constant struggle for their families.

In modern times education is seen as being central to the agenda in helping to provide the skills for a modern society and in selecting the talented for upward mobility. Education is seen as a vehicle of social and personal progress as well as for liberation. It is believed that education has the power to uplift the poor from their deprived conditions and provide them with an opportunity that would place



them at par with the privileged. Despite the efforts rapid expansion in education did not ensure opportunity for the poor and the privilege of the advantaged groups remained. Due to their background the affluent attained education that leads them to the desired jobs. The poor, on the other hand, remain confined to a life that is similar to that of their illiterate parents due to their background and inferior education.

The reasons why the poor child has less educational prospects is due to the background of these children. Scholars, such as Bourdieu (1974), have pointed out the deficiencies in the culture of the disprivileged child that puts him at a disadvantage as compared to the children from privileged backgrounds. The school fails to recognise these different backgrounds and cultural attributes and treats all children equally presuming that they have equal chances of succeeding in school. This acts as a deterrent for the education of the disadvantaged. It is projected that these children lack the ability to do well when it is only the result of cultural reproduction. The teachers put the blame on parents saying that they do not show interest in their children's education. But this does not seem to be the case as is evident from examples of poor families who prefer to make sacrifices to send their children to private schools or arrange for tuition rather than settle for the free but poor quality public options. Even among the very poor parents there is a willingness to make the necessary sacrifices to send their children to school.

The questions that this study started with was to ascertain the nature of school experience of poor children. Teachers' opinion on the performance of the students, punishment given in schools and the reasons for drop out constitute an important part of the study. Gender differences in drop out and punishment were also studied.

The role of the teacher is instrumental in determining a child's school experience. Universal provision of facilities encourage high enrolment rates but the nature of school experience depend on whether the teachers are motivated and have a feeling of responsibility towards their role as giver of knowledge.

In this study it was observed that despite the flexible enrolment procedures and the welfare schemes run by the government the drop out remains high. The teachers shift the onus of responsibility on the parents pointing to home environment as cause for dropout. They also cite the same factor as cause for poor performance of children. The teachers blame the uncertain unhealthy living conditions, their frequent shifting of residence as responsible for the children to discontinue studying. They also mention that responsibility of household chores at a very early age is another factor. These are different for boys and girls. Boys undertake work that involve venturing out of the house for example they are asked to purchase something for the house, whereas girls are confined to chores that keep them indoors. They also mention that parents find educating girls of little significance. Again, the socialization practices that differentiate

between girls and boys at home, instead of being neutralised, are reinforced in school. For example, girls are made to wash utensils and sweep the floor, while boys do work that require strength (emptying out garbage).

The teachers seem to be ignorant of the fact that their general attitude and commitment can influence a student as to how he/she develops an opinion of how his/her school is. There are several other factors that are not linked to a child's home background. This includes the discriminatory attitude towards poor children and the belief that they are not interested in education.

The teachers' attitude is also reflected in punishment that they give to those who do not comply, discriminating, however, unintentionally against such children. Though Article 33 of the Delhi School Education Act 1973 prohibits punishment in schools, the teachers inspite of being aware of this rule, discipline children by physically punishing them and ridiculing them. To them giving punishment is an extension of their roles as teachers so much that they cannot proceed in class without punishing. There is also a difference in the nature of punishment that teachers give. Men teachers punish more severely. The women teachers admit that men teachers command more authority and the boys understand and obey only when they are punished by them. Teachers state that due to the rude behaviour and violent disposition of boys, they need to be punished. They state that punishment is the only way the boys will

learn. They are completely unaware of the effect that punishment can have on a child physically and psychologically. The teachers initiate teaching by punishing and use it as a method to maintain classroom order.

Punishment is also different when it comes to who is punished more: boys or girls. Boys are punished severely as they are strong and masculine and so they can take the beatings. Girls are given mild punishment as they are fragile and will not be able to withstand harsh beatings. It is also because girls are not rowdy and are more disciplined or willing to be disciplined.

The teachers are not willing to experiment when it comes to teaching methods. Standardized teaching method can render invisible diversities in learning effects across class. This is because learning effects are socially conditioned and the standards applied need to be sensitive to the identities of different life situations. The diversity in children's background implies that a static view of children's life worlds will result in the disadvantaged sections getting excluded from the education process. One standard model of formal schooling is grossly inadequate to provide all children with equal standard of education and hence equal opportunities. The need of the hour is to incorporate the life situation of poor children into their schooling. This will result in their doing well in school and help them finish the primary school stage.

Given the experience of deprived children in schools it is pertinent to question the legitimacy of educational institutions in providing equal chances to children from unequal backgrounds. As economic and social life becomes increasingly based on the written word education has become for the poor a necessary skill to survive in a changing world. The question is whether the schools at the primary stage can do the bare minimum of providing all section of society (including the disadvantaged) the basic literacy skills.

Though schools are meant to neutralize the impact of social background and to provide the opportunities to enable children to perform their adult roles to the best of their ability the schools fail to do so in case of the disprivileged children. As a result of their socio economic and cultural deprivation the children fail to complete even the primary level of schooling. The schools are unwilling to cater to children from disadvantaged background and push children out of school. Thus, the role of education as an agent of social change is a myth.

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