

September 8, 1998

MEMORANDUM

COMPILED FROM RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
OF
NGO'S WORKING WITH EDUCATION RELATED PROGRAMMES.

The Municipal Corporation runs the largest educational establishment in the city of Mumbai. The main beneficiaries of this educational set up are the children from the lower income group residing in chawls, tenements and urban slum communities. Majority of these children are first generation learners or those whose parents are semi-literate. For these children, the education they receive in school is crucial.

Besides the children enrolled in school, in reality we find many who are still left out of the reach of education. We feel that the corporation has a major role to play in bringing these children into the fold of literate Indians.

The urgent needs of the day are to facilitate enrollment of maximum number of children, to sustain them within the system to help them complete their schooling and impart quality, value based education while they are with the school. The aim of bringing to the child to school is, of course, to educate him and also, to priorities education in their list of essentials.

The memorandum compiled addresses these needs and included the immediate and most important aspects needing attention.

ENROLLMENT RELATED PROBLEMS:

We have heard about several corporation policies and we have seen certain schools observing those policies to facilitate the enrollment of children in schools. However, all schools do not acknowledge that there are any such policies made by the corporation. We, the NGOs, are helpless in this matter because we do not have the access to such circulars which state the corporation's policies in this regard. Following are a few examples -

The policy regarding enrollment of children in the corporation's schools, as understood by the NGOs, is that no documents showing proof of age is required at the time of admission to Std.I.

Our experience is that this is not the practice in all schools. Some schools do insist on these documents at the time of admission. NGOs are helpless in this situation and many children lose a number of academic days, thus finding it difficult to cope when they do join or else lose interest and do not join school at all.

We suggest that to fulfill the role of the corporation schools in the nation's goal of "universalisation of primary education"

[+ Our suggestions]

* All circulars related to enrollment procedures be circulated to the concerned NGOs.

A School leaving certificate/ school address/ some proof of the child having completed the stated level need not be kept as mandatory requirement for seeking admission to Stds. II to IV.

* Instead, the child can be given an examination by the concerned school and given admission to the appropriate standard thereafter.

Children, seeking enrollment in the school in the middle of the academic year, lose interest when refused admission.

* Provision made to permit them to sit in without formal registration, which can be completed at the start of the next academic year, would help sustain such children in school.

Another policy is understood to make the provision for a primary school within 1 km radius from the child's home.

This is not found to be the case everywhere, particularly in the cases of new slums.

There is yet another point which needs to be taken into consideration. There are many pockets in the city where vehicular traffic is very heavy and it is not possible for a young child (6 yrs) to go to school alone. This leads to non-enrollment or drop out at early stage.

* Arrangement of transport to school seems to be a solution to both the problems. With transport available children staying at a distance can also be enrolled in school. Also, the non-enrollment of children because of the traffic conditions can be avoided.

PROMOTION AND OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS

We understand that the policy states that -

- 1) no child is to be detained till Std IV
- 2) For children who are promoted to higher standards without achieving the Minimum Level of Learning required for that class, "Parallel teaching" should be undertaken till they achieve the desired level.

Our experience however is that

Promotion policy is generally followed, but the policy of 'Parallel teaching' and efforts to bring children to MLL are completely missing. Many children, who are promoted to Std. IV, are unable to read and write.

This problem has been discussed before and many suggestions have emerged. Here we take the opportunity to once again reiterate what has been recommended by many a committee's report.

* To maintain a good standard of education, the teacher student ratio norms should not be observed on the basis of averages - Averages are deceptive - There are classes where ratio is much higher as 1:70/ 1:80 etc. In practice, the ratio should be maintained at 1:40.

This is more important here because most children are first generation learners with no pre-school background.

* Availability of substitute teachers, when regular teachers are on long leave.

* No additional duties such as election duty, census etc. should be given to primary school teachers.

Even the 'training programme' during the academic year disturb the class schedule, and should therefore be scheduled on non-instructional working days.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOLS -

1) Toilets are not in working conditions. In the case of many children school is the only place where children get the opportunity to use toilet facility. It is important to give them proper training at this stage and as future citizens of India.

2) Water facilities though available, lack maintenance and cleaning in many schools. As a result the water from these tanks cannot be used for drinking.

3) Not all schools have play grounds. Playgrounds facility is essential but if due to crowded surroundings, it is not possible to give a playground to every school, municipal grounds/gardens in the vicinity should be made use of as playgrounds.

4) Atmosphere of the schools can be brightened by using children's drawings, displaying teaching aids etc.

5) Library books are said to be given⁶ to all teachers to distribute in their own classes, but experience shows that these books are hardly ever distributed and used. The reason it seems, that the teachers have to pay for the lost books to use enjoy and learn. Corporation policy should be appropriately adapted.

SOME UNDESIRABLE PRACTICES NOTICED BY NGOS

1) Some teachers insist that a child must take a private tuition from them or else he will not be promoted. Parents not knowing the promotion policies naturally feel threatened.

2

2) Children good at studies are asked to write examination for some other weak children also. Such a practice inculcated wrong values in children and hence must be taken seriously.

3) There is a practice of distributing materials such as school books, note books, uniforms etc. However, these materials are rarely distributed in time. In this way children miss out and number learning days. At least the text books should be made available on the very first day of the schools.

4) There is a feeling that although the school curriculum includes music, drawing, sports, craft etc. due attention is not given to these subjects. We feel that these activities will serve a major motivating factor for children to come to school, as well as ensure the all round development of the child..

5) Attendance Registers do not always reflect the real attendance of children. It is noticed by many NGOs that children who are absent from school for one full year are not only promoted to next standard but year are not only promoted to next standard but also shown as attending regularly in the attendance register.

NGO's wishing to address these issue through the appropriate channels and bringing it to the attention of concerned authorities expecting the required action, are often confused as to the procedure. Provision of guidelines in this regard is most essential.

SUGGESTED ADAPTATIONS IN BMC'S EDUCATION POLICY

1) Corporation should also make provision for pre-primary education (children between 3 and 6 yrs). This will go a long way in curtailing the problems of non-enrollment, stagnation and wastage.

2) As close co-operation of NGOs and Governmental municipal organisation is absolutely necessary to achieve universalization of primary education representatives of NGOs should be appointed on education related committees at all levels.

3) Today the facility of night schools is available only for students of Std. 7th and onwards. We feel that the same facility is necessary for children at primary level also.

4) In schools, surrounded by communities that do not have electric connections, reading rooms should be provided by the school to motivate children to study.

5) NGOs strongly feel that recognition should be given to their NFE students by holding exams for them at a determined minimum level of learning. Such exams should be held at regular intervals, preferably 3 times a year.

6) Grants should be made available to NGOs running the NFE programmes.

7) Currently NFE classes run by the BMC are run during school hours, we suggest, that the timings of the NFE classes be kept according to the convenience of the group concerned, which may be different from area to area.

Recommendations made by NGO's - Prayas and Prerana having special requirements will be attached as submitted by them.

The list of authorities the memorandum has been submitted to :

- at the Municipal Corporation level are

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1) Shri. Nandu Satam | - Mayor of Mumbai |
| 2) Mrs. Sadhana Mane | - Education Committee Member |
| 3) Shri. Girish Gokhale | - Municipal Commissioner |
| 4) Shri. Ratnakar Gaikwad | - Additional Municipal Commissioner |
| 5) Shri. Bhau Gavande | - Education Officer,
BMC Education Dept. |

- at the State Government level

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 6) Shri Manohar Joshi | - Chief Minister, Maharashtra. |
| 7) Shri Sudhir Joshi | - Minister of Education |
| 8) Shri. Rameshchandra Kanade | - Secretary, Education |