



Education for Children of Migrant Labor through Public Private Partnership (PPP): a Study of the Tent Schools Model in Bangalore

Malini Bhattacharjee

Azim Premji University (India)

malinibhattacharjee@gmail.com, malini@azimpremjifoundation.org

At a time and age when privatization and globalization have become enveloping forces, it is not surprising that their impact is beginning to manifest in every conceivable domain of human existence, including education. While education has been largely 'controlled' by the government in most societies for reasons of equity, the role of the private sector has been growing in prominence in the recent past. This phenomenon is perhaps on the rise, given the inability of the public sector to provide quality education and a realization on the part of the state that private actors can meaningfully contribute to universalization of education.

In India, despite the passage of the Right to Education Act and huge budgetary allocations made for improving education, the state of public education is dismal. The recently released OECD Programme for International Student Assessment 2009+ results revealed that India ranked only second last amongst all the 73 countries that participated in the test. A huge section of out-of-school children comprising migrants, street children etc. do not have access to education in any form. Private actors therefore have started taking active initiative in partnering with the government to come up with innovative education delivery models.

One such model is that of the Tent schools in Bangalore, which provide education to children of migrant labour through a public private partnership (PPP). Tent schools are temporary schools, typically constructed near a migrant labour camp in cities/ towns experiencing a high incidence of migration, which enable children to acquire basic learning competencies (in Language, Environmental Science and Math) so that they could be mainstreamed into formal government schools. The composition of students in these schools consist of either children who have never been enrolled in a school or have dropped out.

The costs of these schools are shared between the government of Karnataka and partners such as NGOs, corporates etc. The purpose of this paper is to critically evaluate the merits of the Tent school programme and make a case for replication of similar models in other urban contexts. The researcher takes the stand that with increasing urbanization, and a number of people adopting migration as a livelihood strategy, public educational institutions have to adapt their delivery mechanisms through innovative private partnerships to provide education that is meaningful to the beneficiaries. Also, the need and relevance of PPP will become increasingly important in the new world order. These partnerships have the potential to increase access to quality education for all, especially the marginalized communities, and can especially help meet the challenge of achieving the education Millennium Development Goals in the poorest of countries.