Impact of Social Environment on Education
Delhi Schools Reservation

Compiled by Aditya Undurti

MIT INDIA READING GROUP 2006
Interesting Stats

- 42 million people living in slums (15% of urban population – 33% in MH, HR)
- 2.5% of all households have a four-wheeler (1.3% rural, 5.6% urban)
- 11.7% have a two-wheeler (excluding bicycles – 6.7% rural, 24.7% urban)
- 43.7% have a bicycle
- 35.1% radios, 31.6% TVs, 9.1% telephones
Delhi Schools Reservations

- Supreme Court order to all Private, Unaided Schools (PUA) to “reserve” 20-25% of admissions to students from BPL families
- PUAs in Delhi receive land at below market prices from government
Why Delhi?

• Effect of other variables – such as quality of schools, quality of teachers, and quality of peers minimized

• Allows for direct comparison across social and financial differences
Paper

• “Poor” Children in “Rich” Schools
• Study by Institute of Social Studies Trust
• Covered 6 schools – 4 PUAs and 2 government schools
• 4 individual case studies
• Interviews with principals, teachers, students, parents to assess impact of reservations
The setting

- All families studied from Vinod Nagar (Harijan basti)
- Men: casual day laborers
- Women: domestic maids
- Many social problems – besides illiteracy, there is also gambling, alcoholism, wife-battery
Time to go to school

• Multiple problems to overcome
  – Lack of motivation and hopelessness among parents and children
  – Government bureaucracy in getting income certificates
  – Stereotyping of slum children by school principals
  – Reluctance to grant concessions for cost of uniforms, books, etc.
Solutions

• Problems were overcome by aggressive action
  – Contacted Minister of Education to get the bureaucracy moving
  – ISST personnel had to “represent” the families to get entry into school premises
  – Used legal means to force schools to show that they still had open admissions
  – 3 schools gave partial concessions. ISST paid remaining costs
Children’s Perspectives

• Children enjoyed new schools
  – “Teacher is actually present during class”
  – “Teacher actually teaches, instead of beating”
  – “There are good toilets”

• Social Adjustment
  – No discrimination from students/teachers
  – Recognize difference between “slum friends” and “school friends”
  – Recognize new school as a great opportunity
Children’s Perspectives II

• Academic Adjustment
  – Generally below-average performance
  – Hindi-medium to English-medium
  – Reluctance to approach teachers – “social distance”
  – Schools taking no corrective action
Middle Class Students’ Perspectives

• Only one opinion presented in study
• Survey: 44% favor, 56% oppose
  – If 25% don’t pay any fees, the other 75% have to pay more
  – Government should be working to improve its own schools, not dumping students on private schools
  – Competition is intense, and it is unfair to everyone else
Principals/Teachers Perceptions

• Principals highly biased against the slum children
  – “They have an Inferiority Complex”, “They have a bad home environment”, “They steal”
  – Interviews with individual teachers not allowed

• Teachers
  – Had no discipline problems
  – “Levels of variation” in academic performance
  – “All children are the same”
Parents’ Perceptions

• Parents realize the importance of education
  – “Koi maa-baap nehi chahte ki unki bacche nehi padhe”
  – Even very poor families strive to pay for private schools

• “Learned Helplessness”
  – Sense of fatalism – “our parents were poor, we are poor, our children will be poor too”
Legitimate Concerns

• Increased Cost
  – Many are students from middle-, lower-middle class, or poor (but not BPL) families that strain to pay fees

• Streamlining
  – Teachers not trained to deal with social issues arising in classrooms

• Out-of-school costs – how to pay?
  – Private tuitions
  – Field trips, excursions, home projects
Concerns Part II

• Lack of special help for adjustment, inability to pay for private tuitions -> below-average academic performance -> bad self-image, “learned helplessness”

• What to do if family rises just above poverty line?
Concerns Part III

• Children want to go to school, but environment?
  – Parents force children to drop out, because they do not see the benefits
  – Jeering from peers in slums ("yeh toh ab sahi ho gaya hai")
  – Gender biases

• Misuse
  – Unverified instances of people with "cars and mobile phones" producing low-income certificates
Conclusion

• Not enough to just provide good schools, good teachers
• Parents need counseling to overcome “learned helplessness”
• Children need extra help to overcome disadvantages (domestic violence, peer pressure)
• Criteria for free admission need to be strengthened
• The other 75% of students should not be “punished” in the form of higher costs