

Non-school going adolescents may become a Human Resource---A case study

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Abstract

Certain children are there who are in extremely difficult circumstances e.g. street children, children who migrate with their families, wage earning child laborers, adolescent girls (11-14 years of age) cannot be easily enrolled into formal schools directly. Some of these groups of children would require specific, flexible strategies based on their situation to ensure the possibility that they complete primary / elementary education. There is great heterogeneity among 'out of school' children. Out of school children could belong to remote school-less habitations, could be working children, street children, deprived children in urban slums, bonded child laborers, children of sex workers, girls belonging to the minority community, girls involved in domestic chores or sibling care, children who are engaged in cattle grazing etc. This heterogeneity demands diversified approaches and strategies for their education. There has not been much work for education of 'out of school' children for the upper primary level outside the formal system. This is an area of challenge. Here an alternative (slightly different from present NFE system) method of primary education may be attempted. This may be termed as Need-based Non Formal Education. This is a combination of education & training at the same time. Education with some level of vocational training may be effective and yield fruitful results to make the child worker literate and thereby contribute to the goal of UEE.

Keywords: Adolescent, Child labour, Elementary education, Non Formal Education, Urban slum, Vocational training

1. Introduction

Certain children are there who are in extremely difficult circumstances e.g. street children, children who migrate with their families, wage earning child laborers, adolescent girls (11-14 years of age) cannot be easily enrolled into formal schools directly. Some of these groups of children would require specific, flexible strategies based on their situation to ensure the possibility that they complete primary / elementary education.

There is great heterogeneity among 'out of school' children. Out of school children could belong to remote school-less habitations, could be working children, street children, deprived children in urban slums, bonded child laborers, children of sex workers, girls belonging to the minority community, girls involved in domestic chores or sibling care, children who are engaged in cattle grazing etc. This heterogeneity demands diversified approaches and strategies for their education. This is an area of challenge.

Here an alternative (slightly different from present NFE system) method of primary education may be attempted. This may be termed as Need-Based Non Formal Education (NBNFE). This is a combination of education & training at the same time. Education with some level of vocational training may be effective and yield fruitful results to make the child worker literate and thereby contribute to the goal of UEE.

Objective of the Study: To study the impact of an operational project for the child labor to encourage them towards the *Need Based Non Formal Education*.

Hypothesis

H₁ : *Need Based Non Formal Education* would be treated as the investment for the livelihood of the disadvantaged section of the community.

H₂ : The operational project would motivate the disadvantaged children towards the *Need Based Non Formal Education*.

2. Methodology of the study

An **Experimental intervention** with ten number of non school going boys within the age of 14 years.

Experimental Intervention (undertaking a project)

This can be called an operational project. This is one from of Non Formal Education also. The purpose of this project is to study the impact of an operational project for the child labour (economically disadvantaged section of the society) & to encourage them towards the Need Based Non-Formal Education. This is an attempt to provide elementary education to the child labour through *socially useful productive work* (SUPW). Some non-school going children (child labours) below the age of 14 years, are considered for this project. These boys are collected in a particular place to give them primary education and training of a particular SUPW side by side. This SUPW is so chosen that the product has its local demand. Two years program taken up for this purpose. Some portion(simple things only) of the curriculum of West Bengal Board of Primary Education is emphasized. Or in other words, the condensed form of the whole curriculum is taken up for them. Local school buildings, beyond school hours, are utilized for this purpose. In addition to the practice of this minimized syllabus, there is training for socially useful productive work side by side. Here the project **Gardening** is taken up for those boys.

Gardening or Nursery training i.e. training for preparation of flower and other plants for commercial purpose. The project might be chosen considering the local demand of the product. In short, there are two main aspects of their education -

1. academic part i.e. practice of curriculum of W.B.P.B.E. in minimized form and
2. training part i.e. the training for Gardening (this is a part of horticulture)

The first task will be to identify the non school going children (including child labour, no-where child etc.). The next steps will be as follows :

1. have a talk with their parents before starting the project
2. preparation of Instructional Materials
3. plan for their Training (gardening)

The first part of this program includes simple counting, addition, subtraction, familiarity with the language- speaking & writing, value education etc. This is the **consumption** aspects of education and the training part can be treated as **investment** aspect of education.

The whole attempt will be made to reach the goal of Self Employment through NBNFE.

Population :-

a) Non School going children in the district of 24 Pgs. (N) of West Bengal, below the age of 14 yrs.

Sample :-

three randomly selected Blocks namely – Bongaon Block, Bagdaha Block and Gaighata Block

b) 10 number of Non School going children who are partially child-labour from village areas.

It was found that a number of non school going children concentrate in a single village named Gazna. It is in Gaighata Block in the district of 24 Parganas, West Bengal. At first one boy was approached named Hapizur Karikar and this boy was requested to collect all those boys at a particular place. But the parents were reluctant to send their wards. Then, after holding a long discussion with the parents they were convinced and ultimately they agreed to send their wards to join this project (*elementary education and training side by side*). This is an attempt which is not only an alternative to conventional schooling but also to the prevalent non formal education.

We choose the field of nursery(Horticulture) where non school going children are being engaged under the owner of the nursery with nominal wages or in some cases without wages .

Training Aspects :-

Task Time required

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| a) preparation of soil | 8 weeks |
| b) preparation of Seed Bed | 8 weeks |
| c) about seeds and seed time | 12 weeks. |
| d) seedlings and planting | 32 weeks. |
| e) nurturing with fertilizer water insecticide etc. | 18 weeks |

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| f) marketing (selling) | 12 weeks. |
| g) aspects of 'self employment' | 4 weeks. |

It is expected that after having this training program and education side by side, they will either be self employed or paid better than earlier (before training). This alternative attempt of providing elementary education is effective for the child labours which require at least two years to complete the course.

10 Such non school going boys below the age of 14 years are collected at a particular place to start the program. They became available twice in a week. It was a class room of a private primary school at Bongaon, north 24 pgs in West Bengal. It was started in March – 2004. During the first few weeks, only the letters digits etc. were studied. Some of them were already familiar to these. They started with words and simple addition in mathematics. About 2 months after the introduction of the course, the training aspects of the project was started according to training schedule mentioned above.

vi) Marketing (selling) :-

Marketing is very very important dimension of this project. When the seedlings are ready to be planted, marketing starts. Marketing means not only to sell, but also to suggest the buyers about actual procedure of soil preparation, plantation time, use of all the chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides etc. proper use of water is very essential. Once the buyers are guided by the seller boys properly, they become more interested. Next time, they buy more plants for their garden at home. Gardening is hobby. People become interested in gardening when they see beautiful flowers at neighbor's house. In this way demanded for flower and other plants grows over time. The boy, who are trained now, may earn more than an amount of money a daily labour can. He becomes self employed. 12 weeks are required for this part to discuss.

These boys are acquainted with some aspects of horticulture now. They can grow flower and other plants. If they have a plot of land (either rented or from their parents). They may apply their learnings of horticulture and thereby to become *self employed*. Mainly, they sell their own products, but some times they collect plants from other nursery farm to sell door to door. This profession is not seasonal. They can continue with this profession through out the year. Four weeks are sufficient time to have these knowledge.

On the other hand some instructional materials are used for their academic importance. The main area of emphasis are *letter with picture, words, simple sentences for language development, numbers, digits, multiplication tables, simple addition subtraction, multiplication and simple division are studied.*

Huge number of children remain out of school mainly because their parents are not in a position to expect return from elementary education. If it is possible to ensure return from even elementary education in future, then it may possible to make them literate. Or in other words, if we can invest, whatever minimum it may be, in primary education it will give us return in future. Poor parents will send their children to school or elsewhere for study means they forgo the scope of daily earnings by their wards. This may also be treated as investment. It is an investment that leads to formation of **human capital**.

Guiding principle:

$$r = \frac{y_1 - y_0}{s(y_0 + c)}$$

Where,

y_1 = mean earning of literate.

y_0 = mean earning of illiterate.

c = annual cost of keeping some one in school.

s = no. of years of school

Example:

If,

y_1 = 15,000 per year

y_0 = 10,000 per year

c = 15,000 per year

s = 5 years.

Then,

$$r = \frac{(15,000 - 10,000)}{5(10,000 + 15,000)} = \frac{5000}{5 \times 25,000}$$

or $r = \frac{1}{25} = 4\%$

So, the rate of return from education will be 4% per annum.

Observation :- 1) If $y_1=y_0$ then $r=0$, this means the rate of return on education will be zero. In this situation disadvantaged children and, in some cases their parents also, will not prefer schooling. Rather they will prefer 'working' from which some earning is possible. This is happening for our poor illiterate children.

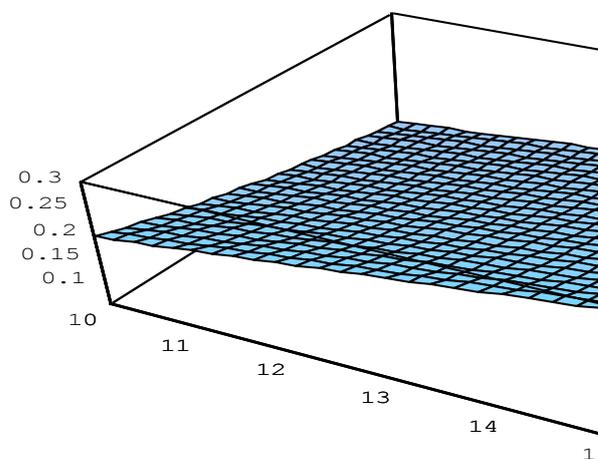
ii) When $y_0 = 0$ (students are not allowed to work)

then $r_1 = \frac{y_1}{s \cdot c} > r$

the rate of return is higher.

iii) If s is high, return is low (other things unchanged)

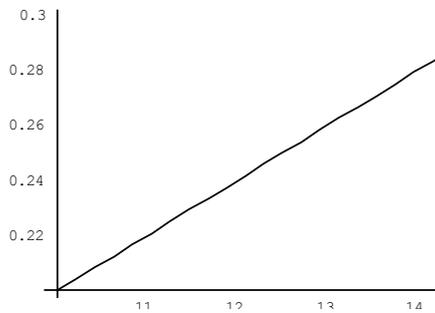
iv) If c is high, return is low (other things unchanged)



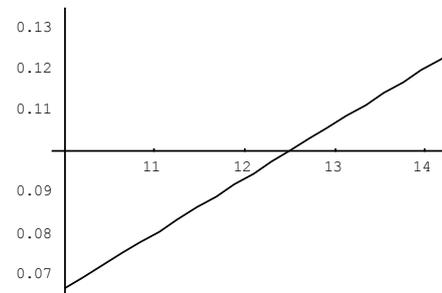
Return (0 to .3), y_0 (0 to 10), y_1 (10 to 15), $s=5$, $c=10$

Return w.r.t. y_1 ($s=5, c=10$)

When $y_0=0$

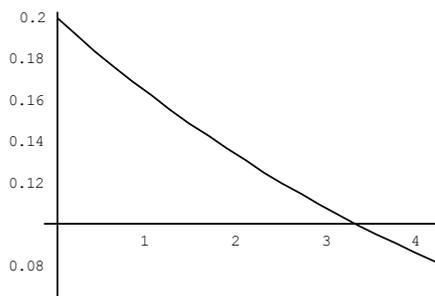


and $y_0=5$

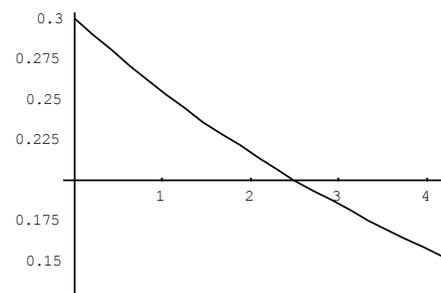


Return w.r.t. y_0 ($s=5, c=10$)

when $y_1=10$

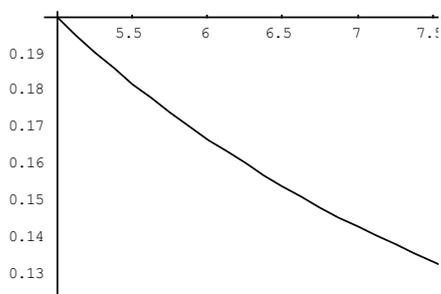


and $y_1=15$

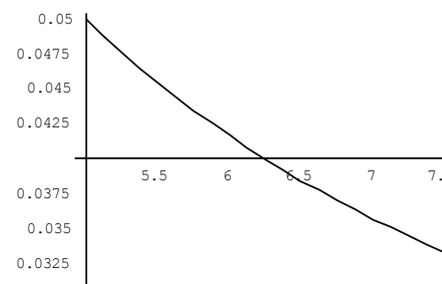


Return w.r.t. s

when $y_0=0, y_1=10$

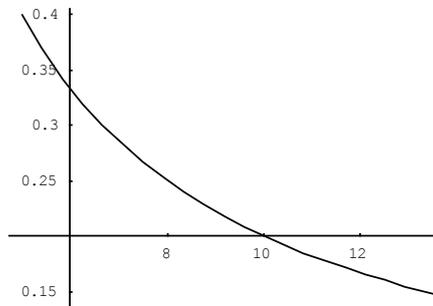


and $y_0=10, y_1=15$

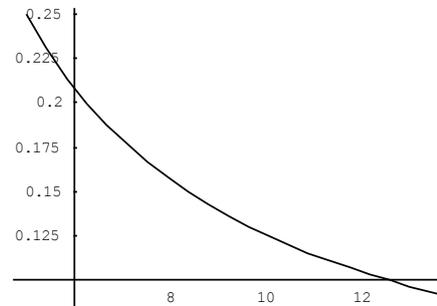


Return w.r.t. c ($y_0=0, y_1=10$)

when $s = 5$



and $s = 8$



Empirical evidence :-

- Primary enrolment rate had a positive (2.66) and significant contributor to growth of per capita income in South Korea between 1960-1985.
- Same thing happened in U.S.A. also.

How does it happen :-

- Capital becomes more productive.
- Labour becomes skilled and quality improves leading to a rise in its productivity.
- Community health and life expectancy becomes better etc.

So, The elementary education can also be considered as an investment in a slightly different manner. Simply the conventional way of schooling may not make it possible. But how is it possible? Through a *need based non formal education* it may be made possible.

3. CASE STUDY:-

This is a case study of the project undertaken for 10 non school going boys. They are the educationally deprived children. Here, case study of one(out of ten) boy named **Saddam Hossein Mollha** is given below :

Family Background:-

Saddam Hossein Mollha is from marginal village family. He is the son of Monsur Mollah and having 4 other brothers and 4 sisters. None of them is school going. Saddam is the youngest among the brothers. Other 3 brothers are day-labours. Among the sisters 2 are married. Only a little plot of land they have for cultivation.

Educational Status:-

Saddam was no where child till 2002. In the year 2004, he started to have this education i.e. he was included to this project. At that time he was totally illiterate. He had no idea about letters either in Bengali or in English. He lives in a village which is far away from metalled road. No proper communication facilities are there. There is a primary school which is at least one km. away from his residence. He didn't try to attend the school to learn anything.

Socio cultural status :-

He is from Muslim community. Consequently he bears Muslim culture. This community, in this area, is not interested in education at all. Parental attitude is totally negative towards education. They consider that education is nothing but wastage of money and valuable time. They can't think the cost of education as investment. They are far away from mainstream culture of educated people. Children from these families become day-labour just after 10 to 12 years of their age. During the day time, these boys engage themselves in different works like agriculture labour, helpers to mason, restaurant boys etc. Some other leave their village for searching other kinds of work also. Sometimes they fall in trap of antisocial gang. In the evening time, they relax engaging themselves in playing cards and some other entertaining activities. They spend an aimless mechanical life.

After joining the project :-

At the time of joining, he was 12 years old. He, together with his family didn't have any interest in education. The purpose of this project is not only to make him literate but also to change the negative attitude of their parents towards education. Saddam started with Bengali letters. Initially he couldn't get any interest. But when he was assured that he would know the different aspects of Horticulture after the completion of the course with 2 years, he became interested. Ultimately he has learnt a part of the curriculum together with horticulture knowledge. This horticulture training enables him to earn which is the main motivation of attending these project.

Now, after 2 years of attending the project, he can read - A.B.C.D, Bengali letters, Barnaparichaya etc. He can recall the multiplication table upto 10 /12. Simple addition is familiar to him. He can sign his name both in Bengali and English. He is not illiterate now.

Regarding Horticulture, he knows the following aspects:

- 1) Soil preparation.
- 2) Preparation of 'seed bed'.
- 3) Selection of seed's for different seasons.
- 4) Seedling (using seed bed).
- 5) Planting
- 6) Nurturing with fertilizer, pesticides, water.
- 7) Marketing (selling door to door or sitting at a particular place).

On the basis of this training, he can prepare the plants for sell. He is using the plot of land which is allotted to him by his father. The rented land can also be used effectively. At this moment he is going door to door with a basket of flower and other plants – collected partly from his own farm and partly – from other neighboring farms at about cost price. He takes the plants worth Rs. 100 to 150 daily. After more than one hour's journey, he starts selling i.e. hawking door to door in a town or semi-town area. The people purchase these plants for their own garden either on the roof or on small piece of land in front of their house. Saddam not only sells his plants (mainly flower plants) to the people but also helps in nurturing the plants time to time. Sometimes he goes to the same area weekly and some times bi-weekly. Whenever he goes to the areas where he sold the plants earlier, he looks after the plants. He guides them about careful nurturing .he suggests them and helps these plants grow. In this way, after 2/3 months, the plants start blooming. The house owner (now plant

owner) gets satisfied and become more interested in gardening. They again purchase the plants from Saddam. One kind of rapport is developed there between Saddam and the flower plant lover residents (Consumer) of the area concerned. Saddam's market of 'nursery plants' is increasing.

Prospects :-

Saddam takes several baskets of plants in a van-rickshaw. These are mainly flower plants. Some other plants are also there. These plants are necessary for gardening. Some hours of hawking door to door, he collects Rs. 500 to 1000 daily i.e. he earns 300 to 800 daily after deducting costs. On an average Saddam earns far more amount daily than the amount earned by him before joining the project.

He is now self employed at least partially. If he can manage to get another plot of land either from his father or from others on lease basis, he can earn more. Not only that, in that case, he will not have to be dependent on other nursery farms. He may be fully self employed at that time.

4. CONCLUSION

Not only Saddam, after completing this course, all the ten boys can now be termed as literate and at the same time in better condition of earning. Moreover, on the basis of the above study, it can be tested that there has been a change in the parental attitude towards the elementary education. Significant result can be available through pre-test & post-test data. After having verbal discussion with them also it can be concluded that the parents can consider the expenditure on elementary education as an investment. Or in other words, they become interested in elementary education. They may be ready to send their children to the school if the students are provided elementary education with a level of vocational training which may be termed as NEED BASED NON-FORMAL EDUCATION.

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