

CHAPTER I

T H E P R O B L E M

THE CONCERN OF THIS STUDY

The object of this study is to observe schools that cater to children of different social strata and to document whether, and if so how the facilities available for schools are different and disparate. This exercise is part of a larger concern about inequality in education, about inequality in the education available to children of different strata in society. Conceding that this inequality has several sources and is rooted in several features of the educational system, this study is inspired by the hypothesis that one of the most significant sources of inequality, is the school itself. In short, it is based on the hypothesis that schools catering to children of the disadvantaged sectors of society do not provide the same atmosphere or content for learning as do schools catering to children from the middle classes or the elite sections of society.

In Bombay city, which is the locale of this study, the pronounced socio-economic differences that exist among the people, is reflected in the prevalence of unequal schools. In the absence of a uniform system of education, schools from their very inception have developed unequally in the city. In a city where

schools are being provided by a variety of governmental and non-governmental agencies, the administering of these schools is being done with varied degrees of financial resources. Insofar, as the physical and academic facilities that are provided by schools are partly related to the financial resources that they have at their disposal, the manner in which schools are financed, makes for differences in the provisions of the schools. In this context, one can draw a distinction among the unaided, the aided and the municipal schools.

There are private schools that are financially "unaided" by the State Government and may depend either entirely on the income that they get through fees, or else may supplement this income with other sources of private income. Most elite schools fall into the unaided category. In some private schools, either the primary or the secondary or both the sections are "aided" by State Government funds. However, more often than not, many schools find this aid inadequate to meet their needs and get an additional source of income, from the nominal fees that they charge their students (the fees are nominal when compared with the fees charged by unaided schools). Finally there are the municipal schools or the free schools, insofar as they do not charge any fees in the primary school and only a nominal fee in the secondary school.

These differences among schools become obtrusively noticeable when coupled with the ability or the inability of parents to choose and pay for the kind of education that they want for their children. Thus there are the elite schools being patronized by a higher socio-economic-status (SES) group of children, whose parents can afford to meet the high costs incurred in maintaining such schools. Children at the bottom of the SES rung, whose parents are unable to choose or pay for their education, are found in the municipal schools. Children who fall between these two SES groupings are, by and large, found in the aided schools, where education, while not being free, is not so exorbitant that their parents cannot afford it.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is guided by the hypothesis that differences in school facilities seem to be correlated to the SES of the students that the schools serve. It observes the facilities at three schools catering to three different socio-economic-strata with a view to identifying differences in the facilities in substantive detail.

This study, by definition, seeks to observe schools catering to different socio-economic-strata. However, I did not have adequate data on the SES status of the students at the three schools, when I decided to choose them for my sample. My choice was based on observations and impressions. Therefore the first

task was to establish the validity of my choice.

Beyond this the aims and objectives of the study were as follows:

- 1) To document differences among the three schools in the physical facilities that they provide. The physical features observed are the school buildings and classrooms, their over-all maintenance and cleanliness, the lighting and ventilation of the classrooms, the presence or absence of furniture for the students, the provision of toilets and water taps and some of the facilities that are provided for the teachers and the principals. Further, the quality of the provisions made for the academic and the all-round development of the students is looked at. Considered here are provisions such as the curricula, laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, facilities for cultural activities and art.
- 2) To examine differences among the three schools in;
 - (i) the structural attributes of their principals, that is the administrative powers that are vested in them;
 - (ii) the personal attributes of their principals, such as their educational and teaching qualifications and their experience as teachers and administrators;
 - (iii) the performance of the principals as gauged from how they - spell out the objectives of schooling, handle the learning, socio-economic and physical environments of their schools, approach discipline and view the

importance of physical and academic facilities in meeting the educational requirements of their students.

3) To pin-point differences among the schools in terms of;

(i) teacher attributes such as their education, training and experience;

(ii) the teacher-student relationship which was observed in terms of whether or not teachers know their students by name, know something about the home circumstances of their students, make themselves accessible to their students and find the time to spend, individually, with their students;

(iii) classroom teaching as gauged by teaching practices such as the importance that teachers place on students asking questions during class, the focus of homework assigned to students and the correction of the homework and classwork by the teachers;

(iv) teachers' expectations of students;

(v) their observations of disciplinary problems such as irregular attendance, talking during class, failure to do homework, forgetting books at home, truancy, cheating, coming unclean to school, use of abusive language and physical violence; and

(vi) teacher responses to the needs of their students via certain classroom practices, namely the allocation of places for students, the criteria used in selection of classroom leaders and the recognition and reward given to students who perform well.

4) To identify differences among the schools in the home background of the students in terms of

(i) family size, as defined by the total number of people living in the household unit and the total number of children in the household unit;

(ii) some of the physical facilities of the home such as the location of houses, the cleanliness of the localities, the type of houses, the number of rooms that they contain, the presence or absence of facilities such as a kitchen, toilet, electricity, fans and more directly connected with the students, the facilities that they have for study;

(iii) parents' selection of schools for their children;

(iv) parental interest in their children's studies as indicated by - supervision of their studies, communicating appreciation to their children when they fare well in their studies and dissatisfaction when they fare poorly, consider themselves responsible for their children's success at school and interact with the teachers, to jointly tackle the academic problems that crop up;

(v) parental attitudes to education as gauged by the importance that they place on their children securing "good marks" in school; and

(vi) parents' educational and occupational aspirations for their children.

5) To focus on differences among the schools in students' impressions of their school life, their future

and their home life. More specifically, it seeks to examine differences in terms of

(i) the enthusiasm that students have for school as gauged by a number of questions such as - how much they like school, whether or not they would be happy to leave school, whether they think holidays are fun, whether they miss school during the holidays and whether they are happy to get back to school after the holidays;

(ii) the students' impressions of the rapport that they have with their teachers as gauged from their responses to questions pertaining to whether or not - they feel free to ask questions in class, their teachers take an individual interest in their studies, their teachers are approachable when they need help in their studies, their teachers show appreciation when they do good work, and they feel free to confide in their teachers;

(iii) the subject preferences of the students, keeping in mind the fact that all subjects do not have the same value in defining access to higher education;

(iv) the educational and occupational aspirations of the students; and

(v) some insights into the home life of the students as indicated by their relationships with their parents, how they spend a typical school day and how they spend their holidays.

6) To examine differences among the schools in

(i) the quality of academic performance, as indicated

by the incidence of drop-out and failure in the schools and by the results at the end of standard X, which is the terminal point of secondary school education; and

(ii) the participation and performance of the students in some of the other activities offered by the schools.

THE METHODOLOGY

Selection of the Schools - As a preliminary to undertaking this study, I spent two months visiting over 50 schools in adjacent localities, in the suburbs of Bombay city, identifying the different types of schools that were there. From these schools, I singled out the three schools for my study. The three schools selected were run by different managements, were differentially financed and catered to different SES groups of students. Whereas many schools had been considered as possible choices for this study, the final decision was governed by the fact that, apart from meeting all the other conditions, the principals of the three schools selected, permitted me the liberty to spend as much time in their schools as was needed - a duration that stretched to nine months - and promised all the required help.

School A is run by the Bombay Municipal Corporation (B.M.C.). It started as a primary school in 1965. It grew into a secondary school in 1973. Both the primary and secondary schools are housed in a single building but are divided to form two physically and

administratively separate entities. For the purposes of this study, these schools have been dealt with as a single administrative entity because all the students of the primary school who pass out are admitted to the secondary school, the latter school also admitting students from other nearby primary schools.

In school A, the primary school is free and students pay only a nominal fee in the secondary school. Hence, the overwhelming majority of students who go to this school belong to the lower SES groups and are drawn from the nearby slums. This school is co-educational. The medium of instruction is Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi. The strength of the school was 2417 students.

School B, is run by the Diocesan priests (they are a Roman Catholic religious order). The school, started over a hundred years ago, was located in a slum area and catered mainly to children from the lower SES groups. Decades later, the school was accorded recognition by the State Government. When student numbers increased, the management felt the need to shift the school to a larger building. In 1966, the school was shifted out of the slum to its present location in the midst of a socio-economically mixed neighbourhood, surrounded by the slums on one side, a middle socio-economic class on the other side, with a higher socio-economic neighbourhood, not far away.

In school B, because of State Government aid for

the secondary school, fees are subsidized and students have to pay only a nominal fee. However, the aid given to the school is insufficient to carry out its various activities and as a result the school has to charge, relatively speaking, higher fees in the primary school (Rs.25/- per month). The hike in fees, the re-location of the school to a new building with better facilities in a better locality, coupled with the fact that the medium of instruction in this school is English, were some of the reasons as to why, almost over-night, parents from the middle and higher SES groups residing in the locality began sending their children to this school, resulting in the mixed SES composition of the student body. The school is co-educational and at the time of this study, the strength of the school was 1664 students.

School C is run by a Christian organization and is managed by a board of trustees, consisting of both Indians and foreigners. This school with a history as old as that of school B, started as an orphanage for the children of Anglo-Indian parentage. Whereas these children did not constitute an economic elite, they were definitely a social elite because of their British parentage and were provided with an education in keeping with this status. However, through the years, as the school was establishing itself as a school with a good academic record, parents from the higher SES groups also began sending their children to this school.

Over a period of time, the objective of educating the orphans, the original purpose for starting such a school, began to get obscured and at the time of this study, the school had only a handful of orphans, with plans to close down the orphanage altogether. The spot-light had shifted to a socio-economically elite group of children.

School C is an unaided school and the management has to meet the costs incurred in running the school, largely from the fees that they charge their students. Parents have to pay over Rs.1,000/- per year as tuition fees for each child. This school, like the other two, is co-educational. At the time of this study, the strength of the school was 1537 students.

Sample Selection within the Schools - Having chosen the three schools, the population to be studied within these schools was selected in the following way.

* The Selection of Students to Establish the SES

Composition of the Schools - One major criterion used in selecting the three schools is that they cater to different SES groups of students. This is an assumption that is drawn from the fact that the three schools are differentially financed, from information that the principals and some of the teachers provided and from my own impressions of the schools. Hence the first task was to collect data for establishing the validity of my choice.

To get a SES profile of the schools, all the students of standards I, V and IX in each school, were selected and information on their SES background was collected. In school A, information was collected from 654 students, which represented 27.1 per cent of the student population of the school. In school B, information was collected from 359 students which represented 21.6 per cent of the student population. In school C, information was collected from 296 students which represented 19.3 per cent of the student population in the school.

The Selection of Principals and Teachers - All the principals and teachers in the three schools were interviewed. There was one principal each, for schools B and C. School A had separate administrators for the primary and secondary schools. In addition, there were two principals for each school (they are called supervisors) who report to the administrator. There were 66, 40 and 51 teachers from schools A, B and C respectively, who were interviewed.

The Selection of Students and Parents - The standard IX students were interviewed on their reflections of school life, their future and on their home life. Students from this standard were selected because they were finishing school and were better able to provide the kind of insights that were being looked for.

Information from 50, 52 and 55 boys from standard IX of schools A, B and C respectively was collected.

Whereas the original plan was to study a quota of 50 boys from each school, information from a few more students in schools B and C was gathered, thereby getting the total population of the standard IX boys in these schools. However, in school A, since student numbers were large, interviews on 50 boys were conducted and using the systematic random sampling procedure, ensured that students from all the classes in this standard were represented in the sample. These students constituted approximately 21.0 per cent of the standard IX boys in the school.

To get detailed insights into the home background of the students, 150 parents of the standard IX students - 50 from each school - were interviewed. They were the parents of the boys who were earlier interviewed.

The original plan was to interview mothers, since the preliminary survey interviews showed that, by and large, it was the mothers who were supervising their children's studies and were meeting their over-all needs. For the final study, whereas it was mostly the mothers who were interviewed, sometimes both parents were present during the interview, and at other times (especially so in school A) only the fathers were interviewed since the mothers were away at their native places and it was the fathers who were looking after the children.

Strictly speaking, the findings from the interviews on the students and the parents cannot be used to generalize for the school as a whole, since the sample was drawn from only one standard of the schools and hence was not representative of the student population of the schools. However, within each school, the students in standard IX were socio-economically no different from the students in the rest of the school and hence, broadly speaking, the findings do have general applicability.

The Tools of Data Collection - The following tools of data collection were used:

Questionnaire/Interview Schedule - The collection of information on the SES background of the students was undertaken with the help of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to the students, with the request that they get it filled in by their parents. In schools C and B, the higher and mixed SES schools, students were prompt in filling and returning the questionnaire. This did not happen in school A, the lower SES school. In this school, many of the students either kept losing the forms, failed to return them or else returned them with incomplete information. As a result, I had to launch out on the laborious task of actually visiting the houses of the students to get the information that was needed. This involved going to the house of a student, identifying the other classmates

of the student who lived in the area and thus moving on until most of the students in each class were covered.

To start with, the principals were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule to get certain basic information about them and their schools. Later, there were a series of interviews with them spanning over 9 months, where a wide range of issues pertaining to their schools were discussed for which interview schedules were not used. Meetings with the principals took place, as and when queries concerning their schools cropped up.

The teacher interviews were conducted with the help of an interview schedule. However, in the course of conversation, teachers spontaneously gave information that went beyond the formal interview schedule. The section on teachers' expectations is based on such data.

In collecting data from the students, the initial plan was to use an interview schedule. In the pre-testing of the schedule, however, it was found that students in schools B and C appeared to be unduly concerned with how they came across to the interviewer but responded more openly and freely to a questionnaire. In school A, students were uninhibited and forthright when being interviewed and many of them saw the interview as an opportunity to express themselves. Hence both these techniques of data collection were adopted. In school A, the students were interviewed. In schools B

and C, the interview schedule was treated as a questionnaire and administered to small batches of students, so that the interviewer could handle any queries they may have had while answering it.

Parents were interviewed with the help of a schedule that was, by and large, adequate to cover the range of their responses.

Other Observations - Apart from the use of questionnaires and interview schedules, considerable time was spent observing the schools - its facilities, its personnel and its activities. A large part of the data in the chapter on physical facilities and the educational provisions of the schools is based on such observations. Time was spent in the classrooms observing how students were taught and how teachers and students related to one another. Students were observed in the libraries, laboratories, playfields and in their participation in the cultural activities of their schools. Many of the insights that were obtained through such observations would not have been possible through the use of questionnaires and interview schedules, and these have been incorporated, at appropriate places in this study.

Secondary Sources - Information was also collected from the official files of the schools. The data on teachers' salaries and academic performance were from secondary sources. However, information retrieval was very difficult in school A, as official files were

chaotically maintained.

Analysis of Data - This study makes an effort to validate the proposition that differences in school facilities seem to be correlated to the SES of the students that the schools serve. However, since the observations cover only three schools which are not even "systematically" chosen to provide a representative sample of schools catering to different socio-economic strata, this validation is not attempted at a level of statistical generalization. Through intensive observations, the study aims at firmly illustrating the situation and suggests guidelines that could be statistically verified with more thoroughly representative samples. Thus the data in this study is analyzed largely in terms of simple percentages and cross-tabulations.

The grading of occupations devised by D'Souza is adopted for this study (D'Souza: 1961; D'Souza: 1968; D'Souza and Sethi: 1972). Occupations are graded in a prestige hierarchy from categories I to VII, with occupations in category I commanding the highest prestige, those in category VII the least and the occupations in the other categories, commanding correspondingly varying degrees of prestige.

A notional SES index is devised for the study. This is done by reducing each of the three variables - father's occupation, father's education and father's

income - into five categories, categories that more or less coincide, one with the other. For each variable, the category scores range from 1 to 5. The highest possible index score that a father can have is 15 and indicates that he belongs to the highest SES level and the lowest possible score that he can have is 3, which indicates that he belongs to the lowest SES level. In between 3 and 15 lie all the possible scores that fathers can have and they indicate correspondingly different SES levels.

Similarly, a rough summary index of home facilities is also devised by giving parental responses to each of the physical facilities specified (location of the houses, cleanliness of the localities, type of houses, the number of rooms that they contain, the presence or absence of facilities such as a kitchen, toilet, electricity, fans and more directly connected with the students, the facilities that they have for study) a score of either 0 or 1. Since 9 facilities are considered in all, the maximum possible score a home can receive is 9 and the lowest is 0. A sum score of 0 implies that the student's home is in a slum locality that is dirty, where he lives in a one room house that has a kitchenette. The house either lacks toilet and bathing facilities or else the inmates are sharing a toilet in common with others. The house has no electricity and no fans and the student has absolutely no facilities for study. A score of 9 on the other

hand, implies that the student comes from a residential area or a fairly mixed area that is clean. He lives in an apartment that has a separate kitchen, toilet and bathing facilities, electricity and fans and he has some facilities for study. In this index of home facilities, scores 0 - 3 represent homes with little or no facilities, scores 4 - 6 represent homes with some facilities and scores 7 - 9 indicate homes with the most facilities.

Organization of the Chapters - This dissertation is divided into eleven chapters. The first three chapters may be viewed as a preface. This, the first chapter, is a statement of the problem and presents the method of the study. Chapters II and III aim at placing the study in the context of the larger theme of education and inequality. The findings have been presented in a set of seven chapters, that constitute the substantive part of this dissertation. Chapter IV establishes the SES differences among the schools. Chapter V documents differences among the schools in the physical facilities that they provide and in some of the educational provisions that they make for the academic and all-round development of their students.

Chapter VI examines differences among the schools in the administrative powers of the principals, in their personal attributes and in their performance. Chapter VII looks at teachers and teaching in the three schools. Chapter VIII identifies differences among the schools in the home background of the students. Chapter IX focuses on differences among schools in the students' impressions of their social life, their future and their home life. Chapter X examines differences in the performance of students in the three schools. Chapter XI offers some concluding comments.

Limitations of the Study - Most of the conceptual discussion of the issue of education and inequality is based on literature from England and the United States. Although conscious of its limitations, I have accepted this bias because it was only from these two countries that the literature required was adequately available to formulate the conceptual issue.

The sources of school income, quite apart from influencing the socio-economic composition of schools, are important because finances are

basic to the provision of facilities by schools. However, I was unable to get adequate information on school finances from schools B and C. As a result this important aspect of unequal school facilities was not covered by the study.