Alternative Education Programs Reaching the Most Deprived Urban Children

A Precondition to Sustainable Development in India

By Valeria Rojas
Student # 3315193

Acknowledgements

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I Introduction

The 2002 Johannesburg World Summit clearly specified that "eradicating poverty is... an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries" (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, p.3). Poverty is a vicious cycle, which damages children's body and mind development, limiting their skills and abilities later on in life. As adults, they tend to be poor and perpetuate poverty by transmitting it to their children (Unicef 2000, p. 1; Hulme & Shepherd 2003, p. 405). Because poor households usually have large families, children tend to be disproportionately represented among the poor (Unicef 2000, p. 1). Furthermore, girls will eventually become mothers and the main responsible for their children's rearing, education and health. Due to gender bias, women are denied education and make up as much as 2/3 of the world's poor. They tend to be illiterate and malnourished, which in turn decreases their ability to protect their children's rights (Ahmed 2010, p. 242).

For the reasons given above, "children and women can be our Trojan horse for attacking the citadel of poverty" (Unicef 2000, p.3). Investing in children right to education is one of the most effective ways to decrease intragenerational inequity and stop intergenerational poverty. Through education, individuals attain the skills and knowledge they need to increase their resilience to cope with vulnerabilities, such as economic shocks and/or natural disasters induced by climate change. Education increases their creativity, productivity and well-being, which in turn allows them to diversify their livelihoods. Finally, it helps children become future active citizens, and participate in development process as main actors rather than passive subjects recipients of services (Unicef 2000, p. 3-4; Ahmed 2010, p. 248). In conclusion, education (particularly for girls) is a vital to expand people's opportunities and freedoms to lead lives they value and have a reason to value (Sen, cited in Ahmed 2010, p. 248).

Aware of the importance of education, Unesco launched in 1990 the Education for All (EFA) initiative. Its six goals aim to provide quality basic education to all children, youth and adults (Unesco 2011). In 2000, the United Nations Millennium Declaration set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eradicate poverty. The MDG 2 on achieving universal primary education and MDG 3 on eliminating gender inequality in primary and secondary schools are particularly relevant to education as a human right. Hence, EFA and MDGs are the two most important global policies on education, which give governments an incentive to fulfill their duties of providing universal compulsory fee education to all children.

1.1 Problem definition

In 2009, the Indian parliament passed the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, also known as the Right to Education Act (RTE). Under this law, all children from ages 6 to 14 should be enrolled in a formal school from standards (std.) 1st to 8th. The RTE is the Indian government main tool to deliver its commitments to EFA and MDGs 2 and 3. Despite the government's efforts, the most disadvantaged children in society are still unable to enjoy the benefits of this law. These include ethnic and linguistic minorities, and slum, street and migrant children, refugees, among others (Ahmed 2010, p. 251). The formal curricula and class schedule are rather rigid and do not fit the needs of these children. For this reason, they are often left out from the formal system, which ironically continues to exclude the poorest of the poor (Calloids 1998, p. 22). In order to cover this shortcoming, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started operating alternative education programs (AEPs).

AEPs are flexible strategies that successfully reach highly underprivileged children by "bringing school to their doorstep" (Door Step School 2009). Many of them are bridging programs that aim to mainstream as many children as possible to formal schools. These try to overcome many of the obstacles preventing children from accessing education. For instance, many child laborers cannot go to school because they work during school hours. AEPs offer them shorter class periods and flexible hours that fit their work schedule. AEPs help eliminate gender disparities by constantly involving parents in their daughters' education. Schools are located as close as possible to girl's homes, so that parents are more willing to let them go to class. Finally, alternative education focuses on providing quality education by reducing the class size and training teachers to give children personal attention.

For the reasons given above, alternative education programs "are one important component of national strategies to achieve EFA [goals] and MGDs," which in turn has a positive impact on poverty alleviation (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 27). The Indian government, however, emphasizes formal schooling as the only legitimate education. It does not recognize AEPs as a valuable contribution that enables children-at-risk exercise their right to education.

In order to assess the role of alternative education in helping disadvantaged children access education, the researcher selected four AEPs operated by local NGOs in India and conducted three months of fieldwork in three different cities. In Mumbai, Door Step School (DSS) operates two non-formal education programs. The Community-based NFE classes targets children living and working in slum areas. The School-on-Wheels is a mobile school, which uses the interior of a bus as a classroom. This program mainly works with children of pavement dwellers. In Pune, Door Step School has a Study Classes program for children of construction workers, who are constantly shifting from one site to another. This program enrolls children in nearby public schools and provides them with after-school classes that help them cope with the curricula of formal schools. Finally, Saath has a NFE program Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites, which also focuses on delivering education services to migrant children living in construction sites in Ahmedabad.

The programs will be evaluated using a bottom-up criterion based on the Human-Rights Based Approach and Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach. On the one hand, the approach will measure the ability of the AEPs to sustainably bridge children to the formal schooling system. On the other hand, it will analyze up to what extent these programs help children gain skills, values and knowledge that will improve their opportunities to escape poverty and lead valuable lives.

Based on the information given above, the following research objective has been formulated:

To assess the effectiveness of these four AEPs in increasing access to formal education, while empowering and increasing the capabilities of children of migrant workers, pavement and slum dwellers. In this way, the research aims to create awareness of the importance of AEPs for helping disadvantaged children exercise their right to education, which in turn helps eradicate poverty, and therefore advances sustainable development.

Below is also presented the main research question:

How effective are the selected AEPs in improving access to formal education for urban deprived children?

1.2 Research relevance

This research aims to make clear the important role AEPs play within the sustainable development agenda. According to the 2011 Human Development Report, "today many debates about sustainability neglect equality, treating it as a separate and unrelated concern" (UNDP 2011, p. 1). Hence, the link between alternative education and sustainable development can be often missed, because the environmental and economic dimensions tend to be more strongly highlighted (Vallance, Perkins & Dixon 2011, p. 342).

By concentrating on this specific type of education intervention, the research addresses two gaps. On the one hand, it is academically relevant because it will address the information gap on how access to alternative education is related to accomplishing sustainable development. It will draw attention to the fact that even though formal education is very important, it is not the only one type of education that should be recognized as valid. On the other hand, it has a societal relevance because it will provide a better understanding of the impact of alternative education programs (AEPs). It will help determine whether or not AEPs are worthwhile to promote as a way to eradicate poverty.

1.3 Research boundaries

In terms of sustainability, the research will mainly focus on its social dimension because the topic

requires a greater concentration of this aspect. Besides, the master's thesis is from the social sciences track. However, poverty and social inequity inevitably affect the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. For example, denying access to education negatively affects India's human capital stock, and consequently its economic growth (Oxaal 1997, p. 3). While environmental degradation exacerbates socio-economic disparities, these social inequalities simultaneously intensify environmental degradation, which results in a self-reinforcing vicious cycle (UNDP 2011, p. 1). For this reason, eradicating poverty is a main objective of sustainable development.

1.4 Thesis outline

The setup of this thesis starts by introducing in chapter II the ground theories and concepts relevant to the right to education and alternative education. The literature review includes the Human-Rights Based Approach to Education, the Capabilities Approach, the relevance of EFA and the MDGs, and the concept of alternative education. In chapter III, the research objective and main research question are reintroduced followed by the formulation of the sub-research question. Then, the researcher addresses the methods and techniques used to conduct fieldwork in India. It will also explain in detail the conceptual model designed to evaluate the outcome and impact of the AEPs. Chapter IV presents the contextual framework, which explains the structure of the AEPs selected for the study. It also introduces the cities where they operate and gives a detailed description of the socio-economic background of children studying in these programs. Additionally, it explains in-depth the content of the RTE Act, which frames this study. Chapters V to IX present the results obtained based on the criteria described in the conceptual model presented in chapter III. Chapter X is the discussion and conclusion chapter. In this chapter, the researcher aims to make relevant connections between the theories earlier presented and the results found in the field. This thesis closes by giving several recommendations for future research.

II. Theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two discusses the main theories relevant to the right to education, particularly focusing on disadvantaged children. The Human Rights-Based Approach and Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach frame this research. After discussing the ground theories, the next section applies some of these concepts to the right to education. Finally, other relevant concepts are also discussed, such as the definition of alternative education programs and global policies on education. The last section also presents some other examples of successful alternative education programs (AEPs).

2.2 Ground theories

2.2.1 Human right-based approach (HRBA)

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) includes norms, standards, principles and goals of human rights system into the planning, design and implementation of development programs (Boesen & Martin 2007, p.9). It recognizes the complexity of poverty and is a radical departure from a needs-based approach and welfare-based models (Nelson 2007, p. 2044).

Whereas the needs-based approach focuses on merely meeting physical needs, the HRBA has a more holistic approach and views needs also in terms of cultural, civil, political, economic and social rights. The HRBA makes a clear distinction between rights-holders and their corresponding duty bearers. Thus, the state is the main duty-bearer playing a major role in the provision of educational services. The state, the private sector and civil society interact with each other in terms of rights and duties. In the HRBA, the outcomes are as important as the processes conducted to realize rights. Finally, the HRBA does not see deprived individuals as victims. Instead, it portrays marginalized sections of the population as equal human beings, who need support to effectively exercise their rights (Boesen & Martin 2007, p. 10, Nelson 2007, p. 2045).

By recognizing individuals' agency and placing them as main actors in their development, HRBA aims to particularly empower the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. It recognizes that "severe poverty is a human rights violation, and that poverty in itself is a root cause of a number of human rights violations" (Boesen & Martin 2007, p.9).

According to this approach, human rights principles should guide all phases (i.e. planning, design, implementation, evaluation, monitoring) involved in development programming. These principles are the following:

Table 2. 1. HRBA Principles

Human Rights Principles	
Principle	**Definition**
Universal and inalienable	People are entitled to them from birth. They cannot be given away nor taken away.
Indivisible	All rights enjoy equal standing and there is no hierarchical ranking
Non-discrimination and Equality	All individuals are equal and entitled to enjoy their rights without discrimination of any kind. Thus, HRBA especially focuses in marginalized groups.
Interdependent and interrelated	The realization of one right depends wholly or in part on the realization of other rights.
Participation and inclusion	All individuals are free to participate in, contribute to and enjoy their rights
Accountability and the rule of Law	The state and other duty-bearers are required to achieve, protect, and promote human rights. Failure to do so entitles rights-holders to appropriate redress before competent court/authority.
Empowerment	Process through which people's capabilities to claim and exercise their rights are increased

Source: Unicef 2007, p. 10-11

Education is a human right enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Unicef 2007, p. 7). Education as a right means free compulsory primary education for all. The state has the obligation to also develop secondary schools and higher education, and implement measures that will make it accessible to all children. Finally, the state must ensure that those children who have dropped out from school actually finish basic education. The state's duty of achieving the right to education does not mean to merely provide free education. It is also the state's obligation to eliminate discrimination at all levels of the education system, and to set minimum standards always aiming at improving the quality of education. The 1989 UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) strengthens the concept of education through four core principles. Table 2.2 shows CRC's core principles.

Table 2. 2. Convention on the Rights of the Child - Core Principles

CRC four core principles
1. Non-discrimination 2. Supremacy of the best interest of child 3. Right to life survival and development of child to maximum extent possible 4. Right of children to express their views in all matters affecting them.

Source: Unicef 2007, p. 7-8

CRC's four core principles recognize children as active agents in their learning, and the objective of education is to support the realization of these principles. Furthermore, CRC exhorts states to eliminate poverty and discrimination because they induce high dropout rates and low school enrollment rates (Unicef 2007, p. 8). Article 29 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child says that education should be child-centered, child-friendly and empowering. Education needs to go "beyond formal schooling to embrace a broad range of life experiences through which positive developing and learning occur" (Unicef 2007, p.8).

2.2.2 The Capabilities Approach

Contrary to other approaches centered on people's happiness or income and consumption, the Capabilities Approach is a framework that focuses on what people are successfully able to do and to be (meaning on their capabilities). Amartya Sen states that the ends of well-being, justice and development should be "conceptualized in terms of people's... effective opportunities to undertake the actions and activities that they want to engage in, and be whom they want to be" (Roybens 2005, p. 95).

People have internal capabilities, which are body fitness, abilities, intellectual and emotional capacities as well as personality traits that a person can train or develop. Internal capabilities include leadership skills, self-esteem and self-confidence, analytical skills, aptitude for numbers or languages, among others. However, people also develop internal capabilities as a result of constant interaction with their political, social, familial and economic environment. These are known as combined capabilities (Nussbaum 2011, p. 20-21).

The capability set of a person reflects various combinations of potential functionings. A functioning is what a person actually achieves to do or to be. Thus, his/her capability is a reflection of the freedom he/she enjoys to choose between different ways of living (Sen 1999, p. 75; Nussbaum 2011, p. 20). In other words, the distinction between functionings and capabilities is between achievements (functionings) and the freedom or valuable options (capabilities) from which one can choose. Individuals should enjoy the freedom (or combined capabilities) to lead the life they want to live, which is what actually makes life valuable (Roybens 2005, p.95).

Martha Nussbaum introduces a list of ten Central Capabilities that are crucial for people to lead lives with dignity. She holds that governments as main duty-bearers should secure a minimum level or threshold of these capabilities to all citizens. Education, included as part of capability 4, should be made a functioning rather than a capability for all children because it "is... a necessary prelude to adult capability" (Nussbaum 2011, p. 26). Moreover, education is considered a fertile functioning that opens up more opportunities for people to realize other related capabilities (Nussbaum 2011, p.44). According to Nussbaum, "at the heart of the Capabilities Approach since its inception has been the importance of education... [because it] forms people's existing capacities into developed internal capabilities of many kinds... [and it is] of the highest importance in addressing disadvantage and inequality" (2011, p. 152).

Governments are oftentimes faced with a 'tragic choice' when they are unable to meet two or more capabilities thresholds due to their limited resources. Nussbaum suggests that in these situations it is best to invest the scarce resources in functionings that are particularly fertile because it will help people get closer to the threshold levels (2011, p. 45). Therefore, governments should make education one of its priorities.

Education increases people's employment options, helps them exercise political participation, and facilitates their integration to society as active and valuable members. It increases productivity, helps people make informed and intelligent life choices, and gives people the skills they need to convert income and resources into functionings and ways of living. Better access to education also has a positive impact on national income rates and contributes to a fairer distribution among the different sectors of society (Sen n.d., p. 55, Nussbaum 2011, p. 152 - 155). Finally, exercising the right to "education is necessary for the fulfillment of any other civil, political, economic or social right" (Unicef 2007, p.7).

As mentioned before, people's capabilities depend on their personal characteristics, as well as their environment. There are three conversion factors influencing how individuals use means (i.e. goods and services) to undertake actions in order to achieve desired outcome (functioning). Contrary to the market-based economy approach, income only cannot explain why certain people cannot access services and goods (Roybens, p. 97-99). There are other reasons influencing people's decision-making process when choosing potential functionings. Table 2.3 explains more in detail these conversion factors.

Table 2. 3. Capabilities Approach - Conversion Factors

Conversion Factors		
Conversion Factor	**Definition**	**Example**
Personal	Partly determine how a person can transform the characteristics of the commodity into a functioning.	Migrant children and their parents are illiterate. Thus, they cannot read and get informed about their rights, which may prevent them from converting free compulsory schooling into a functioning (i.e. going to school).
Social	These factors refer to public policies and legislation, social norms. Power relations also play a role in the conversion of a functioning.	Many girls in India are not allowed to go to school because they are supposed to get married at an early age. This social practice may prevent girls from exercising their right to education.
environmental	Climate and geographical location.	If there are not paved roads or public schools are located far away from girls' homes, then accessing education becomes more difficult.

Source: Roybens 2005, p. 99

In contrast to formal education, many alternative education programs (AEPs) are flexible enough to effectively address these conversion factors. Their innovative education strategies facilitate the conversion of education services into functionings for urban deprived children. In turn, by accessing education, these vulnerable children will be able to train and develop their internal capabilities and increase their well-being.

2.3 Policies on Education: EFA and MDGs

The Education For All (EFA) initiative and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the two most important global policies on education. They have a high influence on how countries design and implement their education programs to deliver this basic service (Mc Millan 2011, p. 542).

In 1990, the Jomtien World Conference on Education For All (EFA) sets the goal of universal primary education for year 2000. This commitment was reaffirmed for 2015 at the World Education Forum 2000 in Dakar. Six new targets were set to meet by this date, being goals 1, 2, 5 and 6 the most relevant to this study.

Box 2. 1. Education for All (EFA) Goals

EFA Six Goals
Goal 1 *"Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, **especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children**"*
Goal 2 *"Ensuring that by 2015 all children**, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities,** have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality."*
Goal 3 *"Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes"*
Goal 4 *"Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults."*
Goal 5 *"**Eliminating gender disparities** in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality."*
Goal 6 *"Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills."*

Source: Unesco 2011

In September 2000, 189 countries at the Millennium Summit adhered to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and committed to meet the eight Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) by 2015. Since then major government donors, the private sector, organizations and civil society have adopted the MDGs. They are critical indicators for countries to self-assess their progress in following through and achieving these set targets (Schmidt-Traub 2009, p. 72-73).

Goals 2 and 3 specifically are relevant to the right to education. Goal 2 sets the target to ensure that by 2015 all boys and girls are able to complete primary schooling. Goal 3 promotes gender equality and empowerment of women by setting the target to eradicate gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015 (Nelson 2007, p. 2043). Making education universal for all children, especially for girls, has significant positive impacts on the other goals, such as eliminating hunger and poverty, reducing child mortality, and improving maternal mortality.

2.3.1 Criticism of the MGDs and EFA initiative

The MGDs and EFA goals (particularly goals 2, 4 and 5) are criticized for having a strong focus on aggregate quantitative objectives (net enrollment rates, literacy rates, and grade completion rates). Governments, highly sensitive to their image on the world stage, target meeting the formal education enrollment rates (outcomes), while neglecting the processes through which they accomplish this goal. They focus on rates at the expense of quality of education (Mc Millan 2011, p. 540). These global policies also put pressure on the international community to bear some responsibility when governments of poorer countries are unable to meet their obligation. Thus, major donors are interested in funding infrastructure and projects that put a large number of children inside a classroom (Mc Millan 2011, p. 541).

Even though MDGs represent concrete goals with practical targets that have with specific deadlines, they do not necessarily force governments to deal with the social and political causes behind inequality and poverty. They are criticized for being blind to inequalities and the needs of the most vulnerable members of society (Nelson 2007, p. 2047; Schmidt-Traub 2009, p. 78-79). In this sense, human rights consider poverty as multidimensional and analyze its causes by making connection between poverty and civil and political freedoms. The MDGs are rather indicators to accomplish in order to alleviate some of the effects of deprivation (Nelson 2007, p. 2046).

However, other academics argue that in fact the MDGs and HRBA complement each other because the latter is oftentimes vague and abstract. On the one hand, the MDGs help the HRBA to set well-defined targets. On the other hand, the HRBA has valuable components that enrich the MDGs, such as identifying duty-bearers and rights-holders, promoting community participation and transforming goals into legal obligations (Schmidt-Traub 2009, p. 80).

2.4 Alternative Education Programs (AEP)

The formal education system does not adequately meet the needs of disadvantaged groups, such as migrant children, pavement and street children. The traditional education system fails to integrate and, consequently, retain these children. They drop out of school before attaining the basic cognitive knowledge and life skills they need for their adulthood. Because they leave before completing compulsory basic education, they do not receive a certification, which is useful for getting a job in the future. The formal system has a rather rigid organization, time schedules and curriculum, which do not suit all children (IIEP 1997, p. 4).

In the 1970s, the faults of formal education catalyzed a movement to design an alternative education system that would offer them more flexible, effective and respectful learning environments. In 1972, the Learning To Be report by the International Commission on Education Development stressed the importance of the act of learning rather than merely focusing on the content of teaching. This different approach of looking at education inspired the 1990 EFA World Declaration in Jomtien (IIEP 1997, p.9).

For over four decades, many different alternative education programs (AEP) have been developed aiming to reach excluded sectors of society. Alternative education is a broad term that refers to programs that are not considered formal education. They are usually implemented by agencies and NGOs, but there are few that are sponsored by the government and its education system. Alternative education also includes non-formal education programs[1], which usually cannot offer a valid certification recognized by the state for the learning achieved (IIEP 1997, P. 10).

Furthermore, AEPs are highly diverse and context-dependent. Thus, some are temporary responses to emergencies and/or violent conflict, and others are bridging programs to mainstream out-of-school children. There are two types of alternative education programs: alternative pedagogy and alternative access. Alternative pedagogy offers non-traditional courses, such as HIV prevention or landmines awareness, and they are provided either as part of the formal curricula or in parallel to formal schooling. They aim at changing the behavior of its participants (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 32-33). The AEPs selected for this study, however, belong to the category of alternative access programs and provide an opportunity for out-of-school children to access education through other means.

Besides supporting MDGs 2 and 3 and all of EFA goals, alternative education is a good strategy to also meet CRC's four core principles. AEPs' objective is to proactively reach children who otherwise would be excluded by the formal system, and provide them with child-centered education. Their methodology tends to be participatory, and classes are conducted in child-friendly spaces, where children's rights are respect and their participation is encouraged (Unicef 2007, p. 8).

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[1] According to Unesco, Non-formal education (NFE) caters to people from all ages and includes a wide range of education opportunities, which cover adult literacy, basic literacy and numeracy skill for out-of-school children, life and work skills. NFE enjoys plenty of flexibility, which in turn allows it to not follow the 'ladder' system and adapt its class duration to whatever suits best students' life styles (Unesco 1997, p. 41).

Leah Mc Millan argues that there is a strong need for international development to stop solely focusing on quantitative outcomes to achieve universal primary enrollment (2011, p. 544). Education processes are equally or more important. For this reason, global education initiatives need to recognize that enrollment rates are meaningless if they are not coupled with quality education and mechanisms to retain children. NFE and alternative education are both better suited to address the needs of highly deprived and marginalized children because their curricula, processes and overall strategy are flexible and aim at empowering children (Mc Millan 2011, p. 544). Hence, the MDG and EFA should re-evaluate their goals to also include qualitative indicators that reflect these inclusive processes.

2.5 Application of concepts to Alternative Education Programs

2.5.1 Unicef's HRBA to Education

Unicef developed a rights-based conceptual framework applied to education. According to this framework, the right to education has three main interdependent dimensions: the right of access to education, the right to quality education, and the right to respect in the learning environment. Ensuring universal access to school is not enough because it does not guarantee that children acquire the skills and knowledge they need to lead lives they consider valuable. Thus, quality education requires school processes and curriculum to be relevant and address the needs of children. A human-right based education should also recognize and respect children's rights at school. This in turn is likely to positively impact retention rates and empower children (Unicef 2007, p. 27-28). Each of these three sections has central criteria that must be met. Table 2.4 summarizes these elements:

Table 2. 4. HRBA to Education

Rights-based conceptual framework for education	
1. **The right of access to education**	• Education throughout all stages of childhood and beyond • Availability and accessibility of education • Equality of opportunity
2. **The right to quality education**	• A broad, relevant and inclusive curriculum • Rights-based learning and assessment • Child-friendly, safe and healthy environments
3. **The right to respect in the learning environment**	• Respect for identity • Respect for participation rights • Respect for integrity

Source: Unicef 2007, p. 28

2.5.2 Pigozzi's two-level model for assessing quality education

The EFA goal 6 is concerned with quality education, so all children can accomplish learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and life skills. Mary Joy Pigozzi proposes a two-level model to assess quality

education, keeping in mind the HRBA. Criteria at both learner and system level are equally relevant for program sustainability and success in positively impacting children's lives. Figure 2.1 depicts Pigozzi's two-level system to measure quality education.

Figure 2. 1. Pigozzi's framework for quality of education

Figure 2.1   A framework for the quality of education
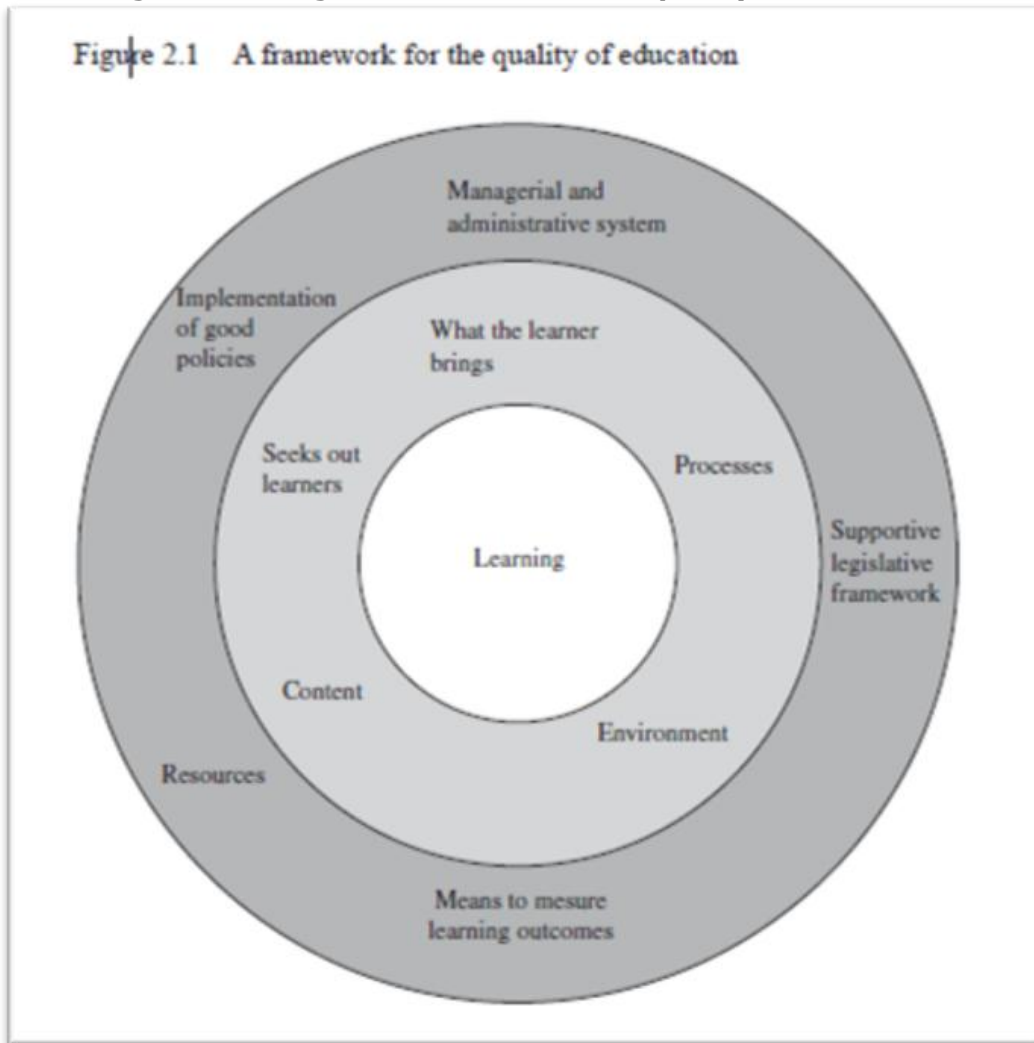
Source: Pigozzi 2006, p. 45

2.5.2.1 Learner level

The criteria at this level are centered around children and their needs with a special emphasis on what happens inside the classroom on a daily basis. There are five dimensions of quality of education at the learner level.

1. **Seek out the learner:**
It means to make proactive efforts to find out-of-school children and ensure their access to schooling. Pigozzi states that seeking out the learners additionally implies that teachers recognize that children learn in different ways and at different speeds. Thus, the teacher needs to seek out also the children's skills, interests and experiences in order to provide them with lifelong learning (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 38).

2. **Respond to what the learners bring:**
Students bring both positive and negative elements to the classroom. For example, children who have been affected by civil wars and/or natural disasters have experienced traumas and emotional distress. Quality alternative education must take into account the experiences of the children it is trying to reach and design the programs according to their needs (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 38-39).

3. **Content:**
Curricula design should involve as many stakeholders as possible, so that thorough understanding of the learners' real needs translate into relevant curricula and educational material. The subjects taught at school need to be in context to the learners' surroundings, and cultural and socio-economic environment (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p.39; Nussbaum 2011, p. 157).

4. **Processes:**
It refers to how the processes of education take place. It looks at how the teacher or facilitator implements learner-centered methods, where children become active participants in their own learning (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 40).

5. **Environment:**
It refers to the physical learning environment. Schools must offer hygiene and sanitation facilities, access to drinking water as well as safe recreation areas (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 40).

2.5.2.2 System level

There is a risk that AEPs focus too much on meeting the criteria at learner level and neglect their performance at the system level. As a consequence, the AEP can become marginalized or the learners become disappointed and frustrated because their learning achievements are not recognized in the formal system. There are five dimensions to the quality of education at the system level.

1. Managerial and administrative system:
The program should be transparent and accountable to all those participating in it. Rules and regulations must be clearly established, and duty-bearers should have well-defined responsibilities. Teachers should enjoy managerial and administrative support from the system, so that they can focus on improving learning outcomes. Parents and communities should feel free to approach the school and bring issues out in the open (Pigozzi 2006, p. 46-47).

2. Implementation of good policies:

Policies and legislation set by the ministry of education are usually not widely known or understood by all stakeholders in education. This is particularly true for stakeholders at the classroom level. Thus, implementation of good policies requires that the government informs school administrators, teachers and students about these policies and that rights they are entitled to. For example, RTE bill introduces several rights that particularly benefit disadvantaged children from the poorest sectors of the Indian society. However, if teachers, parents and children are not aware of them, they are unable to claim their rights (Pigozzi 2006, p. 47).

3. Supportive legislative framework:

Legislation is vital to enforce the right to education because it explicitly outlines the procedures and principles through which this right can be daily exercised. It provides the means to facilitate changes at the macro and micro level (Pigozzi 2006, p. 46-48).

4. Resources:

High quality education requires that it becomes available and accessible to all. It should be free and compulsory to all children, but many developing countries lack the financial, material and human resources to immediately achieve this goal. However, it is important that countries make sustained efforts to support and provide free quality education for all children in the future (Pigozzi 2006, p. 48).

5. Means to measure learning outcomes:

It is vital to first set learning goals that students need to achieve within a determined time period. Subsequent monitoring and evaluation of these learning outcomes is key to program implementers, so that they know how close or far they are from learning outcomes (Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 43). Table 2.5 shows Pigozzi's simple classification of learning outcomes:

Table 2. 5. Learning outcomes to be pursued

Learning outcomes classification	
a. Knowledge	Mastering of basic cognitive skills, which include literacy, numeracy, and core subjects
b. Values	Solidarity, gender equality, tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for human rights, non-violence, respect for human life and dignity
c. Skills or competencies	How to solve problems, to experiment, to do teamwork, live together, interact with those who are different, to learn how to learn
d. Behavior	To be able to put in practice what has been learned in the classroom

Source: Pigozzi 2006, p. 49

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter II has introduced the ground theories that frame this research: the Capabilities Approach and Human Rights-Based Approach. These two bottom-up approaches highlight the importance of agency and place individuals as main actors of their own development. Education is a human right as well as a fertile capability that will allow children to exercise a greater freedom of choice in their adulthood. Currently, there are two main global initiatives on education, MDGs and EFA, which give governments a strong incentive to fulfill as main duty-bearers their obligation to make education universal, free and compulsory.

Even when governments issue laws (like India's Right to Education Bill) that make education free and compulsory for all children, there are certain children the formal system is unable to reach due to their particular life style and living circumstances. When the government fails to cater the needs of these children, NGOs provide a solution by implementing alternative access programs (AEPs). This is the case of the slum and pavement children interviewed in Mumbai, and the children of construction workers interviewed in Pune and Ahmedabad.

As mentioned by the Capabilities Approach, children's internal capabilities do not develop at school as an isolated process. Internal capabilities are greatly influenced by the children's environment. Hence, there are personal, social and environmental conversion factors that can either hinder or facilitate children's capability to transform capabilities into functionings. The contextual framework in chapter IV illustrates in detail the struggles children studying at the AEPs face on a daily basis. It also explains their living conditions, and cultural and socio-economic background, which also pose difficulties for children to exercise their right to education.

III. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by reintroducing the research objective and main research question, followed by the formulation of the research sub-questions. The next section presents the conceptual model, which explains how the main concepts and ground theories of this study are connected. The conceptual model also presents the criteria designed to evaluate the alternative education programs (AEPs) at two levels (the learner and the system level). The concepts used will be described and operationalized into quantifiable variables. The section afterwards addresses the procedures and techniques used to collect data, and introduces the research limitations.

3.2 Research objective and questions

The right to education is a basic human right and one that is critical to enhance individuals' capabilities, which in turn will allow them to lead the life they choose and have a reason to value. The state is the main duty-bearer in charge of providing free and compulsory high-quality education to all children. However, the formal system tends to exclude the most deprived and marginalized sectors of society.

In the urban area of Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad, the group of disadvantaged children includes migrant children, pavement and slum dwellers. Through the use of innovative strategies, local NGOs Saath and Door Step School have designed four Alternative Education Programs (AEPs) that reach these children and provide them with basic literacy, numeracy and life-skills. The research objective of this thesis is to:

> *Assess the effectiveness of these AEPs in increasing access to formal education, while empowering and increasing the capabilities of children of migrant workers, pavement and slum dwellers. In this way, the research aims to create awareness of the importance of AEPs for helping disadvantaged children exercise their right to education, which in turn helps eradicate poverty, and therefore advances sustainable development.*

To investigate this, the following main research question is formulated:

> *How effective are the selected AEPs in improving access to formal education for urban deprived children?*

In addition, the following sub-questions are formulated to help answer the central research question:

At the learner level

- Do the AEPs proactively seek marginalized children to ensure their access to education?
- Do the AEPs consider children's experiences and skills as valuable inputs they bring to the classroom?
- Is their curricula content relevant and responsive to children's daily context and needs?
- Are the educational processes implemented by the AEPs participatory and inclusive?
- Is the learning environment safe and healthy, where children's rights are respected?

At the system level

- How closely do the AEPs work with the state, private sector and/or other stakeholders in order to ensure program sustainability and success in bridging children to formal schools?
- Do the AEPs have a system in place to record learning outcomes?
- Are the AEPs transparent and accountable to all of their participants and stakeholders?

Other relevant question addressed in the Discussion and Conclusion chapter

- What is the impact of the AEPs in the children's capabilities and their present and future well-being?

3.3 Conceptual model: criteria developed to assess AEPs in India

The conceptual model gives an overview of how the researcher's criteria will evaluate the effectiveness of the selected AEPs in increasing disadvantaged children's access to education. The criteria combines relevant elements from Unicef's Human Rights-Based Approach to education (HRBA) and Mary Joy Pigozzi's quality of education framework. There are also important components that have been taken from the Capabilities Approach.

The criteria followed Pigozzi's two-level framework. Whereas the learner level criteria is directly related to students and classroom dynamics, the system level refers to criteria related to program implementation and management. This research addresses both, but mainly focuses on the former.

The learner level criteria has three main components: right to access to education, right to quality education and right to respect in the learning environment. These main aspects correspond to Unicef's three-dimensional approach to the right to education. Pigozzi's five conditions for quality education at the learner level are incorporated as sub-elements of this part of the conceptual model. However, the researcher included three new important sub-elements under the right to access to education. AEPs

must be flexible and adaptable, and they must have in place a tracking system and permanent monitoring mechanisms.

Based on Pigozzi's criteria at the system level, the researcher came up with three main components for the criteria at this level. They aim to assess program sustainability and the extent to which they empower and increase stakeholders' ownership. These three main components are the following: use of system to measure learning outcomes, involvement of key stakeholders and program accountability and transparency.

The effects of the AEPs are divided into 'outcome' and 'impact.' The main research question is centered on the effectiveness of the AEPs in accomplishing quantifiable results in education (i.e. the number of students mainstreamed into the formal sector). The impact, which refers to the extent to which AEPs improve children's well-being, is a more abstract matter that is addressed in the discussion and conclusion chapter. Finally, the conceptual model is framed by the 2009 Right to Education Act, which is the most important piece of national legislation on children's right to education in India.

Figure 3. 1. Conceptual model

3.4 Operalization of concepts
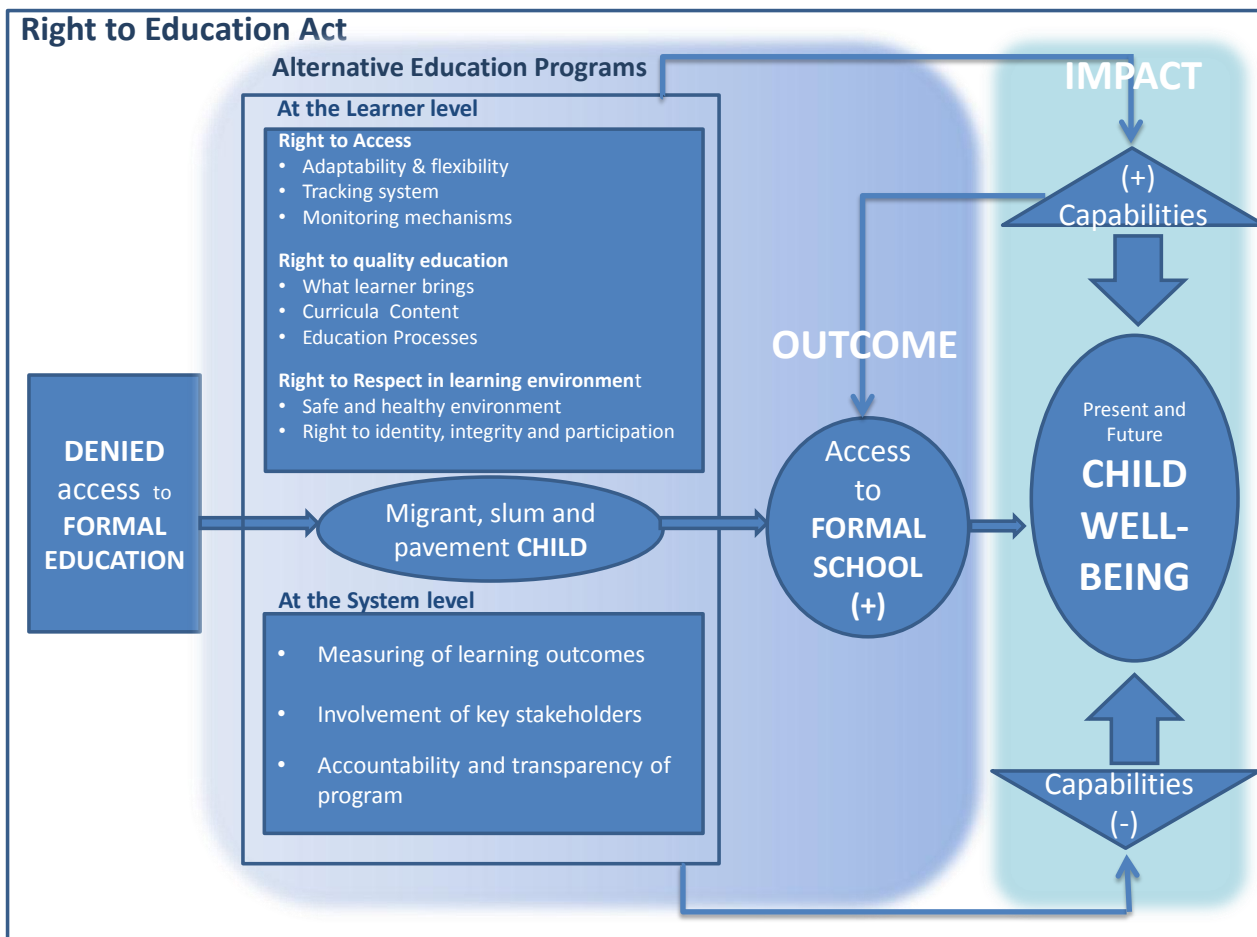
The following concepts are relevant to the research central question and sub-questions. Therefore, they need to be adequately defined and measured through a clear operationalization of concepts. Many of these concepts are based on the definitions given by the conceptual frameworks developed by Pigozzi and Unicef's HRBA to education.

Flexibility and Adaptability: in order proactively search and reach children who are currently out-of-school, the program design must be flexible and adaptable to children's needs and lifestyles (Pigozzi 2006, p. 43, Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 38). This is why the concept is measured by asking the program directors and teachers how they select children to participate in the AEP. It asks about their strategy to reach children-at-risk.

Tracking system: Tracking system refers to how the organization keeps in touch with children that leave the program because either they drop out or they graduate. This tracking system is especially relevant for migrant children who change locations every few months. For children in construction sites, the tracking system allows for teachers to give guidance and advice to parents on how to enroll their children in a formal school at their new construction site. This concept is measured by asking teachers, supervisors and coordinators whether or not their program has a tracking system. If they answer affirmatively, they are asked to explain in detail how it works. In those programs with a tracking system, parents and children will be asked to give a detailed account on their experiences being tracked by the AEPs. They are also asked to rank how useful are to them the tracking practices, and the reasons for why they consider it useful/useless.

Monitoring mechanisms: refers to teachers visiting children's homes on a regular basis. Teachers are mainly in charge of these monitoring practices as a way to gain rapport with parents and identify any potential problems (e.g. family issues, child labor) that might prevent their students from continuing with their education. For those children mainstreamed into the formal education system, teachers and/or supervisors or coordinators are also supposed to follow-up their progress in the formal school. This variable is measured by asking teachers whether or not monitoring practices are part of their daily duties. If the answer is affirmative, then teachers are asked to explain in detail how they conduct follow-ups on students.

What learner brings: refers to the positive and negative experiences and skills children bring to the classroom. These experiences are vital to the program because it reflects their prior and current situation. It helps to understand how children learn and digests knowledge learned in class. It explains the way they behave in class and interact with other children, and their teacher (Pigozzi 2006, p. 43-44, Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 38-39). There are two main sub-components of this variable:

- **Class diversity:** given that alternative education is not formal education, it accommodates a diverse group of students in one classroom. Children might have different knowledge levels, speak other languages and come from other parts of the country. Their ages are also likely

to be quite spread out. This sub-element is measured by asking teachers which methods or strategies they use in order to manage a highly diverse classroom.

- **Self-expression:** teachers are asked if there is a component in the program curricula that addresses children's self-expression, which help teachers take into account children's particular experiences and/or characteristics of migrant children (nomadic lifestyle) and pavement and street children (e.g. possibility they were/are victims of abuse or exploitation. Teachers are asked what methods they use to help children express their feelings and opinions.

Content: refers to what is taught in class (curricula content), which should aim to trigger lifelong learning. Through lifelong learning learners continuously build their skills and knowledge throughout their life. In order for content to be considered of high-quality, curricula need to have four components: knowledge, values, skills and competencies, and behavior (Pigozzi 2006, p. 44, Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 39). Curricula need to also be relevant to children's cultural and socio-economic environment. This variable is measured by asking children and parents if curricula taught in the program is useful and cater to children's needs. In the case of Study Classes students, they will be particularly asked how relevant is the program curricula to their formal schooling. Children are asked about the core subjects and values they learn at the AEP. Teachers and higher management staff in charge of curricula design are asked to explain more in detail the curricula framework i.e. if there are opportunities for using creativity, if there is a component addressing lifelong learning).

Processes: refers to how the curriculum is conveyed to learners. Curricula is important, but it needs participatory and empowering processes to have a positive effect on children. The best way to see if processes are effective is see if children are apply the knowledge learned at school to improve their lives. This concept is measured by asking teachers how often they receive training on participatory pedagogy methods. Children are also asked if they noticed a change in themselves after attending the AEP. Parents are also asked if they see positive impact on their children after starting the AEP. These qualitative answers give a much more detailed account of how processes have impacted children.

Learning environment: refers to the physical space where classes take place, and the social interactions taking place during class time. Thus, the learning environment is the classroom, located inside a bus or in a construction site. The environment must be safe and healthy, where children's rights to integrity, identity and participation are respected (Pigozzi 2006, p. 46, Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 40; Unicef 2007, p. 35-37). On the one hand, this concept will be measure by a series of questions evaluating the access to drinking water, gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, and availability of electricity, recreation space and ventilation. On the other hand, children and parents are asked questions to determine if students are victims of verbal, physical or sexual abuse either by their teachers or fellow classmates. Furthermore, they will be asked questions to determine whether or not they are discriminated feel comfortable participating in class, and enjoying their identity within the classroom.

Participation of other stakeholders: refers to the involvement of other stakeholders, namely the state (local authorities as well), the private sector (e.g. builders from construction companies), and students' parents. Teachers are another important stakeholders given that they are the ones that mostly closely interact with children. Participation of these stakeholders is mandatory because it increases the sense of ownership of the program, which is vital for program sustainability. First, teachers are asked if they feel their supervisors appreciate their opinions or ideas. Parents were asked how often teachers asked them for their opinion or feedback on the AEP. They were also asked how much they felt the teachers actually appreciated their suggestions. Parents were finally asked to rank how important it is for them to be asked their opinions. For Study Classes and Child-Friendly Spaces, builders and laborer contractors were asked their opinion on the AEP and their role as a stakeholder in this program.

Measure of learning outcomes: learning outcomes refers to the levels of cognitive knowledge children acquire during their participation in the program, and how they apply it in their daily life. The NGOs should keep a systematized record on children's progress in achieving these learning outcomes since their implementation. Measuring outcomes allows to identify learning needs, assess if programs' objectives are being met, and generate timely strategies to address any issues preventing program success (Pigozzi 2006, p. 49; Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 43; Unicef 2007, p. 19, 34). The concept will be measure by asking program directors on whether or not they have developed a system to measure learning outcomes, and how it works.

Accountability and transparency: refers to whether or not the program meets its obligations to inform stakeholders involved regarding program progress and finances. In this case, children and parents are the most vulnerable stakeholders and less able to claim their rights. By being accountable, the program empowers these stakeholders and teaches them their right to information (Pigozzi 2006, p. 46-47; Baxter & Bethke 2009, p. 41). Teachers and builders are also important stakeholders. Teachers are asked if they receive support from the system (i.e. support from supervisors and coordinators) in order to better conduct their teaching duties. They are also asked if they feel comfortable expressing disagreement to their superiors.

Parents are asked if they know about the NGO who runs the education program, and if somebody from the organization explained them about how the program runs (program structure and goals, funding for paying expenses, etc.). Parents are finally asked if they have met any other person from the organization besides the teachers. This is important because if parents have a complaint regarding the teacher, they have someone else they can talk to about it. In programs operating in construction sites, builders are asked how regularly the NGO informs them about the program progress.

Increased/decreased capabilities: a capability set is the different combinations of potential doings and beings (named functionings) a person can pick from. The more options he/she has in relation to combinations of functionings, the more freedom he/she enjoys to decide the kind of life he/she wants to lead. Thus, capabilities increase when children successfully acquire useful knowledge, life skills, and values, which, in turn let them do or be a wider variety of things. However, capabilities can also decrease. If children are subject to abuse in the AEP, their self-esteem and self-confidence are damaged.

This in turn negatively impacts their ability to gain skills, values and life skills that will let them enjoy better living standards. By using the criteria explained in the conceptual model, the researcher will be able to assess if the AEPs overall increase or decrease children's capabilities.

The researcher contacted former students from the Community-based NFE classes and interviewed them about how the program has changed their lives. Their experiences are described in detail in chapter VIII, and they are a good way to illustrate the impact of alternative education (i.e. increase or decrease their capabilities).

Well-being of child: refers to a good state of being, which is related to feeling healthy, happy and fulfilled. Child well-being involves more than just how children feel about themselves. It includes access to education, housing security, safety, social relations (e.g. with family, friends, classmates, teacher), among others. It means to avoid poverty, which is understood as the deprivation of capabilities. Accessing education through AEP may increase their capabilities and choices in life. This concept is difficult to measure, given time constraints and the research scope. Child well-being will be measured based on any positive or negative changes (causing an increase/decrease of child's capability set) resulting from their participation in the AEP.

3.5 Methods and procedures

During the first phase, a thorough literature review was conducted to build the theoretical and contextual framework. Constant communication with host organizations, Saath and Door Step School, helped design the research objective and main research question. During this phase, the researcher also created a conceptual model to thoroughly assess the four AEPs, and produced questionnaires for children, parents, teachers, and other key stakeholders based on this evaluation criterion. Indian host organizations, Saath from Ahmedabad and Door Step School from Mumbai, provided relevant literature to produce a thorough contextual framework about their AES and the areas where they are being implemented. Besides reflecting the local context, the conceptual model should clearly address the link between sustainable development, poverty and AES.

In the next phase the researcher spent three months in India, which entailed spending approximately one of month of fieldwork in each city (i.e. Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad). In each city, the researcher had several meetings with the NGO directors and other higher management staff (e.g. directors of AEPs and community coordinators). These meetings were useful for getting background information on the program, students and areas where the AEP operates. Based on the information gathered in these meeting, the researcher better tailored the questionnaires according to each program's specific characteristics. The researcher believes that a Q-squared approach is the best option for conducting fieldwork. The questionnaires used to interview participants had both closed and open questions. The open questions aim at explaining in more in detail the answers to closed questions.

The researcher also conducted participant-observation as a way to better understand the program and gain rapport with children before conducting pilot studies. At the end of the interviews, the researcher produced a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis for each of the host organizations. This report summarized the main results obtained and put them in context, so that it was useful for the organization.

The last phase started only after returning to the Netherlands. The data collected was processed and several statistical tests were run in SPSS. After the tests concluded, the insights and conclusions drawn from the study were discussed in chapters V to IX. The theoretical and contextual model were also reviewed and updated with the information obtained in the field. The conceptual model was also adapted and improved.

3.5.1 Sample selection

The researcher evaluated four alternative education programs (AEPs), which operate in three different cities. The sample selection is as follows:

First, DSS has two NFE programs in Mumbai, namely the Community-Based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels program. For the Community-based NFE classes, the organization suggested doing fieldwork in Ward A, South Mumbai because this is the area where DSS has been operating since its foundation. It facilitated also doing interviews with former students from this program. Hence, three Community-based NFE classes were selected and the researcher interviewed the five students who had attended the program the longest. The children selected were ten years old or above in most cases. These were the minimal requirements to select informants. Children younger than 10 years old are less able to reflect on the program and give critical opinions about it. Furthermore, choosing children who had attended the program the longest was also necessary because newer students would not have been knowledgeable enough to answer the questions thoroughly. A total of 13 students were interviewed in this AEP.

Four classes operating in different parts of Mumbai were selected for the School-on-Wheels program (SoW). The same selection procedure explained above applied to children in the SoW program. However, the five students quote for the School-on-Wheels operating in South Mumbai was divided as follows: 3 students from Fashion Street and 2 students from Crawford Market. A total of 13 children were interviewed from this program.

Either the mother of father of the children interviewed in both NFE programs was also selected for the study. About 25 parents were interviewed from both NFE programs. A total of 7 teachers were interviewed. The researcher also conducted a number of informal and open interviews with community coordinators and area coordinators.

In Pune, fieldwork was conducted in four construction sites located nearby the Banner Road area. Given that the number of Study Classes students would greatly vary from one site to the other[2], the researcher decided to interview all students that were above ten years old that preferably had been tracked by DSS before. The interviewees were also required to have been attending Study Classes for a long period of time. Their parents were interviewed as well. A total of 14 children and 14 parents were interviewed for the Study Classes. Moreover, there was a focus group with 4 parents from a construction site in Moshi. These were parents of children attending DSS non-formal education program for children in construction sites. They were mainly asked about factors preventing them to send their children to formal school.

Three teachers were interviewed, because the fourth one had just recently joined DSS and thus would not have been able to completely answer the questionnaire. A focus group with eight coordinators and supervisors was conducted to ask their opinion on DSS tracking and monitoring system. During the focus group, teachers were also asked about the trainings they receive on processes and pedagogy.

In Ahmedabad, no children could be interviewed because oftentimes the students who have been in the program the longest were too young (below 8 years old). However, their parents were interviewed in-depth about their opinion on the program and the impact it has had on their children. About 21 parents from the Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites program were selected for the study. The program has four classes, so approximately 5 parents were interviewed in each construction site. The study also included interviews with the four teachers. Additionally, three builders[3] and four laborer contractors were also interviewed. The table 3.1 summarizes the number of interviews conducted during fieldwork. This table organizes the information by stakeholder and alternative education program.

3. 1. Number of interviews conducted during fieldwork

Stakeholder	Community-based NFE classes	School-on-Wheels	Study Classes	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Total
Children	13	13	14	0	40
Parents	12	13	14	21	60
Teachers	3	4	3	4	14
Builder	N/A	N/A	0	3	3
Laborer contractor	N/A	N/A	0	4	4
Total	28	30	31	32	121

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[2] In the Vasant Vihar site, there were only two Study Classes students available, while in Golden Trellis six qualified to be interviewed for the study.

[3] The construction site Swaminarayan Park I and II are both owned by the same builder.

3.6 Main research limitation

There were several limitations to this research. First, time and money constraints were always playing a role given that the data about four different programs had to be collected in no more than three months. Moreover, the budget allocated to pay for translators was not enough to hire a professional one. Thus, the researcher could only afford university students, preferably with a social science background.

Language barrier and cultural differences were also another constraint. Moving to a different city every month was difficult because the researcher had to start afresh, get familiar with the city, find a place to live and hire a new translator. Working with different translators every month was difficult, because of language barrier. Even though the researcher trained them, translators took some time before they could get comfortable with the research objective and questionnaires. In Ahmedabad, it was particularly difficult because the researcher had to change translators three times due to personal emergencies or health problems affecting the translators. These unforeseen setbacks also made it difficult to conduct more interviews in the Child-Friendly Spaces program.

Finally, Door Step School in Mumbai and Pune provided the list of children who met the criteria previously mentioned (i.e. children ten years old and above, who have been in the program the longest).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research objective and main research question and sub-questions. It also introduced the conceptual model that will be used to evaluate the four alternative education programs selected for this research. The concepts used in the conceptual model were clearly defined and operationalized into measurable variables. The same selection process was explained and a table summarizing the number of interviews by stakeholders and program was also presented. The chapter finalizes by elaborating on the challenges and limitations the researcher faced when doing primary data collection.

IV. Contextual Framework

4.1 Introduction

The following section introduces the context in which research was conducted. First, the Indian national laws regarding universal, free and compulsory education are presented. Given that the 2009 Right to Education Bill frames the present study, its relevance is explained in depth. Then, the researcher gives a brief description of the cities where fieldwork took place, and introduces the host organizations and the Alternative Education Programs (AEPs) researched. Lastly, after providing relevant background information, the researcher provides an overview of the areas where the schools operate, and the socio-economic characteristics of the students and their families.

4.2 National Context: Laws leading to the Right to Education Bill

Over 60 years ago, India made education free and compulsory to all children as a way to break away from the elitist education system imposed by the colonizers. In the decades following independence, there have been many legislation changes to help achieve this goal.

The 1986 National Policy on Education triggered the emergence of a large scale movement pushing for the realization of universal literacy. Part of this movement was at the grassroots level, and its impact resulted in a rise in demand for primary education (Govinda 2008, p. 431). The government recognized that "a formal system of education alone could not serve the purpose of UPE [Universal Primary Education] and some alternative strategies had to be planned… for improving its quality and the dropout rate" (Chauhan 2009, p. 230). Thus, under this education policy, NFE provision expanded to reach children from schedule castes and tribes, as well as other marginalized sectors of society. Finally, legislation gave greater responsibilities and freedoms to local self-governments, as a way to encourage greater community involvement (Chauhan 2009, p. 229 - 230).

Furthermore, India was influenced by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 1990 World Declaration on Education for All. Together, these two declarations marked a new period of global advocacy for the rights of children. In 2002, India reaffirmed its commitment to these declarations by amending its Constitution to make education a fundamental right of every child (Govinda 2008, p. 433). India currently provides free and compulsory education to all children from age 6-14, from Standard I up to Standard VIII. For the reasons explained above, Rangachar Govinda considers the 1990s as the decade of social mobilization for basic education in India (2008, p. 432).

In 2000, the government of India launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the largest worldwide basic education program. SSA (which literally means Education for All Mission), is a partnership with the government of India, state governments, local authorities and communities to mobilize human, financial and institutional resources to provide universal primary education to all Indian children (Chauhan 2009, p. 231). Its main purpose is to increase access, equity and quality in education, focusing on Schedule Castes (SC), Schedule Tribes (SC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC)[4]. Reforms and programs under SSA enjoy ample political support and are backed up by a legislative framework. Through SSA, the Indian government delivers its obligations to EFA, the UPE goal of the MDGs, and the recently passed Right to Education Bill (Ward 2011, p. 544).

4.3 Right to Education Bill (RTE)

India's biggest legislative accomplishment in education is the 2009 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act. This act is also known as the Right to Education Bill, and came into force April 1, 2010 (DSS 2010).

The Right to Education Bill (RTE) constitutes an unprecedented law because it gives the right to education the same legal status as the right to life (ICBSE 2010). It clearly states that no child should be denied admission to school due to lack of birth certificates and other documents. It also states that children need to be enrolled in classes according to their age and knowledge level. Furthermore, students are entitled to receive special training in order to be at par with their classmates. Children admitted in a school have the right to free education until they complete standard VIII, even after they turn 14 years old (RTE 2009, p. 3).

RTE also prohibits admission exams, and private schools must reserve 25% of their enrollment for children from poor families. No seat in this quota must be left vacant. The state will subsidize private schools at the average per learner cost in the public schools (Govinda n.d.). Thus, at least on paper, RTE eliminates many of the obstacles preventing underprivileged children from accessing formal education.

Under RTE, the government carries out community surveys and tries to get help from NGOs for compiling a list of all out-of-school children. The government gives the final list to principals of local schools for them to ensure children in their area get enrolled. Given that RTE firmly states that every child between 6 and 14 years old (without exception) should be enrolled in a formal school, the government stopped funding organizations providing NFE.[5]

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[4] Scheduled Castes refer to people formerly known as untouchables or dalits. Scheduled Tribes refers to the original inhabitants of India. Other Backward Classes refers to other minorities, such as Muslim people.

[5] Director of the Community-based programs and School-on-Wheels, 2012, pers. comm., 17 March

The number of out-of-school children has decreased by an impressive amount, from 29 million in 2002-2003 to 9 million in 2006 (Govinda 2008, p. 434). In fact, the EFA Global Monitoring Report of 2008 considers India as one of the 28 developing countries that have the highest chances of achieving universal enrollment by 2015 (Ward 2011, p. 544). Despite the tremendous display of efforts, India still faces major challenges in universal education, primarily due to poverty and discriminatory practices. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other minorities, such as Muslims and women, are generally disadvantaged in most states (Govinda 2008, p. 437). In order to successfully address these challenges, "routine input-oriented strategies must give way to new imaginative initiatives that reach out to under-served areas and marginalized populations" (Govinda 2008, p. 433).

The AEPs selected for this research focus on disadvantaged groups that the government is unable to reach: pavement children, slum children and migrant children of construction workers. As a member of the international community, India is responsive to the Education for All initiative and the MDGs, which press for equal access to quality education. Thus, it is in the government's interest to make sure that the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan program and the Right to Education Bill are successfully implemented. The AEPs selected and their strategies to reach highly deprived children are thus greatly shaped by these two national policies.

4.4 Research context

The research focused on four AEPs designed and implemented by experienced local NGOs in Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad.

Figure 4. 1. Political map of India

Source:
http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/india.html

4.4.1 Mumbai

Located on the west coast of India, Mumbai is the capital of the state of Maharashtra, one of the richest states in India. Mumbai is composed of two regions, Mumbai city district and Mumbai Suburban District, and together they form Greater Mumbai. The research was based in Mumbai City, which extends from Colaba in South Mumbai to Mahin and Sion in North Central Mumbai. With a metropolitan population of approximately 21 million people, Mumbai is India's most populous city and the fourth most populous worldwide.

Home to one of the main ports, Mumbai accounts for 70% of India's total maritime trade and 5% of the country's GDP. Important financial institutions as well as headquarters of numerous national and multinational companies are located in Mumbai. Aside from being an important commercial hub, Mumbai is also considered India's entertainment capital and houses the Bollywood industry

For all these reasons, the city attracts migrants from all over the country in search of better job opportunities. Thus, the city is well-known as a melting pot of communities, cultures, languages and religions. Unfortunately, socio-economic disparities are a major problem, and the city suffers from high unemployment levels and the informal sector is widespread (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2012a).

4.4.1.1 Door Step School - Mumbai

Door Step School was founded in 1988 in Mumbai. Realizing the need to address urban deprived children's lack of access to formal education, Door Step School (DSS) takes on the mission to close this gap and bring education to the "Door Step" of these children. Its innovative education programs target street children, children of migrant workers and pavement dwellers, as well as slum children (DSS 2010, p. 5/32).

DSS started with one NFE school in Colaba, South Mumbai, and now it currently operates in several areas of Mumbai City and Mumbai Suburban District. It offers different education programs, ranging from pre-school, computer and reading lessons, NFE classes to study classes (which aim to academically support children going to formal schools).[6]

Picture 4.1. School-on-Wheels 1
Sunanda's class in Fashion Street

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[6] Note: all pictures were taken by the researcher

4.4.1.2 Description of NFE programs

The School-on-Wheels and the Community-based NFE classes are both NFE programs. On average, children in both programs stay for a long time (approximately 2-3 years), but sometimes their attendance is not regular (this is especially true for School-on-Wheels students).

Picture 4.2. Computer lessons in Ward A

Their 18-month curricula and program structure are the same. The only difference is that the School-on-Wheels classes target pavement dwellers and street children, whereas the Community-based NFE program focuses on slum children. Lack of physical space to have a class is a common challenge. However, this challenge is even more pressing among pavement dwellers. Using a bus as mobile classroom has proved to be a very successful strategy in reaching children living in the footpath.

The average size for a School-on-Wheels class or a Community-based NFE classroom is about 25 students. Classes are 2.5 hours long from Monday through Friday.

In order to accommodate the children's needs, DSS offers classes at various times. Thus, the first class is at 9.30am, and the last one around 5pm. Classes are conducted in Hindi, which is a core subject in the curriculum. Besides Hindi language, the other main subject is basic arithmetic. The curriculum includes a self-expression component, where children are encouraged to express themselves and voice their opinions and problems in a healthy way. Finally, there is a general knowledge component, where children learn about different topics, including science by conducting simple experiments in class.

There are many children whose native language is not Marathi or Hindi. In many classes, children from different Schedule Tribes study together, as well as children from different religions (Muslims and Hindus), and tolerance and respect are main values taught in class. Students sit on the floor using mats, and the classroom is full of didactic decorations (many made by the students) and other teaching materials. DSS does not provide notebooks, pens or mid-day meals. Despite the fact that the classrooms lack drinking water, toilets and other facilities, the program is very well-structured with an 18-month academic curriculum that is relevant to the reality and needs of the students.

The strongest aspect of the NFE programs is the education processes that happen inside the classroom. Children receive a participatory and child-centered education, where no rote learning is allowed. Another strength is that teachers are regularly trained (twice a month), and they are generally passionate about their work with Door Step School. Most of the teachers have been with the organization for a long time (many have been working in DSS over 15 years). Besides trainings on how to teach children and how to systematize the learning outcomes of their classes, the teachers receive training for personal development. The latter type of training aims at helping teachers develop as

human beings and informs them about issues which they consider important (e.g. domestic violence, women's rights).

Teachers enjoy the support of other staff members whose main responsibility is to help them manage classes and approach parents, as well as other challenges. Each class has a community coordinator who is always available in the field. In the Community-based NFE program, each community coordinator works with an area coordinator (one for each Ward), who is there to oversee the progress of the whole ward. In the case of School-on-Wheels, teachers and community coordinators report to the main coordinator of all 5 buses.

Once a week, students from both programs go to the Slum Community Learning Center for computer classes. DSS has a computer lab with didactic games to reinforce math and language subjects. Also, children are taught how to use a mouse, keyboard and other computer programs useful for their future. Additionally, all Community-based NFE students and those from School-on-Wheels 1 attend the Community Learning Center for reading classes. Every week for an hour, children learn to enjoy reading books, telling and hearing stories, and watching educational cartoons. The main purpose of the reading class is for children to become life-long learners.

4.4.1.3 School-on-Wheels (SoW)

Since its founding in July 1998, School-on-Wheels has reached about 2000 out-of-school children. The buses park in strategic locations, where many children live and work. At the beginning of the program, parents were afraid that the bus would take away their children, so buses used to come to the meeting point and classes took place out in the road. Years later, DSS is well-known in the community, and classes are conducted inside the bus, whose interior has been adapted in such a way that teachers can comfortably educate children.

Picture 4.3. School-on-Wheels 1
parked in MG Road, Fashion Street

There are currently four School-on-Wheels buses running in different areas of Mumbai, and a fifth one will soon start operating. In a year, each bus covers four classes with about 100 children, and each group of beneficiaries enjoys 2-3 years of this program. From 2000 to 2010, 237 street children have been successfully registered in formal schools, and 40 of them are already going to secondary school (DSS 2010, p. 11/32). The School-on-Wheels program has achieved such positive results because its AEP was flexible enough to suit street children and pavement dwellers' needs and lifestyle.

4.4.1.4 Community-Based Non-formal Education Classes

There are several Community-based NFE classes in one ward, because the program tries to be located as close as possible to children's homes. The classes vary in size, and thus, some classes enjoy a spacious classroom. In many others, however, there is not enough space for children to study comfortably (like the one in picture 4.4).

Many of the students from both NFE programs are child laborers, whose income is vital for their family's survival. However, about 770 children enrolled in this program in 2010, and as many as 552 of them (72%) continued studying until the end of the year. About 44% were present for more than 50% of classes delivered, which is a good indicator that children are engaged in learning (DSS 2010, p. 8/32).

Picture 4.4 Community–based NFE classes -
Varsha's class in Ward A

4.4.1.5 School locations and socio-economic background of target population

Children and parents' profiles varied according to the area. However, the average daily earnings of those children who work is approximately between 50 to 100 INR, and for parents is 100 to 150 INR per day.

School-on-Wheels 1

This bus operates in Ward A in the areas of Crawford Market, Fashion Street and Mantralaya. The children selected for the study are the two classes are located in Crawford Market and Fashion Street, respectively. As explained before, children attending this NFE program are pavement dwellers. This means that they and their families live on the footpaths near the market or busy streets. Children from Crawford Market look particularly neglected, wearing torn and dirty clothes. Their physical condition and personal hygiene is rather poor due to their lifestyle and lack of access to water. A major problem pavement dwellers face is that they are constantly harassed by the police, who can evict them from the pavement at any moment.

Picture 4.5. Student from Crawford Market SoW 1

Located in South Mumbai, Crawford Market is one of the most popular markets in the city. According to the School-on-Wheels Coordinator, children in this area work as shop helpers or rag pickers. They also beg or pick up boxes of wood and papers to sell them. If all four areas are compared, parents in Crawford Market may be the most exploitative. The amount of begging, however, in these areas has highly

decreased due to DSS intervention and frequent parent meetings. Parents work as cart pullers, domestic workers, scrap pickers, or loading and unloading fruits. It is unclear if children beg because it is vital for their household survival or because parents exploit them.[7]

Fashion Street is well-known as a famous spot among locals for clothes shopping, and it encompasses many blocks of street shops situated one after another along MG Road, South Mumbai. Children work as waiters and/or caterers. Some of them work welding plastic and repairing the broken plastic containers. Some others also repair car bumpers. Begging is no longer a common practice after DSS started working in this area.

School-on-Wheels 2 and 3

School-on-Wheels 2 and 3 are both located in Ward E in Wadi Bunder and Reay Road, respectively. DSS considers the people living in the settlements located in these two areas as a kind of pavement dwellers.

There is a strong sense of community, but at the same time there is no privacy. Even though their housing is slightly more elaborate than those living in Crawford Market and Fashion Street, they cook food, wash clothes, wash themselves and do most of their activities outside on the road. Given the high temperatures and lack of space, many dwellers put their beds outside at night.

Picture 4.6. Pavement dwellers in Wadi Bunder (SoW 2)

The homes are not legally recognized and lack access to basic services (water, electricity, sewage, etc.). Thus, their living conditions are very similar to those of pavement dwellers in Crawford Market and Fashion Street.[8] Police harassment is a major problem in these areas, and people are afraid of eviction. Given the extreme scarcity of water during the months of March/April, many people go back to their villages for a few months and rent out their houses. For this reason, there is a constant inflow of new children who will not stay permanently in the School-on-Wheels program.

Parents living in Wadi Bunder come from South India and work on the docks. They also work selling lemon and chilies, balloons and toys, driving vehicles, and making and selling flower garlands. Some of them are domestic servants. Children work doing the same activities as those in Crawford Market (e.g.

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[7] School-on-Wheels Coordinator 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

[8] Human Resources Associate 2012, pers. comm., 27 February

as rag pickers, beggars, selling wood boxes or paper). Most of the parents from the Reay Road area are cart pullers or daily wage workers. Ladies work as domestic servants in hotels, and children are rag pickers. There are only a few children who work in shops or as domestic servants.[9]

Community-Based NFE Program

Figure 4. 2. Map of school locations around Mumbai City District
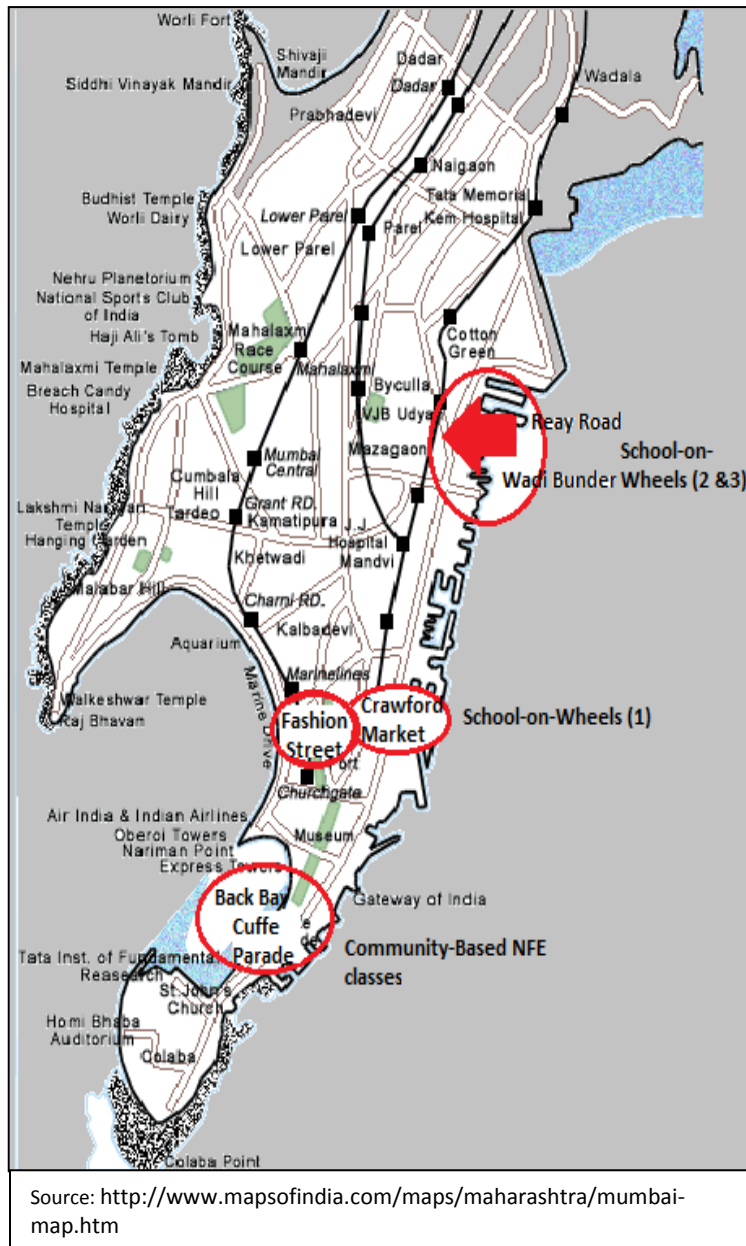
The Community-based NFE program operates in Wards A, B, E, M and R South. Interviews were only conducted in Ward A because this is the area where DSS has been offering NFE the longest (since 1989). DSS' long trajectory in the area facilitated carrying out trace studies with former Community-based NFE students.

The three classes selected are in Ganesh Murthi Nagar and Back Bay areas in Cuffe Parade. The average number of household members in Ganesh Murthi Nagar and Back Bay is between four and seven. About 35% of parents work at the fish dock, cleaning prawns, and about 50% own or rent a taxi. Approximately 20% of children work cleaning fish, and 10% work as household servants. Children also get paid for fetching water for others. DSS identified a new trend where migrant families with young children go back to their villages to bring back older children as servants to look after their own. In return, these older children get food and a place to stay.

The number of people working at the Sassoon dock cleaning fish is higher in Back Bay than in Ganesh Murthi Nagar.

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[9] School-on-Wheels coordinator 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

In Ganesh Murthi Nagar, however, there are more taxi drivers and domestic servants. The Muslims are more prominent in Ganesh Murthi Nagar (about 40%) than in Back Bay (5%). In Back Bay, over half of the population belongs to the schedule caste Banjara (known for their nomadic nature), and it is also predominantly Hindu.[10]

The appearance of children attending the Community-based NFE program is much better than those going to School-on-Wheels. Children wear clean clothes, their hair is nicely combed and oiled, and their personal hygiene is good. Part of the reason for this contrast is that children in Ward A, unlike SoW children, have a more permanent and secure home with access to basic services (water, electricity, etc.).

4.4.2 Pune

Located approximately 160 to 180km south-west of Mumbai, Pune is the second largest city in Maharashtra, and the eighth largest metropolis in India. Located in the western margin of the Deccan Plateau, where the Mula and Mutha rivers meet, Pune city is the administrative capital of Pune district. Pune enjoys relative prosperity and is considered the cultural capital of Maharashtra. It has a growing industry, and recently has become an important information technology (IT) location for businesses. The automotive sector is also prominent in Pune (Enciclopaedia Britannica 2012b).

Figure 4. 3. Field locations in Pune City

Source: Google Maps 2012 (https://maps.google.com/)

4.4.2.1 Door Step School - Pune

In 1992, Door Step School opened an office in Aundh, Pune. After conducting an initial survey, DSS decided to start working with children of construction workers because results showed that these children were particularly deprived of education.

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[10] Community Coordinator of Murthi Nagar and Back Bay areas 2012, pers. comm., 19 March

Furthermore, many NGOs were already working in the (recognized) slum areas and taking care of the education of those children. The model of DSS' NFE programs in Pune (i.e. Education Activity Center), and the ones in Mumbai (i.e. Community-based NFE classes and SoW) are the same (2.5 - 3hrs Monday through Friday). However, the education programs in construction sites operate in a completely different way. At construction sites, Door Step School (DSS) is in charge of the children Monday through Saturday from 9:30am – 5.30pm, with Sundays off. The builder pays for some of the teacher's salary and provides the

Picture 4.7. Construction Site Golden Trellis

physical space for the classroom. The classrooms are made of thin metal or wood planks. An engineer is appointed to check all the needs of DSS, and make sure that the classroom provided by the builder is safe (i.e. that it is not going to collapse). The school is located away from the main construction site, but still near the homes of the workers so that they do not worry about their children. There is no selection of children for participating in the program because all children are the builder's responsibility.

Picture 4.9. Decorations inside Golden Trellis classroom

DSS offers four different education programs. Crèche is a service to look after babies from 0 up to 3 years of age. DSS' Balwadi, or pre-school program, reaches children from ages 3 to 6 years of age. For those children whose parents are reluctant to send them to a formal school or who missed registration for different reasons, DSS offers NFE classes named Education Activity Center. Finally, DSS has a Study Classes program, which is a kind of tutoring class to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills. The program curriculum is for children attending formal schools up to 4th standard. These four programs run in the same classroom and have at least

one teacher in charge. Teachers are ready to substitute each other if for some reason one of them is absent or takes a leave for some days (e.g. marriage of a relative).

The builder has agreed to have a DSS school in his construction site for many reasons. First, builders do not like children roaming around because they distract their parents while they are working and lower their productivity. Second, if authorities catch the builder employing children under 18 years old, they are charged with a big fine. Finally, there are many hazards in the construction site (e.g. staircases and balconies without
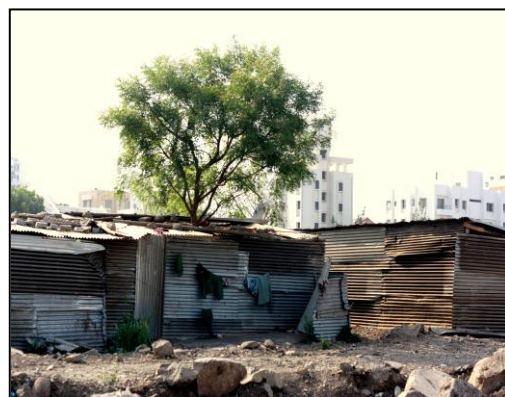
Picture 4. 8. Construction workers housing in Balewadi 43

fences), and the builder wants to prevent children from getting injured at the construction site. Thus, DSS helps the builder to avoid all of the problems mentioned above by making sure that children are kept busy and looked after during their parents' working hours.[11]

In 2010-2011, DSS was able to reach 125 road and construction sites, benefiting about 3,105 children (DSS 2010, p. 7/29). There are about 10 cluster areas and each of them has about 10 – 12 classes. Each cluster has two supervisors (one supervisor oversees 5 classes), and these two closely work with the area coordinator (one per cluster).[12]

4.4.2.2 Description of Study Classes program

Initially, the research was going to be based on DSS' NFE program Education Activity Center (EAC). However, after initial interviews with DSS President and Director of Project Foundation, it was clear that EAC is actually phasing out. Therefore, the focus of the study changed from the NFE Education Activity Center to the Study Classes program.

Given that there were over 10 clusters located throughout the city, the researcher decided that it was best to focus only on the Baner area cluster. Baner Road and Balewadi area, as shown in the map of Pune, are in the northwest outskirts of the city (a suburban area). Interviews were conducted at four construction sites: Windsor, 43 Balewadi, Golden Trellis and Vasant Vihar.

Study Classes are meant for children who are the first generation of learners in their families, and thus lack any moral or financial support from their parents, who are usually illiterate. This is DSS' strategy to reduce school dropouts and teach children the

Picture 4.10. DSS school in Vasant Vihar

importance of education. Besides helping children out with literacy and numeracy tutoring classes through Study Classes, DSS provides transportation (a van) to pick up children from their house and take them back and forth from their nearby municipal schools. DSS also takes care of the enrollment process and earns the trust of parents, so that they let their children go to the formal school.

Like DSS - Mumbai, DSS - Pune has also a training cell, which trains teachers in child psychology and development, and pedagogical methods to teach language, math and other subjects. Additionally, the

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[11] DSS President & Director of Project foundation 2012, pers. comm., 31 March

[12] Director of Project foundation 2012, pers. comm., 27 March

organization has developed an extensive teacher's manual (over 200 pages) for the initial three-week training that all teachers undergo before joining their class.

Figure 4. 4. Map of Study Classes schools in Banner Area

Source: Golden Trellis n.d.
(http://www.goldentrellis.com/locationmap.htm)

Given that the average time most children living in construction sites attend DSS School is 6 months (unlike children in Mumbai), the program has developed a 6-month curriculum to make sure these children attain basic literacy and numeracy skills. Classes are conducted in Marathi (not Hindi), because all formal schools teach in the local language, and there is less emphasis on the self-expression part of the curricula. There are two batches of Study Classes. Children going to formal schools in the morning (from 7am to 12pm) attend Study Classes after lunch (2pm to 5.30pm). Those enrolled for formal school in the afternoon (from 12.30 to 5.30pm) attend Study Classes in the morning (9.30am to 12pm).

Picture 4.11. (left) DSS school in 43 Balewadi and (right) DSS school in Vasant Vihar

Because migrant children move along with their parents to new constructions sites every few months, they are forced to stop their studies. Over the years, DSS has tried to address this issue by designing different methods for tracking children. By keeping in touch with children, DSS is able to give advice to parents on how to enroll children in school in their new working location or back in their hometowns or villages. Furthermore, many children end up at construction sites where there is already a DSS school. Teachers and coordinators from both DSS schools communicate with each other to help these former DSS students get enrolled in a formal school at the new construction site.

In order to facilitate tracking, Door Step School makes a distinction between "migrated" and "dropped out" children. "Migrated" means that children stopped attending DSS because their parents moved to a new location. "Dropped out" means that children still live at the construction site, but for other reasons they no longer participate in DSS programs (DSS 2010, p. 8/29). Once the organization is aware of the reasons why children leave the program, it can effectively address the root causes and, ideally, get children re-enrolled. Thus far, coaching children to call DSS from their new location has proved the most successful methods. As many as 352 children (compared to 156 last year) were reached, and about 91% of them were able to re-enroll thanks to DSS support (DSS 2010, p. 9/29).

4.4.3 Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad is located in Gujarat, which is one of the most industrialized and prosperous states of India. With 6.5 million people, Ahmedabad is Gujarat's largest city and the sixth largest in India. Even though it is Gujarat's financial and commercial hub, Ahmedabad is not its capital city. Ahmedabad is actually about 30 km north from Gandhinagar, the official capital city (Wikipedia 2012c).

Located on the banks of the River Sabarmati, Forbes Magazine ranked Ahmedabad as the third fastest growing city in the world and the fastest one in India. Commerce, communication and especially construction

Picture 4.12. Swaminarayan Park I center in Naroda

businesses are booming in this city. It enjoys a diverse labor force because its thriving economy attracts migrant workers from different areas of Gujarat and other states, where there are fewer employment opportunities (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2012c).

4.4.3.1 Saath

Saath is a Charitable Trust funded in Gujarat, India in 1989. It has been working towards the empowerment of the social and economically vulnerable population sectors through participatory projects. In order to improve the livelihoods of the rural and urban poor, Saath promotes partnerships

among society's different domains: the market (businesses), the state (institutions), and civil society (other NGOs and/or individuals) (Saath, 2010).

Saath operates mainly in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan, in 2 districts in Gujarat and 6 districts in Rajasthan. In Ahmedabad alone, SAATH reaches over 100,000 slum dwellers (Saath 2010). Unlike Door Step School, which focuses on education, Saath has a wide range of programs outside this field. These programs include 4 Urban Resource Centers, 44 Umeed job training and placement centers for youth, 7 Balghars (pre-school centers), and an affordable housing program, among others. Saath has 3 Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) centers that offer non-formal education to over 100 child laborers (Saath 2010, p.8). However, the present research centers on the adaptation of the CFS program to accommodate the needs of migrant children in construction sites. Niraj Jani, Associate Director of Saath, is also in charge of all education programs, including CFS Construction Sites. By including in this study a second education strategy aiming at reaching children of construction workers, the researcher will be able to draw some comparisons between Saath and Door Step School's programs.

4.4.3.2 Description of Child-Friendly Spaces for Construction Sites program

Figure 4. 5. Map of CFS schools in Ahmedabad

Source: http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/gujarat/ahmedabadcity.htm

There are five CFS Construction Sites centers currently running, and they are all located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad city. With the exception of the school located in Vasna, the centers are at least 40 minutes by bike from Saath's office. Until recently, the Budharani Trust supported four out of the five centers, but due to budget constraints, it withdrew its financial contribution.

The following information describes the four centers selected for fieldwork. First, the Madhav Homes center has been running since November 2010, and

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has 35 students ranging from ages 3 to 12. Dineshbhai is the teacher in charge of this and another class in Mangalam Residency, and both schools are located in Vastral. Besides being the teacher of two CFS Construction Sites classes, Dineshbhai is also unofficially in charge of regularly visiting the other classes and reporting back to Mr. Jani.

Picture 4.13. Umang Lambha center in Narol

The second CFS Construction Site center, Swaminarayan Park I, is run by Kaminiben and it is located in Naroda (Northeast of Ahmedabad). This school has been running since May 2010 and it has 46 students from ages 3 to 11 years old. The third classroom where interviews took place is the Swaminarayan Park II center, which is located in Vasna. This school is the closest to office and the most recent one. Artiben is in charge of this class, which opened in June 2010 and currently has 20 students from ages 3-14 (Saath n.d., p. 5).

Finally, Jitubhai is responsible for the fourth class, Umang Lambha center, which is located in Narol.

Compared to DSS in Mumbai and Pune, CFS Construction Sites is a relatively young program (it has been operating for less than two years). The program has great potential and it is providing services to a part of the population which otherwise would be completely neglected. However, there are some areas which require urgent improvement. The most important two factors are more frequent training for teachers, and finishing building the program curricula (which currently is still under construction).

Classes are 2.5 hours in duration, Monday through Saturday. Children learn through games and songs that help develop their cognitive and motor skills. Basic literacy and numeracy are the core subjects. Unlike Pune and Mumbai, most children come from other parts of Gujarat, and thus all classes are taught in Guajarati. Activities conducted in class are meant to develop children's language and social skills. Teachers also teach life skills, such as hygiene, and other important values and good habits. The program also covers children's nutrition and provides a healthy snack during class (Saath n.d., p. 6).

The builder provides the physical space for the classroom, and in some cases (like in the two Swaminarayan Park centers) he also provides stationery material. The quality and conditions of the classroom varies from builder to builder. Jitubhai's classroom in Narol, for example, has the most deficiencies. Because it is located within one of the buildings on the construction site, there is a lot of dust coming into the classroom. The floor has no tiles, so it is too dusty for the children to sit on. Instead, children sit on two wood planks which have bricks to support them. Madhav Homes and Umang Lambha centers have no posters or other didactic material on the walls, which usually give classrooms a child-friendly feeling.

Picture 4.15. Construction site at Madhav Homes in Vastral

4.4.3.3 Socio-economic background of target population

Due to the unskilled character of their work, construction workers are paid low wages, which cannot provide a decent living standard for them and their families. The job involves long working hours and hazardous working conditions. Like in Pune, both parents usually work in construction and have little or no education. Whereas workers in Pune live in camps/housing provided by builder, workers in Ahmedabad live in the unfinished buildings within the construction compound. Like in Pune, however, there is no access to sanitation, safe drinking water, first aid facilities, among other basic services.

Picture 4.16. Artiben's class in Swaminaravan Park II center

Child labor is widespread in the construction sector for children 13 and older. Oftentimes, parents take their children to work with them to help them out. In this way, they supplement the household income (Saath n.d., p. 1). However, children younger than 13 usually spend their day playing at the construction site and taking care of their younger siblings. Girls also help with the household chores, cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes. Fetching wood and water to cook are other important household tasks which children of all ages help out with.

Given their highly mobile living style, these children have little opportunities to access school. Furthermore, they cannot enjoy the benefits of belonging to a local community and extended family network, which could open opportunities for child care facilities. Parents are also less willing to send their children to a local school because their stay is rather temporary. Saath, however, has recently identified an interesting trend among these families. Parents are starting to leave their older children in the village with their relatives or in-laws, so that they can go to school in their hometowns. As some parents pointed out during interviews, it is not practical to move around with the whole family (at least 4 to 5 members). Nevertheless, younger children (from 0 to 7 years old) always migrate with their parents to the city. Taking advantage of this trend, Saath focuses on advising parents to enroll their children in schools located in their hometowns.

Picture 4.14. Female construction worker and her son

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented relevant information about the cities where research was conducted, and the specific areas there alternative education programs operate. It also illustrated in detail the lives and daily struggles of slum and pavement children as well as migrant children living in construction sites. In order to clearly differentiate the four AEPs that will be assessed in the next few chapters, table 4.1 summarizes their most important characteristics.

Table 4. 1. Conclusion table - Summary of AEPs

Name of organization	Name of program	Target group	Fee	Class hours	Number of days	Strategy
Door Step School – Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Slum children and child laborers	Free	2 – 2.5 hrs	5 days a week	After an initial survey, DSS finds out if there is a need for NFE based on the number of out-of-school children. The strategy is to gain the trust of children and parents and convince them to let children go to class for 2.5 hrs at times that do not conflict with their jobs. Also, the

						centers are close to the homes of children in slum areas. The curriculum takes 18 months and by the end of it, the child master the knowledge of a 4th standard.
Door Step School – Mumbai	School-on-Wheels	Pavement children	Free	2 – 2.5 hrs	5 days a week	Given these children live in the pavement, there is no space to set up a classroom. Instead DSS Mumbai uses a bus as a mobile school. The interior of the bus has been modified to become a comfortable classroom. It parks right by where children live and work. Classes are for 2.5 hrs and they are offered throughout the day, so it can better accommodate children's schedule and needs. The curriculum is the same as in Community-based NFE classes.
Door Step School – Pune	Study Classes	Children of construction workers	Free	8 hrs	6 days a week	After builders agree to run DSS programs, a DSS center is set up in the construction site. All children from ages 0-14 are sent to this school for eight hours six days a week. DSS directly enrolls children from ages 6 to 14 in nearby public schools, and provide stransportation services to

						and from the school. In parallel, children going to formal school start attending the Study Classes program, which is meant to help children cope with formal curricula. The program has a six-month curricula because this is the average time children stay at a construction site. After children leave, DSS tracks children through different means, including using cellphones and DSS network of schools and staff located all over Pune. After the child is tracked DSS staff can provide children and parents guidance on how to re-enroll children back into school. In this way, the program makes sure that children continue their education even after they leave the DSS program.
Saath - Ahmedabad	Child-Friendly Spaces for Costruction Sites	Children of construction workers	Free	2 – 2.5 hrs	5 days a wek	After builders agree to run the Child-Friendly Spaces program in their construction site, Saath sets up a classroom inside the construction site. Children from ages 3 to 14 come to the program. The program teaches children basic literacy and numeracy skills, and other useful life skills (e.g.

						hygiene habits). Once the construction is finished, Saath gets in touch with the laborer contractors to find out to which new construction site most laborers are sent to. Saath then tries to open a school in the new site. In this way, the AEP can be considered a mobile school.

V. Right to access to education

5.1 Introduction

The selected Alternative Education Programs (AEPs) will be assessed at two levels: the Learner Level and the System Level. This and the next three chapters evaluate these AEPs at the Learner Level.

This first results chapter focuses on children's right to access to education and the strategies used to reach urban highly deprived children. According to Unicef, learning environments should be physically and economically accessible to children (2007, p. 31). In this sense, all four AEPs meet these requirements because they are free of charge and are located at the 'door step' of every child's home. Centers are located at minimal walking distances from children's homes in the slum areas or construction sites, and in the case of pavement dwellers, buses park right on the road where they live in.

Not only do strategies need to be successful at reaching children, but also at preventing them from dropping out. Strategies may differ according to context and target group, but any AEP that aims to work with children at risk needs to include three elements showed in the conceptual model under the right to access to education dimension (see chapter III). These elements are the following: flexibility and adaptability, tracking system, and monitoring mechanisms. They will be addressed in the following sections.

5.2 Flexibility and adaptability

It is this aspect that makes AEPs a valuable alternative from the rigid formal system, which is unable to cater the needs of highly deprived children. All four selected AEPs are very good in this important aspect.

DSS director in Mumbai believes that formal education is not a realistic option to many of the children enrolled in the Community-based NFE classes, and particularly to those in School-on-Wheels. For this reason, the aim of the program is not to mainstream children, but to give them life skills and basic literacy and numeracy that would improve their future. Even though some children have been able to get transferred to a formal school, DSS Mumbai will not force this on its NFE students if they and their parents are not ready. Often, parents depend on their children's income for household expenses. DSS Mumbai can "only give these children a taste of what education is like."[13] The goal is to start a process through which the following generations will have a higher chance of going to a formal school. For example, a few of the current students at DSS preschool program are in fact the children of DSS alumni.

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[13] DSS Executive Director 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

In the case of Pune, the DSS President has the opinion that formal education is every child's right and nobody has the right to decide for him/her if formal education or NFE is best for him/her. It is important to note that, unlike Mumbai, the builders act as an enabling factor because they do not want to be associated with child labor, so DSS is mandatory for all children as a prevention measure. Given that children cannot contribute to the family income and/or that they are too young to work, they are more willing to accept that DSS enrolls them in school. Taking advantage of the contextual situation, the builder's support and the available funds, Study Classes is very successful at mainstreaming children to formal schooling. Consequently, its NFE program Education Resource Center (EAC) is slowly phasing out.

The work of Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites (CFS) is especially remarkable given its short experience and limited budget when compared to the other three programs. Given that Saath does not have the human and financial capital to enroll children in nearby schools in the city and provide them with transportation services, CFS decided to take a different approach. Saath tries to convince parents to leave their children in the village, so that they can go to school there. CFS teachers point out that it is not practical to constantly move from place to place with the entire family. They also emphasize that parents are constantly worried at work because their children can easily get into accidents while playing on the site. Instead, if they leave their children back in their village with their in-laws or relatives, they can spend their time more productively than roaming around on the construction site.

Saath opted for this strategy because a recent trend showed that many workers have at least one child studying back in the village.[14] From the 21 parents interviewed, six of them said their children were currently studying at a formal school back home (not in the city). Another nine stated that once their children grow old enough, they will send them back to the village so that they can study. Furthermore, at the moment Saath lacks trained teachers, resources and infrastructure to teach more children. Thus, Saath's approach to help children access education seems the best option. Nevertheless, the CFS Construction Sites program started less than two years ago, so it is too early to make an assessment on the success and impact of its strategy to increase access to formal schooling.

5.3 Tracking system

Seeking out highly deprived children requires taking a step further and keeping in touch with these children after they leave the program. It is understandable that implementing such a task would be highly unfeasible for the formal education system. Flexibility gives AEPs a comparative advantage over the formal system, and enables them to design innovative ways to track students.

Tracking becomes particularly vital when working with migrant populations, like children of construction workers. It allows AEPs to guide and help children and their parents face obstacles preventing schooling, regardless where or how many times they relocate.

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[14] CFS Construction Sites Program Director 2012, pers. comm., 20 April

Aware of the high mobility of construction laborers, DSS Pune has tackled this problem by trying out different strategies over the past years, and drawing important lessons from these experiences.

First, teachers tried to give children self-addressed postcards with DSS' address on it. Children were supposed to send these postcards back, so that the teachers could know their new location. However, it did not work, and DSS tried getting in touch with laborer contractors to get information about the workers and their children. This approach did not work out either because contractors did not cooperate as much.[15] DSS then gave each student a card with contact information of DSS coordinators, how many DSS schools the child has been to before, and his/her knowledge level. In this way, the next DSS center or formal school could build on the child's capacity.

In order to make it more comprehensive, DSS decided to change the card and instead distribute "My Book." This book is a diary, which includes the same information as the card along with DSS songs and prayers and details of the child's school enrollment (DSS 2010, p. 9/29). If a child happens to end up in another DSS school (which is common), teachers at the new center would ask the child for the DSS card or book in order to determine whether or not s/he is a former student. If the child has been to other DSS schools, then teachers contact the pertinent supervisors and/or previous teachers.[16] A key aspect of tracking is the good communication among the teachers, supervisors, and coordinators, who handle over 100 classes grouped in 12 geographical clusters. They help each other to find children by checking each other's student lists. Please also see Box 5.1.

Box 5. 1. DSS Teacher's experiences tracking students

Stories of Successful Tracking	
Resourceful teachers	**Useful phones!**
Pooja went to Kharadi, but did not have a phone. Supervisor and Coordinator in charge contacted the laborer contractors to get information about her, but they couldn't help. Then, they got in touch with the builder's person designated in charge of DSS school in Kharadi. He did a follow-up and found the girl. Now, Pooja currently goes to formal school.	*A student did not have a cellphone, but decided to go to the local grocery shop to use the public phone and call his teacher to give her his new address. The shop keeper was surprised that the child was so articulated and could make phone calls. He had assumed that the boy was illiterate given his socio-cultural background.* *Teachers and supervisors laugh narrating how sometimes they get text messages from their students for New Year's or any holiday.*

Source: Focus Group DSS Supervisors and Coordinators 2012, 16 April

Not too long ago, DSS realized that using cellphones was a good way to track children. Cellphones are very cheap in India, and most construction workers have one. First, teachers taught children how to use

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[15] Banner Road coordinator 2012, pers. comm., 5 April

[16] Focus Group DSS Supervisors and Coordinators 2012, 16 April

a phone, and they learned quickly because they find technological devices exciting. Soon enough, however, teachers realized that parents could also call them, so they encouraged them to call any time they had a problem. Teachers keep a record with parents' phone numbers as well. When they were first asked to call and track children, teachers felt strange. However, the relationship that teachers and students develop is so close that keeping in touch with them seems now the natural thing to do.[17]

In Pune, 14 children and their parents were interviewed about their experience with the Study Classes program. Table 5.1 shows that oftentimes children end up in a construction site where there is already a DSS school set up. Over 70% (10 out of 14) of the children interviewed had attended at least one other DSS center before, and all of them (10) had been tracked by DSS. When parents were asked about the way they were tracked, almost 30% of them stated that they talk to DSS before or after leaving to the next construction site. About 20% were contacted by DSS staff after they moved out, and another 20% said their children were traced through DSS card.

Table 5. 1. About DSS Pune tracking system

Name of AEP		Has CHILD been to other DSS schools before?		Has CHILD been tracked?		Is the tracking system useful to you?	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Study Classes	No	4	28.6	0	0.0	0	0
	Yes	10	71.4	10	71.4	9	64.3
	N/R	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	7.1
	N/A	0	0.0	4	28.6	4	28.6
	Total	14	100.0	14	100.0	14	100.0

All parents (except one) whose child had been traced by DSS Pune answered that they consider tracking as a good practice. Table 5.2 shows that most parents consider tracking useful because DSS helped enroll their child in a formal school after the family shifted to a new location. Usually after DSS finds a child, it either takes care of all the paperwork involved in formal school registration or gives parents guidance on how to do it themselves. This confirms that DSS Pune plays a vital role in ensuring children of construction workers can access formal education. The four cases under 'N/A' are the four children who were new to the program, and therefore had never been tracked by DSS.

Table 5. 2. Parents' reasons for considering tracking Useful

Parents' reasons for why tracking is useful		Frequency	%
To enroll child in new formal school		6	42.8
Other		2	14.3
N/R		2	14.3
N/A		4	28.6
Total		14	100.0

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[17] Focus Group DSS Supervisors and Coordinators 2012, 16 April

Box 5.2 is a compilation of case studies, where four Study Classes students and their parents were asked separately about their experiences of being tracked by DSS. The children's responses show that DSS has successfully created awareness among students about the importance of keeping in touch with the NGO after they leave to a new construction site. The fact that children call their teachers or show their DSS card to the new school also proves that they want to continue studying. Parents also seem to be actively involved in the tracking process because they either personally informed DSS that they were leaving or call them afterwards. The answers given by children and parents show that DSS supervisors and teachers truly emphasize their availability and willingness to help out (especially) after children leave the DSS center. These answers also show that they quickly act and use their network with the other DSS centers to make sure children stay in school in their new location.

Box 5. 2. Children's and parents' experiences with DSS tracking

Experiences about DSS tracking system - How did you get in touch with DSS?	
CHILDREN's response	**PARENTS' response**
"I called Saroja and told her I didn't know if there was a school in Aundh [the new location where his family shifted to]. When I learned about the DSS center in Aundh, they picked me up and dropped me back home." - Kalim Hussain Shaikh	*"I called the DSS supervisor, then she helped me out with the admisssion of Kalim, and informed the DSS coordinator at the new site about Kalim, so she could track him." - Shaikh Hussain (Kalim's father)*
"I asked a friend to help me call DSS... to give my new address. The next day, a DSS teacher came to Dhankodi Vasti to pick me up for study classes." - Pitambar Sahu	*"I talked to the teacher at [the previous] DSS school about the change of location. The teacher gave me her number and told me to call her whenever we shifted." - Sri Aju Sahu(Pitambar's father)*
"I went to the DSS center at the new site [Golden TrelliS] and then showed them my DSS card." - Dharma Suresh Pawar	*"I informed the supervisor at Dhanolie that we were shifting to Golden Trellis. Then, the supervisor helped out Dharma with the admission process [for the new school]." - Rukibai Pawar (Dharma's mother)*
"At Golden Trellis, I saw children coming to class, and then realized that it was a DSS center. No one at my previous DSS school informed me that there was a DSS at the new site. I showed the DSS card to the new teacher, and started going to Study Classes here." - Pandu Shiva Rathore	*"When Pandu came here, he found out about [the Golden Trellis] DSS center and showed them his card." - Shiva Rathore (Pandu's father)*

DSS Mumbai does not have a tracking system. In contrast to children in construction sites, slum child laborers are a more permanent set of dwellers, and thus there is less pressing need to track them. Pavement dwellers, on the other hand, are less stable given their vulnerability to eviction any time.

DSS Mumbai started the Bal Samuha program as a way to continue giving support and keeping in touch with former alumni. In Mumbai, there are 436 members divided into a total of 14 Bal Samuha groups, being the oldest one founded in 1997. Children from ages 10 to 18 can join and are grouped according to their age group to discuss problems in their area. Besides further building children's capacity and leadership skills, Bal Samuha helps them implement the solutions they themselves design to address issues in their communities. For example, Bal Samuha groups conducted several awareness campaigns, which ranged from Malaria, Addiction, Water Scarcity to Child Rights. They made informative posters and conducted street plays in order to attract people's attention (DSS 2010, p. 27/32).

Bal Samuha has had a great impact on former NFE students. Many of them, through the trainings and guidance provided by this program, have founded their own NGOs. Couple of them addresses the children's right to education by first catching their attention through playing football.[18] Anyone interested can join the program, but it only operates in the areas where DSS has community-based programs. However, Bal Samuha is not available for pavement dwellers because of their low commitment to investing time and effort going to meetings and organizing events.[19] Up to a certain extent, Bal Samuha could be considered a type of tracking strategy, but children join voluntarily and can leave the program at any time. In this sense, children are not proactively tracked like in Pune and not all students (i.e. pavement dwellers) enjoy the benefits of Bal Samuha.

Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites does not have a tracking system that would allow Saath to know how well children are doing in their formal schools back in the village. Not having a tracking system limits Saath's possibilities of gaining a greater rapport with parents. During summer holidays, children going to school in the village go back to the construction sites to spend time with their family. For the few months they are living on the site, children attend the CFS center and this is the only time teachers get to ask them some questions about their experiences in formal schooling. However, this procedure is rather casual. Tracking is not a formal function of the teachers, so they do not keep in touch once they leave the CFS school. At the moment, it is not feasible because there is not enough trained staff to facilitate the process. Unlike the DSS programs, there are no middle layers (between the teachers and program director) who assign different functions and share responsibilities regarding children's follow-up. Though necessary, tracking can become burdensome and inefficient if teachers do not receive the right support and training.

5.4 Monitoring mechanisms

Teachers from the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels program are very good at monitoring children on a regular basis. One of the functions of the DSS teachers is to go to each student's home 30 minutes before class and call them to school. These daily visits allow the teachers to talk to the parents, build a rapport with them, and inform them about their children's progress. The researcher went several times to the field and accompanied the teachers in their daily follow-up. Once a month, the area coordinator (sometimes together with the teacher) goes to the children's homes to talk to the parents in more detail about their children's school progress.

Thanks to this daily follow-up, the teachers can communicate to area and community coordinators if any problems come up and they can jointly address them on time. For example, when children drop out from the program, they talk to the parents to find out the reasons behind their decision of not letting their children go to class anymore. Most parents interviewed from both the NFE programs pointed out

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[18] Coordinator Bal Samuha Program 2012, pers. comm., 17 March

[19] For further information, see Chapter VIII, where tracer studies are explained in detail.

that they also interact with at least another DSS staff besides their child's teacher. This is a good sign that the coordinators closely work together with teachers to monitor children.

Sixty parents were asked to rank their child's teacher. Over 58% (35 out 60 interviewees) ranked teachers as 'Good', and 35% (21 interviewees) ranked them as 'Very good'. Next, parents were asked to further their answers. Table 5.3[20] summarizes parents's explanations for their positive ranking of teachers.

Table 5. 3. Parents explanations for positive ranking of teachers

Name of alternative education program		Parents' reasons for liking their child's teachers				
		Good at teaching	Kind and understanding	Picks up child	Other	No reply
Community-based NFE Classes (12 respondents)	% within AEP	83.3%	8.3%	33.3%	41.7%	8.3%
School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	% within AEP	100.0%	53.8%	15.4%	30.8%	.0%
Study Classes (14 respondents)	% within AEP	21.4%	21.4%	35.7%	21.4%	14.3%
Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites (21 respondents)	% within AEP	47.6%	23.8%	19.0%	14.3%	19.0%
Total	Count	**36**	**16**	**15**	**15**	**7**
(60 respondents)	% of Total	**60.0%**	**26.7%**	**25.0%**	**25.0%**	**11.7%**

Sixty percent of parents (36 out of 60) think that their child's teacher teaches well, and about 27% responded that the teachers are kind and understanding with their children. Several parents (25%) also appreciated that the teacher went home to pick up the child to go to school. Many mentioned that this behavior showed them that teachers really cared about the child, and that they could trust her. In interviews with children, several of them said the fact that their teacher went to their homes to check on them made them feel important and appreciated. About 25% of parents gave miscellaneous reasons. For example, few parents interviewed in Mumbai pointed out that what they like about the DSS teacher was that she informed them about their children's progress on a regular basis. They think it is important to have a fluent communication between both parties.

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[20] This was an open question, so parents' responses applied to more than one category. For this reason percentages do not add up to 100%

Besides frequent visits, monitoring Study Classes students also entails keeping a record of how they are doing at their formal schools. DSS supervisors and coordinators go to the formal school to make general inquiries about the children's studies and attendance. DSS staff also encourages parents to visit the school from time to time to talk to the teachers about their children's progress. Initially, the formal school teachers asked DSS staff not to interfere with their work. The teachers judged DSS children based on their poor appearance (their parents have to go early to work and do not pay much attention to their dressing). Teachers assumed that these children did not know much at all, but they were surprised to find out that they oftentimes surpassed their peers in class. Formal school teachers became interested in learning DSS teaching methods and started asking advice. Now, formal school teachers and DSS supervisors and coordinators are frequently in touch. Please also see Box 5.3.

In Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) Construction Sites, teachers were asked if they called the children to come to class, to

Box 5. 3. Cooperation between DSS and formal schools

Successful Story: Cooperation between DSS and formal school
Dharma Suresh Pawar (age 14) is a student at Golden Trellis DSS school. He was registered in the nearby formal school and put into the Study Classes program. Dharma, however, was facing problems at his formal school because a classmate from a higher caste was constantly bullying him for being Banjara, a Schedule Castes in India. Dharma told his DSS teacher Swati about his problem. The coordinator went to talk to the formal school teacher, and together talked to the boy who was harassing Dharma and explained him why his behavior was wrong. After the incident, the boy approached Dharma and told him that if anybody dared to insult him, Dharma should just let him know and he will 'take care' of it. By working together the formal school teacher and DSS staff were able to timely solve this problem, and avoid Dharma dropping out for feeling rejected by his new classmates.
Source: D Pawar 2012, pers. comm., 3 April

which they responded that they do it sometimes, especially if the child has not been coming to class regularly. Since frequent visits to children's homes are not formally included among teachers' tasks, follow-ups are not done on a regular basis. Nevertheless, CFS teachers (especially the ones in charge of Madhav Homes and Swaminarayan Park II) have been able to build a good relationship with the parents and children, and allowed them to form a good idea of the household situation of most of their students.

Getting to know each child's situation is very important in order to become aware of potential challenges that may come up, and CFS teachers have accomplished this first part. Frequent visits are the next phase of monitoring, which is essential to timely address of the problems. However, permanent monitoring is still work in progress for the CFS program, and hopefully teachers will get trained in the near future to start implementing this practice. Saath does not have to necessarily follow the DSS approach of daily picking up children, but it needs to increase the frequency of visits based on its staff capabilities. Nevertheless, Saath needs to be careful because, like tracking, monitoring can become burdensome if teachers lack a supervisor to whom s/he can ask for support, especially when dealing with parents.

5.5 Conclusion

There are three important elements of an effective approach to seek out highly deprived children who otherwise would not have access to education: flexibility and adaptability, tracking system and monitoring mechanisms. The particular life styles and extremely difficult living conditions of slum children, pavement dwellers and children living in construction sites (explained in detailed in chapter IV) is what makes the formal system unsuitable to their needs. AEPs cover that gap. Given that their reach is much smaller than the Indian national education system, they enjoy flexibility in designing a strategy that takes into account both the parents and children's needs and context. In this sense, all four programs have met this requirement.

However, not all programs have a tracking system that keeps a record of what happens with children after they leave the AEP. Some might argue that after the child leaves the program, it is no longer the NGO's responsibility because there is not much that can be done: the child moved out from the NGO's area of influence or impact. DSS Pune has proved this argument wrong by designing several creative tracking strategies. After years of work, it seems that using phones (sometimes in combination with the other strategies) greatly increased DSS' chances of keeping track of children and helping them continue their studies in their new location. In 2010, teachers reached 352 children (against 156 from the previous year) and helped re-enroll as many as 91% of them (DSS 2010, p. 9/29). In this sense, DSS Mumbai does not have a tracking system for their NFE alumni. The Bal Samuha program could be considered up to a certain extent a kind of tracking, but children join voluntarily. There is no tracking system for pavement children, which is necessary and important given their high risk. CFS does not have a tracking system yet since it is quite new. In order to increase the program's effectiveness in mainstreaming children to formal schools, Saath should consider implementing tracking procedures in the near future. Having a tracking system in place shows a genuine commitment to help children exercise their right to access to education.

Finally, monitoring is important as well. Whereas tracking happens when children leave the program, monitoring is a constant practice (even daily in the case of DSS Mumbai). Monitoring is important in order to prevent and/or address issues that might result in children dropping out from school. Monitoring is especially relevant for children who are going to formal schools and might face some difficulties adjusting to their teachers, classmates and academic system. While DSS Mumbai and Pune made monitoring part of the teachers' tasks, CFS teachers do not visit children's homes regularly. They usually talk to parents only when children stop coming to class, or at parents' meetings.

The following table (Table 5.4) summarizes the criteria used to evaluate access to education.

Table 5. 4. Conclusion table - Access to Education Criteria

		Access to Education Criteria		
Name of NGO	**Name of AEP**	**Flexibility and adaptability**	**Tracking system**	**Monitoring mechanisms**
Door Step School Mumbai[21]	**Community-based NFE classes** **School-on-Wheels**	• Mainstreaming is not the main objective of the program • Child laborers from the slums and pavement dwellers are an extremely difficult target group, for whom formal schooling might not be a feasible option • Parents depend on children's income and/or might be less willing to let them go to formal school • Main goal is to build their capacity, self-esteem and self-confidence together with basic literacy and numeracy skills	• No tracking system • Bal Samuha program used as a way to keep in touch with alumni, while building their capacities and skills to address issues in their communities • No Bal Samuha groups for School-on-Wheels students because they keep changing places and/or do not show commitment to participate in such program • However, tracking system, especially for pavement children, is needed	• Teachers go on daily visits to children's homes to pick them up to go to class • Teachers use this time to build rapport with parents and find out if there has been any family issues and/or other problems • Once a month the area coordinator visits parents to inform them about their children's school progress
Door Step School Pune	**Study Classes**	• The builder plays an important enabling role by making mandatory going to DSS school • Thus, parents are	• DSS has tried out different strategies to track children • The two most effective have been the DSS Card (which now has become a more comprehensive	• Teachers frequently talk to parents and tell them about their children's progress • Coordinators and

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[21] In order to avoid repetition, the content of the two NFE programs in DSS Mumbai share one space on the table Quality Education Table. The reason is that both programs have the same approach to bringing in children's experiences, share the same curricula framework, and use similar participatory processes.

		not dependent on their children's income • DSS has the means to provide transportation and assistance with the formal school enrollment • These three factors coupled with the RTE bill make it possible for DSS to mainstream children easily	diary called "My Book"), and using cellphones • Taking advantage that everyone has a cellphone, children and teachers exchange phone numbers • Once children have been tracked, DSS help them re-enroll in formal schooling. • If child relocates in a construction site with a DSS school, they are also enrolled in Study Classes program	supervisors also communicate with formal school teachers in order to monitor their progress and timely address any issues
Saath - Ahmedabad	**Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites**	• Saath does not have the means to provide transportation or help with the enrollment in schools in the city • Given its situation, their strategy is to convince parents to leave their children back in the village, so they can go to school • Since the program just started a couple of years ago, it is still too early to know the impact of such strategy	• Saath has not yet developed an effective tracking system • However, it can learned from DSS Pune and adapt its tracking system to suit CFS children's needs • It is especially important for parents and children to know that Saath will help/guide them to solve any problems regarding children's studies • Tracking is also important for Saath to know what children do with the knowledge they get from CFS once they go back to the village	• Monitoring practices are still not part of CFS teachers' tasks • It is not practice by all teachers. Visits are quite irregular • There is a strong need to start implementing monitoring mechanisms

VI. Right to quality education

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the right to quality of education. Quality education, besides helping to develop cognitive skills, promotes creative and emotional development. It fosters values of equality, tolerance and respect for diversity. It helps children to learn about citizenship and civic values (Unicef 2007, p. 32). In the classroom, each child needs to be recognized as unique in personality, needs and abilities. Quality education needs to be child-friendly and empowering, so they develop self-esteem and self-confidence that will allow them to gain other capabilities (Unicef 2007, p. 33).

Based on the conceptual model, there are three components within the right to quality education. First, teachers need to take into account children's background and life experiences that they bring to the classroom. Thus, this section focuses on class diversity and in-class opportunities for self-expression. Second, curricula content must be of direct relevance to the child's social, cultural, environmental and economic context, and cater to his/her present and future needs (Unicef 2007, p. 33). Therefore, this section evaluates curricula based on its relevance, the values and opportunities it offers for using imagination and creativity, and its emphasis on lifelong learning. Finally, education processes is the third component and they must be participatory and empowering. Even though good curricula content is a requirement for program success, it is the way teachers impart knowledge (in-class processes) that has a lasting impact on children and how they apply knowledge outside the classroom. For this reason, this last part presents children's and parents' responses regarding the impact of these Alternative Education Programs (AEPs) on their daily lives.

6.2 Children's experiences and skills as valuable inputs to class

Quality education requires that teachers consider children's experiences and skills when planning and teaching their lessons. Children's experiences reflect their past and present situation, and they help the teacher better understand how they learn and internalize knowledge. It also explains students' behavior and attitude towards their classmates and teacher. Thus, teachers need to carefully deal with class diversity and provide students with opportunities to express themselves on a regular basis. The following two sections compare the experiences and challenges faced by teachers from the four AEPs on these two regards.

6.2.1 Dealing with class diversity

Classrooms in the Community-based NFE, Schools-on-Wheels and Study Classes are greatly diverse. In the Community-based NFE classes, there is a mix of children who speak Karnada, Bhojpuri and Marathi as their first language. In School-on-Wheels, there is a mix of Muslim and Hindu children that speak a variety of languages, Bengali being among the most spoken. Finally, about half of children in the Study

Classes speak Marathi, and the other half speaks different languages, such as Banjara, Hindi and Chhattisgarhi.

Children come from different Schedule Castes, do not necessarily share the same cultural or religious beliefs, and speak other languages than that of their teachers. Furthermore, given that it is not a formal school, students from different ages and knowledge levels study in the same classroom. Some of them have been to formal schools before, and some others have never attended school. All these factors make it difficult for teachers to handle the class, and they need to make sure children feel that they are treated equally regardless of their religion, caste, ethnicity, or gender. Also see Box 6.1.

Box 6. 1. Cultural Diversity in School-on-Wheels

Cultural diversity in class
The teacher of the School-on-Wheels located in Wadi Bunder, has both Muslim and Hindu students in her class. One day children were teasing and insulting each other for being from different religions. Their teacher explained that God made human beings equal, because all people have red blood running in their veins. However, one child interrupted and said that his blood must be green (the sacred color for Muslims), and therefore, not everyone was the same. A few days later, the boy told the teacher she was right because he fell down and saw that his blood was red, just like everyone else's.

Source: Teacher SoW 2 2012, pers. comm., 10 March

In order to deal with differing knowledge levels among students, teachers at Community-based NFE and School-on-Wheels first give an entry exam to newcomers to define their knowledge level in literacy and numeracy. Then, teachers put them into groups according to their knowledge level (level 1 or 2), and, if pertinent, according to their age as well. In contrast, in Pune, all children who are enrolled in a formal school are grouped together, and the DSS teacher at their construction follows a curriculum for literacy and numeracy according to their standard at the formal school.

A strategy teachers use to deal with the language barrier, especially when teaching new or younger students, is to ask older children to help out translate. Older children are usually bilingual in Hindi and/or Marathi and their native language, and can effectively work as mediators when the teacher cannot get the message across. Sometimes, teachers also group children according to their mother tongue. Additionally, acting as a mediator makes children feel valuable and trusted with greater responsibilities. Despite the language barrier, teachers try to keep children involved as much as possible through games and fun activities that help the new children integrate with their classmates.[22] Teachers promote teamwork as another pedagogical method, which encourage students get to know each other better. Constantly interacting with their classmates also helps newcomers to pick up Hindi or Marathi at a faster speed.

Teachers from the Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) Construction Sites program, on the other hand, do not face such challenges on cultural diversity (or if they do, it is minimal). In CFS Construction Sites, the majority of children come from within the state, and thus there is no language or cultural barrier

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[22] Teachers from Community-based NFE, School-on-Wheels and Study Classes 2012, pers. comm.

because most of them come from Gujarat. However, when they do, teachers also use the same method of asking bilingual students to help them communicate with those children who do not speak Gujarati or Hindi.[23]

Finally, DSS teachers in Mumbai and Pune are aware that not all children learn in the same way and thus if a child is unable to grasp a concept they use other teaching methods to explain it again. Teachers have been trained to repeat the lesson to the child until s/he understands it by using drawing, clay and other arts and crafts. DSS teachers are also trained to easily adapt to children's needs, and recognize when children are restless and have trouble concentrating. Before children get bored, teachers usually stop the lesson to play a fun game instead. By switching the activity, teachers capture children's attention again, so it is easier to retake the lesson or start another activity after the game is over. CFS teachers also mentioned that they also apply the same pedagogic method of changing the activity if needed.[24]

6.2.2 Self-expression as a subject in class

The curricula of Community-based NFE classes, School-on-Wheels and Study Classes have a self-expression component. In DSS Mumbai, however, the self-expression part plays a center role in program implementation, whereas in Pune it is much less stressed due to time constraints previously explained in chapter IV. Study Classes compressed the 18-month curricula framework of DSS Mumbai to turn it into six months. Study Classes emphasize literacy and numeracy over other subjects such as self-expression, because the main goal is to avoid children lagging behind in formal school, and consequently drop out. The DSS President, stated that self-expression is also important to Study Classes, but "Mumbai has all the time of the world,"[25] to focus more on the self-expression part of the curricula. Children in Mumbai attend the NFE programs for years, and not months like most cases in Pune. The self-expression component, however, should be vital part of any AEP that seeks to help children gain self-confidence and self-esteem.

The Training Cell Director in Mumbai explained that parents are often too preoccupied with their daily struggles to pay attention to what their children have to say. In class, however, children find that teachers and classmates are interested in what they have to say. Children enjoy having the attention they usually do not get at home. After realizing that there is someone listening to them, they like it and start opening up.[26]

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[23] Teacher from Umang Lambha CFS center 2012, pers. comm., 9 May

[24] Teachers from Community-based NFE, School-on-Wheels and Study Classes 2012, pers. comm.

[25] DSS President 2012, pers. comm., 31 March

[26] DSS Director of Teacher's Training Cell in Mumbai 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

In Mumbai, NFE teachers first start by asking children to tell a story to their classmates, which requires children to use their imagination and creativity. This exercise also helps children learn to feel relaxed and confident when speaking in public. Progressively, teachers start encouraging informal conversations, where children share in class other issues that are important to them. The topics range from activities they enjoy doing, things that make them sad or happy, and family issues, among others. Many formal school teachers make the mistake of allowing students to only talk during recess. If they are to talk in class, it should not be about personal issues, because they consider it irrelevant to the learning process portrayed in textbooks. Children, however, are not interested in discussing things unrelated to their daily life and thus find it difficult to participate in class (Kumar 2000, p.13). DSS teachers from Mumbai try to give knowledge meaning based on what children consider important to them, and in this way avoid children losing interest in the curricula.

Besides talking, teachers in DSS Mumbai also use theater as another way of self-expression that helps children become empathetic. Children are asked to enact different situations where conflict or other issues may arise, such as filling water at the community tap or lining up for the community ration shop.[27] In several interviews, children mentioned that they enjoyed participating in plays in class. Drama is another good way to help children improvise and let out their creativity. It also helps internalize knowledge and values because by acting out different roles, children need to put themselves in someone else's situation and see issues at hand from different perspectives.

By creating a positive ethos for talk, children are encouraged to speak about their positive and negative experiences (e.g. a nice friendship, father coming home drunk,) and learn to channel their emotions in a healthier way. For example, if the shopkeeper at the ration shop tries to cheat the child, s/he should be less likely to insult him in return. Instead, the child should be confident to ask the shopkeeper for compensation for the mistake made in the bill calculation. Self-expression tries to empower children to make their voice heard, so that when parents ask them to stop studying to do a household chore, they are able to say that they will do it after finishing their homework.[28]

Furthermore, teachers from Mumbai and Pune are aware that a child's behavior in class is a reflection of what happens outside class. If a child is quiet and sits alone in a corner, this is an indicative that there has been a problem at home. Similarly, teachers know that aggressive attitude is another hint that maybe the child is taking his/her frustration out on his/her classmates and teacher. Most teachers believe that drawing is the best outlet for children to express without words what they are going through. DSS teachers believe it is important to understand where the child is coming from and try to

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[27] In India, the state and central government provide subsidized basic food items at ration shops. Most people in the research areas in Mumbai hold a ration card, with which buy items at a lower rate than the price market. Oftentimes, fights at the ration shop are commonplace among the families in Mumbai interviewed for this research. Costumers have arguments with each other, or with the shopkeeper for giving them a lesser amount food of what they are entitled to.

[28] DSS Director of Teacher's Training Cell in Mumbai 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

help him/her out to better deal with the situation.[29] However, it is not good to force children if they do not want to open up, and in these cases, teachers let children get involved in class at their own pace. It is a push-and-pull situation, and the DSS teachers' training and experiences help them know when they should push and when they should take a step back.

In the case of Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) Construction Site program, teachers have received a couple of trainings. One of them was with a child psychologist who gave a talk on how to better teach children and retain their attention. Teachers find these kinds of training extremely useful, and would like to have them more often. However, due to lack of human and financial capital, teachers cannot currently get trained on a more frequent basis. Consequently, teachers are less aware of how to incorporate children's experiences and skills into the classroom. Some of the CFS teachers try to do this in an intuitive way, which means that this is not established as a regular practice for all teachers. Also, see Box 6.2. For the reasons explained above, institutionalizing self-expression as part of the curriculum of Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites would allow the program to have a lasting impact on children's self-esteem and self-esteem.

Box 6. 2. Including children's experiences in CFS classroom

Taking into account children's experiences
According to the Child-Friendly Spaces teacher at Swaminarayan Park I, there are two boys that constantly insult and bully their classmates. When asked how she deals with them, she answered that she asks them to leave the classroom until they realize what they did wrong.
The teacher was unable to make the connection that these children's aggressive behavior is likely to be linked to how they are treated at home. Instead of addressing the root cause, the teacher was merely limiting herself to punish them for misbehaving in class.

Source, CFS teacher Swaminarayan Park I 2012, 30 April

In the same way, it is advisable that CFS teachers receive training on how to deal with children with learning disabilities (dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, among others), and other psychological conditions. When parents are ignorant about their children's psychological or learning disabilities, many children are yelled at or even beaten. Parents think children do not want to obey orders or get bad grades in school because they are lazy or mischievous. CFS can play a role to educate teachers and parents to better deal with these kinds of children who need extra help.

6.3 Curricula content

The assessment of the AEPs' curricula is based on three components, which are the following: curricula relevance, values and opportunities for using imagination and creativity, and life-long learning.

6.3.1 Curricula relevance

This section will have three headings. The first one addresses the core subjects basic literacy and numeracy. The second one refers to the evaluation of computer classes by students from the

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[29] School-on-Wheels 3 teacher 2012, pers. comm., 15 March

Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels 1 (Crawford Market and Fashion Street classes).[30] Finally, the third part focuses on children's and parents' responses regarding the relevance of the Study Classes program as an aid to better cope with formal schooling.

6.3.1.1 Basic literacy and numeracy

All four programs have basic literacy and numeracy as their core subjects. DSS[31] recognizes that there is a strong link between language and cognitive development (DSS n.d.). Through language children develop reasoning and analytical skills, process information, form perceptions of their environment, and give explanations and arguments about things happening to them and/or others. According to Khrishna Kumar, "language shape the child's personality because the child lives and grows up in the environment that language creates" (2000, p. 12). For this reason, DSS facilitates language development with the help of its self-expression curricula component, and places a major emphasis on literacy. It emphasizes the importance of simultaneously employing all parts of language (reading, speaking, listening, writing and viewing) in order to teach literacy. By using songs, rhymes, poems and games, DSS creates a favorable environment for children to learn how to read and write (DSS n.d.).

DSS curricula framework in both Mumbai and Pune emphasize the need to impart education by first placing knowledge in a context the child is familiar with. Teaching the alphabet and symbols of sounds, and numbers is meaningless to the children if they cannot make connections and link them to their daily activities.[32] Also see Box 6.3.

Box 6. 3. Putting curricula content in context

Giving meaning to curricula content
Several of the students at DSS Mumbai are child laborers who get paid in cash and constantly deal with money. DSS Mumbai uses fake Indian rupee bills for children to play making financial transactions before teachers teach them in the blackboard how to add and subtract. Giving relevant meaning to knowledge is what enables true learning in the classroom. In this sense, DSS curricula framework is flexible enough to allow for core subjects to adapt to the context children live in. Pavement dwellers do not face the same challenges as slum children, and migrant children.

Source: *Director of Teacher's Training Cell 2012, pers. comm., 20 March*

Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites program teaches literacy and numeracy, but due to lack of training and teaching aid and materials, teachers heavily rely on the blackboard without constantly

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[30] In all wards, there is a computer lab, and once a week all Community-based NFE and School-on-Wheels classes have a one-hour computer class.

[31] In this context, DSS refers to Door Step School as an organization that includes both its Mumbai and Pune branches.

[32] DSS Director of Teacher's Training Cell in Mumbai 2012, pers. comm., 20 March; DSS n.d.

emphasizing the practical uses of literacy or numeracy. These observations and the fact that Saath is still on the process of building its own curricula framework indicate that teachers do not enjoy clear guidance regarding the topics and learning outcomes they should accomplish within determinate time frames. Nevertheless, no interviews with children from the program were possible, and thus not much information can be given in this respect.

Finally, learning how to read and write the national language Hindi or the local language Marathi has yet another benefit. Unlike children from CFS Construction Sites, most children in Mumbai and Pune come from different states and speak languages other than Hindi or Marathi. The literacy component of these AEPs helps children better integrate in the society where they currently live in by allowing them to extend their social network and include people outside their tribe or hometown. Furthermore, Pune's formal schooling (unlike Mumbai's) is exclusively conducted in Marathi. Thus, it is of vital importance for children of construction workers to master this language if they want to do well in school.

6.3.1.2 Relevance of Computer classes

In 2003, the first DSS computer lab was opened in ward A. The computer lessons are once a week, and they teach children basic computer skills (e.g. how to use the mouse and keyboard, how to create files). A customized syllabus has been prepared according to the children's knowledge level. Besides learning MS word and paint, children reinforce their math and Hindi skills through fun computer games.

 All children interviewed from the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels program (26 out of 26) said that they enjoy the computer lessons, and almost 90% (88.4%) of children said that they find it useful. The following table (Table 6.1) [33] shows the reasons behind their answers to this last question.

Table 6. 1. Children's response - Reasons why computer lessons are relevant/not relevant to them

Name of alternative education program		Reason for why computer lessons are relevant/not relevant to your life			
		To get a job	To access information	Other	No reply
Community-based NFE classes (13 respondents)	% within AEP	46.2%	30.8%	53.8%	7.7%
School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	% within AEP	61.5%	15.4%	46.2%	15.4%
Total	% of Total	53.8%	23.1%	50.0%	11.5%

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[33] Children gave several reasons, which qualified under more than one category. For this reason, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Over 50% of the total number of children interviewed considers that learning how to use computers will help them get a good job in the future, because it will make them more attractive to employers. About 23% of respondents also think that computers are useful to access information. About 50% Children gave miscellaneous reasons (qualified as 'Other'). These answers ranged from playing video games to communicating with relatives living in other states.

6.3.1.3 Study Classes relevance to formal schooling

Study Classes students and their parents were asked couple of additional questions regarding the curricula relevance of this program with respect to formal schooling. First, they were asked to rank (from 1 to 5; 1 being 'very useful' and 5 being 'not useful at all'), how useful the Study Classes program is to their (and their children's) formal schooling. In other words, how much it helps the child cope with formal education. Whereas only 50% of parents thought it helps, over 85% of children responded that the program actually helps them a lot.

Table 6.2 summarizes children's and parents' reasons to qualify the Study Classes as relevant/not relevant to formal schooling.

Table 6. 2. Parents and Children's responses regarding the relevance of Study Classes to formal schooling

Parents' responses		In which ways is the Study Classes program relevant/not relevant to CHILD's formal school studies?				
		Teaches Marathi	Not for older children	Reviews formal school topics	No reply	Total
Study Classes Program	Count	2	4	5	3	14
	Total	14.2%	28.6%	35.7%	21.4%	100.0%
Children's responses		In which ways is the Study Classes program relevant/not relevant to your formal school studies?				
		Helps with formal school homework	Reviews formal school topics	Other	No reply	Total
Study Classes Program	Count	4	5	2	3	14
	Total	28.6%	35.7%	14.3%	21.4%	100.0%

About 28.6% of parents stated that the program is for pre-school children, and therefore, it did not help much their children. About 14% of parents valued that the Study Classes program taught Marathi, which allowed their children to study in Pune and easily integrate with their classmates and teachers at the formal school. The most important reason for parents, however, was that Study Classes were a form of free tutoring classes. Given that most parents are illiterate they feel they cannot help their children solve their doubts regarding school subjects, and are happy that Study Classes is there to cover that gap.

Similarly, children appreciated that Study Classes offered them a space where they could review topics taught at the formal school. Some interviewees mentioned that it was useful to re-learn the topics they found difficult to grasp. Unlike formal school teachers, their DSS teachers were able to explain them multiple times if needed. Others pointed out that, by previously learning the multiplication tables at the Study Classes, they were able to outperform their classmates when this topic was introduced at the formal school. In conclusion, most children and several parents perceive the Study Class curricula to be relevant to their children's needs.

6.3.2 Values and opportunities to use creativity and imagination

6.3.2.1 Values learned at school

Besides acquiring moral values at home, children also learn values at school. The students interviewed were asked to name the values they have learned at their AEP. According to Pigozzi, quality education should inculcate values that show respect and tolerance for others, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background. It should also teach solidarity, mutual understanding and non-violent behavior (2009, p. 49). The following table (Table 6.3) compiles children's answers regarding the most important values they have learned in school.

Table 6. 3. Children's responses - Values learned at the AEPs

Name of NGO	Name of alternative education program		Discipline	Sharing	Respect	Tolerance	No reply
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes (13 respondents)	% within AEP	69.2%	23.1%	84.6%	30.8%	.0%
	School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	% within AEP	53.8%	23.1%	92.3%	30.8%	.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes (14 respondents)	% within AEP	42.9%	.0%	28.6%	.0%	7.1%

Almost 70% of students in the Community-based NFE classes and over 50% of students in School-on-Wheels said that they have become disciplined in their studies after attending their AEP. Over 40% of interviewees from Study Classes gave the same answer. Children said that they started voluntarily studying on a regular basis. Respect is among the values that had the most positive responses. Children said that they learned to respect their parents, elders, teacher and classmates. Children from DSS Mumbai also said that their NFE school taught them to share with their classmates (stationary materials, food and others things), and tolerate people from other cultures or religions. Finally, during interviews with Study Classes students, a few of them mentioned punctuality as an important value they learned in this program. They explained that they need to be ready and waiting outside their homes at the right time for the DSS van to pick them up and drop them at school. In-class observations also showed that

students from these three programs help each other (cooperation/teamwork) during class activities. There is a sense of belonging and community among them.

The values mentioned by children, such as becoming disciplined, learning to respect others and teamwork, are important personal qualities to have. It helps them develop important social skills and influences the way they are perceived by others. Besides making them more attractive to future employers in the labor market, these qualities also influence the quality of work they deliver at school or at a job.

6.3.2.2 Opportunities to use creativity and imagination

The Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels offer opportunities for children to develop their imagination, creativity and problem-solving skills. As mentioned before, the self-expression component of these programs encourage children to invent fun stories and tell them to their classmates, and conduct street plays addressing important social issues. However, NFE programs also have a set of extra-curricular activities, which range from arts and crafts to natural science experiments, where children actively participate. During the interviews DSS Mumbai students mentioned clay, drawing and painting as one of their favorite activities. Please also see Box 6.4.

Box 6. 4. Success Story: playing Holi with safe colors

Playing Holi with safe colors
The Holi festival is one of the most popular celebrations in Indian culture, where people receive the spring season playing with powder and liquid colors. However, many people sell in the streets colored water that has been made with harmful chemicals, and in 2012 several dozens of children were taken to the hospital due to skin poisoning. As a class activity, teachers from the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels taught students how to make safe colorful water to play Holi.By boiling water with beetroots, spinach and tumeric, children obtained red, green and yellow water. A girl from one of the Community-based NFE classes started her own business by selling water colored made from safe natural dyes. She invested 10 rupees, and made a profit of 35 rupees using the methods learned in class.

Source: Director of Teacher's Training Cell 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

The Study Classes program offers children limited opportunities to express their creativity given that the main goal is to strengthen literacy and numeracy skills in a short time frame.

The researcher asked teachers from the Child-Friendly (CFS) Spaces Construction Sites program whether or not they provided students with opportunities to experiment with their creativity. However, some of them were confused by the question, and were not able to answer. Like in Study Classes, children regularly migrate from one construction site to another, and thus, the program mainly focuses on core subjects (reading, writing and math).

6.3.3 Lifelong learning

A key part of the curriculum of any alternative education program (AEP) should be the lifelong learning component. Lifelong learning refers to the pursuit of knowledge inside and outside the classroom. Lifelong learning motivates children to become independent learners who are aware of the best ways through which they can learn. It helps children realize that learning is a process that takes place throughout life, not just when they are at school. By teaching children to be lifelong learners, the AEPs would ensure that even if the child does not transfer to a formal school, or ends up dropping out the AEP, s/he will continue learning on his/her own. In this sense, it would better enable children to develop and integrate to society as active and informed citizens. It also helps them to stand out and improve their employability options (Tawi, Akkari & Macedo 2011, p.18).

From all four AEPs, the DSS Mumbai NFE programs are the only ones who incorporate this important element through their weekly classes at the Community Learning Center (CLC).[34] The main objective of CLC is "to encourage children to develop healthy reading habit and thereby to build language skills" (DSS 2010, p. 24/32). Reading has a direct impact on children's ability to learn, because it enables them to comprehend and associate meaning with written language. A good way to promote lifelong learning in the classroom is to help children realize that reading has multiple functions besides studying for exams. For example, they can read for fun, for developing a hobby, or for finding information (Kumar 2000, p. 34, 52).

The CLC in Ward A (where all interviewees go to) has a total number of 3290 books, magazines and newspapers, which are available to all children according to their age and knowledge level. In order to make reading a joyful activity, the CLC conducts several activities. These include story narration (either the teacher or children tell the rest a story), reading books out loud, playing education games, watching didactic cartoons, listening to relevant audio CDs, and sharing new information (DSS 2010, p. 24/32). Thus, CLC promotes a positive attitude towards books by allowing children getting familiar with them (even if they cannot yet read and write).

Students from the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels 1 (Crawford Market and Fashion Street) were asked their opinion regarding the CLC classes. One hundred percent (100%) of them (from both AEPs) responded that they enjoy going to CLC. Table 6.4[35] compiles their main reasons for liking the reading classes.

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[34] All Community-based NFE classes go to CLC. Unfortunately, not all School-on-Wheels (SoW) have access to these lessons. From the classes who participated in the research, only those located close to Ward A (the SoWs in Crawford Market and Fashion Street) went to CLC once a week.

[35] This was an open question and, therefore, children's responses applied to more than one category in the table. For this reason, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

Table 6. 4. Children's responses - Reasons to enjoy CLC

Name of alternative education program		Why do you enjoy CLC classes?				
		Teacher tells stories	Teacher makes us play	**Enjoy reading books**	Enjoy watching T.V.	Other
Community-based NFE classes (13 respondents)	% within AEP	38.5%	46.2%	**84.6%**	76.9%	30.8%
School-on-Wheels (5 respondents)	% within AEP	20.0%	20.0%	**100.0%**	100.0%	.0%
Total (18 respondents)	% of Total	33.3%	38.9%	**88.9%**	83.3%	22.2%

Based on the table results, 100% of children in School-on-Wheels and over 80% of children in the Community-based NFE classes said that they enjoy CLC because they get to read books for fun. Another important reason for them to like CLC is watching cartoons, because at home many do not have a T.V. There are two important conclusions drawn from children's answers. First, CLC is succeeding in accomplishing its main goal of helping children become avid readers. Second, given that audiovisual materials are very popular among children, DSS should continue to use this resource as one of its main didactic materials.

Given the positive responses from students, DSS should try to make CLC classes available in the future to all their School-on-Wheels classes. The other two AEP should consider including in their curriculum a separate space for children to solely read for the pleasure of reading, and get more familiar with different types of books, magazines and other reading material. This would open up an opportunity for promoting lifelong learning among students.

6.4 Participatory and inclusive educational processes

Participatory education processes is also part of the criteria to assess quality education. Good education is not just about curricula content. It is about how this knowledge is imparted to children in the classroom. According to Unicef, "there is a need for the creation of flexible, effective and respectful learning environments that are responsive to needs of all children" (2007, p. 33). Children should not be considered passive recipients whose input is regarded as not valuable.

All the previous sections of this chapter on including children's experiences and curricula relevance build on each other and add towards making educational processes participatory and empowering. In contrast to the traditional teacher-centered approach, children should not be treated as passive

recipients of knowledge (Unicef 2007, p. 33). Processes should be learner-centered, where students are actively involved in constructing their own learning and teachers act as facilitators. These processes should also help students gain life skills that would help them make better decisions and solve problems. If children truly grasp the knowledge taught at school, then they would be able to apply it outside the classroom in their daily activities.

This last section starts with a short note on some relevant education processes that were observed in DSS NFE programs in Mumbai (Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels) that are relevant to mention for the purposes of this study. Then, the rest of the section focuses on evaluating educational processes by looking at children's and parents' responses regarding the impact of these AEPs in their daily life. The first part divides children's responses in two groups: children attending NFE program and those attending Study Classes. The second part follows the same structure, but it concentrates on parents' responses.

6.4.1 Good practices in educational processes

All four AEPs teachers have devised simple methods to praise and give recognition in class to children who do well, while encouraging those who are in the process of accomplishing the set learning goals. It was observed that children clapped after their classmates explained something correctly or finished telling a story to the entire class. They have been taught to appreciate when their classmates participate in class, and do well. These simple signs of recognition from their teachers and classmates boost children's confidence and reassure their contribution in class is valuable, which in turn motivates them to keep participating. DSS teachers encourage give extra attention to those children who are still struggling with a subject and give them extra exercises that will help them catch up with the rest.

Furthermore, Mumbai teachers carefully plan their lesson the day before always linking it to the DSS curricula framework for NFE. This planning always includes an initial 5-minute opening prayer, after which teachers always proceed with the recap. Recap is the 10 to 15 minutes class period in which teachers briefly refresh the topic children learned the day before. Recap is important because it allows teachers to review what was learned earlier, and make clear connections with the new pieces of knowledge children will learn that day. This is a very useful practice that CFS Construction Site should include in its curricula framework.

Finally, Door Step School[36] education programs have a learner-centered approach, which also emphasize life skills. According to Unicef, life skills education "helps young people develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, … builds their sense of personal worth and agency, and teaches them to interact with others in constructively and effectively" (2003). Based on what has been so far explained in this chapter and the following personal accounts given by children and their parents prove that the DSS processes are truly empowering and children acquired important life skills.

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[36] It refers to both DSS Mumbai and Pune

6.4.2 Children's responses[37]

6.4.2.1 Community-based NFE Classes and School-on-Wheels programs

A total of 26 children participating in DSS Mumbai NFE programs were asked to rank how useful their AEP is to their future life. Based on Table 6.5, an impressive total of 88.5% of children interviewed (23 out of 26) ranked it as useful, and another 3.8% ranked it as very useful. Next, children were asked to further explain their answers, which were narrowed down to four main categories.[38] The most popular answer (46.2%) is that studying in the NFE program increases their chances of getting a good job and/or securing a future. About 38.5% (10 out of 26) also answered that what they learn in school will help them educate their own children and maybe even send them to a formal school. Only two girls (one of each program) answered that the NFE program will allow them enjoy greater freedom to decide what they want to do with their life (e.g. getting a job, studying further, having a family).

Table 6. 5. Children's responses on how useful the AEP is to their future life

Name of alternative education program		How useful is the AEP to your future life?				Total
		Not very useful	Neutral	Useful	Very useful	
Community-based NFE Classes	Count	0	0	12	1	13
	% within AEP	.0%	.0%	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
School-on-Wheels	Count	1	1	11	0	13
	% within AEP	7.7%	7.7%	84.6%	.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	1	1	**23**	1	26
	% of Total	3.8%	3.8%	**88.5%**	3.8%	100.0%

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[37] About a total of 40 children were interviewed regarding their views on the AEP they participate in. In Mumbai, a total of 26 children were interview (13 children from the Community-based NFE classes, and 13 from School-on-Wheels program). The remaining 14 children interviewed belong to the Study Classes program in DSS Pune. Unfortunately, for reasons previously explained in the methodology section, it was not possible to interview children from the Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Site program in Ahmedabad.

[38] Children gave detailed answers to this open question, and therefore, many of the responses obtained applied to more than one category.

Children were also asked to reflect about whether there had been any changes in their life due to their AEP. Table 6.6 sums up their qualitative responses into five categories.[39]

Table 6. 6. Children's response on how AEP impacted their lives

Name of alternative education program		How has the AEP program impacted your life?				
		Literacy	Numeracy	Help others	Apply teachings to daily life	Other
Community-Based NFE Classes (13 respondents)	Count	11	9	1	4	5
	% within AEP	84.6%	69.2%	7.7%	30.8%	38.5%
School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	Count	13	7	3	4	6
	% within AEP	100.0%	53.8%	7.7%	30.8%	46.2%
Total (26 respondents)	Count	24	16	4	8	11
	% of Total	92.3%	61.5%	15.4%	30.8%	42.3%

Over 90% of children consider learning how to read and write an important skill acquired thanks to the program. Learning basic math scored quite high among children (61.5%), followed by applying teachings to their daily life (30.8%).

This 'Applying teachings to daily life' category refers to children recognizing that they used what they learned in class to solve personal matters. Some of these affairs include being able to take public transportation by distinguishing the bus numbers, reading street signs, preventing employers from paying them less for their work, among others. The category 'Help others' is very similar to 'applying teachings to daily life'. The difference is that instead of using knowledge for their own convenience, they use it to help others who lack the skills they acquired at the AEP. Among children's responses 'helping others' included reading the mail to their families, helping their siblings with their homework from the formal school, and giving directions on how to find places to people in the street who asked for help. These two last categories show that children are able to reason logically, evaluate options and make judgments on which one is the best and/or most feasible to solution to solve the problem at hand.

From the 13 children interviewed from the Community-based NFE classes, over 50% are child laborers. All of them clean fish at the dock and mentioned that basic literacy and numeracy help them at work. After finishing work, children get a receipt with the number of fish kg. they cleaned and the price per

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[39] Because this was an open question, children gave detailed examples of how they felt the program impacted them. For this reason, for many interviewees their answer to this question actually qualified into more than one category. For example, if a child responds that now s/he is able to do math and also read newspapers for his/her own enjoyment, this answer qualifies under the two categories 'Numeracy' and 'apply teachings to daily life.'

kilo the employer agreed to pay them. Before children and their parents had to accept whatever total amount the employer wrote on the receipt because they were illiterate. Oftentimes they were underpaid. After attending the Community-based NFE classes, children felt confident that they could read and calculate the right amount of money they and their families should get paid. These children also showed critical thinking skills. Instead of blindly believing what the authority (their employer) says, they took into account past experiences and/or other co-workers' experiences of getting underpaid and decided to verify themselves that the employer were paying them the fair wage.

In the case of School-on-Wheels students, many of the interviewees were younger than 10 years old and did not work. They usually roam the streets and look after their younger siblings. Only five out of 13 children work and they do different jobs, from selling chili and lemon to working in catering events. Many of the interviewees recognized that reading, writing and basic math allowed them to make financial transactions (at work and outside work) without worrying about getting cheated. Others said they enjoy helping their younger siblings with their homework. However, there is a striking case, of one boy at Fashion Street, whose life was changed thanks to the AEP. The AEP taught him values that challenged his habit of stealing.

The following box (Box 6.5) shows quotes of children interviewed that explain in their own words how these programs have increased their capabilities. The examples shown below are an indicative that the educational processes through which children learned to master literacy and numeracy skills are participatory and inclusive.

Box 6. 5. Children's quotes - Impact of NFE programs in Mumbai

Children's quotes about how DSS Mumbai NFE programs has impacted their lives	
Name of AEP	**Quote**
School-on-Wheels	"Before I used to rob and steal, beg on the roads. I was like a street child. After joining School-on-Wheels, I left everything and now I know how to read and write, and have all good hygiene habits." - Vijay Sanjay
	"I can read and write, and even can help illiterate people on the road by reading their address or showing them the way. As caterers, we get party orders...so I can read the address and go the exact [party] location." - Sachin Bobade
	"Now I know how to read and write, maths and how to draw. I use maths to add and substract on the shops when I go to buy something." - Nafisa Allaudin Shaikh
	"Before I never used to read and write, but now I can read and write... read names on the road, and I can help my family and friends by reading and writing. I can do maths." - Rubina Samad Mandal
Community-based NFE classes	"I can read and write, and know how to do maths, and I also taught my parents how to sign [their names]" - Anita Jaohan
	"I know how to read and write and I use my maths at my job by adding and substracting and multiplying. If I get lost, I can read and find the place." - Yashoda Awand Chawan
	"I know how to read and write, and I can even read and multiply to calculate the total of the receipt at work and find out the exact amount [I should get paid]." - Nisha Khemu Rathod

6.4.2.2 Study Classes program[40]

Fourteen children enrolled in a formal school and attending the Study Classes program were asked to imagine how different would be their lives without DSS presence. Table 6.7 shows that over 55% answered that DSS Pune facilitated their access formal education. DSS helped them either by taking care of the enrollment procedures and/or helping them cope with formal school studies.

Table 6. 7. Impact of DSS Pune in Study Classes students

Alternative Education Program		Impact of DSS Pune in your life?			
		Access to Formal School	No impact	Other	Total
Study Classes	Count	8	5	1	14
	Total%	57.1%	35.7%	7.1%	100.0%

However, as many as 35.7% answered that DSS actually had no impact on their (present) life. There are several factors that explain their answer. First, all of five children were not enrolled in a formal school by DSS. Their parents themselves enrolled in school from 1st standard, and they were currently studying in 4th standard or above. Second, the Study Classes curriculum is designed to help children up to 4th standard, and teachers are not prepared to deal with children that study in higher standards. Third, the DSS centers these children go to recently opened and they are quite small compared to the other older centers in Windsor and Golden Trellis. Given the small size of these centers, there was only one teacher in charge of all the programs (rather than at least two of them), and they were inexperienced and new to DSS. The shortage of staff, together with the fact that most students are in pre-school, resulted in the teachers devoting most of their attention to younger children (neglecting the older ones). For this reason, these children see the DSS center as a place where they go to play.

These five children are rather a special case, because most children in construction sites do not normally go to formal school in the city. Parents do not enroll their children in formal schools for a number of reasons. Oftentimes the construction sites are located in the outskirts of the city and the schooling facilities are far away from their home. Parents, afraid of their children's safety, refuse to send them to school alone. Other times, parents are unaware the locations of schools and that they are free of

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[40] Given that the main objective of the Study Classes (SC) program does not focus on giving children life skills (like the NFE programs in Mumbai), the question asked to the 14 children in SC program is slightly different. The question is not about the program itself, but rather about the DSS presence in their life. DSS mainstreams children to school, and Study Classes is the program that strengthens their literacy and numeracy skills to help them cope with formal school. The success of the Study Classes program depends on DSS' intervention first to enroll children in school.

charge.[41] Thus, most children have lower knowledge levels and having a Study Classes curriculum covering standards above the 4th grade does not seem so urgent. DSS Pune, however, is considering addressing this curricula issue next year.

In conclusion, for the majority of migrant children living in construction sites DSS Pune plays a key role in increasing their access to formal school. Study Classes is the key element that helps retain children in school. Box 6.6 is a compilation of quotes given by Study Classes students that portray how AEPs can help children exercise their right to education. Based on the responses below, the program has enable them to have go to formal school, which in turn has broaden their mind on regards of what they would like to do in their life.

Box 6. 6. Children's quotes - Impact of Study Classes

Children's quotes about how DSS Pune has impacted their life
How different would have been your life if DSS would not have been there?
"I would have not been able to go to school. I lack the appropriate required certifications and documents… I didn't know how to read, but now I might be able to go to college because of DSS." - Sunny Prakash Bhosale
"I would not have been able to attend school. I didn't know anything about schools and DSS helped me to cope up with (formal) school." - Pandu Shiva Rathore
"I would have ended up working in a restaurant and might have had to sell liquor. If I did not have any money, I would have turned into a scrap dealer... I want to become an engineer and I wont be able to do it without studying." - Dharma Suresh Pawar
"My life has changed after coming here [DSS school]. I would have not learned how to read and write, and would have not got enrolled into school. I like to learn and I will get a good job." - Pitambar Sahu
"I would not be [currently] enrolled in school… [DSS] taught me from Balwadi to 3rd std." - Shiva Kishan Rathore
"I learned to read and sing songs. I did not know anything when I was in 3rd std [in the formal school], but the teacher at DSS taught me everything." - Kalim Hussain Shaikh

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[41] Focus Group Parents Moshi Construction Site 2012, 18 April

6.4.3 Parents' responses[42]

6.4.3.1 NFE programs: DSS Mumbai and Saath in Ahmedabad[43]

In order to better understand parents' perceptions on educations and the program, they were asked first if their children had ever been to a formal school, and the reasons why they dropout or never attended school.[44]

As many as eight (out of 12) children in the Community-based NFE classes have never attended school mainly because of their family's meager income. The remaining four dropped out because their parents moved to Mumbai. In School-on-Wheels, nine (out of 13) children used to go to formal school, but dropped out for different reasons. These range from moving back to the village to the passing away of one of the parents. The other four never went to school again for various reasons, which include parents' unawareness of the education system and lack of school transportation. However, all of the parents of child laborers in Mumbai (except one) stated that it was necessary for their children to work, because without this extra income the household would not be able to survive.[45] In Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) Construction Sites, almost half of the children have never attended school (47.6%) due to poverty, and about 24% dropped out. However, 6 out of 21 parents interviewed said that their child is attending CFS center only for the summer vacation, because their children actually go to (formal) school back in their village.

Despite most parents not having enrolled their children in school, 100% of them in Mumbai (25 out of 25) and over 90% of parents in Ahmedabad strongly believe that studying is currently the best for their children. Their main reason is that education will help their children to get a good job and secure a future. In Ahmedabad, parents also mentioned 'becoming literate' as an important reason for studying in school. Over 60% of parents in Mumbai and 38% of parents in Ahmedabad would like their children to at least finish secondary school (10th standard). Over 20% of parents in CFS Construction Sites program would actually like their children to study up to college. In fact, 42.9% of parents interviewed from CFS stated that they plan on enrolling their children back in the village once they grow old enough.

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[42] About a total of 60 parents gave their opinion regarding their views on the AEP their children participate in. In Mumbai, a total of 25 parents were interviewed (12 from Community-based NFE classes and 13 from School-on-Wheels). Fourteen and 21 parents in Pune and Ahmedabad, respectively participated in the study as well.

[43] Given that Community-based NFE classes, School-on-Wheels and Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites are NFE programs, it was convenient to put parents' responses in the same section. In this way, it would be easier to draw similarities and make differences between the three strategies.

[44] Given that the sample of children is not proportional to the number of girls and boys there are in a class, it is not possible to also analyze this variable according to children's gender.

[45] In the CFS Construction Site program, no children (except one older girl) work for pay. The majority of children attending this program are usually young (below 11 years old). Children above 13 or 14 years old start working in construction.

Even though most parents said that they would like their daughters to study, during the 30-minute interview many of them admitted that in their tribe and/or culture girls marry at an early age and are not allowed to study. For this reason, many were more concerned about saving money for the dowry than sending their daughters to school.[46] In conclusion, parents' responses in general show some inconsistencies (especially regarding their daughters' education). It seems that there is a large difference between reality and what they consider ideal for their children. They value education because they associate it with higher socio-economic status, but think that their current economic situation and cultural barriers make it too difficult for their children to study.

Next, parents were asked their opinion about the AEP their children attend. In Mumbai 84% of parents said that they were happy their children were studying. A similar percentage (90%) of parents in Ahmedabad replied that what their children learn at CFS school is relevant to their life. Many of them also mentioned that they were happy their children were doing something more useful with their time than roaming around the construction site. Despite the positive responses, some interviewees (especially fathers and parents from CFS) had a difficult time answering what subjects their children learn in the NFE school. Parents were more eloquent when asked to give examples of changes they have seen in their children after they entered the program. Table 6.8[47] categorizes parents' responses regarding the program impact.

Table 6. 8. Impact of AEP on child's life

Name of Alternative Education Program		How has the AEP program impacted the CHILD's life?					
		Literacy	Numeracy	Help others	Apply teachings to daily life	Other	No reply
Community-Based NFE Classes (12 respondents)	% within AEP	75.0%	41.7%	33.3%	33.3%	25.0%	8.3%
School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	% within AEP	84.6%	15.4%	30.8%	23.1%	7.7%	15.4%
Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites (21 respondents)	% within AEP	14.3%	4.8%	.0%	9.5%	57.1%	28.6%

In both NFE programs in Mumbai, literacy and helping others are among the most popular answers because parents were aware of how beneficial it was to them to have a literate child in the family.

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[46] In India, there is a strong gender bias against girls. Sons are considered as the main breadwinner and the ones that will take of their parents once they age. Girls, on the other side, are seen as a burden. Besides providing for them till they are old enough to marry, parents need to pay the groom an expensive dowry in-kind and cash. Once girls married, they leave their parents' home to live with their husband and in-laws.

[47] Parents gave extensive answers to this open question, and therefore, many of the responses obtained applied to more than one category. For this reason, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Learning basic numeracy was a particularly popular answer among parents in the Community-based NFE classes. Many of their children are child laborers are they find it important for them to know how to calculate their wages. Only three (out of a total of 25 parents) replied that they did not know/notice any difference.

This number doubles among parents from CFS, because they are less involved in their children's schooling, and Saath has the challenge to reverse this trend. In some cases, parents did not see a change in their children because their children regularly go to school in the village. In others, they were too busy working for most of the day. CFS parents gave miscellaneous answers (classified as 'Other') regarding how the program had impacted their children. Their responses range from good hygiene habits, to not using bad words to enjoy studying.

Box 6.7 classifies parents' answers by AEP, and clearly highlights the differences in their perceptions of how the program has positively influenced their children.

Box 6. 7. Parents' quotes – Impact of NFE programs

	Parents' quotes about how NFE programs impacted their CHILD	
	Name of AEP	**Quote**
Mumbai	**School-on-Wheels**	*"Anjali can read and write, she paints well. If her younger brother or sister makes any mistake in their studies, she helps them out." - Radha Ranga Pawar*
		"Rubina writes and reads [signs] properly, which is helpful when we go out. She taught me how to write my name and helps her brother in his studies." - Shabini Samad Mandal
		"At our hotel, he [Jamal] handles our account by summing up the amounts. He can also read and write." - Banesha Noorul Shaikh
	Community-based NFE classes	*"At our workplace, she [Nisha] can calculate the exact amount of money we should get paid according to the number of fish kgs we cleaned… and even help other people at work by reading their receipts and adding up the total amount they should receive from the employer." - Jamu Khemu Rathod*
		"Yes, I have noticed that after Jaya is coming to [this] school, she can read and write. For example, she helps us by reading what comes in the television, in the phone and adds up the the total amount [at work]." - Shantabat Rupshi Pawar
		"She [Yashoda] can read and write. So when we give her money to buy water, she gets the exact amount of water." - Kavita Anand Chawan
Ahmedabad	**Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites**	*"My child [Mehul] has started studying now, and he has developed love for his studies." - Noorieben Damo*
		"She [Deepika] has started reading and writing. She loves coming here [CFS school]. Even on Sundays, she checks whether the teacher has come or not." - Ramilaben Damo
		"My children [Ganesh and Mitesh] now wait for the teacher to come and want to remain in school itself." - Ashaben Bhavan Bhai Raval
		"After joining [CFS school], Bhuri is saying that she wants to study more." - Nandivi Bariya
		"Our child [Lalo] keeps telling us [parents] what the teacher taught him. He also bathes." - Laludi Koli Patel
		"Ajay showers three times a day, and cleans everywhere. First, he was immature, but now he is behaving nicely...he also used to fight but not anymore." - Vikram Vasava

6.4.3.2 Study Classes[48]

Like in Mumbai and Ahmedabad, almost all parents interviewed (13 out 14) agreed that currently it was best for their children is to go to school, mainly because education guarantees them a higher standard of living. For as many as 43% of parents DSS' largest contribution was to facilitate their children's admission to a formal school in the new construction site. Without DSS support (in transportation, admission procedures, etc.), it would have been difficult for these parents to send their children to

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[48] Unlike the other three programs, Study Classes is not a NFE program. Given that DSS Pune mainstreams children to formal school and then provides academic support through the Study Classes program, parents were asked a slightly different set of questions regarding the impact of the program on their children

school. Even though they think that the Study Classes curricula helps their children to cope with formal school, parents are not aware of how DSS teachers teach their children.

Based on observations in class, the education processes in Pune are similar to those in DSS Mumbai. Like in DSS Mumbai, teachers receive a three-week initial training, where they learn about child development and psychology, and methods to teach language, math and creative thinking. After this teachers get once a month a refresher training to keep up their knowledge and skills in participatory teaching and other issues relevant to the children they work with.

In large DSS schools (Windsor and Golden Trellis), teachers keep a close relationship with their students, and give personal attention to them. They help students solve doubts and questions about the subjects learned at the formal school, and promote children's participation in class. As mentioned before, this does not necessarily hold true for the smaller and newer DSS centers (Balewadi 43 and Vasant Vihar), where there is only one teacher in charge.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described and compared in depth the four alternative education programs with regard to the three criteria to assess Education Quality. It is clear that all three aspects (children's experiences and background, curricula content and teaching processes) are equally important and build on each other. Based on the evidence presented, both Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels are the best AEPs under the Right to Quality Education. The results of their efforts in making possible a participatory learning has shown in the responses given by parents and children regarding how the programs have increased children's capabilities, and therefore improved their present and future well-being. At the learner's level, DSS' NFE programs embody what Unicef states under its normative list of requirements for participatory and empowering education. These programs centered on the learner giving him/her an active role in the learning process, which also considers his/her needs based on socio-economic, natural and cultural environment he/she lives in.

Table 6.9 summarizes the performance of all four programs on the Education Quality criteria.

Table 6. 9. Conclusion table – Education Quality Criteria

Education Quality Criteria				
Name of NGO	**Name of AEP**	**What children bring to the classroom**	**Curricula content**	**Processes**
Door Step School Mumbai[49]	**Community-based NFE classes** **School-on-Wheels**	Pays special attention encourage children's self-expression, and frequently trains teachers in this regard Teachers are trained to deal with cultural diversity in class	Core subjects are basic numeracy and literacy up to 4th std. Puts knowledge in familiar contexts so that children can make connections that will facilitate learning Teach important values Provide opportunities for children to use their creativity Includes a lifelong learning component through its CLC classes	Participatory and learner centered approach Has increased children's self-esteem and self-confidence Recap and in-class recognition of students' progress (praising) Children have increased their self-confidence and agency. Applying teachings outside the classroom gave positive results. Children and parents see a significant change
Door Step School Pune	**Study Classes**	Pays less attention children's self-expression, but it is still an important part of its curricula Teachers are trained to deal with cultural diversity in class	Core subjects are basic numeracy and literacy up to 4th std., taking into account the formal school curricula Parents, and especially children recognize that Study Classes successfully help them cope with formal schooling Teaches important values	Participatory and learner centered approach Has increased children's self-esteem and self-confidence Teachers practice in-class recognition of students' progress (praising) Has allowed children to access formal schooling, and consequently has

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[49] In order to avoid repetition, the content of the two NFE programs in DSS Mumbai share one space on the table Quality Education Table. The reason is that both programs have the same approach to bringing in children's experiences, share the same curricula framework, and use similar participatory processes.

			Provides less opportunities for children to use their creativity	broaden their mind regarding the options of what they would like to do in life
			Does not allocate specifically in its curricula a component of lifelong learning	
Saath - Ahmedabad	**Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites**	There is no self-expression content in the curricula Teachers face less challenges regarding diversity because children come from the same state and speak the same language.	Core subjects are basic numeracy and literacy, but the program still lacks a curricula framework Teach important values[50] Limited opportunities for using creativity No lifelong learning component	Teacher-centered, students are treated as passive recipients of knowledge Teachers' training are not on a regular basis, and there is a strong need for training on participatory processes Teachers practice in-class recognition of students' progress (praising) Impact of program has mixed results because few children actually go to formal school in the village Program is at the beginning stage, so impact is still limited

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[50] These values were implicitly mentioned during interviews with parents who were happy that their children had improved their hygiene habits and discipline in their studies.

VII. Right to be respected at school

7.1 Introduction

In addition to focusing on the rights to access to quality education, it is also relevant to evaluate the learning environment. First, schools should be child-friendly and gender-sensitive, where children can safely and comfortably learn and play learning environments. However, it is very important that children are not subject to discrimination of any kind by their teachers or classmates. They must not be subject to verbal, physical or sexual abuse at school. Traumatic experiences can negatively affect children's emotional and psychological state.

Hence, following the conceptual model (chapter III), the alternative education programs (AEPs) will be evaluated on their performance with regard to children's right to identity, integrity and participation. The first section, however, starts by evaluating the safety of the physical learning environment, where AEPs are conducted.

7.2 Child-friendly and safe schools

The physical school infrastructure of all four AEPs does not meet the standards set by Unicef (2007, p. 34). Unicef stipulates that all schools should be equipped with 'gender sensitive' toilets – where girls and boys have privacy and feel comfortable using them. Obstacles to children's health and safety should be removed as well. However, all schools visited during the three-month fieldwork lacked toilets altogether. In addition, they had no access to drinking water, and most of them had no proper ventilation. Only one of the classrooms of the Community-based NFE classes had working fans. These two facilities are especially important during the summer months when it is extremely hot[51], because heat can cause dehydration and negatively affect children's attention span.

Furthermore, most schools did not have electricity and many of them were dark inside, which can strain the students' eyes. The School-on-Wheels (SoW) buses, however, did not have this problem because they park out in the street where there is plenty of natural light. The physical space where classes are conducted was rather small in several schools. This is especially true for most Community-based NFE and all Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) classrooms, where children need to sit close to each other and there is no room for desks or any other piece of furniture. In the case of School-on-Wheels, even though the space can be sometimes tight (depending how many children come to class), the interior of the bus has been modified to make the most of the limited space available. The seats have been removed and

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[51] Temperatures can reach up to 45 Celsius degrees.

instead of desks, children use mats. All buses have two blackboards (one in the front and at the back) and cupboards attached to the ceiling, which run along the length of the bus.

Some of the limitations explained above are related to the fact that there are few options for school locations if they want to be located at the children's 'door step.' In the case of pavement dwellers, this has been solved by using buses as mobile schools. However, those schools located in the community are rather small because of the lack of space that characterizes slum areas. In the case of Study Classes and CFS programs, the builder is in charge of providing the physical space, and it varies according to what the builder considers necessary and/or is willing to give. For this reason, some classrooms are better equipped than others. In Umang Lambha, the CFS classroom is located right underneath a construction site. Besides being loud, after 11am there is a lot of dust constantly coming in and out of the classroom, which makes it difficult to breathe. Except this CFS classroom, the other AEPs have their classes located in safe places and offer a nurtured environment for children to learn.

7.3 Right to identity[52]

According to article 30 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "children have the right to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion and use their own language" (Unicef 2007, p.36). Thus, the AEP should make sure that no child is discriminated by their classmates and/or teacher on the basis of religion, gender, ethnicity, mother tongue or socio-economic background. Children were asked if they ever felt that their classmates or teacher treated them differently. Table 7.1 summarizes their responses.

Table 7. 1. Children's responses - Discrimination in class

Name of AEP			Have you ever felt discriminated by your classmates?			Have you ever felt discriminated by your teacher?		
			No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
Community-		Count	13	0	13	13	0	13
		% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
School-on-		Count	12	1	13	13	0	13
		% within AEP	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Study Classes		Count	14	0	14	14	0	14
		% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	39	1	40	40	0	40
		% of Total	97.5%	2.5%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%

[52] No children from the Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) Construction Sites program were able to be interviewed. For this reason, Table 7.1 shows responses only from students of the other three AEPs. Nevertheless, 21 parents whose children go to CFS participated in the study and their responses are included in Table 7.2.

No children felt discrimination of any kind from their classmates, with the exception of one case in a School-on-Wheels class. The respondent complained that a male classmate called her names for being a girl and a Muslim. She said that her teacher quickly addressed the matter by scolding the boy. Furthermore, no student from any of the three AEPs reported to have been subjected to discrimination by their teacher.

Parents were also asked if their children ever complained about being humiliated by their classmates and/or teachers for any of the reasons previously mentioned. Table 7.2 shows their responses.

Table 7. 2. Parents' responses - Discrimination in class

Name of NGO	Name of AEP		Has CHILD ever complained about feeling discriminated by his/her classmates?			Has CHILD ever complained about feeling discriminated by his/her teacher?		
			No	Yes	Total	No	Yes	Total
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	11	1	12	12	0	12
		% within AEP	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	School-on-Wheels	Count	13	0	13	13	0	13
		% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	14	0	14	14	0	14
		% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Saath - Ahmedabad	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Count	21	0	21	21	0	21
		% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	59	1	60	60	0	60
		% of Total	98.3%	1.7%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%

From 60 parents interviewed, only one parent from a Community-based NFE class said that her child was discriminated by a classmate on one occasion, but did not give more details. Finally, 100% of parents stated that they had no complaints about their child's teacher in this regard.

7.4 Right to integrity

School discipline by no means should violate children's dignity. In order to find out if teachers use violence as a method to impose discipline and order, children were asked to describe what their teacher does when students misbehave in class. Table 7.3 shows that teachers do not physically punish their students.

Table 7. 3. Children's responses - Teachers' discipline methods in class

| Name of NGO | Name of alternative education program | | How does your teacher punish when children misbehave? | | | |
			Doesn't do anything	instructions to behave	Scolds	Total
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	0	13	0	13
		% within AEP	**0.0%**	**100.0%**	**0.0%**	**100.0%**
	School-on-Wheels	Count	1	8	4	13
		% within AEP	**7.7%**	**61.5%**	**30.8%**	**100.0%**
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	0	13	1	14
		% within AEP	**0.0%**	**92.9%**	**7.1%**	**100.0%**

All 13 children interviewed (100%) from the Community-based NFE classes, and over 60% of School-on-Wheels interviewees stated that their teachers give instructions to put order in class. Thirteen out 14 children attending Study Classes also gave the same answer. Teachers' instructions range from asking students to sit down and keep quiet to making promises of playing a game if they calm down. About 4 out 13 children in School-on-Wheels and 1 out 14 from Study Classes stated that their teacher does scold them when they misbehave.

However, teachers are not the only ones who could be abusive to children at school. Children can also bully their classmates. In this study, the main forms of violence against children in school include being subjected to constant shouts, insults, physical abuse and sexual abuse.[53]

Children were asked to answer if they were ever insulted, constantly shouted or beaten by their classmates and/or teacher. Table 7.4 compiles answers for questions referring to both classmates and teachers.

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[53] The question on sexual abuse is very sensitive, and for this reason, the phrasing of the question was "Has any of your classmates/your teacher touched you or done things to you that you did not agree to or like?" However, many children were too young to comprehend what sexual harassment or abuse meant, and for others the question was too vague and turned rather confusing. DSS Mumbai thought it was best not to ask this question directly to children, but to their parents instead. After few pilot studies, the researcher also realized that research assistants were not comfortable asking this question to children, and they often skipped it. Hence, the researcher followed DSS advice.

Table 7. 4.Children's responses - Right to integrity at school

Name of NGO	Name of alternative education program		Are you repeatedly insulted?		Are you constantly shouted?		Are you badly beaten?	
			No	Yes	**No**	Yes	**No**	Yes
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes (13 respondents)	% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	% within AEP	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%	0.0%	92.3%	7.7%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes (14 respondents)	% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Total **(40 respondents)**			97.5%	2.5%	100.0%	0.0%	97.5%	2.5%

Almost no children reported to have been subject to any of the three forms of violence considered for this study. From 40 interviews, there were only two complaints reported: one for insults and one for physical abuse. The two complaints were reported by the same child (age 11 years old). He said that one of his male classmates (of the same age) frequently bullies him for no reason. He also mentioned that when this happens in class, his teacher pulls them aside and solves the matter immediately.

Parents were asked if their children even complained about being bullied at school. Besides the three categories children were asked, parents were additionally asked if there were incidents with their child regarding sexual harassment or abuse at school.

Table 7.5 summarizes their responses. In the programs Community-based NFE classes, School-on-Wheels and Child-Friendly Spaces, parents did not report any incidents of violence against their children by their teacher or classmates. In Study Classes, however, there were two complaints of a teacher insulting and constantly shouting at a student. These complaints were made by the same parent, whose child studies at Balewadi 43. The mother complained that the DSS teacher constantly yelled at her son and never asked him anything in a nice way. She also mentioned that the teacher in more than one occasion insulted him for misbehaving in class.

Table 7. 5. Parents' responses - Right to integrity at school

Name of NGO	Name of alternative education program		Has CHILD ever complained about being repeatedly insulted?		Has CHILD ever complained about being constantly shouted at?		Has CHILD ever complained about being badly beaten?		Has CHILD ever complained about being sexually harrased?	
			No	Yes	**No**	Yes	**No**	Yes	**No**	Yes
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes (12 respondents)	% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	School-on-Wheels (13 respondents)	% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes (14 respondents)	% within AEP	92.9%	7.1%	92.9%	7.1%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Saath - Ahmedabad	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites (21 respondents)	% within AEP	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Total (60 respondents)		% of Total	**98.3%**	1.7%	**98.3%**	1.7%	**100.0%**	0.0%	**100.0%**	0.0%

7.5 Right to participation[54]

According to article 12 of CRC, children are entitled to express their views in all matters related to them (Unicef 2007, p.36). As explained in Chapter V, DSS Mumbai and Pune have a self-expression component in the curricula of their programs. It focuses on children's freedom of expression, and teachers are permanently trained on how to encourage children to open up and actively participate in their learning process. By having a self-expression component, AEPs show their commitment to empower children to exercise their right to participation.

This variable, however, was measured by asking if they feel that their teachers appreciate their input in class, and how much they like their classmates. Children's responses illustrate their perceptions of class dynamics and teacher-student interaction. In addition, teachers were also asked to rank how valuable they consider their students' opinions and ideas.

Table 7.6 shows children's opinions about how much they feel their teachers appreciate their opinion in class. Over 90% of children in the Study Classes and School-on-Wheels program said that their teacher values their opinion. In the Community-based NFE classes, over 80% of children said the same

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[54] This section does not include answers from CFS children, but it does show CFS teachers' opinions regarding the right to participation.

Table 7. 6. Children's responses - Right to participation at school

Name of AEP		Do you feel that your teacher values your opinion?			Total
		No	Yes	No reply	
Community-based NFE classes	Count	0	11	2	13
	% within AEP	**0.0%**	**84.6%**	**15.4%**	100.0%
School-on-Wheels	Count	0	12	1	13
	% within AEP	**0.0%**	**92.3%**	**7.7%**	100.0%
Study Classes	Count	0	13	1	14
	% within AEP	**0.0%**	**92.9%**	**7.1%**	100.0%
Total	Count	0	36	4	40
	% of Total	0.0%	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%

When children were asked how comfortable they felt participating in class, about 70% of children in both NFE programs in Mumbai said that they felt comfortable speaking in class, and another 23% said that they actually felt 'very comfortable.' Only one child in each program responded that he did not feel comfortable speaking in class. In Study Classes, however, an overwhelming 79% said that they felt 'very comfortable' expressing their opinion in class, and over 14% answered 'comfortable' to this question. Only one confessed to feeling a bit shy to speak in public. It seems that teachers' efforts to help children open up and freely express themselves in the classroom are quite successful. In-class observations help confirm children's perceptions.

Most students in DSS Mumbai and Pune seem to consider their classroom a second home, and feel at ease in this nurtured environment. Part of the reason for children to feel comfortable at their AEP is that the class size is rather small (maximum 25 students per class). It is easier and faster for children to become acquainted with all their classmates. If children like their classmates and feel relaxed around them, then it is less likely that they would feel inhibited and scared to participate in class.

One hundred percent of interviewees in School-on-Wheels and Study Classes stated that they like their classmates very much. About 77% of interviewees from the Community-based NFE classes program said that they also like their classmates, but three children (23%) did not answer the question. Box 7.1 includes some quotes by children regarding how they feel about their classmates at the AEP.

Box 7. 1. Children's quotes - Opinion about their classmates

	Children's quotes regarding what how they feel about their classmates	
	Name of AEP	**Quote**
DSS Mumbai	School-on-Wheels	*"We work together, respect each other and behave well" - Khulsum Shaikh*
		"I like them, as we are from the same community and we are like family." - Jamal Ludul Shaikh
		"We study together and help each other in our studies." - Sachin Bobade
	Community-based NFE classes	*"[My classmates are] very nice. They help me in my studies. We don't fight, and work together.." - Komal Lakshman Chawan*
		"[They are] very nice. If I make any mistake, they help me and we play and work together." - Arti Kishan Rathod
		"We play together, and we help each other in our studies and we do our job at work together as well." - Komal Umesh Rathod
DSS Pune	Study Classes	*"At [DSS] school, if anybody needs a rupee or some money we lend it to each other. We share tiffins and exchange gifts and souvenirs when we come back from pilgrimage." - Dharma Suresh Pawar*
		"They don't hit or scold. They play with me." - Pitambar Sahu
		"We share food together, play and have fun together. We also go on short trips to nearby areas of Pune." -Pandu Shiva Rathore

In Mumbai, the seven NFE teachers interviewed for this study said that children have the right to speak and that their suggestions are often taken into account because they are good ideas. Besides bringing forth good ideas for in-class activities, students from one of the Community-based NFE classes came up with a solution to prevent one of their classmates from dropping out. The children came up with the idea of going to a student's home along with the teacher and tell her that if she refused to go to school, then they would bring the school outside her house and conduct classes right there. The teacher thought it was a good strategy and they gave it a try. It seems that it worked out because the girl is currently studying at DSS center. Study Classes teachers also agreed that it is important to hear children's ideas and opinions. For example, students, inspired by the decorations at their formal school, suggested the DSS teacher in Golden Trellis to make some decorations with colorful papers to cheer up the classroom.

In Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites (CFS), three out of the four teachers interviewed also recognized the importance of listening to children and making sure that they know their ideas are valuable. However, the newest teacher, seemed confused when asked how valuable does she consider children's opinions. She answered that in her class there is no participation, which indicates that her

teaching style might be closer to rote learning and teacher-centered approaches. Training would help CFS teachers better understand why is it important to encourage children to actively get involved in class. It will also advise on the best and most effective ways to help children exercise their right to participation.

7.6 Conclusion

Children participating in AEPs should have access to a safe and healthy learning environment where their rights to identity, integrity and participation are respected by their teachers and classmates. Even though classrooms in all AEPs have major infrastructure deficiencies, in-class observations have shown that most of them are safe environments, where teachers take good care of children.

Forty students and sixty parents were interviewed regarding children's right to identity in the classroom. Their responses showed that there were few cases of discrimination, where children insulted each other for belonging to a different religion and/or schedule caste or tribe. There were no cases reported where the teacher discriminated against the students.

They were also interviewed about children's right to integrity. Parents in all four AEPs said that their children have never complained about being subjected to insults, beatings, shouting and sexual abuse by their teacher and/or classmates, with the exception of one case in a Study Class. The mother complained that the DSS teacher of this Study Class constantly yells at her son, and has even insulted him more than once. From the forty children interviewed, there was only one case of bullying reported, which involved one student intimidating another. Children were also asked to explain how their teachers discipline them, and their answers confirmed that teachers do not use violence as a method.

Children's right to participation was measured by interviewing both children and parents. In this regard, some programs are more effective than others. The Community-based NFE classes, School-on-Wheels and Study Classes programs have a self-expression component in their curricula, which seems to have positive results. Teachers of these three AEPs encourage children to talk and participate in class, which children appreciate. Almost 100% students said that they feel comfortable speaking in class and giving their opinion. A total of 14 teachers were interviewed from all AEPs, and all of them, with the exception of one, agreed that it is important to hear what children want to say with an open mind. Thus, if their ideas are good, teachers can implement them in class.

In conclusion, despite facing challenges in one or more criteria, the four AEPs provide safe and healthy learning environments for these highly vulnerable children. The following table (Table 7.4) summarizes the criteria used to evaluate children's right to respect at school.

Table 7. 7 Conclusion table - Right to respect at school

		Right to respect at school – criteria			
Name of NGO	**Name of AEP**	**Safe schools**	**Right to identity**	**Right to integrity**	**Right to participation**
Door Step School Mumbai[55]	**Community-based NFE classes** **School-on-Wheels**	• Lack of access to drinking water, gender-sensitive toilets, proper lightning and ventilation	• There are no discriminatory practices by the teacher against children • Even though some children might insult each other due to their caste, religion, gender and/or ethnicity, these are not regular practices among students	• No children has been subjected to constant shouting, insults, physical or sexual abuse by their teacher or classmates • There is only one case of a boy being bullied by another classmate	• Teachers encourage children to participate in class and value their opinions • Children feel that their ideas are appreciated by their teachers • Children like their classmates and feel comfortable speaking in class
Door Step School Pune	**Study Classes**	• Same as above	• Same as above	• No children has been subjected to constant shouting, insults, physical or sexual abuse by their teacher or classmates • There is only one incident	• Children feel comfortable speaking in class and like their classmates • Teachers appreciate their ideas, which is sensed by most students

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[55] In order to avoid repetition, the content of the two NFE programs in DSS Mumbai share one space on the Quality Education Table. The reason is that both programs have the same approach to bring in children's experiences, share the same curricula framework and use similar participatory processes.

				where a parent complained about a teacher	
Saath - Ahmedabad	**Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites**	• Same as above	• Same as above	• No children has been subject to constant shouting, insults, physical or sexual abuse by their teacher or classmates	• No children were interviewed from this program, but teachers need training in this criteria

VIII. Tracer Studies

8.1 Introduction[56]

Four tracer studies were conducted with former Community-based NFE students who participated in the program over 10 years ago. The alumni interviewed come from the Back Bay and Cuffe Parade areas in South Mumbai. It is important to notice that DSS put the researcher in touch with these alumni and, therefore, it is likely that NGO picked the most successful former students for these tracer studies.

The case studies are relevant to the study to illustrate how this AEP has impacted the lives of these four people. Besides increasing these alumni's access to formal schooling, the Community-based NFE classes used participatory and empowering pedagogy in class that helped them overcome difficulties and successfully stay in school all the way to university. On the one hand, the following tracer studies give a rich picture of the challenges and limitations highly deprived children undergo on a daily basis. On the other hand, they show the other side of the story: how different their lives could be if given the choice to exercise their right to education.

At the end of chapter, the tracer studies will be analyzed in the light of the three elements that compose the assessment criteria at the learner's level (see conceptual map): Right to access to education, Right to quality education and Right to respect in the learning environment.

8.2 Case Study I: Prakash Chauhan[57]

Prakash is 20 years old and belongs to the Banjara Scheduled Caste. He is from the Cuffe Parade Area, South Mumbai and started going to DSS Balwadi pre-school when he was only five years old. Afterwards, he studied at the Community-based NFE classes until he was eight years old, at which point DSS transferred him to a formal school.

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[56] Four tracer studies were conducted with former Community-based NFE alumni. It was not possible to carry out tracer studies with students from the other AEPs. The main reason was that the NGOs have a difficult time keeping in touch with children in the long-run (e.g. former students from 10 years ago), especially with those who lack a permanent location. DSS has not been able to successfully keep in touch or start a Bal Samuha program with students from School-on-Wheels program. Though effective at tracking children, the Study Classes program faces greater challenges than the Community-based NFE program, because of the children's constant shifting of location. Finally, Saath's CFS Construction Sites program is too young (less than two years old) to conduct trace studies at this moment.

[57] P Chauhan 2012, pers. comm., 10 March

His two older brothers studied up to 1st std., because Prakash's father refused to let them continue studying and put them to work as fishermen. Prakash says, "I did not know anything about education and felt that education was useless, but my DSS teachers pulled me out of my home and brought me to school and told me how important it is to be educated... for me, my [DSS] teacher is everything in my life." His DSS teachers, contrary to formal school teachers, paid close attention to him and repeated "ten times the same thing [if needed] and did not leave me until I understood... [They] encouraged me to study."

Four years ago, Prakash founded the Rainbow Foundation with his own money and funds he got by applying to funding organizations. Rainbow teaches football to children who never attended school or dropped out. Through this sport, Prakash tries to teach children in his community the importance of education. Girls were the main challenge, as their parents usually do not allow them to go outside their home, but they trusted Prakash and let them practice with him. He personally picks up children from their homes located in different parts of Mumbai. According to Prakash, children "should get a Bachelor's degree and NFE should be the first step for the students who cannot afford [formal school]."

If DSS would not have persisted on his education, he says "I would be like my brothers, who sell and clean fish... I would have to wake up at 5am and work the whole day until the evening... usually men in my tribe get married as early as 12 years old, but because of DSS I am given the choice to marry at [later] age." Prakash is currently studying 11th std., and plans on finishing higher secondary school to then do his Bachelor's degree. By using his own example, he tries to help children realize that they too can accomplish their goals and study further.

8.3 Case Study II: Fatima Mulla[58]

Fatima is a 20-year old Muslim girl who lives in Back Bay and used to clean fish from an early age. When she started going to the Community-based NFE classes, her parents opposed her studies because her older sisters were already married. Thus, there was no one else to take care of the household chores (both parents worked), and they also wanted her to continue contributing to the household income. She remembers that her parents used to insult her DSS teacher when she came to pick up Fatima to go to class, but "she [DSS teacher] never gave up."

Fatima studied at the NFE school for two years before she was transferred to a formal school and enrolled in the Study Classes program. DSS helped her get a scholarship, which gave her confidence to keep studying. By becoming educated, Fatima wanted to gain the respect from her community. Girls in her culture are not allowed to go to school and marry at an early age. By getting educated, she could delay her marriage. Fatima says, "I wanted to make a difference in my community, and wanted to prove wrong those who thought I could not do this." She continued working early in the morning and was

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[58] F Mulla 2012, pers. comm., 10 March

often late, but her formal school teacher allowed her to come a bit later as recognition for her hard work at school.

DSS helped her understand the importance of being educated and prepared her to deal with the competitive (formal) school environment. She says that DSS gave regular tests (an important part of the curriculum), which gave her confidence to take exams at the formal school. Fatima also emphasizes that the DSS teaching methods are very good and one of things she most likes is that the classroom size is small enough for the teachers to give personal attention to each student. Teachers' support was vital for her to cope with the formal education. Fatima is currently in her 2nd year of college in social work and, as part of her program, she does fieldwork teaching children. She applies many of the DSS teaching methods, and often asks teachers for advice.

Fatima joined Bal Samuha when she was in 5th std. and through the years has conducted many leadership workshops. However, at the moment, she cannot participate as much as she used to because she has a busy schedule of classes. When asked how different her life would have been without DSS, she said "I would have not gone to school... by now I would be married with two children... my mother used to tell me to get married, but after she saw how determined I was with my studies, she told me to wait and finish my education." After completing her Bachelor's degree, Fatima is considering doing a Master's degree in Counseling, and is very excited about her future plans.

8.4 Case Study III: Ashok Rathod[59]

Ashok[60] is 23 years old and lives in Cuffe Parade, South Mumbai. When he was four years old, he attended DSS' Balwadi pre-school program, and after graduating DSS enrolled him at a municipal school nearby. He joined the Study Classes program in order to help him cope with formal school, where his DSS teacher kept him motivated and focused on his studies. Ashok remembered that once he injured his leg and could not walk, so his DSS teacher used to pick him up from home and carry him to all the way to class.

Later on, he joined Bal Samuha and through this program he gained greater developed self-confidence and leadership skills. According to Ashok, Bal Samuha gave him the tools and training he needed to become active in his community and address pressing social issues. In 2007, Ashok funded his own NGO, named OSCAR (Organization for Social Change, Awareness and Responsibility). This organization uses football as a medium to reduce school dropouts and spread drug abuse awareness among children in Ashok's community. Even though many parents were suspicious and reluctant in the beginning, OSCAR

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[59] A Rathod 2012, pers. comm., 13 March

[60] He did not attend the Community-based NFE classes, but his case is still relevant to identify many of DSS good practices on increasing children's access to education. Ashok is also a good example of how getting educated can radically change one's life.

has aided 700 children. It has also created an opportunity for girls to participate in these activities and increase their chances to stay in school.

He says, "My life would have been very different if DSS would not have been there in the first place... I would have by now been married and working at a local fishery... I would not have been able to run my own organization... I found my potential at Bal Samuha to give back to society." Currently, Ashok is on his first year of Bachelor's of Commerce, and he is determined to push OSCAR forward. DSS has greatly impacted his life, and increased the number of choices of doings and beings (capabilities) available to him.

8.5 Case Study IV: Santosh Hari Rathod[61]

Santosh is a 21-year old young man from the Banjara Scheduled Caste. He attended the Community-based NFE program for three years and remembers that his DSS teacher used to explain to him carefully whenever he made a mistake. After the NFE program, DSS helped him get enrolled in a public school, and Santosh started attending the Study Classes program.

Education expanded his opportunities and gave him a broader perspective of what he wanted to do and be in life, and he says that DSS intervention was the first stepping stone for him to get interested in studying. Reflecting on how different his life would be without education, he says, "I would be an illiterate person and doing some small job and hanging out in the streets... I would work sweeping the road or as a housekeeper."

Santosh is an active person, and besides working part-time in a travel agency, he is about to graduate this year with a Bachelor's degree in commerce. In his free time, he volunteers at the DSS Community Learning Center by helping children develop an avid interest in reading books. As part of this job, he constantly talks to parents about the benefits and importance of education, and tries to convince those who are reluctant to send their children to school. He uses his own life experiences to show parents that a different life is possible if they support their children's education.

8.6 Analysis of tracer studies based on criteria at the learner's level

There are several similarities among these four tracer studies, and they all relate back to the three elements of the right to education at the learner's level.

First, DSS played a major role in the four informants' right to access to education by helping them enroll at a formal school. In Fatima's case, it helped her obtain financial aid, so she could continue her studies. However, access to education involves more than just mainstreaming children to formal schooling. It

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[61] S Hari Rathod 2012, pers. comm., 17 March

implicates that teachers need to closely monitor students in order to identify problems that could potentially force them to drop out. The interviews show that the informants' teachers constantly visited their homes and were aware of each child's situation. Thus, the tracer studies give good examples of how much DSS teachers went out of their way to make sure the informants did not fall behind in school. Prakash, Fatima and Ashok's cases are especially relevant to show the good monitoring practices of DSS and the deep commitment teachers had to ensure children's access to education.

Second, the informants were satisfied with the quality of education they received at the Community-based NFE classes. The alumni interviewed said that it was relevant and helped them cope with formal school. For example, Fatima mentioned that having regular tests at her NFE classes helped her to easily adapt to her formal school's exams.

Curricula alone, however, would have been of little use if the teaching methods used in class were not empowering in character. Interviewees mentioned that it was their teachers who taught them the value of schooling, which in turn allowed them to exercise their right to be educated in an informed and voluntary way. Many of the informants mentioned that they appreciated the personal attention paid to them and their learning needs. Teachers were patient and explained lessons many times if necessary. Fatima admires the Community-based NFE teachers for their good work, and hopes to be as good a teacher as her DSS teachers were to her. For this reason, she often asks them for advice on how to apply these methods with her own students.

Third, the Community-based NFE classroom acted as safe and healthy environment, where these former students found the emotional support they needed to continue studying despite facing several challenges (e.g. parents opposing their schooling and social pressures for marriage). As a result of being the first members of their family to regularly study at a formal school, it is likely that the first few years were difficult for the interviewees. On the one hand, no one at home could serve as a role model and offer them moral support and advice based on their past experience. On the other hand, given that most (or all) of their family members were illiterate, nobody could help them out with their homework. Informants emphasized the love and care with which their teachers looked after them. They gave a few examples of how the DSS teachers gave them words of encouragement (e.g. Fatima's NFE teacher), which kept them focused and motivated in their studies.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the important role that Bal Samuha plays as a program that further builds the capacity of children. Ashok and Prakash are important examples of the impact this program has on building capabilities. By giving children a platform to address problems in their community, Bal Samuha slowly helps them explore the different roles they can take and surprise themselves with the kinds of things they can achieve. Bal Samuha focuses on providing different workshops to develop leadership and organizational skills.

8.7 Conclusion

By strengthening their self-esteem and self-confidence, this AEP set the bases by which participants made important decisions later in life, such as finishing higher secondary school, obtaining a Bachelor's degree, delaying marriage, among others. These tracer studies demonstrate that education is a fertile capability that opens up a number of opportunities. In the case of Ashok and Prakash, they felt capable enough to run their own NGOs to work with children and tackle important issues in their communities. They have become leaders in their community and hope to make a difference. Furthermore, Santosh, as well as the other informants, was able to improve his living standards and that of his family by becoming highly educated and getting better job opportunities. Gender biases against girls are unfortunately endemic in Indian culture. However, education has increased Fatima's freedom of choice. Fatima has been able to delay her marriage until she decides she wants to have a family (an uncommon practice in her community).

The stories of these four former students of the Community-based NFE classes show the kinds of difficulties that prevent children from disadvantaged backgrounds from getting educated. These challenges range from cultural practices, poverty, child labor, gender biases, among others. Without the help of AEPs, like the Community-based NFE classes, it would be extremely difficult for them to access formal education. The lives of these four interviewees would have been rather different and limited in choices of what they would have been able to do and to be. Education has offered them the opportunity to lead meaningful lives, with dignity and agency.

IX. AEP assessment at the system level

9.1 Introduction

In addition to assessing the alternative education programs (AEPs) at the learner level, the study also evaluated them at the system level. Many programs first aim at improving their performance at the classroom level and focus on processes, curricula and other criteria at the learner previously explained. Unfortunately, oftentimes they overlook the criteria at the system level, which is also vital to ensure the sustainability and success of the AEP at increasing children's access to education. Hence, chapter IX evaluates if the four AEPs meet the following requirements: use a system to measure learning outcomes, involve relevant stakeholders, and are transparent and accountable to these stakeholders.

9.2 System to measure learning outcomes

It is necessary to set goals based on the curricula and assign realistic time frames to meet these goals. Having a system in place to measure learning outcomes is important to facilitate monitoring, evaluation and recording of these outcomes. It also allows for a uniform way to convey results and aggregate data. Furthermore, it is vital for program implementation because it allows NGOs to learn whether or not the goals set are feasible, or if they need to be readjusted to better fit the learners' needs. Finally, it helps NGOs to have a good idea of how far or how close they are from achieving these learning outcomes, while also allowing them to analyze the program's performance over time.

DSS Mumbai and DSS Pune have a similar system to record learning outcomes. In DSS Mumbai, the 18-month curriculum is divided in four levels. When children enter one of the NFE programs, they take a pre-test, which determines their level according to the knowledge they have at the time of admission.

Once they start going to class, teachers take a weekly exam to track the children's learning progress. Every child has a performance sheet, which teachers fill out at the end of every month. Teachers use a marking system that contains different indicators according to the core subjects (language, math, self-expression, etc.) of the DSS curricula for NFE programs. Every quarter[62] these performance sheets are entered in the computer system using an official template. Twice a year (every six months), the information entered in the computer system is aggregated and classified by class.

In July and January, there is a Review Meeting. The School-on-Wheels and Community-based NFE staff is put into teams. Heading the School-on-Wheels team is the coordinator of all SoW buses and the community coordinators assigned for each of the buses. In the Community-based NFE program, there is

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[62] Teachers enter the performance sheet in the computer in July, October, December (sometimes the deadline extends until mid-January) and April.

a team for each of the four wards where the program operates. The teams are composed of the area coordinator followed by the community coordinators for the different areas within each ward. During the Review Meeting, the teams present the progress of children on meeting the objectives set for the curricula. This is a presentation for all the coordinators, directors and associate directors. Even though teachers do not participate in this meeting, they are in charge of presenting their students' progress at the Annual Performance Presentation, where all the DSS staff participates.[63]

DSS Pune has a similar system, but it adapts the goals and time frames to its six-month curricula to better respond to the migrating children that go to Study Classes. The Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites program unfortunately does not have a system to record learning outcomes. At this moment, the program is still on the process of finishing its curricula framework, and thus fulfilling this system level criterion would be the next step after completing this first phase.

9.3 Involvement of key stakeholders

In order to ensure that the AEP can sustainably mainstream and retain children in the formal system, it is necessary to involve key stakeholders, so that they so that feel ownership and commitment towards the program. In the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels programs, these key stakeholders include the DSS teachers, children, parents and the government. In addition to these stakeholders, the Study Classes and Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) program should also engage the builders and laborer contractors. The former is an important financial sponsor of these AEPs, whereas the latter closely works with the laborers and knows their migration patterns.

First, all four programs have meetings at least once a month, where teachers can discuss and update each other and their supervisor about the program progress. In the case of DSS Mumbai and Pune, frequent trainings and the annual Performance Presentation also open an opportunity for teachers to share their experiences and give input on how to better address problems in the classroom. Interviews and participant-observation show a deep commitment of DSS teachers to the programs, because they feel that they play an important role in it and in children's lives. Many of the teachers have been working over 15 years in DSS Mumbai. In Pune, some of the older teachers are now working at the teacher's Training Cell providing and organizing trainings.

Teachers[64] from all four AEPs were asked if they feel that their opinion and ideas are appreciated during meetings with their supervisors and coordinators. All teachers from DSS Mumbai and Pune answered affirmatively. However, the answers given by CFS teachers are rather mixed. Some of them said that they feel comfortable participating in the meetings, whereas another said she feels shy to give

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[63] Human Resources Associate 2012, pers. comm. 6 March

[64] A total of 14 teachers were interviewed: three from the Community-based NFE classes, four from the School-on-Wheels program, three from Study Classes and four from the Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Site program.

suggestions. Another CFS teacher actually complained that his suggestions are received well, but they are rarely implemented and never followed up. An explanation for CFS teachers' mixed responses is that there are no middle layers between them and the program director, who is also Saath's Associate Director. DSS teachers meet with their supervisors and coordinators, who then communicate their grievances and/or suggestions to the program directors. Despite teachers having a cordial relationship with the DSS executive director and president, they do not directly communicate with them. Thus, they are less afraid of hurting sensibilities or losing their job.

Children are the most important stakeholders and the main beneficiaries of the AEPs. Education is a human rights and, as right-holders children should be fully informed of their rights. However, for many of these children would be rather difficult to understand what rights are, because they feel that it is actually their duty to contribute to the family's income. During interviews with Community-based NFE students, many showed said that they do not want to go to a formal school, because they are worried that their household would not survive without their help. In these cases, it might be better to first help them understand the value of education, before introducing the concept of them as right-holders. This is the approach that the selected AEPs have adopted, which also entails creating awareness among parents about their children's right to education.

Parents are the other key stakeholders in all AEPs because their support to children's education increases the chances that children will successfully stay in school. Parents' should be fully informed of their children's right to education, and explained what the Right to Education Bill means for them. However, reaching parents can be difficult because they leave home early and come back late, and many are too busy to go to school for parents' meetings. In Mumbai, for example, many interviews with parents were actually cancelled because there was no suitable time to meet given that they arrive from work past 9pm.

Parents were asked how often teachers ask for their opinion on the program. Table 9.1 summarizes their responses.

Table 9. 1. Frequency parents are asked their opinion on the program

| Name of NGO | Name of AEP | | How often does CHILD's teacher ask for your opinion/feedback? | | | | | | |
			No reply	Never	Often	Seldom	Sometimes	Very often	Total
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	1	3	7	0	1	0	12
		% within AEP	8.3%	25.0%	58.3%	.0%	8.3%	.0%	100.0%
	School-on-Wheels	Count	1	1	9	0	2	0	13
		% within AEP	7.7%	7.7%	69.2%	.0%	15.4%	.0%	100.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	4	2	1	0	2	5	14
		% within AEP	28.6%	14.3%	7.1%	.0%	14.3%	35.7%	100.0%
Saath - Ahmedabad	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Count	3	7	4	3	2	2	21
		% within AEP	14.3%	33.3%	19.0%	14.3%	9.5%	9.5%	100.0%

The Community-based NFE classes and the School-on-Wheels program scored quite high in this question. More than 50% of parents in both programs said that the teachers ask them for their feedback on a frequent basis. In the Study Classes, the percentage is lower than 50%, but still significant (about 43% if adding the count from 'very often' and 'often'). The parents interviewed from the CFS program, however, scored much lower. Only 28.5% of parents reported that their children's teacher asks for their opinion, and as many as 33% stated that they have never been asked to give their input. Next, those parents who respond affirmatively to the first question were additionally asked to rank how much they think the teacher actually values their opinion. Table 9.2 shows parents' responses on this matter.

Table 9. 2. How much parents feel their opinion is valued?

Name of NGO	Name of AEP		How much do you think CHILD's teacher values your opinion?					Total
			Not applicable	No reply	Appreciated	Neutral	Very much appreciated	
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	3	1	7	1	0	12
		% within AEP	25.0%	8.3%	58.3%	8.3%	.0%	100.0%
	School-on-Wheels	Count	1	1	9	2	0	13
		% within AEP	7.7%	7.7%	69.2%	15.4%	.0%	100.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	2	5	3	0	4	14
		% within AEP	14.3%	35.7%	21.4%	.0%	28.6%	100.0%
Saath	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Count	7	4	8	1	1	21
		% within AEP	33.3%	19.0%	38.1%	4.8%	4.8%	100.0%

Parents interviewed from the Study Classes program feel that their feedback is respected and taken into account. Whereas no parents replied "very much appreciated" in the NFE programs in Mumbai, about 29% of parents in Pune gave this answer. More than 50% of parents interviewed in each of NFE programs in Mumbai responded that they feel their opinion is valued. In CFS, over 50% of parents did not reply to this question either because they did not know or because it was not applicable to them (i.e. they have never been asked for their opinion). The remaining 43%, however, answered that their opinion is appreciated.

All parents were finally asked how important it is for them to be asked their opinion regarding the AEP where their children study. Table 9.3 compiles their answers.

Table 9. 3. How important is for parents to be asked their feedback?

Name of NGO	Name of alternative education program		No reply	Important	Neutral	Not important at all	Not very important	Very important	Total
			How important is for you that the teacher asks your opinion?						
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	0	10	0	0	2	0	12
		% within AEP	.0%	83.3%	.0%	.0%	16.7%	.0%	100.0%
	School-on-Wheels	Count	0	12	1	0	0	0	13
		% within AEP	.0%	92.3%	7.7%	.0%	.0%	.0%	100.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	1	4	0	1	3	5	14
		% within AEP	7.1%	28.6%	.0%	7.1%	21.4%	35.7%	100.0%
Saath - Ahmedabad	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Count	1	11	2	1	5	1	21
		% within AEP	4.8%	52.4%	9.5%	4.8%	23.8%	4.8%	100.0%

Over 80% of parents interviewed in each of the NFE programs in Mumbai consider it 'important' to be involved in their children's education process. A significant number of parents in Study Classes (9 out of 14) and CFS (12 out of 21) also believe it is important to be involved and give feedback.

In Study Classes, however, the number of parents who responded 'not very important' is slightly higher than in the Community-based NFE classes. For the CFS program, this number goes up to five. Parents' main reason to consider their opinion as not relevant is that they are illiterate and many even never attended school. According to these parents, they do not know better than the teacher, so they should not interfere. Parents from the Study Classes program added that since the NGO takes care of everything, there is no longer a need for them to get involved. This kind of responses shows that it is important for all AEPs to focus on helping parents feel comfortable voicing their opinions and making them realize that their input is valuable and necessary. In the case of Study Classes, it is risky that parents become so dependable on the NGO's help, because it is not a sustainable way to mainstream children. If the NGO withdraws its support, it increases the chances that parents will not make an effort to make sure their children stay at school.

Even though all programs hold parents' meetings as a basic way to get them involved, this might not be enough. DSS Mumbai and Pune implement monitoring mechanisms, which also help gain greater rapport with parents. Despite the fact that the NFE programs in Mumbai seem to be doing better at involving parents than the other two AEPs, all of them need to keep working towards overcoming parents' reluctance to let children go to school and/or their disinterest in participating in their education. Winning over parents' trust and cooperation is an ongoing process.

The Right to Education (RTE) Bill stipulates that (formal) education is free, universal and compulsory for all children from age 6 to 14. The AEPs selected for this study deal with the government and the implementation of RTE Bill in different ways. On the one hand, DSS Mumbai does not agree that formal education is the best option for the children attending its NFE programs (i.e. slum and pavement

dwellers). Only those children who are prepared and whose parents also allow their schooling should be register in a formal school. Even though the RTE is helpful in some ways, it still has major loopholes that negatively affect highly underprivileged children. Thus, it refuses to support the government in its initiative to compile a list of all out-of-school children to mainstream them into the formal system. DSS Pune, on the other hand, sees the RTE Bill as a powerful tool that has facilitated their work of access to formal schooling for children of construction workers. This law has helped to make sure no children are denied admission for enrolling and re-enrolling in multiple schools due to their migrating lifestyle. Regarding the CFS program, the research has not been able to determine Saath's position regarding this law.

Builders and laborer contractors are important stakeholders. DSS Pune has been working with builders for at least 10 years. Even though at the beginning they had to convince them to set up a DSS school in their construction site, now builders are the ones approaching DSS. Their support and interest in the program has also allowed DSS to ask for more funding than just the physical space for the classroom. This year DSS is actually planning on asking builders to sponsor up to 80% of the costs for the school. Besides funding, builders are important because they can exercise pressure on parents to let their children go to the DSS center. Some builders as well as laborer contractors have threatened parents to lower their wages if they do not send their children to school[65]. Laborer contractors are important because they also help track children. Saath realized that by closely working with laborer contractors, it was easier to know where most children go after their parents finish their contracts at the site.

In Ahmedabad, three builders and four contract laborers were interviewed regarding their views on the program and the role they play in it.[66] From the three builders interviewed, the builder of Swaminarayan Park I and II is the only one that shows commitment to the CFS program. He even mentioned that he would be happy to have children from the nearby areas to join the CFS school. The centers in his two construction sites are the safest and best-equipped schools of all four CFS centers. The other builders stated that they believe that program is a great idea, but they want to get involved as little as possible because their job is to make sure the construction goes well. They pay no respect towards the children of their workers and consider them not their problem. The builders of the Umang Lambha and Madhav Homes sites expressed that have done a lot by giving permission to Saath run the CFS program and providing it with a physical space to set up the classroom.[67]

Saath needs to develop a different strategy to get builders on board and get them excited about the program. A first step is for teachers stop approaching builders only when there is a problem. Instead, Saath should also inform builders about positive changes and progress of children's education in order

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[65] Teacher Golden Trellis 2012, pers. comm., 5 April

[66] It was not possible to interview builders and laborer contractors in Pune. Therefore, no information regarding their views on the program can be provided.

[67] Builders of Madhav Homes, Umang Lambha, and Swaminarayan Park I & II 2012, April - May

to win over their interest in the program. Organizing talent shows or science fairs are also a good way for builders to see tangible results of the CFS program and gain insight of how their contribution is changing the lives of these children.

Laborer contractors, on the other end, support the program and have a friendly relationship with the teachers with whom they exchanged phone numbers to keep in touch in case of problems or changes regarding the children or workers. In one opportunity, the contractor called the teacher from the Madhav Homes center to ask him to open a school in the new site where his laborers started working.[68] However, it is important to make sure teachers communicate with all contractors. At the Umang Lambha site, one of the two laborer contractors interviewed was surprised to find out that there was a free school in the construction site, and complained that he should have been informed before so that his workers could enjoy this benefit.[69] Like the builders, the laborer contractors should also be participant of events organized by Saath, so that they can also realize the impact this program has over children and get them even more involved to help out the organization.

9.4 Transparency and accountability to key stakeholders

First, rules and regulations should be clear to all NGO staff, especially the responsibilities regarding their function. Furthermore, teachers should enjoy managerial and administrative support from the system, so that they can concentrate in improving children's learning outcomes. They should also be informed about the overall program's progress. Second, parents should be informed, or at least be given the choice to know about the program, how it works and the overall progress. Third, laborer contractors, and especially builders, should be informed on a regular basis of the program's performance and impact on children.

Teachers, supervisors and coordinators from both DSS Mumbai and Pune know their functions and how to work together as a team. Teachers in these three AEP stated that they feel comfortable asking their supervisor for help in case they need extra support or face problems that do not how to handle. They also expressed that they feel comfortable voicing disagreement without fearing retaliation. The researcher attended several of these meetings between teachers and their supervisors and/or coordinators, and they seemed relaxed and comfortable when addressing their colleagues and superiors. Since all teachers, supervisors and coordinators are female, their interaction is even more relaxed and horizontal. Moreover, teachers from DSS Mumbai attend and participate in the annual Performance Presentation, where they can learn about the program's overall performance, and the challenges that need to be addressed.

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[68] Laborer contractor at Madhav Homes 2012, pers. comm., 26 April

[69] Laborer contractor at Umang Lambha 2012, pers. comm., 4 May

In the CFS program, teachers do not enjoy support from the system, because there is not other staff between the top management and the teachers working at the community level. The program director tries to make all teachers feel comfortable and have open discussions, where their suggestions are taken into account. Actually, many of the changes implemented to improve the CFS program are suggestions that were given by teachers during meetings. However, it is still difficult for some of them to feel completely at ease. As explained before, not having staff to who convey their grievances and intercede for them puts pressure on CFS teachers. Some think that voicing their criticism in public would single them out as troublemakers. Even though these perceptions do not match the program director's way of working, this is unfortunately how some of them feel.

There is room for improvement when it comes down to the AEP's accountability and transparency to parents. Parents from the four AEP were asked if they knew about the NGO who runs their children's school. Table 9.4 shows that in all programs most parents do not know about the NGO that runs the AEP that their children participate in. The responses from the CFS parents are particularly worrying because over 90% were not aware that Saath, along the builder's support, set up the program at their construction site.

Table 9. 4. Do parents know about the NGO that runs the school?

Name of NGO	Name of Alternative education program		Do you know about the NGO?		Total
			No	Yes	
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	7	5	12
		% within AEP	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	School-on-Wheels	Count	10	3	13
		% within AEP	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	6	8	14
		% within AEP	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
Saath	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Count	19	2	21
		% within AEP	90.5%	9.5%	100.0%

Next parents were asked if the teacher or someone else explained them how the program works, where the funding comes from and who pays for all the expenses. Table 9.5 shows that in all programs over 90% were not informed by anyone (except in SoW). These results show that the four AEP need to start approaching parents and making sure that at least they are given that choice of getting information about the program.

Table 9. 5. Accountability and transparency to parents

| Name of NGO | Name of alternative education program | | Has anyone explained you how the AEP works? | | Total |
			No	Yes	
DSS - Mumbai	Community-based NFE classes	Count	12	0	12
		% within AEP	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	School-on-Wheels	Count	11	2	13
		% within AEP	84.6%	15.4%	100.0%
DSS - Pune	Study Classes	Count	13	1	14
		% within AEP	92.9%	7.1%	100.0%
Saath - Ahmedabad	Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	Count	21	0	21
		% within AEP	100.0%	.0%	100.0%

In the case of CFS builders, they all responded that the teacher in their construction site informs them in case a problem happens, but there are no regular meetings where they are explained the ways in which children are benefiting from the program. Observations and interviews with both teachers and builders show an imbalance in their interaction due to power relations. Builders are highly educated, wealthy and powerful people, whereas teachers come from humble families and studied up to secondary or high secondary school. Furthermore, teachers might belong to a lower caste than that of the builders, and this also affects their relationship. Even though they are cordial with each other, builders are likely to not regard teachers as equal. Therefore, when teachers approach builders to inform them about the program, builders might be dismissive or consider their feedback as rather informal. Saath should consider assigning a prepared person to represent the NGO, and interact with the builders and update them in the program in a more structured way (e.g. PowerPoint presentation, charts and figures). This might improve the builder's perception on CFS's accountability.

9.5 Conclusion

The chapter has addressed three important criteria at the system level. First, the results discussed above show DSS Mumbai and Pune have in place a system to record learning outcomes. Saath has not yet tackled this important matter, because it is still finalizing its curricula framework.

Second, the four AEPs need to keep working towards working closely together with parents, because it is an ongoing process. Parents's responses also show that many would like to give input and consider it important to communicate with teachers, but some are too shy and/or busy to make an effort to

participate. Moreover, the Right to Education Bill is not regarded positively by all AEPs. Whereas the Study Classes program considers it as an enabling tool, the NFE programs in Mumbai are concerned that the law might hurt more than help marginalized children. Finally, builders and laborers contractors are also important stakeholders. Pune has been working with builders for the past decade and currently holds a better negotiating position than Saath. Builders in Ahmedabad are not concerned about their Corporate Social Responsibility towards their construction workers and their families. They want to be involved as little as possible, and Saath needs to find a way to reverse their mindset.

Finally, the four AEPs need to keep improving their transparency and accountability towards parents and builders. Additionally, Child-Friendly Spaces program has to consider the feasibility of hiring at least one staff member to acts as a coordinator of teachers in the field. In this way, Saath can provide extra support for teachers, so that they can focus on teaching, while also allowing them to openly discussing issues with the coordinator before addressing them with the program director. Transparency and accountability towards builders is also important and necessary. No information has been gathered regarding the performance of DSS Pune in this criterion. Saath, however, does need to create a more effective way to approach builders on a regular basis and gain their interest in the CFS program.

Table 9. 8 Conclusion table – Criteria at the system level

Criteria at the system level				
Name of NGO	**Name of AEP**	**System to record learning outcomes**	**Involvement of key stakeholders**	**Accountability and transparency**
Door Step School Mumbai[70]	**Community-based NFE classes** **School-on-Wheels**	• There is a good system in place to record learning outcomes • Outcomes are recorded monthly and once every three months they are entered in the computer • There is an annual Performance	• Teachers are well-informed and active participants in the program • There is room for improvement to get more parents involved in their children's education • Does not completely approve of the RTE Bill	• Parents are not aware about the NGO, how the program is run and who pays the expenses • Teachers do receive support from the system, so that they can focus on improving learning outcomes

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[70] In order to avoid repetition, the content of the two NFE programs in DSS Mumbai share one space on the table Quality Education Table. The reason is that both programs have the same approach to bringing in children's experiences, share the same curricula framework, and use similar participatory processes.

		Presentation and the Review Meeting		
Door Step School Pune	**Study Classes**	• Similar to above	• Teachers are well-informed and active participants in the program • There is room for improvement to get more parents involved in their children's education • Takes advantage of the RTE Bill to facilitate mainstreaming of children • Builders are involved and interested in participating in the program	• Same as above • No information regarding accountability to builders
Saath - Ahmedabad	**Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites**	• There is no system to record learning outcomes • However, this is still a step too far. Saath is still defining its curricula framework	• Teachers are informed of their functions and the program's progress • There is room for improvement for getting parents excited in participating giving their feedback and opinions about the program • No information regarding Saath's position regarding the RTE • There is room for improvement for getting builders and laborer contractors more interested and committed in supporting the program.	• Parents should be informed about the NGO that runs the school and the way the AEP works • Builders should be informed more often and in a formal way

X. Discussion and Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

After answering the sub-research question at the learner and system levels, this chapter begins by addressing the main research question. The following section goes back to the ground theories discussed in detail in chapter II and makes relevant connections to the results obtained during the three months of fieldwork. Based on these connections between theory and children's daily reality many important conclusions are drawn. This has been a thorough illustration of the role of alternative education in eradicating poverty by increasing children's capabilities. This study finishes by making some concluding remarks about its relevance in the sustainable development agenda, and the urgent need to grant it a higher recognition.

10.2 Answer to main research question

The right to education is a human right, and even though the Indian government has displayed great efforts in meeting its duties to provide education services for all, it still fails to reach the most marginalized sectors of society. NGOs created alternative education programs (AEPs) to step in and cover this gap. The present study compares AEPs in Mumbai, Pune and Ahmedabad that work with children of slum and pavement dwellers, and migrant children of construction workers.

Door Step School Mumbai has two NFE programs. The Community-based NFE classes target children living and working in the slum areas. The School-on-Wheels is a mobile school that works with pavement dwellers and street children. In Pune, Door Step School has schools at over 100 construction sites and its Study Classes program helps mainstream children to the formal education system, while providing them with tuition classes that help them cope with the formal curricula. Finally, Saath implements the program Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites that also cater the needs of migrant children living on construction sites. The research aimed to assess the effectiveness of these AEPs in helping increase the access to formal education of disadvantaged children. Thus, the main research question is the following:

How effective are the selected AEPs in improving marginalized children's access to formal education?

In order to answer this question, the researcher developed a criteria based on the Human Rights-Based Approach and the Capabilities Approach. The previous chapters thoroughly evaluated the AEPs using these criteria at the learner and the system level. Based on the conclusions drawn from these results, the following was found:

- The Study Classes program is the most effective at mainstreaming children into the formal education system

- The Community-based NFE classes have been found to be the second most effective

- The School-on-Wheels program and the Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites are the least effective AEPs in improving marginalized children's access to formal education. Nevertheless, the latter has a great potential despite being such a new program.

10.2.1 Reasons for the effectiveness: the Study Classes program

The Study Classes program has been found to be the most successful at accomplishing what the conceptual map labeled as 'outcome' because this program has a satisfactory performance in most criteria at both levels. Alternative access programs are a valuable contribution because of their innovative strategies to seek out children, who otherwise are invisible to the formal system. The Study Classes program excels in this aspect because it has managed to design several strategies to trace and re-enroll the children of construction workers in school.

DSS Pune employs and trains a large body of people to fulfill the roles of teachers, supervisors and coordinators in over 100 classes spread throughout the city. There is effective communication within this hierarchical system and these employees also work efficiently as a team to monitor and track children. Taking advantage of this extensive network and using cellphones to keep in touch with parents and children have both proved to be successful strategies to track children after they move to another site. Due to the large number of DSS centers in Pune, it is not unlikely that children move to a construction site where there is a DSS school already established. If this is not the case, DSS teachers can still guide parents over the phone through the admission procedures to enroll their children in a school at the new location. Permanent monitoring mechanisms and working closely with formal school teachers are also very important factors in promptly addressing problems that arise at home or at the formal school. Otherwise, these problems might result in children dropping out of school.

Moreover, most children and parents consider that the curriculum of the program helps children cope with formal schooling. Study Classes students do very well in their formal schools, and many stand out for winning extra-curricular contests and sport competitions. The DSS center offers a safe learning environment, where children's rights are respected. Students have close relationship with their teachers and peers, which also makes them feel quite comfortable when expressing their ideas or opinions. Children interviewed in this program expressed that if DSS would not have intervened and helped them register in a formal school, their lives would be very different with no aspirations or hope to study further.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that builders are an important enabling factor that facilitates DSS work. Builders in Pune act as an authority that prohibits child labor and find DSS programs as a preventive measure. They can exercise pressure on the construction workers by even threatening to lower their wages if parents refuse to send their children to the DSS school. Given that children spend

eight hours a day, Monday through Saturday, parents cannot rely on their children's labor as another source of income. DSS takes care of the enrollment procedure and provides transportation to school, so parents consider the program a good opportunity for their children. Parents also feel that their children are better off learning at school rather than distracting them in their workplace.

10.2.2 Reasons for (in) effectiveness: the other AEPs

The lack of punitive measures against child labor in Mumbai is partly the reason why the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels programs are not as effective as those in Pune in mainstreaming children into formal schools. Among the children interviewed from these NFE programs, all are child laborers whose families depend on their income to survive. In the Back Bay and BAN areas, all of them work cleaning fish. In the School-on-Wheels program, children do different economic activities, which range from waiters to street vendors. Unlike the builders in Pune, there is no employer in Mumbai that punishes parents for taking their children to work. Hence, parents become dependent on their children's income, which increases the opportunity cost of formal schooling. However, there are some children from the Community-based NFE classes that have mainstreamed and are now attending the Study Classes program.

The School-on-Wheels program is even less successful at transferring children to the formal education system because of the extreme poverty of these children, as well as the lack of a secure shelter. Parents are too preoccupied with their daily struggles to consider their children's education a top priority. They are employed mostly in the informal sector, which contributes to income instability. There is a lack of electricity, water and sanitation. The police constantly harass children and their families, and they are constantly afraid of being evicted. Additionally, their lack of secure tenure makes them mobile up to a certain extent and DSS Mumbai finds it difficult to keep in touch with pavement dwellers. There is no tracking system to know what happens to them after they drop out or graduate from the program.

Furthermore, children mainstreamed from School-on-Wheels have a difficult time adjusting to formal schooling. Their physical appearance due to their poor socio-economic background makes them particularly vulnerable to discrimination in a bigger setting, such as public schools. Besides, even if DSS manages to transfer children from the School-on-Wheels to a formal school, there is not enough space in the bus to conduct a Study Classes program separately to help them cope with formal curricula.

Unlike the AEPs from DSS Mumbai and Pune, the Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites (CFS) program in Ahmedabad has a very limited budget, which in turn decreases its influence. It is unfeasible to hire more staff to get in charge of enrolling children in the city or tracking those who go back to their village. At the moment, Saath is also unable to provide transportation services to school and regular trainings to teachers in participatory pedagogy. Unlike in Pune, builders in Ahmedabad are not an enabling factor. Interviews with builders showed that, despite being key stakeholders, most do not show much interest in the progress of the program and want to get involved as little as possible. Despite these restrictions, the CFS program offers children in construction sites an opportunity to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills. This opportunity was not present at all before Saath's intervention, and without these

skills "many avenues of opportunities are closed… [because] illiteracy is an enduring disability" (Nussbaum 2011, p.154-155).

Compared to DSS Pune, Saath has opted for a rather different approach to increase children's access to formal schooling. The NGO noticed that many construction workers started leaving at least one of their children back in the village, so that they can go to formal school there. Saath decided that the best strategy was to encourage parents to send their children to school in the village by explaining them the benefits of education, their children's rights under the Right to Education Bill. Not only does this strategy better suit Saath's available financial and human capital, but also it works effectively by adapting its approach to what parents are already doing. However, CFS started only two years ago, and therefore, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of this strategy.

Table 10.1 summarizes the factors influencing the effectiveness of the AEPs[71]

Table 10. 1. Presence of factors increasing the effectiveness of AEPs

Presence of factors increasing the effectiveness of AEPs					
Name of Program	Tracking system	Monitoring system	Transportation to school[72]	Punitive Authority against child labor	Secure tenure/permanent dwelling
Study Classes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Community-based NFE	No	Yes	N/A	No	Yes
School-on-Wheels	No	Yes	N/A	No	No
Child-Friendly Spaces Construction Sites	No	No	No	No	No

10.3 Links to the ground theories

This section will compare practice with theory, and will make important connections to the theoretical framework previously discussed in chapter II. After assessing the effectiveness of the AEPs in sending children to formal schools, i.e. the outcome, the following section will evaluate the AEPs based on their impact on children's capabilities. Even though it is important help children access formal schooling,

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[71] The chart below is in order of most effective to least effective program, and thus Study Classes is at the top.

[72] This factor only applies to the AEPs in construction sites, namely Study Classes and Child-Friendly Spaces. DSS Mumbai does provide transportation services to children going to school in slum areas.

perhaps it is even more pressing to assess whether and how the AEPs affect children's capabilities. Capabilities grant children with greater freedom of choices from which they can make present and future life decisions that will allow them to lead valuable and fulfilling lives. For this endeavor, the Capabilities Approach will mainly be applied.

10.3.1 Accessing schools – a matter of overcoming conversion factors

Children do not develop their capabilities in isolation, because they are highly influenced by their environment. The Right to Education Bill (RTE) makes education free and compulsory. Therefore, in theory children have the choice to go to school, but are unable to exercise this right in practice because of conversion factors.

Ingrid Roybens's theorey of conversion factors (Roybens 2005) is highly relevant to understand the challenges migrant children and slum and pavement children face in exercising their right to access education. The alternative access programs selected for this study have taken these factors into account and addressed them in their strategies to reach these children. The chart below illustrates the most pressing conversion factors.[73] Table 10.2 also clearly illustrates how the AEPs cover a gap that the formal system has thus far been unable to close.

Table 10. 2. Conversion factors affecting children' right to education

Disadvantaged Children's Conversion Factors		
Type of Conversion Factor	Description	Solution proposed by AEPs
Personal – Migratory lifestyle/non-secure tenure	Students from Study Classes in Pune and School-on-Wheels in Mumbai lack a permanent home in the city. They are either constantly migrating, or are vulnerable to eviction at any time, respectively.	Study Classes has developed a track system and permanent monitoring in order to ensure children enroll in school wherever they go. In School-on-Wheels, buses park nearby where the children live and work. The bus provides a good solution given that there is no place to set up a classroom on the pavement.
Personal – Children's feeling of responsibility toward the household income	Many children interviewed from the Community-based NFE program expressed that it was their responsibility to work hard to help their family financially. They do not see education as their right.	DSS Mumbai tries to teach children the value of education by first making the curricula relevant to their living environment. This is specially challenging for out-of-school children, whose attention span might be shorter and who are not used to sitting still in class for long periods of time. The program tries to make learning fun by actively engaging children in class. By realizing how they can use what they learn

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[73] It should be noted that the described factors are not exhaustive.

		at school, children might be more interested to continue learning.
Social – Gender bias	Girls are not allowed to leave the house after they get their period. Parents also prefer to invest in their sons' education because they are considered the main breadwinner, and the ones that will take care of their parents when they age.	The schools are located very close to the children's house in order to reassure parents that their children are safe. Furthermore, when parents withdraw their daughters from the program DSS in Mumbai particularly, the staff do a follow up session with parents to try to convince them that their daughters should also receive an education.
Social – Marriage at an early age	Boys, and especially girls, marry at an early age.	Enrolling children in formal school delays marriage. In the case of non-formal education, teachers and coordinators try to persuade parents that it is not a good idea to marry their children at an early age.
Social – Child labor	Poverty makes parents rely on their children's income, especially among slum and pavement dwellers.	DSS Mumbai school is aware that in many cases parents are faced with a tragic choice. On the one hand, they would like their children to study. On the other hand, their income is not enough and they need the help of their children for the survival of their household. DSS is aware that prohibiting children to work is not going to solve the problem, and would alienate parents. Instead, NFE programs run at different times of the day for only 2.5 hrs, so that children can still help out at home and/or work. It accommodates children's lifestyles and needs.
Environmental – schools far away from home	Construction sites are usually located on the outskirts of the city, where education services are far away from children's dwellings. Thus, it is very difficult for parents to take time off to drop and pick up children. Furthermore, parents are worried about their children's safety if they let them go to school by themselves.	DSS Pune provides transportation to and from school every day. Furthermore, the DSS school in the construction site is close to parents' working place and they can come at any moment to check up on their children.
Environmental – construction sites are not safe	Construction sites are not safe places for children to play around, because they could easily get into accidents. It is especially difficult for teenage girls, because men tend to say inappropriate comments to them.	The CFS and Study Classes provide a nurturing environment, where teachers will look after children, especially older girls. They provide a classroom, where children feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves. They encourage students to help each other and treat each other like family or close friends.

10.3.2 Education as a fertile capability

The section above discussed the capability of accessing school and how AEPs help children convert this capability into a functioning (i.e. enrolling in school). This section focuses on the internal capabilities the AEPs help children train and develop. It analyzes the impact they have on children' present and future well-being (Nussbaum 2011, Sen 1999, Roybens 2005).

The alternative access programs presented in this study help children develop cognitive skills, literacy and numeracy skills, analytical skills, critical thinking, self-esteem and self-confidence, among others. By developing these internal capabilities, children are more prepared to become the main actors of their own development in the future and hopefully avoid poverty[74] in their adulthood. Education, formal or non-formal, is meant to start a process, which will eventually lead to break the cycle of poverty.[75] This section will exemplify how the concept of education as a fertile functioning (i.e. one that promotes other capabilities) is useful when discussing empirical results.

The Study Classes program is very successful at delivering what the conceptual map defines as 'outcome,' i.e. mainstreaming children to the formal school. However, the Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels programs have a significant 'impact,' i.e. increase of capabilities.

Students from the NFE programs in Mumbai master literacy and numeracy skills. Children from the Community-based NFE program said that knowing how to read and write and doing basic math has helped them prevent their employers from taking unfair advantage of them and their families. Some parents even mentioned that their children help out other people at their workplace with their bills. A few of the children from School-on-Wheels (SoW) said that the program enabled them not to get lost because they can read street signs and figure out which bus number they need to take in order to navigate the city. This was especially relevant for a SoW student who works at catering events and who needs to go to different addresses around Mumbai. These are some examples of how children apply what they learn at their AEPs. Children showed that they gained enough self-confidence to confront employers or shopkeepers when they are trying to cheat them.

As explained before, the curriculum alone does not explain the increase in children's capabilities. It is how teachers impart education that makes a significant impact on children. The self-expression part of the curriculum is vital because it trains children on how to articulate their opinions and thoughts. It

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[74] Poverty should be understood as more than just low or insufficient income. Poverty is the deprivation of basic capabilities or freedoms (Sen 1999, p. 87).

[75] Children, who are poor and need to work from an early, are less likely to get educated. Due to this lack of education, employment opportunities are very limited, and tend to be poor in their adulthood. Because their income is meager, they make their own children work and prevent them from getting educated. The cycle repeats again, which shows that poverty is intragenerational as well as intergenerational.

makes them feel comfortable participating and engaging in class activities. Finally, it allows them to reflect on different issues that are important to them (e.g. family problems, drug abuse, domestic violence) and learn how to better deal with them. Participatory education processes and self-expression are the tools through which AEPs help children develop a different array of doings and being, which will also influence their future.

The tracer studies are tangible examples of how developing capabilities impact children's future well-being. The four interviewees are currently in their early twenties and belong to marginalized sectors of society (i.e. Scheduled Castes and Muslim minority). Their parents denied their elder siblings their right to education, but DSS opened to them the opportunity to go to a formal school. All of them are currently doing their bachelor's degrees and plan on completing them. Education and Bal Samuha played an important role in developing their leadership skills. They founded their own NGO to help other disadvantaged children, especially girls, stay in school. They mentioned that they could have never imagined starting such a big project, but that now they feel confident that they are helping make a change in their communities. They have developed the capabilities to exercise their political rights and have become recognized community leaders. Education also allowed them to have greater agency in determining what they want to do with their lives.

Contrary to their cultural traditions and societal norms, the four interviewees decided to delay their marriage in order to finish their studies. Fatima's case study is especially relevant because being highly educated has opened up other important capabilities. Besides granting her the power to delay her marriage, being highly educated makes Fatima less vulnerable to domestic violence when she decides to form a family. Being able to earn an income outside the household allows her to enjoy a more symmetrical relationship with her husband. She can leave him if he tries to abuse her or her children, because she will be able to look after herself and her family. Furthermore, Fatima is likely to enjoy a greater say regarding decisions about her children's education, nutrition and overall well-being.

All tracer studies participants concluded by adding that they will ideally like their children to also go to university. Many said that their will be required at least to graduate from secondary school (i.e. finish 12th std.). These responses indicate that DSS NFE programs started a process through which the future generations will acquire higher education levels than their parents did.

Even though the NFE programs in Mumbai are not able to successfully transfer many children to formal schooling, they are very effective at increasing children's capabilities and improving their present and future well-being (Baxter & Bethke 2009). The examples presented prove that the role of education does not limit itself to teaching basic curricula. In order to have a noticeable impact, education must be imparted in participatory ways, which enable children to consciously apply knowledge outside the classroom and solve problems in their daily lives. The impact of increasing women's freedoms has also been widely discussed in academic literature [for example, see Martha Nussbaum's Women and Human Development and Creating Capabilities].

This section has proved that education is indeed a fertile functioning, which in turn makes it one of the most effective strategies to stop both intergenerational and intragenerational poverty (Unicef 2000, Unicef 2007, UNDP 2011, Nussbaum 2011). Hence, education as a poverty alleviation measure is vital to the achievement of sustainable development.

10.3.3 Formal versus non-formal education

The four AEPs try to fulfill the four core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Firstly, all programs try to fight against discrimination by making education (formal and/or non-formal) available to sectors of the population that are usually left out of the formal system. Secondly, all programs try to improve the children's right to survival and development by helping children develop their internal capabilities. Thirdly, children have the right to express their views on matters that are important to them. The Community-based NFE classes and School-on-Wheels excel in this area through its emphasis on self-expression as part of their curricula. Finally, all programs look after the best interests of their students, but fieldwork found that DSS Mumbai differs from DSS Pune regarding their views on the role of non-formal education.

On the one hand, the Executive Director of DSS[76] strongly believes that formal education is not necessarily the best for the children attending NFE programs in Mumbai. Many children from NFE programs work outside home, and all of those interviewed (except one) answered that they work because without their income, their family would not survive. Furthermore, all of them stated that they enjoy working because it makes them feel good that they can help out at home. Contrary to parents in Pune, parents in Ward A are able to rely on their children's income to supplement the household budget. Forcing children into formal schooling because it is their right does not solve their poverty situation. Formal schooling becomes unfeasible if parents do not morally support their children's education.

As mentioned before, slum and particularly pavement children have a difficult time adjusting to public schools. The NFE classroom is a small (25 children max.) and familiar place where teachers pay personal attention to each of their students. Children who transfer find it difficult to a cope with the formal system because classrooms are much larger (about 40 to 60 students), and children are more vulnerable to discrimination from their teachers and/or classmates. This is especially true when children are older and they are enrolled in a lower standard due to their basic knowledge level.

For these highly marginalized children, mainstreaming might actually hurt them more than help them. If children face difficulties in the formal school, they might end up dropping out from both the formal and NFE programs, because they might be scared to enroll. Hence, they end up in a worse situation than when they were not registered in the formal school, because they reject any education opportunities. See Box 10.1. The DSS Executive Director believes that if formal education is unfeasible to the children

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[76] DSS Executive Director is mainly in charge of education program in Mumbai, whereas DSS President oversees programs in Pune.

currently studying in NFE programs, at least they got a taste of education. This will hopefully encourage these children to enroll their own children at school from an early age.

On the other hand, the DSS President strongly believes that NFE is a poor second choice and that no child should be deprived from going to formal school. NFE schools do not have the resources and infrastructure that formal schools do, and their reach (number of children benefiting) is extremely limited. Gender bias is not present until girls turn at least ten years old or until they begin menstruating. Furthermore, children are not able to work and financially contribute at home until they turn 11 or 12 years old[77]. Hence children, especially girls, should complete at least up to 5th or 6th std. According to the DSS President, nobody has the right to decide whether children should go to formal or non-formal school, even if NFE might be a better option. She argues that even though formal schooling is far from perfect, the solution is not to shy away from it. NGOs, like DSS, should help formal education overcome its weaknesses. The Right to Education Bill (RTE) has facilitated the mainstreaming of children of construction workers, who might need to be re-enrolled in different formal schools several times within the school year.[78]

The research has proved that mainstreaming is not always feasible nor the best option for all children. Children who are mainstreamed into the formal sector from an early age (i.e. six or seven years old) face less difficulties adjusting to public schools. Study Classes provide them with valuable academic and moral support. Additionally, children who do not need to help support their family's income, also have a better chance of being successfully mainstreamed to formal schooling. For older children, especially girls, it is more difficult because their parents might consider they are more useful helping out at home or working for an income.

Hence, it is not a matter of non-formal education competing with formal education to act as a substitute. It is necessary to accept that formal education might not be a possibility for everyone, and NFE might be the best option they have. What is important is that whatever education children receive, whether formal or non-formal, it must be participatory and empowering. It must increase their capabilities to obtain results like the examples observed in students from the NFE programs in Mumbai. In this sense, the formal education system can draw important lessons from the know-how and processes non-formal education programs implement in their classrooms.

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[77] This is not necessarily the case for children in Mumbai, where their parents take them along to work. Some School-on-Wheels children also work begging for money in the street.

[78] DSS President 2012 & Director of Project Foundation, pers. comm., 31 March

Box 10. 1 Case Study: Formal schools not always the best option

Case study: When formal education actually hurts children's well-being
Ismael, a brilliant boy from School-on-Wheels, did so well in the program that DSS helped him enroll in a formal school. However, he found it difficult to adapt to the formal system and decided to drop out from school. He also decided to not go back to the School-on-Wheels program, probably because he was afraid that DSS teachers would send him back to the formal school. *Imposing an alien education system might hurt children rather than help them. After this experience, the DSS Executive Director decided not to help out the government by handing in a list of all out-of-school children she works with. She considers children's well-being is first, even before complying with the law. A more suitable option to formal schooling is to enroll School-on-Wheels children in hostels or boarding schools. Some have been enrolled in such schools, and they are enjoying going to school and adapting to the system easily, because in these hostels the staff looks after children in a similar way DSS takes care of them.*

Source: DSS Executive Director 2012, pers. comm., 23 February

10.3.4 Loopholes in the Right to Education (RTE) Bill

The 2009 Right to Education (RTE) Bill is a very important law for all children to exercise their right to go school. It addresses some of the most pressing obstacles preventing disadvantaged children from getting admission in schools, such as showing an identity document or birth certificates. Despite its important contribution, the RTE has loopholes that negatively affect the most underprivileged children.

The law says that no child from age six to 14 should be denied access to formal education, and focuses on getting as many children as possible enrolled into formal schools, i.e. the quantitative outcome. However, it does not pay attention to the process required to achieve the outcome, which is a vital component of the Human Rights-Based Approach. The RTE seems to disregard the fact that formal schooling is not a suitable solution for all children. This law does not take into account the factors affecting disadvantaged children and their capability to access education (previously discussed in section 10.3.1). Since the RTE recognizes formal education as the only legitimate one, the government stopped funding NGOs (like DSS) that were operating successful non-formal education programs. As a matter of fact, DSS Pune has suffered severe budget cuts due to the RTE.[79]

The RTE pushes for formal education, but it does not provide mechanisms that genuinely address the needs of the most disadvantaged children. Under the RTE there is no policy about procedures and strategies to sustainably retain in school those children enrolled under this law. Furthermore, it does not provide special curricula that help former out-of-school children to successfully cope with the formal

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[79] DSS Executive Director 2012, pers. comm., 23 February

system. Finally, there is not budget allocation to sustain a monitoring mechanism to evaluate the progress of these children after entering the formal system.[80]

Furthermore, a major loophole is that at the time of admission, the RTE prioritizes the age of children over their knowledge level. This means that the government wants children to be enrolled in the standard that is appropriate to their age despite having a much lower knowledge level than that of their peers. For instance, an illiterate 10-year old child should be admitted in 1st std. for the first year if one looks at knowledge level, but the year after he or she should be enrolled in the standard corresponding to their age (i.e. 6th std). Teachers should provide extra support before or after class in order to help the child catch up with their peers.[81] However, this is an unrealistic goal because the child lacks the capacity to absorb so many concepts in one year, and he or she is not used to studying so many hours a day. Public school teachers are unable to pay personal attention to children having trouble learning because they are in charge of a much larger number of students, and in practice they do not provide the extra assistance that the law requires.[82]

In conclusion, the RTE is mainly concerned with quantitative results that show that India is close to achieving universal education for all children. However, the law has significant loopholes that make it seem as though this initiative lacks a sincere commitment to prevent dropouts. The efforts of the Indian government to facilitate access to formal schools do not have a large impact if they cannot ensure that children stay in school and complete compulsory education, which grants them the necessary skills and capabilities to lead valuable lives.

10.3.5 Granting higher recognition to AEPs in MGDs and EFA

The RTE is a good example of the influence the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA) goals have on national education policies. As pointed out by Paul Nelson and Guido Schmidt-Traub, the MDG goals are quantitative benchmarks, which disregard the needs of the most marginalized sectors of the populations (2007, p. 2047; 2009, p. 78-79). Some of the EFA goals are also quantitative. Governments are highly sensitive to their reputation in the international community and meeting their commitments to these global policies on education is very important to them (Mc Millan 2011). The problems with setting only quantitative goals is that governments, in their aspiration to accomplish those numbers, create laws and policies that might hurt more than help disadvantaged children.

The RTE is mainly concerned with increasing enrollment rates in order to meet the MDGs and EFA goals, and has not supplied mechanisms to retain children in school. Besides retention, however, the government should also provide specific requirements for schools to improve the quality of education.

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[80] Director of Community-based programs and School-on-Wheels 2012, pers. comm., 17 March

[81] DSS Executive Director 2012, pers. comm., 23 February

[82] DSS Pune Director of Training Cell & DSS Pune Associate Director 2012, pers. comm., 18 April

Instead of ruling out NFE, the government should work with NGOs to overcome their weaknesses, as suggested by the DSS President.

Nevertheless, until the major global education policies, like EFA and MDGs, grant higher recognition and status to alternative education programs (particularly NFE), the Indian government might not accept NFE as a valuable ally to reach the most vulnerable children in society. The goals of these global policies should incorporate qualitative indicators that press for participatory and empowering education. Only then will governments have a higher incentive to make efforts to incorporate some of the processes, curricula and good practices of alternative education programs. This change of attitude towards alternative and non-formal education is necessary if disadvantaged children are to fully exercise their right to education.

10.4 Concluding remarks

The discussion section has touched upon relevant issues regarding children's right to education. The chapter started by answering the main research question, and results pointed out the Study Classes program in Pune is the most effective AEP at increasing access to education for disadvantaged children. It has been able to overcome many of the conversion factors preventing children from going to school. The Study Classes program is particularly successful at delivering the 'outcome' due to its tracking and monitoring system and their transportation services. There is, however, an external enabling factor contributing to the program's success, which is a punitive authority prohibiting child labor (i.e. the builder).

Results also showed that, more than a matter of formal versus non-formal education, schooling needs to be empowering. Participatory education is able to develop children's internal capabilities and open up other freedoms. Thus, quality education is inherently fertile, and children who benefit from such education are more prepared to use their knowledge in ways that improve their present and future well-being. Both NFE programs in Mumbai excel in this aspect, despite mainstreaming very few children. Their significant impact on children's lives is illustrated through the many positive experiences of current and former students.

However, the RTE law shows that the government is mainly concerned with meeting the quantitative benchmarks set by the global policies of EFA and the MDGs. These goals lack indicators that also press governments to improve the quality of education and retention rates. The Indian government needs to realize that "attendance is deemed worthless if not coupled with quality learning" that encourages children to become active and valuable citizens (Mc Millan 2011, p. 544). Nevertheless, for national policy makers to change their attitude, the international community needs to first broaden their focus and also recognize alternative access education and non-formal education as vital elements of children's right to education.

10.4.1 Link between alternative education and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is concerned with distributing justice. In theory, future generations should enjoy at least the same availability and accessibility to natural resources to make a livelihood as do people today. Similarly, people's opportunity to lead valuable lives should not be restrained by factors outside their control (UNDP 2011, p. 1-2). In practice, absolute poverty and social inequalities keep increasing, particularly in developing countries.

Eradicating poverty is a paramount goal of sustainable development because poverty undermines the political stability and economic prosperity of countries, and negatively affects the environment and social bonds between people in society (Ahmed 2010; DESA 2009; Nussbaum 2011, p. 155). Education is one of the most effective strategies to stop both inter- and intragenerational poverty. It has been proved to be a highly fertile functioning, which can reverse the negative effects of poverty.

For this reason, making education accessible to all children, especially to girls, is vital for poverty alleviation. However, research has shown that children from marginalized sectors are a particularly difficult group to reach and require special attention because their rights are often ignored. The four alternative education programs (AEPs) selected for this study have stepped in to tackle this shortcoming.

The purpose of this study was to show the link between alternative access education and sustainable development; a link oftentimes overlooked. This link is often disregarded because alternative education does not enjoy the same status as formal education does, and many consider these alternative programs as poor substitutes.

This research shows that AEPs are relevant to sustainable development because of they are empowering and flexible enough to cater to the needs of the most marginalized sectors of society. After three months of fieldwork with slum and pavement children in Mumbai, and migrant children living in construction sites in Pune and Ahmedabad, the results obtained clearly demonstrate a significant positive impact. Despite the fact that mainstreaming is not possible for all AEPs, all of them have opened up an opportunity for education, which would not have been possible without their intervention. They have helped children develop their important internal capabilities, which in turn will enable them to exercise other social, civil and political rights. They have developed skills that in the future will allow them to enjoy greater freedom of choice in their employment opportunities, number of children they want to have and their well-being in general.

The present work hopes to create greater awareness among academics and development practitioners regarding the fundamental role alternative access education plays in eradicating poverty, and thus furthering a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

10.5 Suggestions for future research

The criteria used to evaluate the performance of the four alternative education programs have two levels: the learner and system level. Even though fieldwork gathered interesting finding on the former, the study mainly focuses on the learner level. Hence, it would be relevant to further explore the criteria at the system level.

Future research could assess better strategies to involve key stakeholders. First, parents are the most difficult group of stakeholders to work with, and in-depth fieldwork with them would help the NGOs to better gain their interest and support. The NGOs need to work towards making parents comfortable voicing their opinions on the program. Second, it would be also relevant to look into ways to greater involve children (the main beneficiaries of these programs) in giving their feedback on the curricula relevance or pedagogy processes. In the case of the AEPs operating in construction sites, it would be useful to further investigate the factors and strategies that could increase the builders' commitment and involvement in the program.

Finally, accountability and transparency mechanisms need to be further researched. All four AEPs showed that their accountability to parents has room for improvement. Accountability and transparency to builders need to be also clearly communicated on a regular basis. This part of the criteria is one that needs special attention in order to ensure program sustainability.

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Appendix I

Key informants at the higher level management

1. Bina Lashkari

   DSS Executive Director 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

2. Arnavaz Kharas

   DSS Director of Teacher's Training Cell in Mumbai 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

3. Rajendra Kamble

   Coordinator Balsamuha Program 2012, pers. comm., 17 March

4. Trupti Brid

   Community Coordinator in Murthi Nagar and Back Bay areas 2012, pers. comm., March

5. Poonam Bhonsale

   Human Resources Associate 2012, pers. comm., 27 February

6. Baban Gawde

   Coordinator of School-on-Wheels 2012, pers. comm., 20 March

7. Deepak Panzade

   Director of Community-based programs and School-on-Wheels 2012, pers. comm., 17 March

8. Rajani Paranjpe

   DSS President 2012, pers. comm., 31 March

9. Ravindra Mahumuni

   Director of Project Foundation, pers. comm., 31 March

10. Niraj Jani

    CFS Construction Sites Program Director 2012, pers. comm., 20 April