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## Educational Process Followed in Street Classrooms

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### ABSTRACT

*The educational process followed in formal school classrooms is different from the process followed in the classrooms of non-formal educational programmes where the certificate and validity of learning is not assured. One such programme operating in India is Mobile School Programme. The objective of the paper is to assess as how the educational process takes place inside the classrooms of the mobile school programmes, which is assessed on the basis of teaching-learning activities generally liked by children, child friendliness of the classroom and student evaluation adopted by teachers in the classrooms. Four NGOs are running Mobile Schools and cover 18 slums of Delhi. The analysis is based on the data collected through direct observation by the researcher in the classrooms.*

### Introduction

Each school and classroom creates its own environment of learning depending on the ways of organising and visualising their teaching-learning activities. The organisation of a classroom running on the side of the road and a classroom in a well-constructed building will obviously be different. A teacher who teaches specific subjects organises the teaching-learning differently as compared to the teachers who manage all the subjects

individually. Teaching-learning in a class with children of all grades will definitely be different from the class with children of same grades. A school running in a bus will entirely conduct and organise classes in a way that is not common to a school standing at one place. All these factors significantly contribute to the effectiveness of a school and classroom. National Curriculum Framework 2005 and National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 emphasised that learning depends on what happens

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inside the classroom. Relevant curricula content is not the only thing required for good education but how the curricula are being imparted in the classes is also important. The way of imparting curricula is different in different educational settings. After the declaration of EFA at Jometien in 1990, in the last 40 years many educational programmes were started by private organisations, NGOs, religious groups, village communities, international bodies and even by ministries of education to support the education (IIEP, 1997, p. 4). These programmes are substitutes for country's formal education system and differ in their approaches towards educating children and types of intervention (IIEP, 1997, p. 10; Baxter and Bethke, 2009, p. 27). These programmes focused on group of children who are not enrolled in formal schools, with different curriculum and methods and operate in different geographical locations (Uemura, 1999; Nicolai, 2003; Farrell and Hartwell, 2006; Baxter and Bethke, 2009). One such programme operated in India is *Mobile School Programme: Education on Wheels*. The idea of *Mobile Bus Programme* has been started by Nirbhaya Niranjan of Calcutta. First in the series of this type of buses was the Doorstep Schools started way back in 1988 in Mumbai. The programme became popularised when Delhi Government started it in collaboration with two of the leading NGOs named Butterflies and Salaam Balak Trust in 2008. The motto of the programme is: *"If the children cannot*

*come to the school, let us take the school to them"*. The objective of the programme is to take education to those deprived children who are living on streets, railway stations, bus stands, construction sites, etc. The whole bus is a single classroom, which transacts the curriculum to the children with different grades and age at the same time and at the same place. Since these delivery mechanisms are best suited to the needs of underprivileged children in terms of their curricula, processes and flexible strategy of education (McMillan, 2011, p. 544) and occur in small, remote locations, generally inhabited by marginalised communities, it is important to see or note or describe as to whether these mobile programmes are successful in delivering a relevant educational process to the children in their classrooms.

The programme is operated through a refurbished yellow bus, which is fully equipped with teaching-learning aids, computer and a LCD TV used for film screening on social issues on specific day of the week. Computer is used for making children computer-literate. Each bus is associated with a municipality school of its area to mainstream children who complete the learning cycle in the bus. Timings are fixed as 2–3 hours at each location. The bus generally starts at 8 o'clock in the morning and reaches its first location at 10 o'clock. Two teachers are always present with 30–50 children in the class. Teachers spend more than 9 hours a day in the school/bus, as they have to cover all the locations in

a day. In all the locations, multigrade teaching has been followed.

### Research Objective

The objective of the paper is to assess as *how* the educational process takes place inside the classrooms of the mobile school programmes running on the streets.

### Parameters

The relevance of educational process is assessed on the basis of following parameters:

1. Teaching-learning activities mostly adopted by teachers and liked by children.
2. Teaching methods adopted by teachers and liked by children.
3. Child friendliness of the classroom.
4. Student evaluation adopted by teachers in the classrooms.

### Sample

NGOs/Schools running the mobile schools in Delhi are Deepalaya, Salaam Balak Trust, Nav Jyoti Foundation and Aanchal.

**Table 1**  
**Slums Covered by the Selected Mobile Schools**

NGO	Slums	Location
Aanchal	Shastri Park – Bangali Basti Mansarovar Park New Seemapuri Seelampur Sundar Nagri Shastri Park	North Delhi
Deepalaya	Haidarpur Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar Sarai Peepalthala	North West Delhi
Salaam Balak Trust	Kalandar Colony Vivek Vihar Mansarovar Park	North East Delhi
Nav Jyoti Foundation	New Sanjay Camp Valmiki Mohalla Kabbaddi Basti Bangali Basti Sonia Gandhi Camp	South Delhi

Four NGOs are covering 18 slums of Delhi.

### Tools

The research is entirely based on the participant observation by the researcher.

### Participant Observation

The research is entirely based on participant observation. The researcher personally visited the sites of the programmes for 96 days. No

activities do teachers use in their classrooms? Whether these activities are liked by children or not? What teaching methods are used by the teachers? Are these methods enjoyed by children or not? Are the classrooms of the programme *child-friendly*? These are certain questions that are answered in this section to assess the educational process of mobile schools in terms of classroom practices.

**Table 2**  
**Description of Observation Period for Data Collection**

Programme	Sample	Number of days of observation/Bus	Total classrooms observed	Total days of observation with data collection
Mobile bus programme	4 NGO's = 18 locations	1 month / Bus	18 classrooms observed (4+3+5+6)	24 × 4 = 96 days' observations with data collection

disturbance was created to record the real situations of classroom teaching. Observation was carried out with the help of:

1. Observation schedule;
2. Field diary;
3. Questionnaire for teachers and children: Total 10 teachers and 96 children were interviewed.

### Observation Period

The observation period was of 3 months and 6 days, which started from October 2012 to January 2013.

### Analysis and Interpretations

How are children grouped in the classroom? What teaching-learning

### Teaching-learning Activities

In teaching-learning activities, 11 activities like TV screening/video shows, group discussion, educational games, art and craft, music & dance, drama, poems & riddles, storytelling, study of picture charts, outdoor games and excursions were observed. In mobile school, TV was used to create awareness about social issues. Children were asked about teaching-learning activities they enjoy the most in the classroom. Children voted for educational games, followed by art & craft, excursions and then TV screening. Teachers were also asked to give their views on the teaching-learning activities enjoyed by the children the most. Teachers

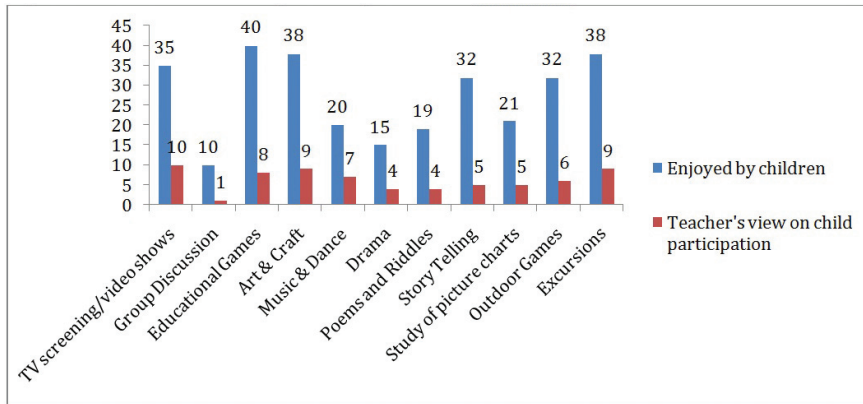


Figure 1. Most liked Teaching-learning Activities: Children's and Teachers' views

voted for TV screening, followed by art & craft, excursions and then educational games. The sequence of preferences as given by children and voted by teachers for teaching-learning activities is totally opposite (Figure 1), but has a common element which is the choice of activities.

The reason behind the popularity of educational games among children was their attractive colours and pictures. As the children are first generation learners so they did not see these type of equipments in their homes. Some of them go to government schools where again they are not able to see these



Figure 2. Picture clicked during observation

type of equipments. Figure 2 shows the children in bus watching a story on TV.

### Teaching Methods

As NCF-2005 focuses on constructivism, it is therefore important that the teacher uses constructive approach while teaching. Teaching any content is useless until and unless the content is not understood by the students and it all depends on the teaching approach. What methods are used by teachers in the classrooms? The data collected through observation are grouped in five methods/categories:

1. Activity-based means teaching through different activities;
2. Learning through work means teaching by giving written work to children;
3. by lecture;
4. activity outside the centre;
5. drama means through role plays.

Observations were made for each subject for mobile schools. Whether these methods were liked by children or not? This question was answered by asking children about their favourite teaching methods.

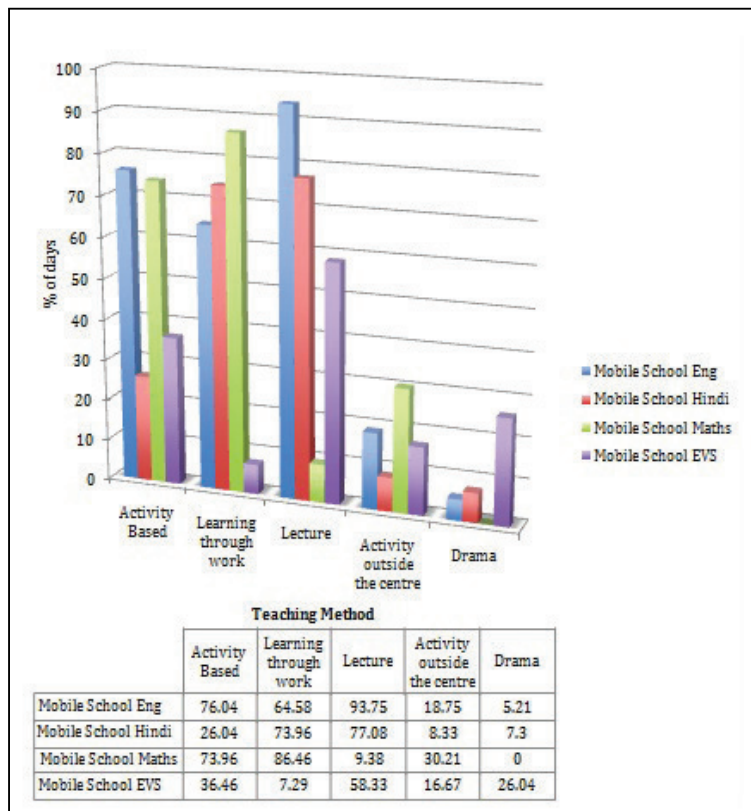


Figure 3. Frequency of Teaching Method Mostly Adopted by Teachers

It was observed that in case of English, lecture was used maximally in mobile schools. For Hindi, most of the times lecture method was used. Teachers taught Maths through work at 86.46 per cent of times and activities at 73.96 per cent of times. EVS was taught through lecture 58.33 per cent of the days. The second most used method was activity-based which is also appropriate as per NCF-2005. As it is clearly mentioned in NCF-2005, “Children should be engaged in activities to understand the environment through illustrations from the physical, biological, social and cultural spheres”.

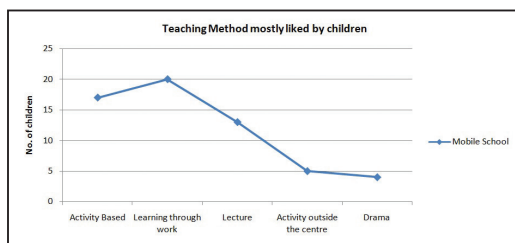


Figure 4. Teaching Method Mostly Liked by Children

For determining the liking of children regarding teaching methods, questions were asked to children through questionnaire. The idea was to analyse the degree of suitability of the teaching methods as adopted by teachers for these children. Whatever method a teacher adopted in a class should be liked by children especially in case when they did not go to school and are first generation learners. While asking about the most liked teaching method the children studying in mobile school opted for activity-based. Among activities children usually did mathematical games, group

poems, passing the ball for EVS activities, etc. The classroom observation showed that activity-based method of teaching was the second most used method by the teachers in English, Maths and EVS. That shows the good level of sync between the teachers’ strategies and children’s liking. It shows that the teachers of mobile schools understand the phenomenon behind teaching children of slums.

Which teaching method is appropriate or not, largely depends upon the choices of students. The method most understood by the children is the most appropriate. In this term, mobile schools are effective.

### ‘Child-friendly’ Classroom

Although both the National Curriculum Framework 2005 and RTE 2009 laid importance on child-friendly learning environments in promoting retention and learning among children, neither document explains a ‘child-friendly’ classroom and how to recognise it. In the selected programmes it was observed whether their classes are child-friendly or not. For analysing the child friendliness of the classrooms few dimensions were selected. While selecting the dimensions the document NCF-2005 was kept in mind.

Dimensions used as criteria for deciding a classroom as ‘Child-friendly’:

- Medium of Instruction: Mother tongue or Not mother tongue
- Use of TLM in introducing the topic: Yes or No
- Approaches used for introducing the lesson: Narrative or Participatory

- Approach used in teaching: Teacher-dominated or child-centered
- Types of questions asked during teaching: Real life experience based or Book-based
- Questions asked by children: Frequently or Infrequently
- Nature of activities: Small group/ Individual or Large group
- Teacher Behaviour: Teacher smiles or jokes with children or not

### Box 1. Indicators for child-friendly classroom

A classroom is 'Child-friendly' in which:

- Mother tongue is used by the teacher.
- There is use of TLM in introducing the lesson.
- Participatory approach is used for introducing and transacting the lesson.

While observation, separate observations were made for all the above mentioned dimensions. But to assess how child-friendly the classrooms of Mobile School programmes are, data was analysed in a compiled manner.

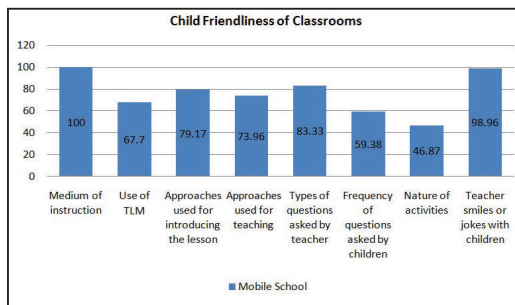


Figure 5. Frequency with which individual 'Child-friendly' indicators were observed

The graph shows the number of days the selected dimensions of child friendliness were observed in the classrooms. The number of days is shown in percentage for the purpose of analysis.

In mobile schools the data of 96 days of observation of 18 classrooms showed that happenings inside the classrooms are in accordance with what policy document espouse. All the 8 dimensions occurred more than 50 per cent of times except in 'nature of activities' category. Since the teacher in the class teaches in Hindi, which is the mother tongue of children of these slums, the behaviour of the teacher is considered child-friendly. Nature of activities is more of group activities. As there is dearth of physical space so most of the time teacher tried to involve all the children in large group activity. The behaviour of teachers of mobile school was as good as they generally laughed, joked, smiled with all the children. After every few hours they started counseling children one by one. Those who came late to the class, were never scolded by the teacher but were asked reasons for coming late. Children were very frank with teachers and they started telling their family problems to the teachers.

### Good Educational Practices

For praising and giving recognition in class to the children who are doing well, teachers have devised simple methods of encouragement. All children have been taught to clap and appreciate after their classmates explained something correctly or participate or do well. This



recognition boosts children’s confidence and motivation so that they keep on participating. Teachers give extra attention and help to those children who struggle with their studies. In the programmes, proper lesson planning has been done by the teachers. Mobile bus teachers are more careful while planning their lessons. They have their own curricula framework so to comply with the curricula framework they prepare their lessons in advance. They start their class by a small prayer followed by a recap of the lesson.

### Student Evaluation

The importance of evaluating children continuously is focussed by NCF–2005. It is needless to emphasise the importance of continuous and comprehensive evaluation of student learning. What are the existing practices of evaluation followed in the selected programmes? Keeping in line with the importance of continuous evaluation few dimensions have

been selected. The dimensions were restricted to a few and these are:

- Assessment of students during teaching-learning: Yes or No
- Mode of assessment of learners achievement: Written & Oral both or any one
- Homework assigned: Yes or No
- Evaluation of homework: Regularly or not regularly
- Recapitulation/Evaluation at the end (review of the lesson with the help of children): Yes or No
- Remedial measures adopted: Yes or No

#### Box 2. Indicators of Continuous Evaluation

Continuous Evaluation is followed by the teacher if:

- Teacher assesses the children during teaching-learning.
- Both written and oral modes are used for assessing the children.

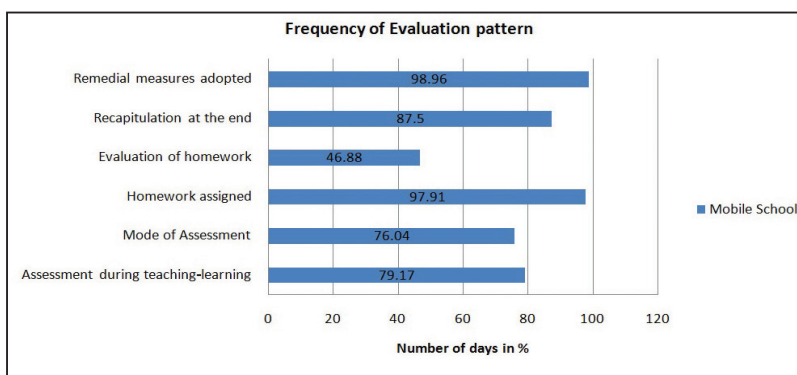


Figure 6. Frequency with which ‘continuous evaluation’ indicators were observed

In mobile schools, it was observed that on 79.17 per cent of days teachers did assessment of children through written and oral both modes. On almost all days teachers gave homework to children, but it was sad to observe that they hardly checked their homework. The main problem with teachers regarding daily evaluation of homework seems to be time constraint as they are supposed to spend only 2 hours at one location. The unique thing in mobile schools is that teachers were very attached to children and interacted with them on one to one basis with more focus on academically weak children. Teachers would counsel the children, ask their personal problems, listen to their previous works and teach them accordingly. On most of the days, the researcher observed this happening in buses. Even if a student was absent for more than three days teacher went to the slum to inquire about the child's absence. In case of continuous evaluation mobile schools are found to be effective enough.

### **Conclusion**

Mobile schools proved to be effective enough in delivering relevant

educational process in their classrooms. On an average, two teachers were always present with 30–50 children in mobile schools. Learner-centered approach was followed by the teachers. Clapping, praising and appreciating were commonly used methods of encouragement. The behaviour of teachers of mobile school was good as they generally laughed, joked and smiled with all the children.

In the present paper, mobile bus programme has proved to be an important link between access to education and sustainable development by providing relevant educational process in their classrooms. By having participatory and inclusive educational process and by creating child-friendly classrooms, mobile buses are successful in creating 'impact' on the well-being of the children. Indian government needs to change its attitude and realise that 'attendance does not matter if not coupled with quality learning' and should recognise outreach programmes (and other non-formal education) as important elements for imparting right to education to those who really need it (McMillan, 2011).

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