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Access and Innovation: A Study of Two NGO Schools in North India

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Introduction

Occupying an area about one-third the size of the U.S. on the Indian subcontinent, India is a diverse nation of over one billion people. Many "symbols" of India— the Taj Mahal and Bollywood, for example, are easily recognized the world over. Other images commonly associated with India in the popular imagination are not as cheerful: abject poverty in the urban slums and rural villages, and the recent terrorist siege of Mumbai. Hindi and English are commonly spoken in India, while 14 other officially recognized languages signify the vast linguistic diversity on the subcontinent. Although the majority of the population is Hindu, many other major world religions are represented in India: Islam, Christianity, Sikhism and Buddhism to name a few. India is a federal republic, with its national government operating from the capital city of New Delhi. It is a largely agrarian society; over half of the population works in agriculture. Economic liberalization in recent years has led to rapid economic growth and has drawn worldwide attention to India's development.

Despite the celebrated rise of the middle class in India and impressive economic development in recent years, India has yet to fully address one element that has long been acknowledged as an important part of development: universal basic education. India's uneven development is evidenced by India's relatively high illiteracy rate. According to 2001 data provided by the Population Reference Bureau, the literacy rate for females (age 15-24) was 65% and 80% for males of the same age group ("Data by Geography"). Because the Indian government has been slow to deliver on its promise of universal primary school education, in the last thirty years many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged to address this important development goal. Recent scholarship

suggests that two strengths of NGOs are their ability to reach disadvantaged communities and their ability to experiment on a small scale with innovative solutions to social problems (Clark 1995, Jagannathan 2001). Because of the inequalities in the current public education system, the decentralized nature of educational administration in India, and the positive attitude of the government towards NGO involvement in education, this study operates on the premise that NGOs in India are well poised to contribute to these two areas. However, this paper will also explore possible limitations of NGOs providing primary education.

Using data collected from two NGO schools in North India, this study presents two case studies that will shed some light on how NGOs in India are increasing access and innovation in the primary education system. By comparing and contrasting the two organizations, this study will also highlight the diversity of NGOs involved in primary education in India. Instead of making broad generalizations about the role and contributions of NGOs in primary education in India, this study aims to provide perspectives on two different organizations and raise questions about NGO schooling in India.

To better understand the context in which to locate these two case studies, the following sections review important literature on recent developments in education in India and the role of NGOs.

India: An Educational Overview

The history of education in India is complex. For the purposes of this research study, I will focus mostly on developments after the 1980s. However, the colonial era and the three decades immediately following independence in 1947 have shaped the

education system as it exists today, and are worth a brief explanation. Although schooling certainly did exist prior to the colonial period, the arrival of the British and European missionaries marked the introduction of "modern" or "Westernized" education into Indian society[1]. The implications for primary school education during this period are not as clear as for higher education, as the British did not invest highly in primary education, did not establish many primary schools, and did not enforce any system of compulsory education (Weiner 1991: 105)[2]. However, two important legacies of schooling during British colonial rule persist even today: the inherent elitism of the education system and the use of the English language in higher education since the 1830s (Kumar 2000, Chatterjee 1976)[3].

Having accepted the merits of a Western education, around the turn of the century the Indian National Congress "unsuccessfully urged the British to establish free and compulsory education" (Weiner 1991:7). Finally a law was passed by the British government in India that allowed provincial governments to authorize compulsory education on a local level. This action set an important precedent that has shaped the educational system in India wherein primary education is seen by the government as a right of the citizen, but not a duty of the government. After independence from the British, the new Indian government articulated in Article 45 of the Constitution a commitment to free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 under Part III (Fundamental Rights) rather than Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy).

Article 45 reads: "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." (Constitution of India). At

the time, the government declared that this goal should be reached by 1960, ten years after the writing of the Constitution. However, by again regarding education as a right, the government continued the practice of permitting but not enforcing compulsory primary education (Dreze and Sen 2002:164, see also Dhagamwar in Kumar, 2006:26). The challenge of universal primary education at the time of independence was enormous; in 1950, the "overall literacy rate was 18 per cent and the female literacy rate was only 9 per cent" (Govinda, 2002:1). Although 16 of 22 states shortly passed similar laws permitting compulsory education by local government bodies, only the state of Karnataka passed a compulsory education law in 1961. Karnataka met with great success with its education programs, and reported an official enrollment rate of 98% (Weiner 1991:72).

In addition to failing to require compulsory primary education, the Indian government focused mostly on higher education in the years immediately following independence. This emphasis on higher education and vocational training left fewer resources for primary school education of the masses, and indeed primary school education was underfunded by an estimated 7.16 billion rupees in the first five year plan (Weiner 1991:107). This set a dangerous precedent. Today primary education continues to be underfunded and the government turns to alternative measures such as non-formal education to cut expenses; meanwhile, in 2009 the Indian government announced its plan to increase the higher education budget by 21% (Neelakantan 2009). Non-formal education refers to "any organised educational activity outside the established formal system - whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity - that is intended to serve identifiable learning clienteles and learning objectives" (Combs with Prosser and Ahmed 1974). Nussbaum (2007) argues that Nehru's belief in the need

for science and technology to modernize India has led to neglect of arts and humanities in Indian education today[4]. The early education system focused heavily on rote learning. Curricula today still place too little emphasis on active engagement, critical thinking, arts, and self-expression as opposed to repetitive learning (Nussbaum 2007:282). The stress on science and rote memorization may be two factors which make schooling less accessible and enjoyable for all children.

As these early developments illustrate, the "educational history of modern India can be read at two levels: as declaration, in which case we have one narrative; and as practice, or the experience of education, in which we have another narrative" (Kumar 2000:23). Clearly the goal of universal elementary education was not reached by 1960. Over the next two decades, the national government shifted more of the responsibility for education to the state governments. In 1986-7, the same year that the National Policy on Education (NPE) "reiterated the issues of equality of education opportunity, and free and compulsory education for all children up to 14 years", nearly 50% of children ages 6-11 living in rural areas had never been enrolled in school (Kumar 2006:23, Visaria in Dreze and Sen 2002:165).

The lack of serious progress in primary education post-independence fueled an international dialogue over child labor in India during the mid-1980s (Ramachandran 2003:1). Myron Weiner's influential book The Child and the State in India shed light on the connection between the Indian elite's views on child labor and its failure to provide free, compulsive primary education.

Weiner (1991) argued that prevailing beliefs about social hierarchy commonly held by government officials, bureaucrats, educators and the middle class in India

prevented compulsory education from becoming a duty of the government. The idea that hierarchy is a natural part of society led Indian elites to justify the lack of primary education among lower classes. For example, the belief that child labor provides a necessary income for impoverished families and that compulsory education would be in some ways coercive has prevented the complete eradication of child labor, a phenomenon that keeps many poor children from attending school still today. According to Hindu tradition, lower castes and Dalits perform menial, degrading jobs; therefore, many upper class Indians doubted the necessity of an education for lower caste and Dalit children. While Indian elites during this time generally promoted the idea that economic progress must be achieved to usher in human development, Weiner asserted that policy changes, not economic growth, were necessary for the eradication of child labor and the achievement of universal primary education. This argument is supported by recent evidence that the states of Kerala and Himachal Pradesh have been able to achieve better educational outcomes than the wealthier states of Punjab and Haryana ("India: Primary Education").

The period of the late 1980s through the 1990s brought many important developments in education in India: the introduction of non-formal and alternative education schemes, external and non-governmental participation in education, and a renewed emphasis on primary education both domestically and internationally. The National Policy on Education in 1986 included non-formal education as a major component of educational policy for the first time. Non-formal and alternative education programs such as the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), implemented in 1988, increased dramatically in number (Govinda 2002, Kumar 2006, Ramachandran 2003). The TLC

aimed to achieve minimum competencies among learners within 200 hours of instruction in an "environment which suited the learner" (Karlekar 2004:20). The establishment of non-formal education (NFE) facilities also coincided with the introduction of shiksha karmis (SKs, or para-teachers) into the education system of many states as another alternative strategy. Para-teachers are one alternative solution to the problems of teacher absenteeism, teacher shortage, and poor teaching quality in India. SKs are essentially part time teachers who are less educated (typically educated up to the tenth class, whereas one must graduate from twelfth class to attend college) and paid significantly less (Dreze and Sen 2002:170).

Although schemes such as the TLC have been effective, many are still skeptical of non-formal and alternative education. Kumar (2006) refers to the mid-1980s as the time when the state "meeting demands for formal schooling by implementing non-formal schemes under the garb of increasing the literacy rate" (24) and warns that NFE education delivers a second rate education to tribal, Dalit, female, and disabled children (38). Similarly, Dreze and Sen (2002) warn that reliance on alternative schooling without a serious long-term vision for such programs raises serious concerns of quality, equity, and sustainability in primary education (170).

Coinciding with economic liberalization policies of 1991, the early 1990s saw the "opening of the primary education scene to external assistance on a fairly large scale" (Govinda 2002:17). Programs such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Lok Jumbish Project were made possible by the "commitments made by the international donor community at the Jomtien Conference" (Govinda 2002:2). The First World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, where

delegates from 155 countries and about 125 NGOs met to declare 1990-2000 the decade of Education for All (EFA). The Conference stressed universal primary education and an end to mass illiteracy. The attention of the international community perhaps put some pressure on the Indian government to take increased action on the issue of primary education, because the 1990s are widely recognized to be the decade of the most intensive period of primary education development in India, particularly in terms of increase in literacy rates and number of primary schools (Govinda, 2002:2). Ramachandran (2004) notes the decadal jump of a11.8% increase in literacy among men and a 15% increase among women as a major achievement of the 1990s (19).

After the Jomtien Conference the international donor community, such as the World Bank and UNICEF, played a large role in funding the District Primary Education Program (DPEP), which was a "large, multi-state programme" initiated in 1994. The DPEP has been praised for "augment[ing] available resources for primary education... [and giving primary education] the attention and priority it merits in the government (Ramachandran 2003:1). Two successful programs implemented in Rajasthan during this time were the Lok Jumbish Project and the Shiksha Karmi Project, both funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The Lok Jumbish Project has been an effort to mobilize communities to improve schools and empower women (Yadappanavar 2008). The Shiksha Karmi Project trains local youth as para-teachers in "remote, economically backward, rural areas where primary schools are either non-existent or dysfunctional" (Ramachandran and Sethi 2000:7). Similar programs across India represented cooperative efforts between the Indian government (national and state level), international donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This opening

up of the educational system allowed for significant increase in NGO participation in education at the local level.

These trends reflect the growing dialogue and concern about the state of primary school education in India (Ramachandran 2003:1). Another major step forward was taken when the Indian Parliament passed the 86th Amendment to the Constitution. Kumar (2006:36) writes that

> "Under pressure from international bodies and national civil society organizations, the Indian State, through the 86th Amendment made elementary education a fundamental right by inserting Article 21A, which says that 'the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine'".

Despite the progress that this amendment represents, it still fails to mention how exactly the education will be provided, what role the state governments will play, to or specify the government's financial commitment to the education system (Kumar 2006:37). Skepticism about the seriousness of the government's commitment and/or ability to provide universal compulsory education clouds the optimism with which the amendment might otherwise be viewed.

Entering into the 21st century, much work is left to be done if the goal of universal primary education is to be achieved in India. According to the 2002 Education for All study (led by UNESCO), 87.5% of all children of the appropriate age group were enrolled in primary school education, but only 61.4% graduated from the 5th standard (Regional Overview 2006). Concerns about private and foreign investment in primary education and the trend towards private schooling for more affluent children raise concerns about the commodification of education (Kumar 2006, Ramachandran 2003, Saxena 2006)[5]. Furthermore, the criticism that NFE provides second rate education for

already disadvantaged children is a serious one, considering the lack of a long-term vision for non-formal and alternative school schemes. Perhaps most importantly, the increase of outside investment and implementation of non-formal education and literacy campaigns cannot hide the obvious lack of effort to strengthen the existing system of formal schooling by the state (Kumar 2006:36). In this context many NGOs have emerged to attempt to fill the gap caused by the government's failure to provide universal primary education. For example, the Lok Jumbish Project and the Shiksha Karmi Project in Rajasthan, two successful programs previously mentioned, depended on partnerships between the government, foreign funding agencies, and local NGOs. While the role of NGOs is still marginal in the overall primary education system of India, at this point we must ask: What is the role of NGOs in providing primary education in India? What are their contributions? And what part *should* they play if universal primary education is to be achieved in India?

The Role of NGOs

Because the voluntary sector is so large in India in terms of visibility and sheer numbers, it may be useful to first define NGOs and highlight some key arguments about the general role of NGOs before focusing on the particular role they play in education. As our world becomes more interconnected, the role of non-governmental organizations is increasing in important areas such as advocacy and achieving development goals. In India, this is especially true. India has the second highest number of NGOs in the world after Brazil (Clarke 1998:36).

NGOs are often defined more by what they are not. Typically, they are not affiliated with any particular government, although they sometimes receive funding from

governments. For example, many NGOs addressing education in India receive some form of government funding and/or partner with the government on multi-state campaigns such as the Total Literacy Campaign. They do not strive to produce goods or offer services in pursuit of profit. NGOs are often seen as delivering services and solutions that governments cannot or do not offer to their citizens. NGOs are generally intended for long-term existence, although the sustainability of NGO projects is sometimes a cause for concern. An NGO then is "a private citizens' organization, separate from the government but active on social issues, not profit making, and with transnational scope" (Weiss & Gordenker 1996:20). Advances in technology, growing resources from international donors and governing bodies such as the UN, and a reputation for being the voice of the people have contributed to the rise of NGOs in development.

Criticisms of NGOs tend to be that they reinforce existing power structures between the First and Third World, particularly international organizations in which the donors and major decision makers live in another part of the world than where the organization is working. NGOs can then be viewed as a new type of First World imperialism. Ferguson (2003) compares the work of NGOs and international aid organizations to that of missionaries during the building of the British Empire and states that NGOs, "like the missionaries of old, can be as much an irritant as a help to those trying to run a country" (6). In terms of the financial viability of NGOs, it has been argued that they are not necessarily more cost-effective than government-provided services, and have little transparency (Nunnenkamp 2008). Often, individual donors as well as foreign governments tend to focus aid on more effectively governed countries and

well-established NGOs, believing that their money will be better spent. The irony of this approach is that it is countries with weak, corrupt governments and an underdeveloped NGO sector that need the most aid (Stephenson 2005, Nunnenkamp 2008). Another concern is that NGOs effectively let the government off the hook from providing services like education and health care to its citizens. Furthermore, although NGOs are often involved in democratization processes (Weiss & Gordenker 1996), decision-making processes within NGOs are not necessarily democratic.

One of the most important factors in determining the role and efficacy of an NGO is its relationship with the government. Clark (1995) identifies the most constructive type of NGO-state relationship as "a collaborationist one in the sense of a genuine partnership to tackle mutually agreed upon problems, coupled with energetic but constructive debate on areas of disagreement" (598). According to Clark, India's voluntary sector has achieved this type of healthy relationship with the government (2003:598). Sen (1999) adds that when applied specifically to India, "the relationship at the local level can be generally characterized by the hostility of politicians, party workers, local elites, lower level bureaucrats, and lower level employees of the state toward NGO activity"(1). NGOs involved with primary education in India often not only cooperate with different levels of government, but also help implement state programs (such as the DPEP). Clark (1991) also warns that "An NGO's dependence on foreign sources of finance might foster the suspicion of governments and nationalistic political parties"(596). This concern resonates especially for NGOs in India as the educational system becomes more open to foreign aid and investment.

The roles of NGOs in primary education in India cannot be easily generalized because the types of organizations, their aims, approaches, outcomes, and contributions are numerous and diverse. NGOs surveyed for the India Education Report reported the following areas of focus in basic education (from most commonly reported to least): mobilizing community, imparting literacy, enhancing quality, training teachers, providing additional facilities, and providing teaching-learning materials (Govinda 2002:125). NGOs in India often reach out to specific underserved subgroups of the Indian population such as girls/women, street children, socio-economically deprived, tribal and rural regions, urban slum dwellers, and handicapped/special needs children. Other organizations work towards the goal of universal primary education through addressing related issues, such as child labor or providing Early Childhood Care and Education. For example, as of 2001 the well-known and successful M.V. Foundation which operates in six states had enrolled 80,000 working children into government schools, including 4000 bonded child laborers (Jagannathan 2001:12)[6]. Due to the overlapping of these issues, NGOs vary in the extent to which they are working specifically "in education." Types of organizations range from those that run multiple schools to those that use education and a means to empower people to address other social issues such as Dalit rights and environmental sustainability.

As illustrated above, NGOs play many diverse roles in working towards the goal of universal primary education in India. Despite their limitations, NGOs are an important part of India's decentralized and somewhat fragmented education system. Even when they run their own educational facilities, NGOs do not hope to set up a parallel system of education, but "wish to act as catalytic forces to improve the effectiveness of the

Government system" (Jagannathan 2001:4)[7]. According to Clark (1995), in an enabling environment, NGOs can contribute to mainstream development through "their ability to reach poor people especially in inaccessible areas" and "their capacity for innovation and experimentation" (594)[8]. Similarly, Jagannathan argues that while "NGOs cannot be the panacea for all the problems that beset elementary education", they are particularly effective in "the successful schooling of underprivileged children" and "cataly[zing] innovations in schools" (Jagannathan 2001:3,6).

Using this framework of *access* and *innovation* in NGO schooling, I will now turn to the case studies of two North Indian NGO schools, Bodh Shiksha Samiti and Little Stars School. By first describing the two organizations, I hope to illuminate some of the bigger issues within primary education previously described in this paper. By comparing and contrasting the two organizations, I will illustrate the different ways in which these two NGO schools approach primary education. Finally, I will analyze the ways in which each school contributes to the primary education system by increasing accessibility for underprivileged children and using experimentation and innovation to improve the quality of education. Along the way, we may also come to realize some of the limits of NGO schools, and the need for a long-term plan on the part of the government as to what roles these organizations can and should play in the realization of universal primary education.

Methods of Data Collection

During the spring of 2008, I spent four months in north India with the School for International Training's Culture and Development program. While based in Jaipur city for the majority of the time, I was able to travel extensively throughout the state of

Rajasthan. The last month of the program was spent in researching an independent study project somewhere in north India; I chose to study NGO schools. In addressing this topic, I focused on two organizations in North India: Bodh Shiksha Samiti in Jaipur, Rajasthan, and Little Stars School in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Due to the nature of my research question, which requires qualitative description and analysis, I found classroom observation, field notes, and interviews to be the most appropriate tools for data collection. In addition to traditional methods such as interviews, my research will be informed by my own experiences working with these organizations: as an intern at Bodh and as a volunteer at Little Stars. Thus, because of my unique roles as researcher and as volunteer/intern (i.e, a participant-observer) this study is based also on experiential learning.

In March 2008, I interned for one week at Bodh. During this six-day internship I split my time between the NGO offices in Kukas, a small suburb outside of Jaipur, and working at Bodh's school for slum children at Gurutek Bahadur Basti in Jaipur. At Kukas, I gathered data by talking with staff members and reading publications and materials available at the office. After this introduction to the organization, I spent three days in the field observing classes, visiting different campuses and conducting interviews. Of the time I spent in the classroom, I participated in mostly pre-school and first standard classes. I also went on two "community contact" visits with Bodh teachers and sat with the teachers during their planning periods for those three days. Furthermore, I visited a local government school and attended a teacher's workshop. I conducted a total of five interviews, two with staff members of Bodh, two with mother-teachers working at Gurutek Bahadur Basti, and one with the headmistress and Bodh teacher of

Government Girl's School in Javahar Nagar, Kuchhi Basti. I also held one focus group with the teachers of Gurutek Bahadur Basti school. Fourteen teachers attended and participated in the discussion. All of these interviews were translated by the school coordinator for Gurutek. I developed a better understanding of the organization, especially in terms of curriculum development, classroom environment and community involvement.

For the second part of my study, I spent three weeks at Little Stars School (LSS) in the city of Varanasi in April 2008. As a volunteer, I spent a significant amount of time working on different projects such as funding research and creating exercises to accompany English reader workbooks for classes 1-5. Due to the timing of my stay there, which coincided with class reviews and examinations, I was unable to spend as much time in classrooms as I would have liked. I participated in one English class for Upper Kindergarten (UKG) and 1st class, but other data collection at LSS consisted entirely of interviews and studying learning materials such as reader workbooks. With the help of a translator, I conducted a total of fourteen interviews with families, community members, staff, teachers and children. A detailed breakdown of the fourteen interviews can be found in the following table. Through these interviews I was able to gain different perspectives on the organization.

Table 1.1 *Interviews at Little Stars School Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh*

Type of Interview	Number	Location	Notes
Teacher	4	LSS	
Hostel girls	2	LSS	Hostel girls are also students, and were asked many of the same questions
Students	2	Their homes	
Families	4	Their homes	All families interviewed lived in the surrounding *basti* areas in Nagwa
Local priest/social worker	1	His home	This man is a community member, researcher and social worker who has been living in the Nagwa slums for 18 years
Staff (Asha Pandey, founder and principal of LSS)	1	LSS office	

Case Studies

I chose these two organizations because they happened to have good working relationships with my study abroad program based in Jaipur. They were not chosen at random. Both organizations had worked with American students placed through SIT before, and were generously willing to host me while doing my research. I also chose two organizations in North India specifically because most of the states considered to be "educationally backward" states, including Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, are located in North India. The advantage to choosing these two schools was that I already had a certain amount of entrée with the organizations, through personal relationships with SIT staff and a history of positive collaboration. Although the schools were not chosen to be representative of any particular type of NGO school, they take two very different approaches to achieve the same goal of educating children in disadvantaged communities.

I will give a brief background of each NGO school before discussing how the two case studies illuminate some issues mentioned in the previous section.

Bodh Shiksha Samiti

Bodh Shiksha Samiti was founded in the 1980s by a group of Jaipur-based social activists. The group, finding that most slums lacked schooling facilities and noting the inadequacy of nearby government schools, raised the first Bodhshala (Bodh school) in Gokulpuri, a slum neighborhood in urban Jaipur ("The Genesis"). Afterwards, having received funding from a government program entitled "innovations and experimentations in primary school education" Bodh established four more schools in urban Jaipur. Now, the total number of Bodhshalas in urban Jaipur is seven. From its modest beginnings as a grassroots organization founded by social activists, Bodh has now transformed into a complex organization with programs for both rural and urban children as well as teachers. Bodh partners with the government of India through the DPEP in Rajasthan. Bodh also now receives funding from highly recognized international development and aid organizations such as UNICEF, Oxfam Netherlands, CARE India, and the American India Foundation ("Our Partners"). This paper cannot cover their many projects and will focus mostly on the particular Bodhshala with which I worked in the Gurutek Bahadur basti (slum) neighborhood. I will use my experiences at this Bodhshala and at the Bodh headquarters in Kukas to highlight their innovative approach to primary education and their strategies to increase the accessibility of schooling for urban poor children.

Bodh's mission statement reads "Bodh's mission is to participate in the formation of an egalitarian, progressive and enlightened society by contributing in the evolution of a system of equitable and quality education and development for all children." ("Mission").

Bodh's educational philosophy is rooted in the principles of democracy, sustainable community involvement, and quality, equitable education for deprived children ("Philosophy"). They aim to instill a sense of equality and confidence in their students through holistic learning. Self-expression is encouraged among the children and the classroom environment is informal and democratic. In order to develop a child's cognitive and non-cognitive skills, "a very flexible and joyful process of teaching/learning is followed" by the Bodhshalas (Jagannathan 2001:19). To summarize the goals laid out by its website, Bodh seeks to provide quality education for deprived urban children through innovation and experimentation in primary education, community mobilization, mainstreaming successful approaches for large-scale implementation, innovative curriculum and teacher development, establishing integrated community schools (Bodhshalas), networking, research, and continuous evolution of philosophy and practices ("Approach and Strategy").

According to a 1998 UNICEF survey, "an estimated 30% of the population of the city of Jaipur lives in slums" and "In nearly 50% of the slum colonies, more than half the children were out of school" (Jagannathan 2001:19). According to a Bodh resource person, the seven Bodhshalas in Jaipur serve small, relatively homogeneous slum neighborhoods such as Muslim or Dalit communities. Gurutek Bahadur basti is a poor Sikh community on the outskirts of Jaipur. The men of the community are ironsmiths and worked with metals, while the women often sell fruit and vegetables to supplement family incomes. Bodh uses different techniques to integrate the school and its teachers into the slum community in which it operates. For example, at the Gurutek Bahadur Bodhshala two women were trained as mother-teachers in order to help with the

organization and founding of the school there. The women convinced the senior males in the community to accept the school, and talked to mothers about the importance of education. The two women reported that in exchange for performing these and other duties for the Bodhshala, they were taught to read and write and gained confidence from their important role.

Bodh requires all Bodhshala locations to donate classroom spaces, believing that if they are invested in education, even the poorest community can find a way to contribute. At Gurutek, one two-story building was entirely set aside for the Bodhshala's use; pre-school, music, dance, and computer science classes were most commonly held in this main building. Other lessons took place in available spaces carved out and scattered throughout the neighborhood: in an unused room of a community member's house, an abandoned building, or under the shade of a tree.

Little Stars School

As a university student, Asha Pandey, the founder and principal of Little Stars School, was moved by the plight of children in her hometown of Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh is considered an educationally backward state of North India. In the mid-1990s, she began teaching a few working girls basic reading and writing skills in her free time. The one-hour sessions were held three days a week. Meanwhile, she began talking with the parents of poor and working children, such as local rickshaw drivers. She said she "tried to convince them of the importance of education". As the girls began to develop reading and writing skills, more and more children began to show up for these lessons. Finally, when the number of students

reached 125, she knew she could no longer teach them all on the roof of her small house ("History"). With the help of private benefactors, she built a three-story building in the residential neighborhood of Nagwa in Varanasi and officially founded the Little Stars School ("History").

Today, "Little Stars School provides free education for more than 400 children from underprivileged homes in Varanasi" from preschool to class IX and also runs a small hostel for girls ("Little Stars School"). The school continues to be funded by 15-16 main donors: individual friends of Ms. Pandey, past volunteers, and mutual acquaintances. They are all foreigners, according to Ms. Pandey, and the future of the organization is always uncertain because of funding issues. The donors can contribute in multiple ways. For example, 50-55 children are fully sponsored to attend Little Stars School. Some donors choose to contribute items such as book bags and uniforms, to fund particular projects, or to donate their time and expertise as volunteers. Little Stars School is not affiliated with any other NGOs and does not receive funding or benefits from the government ("Little Stars School").

The philosophy of teaching and learning at Little Stars School is very much the philosophy of Ms. Pandey herself. She began the school with the goal of basic literacy, reading and writing in Hindi, as her goal. Now, with about 400 students, she follows the model of government schooling but hopes to provide a more challenging and higher quality education than local government schools. Up until class V she prefers to use private books which are more challenging than government textbooks. For classes VI-VIII they follow the government curricula, supplemented with extra activities and classes taught by volunteers such as painting and health. Ms. Pandey's goal is to provide a

quality education to the students such that when they are finished at LSS, they are able to continue their high school, perhaps college education if possible, and find good jobs. In order to help the female students find jobs, LSS also provides vocational training in sewing, typing, and cosmetology, especially for the female students ("Classes and Vocational Training"). In contrast to Bodh's unconventional classroom settings, Little Stars Schools resembles a typical school familiar to the West. Whether from the influence of foreign donors and volunteers or the legacy of British colonialism, the children wear uniforms, sit behind desks, and teacher/student relationships are more formal.

Because the children who attend Little Stars are street children, they come from all over Varanasi and even a few were brought there from surrounding villages. Therefore the community which Little Stars serves is hard to describe. According to Ms. Pandey the immediate neighborhood is somewhat affluent, although the neighbors are not involved with the school. The students of Little Stars "come from a variety of backgrounds and family situations", but many are working children ("The Children"). These children often perform menial and degrading tasks such as collecting trash, selling tobacco, cleaning houses or begging to provide extra income for their families. The interviews with families revealed that the parents of Little Stars students are often cycle rickshaw pullers, dishwashers, housekeepers, or street sweepers.

The neighborhood in which I conducted family interviews was a nearby Dalit community from which many children attended either Little Stars School or another nearby missionary-run school, Little Angels. A local priest and social worker who lived in the same neighborhood where the interviews took place reported that the members of

this neighborhood community were Chamars— the same Dalit caste as Mayawati, the current Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. The hostel girls, Ms. Pandey, her teenage daughter, and three full time staff live in the building and make up their own unique community. The hostel girls, many of whom were abandoned or abused by their parents, look to Ms. Pandey as a mother figure and to one another as sisters. Ms. Pandey said that in addition to the schooling they receive during the day, the hostel girls benefit from informal spiritual training, social outings, and the love and attention of herself and the live-in staff.

Discussion

There are many frameworks through which to analyze primary education in India. Dreze and Sen (2002) note that the discussion on educational deprivation in India could benefit from an analysis of accessibility, affordability, and quality of schooling (159). When talking specifically about NGO and non-formal education, Dreze and Sen (2002) raise concerns about the quality, equity, and sustainability of alternative schooling programs (170). One could also analyze NGO education in terms of the broader educational system in India, and ask whether NGOs are helping as a temporary supplement to the public schooling system or are actually intended as a permanent substitute for adequate schooling facilities (Dreze and Sen 2002:171). Because of the limited scope of this project, I will not assess the quality of education provided by the two schools in the case study. Nor will I attempt to answer whether NGOs are helpful or harmful to the overall primary education system in India. Instead I will apply the theories

of Jagannathan (2001) and Clark (1995) regarding NGOs providing *access* and increasing *innovation*.

When discussing the role and contribution of NGOs in primary education in India, it is often pointed out that two strengths of NGOs are: (1) they increase *access* to education for disadvantaged groups and (2) they create *innovative methods* through experimentation and research (Jagannathan 2001; Clark 1995). I should note that in this study, my definition of access is more than mere physical proximity; it also encompasses inclusive classroom environments, community outreach, and curricula that make education more *accessible* to urban poor children. NGO schools can increase access to primary education by reaching out in particular to disadvantaged groups such as Dalits and tribal groups. In the cases of Bodh and Little Stars School, the target population is poor urban children, including slum dwellers and street children. Given India's huge population and immense diversity (cultural, religious, linguistic, etc), NGO schools also have the capacity to increase access by developing a learning environment and curriculum which is flexible and sensitive to the context of a particular community.

Another argument is that NGO schools help to improve the overall education system in India because of their ability to experiment and come up with innovative approaches. In the context of this study, I consider innovation to be practices outside the mainstream approach to education used by government schools in India (e.g. rote learning, formal teacher-student relationships, adherence to government curricula, etc.). Compared to the government education system, NGOs are much smaller in size and reach. Because of the lack of bureaucratic red tape, NGOs have the ability to create and implement programs much more quickly. In theory, the programs can then be evaluated

and their findings or best practices can inform the mainstream education system. Keeping in mind the themes of access and innovation, I will now look to the case studies and how they contribute to the goal of universal primary education.

Access

Both Bodh and Little Stars Schools specifically target urban deprived children: slum children at the Bodhshala in Gurutek Bahadur basti in Jaipur City and street, working, and otherwise disadvantaged children at Little Stars in the surrounding areas of Nagwa, Varanasi. Although both NGO schools were established in order to increase the access of these children to primary education, one question we should keep in the back of our minds when studying NGO schools is why these children were otherwise failed by the government schooling system. The Gurutek Bahadur Bodhshala, like all Bodhshalas, was deliberately placed in a slum area in which there was previously no educational facility. Asha Pandey began teaching informal classes which snowballed into the founding of Little Stars because she felt that there were no educational opportunities for the poor children of Varanasi and that government schools were inadequate. Both organizations take the issue of access very seriously and hope to reach as many children possible. That being said, they each have different strategies in addressing this issue and reaching out to their respective communities.

One of the three main principles of Bodh's philosophy of education is democracy— "a sense of equality among children and between children and the community and inculcation of democratic norms as a part of a child's personality" ("Philosophy"). This principle is reflected in democratic classroom practices that increase the accessibility of education for Bodhshala students. At the Gurutek Bahadur

Bodhshala, student/teacher interactions are very informal. Teachers sit on the floor with students and encourage active participation. In an interview with one 5th Standard math class, the students reported that they liked school "because there is no fear and teachers are friendly". The children often learned by playing, and there was a recreational atmosphere to many of the classroom activities. Furthermore, teachers seemed to take every opportunity to teach the children something about the world around them. As I observed a preschool class one morning, the children were suddenly distracted by airplanes flying overhead as part of an air show for the Festival of India. The teachers led the children outside to watch the display, explained the Festival of India and what the air show was about, and then asked the children several questions about airplanes (in Hindi).

Another strategy Bodh uses to increase access to education is through community integration. Community integration strategies at Bodshalas include the hiring of mother-teachers, community contact visits, and the provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). In an interview at Kukas Bodh headquarters, a staff member explained that Bodh eventually hopes to turn over all responsibilities for the seven Bodhshalas to the communities. Therefore, Bodh has taken special effort to cultivate a sense of community involvement and ownership of the schools. When the school was being established in this community, Bodh recruited two women from the neighborhood to be mother-teachers. The mother-teachers helped spread awareness and acceptance of the school in the basti, and helped the Bodh staff and teachers run the school. In return, they were trained in teaching methods and basic reading and writing skills. In addition to the mother-teacher program, all teachers at the Bodhshala were required to go on community contact visits.

Teachers at the Bodhshala are mostly young university graduates interested in gaining teaching experience and serving disadvantaged communities. Most are originally from Jaipur city, and now commute to the Bodhshala from other residential areas in Jaipur. Because the teachers at the Bodhshala do not live in the slum area, the community contact visits are important for integrating the teachers into the community and creating trust in the school. The teachers make two to three home visits daily just to check in with the families of students. During the community contact visits I observed, the teachers and families seemed very familiar and comfortable with each other. One day when preschool attendance was low, I went with the preschool teacher as she walked through the neighborhood to "round up" any children and/or ask families why they were absent. The fact that the Bodhshala provided a preschool program (also known as Early Childhood Care and Education or ECCE in India) also increased the access to education by the slum community, particularly the women. In poor communities, older girl children are often expected to stay home and help out with household responsibilities and looking after younger siblings. By providing a ECCE program at the Bodhshala at Gurutek, the teachers hoped to allow more girls to attend school.

Finally, the curriculum and learning processes at the Gurutek Bahadur basti Bodhshala are aimed to increase the accessibility of education to the slum children. Instead of dividing up children by age and teaching the same material regardless of ability (as is standard in government schools), Bodh classes are often divided into small groups where students take on tasks appropriate to their ability. In this way, older children who are behind in schooling do not feel penalized. During a focus group with the teachers at the Bodhshala, they described the end goal of a Bodh education as the

personal development of the child into a conscientious, empowered citizen. According to one teacher, learning is student oriented rather than teacher oriented and "teachers are more than just dispensers of information". In an interview at Bodh headquarters, one staff member explained that at each Bodhshala the curriculum is context-based and suited to each community, and therefore is more relevant to the children's lived realities. Approachable teachers, joyful learning, and appropriate curriculum create a learning environment in which the students feel welcome and included— thus extending an accessible education to the children of Gurutek Bahadur basti.

Like Bodh, Little Stars School has particular strategies to reach out to street and working children and make schooling a more inclusive and accessible experience. The environment at Little Stars is safe and welcoming: colorful murals decorate the walls, desks, and chairs of the classrooms. Ms. Pandey and the Assistant Principal, Ms. Tyotima, create a homey environment, especially for the hostel girls. The low teacher-student ratio (about 1:21) and quality of education draw students in to the school. In addition to providing education and all school materials for free, LSS offers its students free lunches and snacks. The free meals are important because they may be the best or only food the child will eat that day. In addition, the students at LSS have opportunities to learn special skills such as dance and painting in volunteer-led classes, participate in social outings, and perform in community evens organized by Ms. Pandey.

Unlike the teachers at the Gurutek Bahadur Bodhshala, Ms. Pandey is already a lifelong and visible resident of the community in which she teaches. She is well known by the families which send their students to LSS. Although the families are not involved with the school to the degree that they are at the Bodhshalas, all the families I

interviewed seemed to like and trust Ms. Pandey, and deeply appreciate what she was doing for their children and the community. One father reported that he felt "a close connection with the school" and another mother praised the school for its "good teaching methods and quality education". The school itself was founded after Ms. Pandey talked with many local parents of out of school children and tried to convince them of the importance of school. She no longer does this because the school is already at full capacity. In an interview one teacher pointed out that although the teachers at LSS do not go on community outreach visits like the community contact visits at Bodhshalas, the school does host community events for religious and cultural holidays several times a year where the students perform and show off what they have learned. The visibility of the school and its positive reputation in the community encourage parents to send their children there, thus increasing access to primary education for local deprived children.

At Little Stars School, the curriculum, pedagogy or learning processes were not deliberately altered in order for education to be more accessible to the children. Bodh places a conscious emphasis on democratic and progressive practices in these areas. I found that this was not the case at Little Stars, although teacher-student relationships were friendly and the children seemed to enjoy school. While LSS does not create its own curriculum, Ms. Pandey personally chooses the textbooks and learning materials that will be used. She said she tries to find the best materials, and adds to them to make them more thorough or challenging. While studying the learning materials at Little Stars School, I came across examples of inclusivity in the curriculum in lessons from English workbooks for Classes I-V. The workbooks used stories in English as a medium to teach

moral lessons, such as respect for the environment, celebration of other cultures, and religious tolerance[9].

Innovation

As for innovation, Bodh has many programs which seek creative solutions to problems in the education system, such as placing Bodh-trained teachers in local under-resourced government schools. In the "Approach and Strategy" section of their website, the first item listed reads, "Innovations and experimentations in the realm of elementary education for deprived children". In fact, some of Bodh's innovations have been so successful at Bodhshalas and local government schools that Bodh is now working on scaling up and mainstreaming some of its practices through a partnership with the government ("Approach and Strategy"). At the Gurutek Bahadur basti Bodhshala, Bodh's creative approach is evident in the pedagogical styles of the teachers, the curriculum, and the management of the school itself.

In interviews, the teachers at the Bodhshala emphasized democratic classroom interactions as a particular feature of a Bodh education. The teachers always sit on the floor with the children, and encourage open communication as part of the teaching/learning process. The teachers try to make learning an interactive experience which is enjoyable for the children. Many exercises that I observed were based on learning through play. For example, a first standard class used letter tiles to construct words through play; the children created nonsense words until they created a real word which the teacher then wrote on the board. In order to accommodate children of different abilities and levels of schooling, the classes were sometimes broken into multi-level learning groups. One Bodh teacher explained that at government schools "all students

work on the same material regardless of learning pace or level of understanding." According to a staff member at Bodh administrative headquarters an emphasis is placed on competencies rather than content. Competencies are set for each standard and revised each year. In one first standard math class, the teacher worked on the competency of basic numeracy by breaking the children into groups based on ability. One group practiced writing numbers 1-9, another counted by 10s and the third group worked on simple addition and subtraction problems. Each student's achievements are kept in standard portfolios, and the teachers keep monthly assessment records to chart the children's improvement. During an interview at the Gurutek Bahadur basti Bodhshala, one teacher reported that he believed the experimentation in Bodh schools led to a better understanding of educational approaches and concepts and a higher quality education.

Besides these features of the teaching/learning process which are unique to a Bodh education, Bodh produces its own curriculum for each standard every year. According to a staff member, the curriculum development program is funded by UNICEF. Bodh holds monthly workshops at the Kukas office for teachers to share and evaluate new materials. At these workshops, teachers meet by grade level and discuss best practices as well as review new materials. Every year, the Bodh curriculum for each standard is revised. While all teachers participate in curriculum development at the workshops and are provided with a Bodh curriculum, they are encouraged to make changes to the curriculum in order to make it more suitable for their particular social/cultural environment. One staff member stated that when it comes to curriculum development, "context dictates material". When asked what attracted them to Bodh, many teachers answered that Bodh teachers have fewer restrictions and are free to

exercise more creativity in the classrooms. The goals of the Bodh curriculum, according to one Bodh staff member, are to provide basic education and create conscientious members of the community in which they live. This innovative approach of constant curriculum evolution has attracted the attention both of highly recognized international organizations such as UNICEF and the Indian government.

When discussing the failures of the primary education system in India, one commonly cited problem is that of teacher absenteeism. Bodh hopes to increase teacher accountability and revolutionize the way local schools are managed through community participation and teacher ownership. All Bodhshalas are self-run and managed by the nucleus of teachers and community stakeholders such as the mother-teachers. As one staff member remarked, "there is no monitoring of teachers or assessing them. Child assessment is inherently teacher assessment." Bodh uses specific techniques such as community contact visits to integrate the teachers into the local community; therefore the teachers feel a sense of responsibility and accountability towards the community they serve. The teachers meet daily for a planning period in the afternoon where they collaborate in lesson planning, write in personal reflection journals, and discuss any issues going on in the school. Since the teachers serve as a support system for one another, they are accountable to each other as well as the community. The long term goal for each Bodhshala is to hand over the school completely to be run by the community. This innovative approach of community-run schools could be a helpful model for the already decentralized Indian primary education system for increasing teacher accountability and attendance.

Compared to Bodh, Little Stars School does not seem to contribute much in the way of innovation. The teachers receive no special training other than a little coaching by one of the senior teachers or the principal and founder, Ms. Pandey. Teachers at LSS are friendly but authoritative, and teaching styles seem to correspond closely to those of adequately resourced government schools. The curriculum combines private textbooks and government targets for each class. When talking with Ms. Pandey one gets the idea that she finds nothing inherently wrong with the current education system except that it tends to leave out children from certain disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the mere existence of the school is an innovation in that it provides schooling for disadvantaged children. The local government schools had failed to provide education to the children that began attending LSS when it was first founded by Ms. Pandey, and the current students might not be attending school at all if they were not enrolled at Little Stars.

LSS is a much smaller organization than Bodh and lacks the complex bureaucracy, recognition, and organized funding that Bodh enjoys. Ms. Pandey is personally responsible for running the school on a day-to-day basis. In addition to acting as a mother figure for the hostel girls, she spends after school hours fundraising, networking, choosing textbooks, etc. One cannot help but wonder how the school could possibly go on without her.

In this study, innovation is operationalized as practices outside the mainstream approach to education used by government schools in India. In these terms, Little Stars School does not contribute to creative solutions or small-scale experimentation in primary education the way that Bodh does. However, I would argue that starting an organization that provides basic reading and writing skills to a handful of working girls

and developing it into a full-time school that provides education to about 400 students takes an immense amount of innovation, creativity, and vision on the part of the founder, Asha Pandey.

In addition to acknowledging the contributions of these two organizations by way of access and innovation, it is also important to discuss their limitations. The founders of Bodh and Little Stars both cited lack of adequate government schooling as a reason for starting their own schools, and the fact remains that NGO schools cannot be a panacea for all the ills of the public primary education system. Lack of adequate facilities, teacher absenteeism, and the shortage of qualified teachers are widespread problems in the government schooling system. These structural problems are reinforced by gender, caste, economic, and geographic discrimination in schooling. For example, the rate of teacher absenteeism is much higher in poor rural areas, and girl children face many obstacles to staying in school once they enroll (see Dreze and Sen 2002, Ramachandran 2003 & 2004).

While at the Gurutek Bodhshala, I traveled to a nearby government school at which they had placed a newly trained Bodh teacher. Even compared to Bodh's modest equipment the school lacked resources. In the one run down building, two teachers taught over 75 students of all classes. According to the headmistress, the neighborhood which the school served was home to Dalits and Muslims who had emigrated from Bengal and Sindh during Partition. This school is a prime example of the government's failure to provide adequate quality primary education to disadvantaged communities. Under these circumstances, NGOs can provide a better option for schooling than

government schools. However, they cannot provide the necessary infrastructure for a better system, or combat gender, class, caste, and geographic discrimination on their own.

As I mentioned, Little Stars School is currently at full capacity and raising funds for more space to expand their operations. Both Bodh and Little Stars are limited in the number of students they can feasibly serve. This raises the issue of access. Even though both organizations increase the access of schooling for many students, there will always inevitably be some children of similar circumstances left out—simply because small NGOs have limited staff and resources.

Perhaps the most important question we should ask is what role can and should NGOs such as Bodh and LSS play in the struggle for a better schooling system in India? If small organizations continue to adopt their own approaches and methods of education and then provide alternative primary education to disadvantaged communities, what are the implications for the future of universal primary education in India? Without a long-term plan that incorporates and justifies the use of NGOs, foreign investors, and non-formal education programs, how can we be sure that these developments are improving the prospects for universal primary education?

Conclusion

Although they are working towards the same goal of universal primary education in India, Bodh Shiksha Samiti and Little Stars School seem in many ways to be opposites. Bodh has a large network of international donors and advocates and is working with the government to mainstream its approaches; Little Stars School is run almost entirely by one woman, has no connection with local government schools and gets

by on donations from individual friends and acquaintances. Bodh education is progressive in every way, from democratic classroom environments to constant curriculum development; Little Stars Schools basically offers a higher quality version of local government school education to children who only have access to very poor quality or no schooling.

One thing is clear: the NGOs involved in the provision of primary school education in India are diverse and so are their contributions. Access and innovation are two characteristics that are argued to be strengths of the NGO sector (Jagannathan 2001; Clark 1995). By analyzing the extent to which these two organizations make contributions to increasing access and promoting innovation in primary education, I hope I have illustrated the diversity of roles and contributions of NGOs to the primary education system in India. Because this study is limited to two organizations, I do not make any broad generalizations, but instead give two perspectives on what NGOs *can* contribute to the areas of access and innovation and illustrate the diversity of approaches in an already decentralized system.

More than answering any broad questions about the role of NGOs in the educational system in India or evaluating their overall contribution, this study raises many questions. Although I have no official documentation or statistics regarding the outcomes of students at these two organizations, anecdotal information gathered indicates that the education provided by these two schools produces very different results. At the Gurutek Bahadur basti Bodhshala in Jaipur, a staff member informed me that several girls who had attended Bodh for eight years transferred to a government school to continue their education. However, they found the educational structures outside of Bodh to be

too unwelcoming and dropped out. At the government schools, the girls faced discrimination based on their gender, caste, and economic background. This discrimination was too much to bear, and they decided to discontinue their education.

This evidence suggests the limitations of a Bodh education, and raises questions concerning the usefulness of their innovation in primary education. Many of the teachers at Gurutek expressed disappointment in their inability to promote higher education or change employment opportunities for their students, all of whom went on to have the same occupations as their parents. In contrast to this information, Asha Pandey reported that 20-23 Little Stars School graduates have finished or are finishing their high school elsewhere. Furthermore, she said that 6-7 former LSS students are now in their first year of BA programs. In providing vocational training, especially for the girls, Ms. Pandey seemed quite confident that the students would have better job opportunities after graduation.

While discussing Bodh's educational philosophy during an interview in Jaipur, one Bodh staff member rhetorically asked "What is your goal in educating this child?" The fact is that probably every organization working in education in India today would have a different answer. As the anecdotes above illustrate, education can mean preparing a child to better navigate his or her social world in a meaningful and empowering way. Or, it can mean giving a child the tools he or she needs to break from his or her social world in order to pursue different educational or vocational goals. In India, NGOs such as Little Stars School and Bodh Shiksha Samiti are pursuing these goals and more in primary education by increasing access and exploring innovative ways to improve the educational system. However, we must look at the bigger picture and ask why certain

groups are not well served by the government education system, and what place NGO schools have in the long-term strategy for achieving universal primary education in India.

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Notes

[1] Christian missionaries played a large role in education in 19th century South Asia. In Sri Lanka, for example, "65% of all children attending school were Christian" (Silva in Weiner 1991:172).

[2] It should be noted that prior to 1833 no compulsory education system existed in England, and illiteracy only ceased to be a major issue around 1870 (Weiner 136).

[3] Kumar (2000) argues that education under the British was an inherently unequal project of colonizing and civilizing that mostly benefited the upper castes (15); Chatterjee (1976) notes the triumph of English over Indian vernaculars in higher education, government and as an empire-building tool (iv-xi).

[4] Jawaharlal Nehru was India's first Prime Minister. Nussbaum (2007) argues that after independence, the Tagorian view of education (freedom of mind, creativity and critical thinking) as well as Gandhi's plan for the educational system of India (small, self-supporting schools that focused on the holistic development of the child) gave way to Nehru's emphasis on using science and technology to modernize India.

[5] It is now a widely recognized phenomenon in India that even parents with modest incomes will choose to send their children to a private rather than a government school in order to receive a better education. This trend suggests that not only poor children continue to receive a second-rate (if any) education, no serious work will be done to improve the public education system. Private school lobbies are among the most vocal in arguing against compulsory education in India (see Seethalakshmi 2006).

[6] The MVF is a private, charitable trust that takes the stance that "every child out of school is a working child" since many child laborers work at home, farm, and look after

younger siblings (Jagannathan 2001:11). See http://www.mvfindia.in/mvf/index.html for more information.

[7] This statement reflects the attitude of the six NGOs studied by Jagannathan. However from the literature I have read about many NGOs in education, I would argue that this is the prevailing attitude.

[8] He also lists: scale, representivity, and skills of participation (Clark 1995:594-595)

[9] From Learn by Fun English Reader books published by LBF Publications Private Limited. They are English workbooks for Classes I-V. The lessons referenced here are "The Man and the Crocodile" about how mankind exploits nature which included several "Do's" and "Don'ts" of being kind to nature, "Merry Christmas" about Christmas traditions and the message of Jesus Christ, "Love Nature" about saving trees, "15th August", "Holi", and "Festival of Lights" about Indian festivals.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTION USED AT LITTLE STARS SCHOOL

Questions for Ashaji

1. What inspired you to found Little Stars and how did you go about starting the school?
2. What was your biggest challenge in starting the school?
3. What is your philosophy towards teaching and learning? (Any principles, or key influences that guide LSS, what is the role of the child and the teacher, etc).
4. What does LSS get most of its funding?
5. How is the curriculum chosen and/or developed?
6. Do the teachers tailor the curriculum to meet the specific needs of the students? If yes then how so?
7. Where does LSS get its learning materials (workbooks,etc)?
8. How are teachers hired? (As in, are there any specific qualities you look for when hiring a LSS teacher and how do you search for them?)
9. Do the teachers get any type of special training?
10. What are the teacher/student relationships like?
11. Are any of the student's families involved with the school?
12. Are the local communities supportive? How are they involved with the school?
13. What are the local government schools like? (If any) Does LSS work with them in any capacity?
14. How is the hostel run? Do other staff members live here to help care for the girls?

Questions for Families/Parents

1. Please tell me a little bit about your family and yourself (How long have you lived in Varanasi, what do you do for a living, how many children, etc)

2. How many years of schooling have you had?
3. How do you feel about LSS in general?
4. What are your relationships like with the staff and teachers there?
5. What changes have you noticed in your child as a result of attending LSS?
6. What impact is LSS having on the local community?
7. How do you expect your child's education to impact the rest of his/her life?

Questions for Teachers

1. What is your name?
2. What subject/standards do you teach?
3. What is the student/teacher ratio in your classes?
4. How long have been working at LSS?
5. How did you come to teach here (ie. Instead of a different job, government school, etc.)
6. What is it like to teach here? (What are the biggest challenges, the best part of working at LSS, etc)
7. How do the teachers help each other and work together?
8. Do you have any teacher training sessions, curriculum development workshops etc where all the teachers work together?
9. What are your relationships with the students like?
10. What is your relationship with the local communities and children's families like? Do you live nearby? Do you feel accepted?
11. Is this a permanent teaching position for you or temporary?
12. Is attendance generally regular in your classes? If not are there any patterns?
13. Please give me an example of one or two activities/exercises you might do on an average day.
14. What are the special needs of your students and how do you meet those needs?
15. How do you teach to develop a child's mind and character in addition to reading and writing?

Questions for Students

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you/What standard are you in?
3. Have you attended any other school before Little Stars?
4. What is your favorite subject? Why?
5. What's your favorite part about going to school?
6. What do you do after school?

Questions for Hostel Girls

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What's your favorite subject in school? Why?
4. How long have you been living here?
5. Where were you living before?
6. What is a typical day like for you?

7. What are your relationships like with the other girls? With the teachers and staff? With Ashaji?
8. What the best thing about living in the hostel? What don't you like?
9. What do you want to be when you grow up?