

**EDUCATION MAPPING IN A SLUM AREA:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DYNAMICS OF DEMAND AND  
SUPPLY**

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## **Introduction**

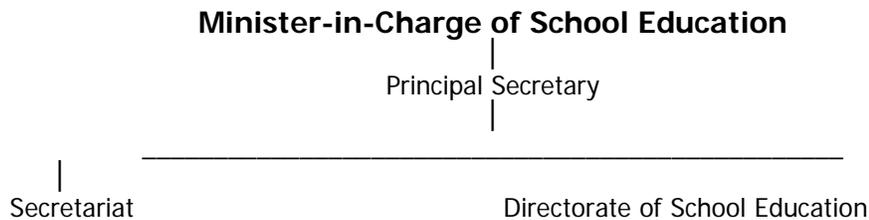
The social, economic and cultural development of a nation is an achievement which rests largely on the educational attainment of its masses. Development theory in recent years has taken note of the importance of education as an index of development of a nation, and with its myriad positive effects on the functioning of a society, the outreach of education to every stratum of society is a subject of great concern.

It is in this context that we examined the state of primary education in a slum in the city of Kolkata, which is upheld not only as an exemplary centre of learning and culture, but also as a city where unchecked urbanisation has forced great numbers of people to live in extremely squalid conditions, not having access to the basic amenities of life. Thus, although West Bengal has made considerable progress in the field of literacy and education with the literacy rate rising from 48.6% in 1981 to 68.2% in 2001 (as per census data), the situation which interested us was whether conditions in slums had undergone a change so remarkable.

To study the dynamics of demand and supply we conducted a survey in a slum to understand comprehensively the state of education in the slum and diagnose problems if any. It is hoped that our findings shed light on the prevailing conditions and create awareness about the need for policy reforms in the education sector.

## **OVERVIEW OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN KOLKATA**

The Minister-in-Charge of School Education along with the Secretary and Secretariat is responsible for planning and policy-making in all matters pertaining to School Education, while the Directorate of School Education implements the policies of the government through Inspectorates located at various tiers- districts, sub-divisions and circles.



Primary education in Kolkata is administered by 3 important stakeholders, namely, the State Government, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, and Private (Individual/Institutional) Stakeholders.

The primary schools can thus be classified on the basis of management and/or funding into those:

- (a) Managed and funded by the State or Union Government (Government schools);
- (b) Funded and managed by the KMC (KMCP schools); and,
- (c) Funded and managed by private stakeholders (Private Unaided).

Contrary to secondary/higher secondary schools, there is no difference between schools funded and managed by the government and schools funded by the government but managed privately (private unaided), at the level of primary schools – all primary schools funded by the state government, KMC, or privately, are managed by the same.

The Department of School Education of the State Government is in charge of all matters relating to education in West Bengal. The responsibility for the provision of primary education in Kolkata and academic policy formulation lays with the West Bengal Board of Primary Education, which is the nodal body for the same, as per the powers vested in it by the West Bengal Primary Education Act, 1973. The State Government, through its District Primary School Councils, runs 1297<sup>1</sup> primary schools in Kolkata, with an average of 7 primary schools per square kilometre<sup>2</sup>, catering to 317017 students. The Ministry has a dual management system for primary schools – the WBBPE handles all academic and managerial aspects of schools, while the Directorate of School Education monitors and supervises the WBBPE and handles general administrative and financial functions through its District Inspectorates. The

<sup>1</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> All India Education Survey, National Council of Educational Research and Training

duality is apparent in the intertwining of the Directorate and the WBBPE through the District Inspectorates, who act as secretaries of, and function as executive heads of the District Primary School Councils.

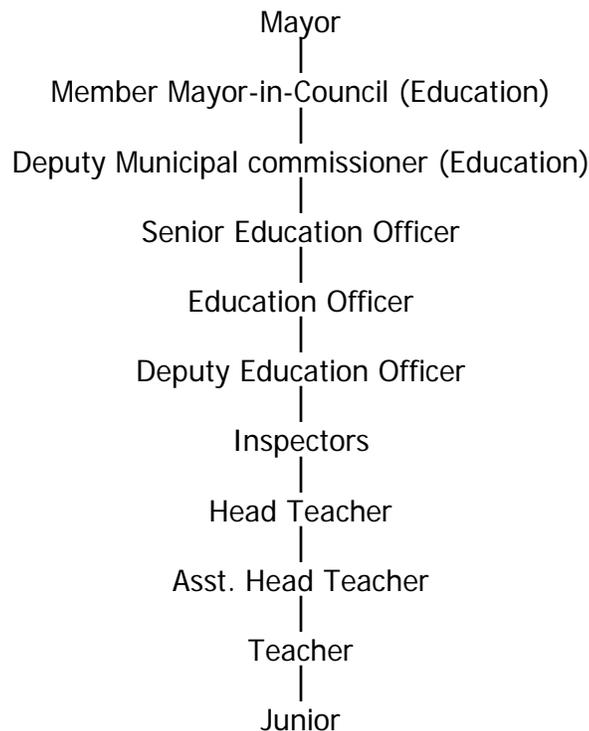
The administration of schools and allotment of funds is taken care of by the sub-inspectors of schools, who are appointed for every Circle, and report to the District Inspectorates.

The management of schools at the grass root level, however, is performed by autonomous locale specific bodies known as Ward Education Committees. These committees have no official executive powers, but function under the supervision of Circle officers. Their purpose is to decentralise the day to day management of schools, although they do not have the power to make policy decisions regarding management.

### **Administrative structure for schools run by Kolkata Municipal Corporation**

Elementary schools are also run by Kolkata Municipal Corporation. The Department of Education under KMC is in Charge of the overall administration and management of these schools. The structure of KMC run primary schools is given below.

Kolkata Municipal Corporation



Member Mayor-in-Council (MMIC) is an elected candidate, who is responsible for making decisions at the policy-making level, followed by the Deputy Municipal Commissioner (DMC), who executes the decisions of the MMIC, Education through his juniors. The DMC along with the Senior Education Officer and the Education Officer

supervises the overall administration and management of the education department of the KMC.

## **PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON PRIMARY EDUCATION**

The two main providers of education from the Government are West Bengal Board of Primary Education and Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

The primary schools run by the WBBPE (subsidiary body of the State Government) receive funds from two sources:

- The State Government through the District Primary School Council, Kolkata;
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

For the year 2004-05, the expenditure on primary schools run by the State Government from the above two sources was Rs 429,469,914. With a total enrolment of 171,323 pupils in those schools, the per capita expenditure by the authorities was Rs 2507 in that year.<sup>3</sup>

The Municipal Corporation Schools are funded by

- The Department of Education, KMC;
- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

For the year 2004-05, the expenditure on primary schools run by the KMC from the above to sources was Rs 120,365,000. With a total enrolment of 25,802 pupils in those schools, the per capita expenditure by the authorities was Rs4665 in that year, which is nearly 186% of the amount spent on schools run by the state government

### *THE ROLE OF SARVA SIKSHA ABHIYAN IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN WEST BENGAL*

Many of the government schools surveyed were receiving funds and other benefits from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme. Through these funds the school authorities

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<sup>3</sup> An Analysis of Primary Education in Kolkata; Ghosh, A; 2005. Centre for Civil Society.

said that were able to provide free books and improve the infrastructure of their schools, which had improved the number of children enrolling in these schools.

During the year 2007-08, the West Bengal government received Rs 20,000 Lacs under this scheme. And the proposal for 2008-09 is Rs 210187 Lacs <sup>4</sup>

With the help of the SSA, a Shikshalaya Prkalpa Programme which aimed at providing education for all children in Kolkata was launched in the year 2001. It especially targets deprived urban children in Kolkata who had dropped out of school. According to an initial survey in all the wards in the city it was found that the number children who were not attending any form of schools were about 44,646 with most of them in the age-group of 5 to 9 years. Many of these children live in various slums around the city where either the environment is not hospitable to education or there is a lack of educational institutions.

Under this program the following activities were carried out to ensure that that these children receive primary education.

- Facilitate direct admissions into formal schools, for those children who live in areas where a formal school is accessible. It also provides a bridge course for slum children which help them to prepare for studies in formal schools.
- It also aims to establish 600 Shikshalayas around the city with the help of local NGOs. These are meant for those areas where a formal school does not exist or the school does not have sufficient capacity.
- Integration of the existing community managed primary education centers which are known as Shishu Shiksha Kendras into this programme

## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SLUMS IN KOLKATA.**

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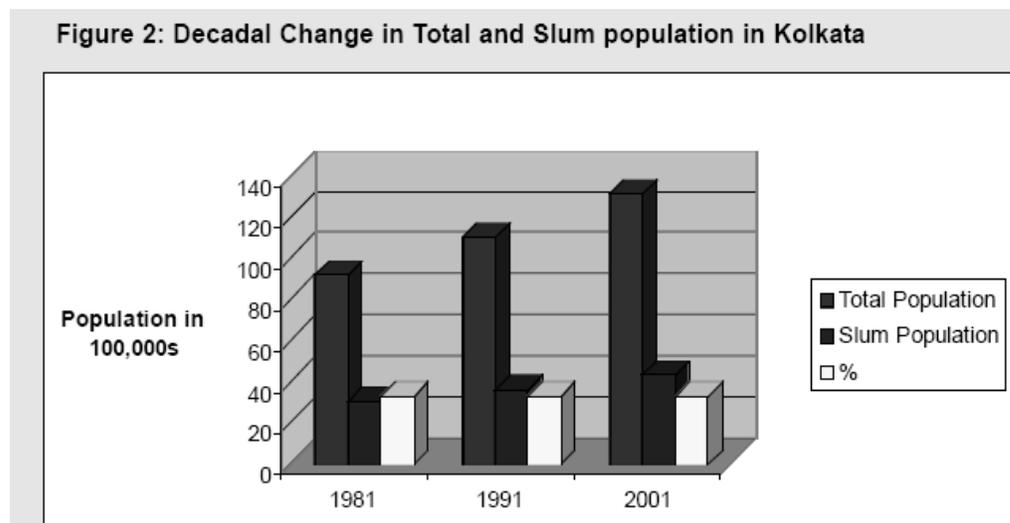
<sup>4</sup> Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Website [www.ssa.nic.in](http://www.ssa.nic.in)

The growth of urban population in Kolkata has been one of the primary reasons for a phenomenal increase in the number of slums and squatter colonies in the city.

Overcrowding has been a problem for many centuries, and seems to be getting worse due to a high amount migration into the city. In the 2001 census the city's population density per square Km was 44,458.

About one third of the population under the Kolkata Municipal Corporation lives in slums and there 2,011 registered and 3500 unregistered slums in Kolkata.<sup>5</sup>

The Graph below shows the increase in slum population in the city over the past decades.



### Types of Slums in the city.

<sup>5</sup> Urban slum reports, the case of Kolkata by Dr. Nitai Kundu, Institute of wetland management and ecological design, kolkata,2003

The slums of the city can be divided between those slums which have recognized by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, known as Bastis and those which are not recognized are known as squatter settlements.

Squatter settlements are found near canals, drains, railway tracks and roads around the city. They do not have access to any basic amenities and the KMC is not responsible for providing them with even sanitation and water supply.

**Literacy rates in Slum areas.**

In the 2001 census it was found that 67 percent of slum population are literate and out the literate people 57 per cent are males and 41 per cent are female. On the other hand, the 2001 census reported that the literacy rate for whole of Kolkata was 82 per cent.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research project, education mapping in a slum area, was embarked upon with a certain set of objectives in order to establish or make any inferences on the demand and supply of educational services in the respective slum.

- Ascertain the availability of primary schools in the chosen area, and thus establish whether or not there exists a supply of primary education.
- On the basis of data collected, determine whether a demand for education exists.
- Analyse the preferences of the consumers, that is, determine what type of schools are preferred and examine reasons for the same.
- On the basis of certain parameters, determine the quality of education imparted by the schools and examine causes behind the drop out problem that exists in the slum.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the objectives of the project were multiple, a different methodology was adopted for the purpose of obtaining information or making deductions for each objective.

### METHODOLOGY FOR SUPPLY SIDE ANALYSIS

- In order to determine the supply of primary and secondary schools, information on the existence of these schools within a 1 km radius of the slum were first gathered through both formal and informal sources.
- The schools were visited and data on school strength, class size, enrolment rates, staff size and provision of infrastructural facilities was collected.
- In addition to the aforementioned variables, the retention rates and teacher-student ratio were used to determine quality of education.
- In order to obtain a more qualitative perspective on the problems the problems with the state of education as perceived by the providers of these services, interviews were conducted with principals and teaching staff.

### METHODOLOGY FOR DEMAND SIDE ANALYSIS

- Interviews were conducted with 25 households to obtain information on number of children attending school, number of children who have dropped out, household income, satisfaction with schools and reasons for drop out

## METHODOLOGY FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Eight Focus Group Discussions were carried out to support the quantitative data obtained through household surveys, thus probing further into school preferences, the problem of drop out rates and reasons for the same and grievances with the schools.

### Participant groups

The number of participants varied from 5 to 10. Four of the discussions were held with parents, and the other four with kids.

The parent groups included parents whose wards had dropped out of school and those whose wards are still in the fold of formal school education. There was a similar mix of school going and drop-outs in the discussions with the children.

<b>Location of group discussion</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Number of sites</b>	<b>Number of discussions</b>	<b>Number of participants (group 1 + group 2)</b>
New Kulia Tangra	Parents	1	1	8
Pagla Danga Road	Parents	2	2	7+6
Mathur Babu Lane	Parents	1	1	9
New Kulia Tangra	Children	2	2	10+7
Pagla Danga Road	Children	2	2	8+9
Total		8	8	64

The slum where the dynamics of demand and supply of primary education was studied was the Mathur Babu Lane which is located on the D.C Dey road in Ward 57 on the eastern side of the city of Kolkata. Part of the Tangra area, Mathur Babu Lane is just one of the 27 slums in this ward, many of which are located around the D.C Dey, Road but only 16 are recognized by Municipal Corporation.

The population density of this slum area is very high and over the years many squatter colonies have developed into large slum type settlements. The hygiene conditions are truly deplorable as many of the slum houses are located right on the sides of an open air Khal or sewage drain, civic amenities are far from adequate to meet the growing population of the slum.

The population of the slum area is predominantly Bengali with a large number of Oriya and Bihar immigrant populations, many of whom are seasonal migrants and return to their respective states during festivals.

Most of the men work as daily wage earners or are involved in plastic industries while most women work as domestic helps. During discussion with the people in the slum it was brought to light that many men in this area have become unemployed due to the closure of the leather industries located in the Tangra area. Chronic unemployment has reduced their standard of living and has also led many of the unemployed to turn to alcoholism and gambling making the environment of the slum particularly dangerous for children.

According to the 2001 census, the D.C Dey road alone has a population of 2255 families that is around 9687 dwellers, majority of them living in Kuccha houses and the average size of the family is 4.2

## SUPPLY OF EDUCATION

Seven primary schools were surveyed in the 1-1.5 km radius of the slum. The profiles of the schools are given in the table below.

**Table 1: School Profiles**

<b>Serial Number</b>	<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Govt/KMC/ Private</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Address</b>
1	Pally Unnayan Sanghathan Pre Primary School	Government	Bengali	44/43 D.C. Dey Road, Kolkata-700015
2.	Kolkata Municipal Corporation School	KMC	Bengali	7 Kulia Tangra, Kolkata-700010
3.	Shri Panchnath Vidyalaya	Private	Hindi	17, Pagla danga road, Kol 10
4.	Maarer Bagan Primary School	Govt	Bengali	9/7/H, Ram Mohan Benia Lane
5.	P.K. Oriya Primary School	Govt	Oriya	44 H/20/1, D.C. Dey Road, Kolkata-700015
6.	Samaj Kalyan	Govt	Bengali	D.C.Dey Road, Kolkata-700015
7.	Bastuhara Vidhyapith	Govt	Bengali	Mathur Babu Lane, Kolkata-700015

At the onset itself, it can be seen that the non availability of education is not a problem in this slum area. The supply of education is quite high, however only the supply of education does not ensure the education of the children in the slum area.

Through a detailed survey and analysis of the school mentioned above critical indicators of the quality of education are also discussed below.

School	Infant	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V	Total
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## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is variable which cannot be precisely measured, and is difficult to capture. However, certain indicators like those mentioned below can help in assessing the quality of education.

- Enrolment rates
- Size of the teaching staff
- Teacher-student ratio
- Average class size

**Table 1.1: Enrolment figures for the primary schools surveyed**

	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09	07-08	08-09
Pallykumbhayan School	27	29	31	20	37	22	39	32	25	33			159	136
	67	33	21	19	10	10	9	6	6	8	6	5	119	81*
Shri Panchnath Vidhyalay	44	39	38	35	39	41	43	37	41	47	43	45	248	244*
Maarer Bagan Primary School		48	51	59	53	57	47	43	36	32	24	19	266	258
P.K. Oriya Primary School	-	-	30	17	20	12	18	10	22	13	22	12	112	64
	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07	05-06	06-07
Samaj Kalyan	-	-	201	106	104	104	93	93	85	85	-	-		388

Bastuhara Vidhyapith	-	-	114	110	46	56	68	45	52	50	34	43	314	304
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The year and class wise distribution of the number of children enrolled in the schools brings forth the glaring problem that a reduced number of children are joining the next class after finishing an academic year, hence the problem of drop outs is of vital interest. The pivotal question then becomes that even though there is an adequate amount of supply of education, why are children dropping out? An answer to the question is not simple and has to be addressed in parts.

**Table 1.2: AVERAGE CLASS SIZE**

Serial Number	School	Total number of children (07-08)	Average class size
1	Pally Unnayan	159	32
2	KMC	119	24
3	Shri Panchnath Vidhyalay	248	49
4	Marer Bagan	266	53
5	PK Oriya Primary	112	28
6.	Samaj Kalyan	388 (2006-07)	97
7.	Bastuhara Vidhyapith	304(2006-07)	61

In KMC and Pally Unnayan school three different classes were found to be taught in the same class room together at the same time.

#### TEACHER STRENGTH AND STUDENT TEACHER RATIO

**Table 1.3: Number of teachers and the Student-Teacher Ratio**

<b>Serial Number</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>No. of Teachers</b>	<b>Student-Teacher Ratio</b>
1.	Pally Unnayan Sanghathan School	4	34:1
2.	KMC School	2	41:1
3.	Shri Panchnath Vidhyalaya	10	25:1
4.	Maarer Bagan Primary School	7	37:1
5.	P.K. Oriya Primary School	3	21:1
6.	Samaj Kalyan	11	35:1
7.	Bastuhara Vidhyapith	9	34:1

A higher number of teachers would imply that each teacher will be able to devote more time and attention a particular student.

As the number of students studying in the respective schools is low the student teacher ratio is reasonable. However, we are not in a position to determine the quality of education only through a quantitative analysis. It has been discussed in a later section, taking into account data gathered through qualitative analysis.

#### OTHER FEATURES OF SURVEYED SCHOOLS

**Table1.4: Implementation of Incentive Schemes**

<b>Serial Number</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Free Text Books.</b>	<b>Mid- Day Meal</b>
1	Pally Unnayan	Yes	No
2	KMC	Yes	No.
3	Shri Panchnath Vidhyalay	No.	No.
4	Marer Bagan	Yes.	No
5	PK Oriya	Yes	No
6.	Basthura Vidhyapith	Yes	No
7.	Samaj Kalyan	Yes	No

## ADMISSION FEES

In addition to the incentive schemes implemented by the government, Primary education in the schools surveyed was free only a few schools (Marer Bagan, Samaj Kalyan and Bastora school)Others charge a nominal yearly fee of Rs 120/- to Rs 140/-.

## PROSPECT OF FURTHER EDUCATION

As mentioned earlier, primary education in Kolkata is usually till Class IV or V, hence it is important to examine whether a child from the slum area has the opportunity to attend a secondary school after completing primary schooling. It was found that there were at least 8 to 10 secondary schools within a 3km of the secondary schools. The details of a few secondary schools surveyed are mentioned below.

**Table 2: Secondary Schools surveyed**

Serial Number	Name of School	Govt./KMC/ Private	Medium	Address
1.	Oriya junior high school-	Shikshalaya under SSA	Oriya	44H/ 20/1 DC Dey Road Kol. 10
2.	Kishore Vidhya Peeth	Govt.	Bengali	27B/3A, CP

				Road, Kol 10
3.	Shanti Sangha Boys' School	Govt.	Bengali	¼, Barowaritala Road Kol 10
4.	Shanti Sangha Girls' School	Govt.	Bengali	1/8 Barowaritala Road, Kol 10  –

**Table 2.1: Number of children enrolled and admission fees**

<b>Serial Number</b>	<b>Secondary School</b>	<b>Number of students enrolled (V- VIII)</b>	<b>Admission Fees. (Rs)</b>
1	Oriya junior high school (Shikshalaya)	135	Nil
2	Kishore Vidhya Peeth	253	200/-
3	Shanti Sangha Boys'School	376	330/-
4.	Shanti Sangha Girls' School	310	225/-

While it is encouraging to note that like primary schools, there are number of secondary schools near the slum area which provide an opportunity to a child to continue education, however, there was one disquietening factor which was brought out during our survey: the high admission fees of secondary schools and also the cost of books has to be borne by the family.

#### ANALYZING THE SUPPLY OF EDUCATION

- There is an adequate supply of schools in the slum, and the enrolments rates indicate that the number of children attending these schools is quite high.
- However, the analysis of the quality of education indicates that it would have been higher if the student teacher ratio and class size was lower. This is corroborated by the data on class wise enrolments which indicate that children are not continuing with education and dropping out, indicating that there is problem with the quality of education the children are receiving.
- The secondary school survey shows that children who do complete primary education do have the opportunity to attend secondary schools, however, the point to note is that even though primary schools charge no or minimal fees, secondary schools charge a school fees which is much higher.

#### DEMAND FOR EDUCATION IN THE SLUM

Having established that there exists an adequate supply of schools in the slum under study, the next step was to determine whether or not there exists a demand for primary education in the slum.

In order to do so, 25 households were surveyed and information on the number of children going to school and income of the household were obtained (the questionnaire for the household survey has been provided in the annexure).

Another aim of the study was to determine the preferences of the families for the different types of schools (private, corporation or government)

Apart from analyzing the data collected, for an in depth perspective on the quality of education and preference between the types pf schools, Focus Group discussions were conducted with children and parents.

Hence, data on household surveys in some sections are corroborated by results of the Focus Group Discussions.

#### **Is there a demand for education?**

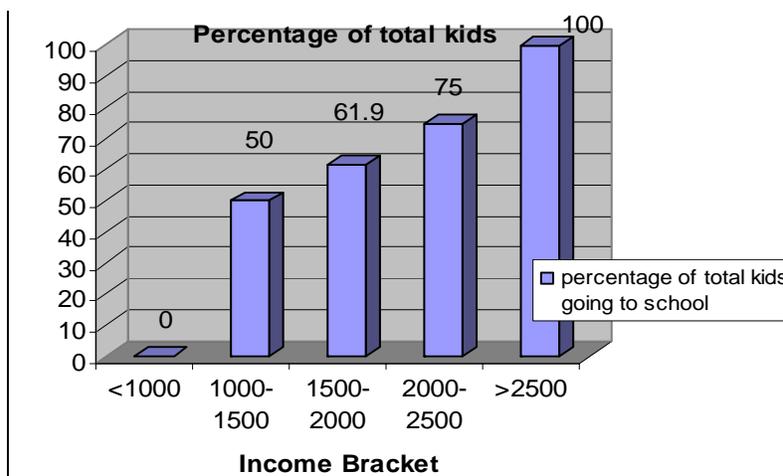
An important variable that determines preference or demand is the income of the

family. That is why the households have been identified as belonging to a certain income bracket, and the total number of children going to school from a particular income bracket has been provided to highlight the importance of the income bracket in the analysis.

**Table 3: Number of children attending school from a particular income bracket**

Income bracket (in Rs)	Number of households	No. of children in the income bracket (Drop outs + School going)	No. of children going to school in that income bracket	Percentage of children going to school in the income bracket
>1000	1	2	0	0
1000-1500	5	16	8	50
1500-2000	9	21	13	61.9
2000-2500	7	16	12	75
>2500	3	5	5	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>38</b>	

Note: children who have dropped out before completing primary education have not been included in the category of school going kids



Thus we find that there exists a demand for education for every income bracket except the first. Although these figures are not characteristic of the entire slum, they reveal that there is a demand for education.

Which schools are the children going to?

As has been discussed in the previous section, there are three types of schools in this area: government, corporation and private. On examining what schools the families are

sending their kids to, we will be able to determine their preferences.

It has to be borne in mind that the demand is not determined by preferences alone, but also by what they can afford. Hence the cost of education as incurred by the household plays a crucial role in determining their choice.

Thus it is necessary to look at cost of government, corporation and private school education as incurred by a household for educating one child before tabulating demand. The components of cost to evaluate final cost are as follows.

- Admission Fees
- School Fees
- Transport
- Books
- Miscellaneous
- Tuition

Transport costs were not incurred by any of the families, as the schools are in very close proximity to their houses. It was also found that every household sent their kids for private tuitions, regardless of which school the kids were going to. Government and Corporation schools do not charge a monthly fee, while private schools do. The government schools provide text books to the students free of charge, however sometimes the students have to buy some of the books on their own. The same holds true for corporation schools.

**Table 3.1: Average cost incurred by a family for educating one child**

	<b>Private</b>	<b>Corporation</b>	<b>Government</b>
Admission	400	Nil	120-150
School Fees	600	Nil	Nil
Transport	Nil	Nil	Nil
Books	400	150-200	150-200

Miscellaneous (includes uniform and session fees) <sup>6</sup>	300	Nil	120-150 (session fee)
Tuition	100-150	100-150	100-150
Total	1400-1450	250-350	370-500

Note: All figures are annual and in Rs

The cost of education in a private school is the highest, followed by government and then KMC.

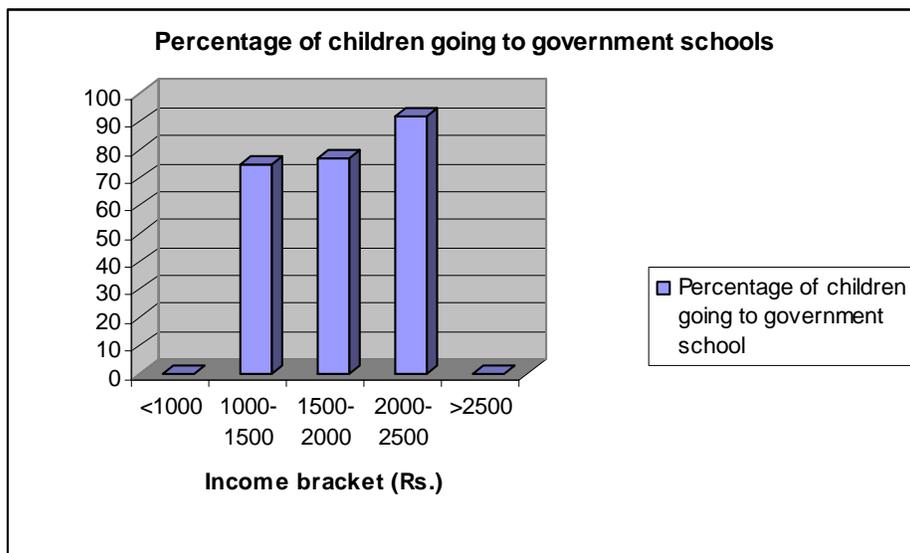
**Table 3.2: Percentage of children from each income bracket attending a particular type of school**

Income bracket (Rs)	Number of children going to private school	% of children going to private school	Number. of children going to Government Schools	% of children going to Government schools	Number. of children going to Corporation schools	% of children going to corporation schools
1000-1500	0	-	6	75	2	25
1500-2000	0	-	10	76.9	3	23.08
2000-2500	0	-	11	91.67	1	8.33
>2500	5	100	0	0	0	0

For a clearer understanding of the trend, the figures from the table above have been plotted graphically below:

<sup>6</sup> Government schools charge an admission fee for a new admission and charge a session fee for every subsequent year, thus both fees are not charged simultaneously

**Graph 1.1**



The above graph shows that :

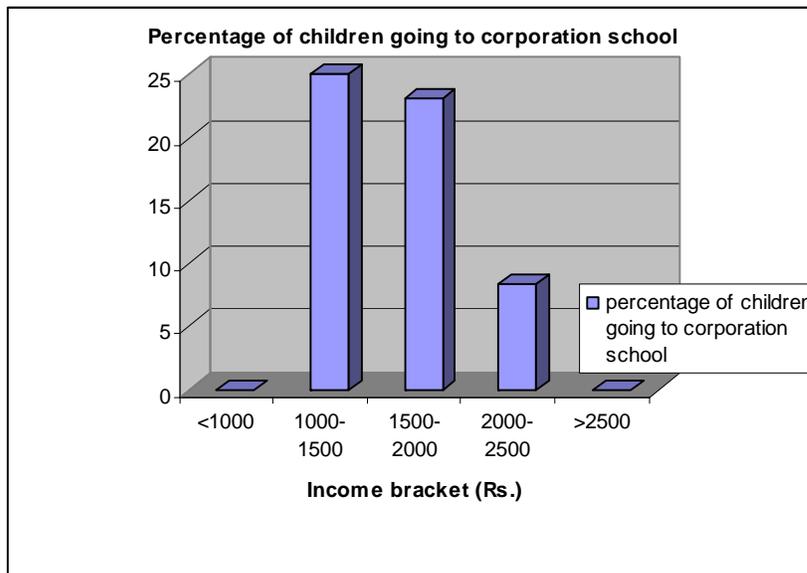
- In the income bracket Rs 1000 to 1500, 75% of the total numbers of children going to school are attending a government school.
- In the bracket Rs 1500 to Rs 2000, 76.9% of the total numbers of children going to school are attending a government school, and
- In the bracket Rs 2000-2500, 91.67% of the children are attending a government school.

Observations:

From the above graph we observe that:

- As the income of the household increase, there is an increase in the number of children going to government school. Hence, showing a positive co relation between the income of the family and the demand for education for government schools.

**Graph 1.2**



The above graph shows that :

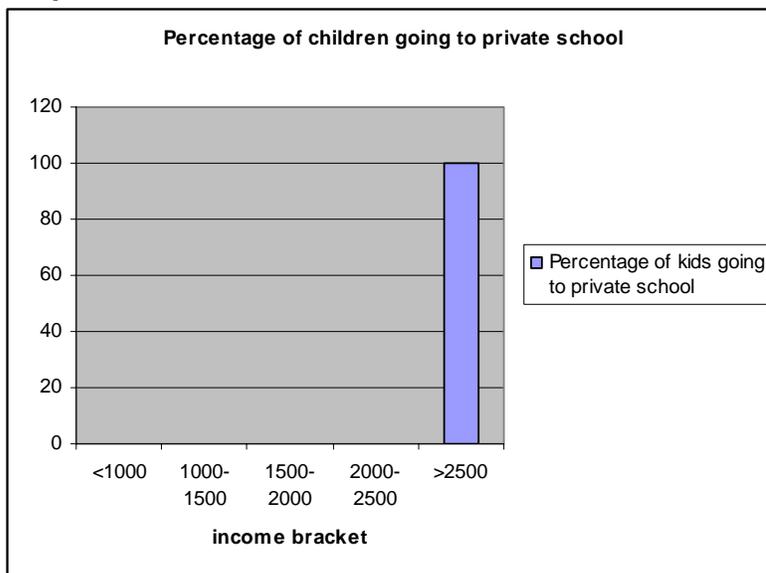
- In the income bracket of Rs 1000 to 1500, 25% of the total numbers of children going to school are going to a corporation school.
- In the bracket Rs 1500 to Rs 2000, 23.08% of the total numbers of children going to school are going to a corporation school.
- In the bracket Rs 2000-2500, 8.33% of the children are going to a corporation school.

Observations:

From the above graph, we can observe that:

- As the income of the household increases, there is a decrease in the number of children attending corporation schools.
- Hence there is a negative co relation between the increase in the income of the households and the demand for education for corporation schools.

**Graph 1.3**



The graph above shows that 100% of the children in the income bracket of above Rs 2500 are attending private schools.

Observations:

From the above graph, it can be observed that:

- Though there is no demand for education in a private school in the first three income brackets, the demand for education in a private school rises sharply at the highest income level.

Hence, it can be observed that as the income of the household increases, the demand for an educational institute shifts to the institute providing better quality education.

There exists a positive relation between the income of the household and the choice of school.

### **Preference Determination**

In the first 3 income brackets, the preference is for government schools, but for families with a higher income level, private schools seem to be preferred to government schools.

Hence it can be concluded that for the most part, private school education lies outside the budget set of slum-dwelling families. It is not feasible owing to their meagre income.

When asked for the reasons for their school selection, the following were cited.

- proximity of school
- affordability
- teacher referral

Thus we find that in every income group except that of the first (< Rs 1000), there exists a demand for education.

Even if the income bracket is that of Rs 1000 to Rs 1500, there will be kids from these families going to primary schools. Owing to the paltry income, their choices might be limited, but the families will send their kids to the schools they can afford.

*Demand is not exceeding supply, as those kids who are not going to school are doing so not because of a shortage of schools but other factors.*

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION ON SCHOOL PREFERENCES

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### Primary Questions:

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- Which schools are the children sent to?
  - Reasons for the choice.
  - Is there is a preference for another type of school?
  - Reasons for the preference.
- 

### Parent Focused Group Discussions:

- 2 out of the 4 parent groups show a preference for private school but budget constraint was the reason cited for their choice being limited between corporation and government schools.
- The same groups choose to send their child to a government school rather than corporation school.
- 1 out of the 4 parent groups did not have a clear preference between the three schools, even though some of the parents in this group were sending their

children to private schools. The group did not seem to be informed about the distinctions.

- In the same group, some parents who send their children to private school showed a preference to government school as they felt that this would help their child to secure a government job in the future.

#### Children Focused Group Discussions

- In the two focused group discussions conducted with children in New Kulia Tangra, the children showed a preference for Government school, however these children, some of them who had dropped out did not know anything about private school education. Hence, their choice of Government schools was over corporation schools.
- One of the two children groups located in Pagla Danga road showed a clear preference for private schools, though most of these children were enrolled in a private school, they had previously studied in Government schools.

#### **Are the households satisfied with the schools?**

From the household survey there were primarily five answers, which have been listed in the decreasing order of frequency of mention.

- Unable to judge/can't say.
- Would have opted for private or an English medium schools if they were affordable.
- children are at fault and do not study.
- school is at fault.
- satisfied

#### FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION on grievances with schools

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##### Primary Questions:

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- Is there any problem the child faces in school?
-

- 
- Are the parents happy with the child's progress?
  - Are there any specific problems that you think should be addressed?
  - Does the child take tuitions, if yes, then why?
- 

### Grievances with schools

Another aim of the discussions the study was to find out the exact grievances of the students and families with the schools to obtain a more meaningful picture of the state of education in the slum. The groups came up with similar answers which have been listed below.

- Children do not understand what they are studying. Tuitions become necessary for the child to cope up with studies.
- Teachers do not teach well and give no individual attention to weak students. The student teacher ratios are also quite high.
- Large classes make it difficult for the children to concentrate. Also in some schools different classes were taught together.
- Absence of tracking of children i.e. whether the child is actually attending classes or leaving school in between.

Which schools have the kids dropped out from?

The table below gives a break up of the schools that the children have dropped out of. It is to be noted that for income brackets less than Rs 2500, none of the children in the survey had joined the private school.

**Table3.3: Number of children who have dropped out**

Income Bracket (Rs)	Number of children included in the	Number of drop outs			Total
		Private	Govt.	Corp.	
<1000	2	-	0	2	2

1000-1500	16	-	5	3	<b>8</b>
1500-2000	21	-	4	4	<b>8</b>
2000-2500	16	-	4	0	<b>4</b>
>2500	5	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>

More children have dropped out of government schools than they have from corporation schools. But it has to be kept in mind that there were more kids who had opted to go to government schools in our sample survey, thus the absolute number of drop-outs might be greater.

This does not however constitute a preference for corporation schools. The percentage would provide a deeper insight. In order to calculate the number of children who have dropped out of corporation schools, we have used the formula:

(Children who have dropped out/Total number of kids who had enrolled in the corporation school) \*100

The total number of kids who had enrolled would also include those who have now dropped out.

Total number of children who had enrolled in corporation schools	=15
Number of children who have dropped out of corporation schools	=9
Percentage of kids who have dropped out of corporation	=9/15*100
	<b>=60%</b>

**Thus from the sample survey, 60% of the children who had enrolled in corporation schools have dropped out.**

Total number of children who had enrolled in government schools	=40
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Number of children who have dropped out of government schools	=13
Percentage of children who have dropped out of government schools	=13/40*100
	<b>=32.5%</b>

Thus from the sample survey, 32.5% of the children who had enrolled in government schools have dropped out.

From the sample survey, children attending private schools, no cases of drop outs were found

#### Focus Group Discussion on the reasons for drop outs

##### Primary Questions:

- What schools are the children sent to?
- Why has the child dropped out?
- Did the child find it difficult to cope with studies?
- Were there any economic compulsions?
- Do you think that it is the child's fault or the school's?
- Did any of your friends/ siblings drop out with you?

Each group was asked to list factors they perceived to be responsible for the occurrence of high drop-out rates.

As opposed to widely held notions that parents do not encourage their children to study because they themselves are not educated and instead ask them to help with work or chores, the discussions revealed quite the contrary; their parents in fact urged them to continue with their education and not drop out of school.

**Table 3.4: Results of a focussed group discussion on the reasons for Drop outs**

<b>Serial number</b>	<b>Group's Opinion</b>	<b>Frequency of inclusion</b>	<b>No. of parents groups</b>	<b>No. of children's group</b>
1	Environment	6	4	2
2	Inability to understand/ lack of learning in schools	5	2	3
3.	Prospect of making money	5	3	2
4.	Fear	4	2	2
5.	Income constraint	2	1	1
6.	Can't Say	1	0	1

Environment:

A host of factors collectively create an unhealthy atmosphere for learning in the slum.

- To begin with, the families are rooted in poverty. In a lot of the families surveyed, the mother was the only earning member as the father had lost his job when nearby factories closed down. Negative influences all around, older siblings or friends who have dropped out do not encourage the child to continue with studies.
- There is an absence of child monitoring, even in school the teachers do not pay individual attention to each child. Hence both the environment in the slum and the school is in a large way responsible for the children dropping out.
- Most of these children are first generation learners; their parents cannot guide them effectively. Parents are not able to judge the effectiveness of the schools. There is a tendency to blame the children for disinterest in studies,

while the reason can be the lack of actual teaching in the school

Inability to follow/Lack of learning:

- The discussions revealed that in the majority of the cases, the students who had dropped out because they felt they learn very little in school. In some cases, there were students in class IV who could neither read nor write correctly.
- Parents in the group discussions complained that government schools promote even weak students and the system of examinations in most schools are not effective; hence a student who has not been able to cope with studies throughout the year is still promoted to the next class.
- All the school going students surveyed take private tuitions to understand what is being taught in school. Parents feel that the children perform better if they are tutored everyday and study regularly.

Fear

- Children complained that they do not understand what is being taught in school. They are instilled with a sense of fear, as many a times the teachers harshly punish, students who are not performing well.

Income constraints

- Compounded with the set of factors mentioned above, there is the monetary consideration which also forces some children to drop out. Unable to buy books, they do not understand what is being taught and together with a sense of fear, or a desire/need to earn money they leave school.

There are thus some serious problems with the schools, and the slum conditions which together lead to high drop out rates

## **Conclusions**

As it was discussed in the sample survey section, there is an adequate supply of schools and a considerable demand for education among households from different income brackets in our sample slum area.

However, the parameters measuring the quality of education in these schools and Focus Group Discussions with parents and children in the slum reveal that there remains a yawning gap between the expectations of both children parents and the quality of education the government and corporation schools are imparting.

Due to their vulnerable and weak socio economic status, slum children are in need of special attention during their years in primary school. Not finding a friendly environment in school, these children lose interest in studies and drop out. This problem is reflected in the lower number of children joining the next class every year in most schools.

The survey results above show that the construction of schools in the area, does not necessarily mean that all slum children will all attend school. There are number of factors which affect the learning period of a child, and the most important, as discussed in the Focus Group Discussion section, is environment.

Without improving or providing the basic liveable conditions of a slum, an atmosphere conducive for the child's learning cannot be created, no matter how many schools are constructed, the problem of lack of learning and eventual drop puts will remain. Apart from appalling living conditions, the slum children are not receiving good quality education. The schools are over crowded, the class sizes are large and the low student teacher ratios are a cause of concern.

As it is clear household surveys that most of these families prefer private schools but in most cases they cannot do so because of income constraints. Their school choices make it clear that they are aware of the distinctions in the qualities between corporation, government and private schools.

### **Recommendations**

The West Bengal Government must improve living conditions in slums through more slum development schemes and strive to recognize large squatter colonies. Without improving the overall living conditions of the slum dwellers and by only providing schools the progress of the education initiative will remain unbalanced and lacking.

The section on public expenditure on education clearly shows that though a large sum of money is spent by the government on maintaining and building new schools at the grass root level the child is still suffering from the lack of good quality education from corporation and government schools.

This problem is will not be solved by increasing public expenditure on schools or constructing more schools and Shikshalayas, instead there is a dire need of new policy solution to ensure that all children not only go to school but are given a good quality education.

The school choice campaign can effectively solve the basic problem of attaining good quality education from government schools for thousands of children all across the country.

- The campaign offers to reform the current system by removing the system of funding schools and instead funding a child through the system of education vouchers.<sup>7</sup>
- The family will not be constrained to send the child to a poor quality school and will instead be able to opt for a school where the quality of teaching will be higher.
- This is also an efficient solution, as schools will become competitive in their bid to attract a greater number of students.

Thus a market based system will only increase quality, as schools will try to raise their standards for their own sustainability. It is only through the implementation of public policy of this nature that the education system would be able to emphasise on quality and ensure that the divide between government school educated children and private school educated children are narrowed.

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<sup>7</sup> The education vouchers are meant to be redeemable only in schools.

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## Annexure

### Subject-School Profile

1) School Code:

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2) Type of School: KPSC/KMC/Shikshalya

3) School Name:

4) School Address:

5) Medium: English/Bengali/Urdu/Hindi

6) Number of Classes run:

7) Children Enrolled:

<b>Class</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>			

8) Co-education: Yes/No

9) Building: Own/Rental/Rent free

10) Source of funding:

11) Fees charged:

12) Number of Staff:

Staff	Approved	unapproved
Teaching		
Non-teaching		
Total		

:

## **Annexure 2: household survey Questionnaire**

1 Name of Parent:

2 Monthly Income:

3 Family Size:

4 First Generation Schooled Child(ren):

5 If No to (4), Parents' Level of Schooling:

6 Children: .

7 Reason for Selecting School:

8 Distance from School:

9 Cost of Education (annual figures) for the son in secondary school.

School Fees

Transport

Books

Tuition

*Total Cost*

10 School rating.

11 Reasons for dropping out:

12 Notes: