

Mobile School for the Street Children: A New Paradigm of Non-formal Education

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STREET children belong to the category of the most vulnerable children (MVC). This is because they are poorest of the poor children living in the corner of misfortune. Completely detached from the family a large contingent of urban poor children in grave situation find place in pavement to lead a miserable life in a deplorable street situation. They live on the street and move on in group aimlessly is a common urban scene. They don't care as nobody cares for them. Are they mavericks?

The children on the street are migrated from different places. They are misplaced quite oblivious about the places they come from. In fact they came from the families hard pressed by abysmal poverty with or without parents. They are struggling for survival with little or no sense of right or wrong. They participate in informal labour market as child labour or working children. An absence of psychological supports and basic necessities withstands normal growth of the street child. They cannot dream of the prospects of primary education. The only way out to address their predicaments is programmatic intervention through non-formal education.

Mobile school is significant as a dynamic non-formal institution. It runs parallel to the concept of moving child—a flying bird in the environment he deeply enmeshed. This is a viable paradigm for improving street situation. As an innovative approach mobile school attempts to draw huge number of vagrants and child workers enthusing them into positive thinking. It is expected to enable them to learn lessons of enlightened society.

The street children get stuck in odd jobs that can hardly build human capital. They are less likely to be employed within the set wage structure compared to adult labourers. What they do here and there around the street cannot be truly termed as employment. Among child labourers well trained working children other than street vagrants obtain access to wage market. The involvement of street children especially street girls reflects difficulties they face in going to work in a proper environment. In fact they are not included in measured employment. When working, they are found in low-paying jobs. As they are paid far below the market rate they cannot expect to have access to social security.

Labour market outcomes for the child are affected by general trends in poverty. Because of severe income constraints in low income countries, poor families may have no choice but send children to work rather than to formal school and the street children have significant difficulties in finding work. Micro analysis of the countryside shows that incidence of migration to cities increases when the families below poverty line faced income shocks due to several antecedents like flood, draught, river erosion and violence.

What is contributing to vulnerability of street child? We observed that rise in misplaced children pouring in cities continue to add pressure on child labour market. Poor access to information about piercing economic crisis in the country side is more than a problem of rural development. Policy failures have unintended effects on the poor families. More social institutions hinder meaningful participation of the girls.

Government—NGO collaborative venture in the realm of non-formal education (NFE)—serves to address this state of vulnerability so far as street child is concerned. The revealing aspect of non formal education is mobile school. The purpose of the mobile school is to socialize the street children at different city points with a systematic plan of non-formal basic education. Mobile school tends to make non-formal agenda life-oriented. So the paradigm of mobile school is a package of animated concepts commensurate with street situation and community participation. It professes to inculcate among the most vulnerable children (MVC) lessons of good life. This is a contextual action research intended to minimize the adverse effects of urbanization on the street children. It is enjoined upon the voluntary organizations to steer this popular education to a success through community participation.

Specific to street situation mobile school is capable of reaching the unreachable as an appropriate policy advocacy for popular education at the base. Investment of resources, both material and human, on mobile school development, is a productive social investment. What is needed is a long term plan of action keeping in mind the importance of human right focused activities. For this out-reach programme to become successful it is necessary to well manage social service spectrum. At times it is necessary to sensitize the community so that the city dwellers in different city fringes become protagonist rather than antagonist about mobile school. In the process they will become sympathetic to the street children loving them as their own.

The importance of mobile school can hardly be overemphasized in view of the escalating street terrorism and rising militancy of extremism. There is a lurking fear of the subversive activities as the militants as invisible forces may strike any time. There is a possibility of the street children being used by these obnoxious elements. Only a rapt attention to the development of mobile school putting the street children first can make this possibility remote.

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