

Study of the Alternative Schools (ASs) under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and its Contribution to SSA (Delhi)

CHITER REKHA*

Abstract

Education is the fundamental right of every child and in that direction Delhi Government is also determined to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age-group 6-14 years. NCT of Delhi has shown good progress in the field of education and has obtained higher literacy rate than the national average in 2011 census, even so hundreds of children remain out-of-school and hence, the prospect of achieving UEE remains a distant dream. In this backdrop, the paper attempts to highlight the role and functions of Alternative Schools (ASs) under EGS for UEE for children in age-group 6-14 years in Delhi. This study involves various aspects related to quality dimensions of elementary education like infrastructure and basic facilities, teaching learning material and teaching learning process, perception of ASs functionaries' towards ASs. The paper tries to ascertain whether the activities undertaken by the ASs are in accordance with the prescribed guidelines of SSA and RTE, and how far have they been successful? Thus the ultimate purpose of the study is to bring out the reality of the implementation of SSA with regard to Alternative Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is a programme launched by Government of India to achieve the goal of Universalisation of Elementary

Education (UEE). It was launched in Delhi in the year 2003. SSA provides support to out-of-school children in the form of Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) and many other strategies under Alternative and Innovative

* *Lecturer*, Department of District Resource Unit, DIET (South West), Ghumanhera (SCERT), New Delhi-110073.

Education (AIE) Programme. These non-formal education schemes (EGS and AIE) are the main components of SSA. Alternate education programme, such as Alternative Schools, under SSA, attempts to bridge learning gaps and hence reduce the number of out-of-school children in the National Capital Territory (NCT). Alternative Schools (ASs) were designed under the Education Guarantee Scheme to address the specific needs of out-

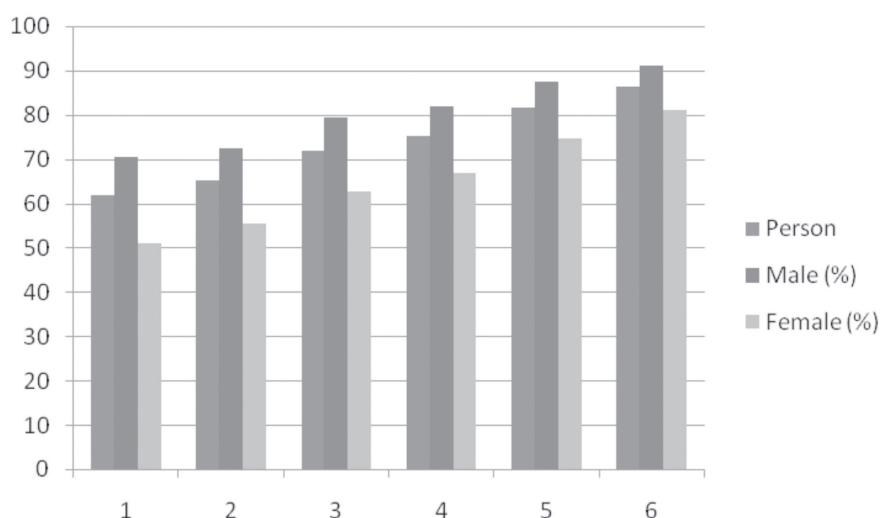
of-school children and provide them with an opportunity to complete primary schooling.

Delhi is the second largest metropolis in India after Mumbai with a population of 16 million. NCT of Delhi has shown good progress in the field of education as it is evident from Table 1 which shows an increasing trend of literacy rate ranging from 61.95 per cent to 86.34 per cent during 1961-2011 as per census.

Table 1
Delhi Literacy Rate (1961-2011) – in percentage

S. No	Year	Person	Male	Female
1	1961	61.95	70.37	50.87
2	1971	65.08	72.55	55.56
3	1981	71.94	79.28	62.60
4	1991	75.29	82.01	66.99
5	2001	81.67	87.33	74.71
6	2011	86.34	91.03	80.93

Source: Economic Survey of Delhi 2005 and Census 2011



Literacy rates for 1961 and 1971 relate to population aged five years and above. The rates for the year 1981 to 2011 relate to population aged seven years and above. Literacy rate by sex for Delhi and districts is given in the following table:

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN DELHI

Estimation of the correct number of out-of-school children in Delhi is a daunting task. The NCT of Delhi is a major destination for migrants from neighbouring states and other

parts of the country. The rate of migration has seen an increase over the past years which also means an increasing presence of street children and out-of-school children in Delhi.

Table 3 shows that thousands of children remain out-of-school. AWP and B puts the figures of the out-of-school children as 30001 in 2007-08, 38922 in 2009-10, 32063 in 2010-11 and 23536 in 2011-12. Going by this report, the goal of achieving UEE is still distant.

Table 2
District-wise Literacy Rate of Delhi

S. No.	State/District	Literacy Rate					
		Person		Male		Female	
		1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
	NCT of Delhi	75.29	81.67	82.01	87.33	66.99	74.71
1.	North-West	72.22	80.57	79.59	86.67	63.06	73.08
2.	North	75.87	80.10	80.83	84.64	69.69	74.54
3.	North-East	67.83	77.53	77.08	84.78	56.52	69.94
4.	East	77.50	84.91	84.14	89.65	69.52	79.26
5.	New Delhi	80.59	83.24	86.33	88.62	73.19	76.33
6.	Central	75.42	79.69	79.85	82.73	70.26	76.05
7.	West	79.01	83.39	84.17	87.85	72.85	77.99
8.	South-West	78.40	83.61	85.95	89.86	68.66	75.55
9.	South	75.69	81.96	82.79	88.26	66.67	73.94

Source: Directorate of Education, GNCTD

Table 3
Out-of-School Children in age-group 6-14 years

Delhi	Out-of-School children
2007-08	30001
2009-10	38922 (urban)
2010-11	32063
2011-12	23536

Source: AWPandB 2009-10

Table 4
Number of Out-of-School Children in Delhi – District-wise

Districts	No of Out-of-School Children (OoSC)
East Delhi	2380
North East	3860
North	960
North West	3200
West	3665
South West	2520
South	5751
New Delhi	160
Central Delhi	1140
Total	23,536

Source: Project Approval Board (PAB)

Table 4 shows district-wise out-of-school children in Delhi. According to the Project Approval Board (PAB) Meeting (held on May 2011), 25,536 children are out-of-school in Delhi.

MAJOR INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION OF DELHI FOR UEE

Delhi Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Samiti (DSSAS)

In 1993, the Department of Education, Delhi launched the 'Education for All' programme for school students and teachers. The target is to cover about 12 lakh illiterates of Delhi in age-group of 6-35 under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor of Delhi and Secretary, Department of Education, Delhi.

Universalisation of Elementary Education Mission (UEEM-2002)

In Delhi, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) was initiated in the year 2003,

two years after its first launch in the country in 2001. A society was formed and got registered in the name of 'Universalisation Elementary Education Mission' (UEEM 2002) under the Department of Education, NCT of Delhi for the implementation of SSA programme. UEE Mission in Delhi envisages two kinds of integration of the formal school systems (MCD, NDMC, and DCB) as well as of the formal and alternative education system. The SSA in Delhi is being implemented in partnership with Directorate of Education of the Government of National Capital Territory (GNCT) of Delhi, Municipal Council Delhi (MCD), New Delhi Municipal Corporation, Delhi Cantonment Board, State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT), 9 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET), Community, NGOs.

Teaching through CALTOONZ

UEE Mission has developed the course

material for upper primary classes to help learners in overcoming their weaknesses through CALTOONZ, a programme based on computer animation. The aim of the programme is to check school dropout rate by making the learning process more interesting and attractive in the Government schools.

YUVA

UEE Mission has launched this innovative programme to make learning more joyful and more skill-oriented.

BaLA

Every child needs a harmonious environment for personality development. Realising the need of child-friendly environment, it has been decided by Education Department that all school buildings be suitably developed with architectural designs in such a way that the school's entire physical environment itself acts as a learning aid.

Enrolment Drive (*Dakhila Abhiyan*)

The concept of *Dakhila Abhiyan* took shape in the year 2001. Delhi Government in its initiative passed an order that no school would insist on showing a birth certificate or an affidavit for admission up to Class V.

Automatic Admission from Class V to VI (Twinning of Schools)

To check students dropout at Class V stage, Twinning of Schools system has been evolved in which every

primary school is attached to one Directorate of Education school and the admission of students from primary school to the Directorate of Education school is automatic.

Online Admission in Directorate of Education Schools

Mid-day Meal Programme

This is provided to boost universalisation of primary education by improving enrolment, attendance, retention and learning level of children and to improve nutritional status of the students. Delhi Government has been providing Mid-day Meal to the students of primary stage since 2005.

No Retention Policy

In order to achieve the target of UEE and bring down the dropout rate to zero, the government launched the policy of "No Retention" till Class VIII from the year 2009.

Right to Education Act, 2009

According to this Act, every child in age-group 6-14 years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education.

INITIATIVES FOR THE COVERAGE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN

(a) Household Child Census

As directed by MHRD, Government of India, Household Child Census was conducted in approximately 15, 20,272 households. The analysis of the data indicates that there are

Table 5
Out-of-School Children (in thousands)

Age group	Male	Female	Total
6-10	18949	16693	35642
11-13	9757	8821	18578
Total	28706	25514	54220

Source: SSA report 2009

54,220 out-of-school children as given in Table 5.

(b) Learning Centres (2002-03)

The UEE Mission involved NGOs on annual contract basis to run Learning Centres (LCs) which were established as an alternative approach.

(c) *Khulja Sim Sim* Project (2008-09)

In order to provide education to out-of-school children and adult learners through an interactive, interesting and enjoyable manner, the department has initiated an innovative project to establish ICT based learning stations on the boundary wall of the Government schools all over Delhi.

(d) *Chalta Firta Schools*/Mobile Schools (2008)

The two *Chalta-Firta Schools* / Mobile Learning Centres (MLCs) are being run very successfully by the organisations namely Butterflies and Salaam Baalak Trust.

(d) Residential Bridge Course Centres (2006)

The Government of Delhi has launched a campaign for the education of all

children and adolescents who live and work on the streets under SSA. The Department has operationalised three Residential Bridge Course Centres (RBCCs) for street and working children, with the involvement of 'Samya Centre for Equity Studies' - an NGO.

(E) KGBV

In view of the low female literacy rate, in the Mustafabad area of North East Delhi, MHRD Government of India has directed the Department of Education to set up one Hostel-cum-School under the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* (KGBV) Scheme of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*.

(g) Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE)

In order to provide quality pre-primary education, 300 Model Early Childhood Care and Education Centres have been operationalised in various schools.

(h) Alternative Innovative Education (AIE) Centres

Alternative Schools are an alternative approach for the education of out-of-school children under the Education Guarantee Scheme.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the role of the Alternative Schools in achieving the goal of SSA.
- To study the infrastructure and basic facilities available at the ASs.
- To find out the extent of activities undertaken by Alternative Schools (ASs) under the prescribed duties of SSA.
- To study the perception of children, parents, instructors, supervisors, project heads (PHs) and Directors of ASs on the effective implementation of ASs.

SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

Forty-five Alternative Schools were selected for the research. 28 Learning Centres (LCs) and 4 Mobile Learning Centres (MLCs) were chosen randomly from the same area. 10 *Khulja Sim Sim* (KSS) - Hall in the Wall Education Limited (HiWEL) were selected through systematic sampling and all the 3 Residential Bridge Course Centres (RBCCs) were

also taken into consideration. All the stakeholders (Directors, project heads, supervisors, instructors, parents, and children) were also taken into consideration.

METHODOLOGY AND TOOLS USED

Survey Method was adopted for the collection of data. The data for the present study were collected through the medium of questionnaires, interview schedule, observation schedule and checklist. Questionnaires and interview schedule were prepared mainly to study the perception of parents and Alternative School functionaries' regarding the role of ASs in implementation of SSA. Observation schedule and check list were prepared to assess the extent of the activities undertaken by the Alternative Schools in accordance with their prescribed duties under SSA and RTE. For the analysis of the data, simple statistical technique like percentage was used.

Table 6
Responses of Instructors Regarding the Role of ASs

Role of Alternative Schools	ASs (45)	Percentage
Children living in the red light area/children of sex workers	04	9
Children of parents working at construction sites or railway stations	30	67
Out-of-school children	45	100
Street children/working children	35	78
Migrated children/off the state children	33	73
Orphan children or children of dysfunctional families	25	56

DATA ANALYSIS

On the basis of data analysis and interpretation, the following main findings have emerged out of the present investigation.

This study was conducted on 45 Alternative Schools. Table 6 reveals that majority of instructors agreed that ASs which were established as an alternative approach for the education of out-of-school children under Education and Guarantee Scheme have played an important role for the education of dropout and never enrolled children, working children and children who are not in a position to reach out to formal school, children of parents working at construction sites or railway stations, out-of-school children, migrated children, street children, orphan children or children of dysfunctional families in the age-group of 6-14 years. RBCCs are providing education

to entire population of children living in slums, open streets, children working in tea stalls, dhabas, domestic help, garbage collectors, begging on traffic signal and religious places, loitering around the railway stations and also the children most difficult to approach. *Khulja Sim Sim* were providing education to out-of-school children and adult learners.

Children in red light areas or children of sex workers are also one of the target groups to be covered under SSA. Only 9 per cent ASs (MLCs) were providing the education of the children of sex workers or children living in the red light areas.

Table 7 exhibits the responses of the 22 directors and project heads about the role of ASs. All the PHs and Directors of Alternative Schools said that their ASs were playing a major role in enrolment, retention, mainstreaming, mobilising,

Table 7
Responses of Projects Heads and Directors about the Role of ASs

Role of ASs	Directors and Project Heads (22)	Percentage
Checking dropout	20	91
Enrolment	22	100
Retention	22	100
Mainstreaming	22	100
Mobilising	22	100
Quality improvement in education	22	100
Curriculum development	14	63

checking dropouts, (63 per cent) curriculum development and quality improvement in education of the children in ASs whereas *Khulja Sim Sim* Centres were not playing the role in checking dropouts and curriculum development.

One of the major objectives of SSA is to provide basic facilities to children, such as stationery, drinking water, and separate toilets for girls, separate classroom, teaching equipments, etc. The analysis of the data shows that all the objectives are fulfilled partially. 96 per cent ASs do not have separate classrooms for the different classes of children and 62 per cent of ASs have less space for group activities. Most of the Alternative Schools, especially LCs, run under one roof. MLCs run

in a bus whereas *Khulja Sim Sim* run in constructed cabin attached with boundary wall of government schools (shown in the photograph no 4). Only 44 per cent of ASs have computers. Each kiosk (*Khulja Sim Sim*) has only two computers which is not sufficient for the children. It is very difficult for them to learn daily. There are no chairs/benches available at KSS for students and instructors. RBCCs are running in old Government school buildings and the condition of buildings is not so good. 76 per cent of ASs have no separate toilet for girls and (91 per cent) ASs had no play ground and play materials. Only 4 per cent ASs have chairs and 96 per cent students have to sit on the floor. 58 per cent have no adequate

Table 8
Basic Facilities Available at the Alternative Schools

Facilities	Observation Result (45 ASs)	Percentage
Stationery /books	32	71
Drinking water	21	46
Toilets for girls	11	24
Daris	32	71
Chairs, benches	02	04
Separate classrooms	02	04
Proper light in the classroom/sun light	22	48
Adequate space in the classroom	17	38
Teaching aids/learning aids	15	33
Computer	20	44
Playground	04	09
Uniforms	08	17
Libraries and their use	17	38
Mid-day meal	07	15
Medical	19	42
Vocational training	16	35

medical facilities and 85 per cent ASs have not provided Mid-day Meal and uniforms to the students.

Only 33 per cent of observed ASs were found to be using adequate teaching learning aids and 71 per cent Projects Heads claimed that they provide vocational training to the students of their ASs, however the observation reveals that only 35 per cent ASs were providing vocational training to the students of ASs. Textbooks, stationery were provided to the students at 71 per cent ASs. *Khulja Sim Sim* Centres have no provision of textbooks, stationery and teaching learning material for the students.

The library forms an essential component of SSA. The study revealed

that 62 per cent of ASs did not have a library which is the most important objective of the SSA. Thus, it can be inferred from the data that ASs are not able to play their role effectively and meaningfully in implementing the SSA.

Table 9 depicts that 77 per cent instructors used formal school books and only 22 per cent instructors have developed their own teaching plans before teaching in the classroom to make teaching-learning effective. 20 per cent instructors were using effective teaching methodology and audio-video aids and other teaching aids (such as models, charts, maps, specimens etc.) while teaching.

According to NPE 1986, the child centred and activity based process

Table 9
Observation Results with respect to Teaching Learning Process

Teaching Learning Process and Teaching methodology	Alternative Schools (45)	Percentage
Instructors develop their own teaching plans	10	22
Books are used for teaching (Formal school books)	35	77
Audio-Video aids and other teaching aids while teaching	09	20
Methodology of teaching are used by the instructors' books	32	71
Peer group learning	09	20
Demonstration	11	24
Learning by doing	09	20
Approach of teaching (child centred)	11	24
Punishment is used for classroom management	01	02
Class handled by the instructors (multigrade)	42	93
Continuous and comprehensive evaluation of learner done by the instructors	07	15

Table 10
Activities undertaken by Alternative Schools (ASs) are in accordance with their prescribed duties under SSA

SSA Norms	ASs (45)	Percentage
All the EGS and AIE provide free education to 6-14 age-group of children	45	100
Provision for the education of children with special needs	45	100
Special educator / special facilities for CWSN	02	04
Bridge the gender and social gap	45	100
EGS and AIE centres function for at least four hours during the day time	21	46
Preference was given to women in selection of EVs/ instructors	31	69
Teacher qualification laid down by the NCTE under Section 23 of the RTE Act	12	27
30 days induction training of EVs for primary level centres and 40 days for upper primary centres were completed prior to the starting at the centre	31	69
Alternative Schools are playing major role in checking the dropouts/enrolment/retention/mainstreaming, etc.	32	71
Door-to-door survey of OoSC done	45	100
For age appropriate admission of OoSC, and continued support to them	45	100
If the no. of children exceed 40, additional EVs can be provided at the centres. Pupil teacher ratio should be 40:1	45	100
Facilities provided by the community like suitable space, drinking water facilities, etc.	10	22
Community involvement through parents' group SC/PTA's/MTA's	31	69
Bridge courses	45	100
Remedial teaching	45	100
Residential camps	03	07
Mainstreaming of children into formal schools	45	100
Record-keeping and close monitoring of the learner admitted in the ASs in regard to their regular attendance, dropout, child profile, and promotion to next class	36	80
HMs were involved in regular supervision of ASs from which children likely to be mainstream	16	35
Regular evaluation of the functioning of EGS and AIE intervention	45	100
Regular academic support form CRPs/BRPs	15	33
Curriculum development, particularly of bridge courses	13	29

of learning should be adopted at the primary stage. It was seen that most of the ASs were not using the child centred approach. In 71 per cent of the classes of ASs, the concepts were being taught by the instructors using traditional method of teaching (by books) while only 24 per cent instructors used child centred approach during TLP by involving the students in class activities. Only 15 per cent instructors were used Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation for the evaluation of the students of ASs. After the observation, it was found that all the instructors of LCs, MLCs and KSS taught the multigrade classes at ASs whereas the monograde classes were handled by the RBCCs instructors.

Out of the norms prescribed by the SSA, the following points are being observed in all alternative schools:

- The entire ASs were providing education to 6-14 age-group (Classes I to V) of children except KSS. All the *Khulja Sim Sim* were providing education to 4-18 age-group (Classes I to VIII) of children.
- RTE mandates that all children in 6-14 years of age-group should be educated in the neighbourhood schools. This also includes CWSN. Hence, SSA ensures that every CWSN, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability is provided quality inclusive education. SSA has a 'zero rejection' policy so that no child is

left out of the education system. School preparedness of CWSN must be ensured by providing 'Special Training' as envisaged in the RTE Act. The existing alternative schools are providing special training to the children who are not enrolled in schools or have dropped out. All the ASs have a provision for the education of children with special needs and trying to bridge the gender and social gap. There was only 4 per cent physically challenged children in these centres. Special needs units are running by some NGOs like Samaya Centre for Equity Studies and Prayas for CWSN. 60 per cent of the ASs did not have support services for children with special needs.

- As per the norm under SSA, teacher-pupil ratio in a class should be 1:40. All the functionaries reported that the teacher-pupil ratio at their ASs was 1:40 which was as per norms under SSA.
- The RTE Act recommends free education and bans physical punishment and mental harassment. It was seen that entire ASs followed this Act.
- All the ASs (LCs, MLCs., RBCCs and KSS) are conducting household surveys for locating OoSC as well as dropout children which were in line with SSA and helping in mainstreaming the children in formal schools like MCD, NDMC and *Sarvodaya Vidyalayas*, etc.

- Close monitoring of the learner admitted in the ASs with regard to their regular attendance, dropout, child profile, and promotion to next class was conducted in all the ASs (LCs, MLCs., RBCCs and KSS).
- Bridge course, remedial classes and mainstreaming are an important objectives of ASs assigned under SSA. The entire ASs were providing bridge course facilities, remedial classes to the children of ASs and helping the children in mainstreaming into the formal school.

However the norms which were not being followed by all the sampled ASs were:

- SSA prescribed minimum 4 hours per day for each AS. 53 per cent alternative schools are open 3 hours per day. RBCCs being Residential centres remain open for all 7 days in a week and working hours are round the clock.
- According to the norm of SSA/RTE, 50 per cent women instructors should be recruited under SSA but KSS are not following this norm. 70 per cent KSS have male instructors.
- Out of 35 instructors of LCs, MLCs and RBCCs, only 27 per cent instructors of ASs have a required qualification. All the KSS instructors have required qualification (diplomain computer) as recommended by RTE Act. So

instructors' qualifications as laid down under Section 23 of the RTE Act are not being fulfilled. 69 per cent instructors got the induction training of 30 days.

- Only 7 per cent (RBCCs) ASs were providing residential facilities to the children enrolled there in. Although some of the parcel institutions running these LCs (such as Prayas, Ritanjali) have some residential facilities but these are not being provided to even orphan and destitute children enrolled in their LCs.
- Twenty-two per cent ASs received the facilities provided by the community like suitable space, drinking water facilities etc. and 69 per cent ASs involved the community through parents group PTM/SC etc. 35 per cent ASs get the support from the HMs of the schools. Only 33 per cent ASs get regular academic support from CRPs/BRPs whereas none of the MLCs, RBCCs, and KSS gets regular academic support form CRPs/BRPs and only 29 per cent ASs are developing their own curriculum and textbooks according to the NCF 2005.

PERCEPTION OF THE STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT THE ASs

All the respondents (directors, project heads, instructors, parents) agreed that the ASs had been successful in effectively implementing SSA. 50 per cent respondents felt that the government should take more

initiative and also make efforts in the improvement of ASs physical environment. Most of the ASs are running in slums in congested areas, that too in one room. There was no proper sitting arrangement for the children. It therefore affects the enrolment and retention of the children in ASs.

As far as the provisions for children were concerned, 64 per cent Alternative School functionaries reported that they were getting ₹1535/- per student per annum for primary (6-11) and ₹2960/- per child per annum for upper primary (12-14). RBCCs are getting ₹10,000/- per student per annum from which they were paying the salary to the instructors, giving rent for the learning centres, salary to the maids who were looking after the children and were also purchasing copies and other necessities for the students. 36 per cent (RBCs and KSS) functionaries reported that building facility is provided under SSA. Only 9 per cent said that computers are also provided under SSA. All the NGO functionaries were highly dissatisfied with the amount of money that they were getting and stated that the money was too less.

SUGGESTIONS

The following discussion could help the ASs in paving the path towards effective implementation and achievement of the goal of SSA and RTE:

- Instructors' qualifications need to be followed for future recruitments. The salary of the instructors should be increased for motivating them in their work.
- Library, mid-day meal, proper sitting arrangements, chairs and health check facility must be made mandatory in all ASs.
- Children of KSS were not satisfied with the teaching equipments and sitting arrangements. According to them, each kiosk has only two computers which are not sufficient for the children. It is very difficult for them to learn daily. There are no chairs/benches available at KSS for students and instructors. The instructors of KSS said that the number of computers on each kiosk should be increased and seats should be provided to the students as they find it very difficult for the instructors to teach the students in extreme weather.
- Around 65 per cent of the surveyed ASs has 30-40 students enrolled at the centre, at different grades or levels. Many of the enrolled students are first generation learners or OoSC with no support at their homes. It is important to understand that this target group needs special care in the early formative years, for which instructors need to be provided special orientation not only to provide bridge courses but also remedial classes to make schooling feasible to new entrants and to curb dropouts.

- In case of children without adult protection, lack of community support and ownership has been a major challenge. To overcome this, children's own community should be encouraged to mobilise people in the form of 'collective' or 'support group' and they should be given enough space to voice their concerns and participate in planning, implementation and monitoring interventions for the education of these children.
- An orderly atmosphere and an attractive working environment will make children happy and comfortable. Therefore, number of classrooms should be increased in all ASs and better infrastructure must be provided.
- Separate LCs, MLCs, for boys and girls have to be established so as to motivate the conservative parents to send their girl child to LCs as they are not interested in sending their daughters to co-education school and LCs.
- The number of RBCCs should be increased and separate RBCs should be established for girls. Three RBCCs are not adequate for whole of Delhi. According to NBT newspaper dated 1 February 2011, there are 1 lakh street children in Delhi and most of these children are girls.
- An educational plan should be prepared for child with special needs in consultation with parents and experts. Its implementation should be monitored and reviewed from time-to-time.
- In ASs where there are children of different age-groups and of different abilities, providing adequate and appropriate need based TLM is a major cause of concern. Therefore, it is important that children should have a variety of TLMs that are relevant to their age and ability so that they are actively engaged in teaching learning process.
- The SSA framework states "children should be encouraged to think and observe independently and the classroom should be the forum for interaction". The ground reality, however, seen in most of the LCs is different than that advocated in SSA. Teachers generally use the traditional 'chalk, talk, and text' method. Therefore, the teacher should use child centred activity based approach.
- Teacher should be made competent in undertaking activities like community surveys, survey of school/LC mapping, total population survey, survey of community resources and their use in furthering educational development.
- The vision of SSA is to enable each child to understand skill and dignity involved in manual work. Work education and art and craft education will enable children to consolidate their experiences through manual work and realise its significance. So, work education and art and craft education should be provided to the learners.

CONCLUSION

Some of the major findings may be given as under:

- There is less rigidity in terms of age of the child to seek admission, timings of classes, date of admission, attendance, and leave rules, etc. unlike in the formal schools. It was observed in the study that though the class timings of ASs are flexible, children also come late and stay beyond the school time. This cannot happen either in government schools or in private schools.
- Instructors make special efforts to encourage and enrol students.
- Those children who have been out-of-school or dropped out from schools get a chance to study in ASs. The entry into formal education is made possible and easy.
- If children after studying for a few years in the ASs can be admitted to a formal school then one of the purposes of opening SSA is achieved, i.e. of preparing the child to enter formal school. This is in consonance with an important objective of SSA that all children in such schools should be 'back to school' by a prescribed time. In this sense, these EGS Centres work as preparatory mechanisms to groom a child to enter the formal school.
- The RTE Act stipulates age appropriate admission for out-of-school and dropout children. The rationale of this provision is to ensure that older children do not lose self esteem by being made to sit in a class of younger children, and consequently drop out-of-school system. The RTE Act also provides that such children shall be entitled to free and compulsory education even after attaining the age of 14 years till they complete elementary education. All the ASs were providing remedial education and bridge courses to slow learners, out-of-school children, never enrolled children or children who had been absent for a considerable period of time. RBCCs being run by NGO- Samaya Centre for Equity Studies – were providing residential facilities to homeless and street children.
- In conclusion, one can say that SSA encourages participation of NGOs by way of participatory need assessment, implementation and monitoring. In addition, these agencies are expected to play a proactive role in advocacy for children's rights with emphasis on the Right to Education. SSA should review the nature of its engagement with NGOs and initiate the process of dialogue to open up new areas of collaboration in keeping with the parameters of the Act. Areas where partnerships have worked well should be continued taking into cognisance the new realities thrown up by the Act and fresh areas of partnership explored. NGOs would also have to relook their roles in the light of RTE Act for running Alternative Schools for out-of-school children.

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