

**PUBLIC DELIVERY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN
KOLKATA**

A STUDY

PRATICHI RESEARCH TEAM

**FOREWORD BY
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CONTENTS

Foreword – Amartya Sen	11
Introduction	15
Socio-economic Stratification and Schooling : Profile of the Selected Households	18
Public Delivery of Primary Education in Kolkata : Study Highlights	22
Aspiration of Acquiring Education	23
Children and Their Schools	26
Asymmetry in Teaching and Learning	39
Unutilised Potentials : Fragile Implementations of Incentive Schemes	50
Conclusion	54
Bibliography	60
Appendix – I : Appendix Tables	62
	81

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1 – Literacy rate among the selected households	20
Table 2 – Level of Education that Parents Want their Children Achieve (in percentage)	24
Table 3 – Factors Motivating the Children to Continue Studies	24
Table 4 – Status of Public Primary Education in Kolkata: Overall picture	26
Table 5 – Average enrolment per institution	27
Table 6 – Status of ownership of building	28
Table 7 – Type of buildings	28
Table 8 – Distribution of institutions by number of classrooms	28
Table 9 – Distribution of teachers according to institution	31
Table 10 – Distribution of teachers across types of primary schools	31
Table 11 – Number of non-teaching staff in different institutions	32
Table 12 – Average Schooling Time (in Hours)	36
Table 13 – Performance of the children according to the results provided by the teachers and our observation. (Percentage of children in the range of marks)	40
Table 14 – Distribution of children who failed to write their name according to their status of receiving or not receiving private tuition	41
Table 15 – Average Cost of Schooling	42
Table 16 – Distribution of children according to expenditure class of schooling	43
Table 17 – Reasons for not receiving private tuition	45
Table 18 – Who imparted private tuition?	45
Table 19 – Average annual expenditure on private tuition (in Rs.)	46
Table 20 – Inspection occurred in last one year	47
Table 21 – Institutions with committees	48
Table 22 – Preferences of initiation of Mid Day Meal Programme	52

LIST OF CHARTS

	Page
Chart 2 – Female Literacy Rate and Attendance (KDPSC)	33
Chart 3 – Female Literacy Rate and Attendance (KMC)	33
Chart 4 – Female Literacy Rate and Attendance (SSK)	34
Chart 5 – Parents' View Over the Local Government School	35
Chart 6 – Children who failed to write their name properly	40
Chart 7 – Distribution of children according to the cost of schooling of different institutions	42
Chart 8 – Extent of private tuition	44

Foreword

Amartya Sen

The Pratichi Research Team has been concerned for some years with the state of primary education in rural West Bengal, and we have presented to the public the findings of our investigation of primary schools and educational centres in six districts in West Bengal (Birbhum, Medinipur, Puruliya, Bardhaman, Murshidabad and Darjeeling) and one district in neighbouring Jharkhand (Dumka). We have also presented the results of our studies on primary health care in two districts in east India, viz. Birbhum in West Bengal and Dumka in Jharkhand.

Until last year we could not turn to primary education in Kolkata, though we have been curious, naturally enough, about the situation in this great city. Our resolve was strengthened by a warm request from the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC hereafter) to conduct a study of schooling provided by it. This brief report presents some of our preliminary findings. The KMC was aware that there are problems that need to be encountered, and even though our findings are not particularly flattering, we – the Pratichi Trust research team – very much appreciate the spirit of questioning (including self-questioning) which is part of the great tradition of this city and to which the KMC also subscribes. We hope that the suggestions for improvement that follow our critique of the state of affairs today will help the identification of crucial directions for future policy and practice.

Our Focus and Approach

The Pratichi team's method of investigation tends to take the form of studying a small number of institutions with very great care, going beyond readily provided data, and include both directly observed ground realities and findings based on extensive interviews and conversations. Our focus is, thus, on the depth of the investigation, rather than on its width. This is worth bearing in mind, since we must emphasize that our findings are not claimed to be fully representative of all the Kolkata schools. Even though the schools within each category were selected on a random basis, the results, if they are interpreted to apply to all Kolkata schools (rather than just to the specific schools studied), must be seen to contain possible sampling errors. We have opted for in-depth studies (which include having extensive conversations with teachers, parents and pupils, and undertaking our own testing of educational achievements in the schools) of a limited number of schools to get a fuller understanding of what is happening there, rather than relying primarily on the data that are readily obtained or standardly given out on an institutional basis by the schools, or by ministries or offices involved in operating primary education.

We tried to look both at the KMC primary schools and at Sishu Siksha Kendras (SSK, hereafter), run by the Corporation. We also examined a sample of the much larger cluster of state-run primary

schools, operated by Kolkata District Primary School Council (KDPSC, hereafter). We were interested in all the three categories of non-private schools in Kolkata, and also, to the extent possible, in comparing their performances.

The Overall Picture

The overall situation of primary education in Corporation-run and State-run schools in Kolkata is certainly quite discouraging. On the other hand, we were extremely impressed by the emphasis that the parents themselves place on having good education for their children – girls as well as boys – and the much-discussed resistance or apathy of parents (which is often blamed for the deficiencies of primary education in India) was conspicuously hard to find. We also found much open-mindedness among staff members working for educational authorities of the Corporation and of the State, who seemed willing to engage in critical discussions in seeking ways and means of making the situation better.

In addition to talking with a wide group of parents, teachers, officials and union leaders, we have investigated, in as much detail as we could, the operations and performances of 10 KMC primary schools, 5 SSKs run by the KMC and 15 KDPSC primary schools. The observed deficiencies of the on-going arrangements include the following :

- (1) **high frequency of absenteeism of pupils** : attendance rates that could be worked out from investigation of the detailed records of the schools, varying from an average of 56 per cent attendance in KMC primary schools, 66 per cent presence in KDPSC (state) schools, and 76 per cent attendance in Corporation-run SSKs;
- (2) **low educational achievements of pupils** : percentage of children who got the lowest grades (that is, 0-20 out of a hundred) to be, respectively, 8%, 3% and 2% in KMC schools, KDPSC schools and SSKs, according to their own records, but which needed correction based on our independent testing and scrutiny, which yielded the much higher figures of 25%, 16% and 22% respectively, in the three categories of primary educational institutions;
- (3) **considerable parent dissatisfaction with the school performance** : our investigations indicated that percentage of dissatisfied parents to be, respectively, 51%, 37% and 38% in the KMC schools, KDPSC schools and SSKs respectively (there is evidence that the dissatisfaction with the SSKs related particularly to the lack of facilities in those centres of learning);
- (4) **considerable irregularity in the attendance by teachers and high level of parent dissatisfaction with the teachers' performance** : the latter is reflected in the percentage of parents who are dissatisfied with the teachers which are 35%, 20% and 8% for the KMC schools, KDPSC schools and SSKs respectively;
- (5) **non-functioning of parent-teacher committees** : the percentage of parents who were unaware that there were such committees at all amounting to the hefty figures 100%, 73% and 54% for the KMC schools, KDPSC schools and SSKs respectively;

- (6) **extraordinary dependence on private tuition for almost anyone who could afford it**, which is a great indictment of what state or city educational facilities offer to the children : 73% of the state-run primary school children rely on it, and while the percentage is lower for the KMC schools and SSKs, varying between 45% and 50%, the proportions, it emerged, would have been much higher if the parents had been less poor;
- (7) **enormous variation between different schools within each category**, indicating that the initiative and sense of duty of teachers, and the functioning of parent-teacher committees (when operational, which is very rare), make a very big difference to what children from non-affluent backgrounds get from the state and city administrations in Kolkata;
- (8) **effective exclusion of children from very poor families**, which occurs particularly when there are no KMC schools or SSKs within easy reach, and when the state schools run by KDPSC insist on, as is the case with many of them, a significant monthly amount to be paid by the parents for their children to be enrolled;
- (9) **failure of the inspection system of schools**, which is extensive throughout primary education in Kolkata, and applies even to the state schools run by KDPSC where the inspection system is meant to be universal : in fact, of the 15 sampled KDPSC schools we examined, eight had not seen any inspectors in the preceding one-year period.

The Way Forward

The problems identified in the brief summary picture presented here (this will be followed up by a detailed report) suggest clear points of focus that need attention. To mention just a few immediate needs, we list the following :

- (1) The inspection system for all schools, including state schools where it is meant to be mandatory but often absent, needs urgently to be revived.
- (2) We need the cooperation of the teachers' unions for doing their duty not only to the interests of their membership (obviously an important function), but also to do what they can to reduce the negligence of some teachers which bring the entire community to some disrepute; we are very happy to note the eagerness of some of the leaders of teachers unions (including the largest one in West Bengal) to do what they can to change the situation and provide leadership in this important area of public action;
- (3) The parent-teacher committees need reviving, and in some case have to be started off from complete absence, and an educational plan is needed for the city to make this vital tool of good schooling arrangements to be operational and effective. In many rural areas of West Bengal this is already happening, and it would be a pity if the premier city of the state lags behind the villages in this respect.
- (4) The complete denial of the right to free basic education that is reflected in the need for private tuition has to be overcome by raising the quality of schools, but it is immediately important to recognise

that there is an enormously uncouth problem here (primary school children do not suffer from the need for substantial private tuition in almost any other country in the world).

It must, of course, be acknowledged that Kolkata's schooling problems are made difficult by the impoverished economic circumstance of a large section of this city's population. While the state schools, run by KDPSC, draw on students from families of very diverse backgrounds (some as affluent as those who send their children standardly to private schools), KMC-run schools and SSKs have to cater mostly to children from very poor families. And yet some of these KMC-run institutions do remarkably better than others, and we were particularly impressed by the performance of teachers in the SSKs, where pupil attendance is high, teachers' work irregularities are low, parent satisfaction with the performance of teachers is agreeably large, and where parent-teacher committees are often quite functional and effective. The SSKs are, of course, plagued by lack of facilities (and here the city and the state have good reason to be more generous), but we have been particularly struck by what a big difference can be made by the dedicated work of the teachers.

Finally, the system of regular, cooked mid-day meals for which the Pratchi research team has been arguing for some years now, and which has now been instituted in many rural areas of West Bengal is conspicuous by its total absence in the capital city of the state. Given the importance of this arrangement for the nutrition as well as school attendance and performance of the children, which has been confirmed by our studies of the results of their introduction elsewhere in West Bengal, it is imperative that Kolkata does not lag behind in this respect.

Like in all other social issues, class divisions can be a blinding factor against a fuller understanding of the imperative needs. Children from the more affluent families have far less stake in having the facility of cooked mid-day meals for their children (the relatively low quality of the food cooked tends instead to absorb all the attention of the spokesmen for some of these families), and those who need it most often have the least access to the media and very inadequate opportunity of giving effectiveness to their concerns. One of the officials we interviewed even expressed surprise that this is meant to be a demand of importance: he asked us, "Don't the children eat at home? Don't their mothers provide them tiffin?"

To work for an efficient and equitable system of primary education for the children of this large – and wonderful – city, we have to break the combined barriers of old customs, fixed habits, ancient resistance to change, and traditionally limited visions. The need for a radical change in Kolkata's arrangements for educating its young children is both critically important and immensely urgent.

March 2006

Introduction

It is now universally acknowledged that universal access to primary education is the first step towards national development, and one of the foremost issues demanding urgent and effective intervention. There is, however, a general consensus that there exists a large gap between what has been desired and emphasised, and what has actually been achieved. This gap, as several studies suggest, is strongly correlated with social stratification, i.e. those economic and social divisions that cut across territorial boundaries. However, the manifestation of this correlation is probably most conspicuous in the urban metropolis, with its dramatic juxtaposition of opulence and poverty. On the one hand, they (saying 'we' immediately identifies Pratichi with urban centres, and others the suburban and rural) have the best-equipped and advanced centres of excellence that produce promising future citizens in thousands. On the other, there are tens of thousands of children – no one seems to know the correct figure – deprived of access even to primary-school classrooms

As regards the delivery of primary education in the urban areas, the severity of the challenge reflects the emerging socio-economic reality. The growing acquisition of wealth by one section of the people and the resulting ability to 'buy' every necessary item has a particular bearing on the performance of the primary education sector. The increased reliance of the relatively affluent on private schools, and the gradual decrease in the efficiency of the delivery of the government primary schooling system are two inseparably linked phenomena in today's society. As we have seen in our earlier studies on primary education, conducted mainly in rural areas but also in some urban areas, this phenomena applies, in various degrees, to the whole of urban West Bengal.

This disparity within urban areas does not, however, obviate the need to take into account the much more important distinction between the rural and urban areas in respect of delivery of primary education. While a large majority of the children in rural areas are enrolled in the government primary schools¹, the case is quite different, in fact the reverse, in urban areas, where a good number of children are enrolled in private schools. For example, according to an SSA (Sarva Siksha Abhiyan) survey, government-funded primary schools in Kolkata account for only 43 percent of enrolled students.²

One consequence of the weaknesses in the running of government-funded primary schools, mostly in the rural areas, is an almost inevitable

¹ According to a survey, about 98 percent of the total enrolled children in the rural areas of three blocks are in the government sector. See for details Rana K et al (2004) Public Private Interface in Primary Education : A study in Birbhum district of West Bengal, Pratichi Trust, Delhi and Santiniketan, also see Rana et al (2005) "Public private Interface in Primary Education", Economic and Political Weekly, April 9. This was also found in our earlier studies, e.g. the Pratichi Education Report I, with an introduction by Amartya Sen, TLM Books, Delhi, 2002

² See Paschimbanga Rajya Prarambhik Siksha Unnayan Sansthan (2004) Universalization of Elementary Education: Some Basic Information, Kolkata

dependence on private tuition. This adds to the existing difficulties of the children from underprivileged families (who are generally first generation learners and cannot get parental help in studying, and are extremely likely to face discrimination in the classroom owing to their underprivileged status); their chances of receiving proper education are minimal, since their parents cannot afford private tuition for them.

But the urban poor, it seems, suffer from a double disadvantage. If the perceived rickety state of the government primary schools is responsible for the increased dependence on private schooling, this dependence is in turn largely responsible for the poor functioning of the government schools. Those who could have raised their voice against this sorry state and played a major corrective role increasingly find in the comfort of private schooling a more secure way of educating their children. The government schools are left with the children of the lowest layers of the society, i.e. powerless and voiceless sections. The inclination towards private schooling has a demonstrative effect – it is observed that even the poor, in fact some of the very poor, are keen to send their children to private schools (that many of the private schools in their functioning allegedly commit the same sins for which the government schools are condemned, and avoided, is another matter). However, enrolling the children in private schools alone does not solve the problem as the unavoidability of private tuition applies in this case too.³ Thus the combined burden of the expenses on private schooling (fees, uniform, books, stationery, etc.) and the additional cost of private tuition has a special impact not only on the economic conditions of the poor families but on their children's education as well (in terms of learning achievement and continuing education). While this situation justifies the existence of government schools in urban areas, it also reinforces the need to strengthen the schooling system, because it demonstrably accounts for the major part of whatever access to primary education children from underprivileged backgrounds can expect to have.

This general understanding made the Pratichi Trust, which is committed to the cause of positive intervention in primary education, engage in an exploration of the ground realities in the government primary schooling system in the urban areas. As it happened, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) also requested us to conduct a study of the primary schools run by this body. However, we undertook the present work with our own resources, in keeping with the Trust's principle of conducting studies independently. The Trust conducted an inquiry in 30 primary schooling institutions of Kolkata, which run under various departments. The institutions include 10 KMC primary schools, 5 Sishu Siksha Kendras (SSK), also run by KMC, and 15 primary schools under the Kolkata District Primary School Council (KDPSC). Apart from interviewing the teachers of the schooling institutions selected on a stratified random sampling basis, the study incorporated structured interviews of 291 parents and unstructured conversations with some other persons concerned with primary education.

³ See for details Rana K et al (2004) Op.cit

This report is divided into seven concise sections, including the present one. Section two briefly discusses the backgrounds of the households interviewed and the constituencies of the various types of public schools, as well as the methodology followed in the study. Section three provides some glimpses of the aspirations of the parents regarding their children's education. Section four deals with the objective conditions pertaining to schooling, while section five discusses the conditions of teaching and learning and related constraints. Section six gives a brief account of the implementation of several incentive schemes meant for children. The last section attempts to summarize the findings.

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation extended by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and the Kolkata District Primary School Council. We are also grateful to the students, teachers and parents of the sampled schools.

It may be mentioned here that the smallness of the sample size does not allow us to draw a definitive conclusion, though the indicative results of the study and their general agreement with the larger social discourse (media, general public discussion and so on) suggest a broader contextual underpinning for these findings.

Socio-economic Stratification and Schooling: Profile of Selected Households

Kolkata was the capital of British India until 1911 (the colonial state was succeeded by the Republic of India in 1947). The glory that it enjoyed then has now largely faded, but traces still linger, and it has remained one of the most important cities in the country. With a 4.5 million strong population (excluding those millions who commute into the city every day), it is one of the most densely populated areas of the country (with a population density of 24,760 per square km, which is the highest among the four metro cities of India)⁴. The low Female-Male Ratio (FMR) (829 women per 1000 men), much lower than the state average (934 women per 1000 men) suggests the preponderance of men in the population. The total population includes of 6.2 percent Scheduled Caste, 0.2 percent Scheduled Tribe and 20.3 percent Muslim communities. Although considered by many as the cultural capital of the country, the disturbing fact that one fifth of its population cannot read or write is not something the city can take pride in, although its literacy rate (81 percent) is quite naturally higher than that in all other districts in the state. In line with the state and country-wise pattern the male literacy rate (91 percent) is much higher than the female literacy rate (77 percent). Despite a declining trend, the city still has a large number of out-of-school children.

As regards the public delivery of primary education, the task has devolved on the Kolkata District Primary School Council (KDPSC) and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. While the KDPSC runs 1403 primary schools, there are 242 primary schools run by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC). The KMC also runs 100 Sishu Siksha Kendra (SSK)s that together cater to the primary educational needs of children coming mainly from poorer economic backgrounds.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning that Kolkata has a large number of private schools. Unfortunately no estimate of the number of such schools, their enrolment figures and the socio-economic backgrounds of the students was available. General observations, however, suggest that the children who generally attend the private schools tend to be from relatively affluent economic backgrounds.⁵

Despite the general condition of relative poverty of students, there have been substantial inter as well as intra-institutional variations among the public run primary institutions in this respect. The differences among distinct categories of government-funded primary schooling institutions as well as among institutions within each category, as found in the study, are nothing but reflections of social stratification,

⁴ These and subsequent figures pertaining to demography, literacy rate, etc. have been taken from the Census of India-2001, if not mentioned otherwise.

⁵ The Pratiche Research Team carried out a study on private schooling in primary education in Birbhum district. The findings found some clear connection not only between income class and private schooling but also between higher expenditure and quality of learning. See for details, 'Public Private Interface in Primary Education : A Case Study in West Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, April, 2005

the fact that choices open to individuals vary directly with their relative positions with respect to income and wealth. The government institutions run by different departments were often perceived as being intended for different sections of people, cutting across such entitlement barriers.

Of the total of 141 municipal wards that the city comprises, our study chose a sample of 29 whose population of 1024154 includes 6.5 percent scheduled castes and 0.2 percent scheduled tribes. Ward-based religion-wise disaggregated population figures were not available. The total literacy rate of the wards mentioned (80 percent, with the male and female literacy rates being 83 percent and 75 percent respectively) tallies broadly with the all Kolkata figure, and so the sample may be considered a fairly representative one.

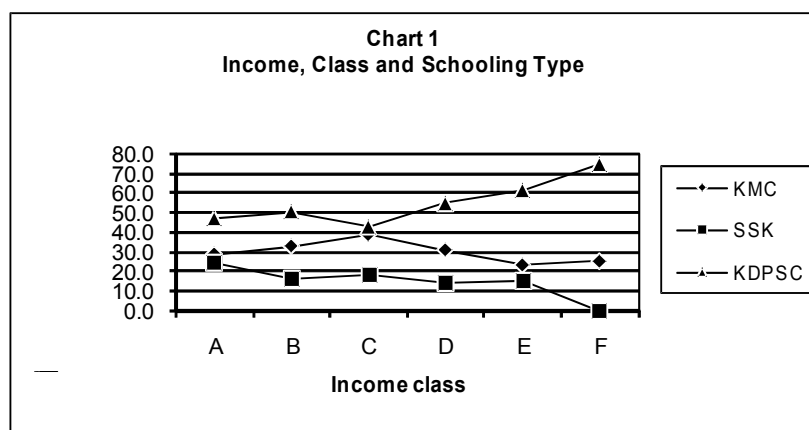
Caste-wise break-up figures for the children enrolled in various institutions were not available from the schools. This, combined with the inability of most of the respondents to state their caste or ethnic identities, restricted the study to an analysis of the data based only on religion. The children in our sample, and thus the households they belonged to, were mainly from Hindu and Muslim backgrounds. Children from half (51.5 percent) of the 291 households selected for in-depth interview were enrolled in the KDPSC schools. Ninety-one households (31.3 percent) sent their children to KMC schools and children from 50 households (17.2 percent) were studying in the SSKs. Seventy percent of the children going to the KMC schools belonged to various Hindu communities while 29 percent were Muslims. The religious break-up of the children enrolled in the KDPSC schools was also similar to the KMC pattern (77 percent and 23 percent), but interestingly the pattern in the SSK was almost reverse : only 38 percent of the selected children were from a Hindu background while 62 percent came from Muslim families⁶. Perhaps owing to their desire to get their children educated within a limited range of choices Muslim parents are trying to make maximum use of the poorly equipped educational institutions that the SSKs are.⁷

Whether Muslims in Kolkata face any particular discrimination on religious grounds is still not very clear. But the discrimination in education on a class basis is amply clear from the occupational pattern of the parents of the children attending different institutions. For example, children from casual labourer families constituted 32 percent and 27.5 percent respectively of the SSK and KMC schools, but in case of KDPSC schools the figure was about 7 percent. Again, the occupational pattern of the selected households displays a clear correlation of religious background with occupational category and annual income category of the households. (See chart 1 below).

⁶ The higher aspiration vis-a-vis limited opportunities of acquiring education has also been reported in some other studies. See Hussain (2004), Santra and Rafique (2003),

⁷ While all the institutions face many problems, the SSKs are particularly handicapped in terms of buildings and other materials given the fact SSK teachers receive a much lower remuneration (Rs 1000) compared to the other teachers (Rs 5,000-10,000).

The economic stratification of society appears to have made a major impact on the public schooling facilities. The following chart shows that the KDPSC schools had a higher proportion of children from higher economic groups compared to the SSKs and KMC schools. In fact, some of the KDPSC schools we visited had been functioning in the manner of a private school and entry of the poorer of children in these schools was to a large extent restricted by the school fee. We shall discuss these issues at some length in the following part of this report.



Not only the social identity or income class but the social capital in the form of literacy of the parents also has a bearing on the constituency of the children in the schools. The level of literacy of our sampled population at 80 percent was much better than the West Bengal figure (68.6 percent). The literacy level among the female population was also higher (75 percent) in comparison to the West Bengal average (60 percent). However, the rate of literacy of the households sending their children to KDPSC schools (82 percent) was much higher than the KMC (80 percent) and SSK households (73 percent).

Table 1. Literacy rate among selected households

	Male	Female	Total
KDPSC	87.2	77.7	82.3
KMC	85.4	75.1	80.3
SSK	76.2	70.5	72.8
Total	84.7	75.3	79.9

The variation in literacy rate and the level of educational achievement among the selected households together with other socio-economic factors indicate that the public schools in general are attended by the underdogs. Only 3.8 percent of the total households had any member with a bachelor's degree and a meagre 0.3 percent had a

member with a master's degree. The annual income pattern of the households also supports this conclusion (more than 50 percent of the households had an average annual income of less than Rs 25,000 and only 12 percent earned Rs 45,000 and above). Socio-economic stratification, we will see in later sections of the report, has a strong influence on the public delivery of primary education in Kolkata.

Methodology

After having some preliminary discussion with the education department of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation we began conducting the study in February 2005. It was decided to carry out the study in a limited number of schools (a total of 30; 10 from KMC schools, 5 from SSKs and 15 from KDPSC schools). Our work involved the following steps :

Step 1. Collecting the figures pertaining to the number of public primary institutions (KMC primary schools, SSKs and KDPSC primary schools), the list of the institutions, enrolment, etc.

According to the list supplied there were 242 KMC schools, 100 SSKs and 1403 KDPSC primary schools. However, the detailed figures were supplied only for 212 KMC schools and 97 SSKs. The study considered the earlier figures as the basis for selecting the sample.

Step 2. We selected the institutions and households on a random sampling basis.

Step 3. We designed three sets of questionnaires for teachers, parents and children respectively. The questionnaires were pre-tested in the field before they were finalised.

Step 4. Teachers' questionnaires were filled up in the school. Parents and children to be interviewed were selected randomly from the attendance register provided by the respective institutions.

Apart from interviews we registered the opinions of several other people concerned with education in one way or another. We also conducted at least one group meeting in each school locality. The members of the research team kept detailed daily field notes.

Types of schools/Findings		KDPSC	KMC	SSK
Total number of Institutions		1403	242	100
Sample Institutions		15	10	5
No. of sample households		150	91	50
No. of children interviewed		150	91	49
Ownership Status of buildings (% in parentheses)	Owned	10(66.7)	6(60)	1(20)
	Rented	5(33.3)	4(40)	2(40)
	Others	-	-	2(40)
No. of classroom(s) (% in parentheses)	One	4(26.7)	-	4(80)
	Two	1(6.7)	2(20)	-
	Three	1(6.7)	2(20)	1(20)
	Four & Above	9(60)	6(60)	-
Distribution of teachers (% in parentheses)	One	-	1(10)	-
	Two	4(26.7)	4(40)	5(100)
	Three	3(20.0)	2(20)	-
	Four & Above	8(53.3)	3(30)	-
Average no. of teachers (Range in parentheses)		3.8(2-9)	2.6 (1-4)	2(2)
Average Enrolment (Range in parentheses)		173.7 (29-542)	52.4 (26-127)	58.2 (43-70)
Pupil Teacher Ratio(Range in parentheses)		45.7 (13.8-135.5)	20.2 (8.7-31.8)	29.1 (21.5-35.0)
Institutions not inspected at all in the past 12 months preceding the study (% in parentheses)		8(53.3)	1(10)	4(80)
Teachers attendance on the days of our visits (% in parentheses)		53(93.0)	22(84.6)	8(80)
% attendance of the children (preceding the month of our visit)		65.9	55.5	76.0
% parents want their children acquire education		100	99	98
Literacy rate of the sample population(% in parentheses)		565(82.3)	411(80.3)	201(72.8)
Average cost of schooling (in Rs.)		1819.7	895.7	858.4
Extent of Private tuition (% in parentheses)		110(73.3)	45(40.7)	25(50)
No. of children able to write name		143(95.3)	80(87.9)	42(85.7)
% children achieved highest grade (81-100 out of 100)	As per the evaluation sheet of the respective institutions	16.8	18.1	0
	As per the quality assessment done by the study	15.9	4.4	6.1
% children achieved lowest grade (0-20 out of 100)	As per the evaluation sheet of the respective institutions	3.4	8	1.6
	As per the quality assessment done by the study	15.9	25.3	22.4
% parents satisfied over	Schools' performance	62.7	49.5	62
	Teachers' performance	80	64.8	92
	Children's performance	71.3	59.3	64

Aspiration for Acquiring Education

In line with some social scientists, a small section of teachers is also prone to believe that ‘parents don’t want education for their children.’ Serious empirical studies on the subject, however, found a picture that was much at variance with this kind of assumption, or prejudice, as one would prefer to call it. Aside from the PROBE report (1999), the Pratiche Trust’s studies have found a very high aspiration among the parents for getting their children educated.⁸ The present study too found that nearly all the parents, 99.3 percent to be exact, strongly expressed the view that they wanted their children – sons and daughters alike – to acquire education. Sometimes parents, particularly mothers, even indicated that educating girl children was more important for them than educating boys. This was particularly so because they thought the girl, a future mother, would teach her own children. ‘This would not only ensure the children’s education but also help the family budget by saving the money that would be needed for private tuition.’

The reasoning of these parents about the necessity of getting their children educated was by and large similar to what we found in our studies conducted in the rural areas of West Bengal. They include

- ▲ increased income opportunity
- ▲ help in building up confidence
- ▲ ability to teach own children
- ▲ ability to read and write letters, newspapers, books, etc.
- ▲ ability to keep accounts
- ▲ increased access to various kinds of information and also to public facilities
- ▲ improved marriage prospects, and so on.

While some of the parents were definite in setting a target that they wanted their children to achieve, a large majority of parents simply left it open, subject to the constraints imposed by the circumstances: in such cases ‘as far as possible’ was the typical response.

⁸ See , PROBE (1999), The Pratiche Education Report I (2002), The Delivery of Primary Education in Jharkhand (2003)

Table 2. Level of Education that Parents Want their Children Achieve
(in percentage)

	KDPSC		KMC		SSK		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Less than class 5	1.0	1.0	2.6	3.2	3.2	2.5	1.9	1.9
Up to class 5	1.9	-	2.6	3.2	3.2	-	2.4	0.9
Up to class 8	1.0	-	2.6	1.6	3.2	2.5	1.9	0.9
Madhyamik (class10)	5.8	17.5	11.7	22.2	9.7	15.0	8.5	18.4
H.S.(class 12)	1.9	3.9	2.6	1.6	3.2	5.0	2.4	3.4
Bachelor's Degree	5.8	6.8	1.3	-	6.5	2.5	4.2	3.9
Master's Degree	1.0	1.0	-	-	-	-	0.5	0.5
Technical/Professional Degree	-	1.0	-	-	-	-	-	0.5
As far as possible	81.7	65.0	76.6	68.3	71	72.5	78.3	67.5
Till their marriage	-	3.9	-	-	-	-	-	1.9
Number of children on which responses were given	104	103	77	63	31	40	212	206*

**Total number of respondents 291; while some parents had both sons and daughters some had either sons or daughters. Responses thus would not tally with the total figure of the 291 interviewed households.

The aspirations of the children were no less pronounced: in fact some of the children's aspirations were so high that even their parents could not help smiling in disbelief. Sixteen percent of the children interviewed said that they wanted to become doctors, while 11 percent said that their ambition was to become teachers. A large number of children (37 percent) said that they wanted to continue studies because it would enrich their knowledge. Very few (only three out 290)⁹ said that they would not be able to continue their studies.

Table 3. Factors Motivating the Children to Continue Studies¹⁰

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Doctor	25(16.7)	7(7.8)	13(27.7)	45(15.7)
Engineer	3(2.0)	-	-	3(1.0)
Government Employment	18(12)	7(7.8)	-	25(8.7)
Teacher	16(10.7)	6(6.7)	9(19.1)	31(10.8)
Other service	1(0.7)	-	-	1(0.3)
Will enrich in knowledge	42(28)	53(58.9)	12(25.6)	107(37.3)

⁹ Our research team interviewed 290 children (91 children from KMC, 49 from SSK and 150 from KDPSC) out of 291 sampled households.

¹⁰ Three children (one from KMC and two from SSK) do not want to continue their study. They mentioned that due to the poor economic condition of their family their parents would be unable to bear the cost of schooling for the following year.

Will help in earning	2(1.3)	9(10.0)	5(10.6)	16(5.6)
Will increase social status	16(10.7)	5(5.6)	6(12.8)	27(9.4)
Others	28(18.7)	7(7.8)	3(6.4)	38(13.2)
Don't know	2(1.3)	-	-	2(0.7)
Number of respondents	150	90	47	287

Responses not mutually exclusive.

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Considering that parents and their children are regularly struggling against poverty and a variety of other insecurities – not only of food and shelter but also of their very physical existence – their aspirations for acquiring education were sky high. Perhaps the constraints they experienced every day, imposed by lack of educational facilities, made them more determined to eliminate the ill omen that illiteracy was from their households. It is a great pity that despite having such a high level of aspiration, the reflection of which was obvious in the enrolment in various schools, the children of the City of Joy are often denied their right to education, particularly thanks to the deplorable functioning of the public education system. We will elaborate this point a little in the later parts of the report.

Children and their Schools

Enrolment pattern

The commonalities of responses of the parents and children concerning their aspirations for education were not however reflected in the enrolment pattern. Although the figures supplied by the KDPSC and KMC showed that the average enrolment per school was almost similar in both the kinds of primary schools (to be contrasted with the much lower enrolment in the SSKs), the disparity between the enrolment data provided by the KMC and the numbers recorded from the sampled school registers makes it appropriate to be cautious in using the data. To elaborate this point, the data supplied for the ten KMC primary schools selected for the study showed an average enrolment of 72 children per school though the actual figures collected from the registers of the same schools, for the same reference year (2003-4), showed an average enrolment of 52 children per school. In case of the SSKs the official figure was 54 but figure found in the study, 58, was a bit higher. In case of the KDPSC schools there was no opportunity to make a comparison as no school specific data was provided.

Table 4. Status of Public Primary Education in Kolkata :
Overall picture

	KDPSC**	KMC*	SSK	Total
Number of institution	1403	212	97	1712
Number of teachers	4497	674	194	5365
Teacher per school	3.2	3.18	2.0	3.13
Number of Female Teacher	2491(55.4%)	369(54.7%)	194(100%)	3054(56.9%)
Female Teacher per school	1.8	1.7	2.0	1.8
Enrolment	169385	27171	7079	203635
Average Enrolment	120.8	128.2	72.9	118.9
Pupil – Teacher Ratio	37.7	40.3	36.5	37.9

Source: * Education department, Kolkata Municipal Corporation

** District office of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Kolkata

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Nevertheless, there was a wide range of variation in the number of children enrolled in different schools, even under the same category. From our sampled schools we found an enrolment of 114 children per school. In KDPSC schools the average was 174, ranging between 29 and 542. For the KMC schools the average enrolment was 52, the lower and upper limits being 26 and 177. The average enrolment in the SSKs was 58, but the range was much narrower - between 43 and 70.

In the enrolment pattern of the different institutions, girls outnumbered the boys. One of the major reasons that we found behind this interesting phenomenon was that the boys, particularly among the poor Muslim households (but also among other poor), began to engage in some type of income-oriented activity while the girls continued studying. This finding tallies with that made by Hussain (2003).

Table 5. Average enrolment per institution

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Boys	85.4	32.1	26.4	57.75
Girls	94.0	26.1	31.8	62.2
Total	173.7	52.4	58.2	114

The lower number of enrolment in the SSKs was understandable owing to their being located in slums and other underprivileged areas. But the very poor state of enrolment in the KMC schools and also in some KDPSC schools was indicative of a serious lack of planning in the public primary education system in Kolkata. Eighty percent of the KMC schools sampled had two shifts, even when this was not necessary. This reduced the number of children by dividing them into two. In some schools the timing did not suit the children of the poorer families and they either opted for other schools or quit studies altogether. While some of the teachers said that the burgeoning of the private schools was the main reason for the poor enrolment rate, in some schools many of the parents straightaway put the blame on the functioning of the schools, which was perceived to be more repulsive than attractive. Both the arguments, it seems, have some foundation. In some of the KDPSC schools many of the children did not even get admission, while some of the schools belonging to the same category did not find enough children. This is probably not as mysterious as it might seem : we simply need to take a detailed look at the running of the schools, considering both infrastructural arrangements and functional competence.

Material Arrangements

School building and classroom

One of the major complaints of the teachers, and also parents in some cases, was that the frail condition of the buildings and the inadequacy of classrooms added largely to the difficulty of running the classes. The problems were manifold and sometimes intertwined with one another. Some of the schools studied had to function in rented houses (40 percent in the case of KMC schools and SSKs and 33 percent in the case of KDPSC schools). They had to depend upon the kindness of some local clubs or other institutions to house their institutions. Some of the school buildings (both KMC and KDPSC) were so decrepit in physical structure that this near- dilapidation created a physical security risk for

the children and the teacher; a major accident could happen at any time.

Along with the general lack of proper school buildings, the institutions had to face various particular difficulties. Some of the buildings, particularly the KMC ones, were made to run two or three schools in as many shifts.

Table 6. Status of ownership of building

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Owned	10(66.7)	6(60.0)	1(20.0)	17(56.7)
Rented	5(33.3)	4(40.0)	2(40.0)	11(36.7)
Others			2(40.0)	2(6.7)
Number of Institutions	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Table 7. Type of buildings

Type of Institutions	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Pucca	11(73.3)	8(80.0)	2(40.0)	21(70.0)
Partly Pucca	4(26.7)	2(20.0)	3(60.0)	9(30.0)
Total	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Again, while some of the schools had more space than required to house the children, in most of the schools the space available for schooling was appallingly inadequate. The KMC schools were more fortunate in this regard. None of the schools visited were functioning in a single room. But the condition of the KDPSC schools and more particularly the SSKs was pathetic:

Table 8. Distribution of institutions by number of classrooms

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
One room	4(26.7)	-	4(80.0)	8(26.7)
Two rooms	1(6.7)	2(20.0)	-	3(10.0)
Three rooms	1(6.7)	2(20.0)	1(20.0)	4(13.3)
Four rooms	3(20.0)	3(30.0)	-	5(16.7)
More than four rooms	6(40.0)	3(30.0)	-	10(33.3)
Number of institutions	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

27 per cent of the KDPSC schools visited and 80 percent of the SSKs were single-classroom schools. In several cases, particularly in the KDPSC schools and SSKs, children were seen competing among themselves to occupy a small, little space. '*Ki para habe bhabun* – imagine the quality of teaching and learning', said a teacher in a KDPSC school. On several occasions this reportedly forced the school authorities to reduce the duration.

Sometimes parents also expressed deep concern over the poor infrastructure of the local government primary institutions, particularly the shortage of classrooms. About 89.5 percent of parents of SSKs were found to be dissatisfied with the building conditions.

While examining the other facilities (drinking water, toilet, electric light, electric fan, blackboard in each classroom, telephone, library, maps and charts, teaching and learning material, toys and games, musical instruments etc) it was found that Kolkata school students faced acute shortage of open space for use as a playground. Lack of toilet facilities was a general problem in all the schools, but the inadequacy was particularly great in the SSKs (only 40 percent had this facility). And, since the SSKs were attended by many over-aged girls (who, denied of educational facilities, could not attend school at the proper age), this shortfall proved to be much more distressing in nature. In some of the KDPSC schools the authorities concerned reportedly collected some money as maintenance charges.

Teachers *en masse* complained about lack of the simplest of equipment (toys and games, TLM, etc.) essential for schooling. Paradoxically in some of the KDPSC schools TLMs were found lying unused and some teachers sought to explain this anomaly as a consequence of shortage of teachers. Very few of KMCP schools were found to be equipped with TLMs. As regards the SSKs, it should be mentioned that they were neither supplied with any TLM nor had any *sahayikas* trained to use them. Notwithstanding the general recognition of the importance of TLM, their use was found to be restricted by several problems ranging from the non-availability and shortage of teachers, a low rate of attendance of children, and in some cases, the lack of motivation of teachers for using this instrument.

While offering suggestions for the improvement of the school, about 70 percent parents of SSKs emphasized infrastructural improvement. This suggestion was echoed by about 43 percent parents of DPSC schools and 32 percent of KMC schools.

Teachers

One of the major complaints of the teachers of the primary schools and the *sahayikas* of the SSKs was that the shortage of teachers was a major challenge they had to face in running the schools. Given the general requirement of a perfectly proportionate ratio of class and teacher, i.e 1:1, all the three types of institutions suffered from the deficiency of teachers. Nevertheless, as far as the schoolteacher ratio was concerned, all the three

types of institutions appeared to be on a par with the overall situation of West Bengal. According to the all Kolkata figures (shown in table 4) while the KDPSC and KMC schools had, on average, more than 3 teachers per school, the SSKs had 2.¹¹ In our sampled institutions the figures were slightly different – 3.8 in KDPSC schools, 2.6 in KMC schools and 2 in SSKs.

The proportion of female teachers in Kolkata (KDPSC 55 p.c, KMC 55 p.c) as well as in the schools studied (KDPSC 54 p.c and KMC 54 p.c) was much higher than the all Bengal figure (25 percent). The KMC schools were in a much better position in terms of availability of trained teachers (92 percent) compared to the KDPSC schools (56 percent) and SSKs (70 percent). However, there was a distinction between the level of training received by the teachers of the primary schools and those of SSKs. While the teachers were properly trained, the SSKs underwent only a crash course.

While not having one teacher per class was certainly a problem that the primary education system has been generally suffering from, it seemed to be further aggravated by the high pupil-teacher ratio (a common feature afflicting the entire state) and the distribution of teachers with questionable rationale.

The all- Kolkata mean pupil-teacher ratios of the three types of institutions were 38 for KDPSC, 40 for KMC and 37 for SSKs. For the schools studied the figures were 46, 20 and 29 respectively. The much wider variation in the mean pupil-teacher ratio of the KMC schools studied compared to the all Kolkata average was to some extent linked with the disparity of data supplied by the KMC, which did not quite match the figures collected from the school registers.

Thus, while the KDPSC schools faced a particular difficulty concerning the number of teachers, this was not generally the case for the KMC schools and SSKs. However, the distributional arrangement was seen to have afflicted both the KDPSC and KMC schools. While some of the schools had a reasonable or even lower pupil-teacher ratio, some had a much larger number of children to be looked after by a teacher. The lower and upper limit of pupil-teacher ratio in KDPSC and KMC schools were 14 to 136, and 9 to 32, respectively.

To cope with the deficiency of teachers, 60 percent of the KDPSC schools sampled were found to have recruited teachers on their own, without any official approval or financial sanction. There were 15 such teachers of whom 14 were women. As reported, they received a meagre amount as remuneration. The expenses were met partly from the school development fund and partly from the contributions made by the regular teachers. Though none of the KMC schools reported having made such arrangement, in some of them the non-teaching staff were sometime engaged to run the classes.

Shortage of teachers is certainly a deficiency that undermine schooling on a serious scale. However, the propensity of certain persons responsible for educational delivery to focus exclusively on this particular problem was hard to overlook.

¹¹ Source: Annual Report 2003-4; Department of School Education, Government of West Bengal)

Table 9. Distribution of teachers according to institution

		KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Trained	Female	18(58.1)	13(92.9)	7(70.0)	38(69.1)
	Male	14(53.8)	11(91.7)	-	25(65.8)
	Total	32(56.1)	24(92.3)	7(70.0)	63(67.7)
Untrained	Female	13(41.9)	1(7.1)	3(30.0)	17(30.9)
	Male	12(46.2)	1(8.3)	-	13(34.2)
	Total	25(43.9)	2(7.7)	3(30.0)	30(32.3)
Total	Female	31	14	10	55
	Male	26	12	-	38
	Total	57	26	10	93

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

The sharp contrast between the teachers' perspective and the parents' perspective clearly suggests that we should view the state of delivery of primary education as a complex amalgamation of different but interrelated problems.

Table 10. Distribution of teachers across types of primary schools¹²

	KDPSC	KMC	Total
One teacher	-	1(10.0)	1(4.0)
Two teachers	4(26.7)	4(40.0)	8(32.0)
Three teachers	3(20.0)	2(20.0)	5(20.0)
Four teachers	4(26.7)	3(30.0)	7(28.0)
Above four teachers	4(26.7)	-	4(16.0)
Total	15	10	25

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

While almost all the teachers thought that inadequate number of teachers (combined with insufficient schooling space) was the biggest hurdle that made their job extremely difficult, the number of parents of all the three types of school-children who had this view was much smaller. The percentage of parents who thought that the number of teachers should be increased was 26 percent, 23 percent and 26 percent respectively for KDPSC, KMC and SSK institutions. On the other hand parents pointed out some other deficiencies – to which we return.

Non-teaching staff

Apart from the teachers, some 53 percent of the KDPSC and all the KMC schools were found to have some non-teaching staff (unlike the situation in the SSKs and the government primary schools in the districts of

¹² In all the SSKs studied the team had found two teachers in all

WestBengal). The non-teaching staff of KDPSC schools were paid by the schools through contribution from students and other sources. But the posts of the non-teaching staff in the KMC schools were all duly sanctioned and were funded by the department. As mentioned earlier some of the non-teaching staffs of the KMC schools were reported to have been doing the job of teaching as well.

Table 11. Number of non-teaching staff in different institutions

	KDPSC**	KMC *	Total
Female	7(70.0)	5(41.7)	12(54.5)
Male	3(30.0)	7(58.3)	10(45.5)
Total	10	12	22

* All approved by KMC,

** all non-approved. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

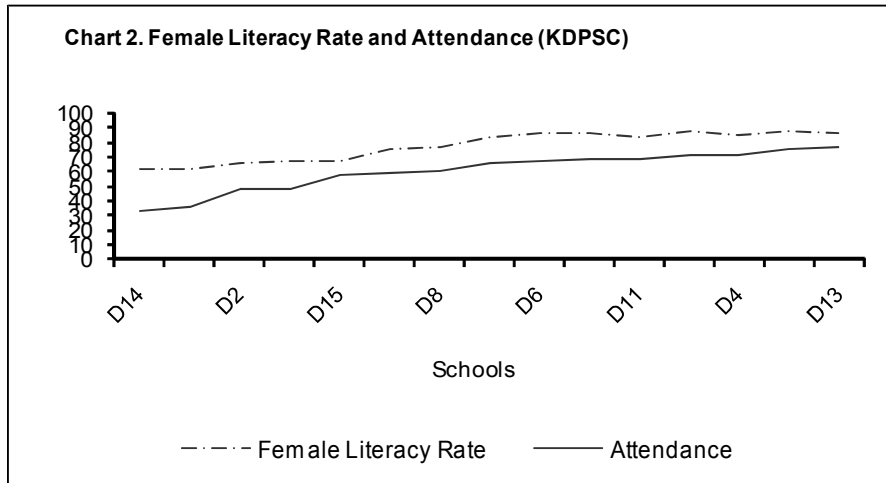
Functional Aspects

Attendance of children

One of the main parameters indicating the degree of effectiveness of schooling is the rate of attendance of children. Instead of depending upon the rate of attendance on the days of our visits we computed it from the attendance data for the whole month preceding the study. According to this calculation the average attendance in the KDPSC schools was 66 percent, 10 percent higher than that of the KMC schools. But the rate of attendance in the 'lowly' SSKs was much higher – 76 percent.

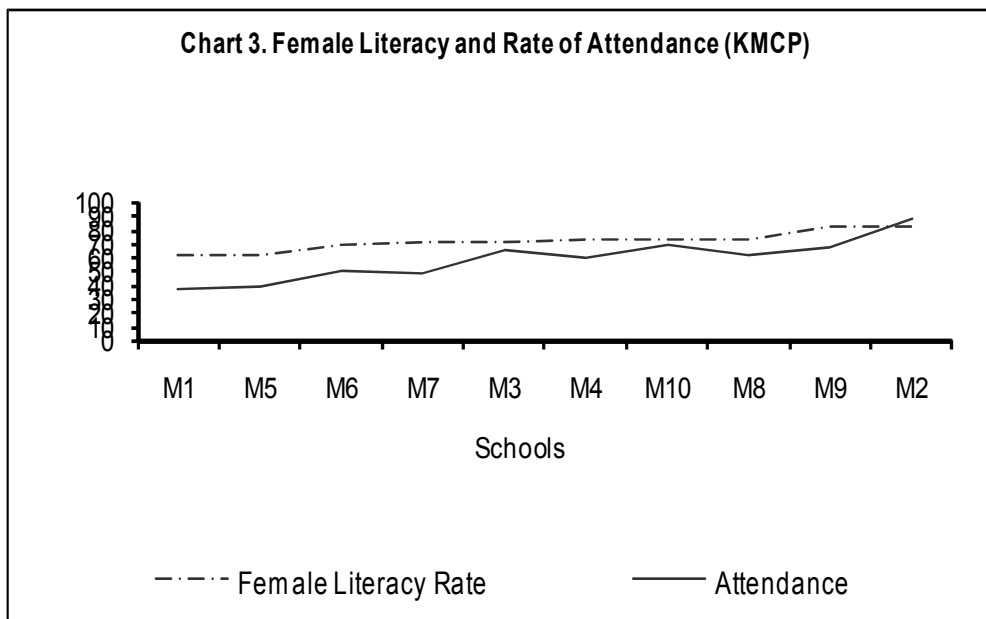
The rate of attendance, as it appeared, was influenced by a combination of other factors rather than by the 'unwillingness of the parents' as generalised by some teachers and relatively richer parents. The main factors that were found to be responsible for poor rate of attendance were, disadvantaged background of the children (poor, illiterate and often both) and unsatisfactory state of functioning of the schools concerned (school environment, teachers' absenteeism, etc). The relatively higher rate of attendance in the KDPSC schools was, to a large extent, influenced by the relatively advanced socio-economic condition of the households involved. As has been seen in the previous section, households sending their children to the KDPSC schools were not only relatively better off but also advanced in terms of literacy rate and level of education.

The socio-economic advancement not only acted as a motivating factor but also contributed to the better functioning of the school by enabling the parents to raise their voices to a greater degree. The class structure of the society, while allowing the advanced sections to raise



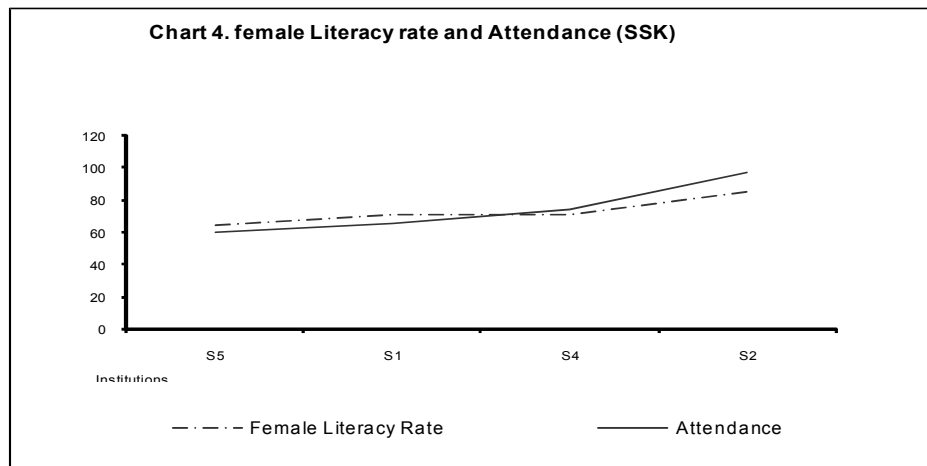
their voices, also ensured in a large measure that the voices were heard. To illustrate, some of the schools (particularly KMC, but also KDPSC) were attended by children of beggars, maidservants who commuted to Kolkata from the sub-urban areas and sex workers. The parents neither found enough time to take care of the children nor could exert any influence on the particular functioning of schooling.

The actual functioning of the schools, as observed, played a pivotal role in determining the rate of attendance. While some of the poorly functioning schools had a much lower rate of attendance (sometime 33 percent), some of the better-run schools could attract a much higher proportion of the enrolled children (up to 96 percent). Even the influence of the socio-economic factors was found to be much lower in some cases. The considerably high rate of attendance in the SSKs that were attended by children from the lowest strata proved this point. While the timing of SSKs suited the children best, the parents also had a much better sense of attachment with the institutions (as the centres were situated inside the localities).



There was a much closer relationship between the sahayikas and the children (as well as the parents) as the teachers themselves were recruited from non-middle-class backgrounds and they were from the surrounding areas. However, some of the children, as admitted by their parents and sahayikas, were enrolled in other schools and treated the SSKs as coaching centres.

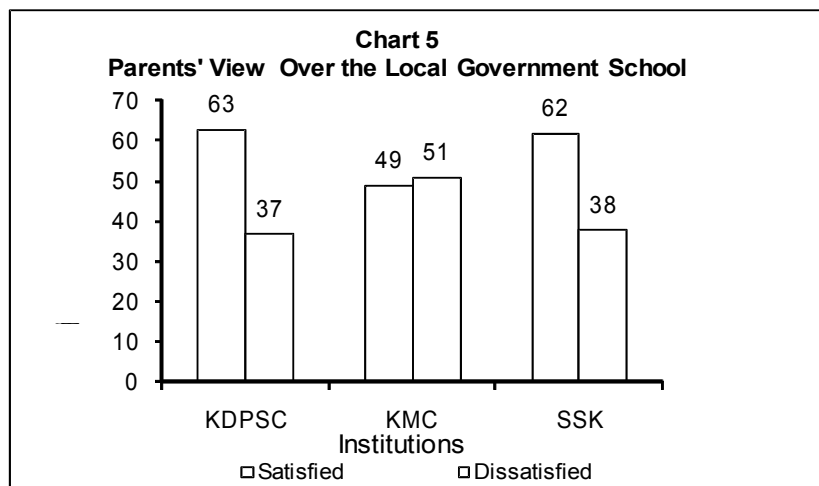
The female literacy rate proved to be one of the most important determinants of the rate of attendance. A positive correlation between the female literacy rate and school attendance was found in the study area. A graphic representation of such correlation showed that higher female literacy rate often led to a higher rate of attendance in the different types of institutions. The launching of the cooked Mid-day Meal programme in the rural areas (a programme not yet launched in Kolkata) has already proved to be one of the most important incentives for raising the rate of attendance. Besides assuaging classroom hunger, this programme, contrary to what affluent commentators had anticipated, has proved to



be a good incentive for the actual functioning of the schooling process (through larger public participation, ensuring teachers' attendance, and so on). However, raising the rate of attendance certainly needs a concerted effort – facing the challenges posed by hunger and poverty as well as poor functional arrangements in the schools.

Functioning of the School

It might seem paradoxical that while a large proportion of parents (80 percent of KDPSC, 65 percent of the KMC and 92 percent of the SSK institutions) expressed satisfaction with teachers, a relative large section of them (37 percent, 51 percent and 38 percent respectively in cases of KDPSC and KMC schools and SSKs) was found to be explicitly dissatisfied over the functioning of the schools. How come the schools run by teachers who earn the appreciation of the parents function poorly?



The puzzle is, to a great extent, linked with the socio-economic condition of the parents that constructed the objectivity. As was mentioned earlier, the majority of the constituency of the public schooling institutions in Kolkata came from low socio-economic backgrounds. Parents of such children were doubly disadvantaged in the task of evaluating the performance of the schools and teachers: their physical distance from the schools (owing to their very demanding occupational pattern combined with their restricted opportunity to participate in monitoring the functioning of the school) as well as their cultural distance (induced by illiteracy or lower level of education).

Many of the parents told us that they did not know what was taught in the school. In response to a follow up question as to why they thought the performance of the teachers was good, a majority of the satisfied parents (83 percent and 76 percent of the KDPSC and KMC schools and 87 percent of the SSKs) said that teachers taught well. However, in many cases, particularly those related with the KMC schools, the respondents did not make a distinction between actual teaching and routine presence in the school. Again some of the parents did not want to express any adverse comment against the teachers, fearing that it could add to their troubles. And in some cases some simple but sincere gestures by the teachers seemed to have made the parents extremely happy. Some of the parents (20 percent of the KDPSC and 14 percent of the KMC schools, and 24 percent of the SSK) were overwhelmed with the teachers 'keeping contact' and 'behaving well' with them.

While there were wide variations in the perception of the parents concerning the parameters of functioning of schools, the visible practical variation in the functioning of the schools (and in the performances of teachers) was no smaller. In some of the schools, particularly those run by the KMC, it was hard to avoid noticing the irregularities on the part of some of the teachers. These included coming late and leaving early, gossiping among themselves, making the children serve the teachers in many different ways, and so on. In a KDPSC run school we even found two teachers engaged in a fierce verbal battle with each other. Parents in the

locality told the stunned research team members that it was so regular an occurrence that it did not surprise them even when the war of words went much beyond their normal limits and culminated in a physical tussle.

However, there were schools where teachers took personal interest to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. In one school some retired teachers were taking classes to help the present teachers. The teachers of the schools having a deficit of teachers said to us that the presence of more teachers would help in dissuading the guardians from shifting their wards to other schools. Again, most of these schools were located in relatively affluent areas. The exception to this general trend of better functioning in the richer areas was found in some SSKs, which were situated in some extremely poor localities.

The variations in the functioning of the schools were also evident from the differences in school days and time (both inter-type and intra-type). The average number of working days in the KDPSK schools was 219 days ranging between 202 and 226, but in case of the SSKs it was 211 days and ranged between 206 and 215. The average number of working days in the KMC schools was 211, the lowest and highest being 203 and 220. The variations were, as reported by the teachers and parents, due to local functions and some other unstipulated closures, such as *bandh*, election, *etc.* Some of the teachers and *sahayikas* suggested that the authority should make some flexible provision or rules for the teachers to distribute the stipulated holidays according to the need of the local area and community. The SSKs were the particular sufferers as they had to depend on the local clubs or other institutions to house their centres and this dependence led to frequent abandonment of the classes owing to the engagement of the schooling space for other different purposes.

Table 12. Average Schooling Time (in Hours)

Type of Institution	Average schooling time in hours	Range of variation	Average working days in a year	Range of variation
KDPSK	4.9	4.5-5	219.4	202-226
KMC	4.5	4-5	211.3	203-220
SSK	3	-	211	206-215

The average working hours in both types of schools (KDPSK and KMC) were also found to vary between four and five hours (in some cases even less). However, such variations in working hours were not found in the sampled SSKs, which were found to maintain a schedule of three hours a day. Even though SSKs had fewer working days and less school-time the satisfaction of the parents over the functioning of the SSKs came mainly from a sense of belonging: most of the parents believed that the SSKs were their own. In spite of several hurdles in terms of space, funding and so on, the *sahayikas*' commitment and sympathetic attitude (that originated mainly from their poor class background) was able to

elicit a lot of public support in the localities. As mentioned earlier, we have seen some such schools, though what we could gather from the general observations suggested that all the three types of schools needed much more structural reform: from material support to the commitment of the teachers.

Asymmetry in Teaching and Learning

Learning Achievements

The functional disparities in the primary schooling system in Kolkata are revealed even more glaringly in the learning achievements of the children, which form a major concern for all those interested in the improvement of the primary schooling system not only in India but also in the other developing countries in South and East Asia.¹³

The quality of education depends on various factors including the attendance of the teachers and children, the adequacy of the infrastructure provided by schools, care on the part of parents and teachers, involvement of the local people with the school, the pupil-teacher ratio and so on. Nevertheless the data suggested a strong correlation between the learning achievement of the children and their socio-economic background. The predicaments of the children coming from lower-income backgrounds were found to be manifold: poverty enfeebled the voice of parents and at the same time made them incapable of arranging private assistance for the education of their children. In most cases children, being first generation learners, did not have the scope to receive parental assistance in their studies and, being poor, could not afford private tuition (the degree of effectiveness of private tuition was, however, questionable. More on this presently). Most appallingly, some of the children could not even write their name, though some did really splendidly. In a study in Birbhum district, our team found a direct correlation between spending and achievement.¹⁴ The present study produced similar result.

To measure the quality of learning achievement we depended on two tools : the result sheets of the tests conducted by the school and a simple on-the-spot assessment of sample groups of children done by the members of the research team. While the school results were based on formal tests of all the subjects taught, the study team's assessment was confined to the ability to read, write and count. Yet the differences between the results of the tests conducted by the school and the assessments made by us were astonishing. While the proportions of low scoring children (0-20) in the KDPSC, KMC and SSK were 3, 8 and 2 percent respectively, the corresponding figures in our assessments were 16, 25 and 22.

Similarly the proportions of high scoring (80-100) children in the school test were 17 percent for KDPSC and 18 percent for KMC schools. None of the SSK children were able to attain that level. But in our assessments it was found that only 4 percent of the KMC children secured places in the high scoring grade. The corresponding figure for the KDPSC schools was however not very different from the school result – 16 percent. But surprisingly 6 percent of the SSK children scored the highest marks (basically the variation should have followed the SSK model as the tools used in our assessments were much simpler).

¹³ Haq and Haq (1998), CAMPE (1999, 2001), PROBE (1998), Rana et al (2002, 2003, Forthcoming).

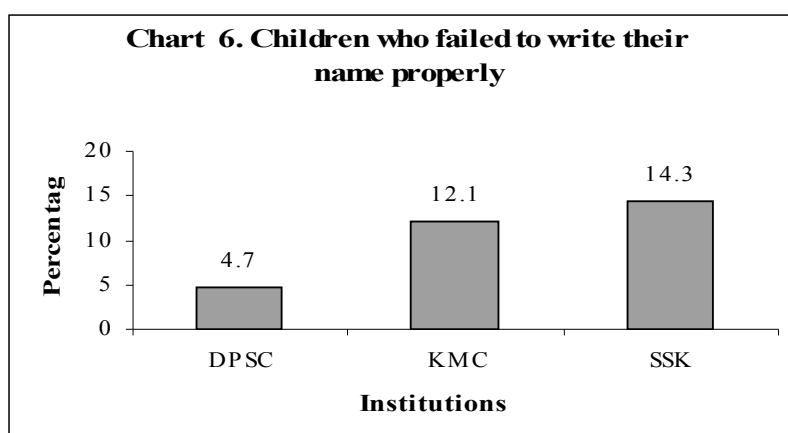
¹⁴ Rana et al (2005)

Table 13. Performance of the children according to the results provided by the teachers and our observation.
(Percentage of children in the range of marks)

Institutions	81-100		66-80		51-65		36-50		21-35		0-20	
	SA*	OS	SA	OS	SA	OS	SA	OS	SA	OS	SA	OS
KDPSC	16.8	15.9	26.2	22.5	23.1	3.9	20.9	27.8	9.5	8.6	3.4	15.9
KMC	18.1	4.4	17.8	12.1	21.3	9.9	17.2	30.8	17.6	17.6	8.0	25.3
SSK	-	6.1	4.8	10.2	30.2	14.3	42.9	28.6	20.6	18.4	1.6	22.4

* SA => Result according to evaluation of School Authority
OS => Result according to the assessment of the study team

It was surprising that a considerable proportion of children of classes 1 and 2 who participated in the assessment even failed to write their name. In case of the KMC schools the figure was 12 percent. For KDPSC and SSK the corresponding figures were 5 and 14 percent respectively. The indications are clear enough: even the SSKs about which parents expressed their satisfaction could not deliver education at the level that was expected.



The failure to write even one's own name may be contrasted with another fact; the fateful lot consisted of the poorest, and the aspirations of their parents for getting their children educated were so high that a substantial proportion (52 percent) of them provided private tuition for their children (against a fee of Rs 80-100 per month), for which they often had to sacrifice the consumption of some necessities basic to their daily life. Yet, their children were not only denied proper education by their respective schools but were also neglected by their private tutors paid out of the income earned by the back-breaking labour of the parents.

Table 14. Distribution of children who failed to write their name according to their status of receiving or not receiving private tuition

Status of receiving private tuition	KDPSC			KMC			SSK			Total		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Received	3	2	5	2	2	4	1	3	4	6	7	13(52)
Not received	1	1	2	5	2	7	2	1	3	8	4	12(48)
Total	4	3	7	7	4	11	3	4	7	14	11	25

Socio-economic Capability and Quality of Learning

Cost of Schooling : Is public education really free?

The answer is in the negative: in spite of constitutional provisions, our primary education system does not provide free service. Parents have to bear some expenses on their children's education even at the primary level.¹⁵ However, parental expenditure on schooling showed large variations in our study.

The average annual expenditure per child in the KDPSC schools was Rs.1820 (ranging between Rs. 6240 and Rs. 154) and the corresponding figures for KMC schools and SSKs were Rs.896 (between Rs 2600 and Rs.120) and Rs. 858 (between Rs. 2200 and Rs. 220) respectively.

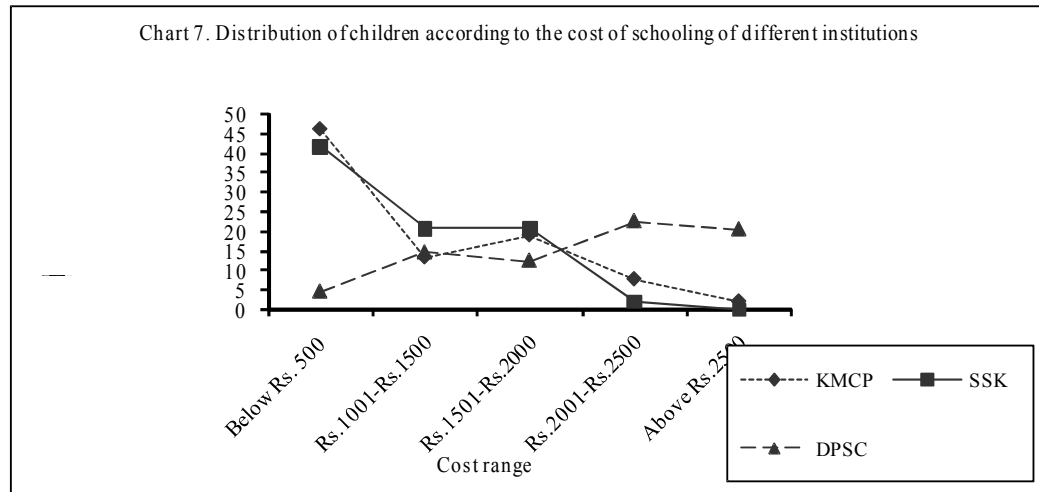
The expenditure pattern reveals the division of the types of government schooling institutions along class lines with the KDPSC schools tending towards a pattern similar to private schooling. Our survey of the parents revealed that 35 percent of the KDPSC school children had to pay an average school charge of Rs 248 per annum. The range of the school charge that varied between Rs 50 and Rs 840 showed that not only there was a policy difference between some of the KDPSC schools and the other two types but that there was a hierarchical division among KDPSC schools. This finding was further reinforced by the fact that 67 percent of the parents of the KDPSC children maintained that they had to spend some money on books. While the state government has been supplying books free of cost to all the primary school children the functioning of some of the KDPSC schools in a fashion more akin to the private schools necessitated this extra cost, meeting which was not easy for many of the parents. Thus some of the KDPSC schools had seemingly closed the door for the poorer section of the children by imposing these extra charges in addition to the burdensome charges of private tuition, which very few, irrespective of types of school, could escape.

Social Segmentation and Cost of Schooling

The distribution of children according to their cost of schooling reflected the class division in a clearer way. While the lowest expenditure group (below Rs 500 per child per annum) formed 46 percent of the KMC

¹⁵ Similar observation has been found by "Public Report on Basic Education in India" (1999) and "The Pratichi Education Report-I" (2002)

schools and 42 percent of the SSKs, the corresponding figure for the KDPSC schools was only 5 percent. The distribution shows that with the increase in the cost of schooling the proportionate representation of children was decreasing in case of KMC and SSK but in case of KDPSC schools the trend was just the opposite (see chart 2).



This was evident from the occupational background of the households sampled. Parents of the children of KDPSC schools came mainly from service or business backgrounds while parents of KMC and SSK going children belonged to working class families who, having no security of employment and income, were economically very much vulnerable. Even some parents of KDPSC school children said to us that it was becomingly difficult for them to meet the cost of schooling, as they had to pay school expenses (charges, books, etc.) on the one hand and private tuition on the other.

Table 15. Average cost of schooling

	KDPSC			KMC			SSK		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
School Fees	269.8 (26)	227. 8 (27)	248. 4 (53)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Text book	132.9 (50)	139. 7 (50)	136. 3 (100)	0	0	0	112. 5 (4)	41.7 (3)	82. 1 (7)
Uniforms	149.6	140. 5	144. 9	144. 4	114 .1	129. 2	100	120	113 .5
School stationary	421.5	371. 6	396	307. 4	317 .1	312. 4	304. 0	298. 2	300
Private tuition	1283. 6	118 5.3	123 4.5	131 3.3	980 .4	110 7.1	888	829. 3	853 .8
Others	52.1	45.4	48.8	23.3	85	63.5	13	15	14. 3
Average	1937.	170	181	957.	838	895.	103	779.	858

Total cost	4	6.6	9.7	1	.2	7	2.3	4	.4
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Calculation based on data provided by 287 households (KMC school- 89, SSK -48 and KDPSC-150). The rest of the households could not provide the data. **Figures in parenthesis indicate the number of respondents in the corresponding cells

Again the cost of private tuition was also higher for the children of KDPSC schools as the required competence of the tutor demanded a higher cost.

The gender wise distribution of costs of schooling gives a different picture. In all the cases the average expenditure on education for a boy child was higher than that of the girls. Although there was no great variation in the children's aspiration for education, the expenditure pattern clearly indicates a gender bias in favour of the male children.

Table 16. Distribution of children according to expenditure class of schooling

Annual Cost	Gender	KDPSC	KMC	SSK
Below 500	B	2(2.7)	18(41.9)	5(33.3)
	G	5(6.6)	23(50.0)	15(45.5)
	T	7(4.6)	41(46.1)	20(41.7)
Rs.501-Rs.1000	B	11(14.9)	8(18.6)	2(13.3)
	G	11(14.5)	4(8.7)	8(24.2)
	T	22(14.6)	12(13.5)	10(20.8)
Rs.1001-Rs.1500	B	18(24.3)	6(13.9)	5(33.3)
	G	16(21.1)	11(23.9)	5(15.2)
	T	34(22.5)	17(19.1)	10(20.8)
Rs.1501-Rs.2000	B	18(24.3)	5(11.6)	2(13.3)
	G	20(26.3)	5(10.9)	5(15.2)
	T	38(25.2)	10(11.2)	7(14.6)
Rs.2001-Rs.2500	B	6(8.1)	4(9.3)	1(6.7)
	G	13(17.1)	3(6.5)	-
	T	19(12.6)	7(7.9)	1(2.1)
Above Rs.2500	B	19(25.7)	2(4.7)	-
	G	11(14.5)	-	-
	T	31(20.5)	2(2.2)	-
Total	B	74	43	15
	G	76	46	33
	T	150	89	48

* Calculation made on the concerned data provided by 287 households (KMC school- 89, SSK -48 and KDPSC- 150). The rest of the households could not provide the data.

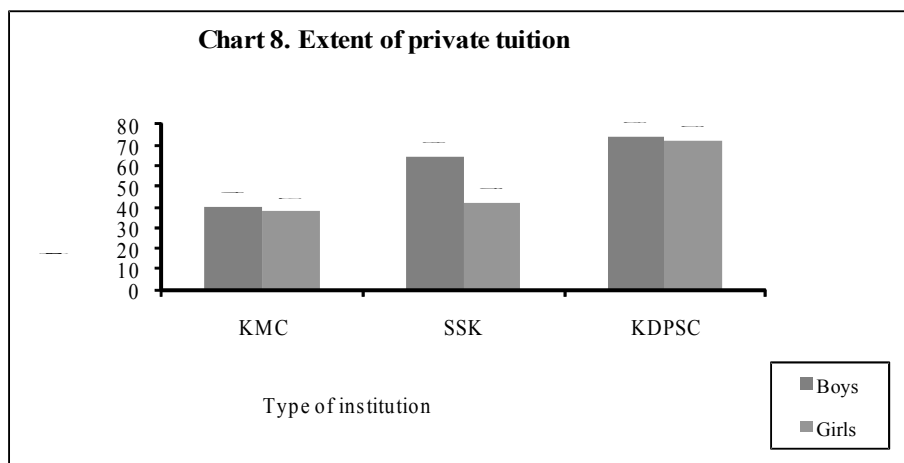
(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

The Unavoidability of Private Tuition

That the deficiencies in the primary schooling are a greater affliction for the disadvantaged section is amply clear from the regrettable correlation between cost of schooling and learning achievement. As

mentioned earlier the social underdogs became the worst sufferers of the primary education system in Kolkata, which tended to favour the relatively affluent section of the society. A considerable section of the KMC school children, 36 percent, did not receive any home assistance. It turns out that in case of the SSKs the figure was 42 percent. The proportion of children who did not receive home assistance was much lower among the KDPSC children, 29 percent. The situation was almost the same as that observed during our first study on primary education in the rural areas.

Lack of education in general and of mothers' education in particular created such an obstacle for the children of the disadvantaged section



that they had no other option but to make some arrangement for their children to obtain private assistance. The failure of the schooling system, which was supposed to safeguard the interests of the poorer sections, virtually became instrumental in widening the gap between the rich and poor through the forced imposition of private tuition.

Though the dependence on private tuition was found to be a general phenomenon, cutting across the categories of schools, it was found to be particularly high among the students of KDPSC schools. While nearly three-quarters of the KDPSC school children (73.3 percent to be exact) got the facility of private tuition, the proportion of such 'fortunate' children in the KMC schools and SSKs was 41 percent and 50 percent respectively. Often we were told that 'teachers insisted on having private tuition'.

Nevertheless, it would be a grave mistake to conclude that the lower degree of prevalence of private tuition among the KMC and SSK children was a result of better performance of the schools concerned. Rather the opposite. It was not that the parents considered private tuition unnecessary, but that the severe financial constraints faced by them did not allow them to provide private tuition for their children. On the other hand the higher degree of private tuition among the KDPSC children was induced by the parents' social position that was financially sounder and aspiration-wise much more ambitious. Thanks to such a position, parents of the richer sections of society while extracting substantial services from the respective schools added various efforts to

prepare their children to be competent enough in the market for salaried jobs. But the underdogs who had to take the poor- quality education delivered in their respective schools as naturally as their everyday uncertainty of getting a square meal could not aspire for more than their children acquiring the basics. Yet even this limited aspiration is not met, say some parents in a mood of dejection. *'Ei tuku sikhte parleo anek, kintu tai ba hocche kothay* – even that much [learning the basics] would have helped them a lot, but they are not acquiring that much',

In general the dependence on private tuition was higher among the boys than the girls. This difference was highest in case of the SSK students – 64.7 percent of boy students had the advantages of private tuition whereas only 42.4 percent of girls were provided with this facility. In case of the children studying in KDPSC schools the percentages of boys and girls who received private tuition were 74 and 72 respectively. However the corresponding figures for KMC school children were 37.8 percent and 43.5 percent for boys and girls respectively.

Table 17. Reasons for not receiving private tuition

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Get assistance at home	22(55)	15(27.8)	7(28.0)	44(37.0)
Can't afford the cost	20(50)	35(64.8)	17(68.0)	72(63.6)
No private tutor available in the locality	-	7(13.0)	1(4.0)	8(6.7)
Others	-	1(1.9)	2(8.0)	3(2.5)
Number of respondents	40	54	25	119

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Twenty percent students of SSKs of our study area reported that they received private tuition from the Sahayika of the same SSKs. For the KDPSC schools the figure was only 2.7 percent and there were no such instances reported in the case of the KMC run schools. However, some of the students of KMC schools said that they received tuition from the teachers of other government schools. In most of the cases though, children received tuition from persons who were not employed as public school teachers.

Table 18. Who imparted private tuition?

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Teachers from the same school	3(2.7)	-	5(20)	8(4.7)
Teachers from the other govt. school	3(2.7)	3(8.1)	-	6(3.5)
Private tutor who is not a school teacher	99(90.0)	34(91.9)	20(80)	153(88.9)
Others	5(4.5)	-	-	5(2.9)

Number of children received private tuition	110	37	25	172
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(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Cost of Private Tuition

That the different types of public primary schooling in Kolkata were based on class discrimination was further reinforced by the variation in the expenditure on private tuition incurred for the children of different types of institutions. While the per child average annual expenditure on private tuition in the case of the KDPSC children was Rs 1234.5, it was Rs 1107 for the children of KMC schools and Rs 854 for the SSK going children. However there were substantial variations in the expenditure incurred on private tuition for the children of the same schools; while the lowest annual expenditure on this in the case of the KDPSC school children was Rs. 300, the highest was Rs. 3300. The range of expenditure on private tuition in the case of the KMC and SSK children was from Rs. 2400 to Rs. 360 and from Rs. 1800 to Rs. 360 respectively.

Again, the boys seemed to have been favoured as regards the expenses made on private tuition. As the following table reveals, while girls of all different public primary institutions faced discrimination in terms of provision of private tuition, the gap was much wider in the KMC schools.

Table 19. Average annual expenditure on private tuition (in Rs.)

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK
Boys	1284	1313	888
Girl	1185	980	829
Total	1234.5	1107	854

Functional Weaknesses

Feeble school inspection system

The school inspection system is the major link between the schools and the departments concerned with the delivery of education. The inspectors' role is much wider than just reporting about the 'erring teachers'. It is the inspector to whom the teachers can report the deficiencies in their schools to present the picture, along with her own observations, before the higher authorities in order to take corrective measures. However, if the observations made in this smaller study indicated anything, the public school inspection system in the city could best be seen as a mechanism reduced to rickety functioning leaving the operational interactions almost completely dependent on personal goodwill.

Of the total of 30 schools sampled of different types 63.3 percent have been reported to be visited by an inspector in the last 12 months preceding our visit.

Table 20. Inspection occurred in last one year

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
No inspection	8(53.3)	1(10)	2(40)	11(36.7)
Once in a year	2(13.3)	2(20)	2(40)	6(20)
Twice in a year	3(20)	1(10)	1(20)	5(16.7)
Thrice in a year	-	2(20)	-	2(6.7)
Four times and above in a year	2(13.3)	4(40)	-	6(20)
Number of institutions	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

To rub salt into the wounds – the long intervals between inspections – the very process of the actual exercise was such as to undermine faith in the system itself. In most of the cases the inspectional procedures did not even include the minimum of formalities let alone taking detailed accounts; this was reported by some of the teachers.

Even the SSKs in Kolkata did not show a dramatically different picture. However, there were some KDPSC schools which were included in a special programme called Integrated Learning Improvement Programme (ILIP) were visited at least four times a year.

Absence of social auditing

If the weaknesses of the official inspection system made the monitoring of the public schooling system ineffective the near absence of the provision for a parental inspection system made it miserable. Although most of the sampled KDPSC schools had School Development Committees (SDC) with representation of parents, teachers and local government bodies, the scope of the functioning of the committee was restricted to some financial and developmental work rather than taking care of the actual functioning of the school. In some cases teachers openly expressed dissatisfaction over the working of the SDCs as they felt that the parents and representatives of the local government bodies were indifferent towards the functioning of the committees. On the other hand many of the parents said that they were not even aware of the committees. Apart from the SDCs, which had a better representation of mothers, a large number of KDPSC schools sampled had Mother Teacher Associations (MTA) as well. However, the functioning of these committees was also reported to be irregular. In fact a good proportion of the parents had no idea of the existence of such committees.

As far as the KMC primary schools were concerned there was virtually no room for the parents to get involved in the functioning of the schools. There was no provision for a parent-teacher body of any sort. Nevertheless, a good number of teachers thought aloud that parents were completely indifferent not only about the functioning of the schools but also about their own children.

In case of the SSKs, however, the formation of an SSK management committee consisting of parents, *sahayikas* and local representatives was mandatory. But only a meagre 46 percent of the parents of the SSK going children were aware of such committees. An estimate of the precariousness of the situation could be found from the fact that a large number of *sahayikas* of the concerned SSKs could not tell us what the rules, regulations and functions of the said committees were. Yet, the location of the SSKs and the background of the teachers made it much easier for SSK parents, particularly mothers, to maintain a more lively interaction with the SSKs concerned, a level of contact unavailable in the other types of public schools.

Table 21. Institutions with committees

		KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Institutions with committee	MTA	11(73.3)	-		11(36.7)
	SDC	14(93.3)	-	-	14(46.7)
	Others	-	-	5(100)	5(16.7)
Institutions without any committee		1(6.7)	10(100)	-	11(36.7)
Number of Institutions		15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Contrary to the views expressed by the teachers on parental indifference towards children's education and the functioning of the schools a large section of the parents firmly stated that they wanted to take part in the governance of the primary schooling institutions. Percentages of willing parents were 64 percent for the KDPSC schools, 37.4 percent for the KMC schools and 70 percent for the SSKs.

The findings of our earlier studies revealed that the parents' involvement not only helped ensure the quality of education but also helped to overcome other difficulties, e.g. the barrier of private tuition¹⁶, shortage of teachers etc. There is plenty of evidence to prove the fruitfulness of parental involvement in the governance of schools.

¹⁶ Santra (2005): 'The Joy of Flying', *The Little Magazine*, Vol. 6.

Unutilised Potentials: Fragile Implementation of Incentive Schemes

With the aim of promotion of primary education the Union and State governments have been providing some schemes as special incentives for the children. They include a national programme of nutritional support to the primary school children popularly known as the Mid-day Meal scheme, a free text book scheme by the state government, a free uniform scheme for the girl students also by the state government, and so on. These are in addition to the already existing provision of free tuition. However, as we have seen in the earlier sections, while the indirect expenditure by the parents for the children studying in the KDPSC schools is quite substantial in some cases, there are instances of direct school charges imposed upon the children. While the public sector, contrary to its objective of making school education free, subjected the parents to paid school education, the incentive schemes became victims of lacklustre and apathetic implementation.

Firstly, none of the public primary institutions in Kolkata were found to have implemented the cooked Mid-day Meal programme (till March 2005) despite the state government's declaration that it would follow the Supreme Court order to implement the programme in all primary schooling institutions. While the state government has successfully brought the primary schooling institutions in the rural areas under the cooked Mid-day Meal programme, it has not been able to do so in the city of Kolkata, where, as we will see presently, the necessity and relevance of the programme is no less than in the rural areas. All the three types of schooling institutions were seen distributing uncooked rice as part of the said national programme. But even this system, which is less favourable to the poorer sections, was found to be functioning very irregularly in the matter of distribution of rice (3 kg per child per month). While the KDPSC administration was found to have been regular in terms of distributing the rice (at least 90 percent of the parents responded in the affirmative), only 64 percent of the parents of KMC children said that uncooked rice was distributed among their children on a regular basis. The proportion of such positive responses in case of the SSKs was only 54 percent.

But the picture was different in the case of supply of free textbooks. While almost all the KMC school children (97 percent to be exact) confirmed the receipt of free textbooks, the figure was lower among the SSK children (88 percent) and unbelievably small in the case of the KDPSC children (59 percent). A major reason for the lower rate of positive response in KDPSC schools on the question of receipt of free textbooks seemed to be linked with the mode of teaching adopted by the KDPSC schools where a number of books prescribed and supplied by the state government were replaced by a selection of books to be procured from the open market.

Similar dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the distribution of free uniforms among the girl students. While 63 percent of girl students of KDPSC schools reported having received a uniform once in a year, the corresponding figure for the KMC children was 15 percent. Children enrolled in the SSKs received none.

In addition to the central and state government schemes, the KMC had some welfare schemes of its own, including free medical check up of children in every primary school. However, only 21 percent of the parents of KMC schools had any knowledge of the programme.

As a whole parents and teachers expressed dissatisfaction over the various incentive schemes. The complaints about the schemes varied from irregular and partial supply to the poor quality of the supplied goods and suggested a number of corrective measures that included regularising the supply of books and uniform, and supplying cooked food instead of hauled rice.

Possibility of a Cooked Mid-day Meal Programme

Contrary to the general aversion of the affluent section towards the implementation of the cooked Mid-day Meal programme, a large number of teachers of different types of institutions we spoke to saw it as a potential instrument not only of increasing the nutritional level of the children but also of raising the degree of learning achievement. However, adverse attitude towards the programme seemed to have strong roots among a portion of the teachers and parents. While all the teachers of the KMC schools and SSKs welcomed a cooked noon meal programme, the proportion of the KDPSC teachers supportive of the programme was 53 percent.

However, parents' opinions were less supportive than those of the teachers at the KMC and SSK institutions. Parents who strongly supported the introduction of the cooked meal programme formed 47.4 percent of the total parents (55 percent of KDPSC, 43 percent of KMC and 32 percent of SSK). However, 62 percent of children interviewed (72 percent of KDPSC, 55 percent of KMC and 43 percent of SSK) said that they would like a cooked meal.

Teachers of all the institutions said that coming to school with an empty stomach was a common affair with most of the students. Many of them did not even get anything to eat during lunchtime. The children, particularly those studying in the KMC and SSK institutions, 'belonged to the poorest of the communities'; their parents worked outside all day long and yet 'hardly earned enough to feed the family properly'. Household hunger was so acute that some of the parents responded in favour of hauled rice as that would help the family sustain itself for a day or two in a month.

Many of the teachers said that classroom hunger was one of the main challenges for ensuring education for all. 'How would the children learn when they suffered from acute pain of hunger? It is difficult even to

sit in the classroom, let alone pay attention [to what is taught]’, said a teacher.

Table 22. Preferences of initiation of Mid Day Meal Programme

	KDPSC	KMC	SSKs	Total
Teacher	53	100	100	77
Parents	55	43	32	47.4
Students	72	55	43	62

(Figures are in percentage)

Problems Anticipated in Launching the Programme

While a considerable section of the different constituencies of primary education in Kolkata (parents, children and teachers) supported the launching of the programme and parents in general expressed their willingness to volunteer their assistance in executing the scheme, many of the teachers anticipated some problems regarding the realisation of the programme. One of the major constraints, they pointed out, was the lack of space for cooking, as a section of schools were functioning in clumsy rented buildings. Some of the teachers feared that the process of cooking and serving would hamper the teaching and learning activities. Nevertheless teachers and parents hoped that once initiated, the actual problems would be sorted out and remedied in course of implementation with the help of the local people. But the authorities concerned did not sound that enthusiastic and till the finalisation of this report (in February 2006) very few of the KMC schools have been brought under the purview of the programme.

Suggestion for other New Schemes

Along with expressing their opinions on the current incentive schemes, teachers of the different primary schools suggested some new schemes, which according to their perception would help the poorer students. About 50 percent of the teachers of KMC schools and 20 percent of SSKs felt that stationery should be supplied by the authorities free of cost. They also suggested that materials related to sports and games should be supplied to the schools concerned in order to benefit the children. A majority of sahayikas and teachers of KMC felt that the supply of free uniforms to all the children was an urgent necessity. These views were also supported by some of the teachers of the other type of schools.

Conclusion

If the substitution of government-backed schooling by a private system (both through private schooling and private tuition) is an indication of growing inequality in the sphere of primary education, the same phenomenon at the same time very strongly points to the increased inclination of the parents from all sections of the society to have their children educated.¹⁷ The direct evidence from several studies including the present one emphatically brings out the fact that almost all the parents want their children to acquire education. Many of the parents lying at the bottom of the income scale said that they often compromise their daily meals to make arrangements for their children's education. Another encouraging finding of the study is that a large number of parents appear to be very keen on changing the functioning of the government primary schooling institutions in a positive way. Many of the parents expressed their willingness to take effective part in the functioning of the institutions.

Also, as the broader discussions suggest, the number of out-of-school children (which was about 25 percent of the total children under 5+ to 9+ group, according to a survey done in 1999¹⁸) has substantially come down¹⁹.

Some Major Challenges

In contrast, the opportunity for universalizing primary education generated through the overwhelming increase in the level of aspirations of the parents, it appears, is far from being utilized in an effective manner. In spite of a radical increase in the rate of enrolment across the country, several studies suggest that the actual implementation of the primary schooling programme is way behind the desired level. Furthermore, the functioning of the schooling system is found to be more skewed than uniform in nature. A straight correlation between the constituency of the institutions and their functioning is indicative of a serious problem in the way the public primary education system is run. The present study also confirms this diagnosis. In addition, the situation in Kolkata is particularly problematic and worrying, for the main constituents of the government primary schooling system are the children of the most underprivileged families. And, as the cross tabulation of the data suggests, constituencies that are poor and disadvantaged are stuck with the worst-run institutions. However, exceptions to this general finding are also found, particularly in the SSKs, which could be educative enough.

Rate of attendance

The rate of attendance of the children in the primary schools is a

¹⁷ See PROBE Team (1998), Public Report on Basic Education, OUP, New Delhi; The Pratichi Education Report I, op. cit. Also See Rana K et al (2004) Pratichi Siksha Pratibedan, Dey's Publishing, Kolkata

¹⁸ Calcutta's Deprived Urban Children, Calcutta Resource Group, 1999.

¹⁹ Bangiya Saksharata Prasar Samity, ****

principal indicator of the state of functioning of the schooling institutions. There were substantial variations in the rate of attendance of the different types of schools and in some schools the rate was frighteningly lower than the desired level. The difference in the rate of attendance between the KMC and KDPSC schools was, to some extent, explicable in terms of their respective constituencies. While the poorest section of the society attended the KMC schools, the KDPSC schools have substantial enrolments from the middle class.

Skewed delivery and growing inequality

The effect of the constituency factor was also more strikingly seen in the school-to-school variations in the rate of attendance. Schools with a better enrolment of children from middle-class backgrounds had much higher rates of attendance than what was found in schools where most of the students are poor.

In sharp contrast to this general finding the relatively higher rates of attendance in the SSKs - which too are attended by the children of the poorest families and are much weaker in terms of infrastructure than the KMC and KDPSC schools, and where the teachers are paid a pittance in comparison with the salaries received by the teachers of the main schools - raises an interesting question as to how this difference can be accounted for. The main reason behind this difference, as found from the responses of a large section of the parents and teachers of the SSKs, was the sense of ownership of the Kendras by the local communities which gave them the opportunity to air their complaints openly, to communicate their feelings to the teachers, to come forward to help the institutions etc. In some of the SSKs, however, the functioning needed much correction and improvement.

One common response of the parents wishing to give vent to their dissatisfaction with the teachers was often expressed in a strongly questioning note on the sincerity and commitment of the teachers of the schools concerned. Serious complaints regarding absenteeism, spending less time in school, and several other derailments were frequently raised by a large number of parents. In fact, members of the research team had the opportunity to witness some of the schools with irregular functioning.

Quality of education and reliance upon private tuition

We were struck by the result of an assessment conducted by the research team that showed about one tenth of the children enrolled could not even write their name properly. They included children from all standards and all of the different types of institutions, but more from the SSKs and KMC schools. "No private tuition, no learning achievement" is probably the slogan of the day. Even the poorest of the parents reportedly spent substantial amounts of money on private tuition. Children of the KDPSC schools were found to be blessed with a double advantage; they got both private tuition and home assistance (thanks to their higher socio-economic status). In spite of the fact that perception of unavailability of private tuition was very strong, many of the students of KMC schools and SSKs did

not receive its benefits simply because their parents could not afford it.

The upshot of poor quality of the education delivered in the primary schools and the consequent reliance upon private tuition seem to be far-reaching – in most of the cases, children incapable of getting privately arranged assistance even fail to achieve the minimum of learning. This has not only caused unhappiness among the parents but also led to the switch-over to the private sector by relatively affluent parents in search of better education. A thinner enrolment recorded in the KMC schools studied suggests a degradation of the schools not only in terms of quality but also in terms of their material conditions of existence. However, some of the KMC schools sampled were found to be functioning very well. Teachers were found to be very dedicated and child-friendly. And the quality of education delivered was much better than what was generally found. However, examples of such good schools were more rare than common. And also it was generally found that better functioning of the schools (both KMC and KDPSC) was directly related to the composition of the population in that area in terms of the proportion of the relatively affluent.

Direct exclusion of the lower classes from education

A number of the KDPSC schools, in contrast to the KMC ones, were peopled by the children of relatively affluent families. It is quite likely that such a constituency encouraged the functioning of some of the KDPSC schools in a manner that was more like private schooling. In these cases it was not only the burden of cost of private tuition that caused the exclusion of the poor children from the arena of education. That was definitely one reason, but in addition to this, some of the KDPSC schools have made the enrolment of children subject to the payment of certain monthly amounts, which were found to have created a further impediment to the poor children's entry into the schools. Also they were found to have prescribed a set of extra books to be procured from the market. Special emphasis on teaching English was also found to be an added "attraction" in such schools.

On the other hand, the KDPSC schools, which had a higher enrolment of children from backward socio-economic origins, were generally seen to have been suffering from a very poor level of functioning.

Frailty of the inspection system

That the functioning of the schools depended greatly on the goodwill of the teachers could also be seen from the feeble inspection system. Eight of the 15 sampled KDPSC schools had not had any inspection in the 12 months preceding the study. However, these schools were found to have been brought under some public supervision through the School Development Committees (SDC). But most of these committees were found to have had their members nominated (by the authorities) rather than elected (by the parents), which severely limited the scope of proper representation of the parents.

On the other hand, though 90 percent of the KMC schools studied were reportedly inspected at least once and at most four times in the corresponding period, none of them had any provision for community supervision. The inspection made by the authorities, in many cases, was reported to be a mere formality rather than taking note of and acting subsequently on the functioning of the schools. The absence of parent-teacher committees, which could actually strengthen the formal and community inspection system, has actually added to the orphanization of primary education. In sharp contrast to the above findings, the SSKs were found to be much more dependent on the local communities for their functioning.

The general inadequacies

While the SSKs suffered from gross scantiness of infrastructure, the other kinds of schools had also had problems housing the children. While some schools were found to be running in rented houses with inadequate space, some of the schools were housed in poorly maintained buildings. However, one major problem of the KMC and KDPSC schools, particularly the latter, seemed to be the shortage of teachers. Although the schools sampled had a better pupil-teacher ratio and school-teacher ratio than the respective figures for the state of West Bengal as a whole, these ratios were not adequate for the functioning of the schools, as mentioned by the teachers and many of the parents.

However, there is a strong possibility that the problem of resources could be overcome with a better organizational re-arrangement. For example, some of the schools, particularly those attended by the children of relatively well off families, had a much higher number of teachers compared to some of the schools attended by the relatively poorer children. While the general constraint of teachers' shortages has to be addressed in the long run, an immediate move on a proper distribution of the existing teachers could help in a considerable measure in dealing with the situation.

Some policy suggestions have been made in the preface of this report. We believe the process of reforming the schooling system would certainly have a cumulative impact that would invite further suggestions and create more avenues. The immediate task, however, is to make a beginning.

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APPENDIX TABLES

I. PARENTS' RESPONSES

A. RESPONDENTS' DETAILS

1. Social Identity and Institution wise distribution of households

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Hindu	116(77.3)	64(70.3)	19(38.0)	199(68.4)
Muslim	34(22.7)	26(28.6)	31(62.0)	91(31.3)
Others	-	1(1.1)	-	1(0.3)
Total	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Gender and social identity wise distribution of respondents

Social Identity	Gender	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Hindu	M	11(9.4)	16(25.0)	4(22.2)	31(15.6)
	F	105(90.5)	48(75.0)	15(78.9)	168(84.4)
	T	116	64	19	199
Muslim	M	5(14.7)	5(19.2)	0	10(11.0)
	F	29(85.3)	21(80.8)	31(100)	81(89.0)
	T	34	26	31	91
Others	M	-	-	-	
	F	-	1(100)	-	1(100)
	T	-	1	-	1
Total	M	16(10.7)	21(23.1)	4(8.0)	41(14.1)
	F	134(89.3)	70(76.9)	46(92.0)	250(85.9)
	T	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Highest educational level of any member of the households

Educational level	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Illiterate	-	1(1.1)	-	1(0.3)
Literate	-	-	1(2.0)	1(0.3)
Below class 4	15(10.0)	12(13.2)	9(18.0)	36(12.4)
Primary	24(16.0)	21(23.1)	15(30.0)	60(20.6)
Junior	53(35.3)	32(35.2)	14(28.0)	99(34.0)
High School	35(23.3)	18(19.8)	7(14.0)	60(20.6)
Higher Secondary	14(9.3)	4(4.4)	4(8.0)	22(7.6)

Bachelor	8(5.3)	3(3.3)	-	11(3.8)
Master	1(0.7)	-	-	1(0.3)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage).

4. Occupational pattern of the sampled households

Occupation	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Casual labour	10(6.7)	25(27.5)	16(32)	51(17.5)
Non permanent job	14(9.3)	14(15.4)	10(20)	38(13.1)
Regular wage employment	42(28)	16(17.6)	6(12)	64(22.0)
Permanent job	27(18)	3(3.3)	1(2)	31(10.7)
Self – employment	15(10)	8(8.8)	3(6)	26(8.9)
Petty trading	20(13.3)	14(15.4)	7(14)	41(14.1)
Vending	1(0.7)	-	-	1(0.3)
Business	7(4.7)	1(1.1)	-	8(2.7)
Domestic worker	7(4.7)	8(8.8)	5(10)	20(6.9)
Mid-wives	1(0.7)	-	1(2)	2(0.7)
Sex-worker	3(2)	-	-	3(1.0)
Others	3(2)	2(2.2)	1(2)	6(2.1)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Social identity and average annual income of the households

		Below Rs.15 000	Rs.15000- <Rs.25 000	Rs.25000- <Rs.35 000	Rs.35000- <Rs.45 000	Rs45000- <Rs.55 000	Rs.55000 & Above	Total
KDPSC	Hindu	19(17.0)	35(31.2)	18(16.1)	21(18.8)	7(6.2)	12(10.7)	112
	Muslim	12(35.3)	11(32.4)	5(14.7)	2(5.9)	1(2.9)	3(8.8)	34
	Total	31(21.2)	46(31.5)	23(15.8)	23(15.8)	8(5.5)	15(10.3)	146
KMC	Hindu	11(17.2)	25(39.1)	13(20.3)	10(15.6)	2(3.1)	3(4.7)	64
	Muslim	8(30.8)	5(19.2)	7(26.9)	3(11.5)	1(3.8)	2(7.8)	26
	Others	-	-	1(100)	-	-	-	1
	Total	19(20.9)	30(32.9)	21(23.1)	13(14.3)	3(3.3)	5(5.5)	91
SSK	Hindu	3(16.7)	7(38.9)	5(27.8)	2(11.1)	1(5.5)	-	18

	Muslim	13(41.9)	8(25.8)	5(16.1)	4(13.0)	1(3.2)	-	31
	Total	16(32.6)	15(30.6)	10(20.4)	6(12.2)	2(4.1)	-	49
Total	Hindu	33(17.0)	67(34.5)	36(18.6)	33(17.0)	10(5.2)	15(7.7)	194
	Muslim	33(36.3)	24(26.4)	17(18.7)	9(9.1)	3(3.3)	5(5.5)	91
	Others	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
	Total	66(23.1)	91(31.8)	54(18.9)	42(14.7)	13(4.5)	20(7.0)	286*

* 5 respondents refused to state their annual income. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

B. ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION

1. Reasons for acquiring education by their children

Reasons	KDPSC		KMC		SSK		Total	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
Improves employment/income opportunity	96 (92.3)	74 (71.8)	68 (88.3)	40 (63.5)	28 (90.3)	26 (65.0)	192 (90.6)	140 (67.9)
Improves social status	35 (33.7)	29 (28.2)	10 (12.9)	7 (11.1)	13 (41.9)	12 (30.0)	58 (27.4)	48 (23.3)
Improves self-confidence and self-esteem	24 (23.1)	25 (24.3)	12 (15.6)	10 (15.9)	5 (16.1)	8 (20.0)	41 (19.3)	43 (20.8)
Leads to greater Independence	4 (3.8)	1 (1.0)	-	2 (3.2)	1 (3.2)	-	5 (2.4)	3 (1.5)
Helps to write letters/keep accounts	16 (15.4)	13 (12.6)	18 (23.4)	19 (30.2)	4 (12.9)	5 (12.5)	38 (17.9)	37 (17.9)
Helps to teach own children	2 (1.9)	26 (25.2)	-	16 (25.4)	3 (9.7)	14 (35.0)	5 (2.4)	56 (27.2)
Improves marriage Prospects	1 (1.0)	65 (63.1)	1 (1.3)	44 (69.8)	-	29 (72.5)	2 (1.0)	138 (66.9)
Others	2 (1.9)	1 (1.0)	4 (5.2)	5 (7.9)	2 (6.5)	3 (7.5)	8 (3.4)	9 (4.4)
Number of respondents	104	103	77	63	31	40	212	206

Total number of respondents 291; while some parents had both sons and daughters, some had either son or daughter; thus responses are not mutually exclusive. (Figure in parenthesis indicates percentage)

C. CURRENTLY ENROLLED CHILD

1. Institution wise distribution of interviewed children

	KDPS C	KMC	SSK	Total
Boys	74	45	17	136
Girls	76	46	33	155
Total	150	91	50	291

2. Reasons for preferring government school

	KDPS C	KMC	SSK	Total
High cost involvement in private schools	6(8.1)	16(35.6)	8(21.6)	30(19.2)
Need certificate from government school	59(79.7)	36(80.0)	11(29.7)	106(67.9)
Better quality in government school	5(6.8)	2(4.4)	1(2.7)	8(5.1)
Better discipline	5(6.8)	4(8.9)	3(8.1)	12(7.7)
Individual care and security of children	34(45.9)	24(53.3)	21(56.8)	79(50.6)
To get admission in higher classes in Govt. schools	9(12.2)	5(11.1)	-	14(9.0)
Parents are not sufficiently educated to admit children in Private school	2(2.7)	-	4(10.8)	6(3.8)
Govt. school is located in the same locality	4(5.4)	1(2.2)	-	5(3.2)
No idea about private school	2(2.7)	-	-	2(1.3)
Inclination of the parents towards mother tongue	7(9.5)	6(13.3)	4(10.8)	17(10.9)
Number of respondents	74	45	37	156

Responses not mutually exclusive.

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

D. QUALITY OF SCHOOLING

1. Working days of the schools during last week of visit

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Six days	88(58.7)	57(62.6)	25(50.0)	170(58.4)
Five days	53(35.3)	34(37.4)	23(46.0)	110(37.8)
Four days	9(6.0)	-	2(4.0)	11(3.8)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Reasons for closure

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Sunday and official holidays	150(100)	91(100)	50(100)	291(100)
Teachers absent	8(5.3)	-	-	8(2.7)
Others	18(12.0)	2(2.2)	11(22.0)	31(10.7)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Average timing of school (in hours)

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Up to two hours	3(2)	5(5.5)	10(20)	18(6.2)
Up to three hours	19(12.7)	17(18.7)	29(58)	65(22.3)
Up to four hours	37(24.7)	37(40.7)	10(20)	84(28.9)
Up to five hours	89(59.3)	29(31.7)	1(2.0)	119(40.9)
Five hours and above	2(1.3)	3(3.3)	-	5(1.7)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

4. Parents' attitude on the performance of the teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Satisfied	120(80.0)	59(64.8)	46(92.0)	225(77.3)
Dissatisfied	30(20.0)	32(35.2)	4(8.0)	66(22.7)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Reasons behind dissatisfaction of the parents on the performance of the teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Teachers do not teach well	12(40)	17(53.1)	1(25.0)	30(45.5)
Teachers gossip among themselves	4(13.3)	5(15.6)	1(25.0)	10(15.2)
Teachers do not take care of children	7(23.3)	4(12.5)	2(50.0)	13(19.7)
Teachers do not give any home work	2(6.7)	2(6.3)	-	4(6.1)
Inadequate number of teachers	-	2(6.3)	2(50.0)	4(6.1)
Pressure of learning is not suitable for children	1(3.3)	-	1(25.0)	2(3.0)
Teachers cannot control the students	9(30)	6(18.8)	-	15(22.7)
Others	2(6.7)	1(3.1)	-	3(4.5)
Number of respondents	30	32	4	66

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

6. Parent's perception regarding the functioning of local government schools

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Satisfied	94(62.7)	45(49.5)	31(62.0)	170(58.4)
Dissatisfied	56(37.3)	46(50.5)	19(38.0)	121(41.6)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage).

7. Reasons behind parent's dissatisfaction on the functioning of local government school

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
School environment is not suitable for proper functioning	32(57.1)	32(69.6)	9(47.4)	73(60.3)
Poor infrastructure	7(12.5)	4(8.7)	17(89.5)	28(23.1)
School has no discipline	37(66.1)	31(67.4)	10(52.6)	78(64.5)
Enrolment is decreasing alarmingly	7(12.5)	5(10.9)	3(15.8)	15(12.4)
Others	5(8.9)	-	-	5(4.1)
Number of respondents	56	46	19	121

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

8. Parent's attitude towards physical punishment

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Approving	108(72.0)	82(90.1)	46(92.0)	236(81.1)
Disapproving	30(20.0)	9(9.9)	3(6.0)	42(14.4)
Indifferent	12(8.0)	-	1(2.0)	13(4.5)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

E. CHILD ATTENDANCE AND PROGRESS

1. General reasons for absenteeism of the children

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Looking after siblings	2(1.3)	-	-	2(0.7)
Helping domestic work	-	13(14.3)	2(4)	15(5.2)
Ill health	144(96)	59(64.8)	48(96)	251(86.3)
Helping parents with earning related works	2(1.3)	3(3.2)	-	5(1.7)
Visiting relatives	79(52.7)	32(32.2)	20(40)	131(45.0)
Lack of interest of child in what is taught	-	3(3.2)	2(4)	5(1.7)
Lack of pressure from parents to attend school	-	3(3.2)	1(2)	4(1.4)
Others	23(15.3)	18(19.8)	5(10)	46(15.8)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Parents' attitude towards the performance of the children at school

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Satisfied	105(71.3)	54(59.3)	32(64.0)	191(65.6)
Dissatisfied	45(28.7)	37(40.7)	18(36.0)	100(34.4)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Reasons behind dissatisfaction of the parents on the performance of the children

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Progress report of school is not satisfactory	20(44.4)	20(54.1)	4(22.2)	44(44.0)
Child cannot able to read, write and answer any question	8(17.8)	14(37.8)	2(11.1)	24(24.0)
Quality of education of the child is deteriorated	4(8.9)	-	4(22.2)	8(8.0)

Child is un mindful	17(37.8)	11(29.7)	9(50)	37(37.0)
Others	-	3(8.1)	2(11.1)	5(5.0)
Number of respondents	45	37	18	100

Responses not mutually exclusive

4. Was home assistance received by the children?

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Yes	106(70.7)	58(63.7)	29(58.0)	193(66.3)
No	44(29.3)	33(36.3)	21(42.0)	98(33.7)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Reasons for not receiving home assistance

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
No one in the household was sufficiently educated	31(70.5)	23(69.7)	17(81.0)	71(72.4)
Educated household members were too busy	8(18.2)	7(21.2)	2(9.5)	17(17.3)
Child refused to take help	3(6.8)	1(3.0)	1(4.8)	5(5.1)
Others	2(4.5)	2(6.1)	1(4.8)	5(5.1)
Number of respondents	44	33	21	98

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

6. Parents' willingness to help for improvement of the functioning of the school

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Yes	96(64.0)	34(37.4)	35(70.0)	165(56.7)
No	54(36.0)	57(62.6)	15(30.0)	126(43.3)
Respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

7. Parents' view regarding their role to improve the functioning of the school

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Financial help	23(24.0)	3(8.8)	10(28.6)	36(21.8)
Influence teachers to teach well and come regularly	34(35.4)	19(55.9)	10(28.6)	63(38.2)
Can help in dry rice distribution / Mid Day meal programme	5(5.2)	1(2.9)	1(2.9)	7(4.2)
Parents should be united to solve the problems	14(14.6)	9(26.5)	5(14.3)	28(17.0)
Can help to improve school infrastructure	10(10.4)	1(2.9)	6(17.1)	17(10.3)

Can apply to government or local leader to improve the condition of school	7(7.3)	4(11.8)	4(11.4)	15(9.1)
Others	18(18.8)	6(17.6)	5(14.3)	29(17.6)
Number of respondents	96	34	35	165

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

11. Suggestion of the parents for improvement of the functioning of the school

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Infrastructure improvement	48(43.2)	21(32.3)	30(69.8)	99(45.2)
Increase number of teachers	29(26.1)	15(23.1)	11(25.6)	55(25.1)
Extension of grade in school	14(12.6)	11(16.9)	1(2.3)	26(11.9)
Teachers should teach well and take personal care	12(10.8)	20(30.8)	3(7.0)	35(16.0)
Effective school hour should be increased	-	1(1.5)	2(4.7)	3(1.4)
Parents should be united and form PTA	15(13.5)	8(12.3)	4(9.3)	27(12.3)
Legal power should be given to PTA	3(2.7)	-	4(9.3)	7(3.2)
Enrolment should be increased	6(5.4)	12(18.5)	1(2.3)	19(8.7)
Pressure on learning should be increased	1(0.9)	3(4.6)	1(2.3)	5(2.3)
Teachers should come regularly and maintain discipline	6(5.4)	1(1.5)	-	7(3.2)
Others	25(22.5)	17(26.2)	2(4.7)	44(20.1)
Number of respondents	111	65	43	219

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

F. INCENTIVE SCHEME

1. Frequency of receiving dry ration

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Monthly	135(90.0)	58(63.7)	27(54.0)	220(75.6)
Bimonthly	4(2.7)	10(11.0)	2(4.0)	16(5.5)
Occasionally	1(0.7)	13(14.3)	21(42.0)	35(12.0)
Not at all	10(6.7)	10(11.0)	-	20(6.9)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Extent of receiving free textbooks

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
All	89(59.3)	88(96.7)	44(88.0)	221(75.9)
Partly	57(38.0)	2(2.2)	6(12.0)	65(22.3)
Not at all	4(2.7)	1(1.1)	-	5(1.7)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Extent of receiving free uniform (girls)

	KDPSC	KMC	Total
Once in a year	48(63.2)	7(15.2)	55(45.1)
Biyearly	8(10.5)	2(4.3)	10(8.2)
Once in school life	-	7(15.2)	7(5.7)
Never	20(26.3)	30(65.2)	50(41.0)
Number of respondents	76	46	122

4. Parents' attitude towards incentive schemes

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Satisfied	47(31.3)	36(39.6)	9(18.0)	92(31.6)
Dissatisfied	103(68.7)	55(60.4)	41(82.0)	199(68.4)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Reasons for dissatisfaction and suggestions to improve

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Quality of dry ration is bad	48(46.6)	15(27.3)	7(17.1)	70(35.2)
Irregular supply of dry ration	5(4.9)	11(20.0)	14(34.1)	30(15.1)
Pulses and oil should be supplied in addition to dry ration	1(1)	5(9.1)	5(12.2)	11(5.5)
Quantity of rice should be increased	3(2.9)	9(16.4)	1(2.4)	13(6.5)
Uniform should be distributed	7(6.8)	21(38.2)	10(24.4)	38(19.1)
Uniform should be given to boys also	15(14.6)	1(1.8)	1(2.4)	17(8.5)
Copies and pencil also to be supplied	49(47.6)	24(43.6)	18(43.9)	91(45.7)
Financial incentive is	6(5.8)	4(7.3)	6(14.6)	16(8.0)

needed				
All textbooks should be given	8(7.8)	1(1.8)	5(12.2)	14(7.0)
Rice distribution centre is far away	7(6.8)	-	1(2.4)	8(4.0)
Provision for dry tiffin	6(5.8)	1(1.8)	4(9.8)	11(5.5)
Dry ration should be given in proper amount	13(12.6)	8(14.5)	-	21(10.6)
Others	8(7.8)	5(9.1)	-	13(6.5)
Number of respondents	103	55	41	199

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

G. PRIVATE TUITION

1. Extent of private tuition

	Gender	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Received	B	55(74.3)	17(37.8)	11(64.7)	83(61.0)
	G	55(72.4)	20(43.5)	14(42.4)	89(57.4)
	T	110(73.3)	37(40.7)	25(50)	172(59.1)
Not Received	B	19(25.7)	28(62.2)	6(35.3)	53(39.0)
	G	21(27.6)	26(56.5)	19(57.6)	66(42.6)
	T	40(26.7)	55(60.4)	25(50)	120(41.2)
Interviewed children	B	74	45	17	136
	G	76	46	33	155
	T	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Parents' attitude towards the unavailability of private tuition

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Avoidable	25(16.7)	18(19.8)	8(16.0)	51(17.5)
Unavoidable	125(83.3)	73(80.2)	42(84.0)	240(82.5)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Reasons for unavailability of private tuition

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Parents are illiterate	37(29.6)	20(27.4)	7(16.7)	64(26.7)
Learning in school is not sufficient	36(28.8)	25(34.2)	10(23.8)	71(29.6)
Children do not obey their parents	17(13.6)	4(5.5)	5(11.9)	26(10.8)
Parents are unable to teach new syllabus	9(7.2)	2(2.7)	1(2.4)	12(5.0)

Quality of learning will be improved	17(13.6)	18(24.7)	15(35.7)	50(20.8)
Educated household members are too busy	12(9.6)	8(11.0)	2(4.8)	22(9.2)
Children will not be able to learn	13(10.4)	2(2.7)	3(7.1)	18(7.5)
Others	-	2(2.7)	-	2(0.8)
Number of respondents	125	73	42	240

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

II. POLICY

1. Existence of PTA (Parent -Teachers Association) or any such committee

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Yes	40(26.7)	-	23(46.0)	63(21.6)
No	110(73.3)	91(100)	27(54.0)	228(78.4)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Parents' attitude towards the functioning of the committee

	KDPSC	SSK	Total
Good	19(47.5)	16(69.6)	35(55.6)
Bad	21(52.5)	7(30.4)	28(44.4)
Number of respondents	40	23	63

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Parents' attitude towards granting legal power to the PTA

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Positive	136(90.7)	80(87.9)	43(86)	259(89.0)
Negative	14(9.3)	11(12.1)	7(14)	32(11.0)
Number of respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

4. Parents' awareness regarding the occurrence of meetings with teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Yes	133(88.7)	20(22.0)	42(84.0)	195(67.0)
No	17(11.3)	71(78.0)	8(16.0)	96(33.0)
Respondents	150	91	50	291

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Attendance of parents in the meetings

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Yes	98(73.7)	14(70.0)	35(83.3)	147(75.4)
Yes (Other than respondent)	5(3.8)	1(5.0)	3(7.1)	9(4.6)
No	30(22.6)	5(25.0)	4(9.5)	39(20.0)
Number of respondents	133	20	42	195

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

H. CHILD INTERVIEW

1. Distribution of interviewed children according to their gender and class

	KDPSC			KMC			SSK			Total		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Class 1	22	11	33	15	5	20	8	6	14	45	22	67
Class 2	13	24	37	6	19	25	6	12	18	25	55	80
Class 3	15	19	34	7	12	19	-	7	7	22	38	60
Class 4	24	22	46	17	10	27	2	8	10	43	40	83
Total	74	76	150	45	46	91	16	33	49	135	155	290

2. Children's ability to write their own name

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Able	143(95.3)	80(87.9)	42(85.7)	265(91.4)
Unable	7(4.7)	11(12.1)	7(14.3)	25(8.6)
Number of respondents	150	91	49	290

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Activities (other than teaching) carried out by teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Drawing	70(46.7)	44(48.4)	13(26.5)	127(43.8)
Music	7(4.7)	16(17.6)	-	23(7.9)
Games and play	57(38.0)	11(12.1)	7(14.3)	75(25.9)
Made children to serve the teachers	31(20.7)	31(34.1)	15(30.6)	77(26.6)
Made children to clear the school premises	21(14.0)	16(17.6)	6(12.2)	43(14.8)
Others	4(2.7)	3(3.3)	4(8.2)	11(3.8)
None	12(8.0)	9(9.8)	15(30.6)	36(12.4)
Number of respondents	150	91	49	290

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Activities performed by the children at home

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Looked after sibling	5(3.3)	4(4.4)	1(2.0)	10(3.4)
Help domestic work	56(37.3)	47(51.6)	18(36.7)	121(41.7)
Income generating activity	2(1.3)	4(4.4)	5(10.2)	11(3.8)
Played around	27(18)	30(33.0)	9(18.4)	66(22.8)
Nothing in particular	76(50.7)	26(28.6)	21(42.9)	123(42.4)
Number of respondents	150	91	49	290

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

4. Punishment by teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Yes	135(90)	79(86.8)	45(91.8)	259(89.3)
No	15(10)	12(13.2)	4(8.2)	31(10.7)
Number of respondents	150	91	49	290

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Mode of punishment

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Scold	112(83.0)	64(81.0)	39(86.7)	215(83.0)
Slap/Hit	99(73.3)	63(79.7)	24(53.3)	186(71.8)
Holding of ear	55(40.7)	33(41.8)	13(28.9)	101(39.0)
Others	3(2.2)	3(3.8)	1(2.2)	7(2.7)
Number of respondents	135	79	45	259

Responses not mutually exclusive. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

6. Childrens' preference of Mid Day Meal

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Cooked Meal	108(72.0)	50(54.9)	21(42.9)	179(61.7)
Continue the distribution of dry rice	42(28.0)	41(45.1)	28(57.1)	111(38.3)
Number of respondents	150	91	49	290

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

III. TEACHERS' RESPONSE

A. GENERAL

1. Distribution of sample schools

Type of Institutions	Number
KDPSC	15
KMC	10
SSK	5
Total	30

2. Average schooling time (in hours)

of Institutions	Average schooling Hour
KDPSC	4.9
KMC	4.5
SSK	3

3. Distribution of institutions by medium of instruction

Type of Institutions	Bangla	Hindi	Urdu	Total
KDPSC	13(56.5)	1(33.3)	1(25.0)	15(50.0)
KMC	6(26.1)	2(66.7)	2(50.0)	10(33.3)
SSK	4(17.4)	-	1(25.0)	5(16.7)
Total	23	3	4	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

4. Average working days of different primary institutions

Type of Institutions	Working days
KDPSC	219.4
KMC	211.3
SSK	211

B. INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Status of ownership of building

Type of Institutions	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Owned	10(66.7)	6(60.0)	1(20.0)	17(56.7)
Rented	5(33.3)	4(40.0)	2(40.0)	11(36.7)
Others	-	-	2(40.0)	2(6.7)
Number of Institutions	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Type of buildings

Type of Institutions	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Pucca	11(73.3)	8(80.0)	2(40.0)	21(70.0)
Partly Pucca	4(26.7)	2(20.0)	3(60.0)	9(30.0)
Total	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

3. Distribution of institution by number of classrooms

	KDPS C	KMC	SSK	Total
One room	4(26.7)	-	4(80.0)	8(26.7)
Two rooms	1(6.7)	2(20.0)	-	3(10.0)
Three rooms	1(6.7)	2(20.0)	1(20.0)	4(13.3)
Four rooms	3(20.0)	2(20.0)	-	5(16.7)
Above four rooms	6(40.0)	4(40.0)	-	10(33.3)
Total	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

4. Facilities currently available at the institutions

Items	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Drinking water	12(80.0)	7(70.0)	3(60.0)	22(73.3)
Toilet	13(86.7)	8(80.0)	2(40.0)	23(76.7)
Electric light	11(73.3)	7(70.0)	4(80.0)	22(73.3)
Electric fan	11(73.3)	5(50.0)	3(60.0)	19(63.3)
Telephone	1(6.7)	0	0	1(3.3)
Playground	3(20.0)	4(40.0)	1(20.0)	8(26.7)
Blackboard in each classroom	13(86.7)	8(80.0)	5(100)	26(86.7)
Library*	1(6.7)	2(20.0)	0	3(10.0)
Maps and Charts	13(86.7)	3(30.0)	1(20.0)	17(56.7)
Toys and Games	9(60.0)	0	1(20.0)	10(33.3)
TLM	13(86.7)	2(20.0)	0	15(50.0)
Musical instruments	3(20.0)	0	1(20.0)	4(13.3)
Number of Institutions	15	10	5	30

(Responses not mutually exclusive).

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

5. Gender wise distribution of teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Male	26(45.6)	12(46.2)	-	38(40.9)
Female	31(54.4)	14(53.8)	10(100)	55(59.1)
Total	57	26	10	93
Average	3.8	2.6	2	3.1

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

6. Distribution of trained and untrained teachers (approved)

		KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Trained	Male	14(53.8)	11(91.7)	-	25(65.8)
	Female	18(58.1)	13(92.9)	7(70.0)	38(69.1)
	Total	32(56.1)	24(92.3)	7(70.0)	63(67.7)
Untrained	Male	12(46.2)	1(8.3)	-	13(34.2)
	Female	13(41.9)	1(7.1)	3(30.0)	17(30.9)
	Total	25(43.9)	2(7.7)	3(30.0)	30(32.3)
Total	Male	26	12	-	38
	Female	31	14	10	55
	Total	57	26	10	93

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

7. Number of part time teachers* in KDPSC schools

	KDPSC
Male	1(6.7)
Female	14(93.3)
Total	15

*Not approved. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

8. Number of non-teaching staff

	KDPSC*	KMC**	Total
Male	3(30.0)	7(58.3)	10(45.5)
Female	7(70.0)	5(41.7)	12(54.5)
Total	10	12	22

*Not approved **Approved by KMC. (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

9. Average enrolment per institution

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Boys	85.4	32.1	26.4	57.75
Girls	94.0	26.1	31.8	62.2
Total	173.7	52.4	58.2	114

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

10. Pupil Teacher Ratio

Type of Institutions	Ratio
KDPSC	45.7
KMC	20.2
SSK	29.1
Total	36.8

11. Number of teachers required per institution – teachers’ response

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Existing teachers	3.8	2.6	2	3.1
Required number of teachers	5.4	4.3	3	4.6

12. Distribution of institutions according to the number of teachers

	KDPSC	KMC	Total
One teacher	-	1(10.0)	1(4.0)
Two teachers	4(26.7)	4(40.0)	8(32.0)
Three teachers	3(20.0)	2(20.0)	5(20.0)
Four teachers	4(26.7)	3(30.0)	7(28.0)
Above four teachers	4(26.7)	-	4(16.0)
Number of institutions	15	10	25

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

C. INSPECTION

1. Inspection occurred in last one year

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
No Inspection	8(53.3)	1(10)	2(40)	11(36.7)
Once in a year	2(13.3)	2(20)	2(40)	6(20)
Twice in a year	3(20)	1(10)	1(20)	5(16.7)
Thrice in a year	-	2(20)	-	2(6.7)
Four times and above in a year	2(13.3)	4(40)	-	6(20)
Number of institution	15	10	5	30

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

2. Activities performed by the Inspectors

Activities	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Inspect resisters	4(57.1)	1(11.1)	3(100)	8(42.1)
Took note of infrastructural needs	2(28.6)	1(11.1)	1(33.3)	4(21.1)
Took note of teachers shortage	-	1(11.1)	-	1(5.3)
Observed classroom teaching	7(100)	7(77.7)	3(100)	17(89.5)
Number of Institutions	7	9	3	19

(Responses not mutually exclusive). (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

D. OTHERS

1. Problem faced by the teachers to run the institution

	KDPSC	KMC	SSK	Total
Poor infrastructure	9(60.0)	3(30.0)	5(100)	17(56.7)
Lack of teaching aids	3(20.0)	6(60.0)	4(80.0)	13(43.3)
Shortage of teachers	10(66.7)	8(80.0)	5(100)	23(76.7)
Too much time spent on non teaching duties	4(26.7)	2(20.0)	-	6(20.0)
Irregular salary payments	1(6.7)	-	5(100)	6(20.0)
Lack of co-operation from parents	4(26.7)	4(40.0)	-	8(26.7)
Harsh living condition in the locality	1(6.7)	-	-	1(3.3)
Others	7(46.7)	3(30.0)	1(20.0)	11(36.7)
Number of Institutions	15	10	5	30

(Responses not mutually exclusive). (Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Persons (other than selected households)Met

List of Officials

D.K. Chakrabarti, Joint Municipal Commissioner, Kolkata
Pranab kumar Sarker, Assistant school inspector, Kolkata DPSC
Raghunath Mitra, Chairman, Kolkata DPSC
P.K. Maity, Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Kolkata Municipal Corporation
Pranab kumar Shau, Education Officer, Kolkata Municipal Corporation
Sanghmitra Makur, District Project Officer, SSA, Kolkata

List of Sahayikas

- ▲ Pramila Mandal, Ambedkar SSK, East Sontoshpur
- ▲ Pratima Banerjee, Ambedkar SSK, East Sontoshpur
- ▲ Kalyani Ghosh, Kabishekhar Kalidas Roy SSK, Taliganj
- ▲ Tapasi Goyel, Kabishekhar Kalidas Roy SSK, Taliganj
- ▲ Nilima Nasker, Kaji Najarul SSK, Bosepukur
- ▲ Sayida Khatun, Parvez Sahidi SSK, Circus Avenue
- ▲ Madhumita Pal, Ramkrishna SSK, Mudiali, GardenReach
- ▲ Kalyani Das, Ramkrishna SSK, Mudiali, GardenReach

List of Teachers of KMC Primary Schools

1. Mita Chakraborty, Teacher in charge, KMCP School (BDM), 5/1 Balaram Ghosh Street
2. Amit Kumar Chatterjee, Teacher in charge, KMCP School (BDM), 84/1 Aurobinda Srani
3. Sushila Devi, Head Teacher, KMCP School (HMM), 9/2 Bidan Square
4. Raunaque Jahan, Head Teacher, KMCP School (UDG), 58 Narkeldanga North Road
5. Mahanga Ram, Teacher in charge, KMCP School (HDM), 44 Strand Road
6. Md. Rahimuddin, Head Teacher, KMCP School (UDB), 75/2C Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road
7. Ratna Sarker, Teacher in charge, KMCP School (BMM), 9 Ahiripukur Road
8. Ira Das, Head Teacher, KMCP School (BDM), 83, Alipur Road
9. Basabi Ghosh, Head Teacher, KMCP School (BMM), 133 Sarat Bose Road
10. Aparna Das, Head Teacher, KMCP School (BMM), 143 S.P. Mukherjee Road

List of Teachers of KDPS Primary Schools

- (5) Kalyani Debdas, Head Teacher, Agrani Siksha Niketan
- (6) Rabin Kundu, Head Teacher, Devi Pankajini F. P. Day School
- (7) Sunil Kumar Saha, Assistant Teacher, Devi Pankajini F. P. Day School
- (8) Bijan Kumar Saha, Head Teacher, Deshbandhu Vidyapith

- (9) Ram Prasad Ghosh, Assistant Teacher, Deshbandhu Vidyapith
- (10) Latika Pal Choudhuri, Head Teacher, Garden for Children
- (11) Ratna Podder, Head Teacher, Janakalyan Primary School
- (12) Anil Baran Acharya, Head Teacher, Khidirpur Banga Vidyalaya
- (13) Ambika Prasad, Head Teacher, Rabidas Harijan Primary School
- (14) Ruhul Amin, Assistant Teacher, Sir Syad Ahmed Free Primary School
- (15) Iqbal Hussain Gazi, Head Teacher, Sir Syad Ahmed Free Primary School
- (16) Gouri Sankar Dutta, Head Teacher, Sisir Bagan Damodar Primary School
- (17) Madhuri Ain, Head Teacher, Sishu Siksha Niketan
- (18) Ruma Nandi, Head Teacher, Susikshan Primary School
- (19) Amar Nath Ghosh, Head Teacher, Swamiji Vidyapith
- (20) Tapati Mitra, Assistant Teacher, Swamiji Vidyapith
- (21) Nilima Dutta, Head Teacher, Kishlaya Vidyalaya
- (22) Zakia Moin, Head Teacher, Judge Abdul Bari Girls' Primary School
- (23) Dinesh Chandra Saha, Head Teacher, Subhash Siksha Shibir
- (24) Sadhan Kumar Ghosh, Assistant Teacher, Subhash Siksha Shibir
- (25) Shibani Sinha, Head Teacher, Kolkata Orphanage Primary School
- (26) Utpal Mukherjee, Assistant Teacher, Kolkata Orphanage Primary School
- (27) Dipa Dutta, Sahayaika, Netaji Subhash SSK.