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Teacher's Attitude and Its Impact on Children's Access to Primary Education: Evidences from Primary Data

Rosy Sulochana*
Rakesh Raman

Research Fellow, ICSSR Project & Ph.D in Economics from Banaras Hindu University

Department of Economics, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

Abstract: Education is recognised as a basic input for empowering individual and overall development of the society. The universalisation of primary education continues to be a distant dream even after sixty years of independence, enormous funding and promises. Rather, the goal of universalisation has only been sparsely achieved and much has to do with the way access has been defined. The government's approach of defining access in terms of attainment i.e., increasing literacy rate, enrolment ratios, infrastructure and teachers availability etc. and then making them affordable to the masses has proved to be grossly unsatisfactory. The approach has been narrowed in including a relevant aspect i.e., the attitude of providers which determines the willingness of first generation learners to join educational institutions and thus, affects access to primary education to a large extent. Keeping this in background, the present paper argues that mere availability and affordability of facilities cannot ensure access. It must be accompanied with an encouraging attitude and high commitment of education providers. Availability and Affordability would fail miserably in ensuring access if those who are involved in providing the facilities to the deprived section actually do not accept their role, acknowledge their responsibility and are not prepared to work tirelessly towards the end. The paper intends to measure the rural-urban disparity in attitude of teachers for which it uses data collected through a primary survey of six basic survey units- 4 villages and 2 wards from the Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. Multi-stage sampling has been done to select the schools and households to be surveyed. Two groups of people were interviewed- parents whose wards were studying in the schools in the survey area and headmaster of different primary schools falling in the locality, thus making the total sample size of 450 parents and 31 headmasters, respectively. For measuring attitude, a psychometric response scale developed by Likert has been used. Likert scaling on 1-5 points has been done for transforming the qualitative indicators into quantitative one. The findings of the study suggests that excessive reliance on year end examination, sparse personalised attention of teachers towards individual problems of the weak students, checking homework on irregular basis and lack of commitment or an easy going approach of teachers towards their job have been the major problems with schooling system in general and government in particular. For ensuring commitment and dedication among the providers, government can employ college/university students during their vacation days for carrying different surveys so as to reduce non-teaching burden of teachers and allow them to solely teach. Besides this, the grading of teachers should be done on the basis of their qualification, behaviour and involvement with students, classroom activity and student's performance both in terms of oral and written examination of student. This would enhance the motivation and commitment level of teachers.

Keywords: Empowerment; Universalisation; Access; Availability; Affordability.

1. Introduction

In the present era, the fundamental challenge before the country like, India is ensuring basic health services, development of infrastructure and educational access to the masses of younger population. Among such issues, the issue of access to primary education is the prominent one which is crucial for the targeted section and thus happens to be the crying need of the society. As a matter of fact, education is recognised as a basic input for empowering individual and overall development of the society.

The universalisation of primary education continues to be a distant dream even after 50 years of planning, enormous funding and promises. Rather, the goal of universalisation has only been sparsely achieved and much has to do with the way access has been defined. The government's approach of defining access in terms of *attainment* i.e., increasing literacy rate, enrolment ratios, infrastructure and teachers availability etc. and then making them

affordable to the masses has proved to be grossly unsatisfactory (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001; Khasnabis and chatterjee, 2007). The approach has been narrowed in including a relevant aspect i.e., the attitude of providers which determines the willingness of first generation learners to join educational institutions and thus, affects access to primary education to a large extent. In government schools teachers have negative attitude especially towards education of weaker section of the society- they feel that the deprived section neither has the will nor the right and resources to be educated. Teachers do not make genuine effort to bring marginalized children into the mainstream schools (Bordia, 2005; Vasavi, 2006).

Keeping this in background, the present paper argues that mere availability and affordability of facilities cannot ensure access. It must be accompanied with an encouraging attitude and high commitment of education providers. Availability and Affordability would fail miserably in ensuring access if those who are involved in providing the facilities to the deprived section actually do not accept their role, acknowledge their responsibility and are not prepared to work tirelessly towards the end.

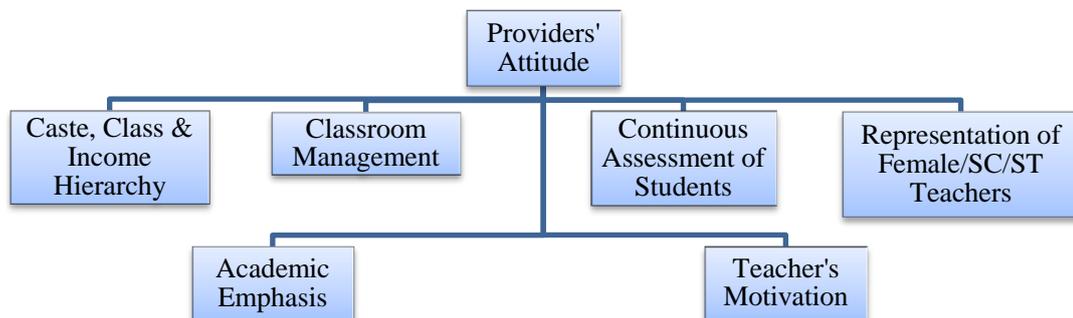
The paper is structured into three sections. Section-I attempts to provide a broader perspective of access to primary education focussing the attitude of providers. Section-II highlights the rural-urban disparity in the attitude of providers of primary education with the help of primary data collected for the Varanasi District of Uttar Pradesh. Section-III, provides policy intervention and argues that in rural areas of Varanasi more than providing educational facilities, creating right attitude among providers would be more effective in ensuring access to primary education.

2. Section-I: Conceptualisation of Access: Attitude of Providers

The existing literature is sufficient to highlight that along with availability (creation of facilities), affordability (cost of education) is also a key factor. The best infrastructure in the world would not ensure access, if the infrastructure is not affordable to the majority of the population. However, mere availability and affordability will not ensure access; a very crucial condition is the right attitude of the providers.

Many scholars have viewed access from the angle of *attitude of the providers*. Access can be ensured only when those entrusted with the responsibility of imparting/administering education have the right attitude towards promoting participation of all social inter-sections of students with bias and malice towards none. In this dimension of access, scholars like, Subrahmanyam (1984), Weindling (1989), Ramachandran (2005) and Dholakia and Iyengar (2008) have generally indicated towards the following factors associated with the providers of education-

Figure-1. Attitude of Providers



The important aspect from the perspective of access is teacher’s attitude towards the children of deprived caste, class and income groups. If the teacher’s behaviour towards underprivileged children is extremely detrimental, it will ultimately lead to the eviction of students from the educational system (Bordia, 2005; Vasavi, 2006). Sometimes, it is observed that poor children get little attention and experience exclusion in the form of unfamiliarity with mainstream language used by teachers and other children. In government schools teachers have negative attitude towards education of weaker section of the society- they feel that the deprived section neither has the will nor the right and resources to be educated. They are destined to do particular type of work in the social hierarchy and any effort to educate them would distort the caste hierarchy and also the social division of labour. They make no genuine effort to bring them in the mainstream. In such a scenario, only acceptability can ensure that facilities are not only created rather they are made available in the right spirit to the deprived section. This calls for a radical transformation of society focusing on strategies and activities to sensitize the community, i.e., teachers, administrators, and pupils to change negative attitudes towards the education of marginalized children. Due to the presence of widespread inequalities in the distribution of educational facilities across region, social groups and communities coupled with the lack of right attitude among the providers, the incorporation of the educationally deprived and marginalized children into education still remains a problem (Jha and Jhingran, 2002; Nambissan, 2006; Saxena, 2006).

As cited by Ramachandran (2004), there exists ‘hierarchies of access’ of different socio-economic groups to different categories of schools. She points out that as one goes down the social and economic pyramid, access and quality issues become more pronounced. In her experience, the vast numbers of the poor in rural and urban India have to rely on government schools of different types, and the quality of these may vary. The relatively better-off in rural and urban India either access better government schools or opt for private aided and unaided schools. Acharya (1982) and Chandra (1983) also found that "educational achievements in terms of literacy, enrolment and retention

correspond closely with the hierarchical order of the rural society according to class, caste and income level. The literacy and enrolment rates decline very steeply in accordance with the society's hierarchy." As per Chandra, the existing school system barely caters to the needs of the children from economically weaker sections" (Chandra, 1983). Kumar (1983) in his empirical study encountered that the enrolment rate was higher among non-scheduled castes whereas the drop-out rate was higher in scheduled castes. The prevalence of caste-based discrimination in the schools was found to be the reason for such a situation. Based on the study in two districts in UP, Srivastava (2001) found a contrast between the upper caste and lower caste with regard to the school type. Upper castes were inclined to prefer private schools than the lower castes that usually sent their children to less-equipped government school.

Along with teacher's attitude, his skill in handling classroom or managing right environment in the classroom is also very crucial. Unsupportive and suffocating class environment discourage learning process and compel students to regularly skip classes. Weindling (1989) found that along with the parental involvement and support, an effective schooling system tends to be characterized by academic emphasis (in terms of belief of students that teacher can teach, regular setting and marking of homework, and visible rewards for academic excellence and growth), classroom management (in terms of high proportions of lesson time spent on the subject matter or interacting with the class as a whole as opposed to individuals, lesson beginning and ending in time, clear and unambiguous feedback to students on their performance and minimum disciplinary interventions), continual monitoring of students' progress and attention of Head towards classroom instruction and learning. Based on a study of grade V students in 15 primary schools of Andhra Pradesh, Subrahmanyam (1984) has shown that academic environment of the schools, followed by home environment of learners and school infrastructure facilities, has a high and positive relationship with reading achievement of children.

Ramachandran (2005) highlighted low access is also accounted partly with educators, especially teachers who in government schools and in more rural areas appear demotivated and disheartened. This demotivation on the part of teachers occurs on many counts *e.g.*, high teacher-pupil ratio especially when school is multi-grade, lack of subject specific training to teachers, wide social distance between teacher and children (poor or socially disadvantaged) and politicization (payment for transfers/preventing transfers, deputations, appointments, promotions and special assignments) of school environment. Of these, social attitudes and community prejudices play a dominant role in determining the ability and willingness of teachers to empathize with children. There are a number of explanations given for lack of commitment and positive attitude of teachers. As per Ramachandran and Bhattacharjea (2009), since teachers' salaries are related exclusively to seniority, teachers have little to gain by putting more effort into teaching. Further, due to the operation of rent-seeking in many parts of the country, teachers often dedicate considerable time and effort to keeping local politicians and power brokers happy because they control the limited rewards obtainable within the system in particular, transfers to desired locations. In general, access to those with power can increase status, whereas dedication to teaching cannot. This seriously affects the commitment level of teachers keeping them away from their real profession. Apart from the above, sufficient representation of teachers from weaker section/caste group also play a crucial role in creating congenial class environment. It is generally believed that teachers belonging to SC/ST communities have more positive attitude towards students belonging to this section and are liable to work with more dedication for educating them and retaining them to schools.

Thus along with availability and affordability, acceptability becomes a crucial factor in ensuring access and promoting inclusive education. Inclusive education is not merely about providing access into mainstream school for pupils who have previously been excluded or closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision. Rather, it demands a change on the part of existing school systems in terms of physical factors, curriculum aspects, teaching expectations and styles, leadership roles.

3. Section-II: Disparity in Access to Primary Education in light of Provider's Attitude

This section is divided into two subsections, one stating the methodology and choice of indicators and second, highlights analysis part showing the rural-urban disparity in attitude of teachers in the survey area affecting access to primary education.

3.1. Methodology & Choice of Indicators

The paper intends to measure the rural-urban disparity in attitude of teachers for which it uses data collected through a primary survey of six basic survey units- 4 villages and 2 wards from the Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh. The survey was conducted in 2012 as a part of Ph.D thesis but information is being used for this work. Multi-stage sampling has been done to select the schools and households to be surveyed. In the first stage, Nagar Nigam located in urban area and two rural blocks has been chosen on random basis. From the 90 wards in the Nagar Nigam one ward from the centre of the town and one ward from periphery have been chosen. From the 8 blocks in the Varanasi district, 2 blocks were first chosen on the basis of preparing a composite index of educational development and from the chosen blocks two villages each have been chosen on random basis after proper listing of village. Two groups of people were interviewed- parents whose wards were studying in the schools in the survey area and headmaster of different primary schools falling in the locality. The total sample size was 450 parents and 31 headmasters of the primary schools.

The attitude of provider is intricate to measure as it is qualitative in nature unlike the issue of availability and affordability. For measuring attitude, a psychometric response scale developed by Likert has been used. Likert

scaling on 1-5 points has been done for transforming the qualitative indicators into quantitative one. The attitude of providers is measured on the basis of following indicators.

Table-1. Indicators of Attitude of Provider

1.	Personalised Attention paid to weaker/deprived section students
2.	Regularity of teachers in schools and their job seriousness
3.	Remedial classes conducted by teachers for weak students
4.	Continuous assessment of the student’s performance or importance to term end examination only
5.	Absence of discouragement to weaker section children due to teacher’s punishment
6.	Giving exercises in the classroom and correcting them

Source: Chosen by the Author from Primary Survey

3.2. Major Findings: Rural-Urban Disparity in Attitude of Providers

A very common problem with access to primary education in Uttar Pradesh is lack of commitment and dedication of teachers and the apathetic attitude especially towards the weak students and students from the weaker section of society. In order to know the guardian’s perspective on the way the teachers perform their responsibility and handle the children, a number of questions were asked as shown in [Table-2](#) given below.

Table-2. Guardians’ Response to Attitude of Teachers (in %)

Question	Village/ Ward	Govt. School		Pvt. School		Question	Village/ Ward	Govt. School		Pvt. School	
		D*	A	D	A			D	A		
Teachers come regularly in school and take their job honestly	Ghamahapur	11.1	38.9	1.7	95	Teachers conduct remedial classes for failures or weak students	Ghamahapur	34.7	15.3	65	18.3
	Millichak	18.4	76.3	3.7	90.7		Millichak	86.8	7.9	100	0
	Singhpur	21.9	71.9	0	93.3		Singhpur	87.5	0	83.4	16.6
	Paterawan	20.4	32.7	4.1	89.2		Paterawan	77.6	0	86.5	1.4
	Rural	17.95	54.95	2.37	92.05		Rural	71.65	5.8	83.72	9.07
	Luxa	5.3	94.8	2.9	94.2		Luxa	42.1	15.8	71.5	10
	Shivpur	25	50	1.9	97.3		Shivpur	37.5	37.5	60.2	23.2
	Urban	15.15	72.4	2.4	95.75		Urban	39.8	26.65	65.85	16.6
	Total	16.8	56.4	2.5	93.4		Total	65.2	8	78.3	11.3
Teachers give homework in classroom & examine the same next day	Ghamahapur	30.5	44.5	10	86.6	Teachers make continuous assessment of student's performance	Ghamahapur	15.3	30.6	8.3	70
	Millichak	29	31.5	2.8	94.5		Millichak	81.6	18.4	13	87
	Singhpur	29.7	68.8	3.4	96.7		Singhpur	81.3	9.4	8.3	81.6
	Paterawan	16.3	53.1	8.2	90.5		Paterawan	51	6.1	13.5	70.3
	Rural	26.37	49.47	6.1	92.07		Rural	57.3	16.12	10.77	77.22
	Luxa	0	84.2	0	97.1		Luxa	31.6	26.3	25.7	57.1
	Shivpur	25	50	1.9	97.2		Shivpur	25	50	8.4	71.3
	Urban	12.5	67.1	0.95	97.15		Urban	28.3	38.15	17.05	64.2
	Total	24.8	53.6	3.9	94.2		Total	50.8	18.8	12.8	73.8
Teachers pay personalised attention to individual problems of students	Ghamahapur	29.2	23.6	36.6	38.3	Importance to term end examination only	Ghamahapur	9.7	36.1	0	76.7
	Millichak	86.8	5.3	61.1	35.2		Millichak	2.6	97.3	0	100
	Singhpur	84.4	4.7	41.7	55		Singhpur	17.2	76.6	6.7	90
	Paterawan	69.4	2	40.5	41.9		Paterawan	0	73.5	1.4	82.4
	Rural	67.45	8.9	44.97	42.6		Rural	7.37	70.87	2.02	87.27
	Luxa	36.9	31.6	45.7	38.5		Luxa	15.8	57.9	5.7	64.2
	Shivpur	37.5	37.5	26.9	54.6		Shivpur	0	75	2.8	66.7
	Urban	37.2	34.55	36.3	46.55		Urban	7.9	66.45	4.25	65.45
	Total	60.8	12.8	42.5	43.9		Total	8.8	66	2.5	80.5

Source: Computed by the Author from Primary Survey (*D= Disagree, A= Agree)

The factor that determines the teacher’s attitude in schools is the regularity and honesty of teachers towards their job. If teachers come regularly to school and impart education with keen interest and dedication, there is high probability among children to grasp lessons quickly. This in turn not only creates a healthy schooling environment rather also makes an interactive classroom which further ensures real access to education. However, a significant difference is found between teachers in government school and that in private schools regarding their regularity. [Table- 2](#) depicts that 92.05% respondents in rural area and 95.75% in urban area, whose children study in private schools accepted that teachers come regularly in schools and take their job seriously and honestly while only 54.95% respondents in rural and 72.4% in urban area who were sending children to government schools agreed on this point. 36% of the respondents of Luxa and 34.7% of Shivpur strongly agreed that the teachers come to school regularly. However, it is a good sign of indication towards the teacher’s glory and respect in private schools, conversely the teacher’s commitment level is still doubtful in government schools. And the situation is much grave in village areas

as compared to the wards. As the level of development in urban areas is higher, the quality of education is better and teachers are more conscious towards their job.

A significant variation was found in giving homework among different schools. While 94.2% of the guardians admitted that this is done in private schools, only 53.6% of the guardians called it a regular phenomenon in government schools. While 67.1% respondents in urban areas admitted that the teacher examine and give the homework to the students in government school, almost 26.37% respondents in rural areas said that students do not get homework and even if these are given these are not examined the next days by the teachers in government school. As per parents, government school teachers are least bothered whether children learn anything or not. As they are assured of fixed salary, they do not want to take burden of giving homework regularly and check the same next day. On the other hand, the situation is quite opposite in case of private schools. Since the school management is strict there and the teacher's accountability is judged through student's performance, the teachers are oriented towards the progress of their students. That is why the children also remain focussed and study at home. They have the fear that next day the homework would be checked and if they do not make it, they would be the odd man out. However, the children studying in government school do not have such feeling as with the negligence of teachers, they also become insolent towards studies. If teachers check home work on a regular basis they can better understand the problem faced by individual students and take remedial measures.

An important indicator affecting teacher's attitude is personalised attention of teachers towards individual problems of the weak students. Normally, majority of first generation learners belong to low caste categories like, SC and OBC, the parents of whom live hand to mouth. As such they cannot afford to pay high fee of private schools so they are bound to admit their children in government schools. With the loose and flexible system of government schools, these children become even weaker in studies unless teacher's pay personalised attention to them. Teacher's inability to tackle these children makes it difficult for them to adapt with the fast going syllabus. Thus teacher's apathy and lack of involvement with such children makes the children to reach on the verge of dropping out schools. So, from access point of view, it is necessary to ensure personalised attention of teachers towards such children. The survey findings reveal significant variation in rural and urban areas in government and private schools. The [table- 2](#) clearly shows these differences. While 67.45% parents in rural and 37.2% in urban areas, who were sending children to government schools disagreed that the teachers pay attention to individual problems of the student, only 8.9% and 34.55% respondents agreed with the statement, respectively. Overall, 60.8% parents disagree to the statement and only 12.8% agreed with the view. On the other hand, in private schools, only 42.6% respondents in rural and 46.55% in urban areas agreed that teachers pay attention to individual problems of student while 44.97% and 36.3% of the respondent defined it as a rare phenomenon, respectively. The responses give clear indication of the fact that there is lack of commitment on the part of teachers especially in government school, thus hindering access to primary education.

In view of above, it is found that teachers perform their duty just as formality and pay no attention to the problems of the weak students, especially in government school. While in private schools, since there is large number of children studying in one classroom having different level of intelligence, it is difficult for teachers to spare special attention to the weak children, rather they teach them in mainstream classroom instead of arranging some special classes for them. As is evident from table, 65.85% parents educating their children in private school in urban area disagreed that teachers conduct remedial classes for weak students. However, this percentage was even higher in rural areas (83.72%). This makes children feel ignored and less able to concentrate on studies. This scenario is even poor in government schools. The situation from which the state of Uttar Pradesh is passing at present where in a good percentage of family is the first generation learner in school, specialised care of weak students is must. If the teachers do not take their problems separately these students were start lagging behind the rest of the class, feel disenchanted and might in the ultimate run discontinue studies. This adversely affects children's access to education.

Excessive reliance on year end examination for a long time has been a major problem with Indian school system in general and government in particular. Due to this, children do not become habitual of competing with others and as such they do not feel the necessity to do better in examinations. This severely affects access as they gradually lose their will to continue education and may result in dropout from school. As far as government school is concerned, almost 57.3% respondents in rural and 28.3% in urban area disagreed that teachers make continuous assessment of student's performance. In some villages, mostly the respondents were found to be undecided about the question. This shows that guardians are not even aware whether teachers assess their ward's performance or not. On the other hand, over 70% respondents in rural and 64.2% in urban area, who were sending their wards in private school, praised teachers for continuously assessing the students and encouraging them to perform on a continuous basis.

The above analysis reveals that there is vast disparity in terms of commitment level of teachers in government school and that in private school. On one hand, where a strict private school management guarantees 100% teacher's accountability and dedication, a flexible management and easy going approach of teachers in government school not only takes the toll of student's future by reducing their interest in studies but also deteriorates the standard of school. Thus, the approach and attitude of teachers is found to be decisive in determining access to primary education.

4. Section-III: Policy Interventions

Government's loaf sided approach, emphasizing upon attainment while neglecting attitudinal issues of teachers, has been the reason for limited success so far. In fact a sense of commitment and dedication among the providers is essential for needful success.

We suggest some very specific measures that address this neglected issue-

- 1) The survey findings revealed that involvement in non-teaching work in the school make teachers feel overburdened. Teaching needs apart from commitment and abilities right frame of mind and a sense of fulfillment and pride. The government can employ college/university students during their vacation days for carrying different surveys. This would not only get the work done but at the same time provide some incentive to the students and some income to them. For maintaining the record of student attendance, mid-day meal details and preparing a host of other information to be supplied some people could be employed at the block level who can visit school on rotation basis and maintain records. Such efforts would reduce non-teaching burden from teachers and allow the teachers to solely teach.
- 2) Teacher's accountability should be judged on the basis of student's learning competencies. Their grading should be done on the basis of their qualification, behaviour and involvement with students, classroom activity and student's performance both in terms of oral and written examination of student. This would enhance the motivation and commitment level of teachers.
- 3) Private teaching/tuition should be strictly prohibited for government school teachers since it makes teachers interested in money making rather than focusing on their job.
- 4) Teachers should be provided with special training related to teaching skill and also handling weaker section students. They should be trained to be cooperative, helpful, encouraging and soft-spoken towards the weaker children. Instead of providing only bookish knowledge, they should interact with children so that children could feel free to ask anything from teacher. If the government system of education is to be reformed, then teacher would have to revive the feeling of social service.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, the present paper suggests that providing access to primary education in real sense is not just a matter of ensuring high attainment and making education affordable by investing more resources. Rather, it demands a change in the mind-sets of providers in the form of committed, dedicated and responsible brand of teachers and educational administrators in schools.

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