URBANIZATION AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN SCHOOLS OF KARACHI

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ABSTRACT:

Urbanization has been defined as the process of city population growth. The population of Karachi has risen from 2,63,565 in the year 1931 to 92,44,492 in 1998. Urbanization has affected all aspects of community – life in the city. The process poses challenges to both the quantity and the quality of school education. The present state of school education in Karachi provides opportunities to social work teams to help improve the standards of school education. The paper aims to find answers to three questions.

1. What is Urbanization, and its implications for school education?
2. What is the state of school education in Karachi?
3. What role can social work play in the improvement of school education?

Introduction

Urbanization has been defined as: "The process of city population growth."[1]. The phenomenon of rural – urban migration is common throughout Asia, Africa and South America. The economic lure of the cities offers hope to migrants. Their presence in the cities continues to add to an urban slum.

Increasing urbanization, simulated by rural – urban migration, raises social problems such as housing shortage, over – crowding, unsanitary living and working conditions, environmental population, and crime. Karachi shows a distinct yearly influx of migrants from the rural areas. As a result, the population has risen from 2,63,565 in the years 1931 to 92,44,492 in 1998.[2]. Population growth in Karachi has gravely affected school education in the city.

The existing problems of school education provide ample opportunities for social work teams to play their role in improving school education in Karachi. Social work, as a professional service to citizens, is able to contribute in community development through the uplift of quantity and quality of education.[3].
The paper aims to discuss:

1. The nature of urbanization, and implications for school education.
2. The state of school education in Karachi.
3. The role of social work in improvement of Karachi schools.

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[1] Lindsey L.L, and S. Beach (2000) Sociology: Social Life and Social Issues, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentices Hall
[2] Government of Pakistan (2001) Pakistan Census Report of Pakistan Islamabad: Finance Division Publication
[3] Johrio, P.K (2005) Social Development and Social Welfare New Delhi: Anmol Publication

1- The Nature of Urbanization, and Implication for School Education

Cities have existed throughout human history. According to Lewis Mumfird (1961)[4], at one time Rome lead in the size of urban population with 800,000 citizens. Urbanization has given impetus to the process of rise of new cities. In the estimated population of World's ten largest cities, Karachi has been placed at number seven in population size, In 2015, the population is estimated to be 20.6 millions[5].

Social analysts are considering the implication of urbanizations for cities in the contemporary world economy[6]. It is reported that in developing countries, all social problems are incubated and magnified in cities, Karachi is no exception. Serious attention needs to be given to the process of urbanization and its implication for Karachi. School education stands at top priority in the measure to respond to the challenge of urbanization in Karachi.

1.1 The Nature of Urbanization

There is considerable literature on urbanization and its implications for society in Pakistan. Scholars have recorded different aspects related to the process, and have clearly mentioned the problems as a result of urbanization. It is customary to lament the disadvantage of unplanned urbanization in the country[7].

The nature of urbanization demands that policy-makers consider how the processes can contribute to ensuring sustainable development of Karachi. Social policy has to take stock of knowing perspectives on urbanization, and the type of their implications for school education and in particular the possible solutions to the problems depending on the perspective that is applied.

The functionalist perspective focuses on how social disorganization and disruption of social institutions is caused. Mass migration from rural areas to urban areas weakens ties in family, education and other institution. When large numbers of strangers come to live together in cities, symptoms of social disorganization get more pronounced. The cases of crime, mental illness, and suicide are the signs of disruption in society. Ready problems, such as water supply, traffic congestion, and pollution, and pollution can be solved through planning[8]. With regards to sound solutions of the problems, the problems of city politics, like the power of city elites, present hurdles in the problem-solving process[9].

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[4] Mum ford, Lewis (1961) The city in history: Its Origins, It Transformation, and its Prospectus. New York: Harcourt

[5] New York Times (1996) The Nagacity Summit, April 08, 1996: A14.

[6] Knox, P.L., and P.J Taylor. Eds. (1995) World Cities in a World-System. Cambridge: University Press

[7] Sellier, F.J.M (1988) Rural-Urban Migration in Pakistan: The Case of Karachi. Lahore: Vanguard

[8] Orum, A.M (1995) City-Building in America. Boulders: West view Press

[9] Judd, D.R., and T. Swanstrom (1994) City Politics: Private Power and Public Policy. New York: Harper Collins

The conflicts perspective centers on the theme that political elites and members of the capitalist class make decisions that benefit the capitalist class[10]. Some sociologist opine that central cities are powder kegs of urban unrest that periodically threaten to explode because of massive job loss allegations of police brutality, racial tensions, and similar issues. Karachi has witnessed such unfortunate cases on different occasions. Education has a positive role to play in solving these problems.

The interactions perspectives examine urban problems from practical standpoint, Integrationist note that people interact in the city as in a world of strangers[11]. One, city people tend to interact with one another in a superficial way. Two, city people tend to interact through "civil inattention", and respecting the privacy of others in public places. Three, city people tend to tolerate alternative lifestyle of others.

An overview of the three perspectives just mentioned might show the nature of urbanization, and type of problems that are faced in the process. The data on urbanization suggest that urban life is complex. Urbanization ushers in changes in the communities. Communities in the cities are remarkably active, and are able to influence aspects of city life. School education is no exception.

1.2 Urbanization and Implications for School Education

Rapid urbanization has affected social patterns in all developing countries, including Pakistan. Research on urban neighborhoods, social net works and the attitude of individuals toward tolerance of other people indicates the implications of urbanization on social institutions including education[12].

This section briefly covers implications for: school social work; building social institutions and citizenship education; the issue of literacy; and education of special children.

The school social work may be defined as the process and method of understanding and providing help to children in the school. School social work helps children to develop their innate physical and mental potentials to the full. The school social worker is a member of the school staff, who is assisted by the school staff to focus on children in need for help. The school social work was proposed in the Third Five-Year Plan (1965-1970)[13], but has not been implemented with full vigor[14]. The role of school social worker is to: guide and help students, and to cut truancy; to forge relationship among teachers, students and parents; to provide help to special children; and arrange financial assistance for needy students through Zakat and other sources.

[10] Feagin, J.R, and Parker (1990) Building American Cities: The Urban Real Estate Game. Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentices-Hall
[11] Karp, D.A G.P Stone, and W.C Voels (1991) Being Urban: Sociology of City Life. New York: Prager
[12] 12 Stocked, J (2000) Sociology: Discovering Society. Australia: Thomas Learning
[13] Third Five-Year Plan (1965-1970)
[14] Khalid, Mohammad (1992) Social Work: Theory and Practices. Karachi Kifayat Academy

Building social institutions and citizenship education has assumed great importance in the rapid urbanization age. "Social institutions refer to the kinship systems, local organizations, and networks of the poor…[15]" social work and citizenship education are a positive source in building social institutions, and strengthening national solidarity. The teaching of citizenship in schools has received considerable attention in the developed countries[16]. Hopefully, in Pakistan citizenship education will receive the same focus as was perceived by the first education minister of Pakistan, Mr. Fazlur Rahman. In his address (1953)[17] to the Education Conference held in Karachi in 1947, the minister laid emphasis on training for citizenship. The citizenship education is aimed to educate children so that they are able to develop appropriate attitude, purposeful actions and healthy dispositions towards fellow citizens.

The process of urbanization in Karachi, has given rise to the number of illiterates in the city. Literacy represents a basic step in early education, and is essential for promoting human resource development in the country. The data with regards to Literacy in the country, including Karachi, points to the need for urgent reforms in the education sector[18]. School social work is in a position to make positive contributions to improve the level of Literacy through innovative steps and closer cooperation with related agencies working in the sector of education.

The process of urbanization in Karachi has its implications for the education for special children, both at the school and the tertiary level education. The current facilities for the education of special children in Karachi do not cover the number of special children. The need to qualitatively improve the conditions of special children is duly realized[19]. Social workers, however, are in a position to take steps and ameliorate the present state of education of special children.

Urbanization has varied implications for school education, and not just those reported above. The state of school education in Karachi does not show ability and resilience to meet the challenges of all the implications caused by the urbanization process.

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[15] World Bank (2001) World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty. New York: Cxford University Press

[16] Osler, A. Ed. (2000) Citizenship and Democracy in Schools: Diversity, Identity and Equality. Stock on Trent: Trentham Books

[17] Fazlur Rehman (1953) New Education in the Making in Pakistan

[18] Government of Pakistan (2007) Pakistan Economic Survey 2006-2007. Islamabad: Finance Division Publication

[19] Shazhadi Shagufta (2000) Disability and the Family of Mentally Retarded Children. Karachi: Derain Printers Company

2. The State Of School Education in Karachi

School education in Karachi suffers from numerous major/ailments prevailing in the educational system of the country. These are: co modification of education[20]; the inability of teachers to impart effective teaching; unrealistic school curricula; reliance on blind borrowing from abroad; and above all lack of self-reliance to tailor school education in line with needs of the time and resources of the country. School education in Karachi faces problems of both quantity and quality. In both aspects school social work can play its role to ensure improvement in quantity and quality.

2.1. School Education and the Problems of Quantity

The state of school education in the country has been discussed by a number of scholars[21]. The problems of quantity are spread out in different directions. A mention of four aspects may be made. These are: population growth rate and school facilities; rise in the out of school children; the state of existing schools; and the inadequacy of financial resources for schools. Data for this section has been taken from the "Sindh Education Profiles 2002-2003[22]".

There is a total mismatch between the children population and the available school facilities. It may be noted that the level of enrolment in primary schools stands at a total of 1,007,238, both for boys and girls. In this total, the share of public schools is 330,649 and that of private schools 676,589 students[23]. The enrolment in private schools is high, and shows that school facilities in the public schools are inadequate. In the long run, there is a possible danger of polarization between the products from public and private schools. Social workers are faced with a challenge to help in improving the facilities of public schools.

The data on the number of public schools in Karachi, and enrolment strength points to shortage of school facilities[24]. There is a total of 3314 schools to cater for the enrolment of 563,215 students in the schools of Karachi. In these schools, 3166 schools are reported to be functional. 48 schools have been closed, and 100 schools have been approved to be opened. The shortage of schools is reflected in the number of out of school children. According to the data[25], a total of 7,52,728 students are out of school. In the total, 3,86,453 are boys and 3,66,275 are girls. The challenge of rising rate of illiteracy is evident in Karachi.

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[20] Siddiqui Shahid (2007) Rethinking Education in Pakistan: Perceptions, Practices, and Possibilities, Karachi: Paramount Publishing Enterprises

[21] Jalalzai, M.K. (2005) The crisis of Education in Pakistan: State Policies and Textbooks. Lahore: Al-Abbas International

[22] Government of Sindh (2004) Sindh Education Management Information System (SEMIS) – Sindh Educational Profile 2002-2003. Karachi SEMIS Publication

[23] Ibid

[24] Ibid

[25] Ibid

The state of existing public schools is not very encouraging. The reports in the print media, with regards to the conditions of the public schools possibly go unheeded. The school reform support unit, which has been assigned the task to help improve the conditions of schools in Karachi, in a recent draft report[26] has also highlighted the unsatisfactory condition of public schools. It was stated that a total of 1506 schools in Karachi are without electricity, 856 schools without toilet facilities, and 788 schools without a boundary wall. It may noted that in the absence of such basics facilities, the schools can hardly be expected to create a healthy teaching and learning environment.

The inadequacies of financial recourse for the schools of Karachi are often cited as a cause of inability in meeting the quantitative needs of schools.

The shortage of finances has some truth in it. However, the lack of sound planning and utilization of allotted funds are the more real causes for the existing conditions. The data related to different districts of Karachi [27] shows disparities in the districts-wise participation rates of school-going children (5-9 years) in Karachi. Probably, better results could be achieved if planning and utilization of funds and recourses could be balanced among the districts. Malir lags behind in an evident way. The problems of quantity mentioned above have implications for the aspects of quality as well.

2.2. School Education and the Problems of Quality

The quality of school education is vital. It is at school level that the foundations of an individual are built. The term "quality" has commercial tinges as well. In commerce, it means meeting the needs of the customer and his expectations from the products. In education, quality has varied dimensions. It entails: the ability of the educational system to meet the aims of education; the suitability of curricula and textbooks to the needs of time; the effectiveness of school teaching; and sound management of the school administration[28].

School education in Karachi falls short of the desired standards of quality on various counts and mention may be made of some factors, which impinge on the quality of education in schools of Karachi.

One, the co modification of school education in Karachi. It is common knowledge that public schools in Karachi have fallen short in the provision of quality education. The data cited earlier show, that the admission in private schools is more than the public schools. The trend has been more marked after the 1990s. Surveys of the past two decades indicate that there has been almost ten-fold increase in the number of private schools. Researchers have reported the dangers of privatizing in the country. Karachi is no exception. The facts mentioned by some scholars and their views need attention. Kamal

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[26] Government of Pakistan (2007) Pakistan Economic Survey 2006-2007. Islamabad: Finance Division Publication.

[27] UNESCO Office (2004) Literacy Trends in Pakistan. Islamabad: UNESCO Office

[28] Niazi H.K and M. Awan (2005) Quality of Education and Teachers Training. Pakistan Journal of Education (Islamabad), Vol xxii/1. pp. 25-36

A. Munir (2004)[29] stated: "Pakistan cannot afford to treat education like bananas. If it takes that route, very soon the multinationals will enter the education sector and set up elite institutions. Then, the middle classes will be left to local educational chains, and the vast majority of the people languishing at the bottom will be denied even a half-decent education, while delivering their families into poverty.

Two, the factors of complex education system at school level presents obstacles in achieving quality. Besides the Madrassa (religious schools), public and private schools exist in Karachi. The curricula, textbooks, and even the aims of education in these institutions differ[30]. In private schools, "O" level and "A" level curricula in Cambridge – system schools is not the same as set by the Government of Pakistan. Cambridge-system schools arrange examination system through the British Council in Pakistan. The complexity at the school level education has its shortfalls in a number of ways, and do not meet quality standards needed for education in the country.

Three, the quality of teaching in public schools of Karachi is not very satisfactory. The students are forced to depend on the tuition centers even from the primary stages. In primary schools, the teachers are often deficient of sound training as teachers[31]. Salient problems in the teachers education are: short duration of teacher education program and teaching practices; out-dated curriculum; laxity in the selection standards of teachers; and lack of research in the improvement of quality of school education in Karachi.

Looking back at the previous two sections may indicate that the state of school education in Karachi presents challenges for social work in the city. Social work is a professional service to people, and needs careful planning and consistent efforts to achieve laid down objectives. In the developed countries social work has been organized on systematic basis[32]. It can serve as a good guideline for planning school social work in Karachi.

3. The Role of Social Work in improvement of Karachi Schools

Literature on modern social work testifies that social work cannot perform alone by an elite of people. In essence, social work is the collective endeavor of the entire community. The present state of social work in the schools of Karachi calls for total reform. The dedicated and qualified social work in the schools of Karachi calls for total reform. Dedicated and qualified social workers have to join hands as a professional body of a legally recognized association[33].

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[29] Munir. K.A (2004) Taking Education to the Marketplace. Dawn (Karachi), Friday, February 27, p 6
[30] Nayyar, A.R., and Ahmad Salim (2003) The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan - Urdu, English, Social Studies and Civics'. Karachi: Sustainable Development Policy Institute
[31] Jumani, D.R., and Pervaize Iqbal (2005) Teachers Educations in Pakistan: An Overview. Pakistan Journal of Education (Islamabad), Vol. Xxii/1, pp/ 105-117.
[32] Fellin, Phillip (2001) The community and the Social Workers. Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock Publishers
[33] Khalid, 1992: 378-384

In order to play a systematic role in the improvement of Karachi schools, the following three objectives have to be pursued at the initial stage . The objectives are realistic and achievable.
These are:

1. Research Based Planning
2. The Literacy Challenge
3. Effective Teaching in Karachi Schools.

3.1. Research Based Planning

Research based is an ongoing process, and lifeblood of sound planning. School social work is distinct in approach on two grounds. First the scope of research is wide, and covers consideration of lifelong process of education. The foundation of education of an individual is laid at school level. Second, the school social work has to consider large number of special children, from economically poor social strata.

The school social work has to be researched by a variety of sociologists who explain social work, and include sociological theory and social work, child protection, elimination of illiteracy, effective teaching and learning environment in schools, and empowering society through knowledge[34]. Social work in schools is not as straightforward a sphere of activity as may be assumed by the one without experiences of fieldwork. For example, social work activity may meet opposition from the corrupt functionaries in the school elements in the educational system. Social workers in the school set-up have to be aware and ready to overcome these practical difficulties in implementation of the duly researched plan of action.

The current urgent need for school social work gives hope of success and support from the stakeholders related to the improvement of Karachi schools. The induction of "School Reform Support Unit" for the growth of school social work is also a help. There are also reports of new and emerging serious cooperation between the public sector and the private sources of development engaged in the school reform process.

The second aspect of coverage of growing population of children, specially those from poor economic background is also to be catered for in the research. The Government has duly recognized the educational needs of special children. However, the work on ground is not adequate to meet rising demands of the education of special children. Research has to keep an eye on the size of special children population and also the implementation of the decided polices[35]. In order to open avenues for the employment of special children in later life, the demands are being aired that special children are educated in ordinary schools. In Karachi, the public schools are hardly in a position to shoulder this responsibility at this stage however; the research has to attend to this aspects with full seriousness.

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[34] Davies, M. Ed (1991) The Sociology of Social Work, London: Rout ledge
[35] Olivr, M., and B. Sapey (2006) Social Work with Disabled People, New York: Palgreve Macmillan

Currently it is borne by data that special persons are deprived of some of their rights enshrined in the Constitution. The situation has to be reversed. It is the objective of research to pave the way for it.

The school social work research has to center on the welfare of children, and has to suggest ways to improve basic services for sound growth, and has to suggest ways to improve basic services for sound growth of physical, mental. emotional, and intellectual growth of children as well as their economic problems in particular. To arrange financial assistance for poor students of society, Zakat and Ushr sources have to be taped by the social workers to help those in need.

3.2. The Literacy Challenges

The school social work is likely to take practical objectives if it accepts the literacy challenge. The spread of literacy, beginning from the schools, has the obvious advantage of environment. In the age of information, now being experienced, the use of new technologies enables to meet the challenge of literacy with less difficulty.

The literacy challenge has been explained as an effort. "To produce a literate populace, capable of functioning at a sufficient level to enhance individual growth and to meet changing societal needs[36]". The definition given by the authors implies adding to the number of those who are literate, and improving the standards of literacy among those possessing basic literacy skills.

The literacy challenge operates at many levels. In the recent literacy efforts basic themes to spread literacy are popular. The school worker has to understand the application of these approaches.

One is the cognitive or information processing view of the human mind. The approach suggests that the child is an active constructor or reality however the child is not born with the ability of decision making and automatic functioning of his potential. These abilities slowly emerge during the early years. Psychologists report that decision processing undergoes a major surge from about 5 to 7 years of age. Any effort to spread literacy has to keep this fact in view. The curricula for children of early age have to consider the cognitive ability of young children.

Two. The real growth of the child takes place in a social context. Therefore, social context view has to be given importance in efforts to accept the challenge of literacy. The teaching and learning environment of the school has to be made conducive to learning.

Three, the factors of cognitive process view and social context view can be useful only when the families and wider communities are mobilized to support otherwise it is not possible to achieve success. The school social work has to focus on creating sound working relationship with the community where the project is to be started.

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[36] Watson A.J (2004) and L.R. Giorecell. Eds. Accepting the Literacy Channel. Sydney : Scholastics

3.3. Effective Teaching in Karachi Schools

The culmination of school social work takes place at the final stage of effective teaching in the school. If school fail to impart effective teaching, the finished products will be below the desired standards worthy of a dynamic society. The quality of education is dependent on teachers to a great extent. Salient features of effective teachers are mentioned below. School social worker has to keep watch on these aspects. Teaching has its own challenges and dilemmas[37]. The effective teaching strategies can succeed only teachers are effective.

An effective teacher has to be a learner in the first place. Learning is lifelong. A teacher, doest not stop learning after becoming teachers but teacher as a learner he nurtures self-esteem as an act of learning. He has more opportunities to benefit from reflecting on what his students learn from him.

Effective teacher has to fully plan and prepare to assume the role of teaching, and manage classroom. The teacher has to plan his lecture, as well as to deliver it, because teaching is an art, and the lesson plan is its working sketch.

An effective teacher needs communication skills to create desirable educational environment to make school into a successful "learning community". The teacher has to demonstrate that he attaches importance both to himself and his students. The communication skills include interpersonal communication, and the quality of written communication in a teaching-learning environment.

Effective teacher manages the classroom learning environment with dexterity. The managing aspect includes control of classroom interaction and classroom behavior. Sound management requires that a teacher is sensitive to the background of students, and realizes that at times their behavior is not intended to be offensive. Their lack of ability to express may be a cause for their otherwise unintended behavior.

Effective teacher must have the ability to apply effective teaching strategies in the process of teaching. These strategies include: direct instruction, discussion technique, small-group work, cooperative learning, problem solving technique and students research.

Conclusion

[37] Groundwater – Smith, S., R. Ewing, and R. Le Cornu (2002) Teaching: Challenge and Dilemans. Australia: Thomson Learning

Rapid urbanization has affected all aspects of community-life in Karachi. Urbanization has implication for school Social work, and points to the unsatisfactory state of school education in the city. The quantity and quality of school education has glaring flaws. The implications of urbanization for school education, and the current state of education in the city presents ample opportunities for social work to play its role. At present, school social work is not fully effective. In order to make a sound start the role of social work in improvement of Karachi schools has to be focused on research based planning, and accepting the literacy challenge. Pursuing the goals of imparting effecting teaching in the schools of Karachi success depends on the support of families and communities to school social work.