

Pedagogy for the Educational Development of Underprivileged Children – A Case Study of NGOs Engaged In the Educational Development of Underprivileged Children

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Abstract

Pedagogy is often used synonymously with teaching method and practice of teaching of an academic subjects or theoretical concept. (Oxford Dictionary, 1998; Sarangapani, 2003). Tailormade pedagogical approaches based on the learning abilities of different learners is very critical and more effective for underprivileged children. Such pedagogical approaches lead to academic achievement, social and emotional development, acquisition of technical skills for the learners. (Varadarajan, 2021; UNESCO, 2021; GoI, 2005). Inclusiveness and equity-based pedagogy support better learning for underprivileged children of the society. (UNESCO, 2021; Varadarajan, 2021; Lilia, 2004; CII, 2012; FICCI, 2015; Gorski, 2013). A study of five (5) Vadodara based NGOs who were selected using purposive sampling technique, was undertaken by the researcher to explore the pedagogical process followed for the teaching the underprivileged children. The major findings are, a) Teaching the children with emotional bonding and value based teaching improves learning ability of the children, b) the educators designs the pedagogy suitable for weak learners, peer learners and self-learners of same class and also based on children's feedback, c) bi-lingual communication i.e English-Gujarati or English-Hindi used while teaching English language, d) skill based activities, model making, visual presentation, educational trips, role play, storytelling, art & craft, student centric teaching style etc. are emerged as effective teaching method.

Key words: Pedagogy, Underprivileged children, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), National Policy on Education (NPE), Non-Formal Education (NFE), Public Private Partnership (PPP)

Date of Submission: 05-04-2022

Date of Acceptance: 20-04-2022

I. Introduction

The underprivileged children of our society live in difficult conditions, look down upon by the society, facing unfavorable behavior towards them, living with many social challenges in comparison to affluent population of the society, are always denied or deprived of the privileges available to the people of upper class. (eGyankosh, 2021; Sharma, 2020; Save The Children, 2016). The underprivileged children, in general, do not receive motivation either from their parents and /or from the society towards education. Their confidence level is low. These are the major factors which made them poor readers and slow learners. However, they have greater sense of independence and responsibility. (eGyankosh, 2021; Sharma, 2020; Save The Children, 2016). From the history of the education of underprivileged children, it has been observed that even in many developed countries, developing / under developed countries there are separate schools / educational institutions for the underprivileged children and privileged children of the society. In India, there are separate schools for tribal children/ children of EWS/ children belongs to backward class. Even in the classroom, there is a separation in sitting arrangements between children of lower cast and upper cast. With the passage of time, education was imparted for underprivileged learners along with the privileged children in the same school. Government of India (GoI) has taken many initiatives and made reforms in education system by including the mother language & culture of the children as a means of teaching the underprivileged children. The purpose is to make the underprivileged children comfortable in learning process, motivate them to join schools, create a positive attitude towards education. In this respect, many schools / NGOs institutions are playing an important role in improving the performance of the underprivileged. (eGyankosh, 2021; Kucher, 2006). It is found that low-income people are infinitely diverse and no readymade strategies that work for all low income / disadvantaged children everywhere. (Gorski, 2013). Therefore, transformation of underprivileged learners to privileged learners through education is a challenging task. (eGyankosh, 2021).

Educational Challenges of underprivileged children

A study of two schools, one in urban metropolis and the other one in poverty-stricken village, where underprivileged children are studying, revealed that their common dilemma / challenges / prospects are of similar nature, though the schools are distinctly different. (Nanda, 1998; NPE, 1986). In many urban areas of India, the underprivileged children which includes street and slum children, children of construction labour mainly belong to short term or long-term migrant labourer family who have migrated from rural to urban (from other states and /or within states/region) for better life / earnings. They live in cramped houses or shabby dwellings, without proper sanitation facilities, clean drinking water, electricity etc. (Thomas, 2014; Dutta & Talegaonkar, 2020). Mainstreaming these children in development process is a big challenge in attaining the goal of universal primary education and inclusive growth in India. (Roy, 2015). The problems faced by the underprivileged can be attributed to major factors such as a) Poor quality of pre-school centres run by the govt agencies, b) no access of after-school education to compliment the school education. There is no one to provide them tuition once they return from school, because their parents are very poor and illiterate, c) poor quality of teaching by private tutor, d) lack of study space for the children at home, e) high cost of private schooling, f) poor quality of teaching in government schools, g) lack of interest in parents about the education of their children, h) no opportunity for education for out of school children, i) lack of sensitivity to the emotional needs of these children. (eGyanKosh, 2021; Arye & Eva, 2004). The text books are packed with information and difficult to understand. Therefore, the privileged children are in advantageous position compared to the underprivileged children. The privileged learners take the help of parents, they can afford to join private coaching classes, whereas, the underprivileged children cannot. Most of the teachers teaching the underprivileged children are from middle or the upper class. The existing teachers training programme do not help them for they cannot find the culture biases in textbooks, methods and test materials for the underprivileged children. (Gorski, 2013; eGyanKosh, 2021). Therefore, there is an urgent need of preparation of textbook suitable for underprivileged learners, method of teaching through oral reading, recitation, group work, role play, peer learning, cultivating critical thinking, skill-based training, concept-based learning etc., and education through the language and dialect of underprivileged learners. (eGyanKosh, 2021; Sharma, 2020; Kundu, 1985; Rao, 2018). India's education policy of 1986, emphasised on Non-Formal Education (NFE) to make the education system flexible, create space for innovation through voluntary effort. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BARC) has successfully implemented NFE in more than 30,000 NFE schools in various parts of Bangladesh. The teachers, mainly women, who have passed 10th grade and are selected from community are trained intensively for teaching underprivileged children. BARC has observed that there is a sharp reduction in school dropouts. (Nanda, 1998; NPE, 1986). The underprivileged children are infinitely diverse and no standard pedagogy or strategy of teaching will work everywhere. (Gorski, 2013). Therefore, it is felt necessary to understand the pedagogical process being adopted by the educators of the NGOs who are engaged for the educational development of the underprivileged children.

Study of Vadodara based NGOs

The focus areas of NGOs in general are education, community development, healthcare, nutritional food for children, sports & cultural activities, women empowerment, environment, relief activities, advocacy, financial support to bright children for higher studies, child labour protection, child abuse and sexual harassment, family planning etc. (Schwabland, 2016; Jagannathan, 2001; Dutta & Talegaonkar, 2020). The main focus of these Vadodara based NGOs, is to up-lift the underprivileged section of the society and work towards educational development of the underprivileged children. (Dutta & Talegaonkar, 2020).

Objectives of study

1. To study the education system of underprivileged children as organized by the NGOs
2. To study the pedagogical process adopted by the teachers for teaching the underprivileged children
3. To study the challenges faced in teaching the underprivileged children
4. To study the children's opinion about the teaching style of their teachers
5. Challenges faced in organizing online education during COVID-19 Pandemic

Design of the study

The design of the study is case study

Procedure for selection of the case

In the above perspective, five (5) Vadodara based NGOs who are registered under Indian Society Act, and are active in the field of education were selected using purposive sampling technique for the study. The name, year of establishment and number of beneficiaries (children) of the NGOs studied are given in Table 1. The NGOs studied satisfy the stringent conditions of transparency, governance and demonstrate impact on beneficiaries and represent most mature Vadodara based NGO in the sector in-terms of size and scale. The study was conducted at NGO's office and/or at their education centers.

Table 1

Name, year of establishment and number of beneficiaries(children) of the NGOs

Sr No.	Name of the NGO	Year of establishment	Number of beneficiaries / years	Remark
1	Baroda Citizen Council (BCC)	1960	1350	Day coaching at activity centers / awarding scholarships / school fees/ advocacy etc.
2	Muni Seva Ashram	1980	650	Both boarding and school facilities are available in the Ashram campus
3	United Way of Baroda (UWB)	1986	6859*	Day coaching at activity centers / school premises / awarding scholarships / school fees/ technology kits/ advocacy etc.
4	Mahavir International (MI)	2000	6000*	Day coaching at government schools/ technical training centers/ activity centers/ distribution of school kits/ scholarships/ education loans etc.
5	Srotoshwini Trust (STTR)	2010	123	Boarding facility, activity center and coaching beyond school hours. Program for empowering underprivileged women

*This includes beneficiaries who receives educational support, annual scholarships and/or school & tuitions fees, mentorship program etc.

Sources of data

The sources of data were the functionaries, teachers & students of the NGOs and the documents of the NGOs

Nature of data

The nature of data – qualitative and quantitative

Sample

The participants of the NGOs are selected using purposive sampling technique were functionaries, teachers & student. Total participants were one hundred seventeen ($n = 95$). The number of participants is given in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Number of participants

Sl.no,	Description	Number of participants
1	Functionaries (Trustee members / managing committee members / education coordinators)	12
2	Teachers (paid & volunteers)	43
3	Students	30
4	Total:	95

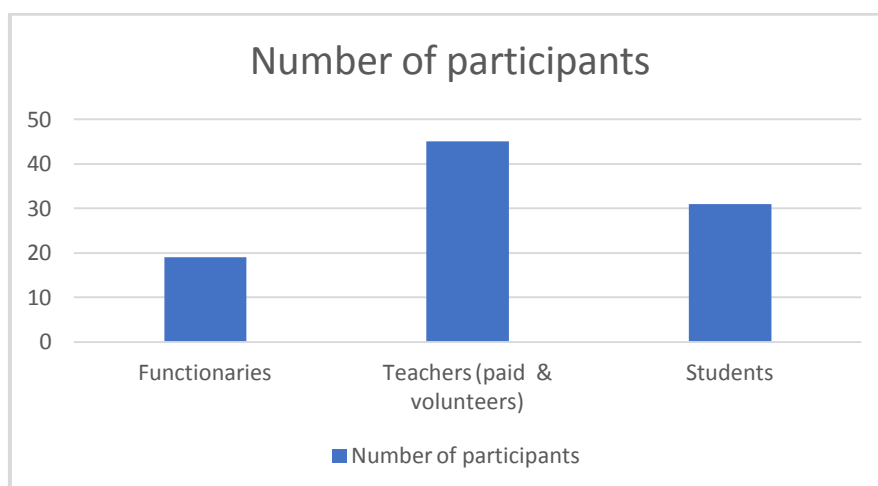


Figure 1

Number of participants

Tools

The tools for the study were semi- structured interviews and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

Data collection

Two-way data collection was made: a) Primary data collection by semi-structured interview and FGD, b) Secondary data collection from annual reports, brochures, web site. The main pointers or the frame work within which the semi-structured interview was conducted are a) how the curriculum is designed/developed and implemented, b) educational set-up and support provided to the student, c) existing IT/computer learning facilities, c) challenges faced in online teaching, d) background and teaching experience of the teachers, e) pedagogy style adopted by the teacher and why, f) feedback mechanism between teachers and students, g) what are the challenges faced by the teachers while imparting the teaching and how they are mitigating the challenges. The semi-structured interviews with functionaries and teachers were of 60 to 70 minutes each. The FGD with children were of 50-60 minutes each. The data collection period spanned from 10th October 2020 to 20th March 2021 and the site of the semi-structured interviews were at NGOs respective Head office and at their activity centers.

Data Analysis

The primary and secondary data collected in the study were analyzed using content analysis.

Findings of the study

The major findings of the study are presented below.

Type of support system of the NGOs for educational development of underprivileged children

- The NGOs organized the education of the underprivileged registered with them, by developing their own curriculum and follow the syllabus of the Gujarat State Board. Their paid teachers and volunteers visit NGOs hostel premises or NGOs activity centers or government schools and impart teaching to the children according to the curriculum. NGOs have set up activity centers at various locations of Vadodara district mainly in and around slum areas, under the bridge, established their own campus where students stay along with resident teachers, functionaries, staff etc. The NGOs also provide tiffin / meals, medical support, stationaries, school uniforms, scholarships, counseling, sports & cultural activities, skill-based training etc. to the underprivileged children. Children are either attached with government / private schools or studying in the NGOs own campus where schooling facilities are developed. The NGOs largely appoint teachers who are proficient in Gujarati and Hindi languages. The students are mainly attached with Gujarati medium school and Hindi medium school. It is observed that female teachers are more in primary and secondary standards, while more male teachers in higher secondary. The President of an NGO shared her experience during the interaction, “we are opined that woman are better teacher for underprivileged children for they manage the children well and create strong emotional bonding”. The researcher found that the desire of teachers for teaching the underprivileged children is either inherited from family or during higher study or influenced from family friend / teachers / during studies

The number of female and male teachers engaged by the NGOs is given in the Table 3 below.

Table 3

Number of female and male teachers engaged by the NGOs

Name of NGOs	Baroda Citizen Council	Muniseva Ashram	Mahavir International	Srotoshwini Trust	Total	%
Female teacher	18	11	29	30	88	63
Male teacher	2	36	9	6	53	37
Total					141	

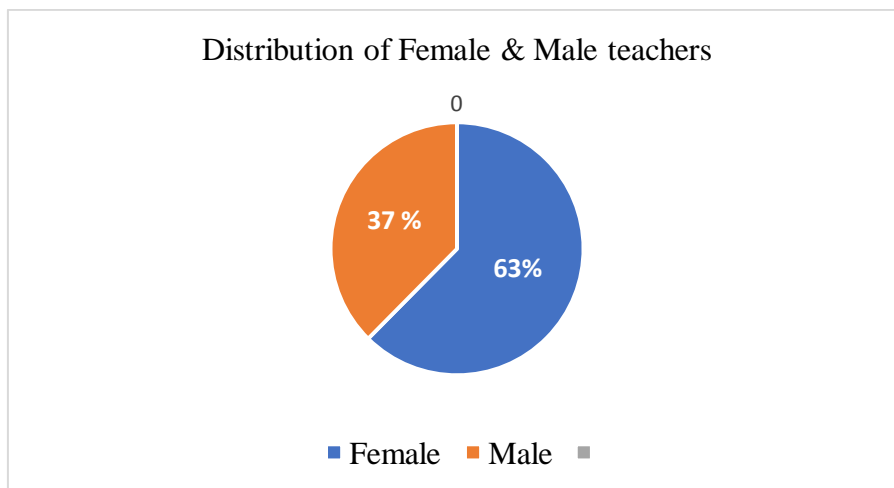


Figure 3
Number of female and male teachers engaged by the NGOs

Analysis

- NGOs prefer female teacher for teaching the underprivileged children. The NGOs functionaries are opined that female teacher are more suitable for teaching the underprivileged children
- In higher classes they engage male teachers mainly for subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Biology, in case female teachers are nor easily available
- In one NGO where residential and school facilities are established, majority of the teachers are male. As the NGOs run their educational program on PPP basis, the State Government depute mainly male teachers for teaching the underprivileged children

Boarding and Day care facilities

Motivating the children and their parents to attend formal or informal schooling needs huge effort. (Dutta; Talegaonkar, 2020). The NGO volunteers go to the grass root level and try to understand the difficulties or inertia of the underprivileged section towards education. The teaching environment created by the NGOs makes these children comfortable and make learning interesting. Figure 2-Graph given below depicts the type of facilities provided by the NGOs.

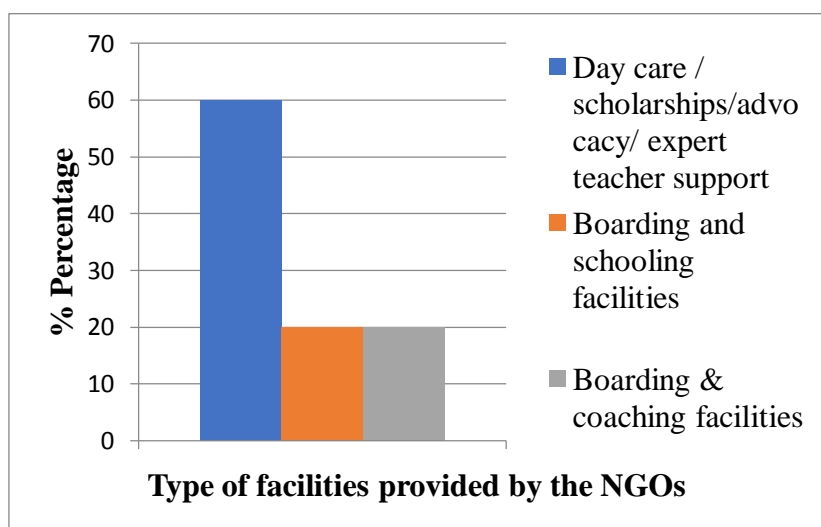


Figure 2-Graph
Type of facilities provided by the NGOs

Analysis

- 3 out of 5 (60 percent) of NGOs have day care education arrangement
- 1 out of 5 (20 percent) of NGOs have developed hostel campus wherein the children stay at free of cost.

- 1 out of 5 (20 percent) of NGOs have established both hostel and school inside the campus. They run the institution on PPP (Public Private Partnership) model where Government grants are available for teachers' salary, running expenses etc. However, management of the institution is controlled by NGO functionaries. Government's involvement is minimal

Pedagogical process adopted by the teachers engaged by the NGOs

- Student centric pedagogical style is used while teaching the students. Apart from text book reading, the students are asked (single or in group) to narrate the topic or subject through storytelling, acting, role play, recitation, debate, elocution, public speaking, painting, group discussion, correlation with their own surroundings / real life situation, examples, illustration
- For subjects like social science / environment, the teachers take them for a visit to nearby villages / gardens /riverside etc. for practical demonstration
- For English language, NGOs engaged experienced teacher (retired school teacher / professors etc.). As majority of the children know Gujarati or Hindi, the teacher blends the communication using both English and their mother language. The students are encouraged to reply in English. The teacher uses short form of sentences and simple words for the beginners. The content of sentences is relevant to their daily activities
- NGOs where majority of the students are from villages and are mainly having farmers background, the teachers use prototype farming tools for practical demonstration, uses stories related to their village life
- Skill based courses are designed by the teacher based on the textbook contents mainly physics, mathematics, chemistry, environment, general knowledge
- The teachers use whiteboards, charts, table, smart TV, videos, digital technology, models etc. depending upon the textbook content
- "Writing assignment is very important to improve the hand writing of students", during the interview, one of the educators of an NGO shared her opinion based on practical experience. During the interview with one teacher of the NGO, she explained, "once the student completes the assignment, they are asked to read their own writing. In this process student understand the areas where they need to improve any why?". She further added that the students realise the importance of good hand writing and it can fetch them good marks. Note books of 4 lines, 2 lines and 1 line are being used by the children for writing English, Hindi and Gujarati respectively. The researcher observed that the students keep the index finger after writing every word so that the distances between the words are almost same and writing looks clear
- Teachers write wrong on the board intentionally and wait for students to find out the mistakes
- Teachers focus more on values-based teaching, social responsibility, good human being, support to parents, respect to cultures, gender equity etc.
- Depending on student's learning ability, teachers segregate the children of standards 8th and below in three (3) groups, a) Self learner, b) Can do with peer's support, c) weak learners who needs more support from teacher. Teacher merge self-learners' children with peer learner children and give more support to weaker learners
- NGOs involve the children in cleaning the premises, organize open house discussions between functionaries, children, teachers, mentors to create awareness and self-learning

Challenges faced by the teachers in teaching the underprivileged children

- "The children are not attentive after they return from vacation due to home / society influence", one of the functionaries shared her experience during the interview. The educator added, "the teachers need to motivate them to bring them back to normal phase".
- "Children from different schools are coming to the activity centers. Managing their school syllabus, pedagogy design, teaching style etc. are few major constraints", the educators shared their experiences during the interview. The researcher observed that due to space constraints, common space is used for teaching children of different grades, different understanding levels, different age groups
- Teacher has to intervene more frequently and has to give more time to the students who have joined the NGOs education system (in standard 3 or higher) without any prior education
- Students mix up Hindi, Gujarati or dialect words while narrating or writing, translation of dialect
- Non-participation of students

Student's opinion/feedback regarding /pedagogy/teaching style of the teachers:

- One of the students shared his view during the interview, "Text book study is good, but if it is seen, it is better. Though we read subjects in the text book, we get more clarity through field work, model making, skill-based activities"
- Many students expressed during the discussion, "Teachers should not pay attention to one student"

- During the FGD with students, the students opined that teacher asking the students at random to write on the board about the topic just taught and explain to the students, improves student's confidence, understanding level, improve their public speaking ability, hand writing, make them attentive, remove the fear and hesitation / inhibitions. The student can realize how frustrating it is, if the students are not listening to what she/he is saying. They become more empathetic for the teachers for the same reason. Student learn the sequence of explaining the topic which the other student can understand easily
- Student like role play, acting, art and craft, more discussion/interaction, friendly atmosphere etc. during teaching-learning process
- Teacher should know the understanding level of the students and accordingly they should teach. Teacher should take feedback whether students have understood or not and the teaching process.
- Duration of the class should be short and interesting
- They like face-to-face teaching over online teaching for they can request teacher for clarification more times, difficult for them to sit continuously for long hours at one place in-front of digital devices, lack of practical demonstration in online system, the parents ask them to do some household works in-between the online class etc.
- During COVID-19 pandemic, children who are staying at NGOs hostel premises, learnt time management, extra-curricular activities, hostel maintenance activities, understanding among children and also with teachers

Challenges faced by NGOs during COVID-19 Pandemic:

- NGOs faced huge challenges to organize online teaching of students during COVID-19 lockdown due to lack of digital devices, network accessibility, skilled teachers etc.,
- Though online interaction/communication platforms such as Zoom Conference, Google Meet etc. are available, the NGO teachers facing difficulties in preparing online teaching materials using digital technology
- Teachers facing difficulties in monitoring and assessing the children's learning performance through online education system

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Kajal Kumar Dutta. “Pedagogy for the Educational Development of Underprivileged Children – A Case Study of NGOS Engaged In the Educational Development of Underprivileged Children.” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 27(04), 2022, pp. 63-70.