A STUDY OF GOVERNMENT URDU PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BENGALURU

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Foreword

India is a country with unparalleled diversity in terms of language, religion and culture. It is indeed a matter of great astonishment for many observers that in spite of such diversities we have not only remained united but are progressing at a fast pace.

Constitutional provisions are designed to safeguard the interests of minorities. Governments have followed policies and implemented programmes to give concrete shape to such lofty ideals enshrined in the Constitution.

The importance of studies bringing out the status of minorities cannot be over emphasized. Akshara Foundation has done a commendable job by focusing on the status of Government Urdu primary and secondary schools in Bengaluru. As brought out in this study, sufficient number of Urdu-medium, lower primary and higher primary schools have been opened. Adequate numbers of teachers have been provided. However, many of these schools are yet to get basic facilities like toilets and separate staff rooms.

Low socio-economic status of large sections of the Urdu-speaking minority has a bearing on the location of such schools, attitude of teachers and school leadership. School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs) require orientation and intensive hand-holding to improve the quality of interaction with the schools for better management of schools. As more and more parents, non-literate included, begin to appreciate education as a means of emancipation, there will be a greater focus on the quality of learning outcomes of their children. Akshara’s interventions like the Reading Programme, Nagu Nagutha Ganitha and the Library Programme are therefore of great value. The essence of such programmes needs to be internalised and institutionalised.

Comparing Urdu-medium schools with similarly placed Kannada-medium schools would have brought out specific challenges faced by minorities. However, there is enough in this study that captures the aspirations and dilemmas faced by minorities.

Congratulating Akshara Foundation and K. Vaijayanti for this effort, I welcome more such studies to help better policy decisions and programme design.

G. Kumar Naik
Secretary,
Primary and Secondary Education,
Government of Karnataka.
Acknowledgements

This study of government Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru is a collective effort of several people. The Akshara team is grateful to various government functionaries and field level practitioners for their guidance and suggestions in completing the study.

We are grateful to G. Kumar Naik, Secretary, Primary and Secondary Education, Government of Karnataka, for reviewing the report and writing a preface for the same.

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Lastly, we would like to thank all the stakeholders for sharing the required information with us.

K. Vaijayanti
Akshara Foundation
Bengaluru, July 2011
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Executive Summary

This study provides an overview of Urdu-medium primary schools in the Bengaluru urban district of Karnataka in India. Akshara’s research examined access to government-run Urdu-medium schools and issues relating to enrolment, student attendance rates and learning achievement levels in these schools. An analysis was also carried out on the infrastructure of the schools and the facilities that are available to students and teachers, such as a playground for children, drinking water provisions and staff rooms.

One of the findings of the study indicates that while there are a sufficient number of Primary and Upper Primary government Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru catering to the Muslim/Urdu-speaking community, many of these schools are in a dilapidated state and do not offer even basic facilities, such as toilets and separate staff rooms. The study also found that the schools had an adequate number of teachers but, in most cases, teaching activity was reduced to a minimum in terms of time and effort. Research found that there are more number of small-size Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru than are listed in the official records. This is a significant finding because most of the plans and funds related to schools are based on the school size (enrolment of children).

Teachers and Head Masters/Mistresses (HMs) who were interviewed said that the infrastructure in their schools needed definite improvement. Some teachers pointed out that students come from the lower strata of society and that the schools are located in slums with poor hygiene levels. They also said that schools can prosper only when the city’s infrastructure improves. Some teachers suggested introducing Kannada and English in the early grades in Urdu-medium schools.
Before we start...

Meet Idayath Afroz, our young poet from GKHPS Gangondanahalli. Idayath’s day starts with an hour and a half of schooling at a Madrasa followed by regular school and then an apprenticeship at a garage from 5-8 p.m. He tries to squeeze in homework in the time available between school and work and is labelled as a bright, promising child by all his teachers. Idayath lives with his maternal aunt because his parents have separated. Idayath was initially enrolled in an Urdu school in Gangondanahalli, which was far from home and on the other side of the railway track. His aunt then decided to move him to a Kannada-medium school that was closer to home. Idayath is bilingual and writes poetry in Kannada about Muslim and Hindu cultures. Idayath hopes to complete his graduation and become a national-level poet and singer. He is a regular member of his school library and says that the books at the library have inspired him to write stories.

There are many Urdu-speaking children like Idayath who hope to lead successful lives but have to struggle to make it happen...
The Setting

The importance of education is universal and transcends languages and cultures. It is universally accepted that education should seek to foster the development of respect for human rights, cultural identity, language as well as the environment. These are principles that concern people of all communities, yet it is also well known that minority culture and education in minority languages needs special nurturing if it has to retain its identity.

India is among the most diverse societies in the world in terms of religion, language and culture. Considering this diversity, the Indian Constitutional framework provides for a unified but culturally diverse nation State. Universalisation of elementary education in India envisages that eligible children, especially in the 6-14 year age group, are in school and acquire the required competencies. Educational priorities have been defined and the country has made an attempt to address the issue of access, quality and equity in education to all children since 1964 with the Kothari Commission and National Policy on Education. The 1992 Program of Action emphasised that enrolment alone may not ensure universalisation of elementary education if the child does not continue and complete his/her education cycle. Hence, retention of a child in school until his/her elementary education is completed assumes importance.

Article 45 of the Constitution ensures free and compulsory education to all children in the 6-14 year age group and the Right to Education Act (RTE) emerged as a result of these efforts. The RTE reiterates free and compulsory education to every child in the 6-14 year age group. These provisions clearly imply that the State is responsible for ensuring quality education to all children without exception. Nationwide programmes, such as the District Primary Education Programme and Sarva Shikshana Abhiyana (SSA) have made efforts in this direction.

Historical experience shows that mass literacy and, hence, enlightenment is better achieved when the mother tongue is used as a medium of education and it has in fact ‘quantitative as well as qualitative outcomes’.

The Hague Recommendations on the Educational Rights of National Minorities and the UNESCO Education Position Paper Education in a Multilingual World (2003) state that “the longer indigenous and minority children in a low-status position have their own language as the main medium of teaching, the better they also become in the dominant language, provided, of course, that they have good teaching in it, preferably given by bilingual teachers.”

In India, Article 350A of the Indian Constitution facilitates for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage: “It shall be the endeavour of every State (state governments) and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.”

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2 Article 350A, Constitution of India.
An Urdu-speaking child falls under the category of linguistic as well as religious minority since Urdu is by and large the language of the Muslim religious minority community in India. The Muslim community is the largest minority group in Karnataka and as per the 2001 census, there are 6.5 million Muslims in Karnataka comprising 12% of the population. According to the Sachar Committee report, Muslims in Karnataka, especially those living in its southern part, speak Urdu and prefer to get primary education in Urdu-medium schools. The availability of Urdu-medium schools allows most Urdu-speaking children to be educated in their mother tongue. The Sachar Committee also noted that a greater proportion of girls is enrolled in Urdu-medium schools.

The quality of elementary education is an important indicator of the development of any community. Empirical research may shed some light on the present state of government-run minority schools in Karnataka. Akshara's study examines the status of government-run Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru, which cater to the Muslim/Urdu-speaking community. This study emphasizes universalisation in terms of the quality of primary education and not just access to primary education.

Data from Karnataka's Department of Education shows that among minority language primary schools, Urdu-medium schools make up the highest number (77%) of schools (others being Tamil-, Telugu-, Marathi-, Malayalam- and Sindhi-medium schools).

Data Source

The present study is based on a survey of all 171 Urdu-medium schools in the Bengaluru urban district of Karnataka and interviews with 25 HMs and 35 teachers from these schools. Data has also been taken from the household survey conducted by Akshara Foundation and information collected by the Karnataka Learning Partnership. Data for learning outcomes is used from the assessment designed and conducted by various programmes of Akshara Foundation.

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3 Hussain M, Perspectives on Urdu Language and Education in India, Social Scientist, Vol. 31, Nos. 5-6, 2003.
4 Sachar Committee Report, Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, GOI, 2006. (The Prime Minister of India set up a High Level Committee in 2005 headed by Justice Rajinder Sachar to study the situation of Muslims in India).
6 As of September, 2010, there were 171 Urdu-medium schools in the Bengaluru urban district.
7 Akshara's household survey was conducted in 2009 covering 48,816 households of children attending 1,162 government schools across all educational blocks in Bengaluru across all mediums of instruction. The survey represented children across mother tongues, castes and religions. Data from 7,350 Muslim/Urdu-speaking households was used in this study.
8 The Karnataka Learning Partnership maintained by Akshara Foundation was formed as a framework for nonprofits, corporations, academic institutions and citizens to get involved in improving government schools in Karnataka. www.klp.org.in
Socio-economic Parameters of Muslim Parents

Understanding the socio-economic parameters of the Muslim/Urdu-speaking community in Bengaluru will provide a deeper understanding of the stakeholders of Urdu schools. Many reports and studies have stressed upon the dismal position of Muslims in India. The Gopal Singh Committee of 1983 ‘Report on Minorities’ suggests that the economic condition of Indian Muslims is worse than that of Scheduled Castes.

The 55th round of the National Sample Survey Organisation reports that 40% of Muslims as compared to 22% of Hindus belong to the absolute poor category in urban areas. 30% of urban Muslim households have a working member with a regular salaried job compared to 44% of Hindus. 16% of urban Muslims fall under the casual labour category compared to 14% of Hindus. Nearly 30% of urban Muslims are illiterate as against 19% of Hindus.

One of the findings of the Sachar Committee report on the economic status of Muslims is that large proportions of Muslim households in urban areas are in the less than Rs. 500 per month expenditure bracket. The Committee also found that the literacy rate among Muslims is much lower than the national average and that the literacy gap between Muslims and non-Muslims is greater in urban areas. 25% of children of Muslim parents in the 6-14 year age group have either never attended school or have dropped out. Another major finding of the Sachar Committee is that Muslim parents are not averse to mainstream education or to sending their children to affordable government schools.

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10 Mohammad Zeyal Haque, The “appeased” Indian Muslims are far more deprived (http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/01102002/0110200297.htm).
Akshara's survey of about 7,350 households showed that 45% of households live in asbestos houses and 36% live in kaccha structures.

About 70% of households had an average size of 4-6 members per family. According to the 2001 census, 59% of urban Indian Muslims are literate.

44% of Urdu-speaking households reported casual labour as their occupation.

28% of households did not have a Public Distribution Card or Ration Card. Of the remaining 72% who had ration cards, 41% of households owned yellow cards, which indicate the economic status of the family.
Schooling for Urdu-speaking Children

This section examines schooling from the point of view of access for Muslim/Urdu-speaking children and addresses issues relating to enrolment and student attendance in these schools. It also looks at the infrastructure of government-run Urdu schools, teacher staffing patterns and the presence of teachers in school. These parameters may provide insights into the status and functioning of the schools.

Schooling Access

An important component of universalisation of education is universal access to it, which is measured in terms of the availability of Primary and Upper or Higher Primary schools (HPS) within a distance of 1-3 kilometres from the habitation. Over a period of time, the number of schools has increased many-fold, according to the all-India educational survey. Schooling facilities have significantly improved since 2002. Activities under SSA gained momentum from the year 2002 and a large number of Primary and Upper Primary schools were opened across the country. This is also reflected in the access to Urdu-medium Primary and Upper Primary schools over the last 8-9 years. The norm is to open one Primary school, Lower Primary school (LPS) or Higher Primary school for every 10,000 people, apart from the norm of a LPS within a vicinity of one kilometre and HPS within three kilometres of the child’s home. These standards apply to the Muslim/Urdu-speaking community as well.

With regard to secondary education (for stds. 7-10), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is responsible for improving the access to and quality of the schools. RMSA states that special attention needs to be paid to districts with a concentration of SC/ST/OBC/Minority groups. Access to Primary, and to some extent Secondary schools, for Muslim/Urdu-speaking children is examined against this framework.

The child census by the Department of Education states that about 15% of Muslim children in the 6-14 year age group live in the Bengaluru urban district. Of the 44,998 government Primary schools in Karnataka (across all mediums of instruction), about 9% (3,956) of schools are Urdu-medium schools. Refer to Appendix-1 for more details.

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12 Child Census 2009. The Department of Education in Karnataka carries out child census of the 6-14 year age group every year.
The Bengaluru urban district has 1,410 primary schools from stds. 1-7. Of this, 171 (about 12%) Urdu-medium schools are currently functional and are managed by the Department of Education. In addition, there are 20 aided Urdu-medium schools and 39 private Urdu-medium schools for Urdu-speaking children in the city. There are also many Madrasas that impart religious education in Bengaluru.

While the exact number of Madrasas in Bengaluru is not known, there are approximately 1,000 Madrasas in the city, according to some Madrasa teachers and senior officials. These Madrasas do not come under the purview of any government authority in Karnataka. Unlike some States in India, such as Bihar, Karnataka does not have a Madrasa Board. There are separate Madrasas for boys and girls. One Madrasa teacher said that they teach all subjects in Urdu to children of all age groups. Some Madrasas house between 300-500 students who come from across India. The majority of teachers are qualified and many Madrasas have teachers from different States to teach children from those States. The Government of Karnataka under SSA supports 15 Madrasas in Bengaluru covering around 1,900 children as of 2009-2010.

While accessibility to schools seems to be satisfactory, the factors related to schooling may present a realistic picture of the state of Urdu-medium schools managed by the Department of Education in urban Bengaluru.

While DISE data shows 184 schools (LPS and HPS) when the survey was conducted, we found 171 schools being run by the Department of Education in Bengaluru.

KLP Database.

15 Lower Primary schools go upto std. 5, Upper or Higher Primary to stds. 7 or 8 and High schools from stds. 8-10.

16 SSA in Karnataka financially supports a Madrasa in terms of teacher salary of Rs. 2,500 per month per teacher, Rs. 5 per child per day as the cost of meals, Rs. 300 per child per year on TLM and Rs. 10,000 per Madrasa for maintenance. In total, a Madrasa with 100 children and three teachers gets about Rs. 3 lakh per year.
A Visit to the Madrasa

Madrasas impart religious as well as general education. Students are taught Urdu, English, Arabic as well as the language of the State in which the Madrasa functions. All Madrasas are required to register with the Wakf Board, but some do not register and function on their own.

There are about 100 Madrasas in Bengaluru and its outskirts, of which about 25 are only for girls. Children can be admitted into Madrasas at the age of 10 years. The duration of the course is 10 years for boys and two or three years for girls. In Madrasas that are run like a proper school, eight hours are allotted per day for the purpose of teaching. Here the course starts with UKG and goes on until std. 7 or std. 10. After graduating from the Madrasas, children can enrol into PUC courses and pursue further studies.

Most children who attend Madrasas come from poor families. Once they complete their course work they become Imams who conduct prayers at the mosques. Others become Hafiz-e-Quran and are employed by the managements of the mosques. Students who find it difficult to recite the entire Quran or those who need to work full-time find other jobs or teach Arabic and the Quran to younger children. In some well-established Madrasas, children are trained in various arts and crafts, such as carpentry and tailoring along with computer training. A bright child may take up the eight-year certificate course of Aalim, which enables a person to work as an Arabic translator for reputed organisations in India or in Arab countries.

The data presented shows that while there are a sufficient number of government Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru till the Primary and Upper Primary level, there are only four Urdu-medium High schools in Bengaluru. This type of situation - low availability of secondary schools for linguistic minorities - seems to hold true in many parts of the country and may force Urdu-medium children to either drop out after std. 8 or to attend Kannada- or English-medium schools.

For administrative convenience the Bengaluru education district has been divided into nine educational blocks, namely North 1, North 2, North 3, North 4, South 1, South 2, South 3, South 4 and Anekal blocks. A Block Education Officer heads each block. South 3 block has the highest number of Urdu schools predominantly located in clusters, such as Byrasandra, Domlur, Lalbagh Siddapura and Madivala.

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17 Edwin Masihi, a sociologist who had conducted a study for SEED in 2000 on the issues affecting the spread of formal education among Muslim communities in Ahmedabad and Banaskantha districts, says that there are hardly any Urdu-medium secondary schools in Gujarat. http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/feb/edu-embattled.htm

18 The Department of Minority Welfare, Government of Karnataka, has implemented the Scheme of Remedial Coaching to Urdu-medium students of stds. 7 and 10 in English- or Kannada-medium for English, Kannada, Mathematics and Science subjects to help them change over to English- or Kannada-medium in their future studies.
Enrolment

There seems to be significant coverage as far as access to Primary and Upper Primary schools is concerned for Urdu-speaking children in Bengaluru. Approximately 20% of children in 5-14 year age group are not enrolled in any form of school in Bengaluru.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrolment in Bengaluru’s Primary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urdu-speaking child population in the 5-14* year age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children enrolled in Urdu-medium schools in the 6-14 year age group (govt., aided and pvt.)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu-speaking children enrolled in government Urdu-medium schools ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu-speaking children enrolled in government Kannada-medium schools ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census India 2001, **DISE Karnataka 2010, ***KLP

About 17% of the eligible Urdu-speaking child population of Bengaluru is enrolled in Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru as per DISE data. According to the KLP database, 36% of children with Urdu as their mother tongue are in Kannada-medium schools. Parents could be sending their children to Kannada-medium schools instead of Urdu-medium schools for better job prospects. It is possible that some children are enrolled in Madrasas.

19 KLP collects data on children’s mother tongues across government schools in Bengaluru.

20 In the Arabic language, Madrasa means school, which may also refer to school at the post-graduate level.
Regular Attendance

While enrolment is one of the indicators for effective schooling, regular attendance is a far more reliable indicator that may have a bearing on the learning outcomes in schools since large enrolment rates that are reported at the start of the school year can mask non-attendance and/or dropouts later in the school year. The percentage of attendance in school on any given school day is a good indicator of the functioning of the school. Data shows a gap of 27% between children’s enrolment and attendance on the day of the visit.\textsuperscript{21}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Schools by Attendance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%-79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%-69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Size (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools below 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The study shows that in about 45% of schools, more than 30% of children were absent.
- There is a discrepancy between enrolment and regular attendance as reported by the teacher and the actual attendance on the day of the visit.
- 11% of Urdu schools have a student strength of 25 and below.
- About 35% of schools have a student strength of 150 and above.

Many schools have a very low student strength. It may be feasible to restructure the schools based on student strength and merge the smaller schools with the nearby larger schools and make transport arrangements for children. Merging schools may also be cost effective since, regardless of the strength, each school has a minimum of two teachers under the Karnataka government’s policy of deploying a Kannada teacher in every Urdu-medium school.

\textsuperscript{21} Care was taken to organise the visit such that there was no holiday on the preceding and following day. Typically, teachers complain that attendance is thin during the festival season and just before and after a long vacation.
A comparative analysis of school size based on the enrolment data from official records and the head count on the day of the school visit clearly shows that there are more number of small-size Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru compared to official records. This is a significant finding because most of the plans and the funds related to schools are based on the enrolment data officially shared by the schools.

### Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)

The PTR in Karnataka as per records is 1:40 or one teacher for every 40 students. In Bengaluru’s Urdu schools the overall PTR is 1:27 taking into consideration the total number of teachers sanctioned and children enrolled. But this ratio dips if one considers data on teacher presence versus child attendance on the day of the visit.

- Overall PTR was 24 across government Urdu schools in Bengaluru.
- About 60% (102 of 171) of schools had a PTR below 25, 34% had a PTR between 25-40 and 6% had a PTR above 40.
- As per official records, 64% of the 61 Lower Primary schools had a PTR below 20. However, about 80% (49 of 61) of LPSs had a PTR of less than 20 on the day of the Akshara team’s school visit.
- As per official records, 46% of the 87 Higher Primary schools had a PTR below 25. However, about 63% (55 of 87) of HPSs had a PTR of less than 25 on the day of the visit.
- Similarly, 13% of the 23 Model Primary schools had a PTR below 25 on the day of the visit compared to 9% as per attendance records.
A School in DJ Halli

One school in DJ Halli has 1,600 children and 33 teachers and operates in a spacious campus. Almost all classes have a minimum of five sections. Managing the students seems to occupy most of the teachers’ time. The school has decentralized its mid-day-meal programme to cater to the large number of students. Each class is served lunch at a different time with the teacher supervising the activity. On the day of the visit the team found that the process of serving and eating lunch wasted almost an hour of class. While some classes were taking lunch breaks, others were in session, thereby creating chaos in the school. It makes one wonder how children are learning and how the teacher manages to teach in such conditions. Although the school was large it was not well maintained.

Return on Investment

24% of the 171 government Urdu schools in Bengaluru have less than 50 children and a minimum of two teachers per school. Of this, 11 of 171 schools have less than 15 children. While the policy on having a Kannada teacher in every Urdu-medium school regardless of the strength makes sense, one would also expect higher levels of learning outcomes in these schools.

A random visit to 4 of 15 such schools with small student strength showed that learning levels are not up to the mark. For instance, in one school with a total strength of 15 children and two teachers, four children and one teacher were present on the day of the visit. A std. 4 child could not read a std. 2 Urdu text book. Of the four students, three were siblings. The school was paying a monthly rent of Rs. 3,500 for its space. A rough calculation shows that the government is spending about Rs. 8,000 per child per month to run the school. Such instances raise the question of whether it is economically feasible to retain such schools. An alternative could be to move the children to a nearby larger school and provide free transportation for them to reach school.
School Infrastructure

Learning can occur anywhere, but there is no doubt that positive learning outcomes take place in quality learning environments. Facilities, such as a good number of classrooms and amenities inside the classrooms, space for a playground, libraries and laboratories present an overall picture of the status of the school.

Research has shown that the school’s infrastructure/environment is an important factor in enhancing learning, although it is not easy to measure the specific contributory role.\(^{22}\) Howard White and Edoardo Masset (2005) demonstrate that the delivery of hardware inputs to Ghana’s basic education system – building classrooms and supplying textbooks – has had a substantial impact on higher enrolments and better learning outcomes.\(^{23}\) A study by Carron & Chau, 1996, on Indian schools found that the quality of the learning environment had a strong correlation with pupils’ achievement in language and Mathematics.

It is an undisputed fact that the physical infrastructure of the school is a critical element in attracting and retaining children in schools. SSA emphasizes the provision of basic physical infrastructure to all schools in a time bound manner allotting 33% of program allocations for civil works that include construction of school buildings, additional rooms, toilets and drinking water provisions. The civil works component of SSA is based on the principles of child-friendliness. The building, corridors, doors, windows, grills and walls are designed as external teaching-learning spaces and used for a whole range of learning activities. SSA envisages a safe and secure, clean and hygienic school campus with toilets, drinking water, boundary, electrification, mid-day-meal kitchen, playground and landscaping.\(^{24}\)

In this context, the following section will examine the parameters related to schooling facilities in government Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru.

Status of School Buildings

In order to determine the status of the school buildings the study took into account whether the school building was owned or rented and the physical condition of the buildings. Of the 171 Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru, 51% of schools own their premises. The rest function in rented spaces or in spaces provided by religious and non-religious organisations on a temporary basis.

About 9% of schools function in a shed-like structure. 13% of schools operate in a structure that is part-pucca and part-shed and others work in semi-pucca structures, indicating that more than 20% of Urdu schools do not function in a proper school building.

\(^{22}\) School Buildings and Student Performance in Developing Countries; www.oecd.org.


\(^{24}\) Annual Report 2007-2008, Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD India.
Facility Indicators

To know more about the facilities provided in schools, the condition of certain indicators, such as the school compound wall, playground, drinking water facility and toilets have been analysed and presented.

Basic Facilities

About 60% of Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru have a boundary/compound wall. Boundary walls are deemed essential for the safety and security of young children who are vulnerable to accidents in crowded places like Bengaluru. However, while almost 90% of Model Primary schools had boundary walls, the majority of LPSs and HPSs did not have this facility.

Facilities Available in Schools (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lights in Working Condition</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity Connection</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compound Wall</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Materials</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramp</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playground</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Play materials include any indoor or outdoor play equipment available in the school. While 61% of schools reported having play materials, only 38% of 171 schools reported having a playground in their schools. Given that space is a scarce resource in urban areas like Bengaluru, the remaining schools had not made alternative provisions for their students, such as taking the children to a public playground. Only 33% of schools had ramps in their schools.

45 Urdu-medium schools have been in existence since the pre-independence era in the Bengaluru urban district. GUHPS Sulthanpet of Kalasipalya has been operating since 1880 in a rented space without basic facilities, such as toilets, a compound wall and a playground. 25 other schools have been operational for the last 50 years. Some of these schools are run in heritage buildings while others function in buildings that are falling apart.
Where do we begin?

A Higher Primary school in North Bengaluru has been functioning since 1977. Seven teachers are in charge of 150 students. The school building resembles a storage area. All children from stds. 1-7 were seated in this small, unkempt room in different groups. It was evident that the children were having trouble concentrating on their work due to the cramped conditions. Mid-day-meal vessels were left open and insects were buzzing around them. The school does not have a toilet, even for teachers, who use the toilets of neighbourhood households. The lack of infrastructure, no separate classrooms or partitions between the classes made visitors feel as if the children were sitting under a roof for hours without any meaningful engagement. Teachers were unable to control the students and chaos reigned. Teachers say that the school was renovated two years ago, but that is not evident to visitors. The mid-day-meal is not good, according to the teachers.

Toilets

The presence of usable toilets reflects the extent to which children’s and teachers’ basic needs are being looked after. 58% of schools had toilets for teachers. 45% of schools had separate toilets for girls and 40% of schools had separate toilets for boys. However, across all these categories about 20% of toilets were not in usable condition. Generally any functional toilet in the school was reserved for teachers and children could not use the facility.

Drinking Water and Electricity

74% of Urdu schools had a drinking water facility in school. 81% said that they had electricity connection and 95% of these schools said that they use the facility.

Space

- 53% of schools had a separate space or room for the HM. In LPSs, the HM’s room is also used as a storeroom and sometimes as a classroom due to space constraints or shortage of staff to handle classes;
- 40% of schools had an adequate number of classrooms;
- 12% of schools had a room for the library;
- 13% of schools had a separate staff room.

Hard to believe...but true

One Urdu-medium school is adopted by the Masjid and is run within its premises. The school has to seek the Masjid’s permission for any action that it takes. While the school building was very nice, two toilets designated for teachers were locked. Students have to keep the toilet clean before the teacher uses the facility.
We are proud of our school

Another Urdu-medium school adopted by a community-based organisation in the heart of the city has progressive members whose aim is to bring the school on par with private schools in the neighbourhood. The school has a watchman and clean toilets with modern fixtures. It has a neat and organized pantry area, a spacious dining hall and a child-friendly hand washing facility. The school has a computer lab with Internet facilities and a computer assistant. All children have e-mail addresses. A member of this organisation visits the school everyday. The organisation’s goal is to ensure that every child speaks and understands Urdu, Kannada and English starting from std. 1. The group believes that if a child is proficient in languages, he/she will be able to absorb any subject that is taught in school. This organisation also believes that good hygiene should be taught in school and that children should wear clean uniforms to school, cut their nails and maintain overall personal cleanliness.

‘Samudayadatta shale’ programmes in two schools:
Discussions on school toilets

Recent interaction with community members in two Urdu-medium schools underscored that there is minimal or non-existent community initiative to ensure that schools provide children with the basic facilities, such as toilets and drinking water. Community members were largely unaware about the condition of school toilets. Some members said that children either use public places as toilets or go home to use the facility. Parents said that they visit school once or twice in a year and are unaware of the existence of the School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC). Government schools are directed by the government to have a SDMC composed of teachers, the Head Master and a local government representative, but the President and the majority of members are made up of parents. Parents and community members do not realize that they can bring problems to the attention of the school committee, local leaders and corporators. In both schools, the SDMC member and President said that they were unaware of school grants although they attend the SDMC budget meetings and the President is co-signatory of cheques. The Education Coordinator from the Education Department said that there is a Rs. 20,000 grant for school maintenance and Rs. 12,000 allocated for repair work annually. Again, parents and SDMC members said they had no clue about the availability of these funds.
Learning Resources and Teaching/Learning Material (TLM)

What is needed is not a single textbook but a package of teaching/learning material that could be used to engage the child in active learning. The textbook thus becomes a part of this package and not the only teaching/learning material, according to NCF 2005.25

Data was collected on the presence of teaching/learning resources, such as libraries, laboratories, computers and learning models to measure the ability of Urdu-medium schools to deliver quality education to children.

- All schools have blackboards and about 77% of schools have maps displayed. More than 80% of schools have teaching aids, such as charts, radios and tape recorders.

- 26% of schools said that they had furniture. In many schools children were found sitting on the bare floor.

- The school library is considered an intellectual space for teachers and students to deepen their knowledge and to connect with the world.

- All 171 Urdu schools in Bengaluru reported having a library in their schools. 90% of these schools said that they had a library timetable in their schools. Akshara's Library Programme is implemented across all schools.

- 98% of schools had radio devices. 85% of schools said that they had a radio programme, which is an interactive radio instruction developed on the school curriculum that is aired through the radio on specific days and at specific times. However, the radio programme for Urdu schools is different from that of Kannada-medium schools. Some Urdu-medium schools said that they have been given content in CD form and that the school decides when to air the CD to the students.

- 70% of schools said that they use models as teaching aids, such as models on body parts and others on Mathematics and the environment.

Teacher Factor

As discussed in the earlier sections, the PTR in Urdu-medium government schools is below the State average. 92% of the 982 working teachers in Urdu-medium government schools are women. This is an important aspect as literature has documented that Muslim parents prefer sending their daughters to schools staffed by women teachers.

Many surveys show that teacher absenteeism rates are high. The 1999 PROBE survey found very little or no teaching activity at sample schools, which added to teacher absenteeism. A survey by Kremer et al. (2005) in rural India in 2003 found that, on average, 25% of teachers in government Primary schools were absent from schools on any given day. The ASER 2005 report also found teacher absentee rate at 25%. However, Akshara’s survey of 171 Urdu schools did not report similar findings. The disturbing factor was that at the time of the visit, among teachers who were present, only about half were engaged in teaching. Similar to the PROBE findings, teachers were busy chatting with their co-workers, reading magazines or buying jewellery from vendors visiting the school. Teaching activity was reduced to a minimum in terms of both time and effort. In many cases, it was just a question of minding children in a room rather than engaging them in the teaching/learning process.

During a visit to an Urdu HPS in South Bangalore Akshara’s research team found the HM buying bangles from a vendor in the classroom. The HM had assigned a student to mind the children while she shopped. The temporary monitor was using a wooden rod to maintain silence in the class. When the HM spotted the team, she started shooing away the vendor and told him not to disturb her during school hours. Although the HM responded positively to the team, it was noted that the seller lingered in the school for almost two hours waiting for the team to leave.

26 PROBE - The Public Report of Basic Education in India was a comprehensive evaluation of the educational system in India and was conducted in 1999.

27 In the case of Model Primary schools we found that there were more number of teachers working than the number sanctioned. This difference could be due to teachers sent on deputation to these schools.
Qualifications and Teaching Experience

- 89% of teachers (857 of 961) have a T.Ch/D.Ed degree;
- 8% of teachers (72 of 961) have a B.A/B.Sc/T.Ch/B.Ed degree;
- 2% of teachers (17 of 961) are double graduates.

- 40% of teachers (387 of 961) have 11-20 years’ experience;
- 30% of teachers (309 of 961) have more than 20 years of teaching experience.

- 30% of teachers (285 of 961) said that they teach all subjects;
- 45% of teachers from HPSs (128 of 285) said that they teach all subjects, indicating that stds. 1-5 are taught by a single teacher.
Learning Outcomes

This section describes Akshara Foundation’s efforts to improve the quality of schooling of Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru. The data presented below is confined to some of the specific programmes implemented in Government Urdu schools.

Reading Programme in Urdu Schools:

Akshara’s Reading Programme adopted a technique that involved a set of reading cards, each of which contains a simple graded text with a colourful illustration. There is a one card for each session and the content gets increasingly complex as the sessions progress. The learning materials are designed to enable students to work at their own pace and practice reading in and out of school. An assessment is conducted every 15 days to monitor the child’s progress or lack of it. Students are given a baseline test on the first day to determine their reading levels at the beginning of the programme. The assessment is meant to be diagnostic. Problem areas are quickly discovered and teachers can tailor their lessons to address each student’s needs. Students are assessed on a five-part rubric – starting from ‘Zero,’ ‘L’ Letter, ‘W’ Word, ‘S’ Sentence (four or five words) and ‘P’ Paragraph reading (four or more sentences) levels. The analysis presented below shows the pre- and post-test results of 6,653 children from stds. 4-8 and demonstrates how children from Urdu-medium schools benefited from the programme.

- 6,653 children from Urdu-medium schools in Bengaluru participated in the Reading Programme.

- 6% of children were at the ‘Zero’ level, 19% at the ‘Letter’ level and 29% at the ‘Word’ level at the beginning of the programme. These numbers went down to 0%, 2% and 13%, respectively, at the end of the programme, indicating a significant improvement in children’s learning levels.

- The programme has converted more number of children to sentence- and paragraph-level readers from the base level.
Mathematics – *Nagu Nagutha Ganitha*

NNG was implemented in two parts: NNG-1 for students in stds. 2 and 3 and NNG-2 for students in stds. 4 and 5. The focus of the programme was on building basic numeracy skills and improving students’ abilities in four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division), basic quantitative reasoning and mental Mathematics. (See Appendix-2)

NNG employs several materials to help students develop their numeracy skills. The Math kit, a set of TLMs provided to teachers as part of the NNG curriculum, is designed to help children link the concrete to the abstract. The assessment was designed as a diagnostic test and covered a narrow range of competencies, which were considered essential to learning higher order concepts. Mathematics teachers in Urdu schools were trained in NNG and each school was given a kit based on the student strength.


- There was an improvement in Math mean scores by more than 20 points across standards among children between the pre- and post-test periods.

![Pre-Post NNG Results - Average Scores 2007/2008](attachment:image.png)
A School Library

In 2008, Akshara Foundation’s Library Programme was introduced in Government Urdu Higher Primary School, Yellagondapalya, as a hub library. Typically a hub library is a physical library established in a large school and has 4-5 smaller schools as ‘spokes.’ The hub librarian visits the ‘spoke’ schools and provides them with books and interacts with the children. Akshara’s Library Programme supports existing government school libraries. This school’s library serves 400 students. The library is stocked with 800 books in Urdu, Kannada and English and has an Akshara-trained volunteer to guide the students. Books are issued at the rate of one book/child/month. The Head Master and teachers believe that children’s learning outcomes have improved because they are active in the library. The HM and teachers say that children are drawn to the library because Akshara’s books are attractive, which motivates the children to read more.

Mohammed Asif, a std. 5 student, says that he loves to come to the library because he can read books and newspapers and participate in activities. Asif says that the library teacher encourages him to read more and that he looks forward to spending time in the library.

Another std. 5 student, Shafreen Shakiya, says that she likes to learn English from the library teacher and therefore visits the library without fail. Shakiya says that she has read 10 books in the last two months. Mohd. Intiyaaz, a std. 6 student, likes the English books in the library and says that he can now read and understand English well. Intiyaaz says that he can read in the library as well as take books home. This enables him to tell stories to his friends, which has improved his learning ability, Intiyaaz says.
HMs and teachers in Urdu-medium schools said that parents are not concerned about their children’s education because they are illiterate. According to the staff, nowadays, government schools are becoming institutions for slum children, which they say was not the case in the past. “All the creamy layered people used to send their children to the government school,” said one teacher. Children who attend government schools are below the learning level, they said. “We are putting all of our efforts into teaching them,” said one HM.

25 HMs and 35 teachers were interviewed in Bengaluru across all the educational blocks to get a fair representation across the district.

### Aware of Right to Education Act

- 52% of HMs and 46% of teachers were aware of the Right to Education Act;

### Attendance and Reasons for Absenteeism among Students

- About 51% of teachers said that 90% of students in their schools attend school regularly;
- The major reasons cited for irregular attendance and dropouts were health reasons, domestic and financial constraints.

### Madrasas

- More than 85% of teachers and HMs said that children attend Madrasas and that Madrasas provide religious education;
- 88% of HMs and 43% of teachers said that a Madrasa education is insufficient for children;
- About 10% of teachers and HMs said that Madrasas coach children on subjects related to the curriculum.
Some Opinions

- More than 50% of teachers and HMs said that parents take sufficient interest in their children's schooling;

- About 68% of HMs said that the School Development and Monitoring Committees are active. However, when pressed for more detail it was found that the SDMC exists only in name and does not function effectively;

- More than 20 of 25 HMs and 25 of 35 teachers said that Urdu-speaking children have access to High schools to enable them to complete their education through std. 10. However, there are only four Urdu-medium Government High schools in Bengaluru. Teachers said that the majority of children move to Kannada- or English-medium schools after std. 7.

Issues in the School

- More than 60% of HMs said that they need more teachers. While the overall PTR was about 1:24 on the day of the visit, there is a possibility that teachers are not evenly distributed within the district. There may be some schools with more teachers for fewer students and others with fewer teachers for more number of students.

- About 60% of HMs said that children sit on the bare floor and that their schools need furniture. It was also found that the floors on which children sit are dirty and often damaged.

- Toilets were flagged as a priority by 32% of HMs.
**Teachers’ Voices**

This section presents teachers’ opinions on Urdu-medium schools. Most teachers believe that these schools are neglected and that their infrastructure needs to be overhauled. Teachers said that the government should take another look at the languages taught in these schools. Teachers also said that the school surroundings are unclean and that schools can be improved only when the city’s infrastructure improves. They pointed out that children attending the schools come from the lower strata of society and that the schools are located in slums.

One assistant teacher said that Muslims have a dilemma – they want to promote their language on the one hand and on the other hand they want their children to learn English and Kannada and join the mainstream. In her opinion, children should be taught in Urdu till the Primary school level and in English from std. 6 onwards. The HM of another Urdu-medium school said that despite the low student strength, they need more than four teachers since a total of 38 subjects need to be taught across all standards. The HM said that textbooks have now improved and that the children like the books. The HM appreciated the training given by Sarva Shikshana Abhiyana.

In another instance, an assistant teacher complained about insufficient teachers in the school (the science teacher was promoted and transferred to another school and the school presently has only two teachers). This teacher sees an improvement in girls’ enrolment in schools due to better facilities and because they are learning English from std. 1. She said that most of the children come from dirty slums. The assistant teacher of another school said that incentives like cash prizes for toppers, bicycles for girl students and better facilities have helped to increase student strength. Children typically come to the school after two years of Madrasa schooling and this hampers their ability to learn subjects other than Urdu, she added.

The HM of a school said that families that are economically well off send their children to convent schools. In his opinion, cleanliness is an issue in government schools and he feels that the schools need to be “upgraded.”

**A Motivated Head Mistress...**

_The HM in this school is very active. When the Akshara field research team arrived at the school, she was bringing in two children from the slum. The HM is very concerned about the school and the education that it imparts. The school, which has stds. 1-5, is very small and children can’t sit comfortably. The HM requested the team to help her school by providing a new school building or introducing her school to a donor. Children in this school were good in reading, writing and Mathematics. According to the HM, the parents are not concerned about their children’s education. They only visit the school to collect the uniform, school bags and books._
Observations

- Only 17% of the school-going child population in the 5-14 year age group from the Urdu-speaking community attend Urdu-medium government schools in Bengaluru. In light of growing residential and non-residential Madrasas, it is possible that children are being enrolled in Madrasas that are not covered under DISE. While one of the key findings of the Sachar Committee is that Muslim parents are not averse to mainstream education or to sending their children to affordable government schools, the situation needs further investigation. There seem to be four categories of households. The first represents the educated middle class that sends their children to English-medium schools. The second group sends their children to Madrasas only because they believe that religious education is more important than formal education. The third category represents people who send their children to government schools. Finally, the last group is made up of those people whose children are never enrolled in school.

- According to the Sachar Committee, children of Muslim parents have limited access to government schools. This may not hold true in Bengaluru since access does not seem to be an area of concern. In fact, there are 4-5 Primary schools located within one kilometre from the child’s home. It is possible that many of these schools were started in localities where the density of resident Muslims was high about 50 years ago. But, over a period of time these localities have been converted into commercial areas and those who resided in these locations have relocated due to the real estate boom. In this changing scenario, the Department of Education should re-examine these schools and take suitable measures, such as merging them with other schools or extending additional infrastructure to the schools, if required. Merging some of the smaller schools may be meaningful in urban areas like Bengaluru that have a shortage of space. A school complex may work better in the city, but such a facility will have to be supported by efficient transportation facilities and basic infrastructure, such as functional toilets, drinking water and mid-day-meals. Travelling a long distance, sometimes by public transport, is not a new experience for many children in minority schools. For instance, approximately 5-10% of children in a government Urdu-medium school in Bengaluru’s North block travel a distance of 10 kilometres from their homes to reach school.

- For all the 171 Urdu-medium Primary feeder schools, there are four government Urdu-medium High schools in Bengaluru. Keeping in mind students’ future employment opportunities, increasing the number of Urdu-medium High schools may not be a good option. Some people believe that the government may have to take another look at the medium of instruction from the perspective of present day needs. One suggestion is to introduce Urdu as an optional third language in the mainstream medium of instruction, such as in Kannada-medium schools in Karnataka. However, one also has to be cautious about the extinction of a rich language like Urdu and parents’ ability to provide additional inputs literature/literary experiences to the child at home in the mother tongue.
Multi-grade teaching is a common practice in most schools. Different teachers conduct multiple classes in a single room due to space constraints. Despite the advantages of multi-grade teaching, the present challenges may persist unless there is a change in the mindset of the teacher. The pre-service teacher’s training does not touch upon multi-grade teaching extensively. Students are not trained to handle multiple grades during their pre-service training. The pre-service training typically exposes students to mono-grade situations and the best scenarios in the education system. When teachers join the schools they are not equipped with TLM, pedagogy or on the job training for multi-grade teaching in Urdu.

The educational infrastructure of many government Urdu schools in Bengaluru is in an abysmal state and needs urgent attention. School should not be seen in isolation and the overall development of the locality reflects the status of a school. Schools are located in slum areas with unhygienic surroundings. Unless the Department of Education takes the initiative along with the local authorities, such as the BBMP and its concerned departments, conditions may not improve. Better planning and long-term vision is key to coping with the rapid urban transition and the massive influx of people into fast-growing cities like Bengaluru.

Findings show that the playful interactive methodologies of teaching Mathematics and English work better and result in visibly improved learning outcomes. In case of Urdu-medium schools, teacher accountability seems to be a critical factor. Teachers are regular and are well qualified. But little can be achieved unless teachers believe that quality education is vital and that they are accountable for the learning outcomes of these children.

Quality education entails not just the teaching learning activities in school, but also the overall quality of the environment in and around the school. The community should put pressure on school authorities to provide quality education to their children. The School Development and Monitoring Committee needs to be strengthened in order to achieve this objective. While the onus is on the parents to ensure that their children are receiving a good education, there are many reasons for lack of parents’ involvement in their children’s schooling. Some parents are not aware of the problems in school and some are not proactive in taking action when required. Parents do not have a holistic approach to education and are confined to a narrow definition of schooling, which could be attributed to their social backgrounds. For instance, during one of the ‘Samudayadatta shale’ programmes, a parent-teacher interaction organized by the school at the end of the academic year, held in April 2011, some parents said that they were not concerned about the lack of basic infrastructure, such as toilets in schools, because they did not have toilets at home. Parents also said that children come home whenever they need to use the toilet. Often children do not go back to school after using the facility and precious school time is wasted in the process. It is important to reinforce that as an institution the school should provide basic facilities to its students. Parents should be informed and made aware of ‘quality schooling’ in order to demand a better quality of education for their children. This is possible only if the State educates parents more effectively and intensively in this direction.
Appendix-1

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<th>Urdu-Medium Schools by Type</th>
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<td>2,146</td>
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* Source: Annual Report 2009-2010; **Source: Annual Report 2009-2010

Appendix-2

Mathematics – *Nagu Nagutha Ganitha* 28

NNG-1 and NNG-2 are implemented for students in stds. 2 and 3 and stds. 4 and 5, respectively.

Methodology: NNG emphasizes student-centered learning with activity-based lessons. The integrated approach combines quantitative reasoning with real-life activities. The programme builds upon basic Math skills. Using tangible representations of mathematical concepts, children are able to understand abstract principles by seeing and feeling them. NNG is based on sequential thinking strategies – Concrete, Representational and Abstract.

28 For more information on Akshara’s Mathematics Programme, please see “An Analytical Report on Nagu Nagutha Ganitha, a remedial math programme, June 2008.” Research: Research Reports. www.akshara.org.in
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