NGOs AND PRIMARY EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY IN NEW DELHI, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

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The Millennium Development Goals are addressing the importance of education, because there are a great number of benefits of education, such as child mortality tend to decrease which gives women the option to give birth to fewer children. At the same time, when the Government is not able to provide sufficient education, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are often involved in the process, despite that they are being criticised due to ineffective working methods. This Bachelor thesis is a case study of six NGOs operating in the primary education sector in New Delhi, India. The aim of this thesis is to look at whether or not these six NGOs have the potential to improve primary education in New Delhi; the analysis of will be based on qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted on site. This study is based on Uphoff’s and Atack’s theoretical approaches about the importance of state, market and civil society collaboration when it comes to achieving social change. The conclusion from the study is that these NGOs play an important role in primary education, not through directly providing education, but by raising awareness of the importance of education, advocacy and by preparing children for their studies.

Key words: civil society, India, non-governmental organisations, primary education
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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EFA- Education for All

MDGs- Millennium Development Goals

NGO- Non-Governmental Organisation

NPE- National Policy on Education

RTE Act- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act

SSA- Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
1. INTRODUCTION

The idea for this Bachelor thesis started when I was working as an intern at a non-governmental organisation (NGO) for three months in New Delhi, India. During my internship I experienced a lot of problems with the NGO in question. Due to this, I am aware of some of the problems with NGOs and their work and this is further being strengthened by the large number of research projects conducted on advantages and disadvantages with NGOs. Therefore, I decided to combine my interest in primary education in India with studying six NGOs in New Delhi that are working with primary education. The aim of this study is to examine whether or not NGOs have the potential to improve primary education.

This Bachelor thesis will start with an introduction, where a background to the topic, clarification of concepts, purpose, research questions and limitations are being presented. Following this, previously conducted research, along with the theoretical framework will be presented. These are being followed by the methodological part. Then the thesis will continue with the analysis and end with a concluding discussion.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Importance of Education

The importance of education has for a long time been addressed on international level and the development cooperation in the 21st century has to large extent been influenced by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). India, like many other countries, is striving to meet the goals that have been set up, including the second MDG, which is trying to achieve universal primary education for all children (UN Millennium Development Goals 2010). The reason for addressing the importance of education through forums such as the MDGs is that education has been proved to have a great number of beneficial effects. A higher educational level, especially among women, tends to improve the well-being of the entire family. Women that are educated usually have fewer children than non-educated women and child mortality tends to decrease (Sen 1999:129,193,195). The well-being of the family also tends to improve because women are more aware of good nutrition and are also able to provide this for their families (Critical reflection in Potter, Binns, Elliott and Smith 2008:223). In addition to this, literate people tend to participate in the political and economical life to a larger extent than those who are illiterate and this can be a strong contribution to economic development in a country (Sen 1999:39-40).
1.1.2 Primary Education in India

The Indian education system is vast, consisting of both government and private schools. India has a federal policy, where both the Central and State Governments have the responsibility to take care of primary education, but the main responsibility lies on the State Governments (Mooij 2007:326). It can be asked if the federal policy is the reason that different states have achieved different results when it comes to providing education for children (Mkandawire 2004:287). Primary education in India is currently facing different challenges. Some of the challenges that scholars have observed is the fact that there is a vast difference in the quality of education, both in government and private schools. Another problem is the poor school infrastructure, such as shortages of classrooms and toilets (Mooij 2007:331). Problems also exist when it comes to teachers and how well they practice their jobs; studies show that a large number of teachers are not skilled enough to take care of their jobs and they do not care whether the students learn something or not. Another point is that teachers sometimes refuse to teach children from lower castes, if it so that the teacher comes from a higher caste (Paik 2009:186,193). Despite all these challenges, the Government of India spent only 3.1% of the GDP on education in 2006\(^1\) (UNESCO 2009).

Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in the number of private schools in India, because of market oriented reforms and private schools have been considered to provide better quality education than government schools (Mehrotra and Panchamukhi 2006:421-422). There are three types of private schools in India. Firstly, private schools, which receive funding from the Government in order to pay for salaries etc. These schools follow the same school curricula as Government schools. Secondly, private schools, which do not receive funding from the Government but are recognised by the Government and hence, they have to meet some requirements (Kingdon 2007:183). Thirdly, unrecognised private schools are not being recognised by the Government; hence, they do not have to follow any kind of regulations. These schools are the ones that can be seen as real private schools (Mehrotra and Panchamukhi 2006:424). This shows that the Government of India also influences private schools to some extent.

1.1.3 Education Policies in India

Despite the problems with primary education, the Government of India has for a long time considered education an issue that has to be addressed. In 1968, the Government launched the National Policy on Education (NPE) and already then the aim was to provide free and compulsory education for all children aged six to fourteen (NPE 1968). However, this plan did not state how the policies should be implemented, so in 1986 a new NPE was launched in order to modify the NPE from 1968. Some changes include the improved emphasis that was put on how to enrol children from marginalised groups in schools and the clear statement that both the Central and State Governments have to provide primary education (NPE 1986).

In 2000 the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme was launched in order to guarantee that all children are enrolled in schools. The foundation and the goals of the programme are: ensuring universal primary education and retention, closing of the gender and social class gap in education and improving the quality of education (SSA 2011:2,5). The latest effort made by the Government of India was in 2010, when the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act) was launched. The RTE Act means that all children between the age of six and fourteen have the right to attend a school close to their home and that the education should be free and compulsory. The Act also states the responsibilities of both the Central and State Governments, e.g. training of teachers, provision of school infrastructure and good quality education. In addition to this the Act also states that the schools and teachers should ensure that the Act is being followed (RTE 2009:(c.2-4)). Almost all the points that are mentioned in the RTE Act have been mentioned in the other policies on education, however the RTE Act have added a rights based approached to the issue. Dréze and Sen highlight that in order to make the education work it is important that: firstly, the state provides good quality education and teacher trainings, secondly, the parents put their children in schools and thirdly, the teachers should ensure that children get the education they need (Dréze and Sen 2002:184).

1.1.4 Role of Civil Society and NGOs

The number of NGOs in India is unclear, but on the Government’s webpage there are 41,812 NGOs registered that are working in collaboration with the Government (Government of India NGO Partnership System 2009), thus one can predict that the number of unregistered NGOs in the country is even larger.
In order to meet the goals that have been set up in the SSA programme and the RTE Act, the civil society and NGOs play an important role both when it comes to implementation and monitoring of the SSA programme and the RTE Act. The reason for this is that NGOs in India for a long time have been playing a role in providing education. But this has also resulted in, at least in theory, that a great number of NGOs have changed their work in order to live up to the SSA and RTE requirements. NGOs are important for: awareness raising among the people, social mapping of educational needs and problems, providing resource help for the Government and provision of special training to name a few (SSA 2011:84-87).

Since NGOs play a large role in the education sector in India it is necessary to provide a short introduction concerning advantages and disadvantages of NGOs. Strengths associated with NGOs are that they are working with people on a grassroots level and hence, said to take into consideration the views of the people (Craig and Mayo 1995 cited in Potter, Binns, Elliott and Smith 2008:319). NGOs are also regarded to be more democratic, flexible and participatory than the government (Holmén 2010:20) and it is common that they put pressure on the government in order to make the work of the government more transparent and accountable (Edwards 2001 cited in Potter, Binns, Elliott and Smith 2008:321). Particularly in India, it has been highlighted that NGOs play a significant role in implementing Government policies. In addition to this, a large number of NGOs have put pressure on the Government to improve the educational situation in the country. It should also be kept in mind that due to NGOs, there has been more resources directed to primary education than if just the Government would provide education (Colclough 2010:505-506).

Despite the positive sides with NGOs, there is a wide range of weaknesses associated with them. Some of the problems are that a great number of NGOs are founded in order to create jobs for people, leaders are inexperienced and they lack resources, skills and knowledge to actually carry out their work, hence, they are ineffective. Another problem is that NGOs focus on short-term targets and that donors influence the projects, a reason for this is that it is easier to receive funding, if the projects are short-termed. In addition to this it is common that NGOs compete with each other in order to attract clients, funding and political influence (Holmén 2010: 207,212,214,218).
1.2 Clarification of Concepts

In this part of the paper, the most important concepts for this paper will be defined.

1.2.1 Civil Society

Civil society can, according to World Bank be defined as a place where NGOs and other non-profit organisations, that are not dependent on the state or the market can come together and work for the common interests. It includes e.g. NGOs, trade unions and organisations that are operating on similar cultural and religious beliefs (World Bank 2010).

1.2.2 NGOs

NGOs are organisations that are operating within civil society. They should be independent from the government and should operate on a non-profit basis (NGOs introduced in Potter, Binns, Elliott and Smith 2008:318). Even though NGOs are said to be independent from the government, researchers have found that there is a growing relationship between NGOs and governments (Blum 2009:235). When it comes to education, NGOs can be divided into three different categories: those who put pressure on the government, those who improve the quality of education that the government provides and those who provide education (Rose 2009:220).

1.2.3 Primary Education

Primary or elementary education in this paper means as specified in the RTE Act, classes one to eight in the Indian educational system and those children are usually in the age of six to fourteen (RTE 2009: (c.1)).

1.3 Purpose, Research Questions and Limitations

1.3.1 Purpose

The primary educational situation in India is in need of improvements and both the Government of India and NGOs are needed to make those improvements. There is however a wide range of problems associated with NGOs; hence the purpose of this study is to:

- Examine whether or not NGOs have the potential to improve primary education, by looking at their own contribution to primary education and by looking at their opinion of the contribution made by the Government of India
1.3.2 Research Questions

The research has been based on the following research questions:

- What are NGOs doing to provide or/and improve primary education?
- How do NGOs look at their own role to provide or/and improve primary education?
- What opinions do NGOs have on the effort made by the Government of India to provide or/and improve primary education?
- What are the overall analysis of the NGOs studied and their possibilities to provide or/and improve primary education?

1.3.3 Limitations

In order to limit the research, I have interviewed:

- Six rather small NGOs that are operating in the education sector in New Delhi
- One Government Official

The reasons behind these limitations will be discussed in sections 4.1 and 4.2.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The aim of this part of the paper is to provide an overview of how scholars have addressed similar research questions. Since I want to examine whether or not NGOs have the potential to improve primary education, I have decided to look at previous research regarding NGOs and how they have been operating in the education sector. In order to get a better understanding of the problem, I have also decided to look at education as a part of social welfare policies.

2.1 NGOs and Education

Blum has carried out a study on the importance of education that is being provided by NGOs and her focus was on small, rural, multigraded schools in India (Blum 2009:235). The basis for her research has been on the education that is being provided by an Education Centre. The Education Centre in question has improved the school environment and enhanced teacher training and support (Blum 2009:242-243). She came to the result that those NGOs that have provided education for children from marginalised groups have had a positive impact on a number of children enrolled in schools, completion and retention, but she also stated that it is too early to
conclude about the overall effects of these programmes, since there is not enough research done on the subject (Blum 2009:245).

Jagannathan has conducted a study on the contribution of a few NGOs, which are operating in the primary education sector in India. The researcher points out that NGOs play an important role in assisting the Government of India in providing primary education, because the Government alone will not be able to provide primary education for all children. Those NGOs that the researcher was studying also played an important role in implementing programmes that the Government has launched (Jagannathan 2001:9,29). Another interesting finding from the study was that community involvement has a positive impact on the quality of education and if the parents were involved in the child’s education, it also increased the attendance level (Jagannathan 2001:32).

Rose has conducted research on the importance of NGOs in providing education for children that for some reasons are not enrolled in schools in India, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Ghana. (Rose 2009:219-220). Common features among NGOs are that they come up with alternative schooling and an important question is whether these children receive the same education as those children who attend government schools. A second question raised in the paper is whether government schools or schools run by NGOs provide better education? She concludes with the fact that there is not sufficient evidence whether or not the education provided by NGOs is beneficial (Rose 2009:221,231).

Mundy and Murphy have been looking at how the emerge of transnational advocacy networks and the increase in the number of NGOs have affected the educational climate throughout the world (Mundy and Murphy 2001:86,90). They highlight the change from NGOs mainly providing education (until the 1970s) on the basis of improving adult literacy. These had little impact on national education policy- to NGOs that have been concerned with the Education For All (EFA) initiative (Mundy and Murphy 2001:96-97). They also pinpoint that in the late 1990s it became important with strengthening local NGOs, so that they are better able to participate in national education policies. This meant that the collaboration between NGOs in different developing countries became more important than before, because the aim was to put pressure on Governments to provide education for everyone. They conclude that NGOs have played a role in advocacy, i.e. connecting educational problems to issues like human rights and global equity instead of just being service providers (Mundy and Murphy 2001:110-112,125).
2.2 NGOs and Social Welfare Policies

Wood and Gough have come up with a Welfare Regime Approach, where they have been taking different institutions into account, such as culture, labour markets and state form to name a few and then they have adopted a model that suits better to contexts in developing countries. Based on this they have classified countries either as welfare state regimes, informal security regimes or insecurity regimes (Wood and Gough 2006:1697, 1699-1701). India belongs to the informal security group, which means that people are dependent on the family to meet social needs. The state has the power and resources to provide welfare, but is suffering from corruption and the country has experienced an uneven development, where rural and urban poverty is a major problem. Another characteristic is that different parts of the country has achieved differently when it comes to social protection, targeted social welfare policies are highly common (Wood and Gough 2006:1704), which can be seen in the field of education, e.g. through a large number of different schemes directed towards marginalised groups in the Indian society (Prabhu 2009:22-24). Wood and Gough also highlights that markets, states, communities and households are interconnected in order to provide comprehensive social policy. When it comes to the community side, NGOs play a part in providing social welfare (Wood and Gough 2009:1701) and this is why it is important to also give a short overview of research done on social welfare policies.

My research will have a slightly different angle to examine the problem. By studying how NGOs in the education sector in India look at their own role in providing or/and improving primary education and how they look at the effort made by the Government of India. In order to get a deeper understanding of the situation, the thesis also examines what a Government Official think about the situation. By having this angle, there will be some new contribution to the field of research.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of my research is based on two approaches, firstly, Uphoff’s approach regarding the importance of state, market and civil society involvement in achieving social change and secondly, Atack’s approach regarding government and NGO relationships in order to improve the legitimacy of NGOs (Atack 1999 and Uphoff 1993).
3.1 State, Market and Civil Society

Usually, when scholars have been looking at who should provide social welfare in a country, the civil society organisations have been left out and have been treated as a residual category. Uphoff has taken another approach and he states that civil society should not be seen as a residual category, but as a category that plays an equally important role in providing social welfare as the state and the market. He mentions that NGOs and civil society organisations are being formed on the basis what we expect from them. One should also evaluate NGOs and their work in relation to state and market interventions, because all three sectors have pros and cons that are linked with each other and all these three sectors should work together in order to achieve change in a society (Uphoff 1993:607,610-611). Although interventions made by civil society should be judged on the basis of what the state and market are doing, Uphoff mentions that interventions made by NGOs should be seen as a chance to achieve positive change, because the government and the market will always be there to provide services (Uphoff 1993:619). Uphoff discusses a study where countries that had strong connections between the government and communities, performed well when it comes to agricultural development and social indicators, such as education and health. In order to achieve social change, the researcher states that it is important that a country has organisations that are operating at both national and local levels and that there are different kinds of organisations, because these can be a substitute for the weaknesses of other organisations (Uphoff 1993:613-614).

Uphoff also discusses the advantages and disadvantages with NGOs. A great number of NGOs are operating on voluntary basis and this might lower the operating costs, but problems with them are that they might not work efficiently if they have internal problems and that NGOs are bad at carrying out their work in a long-term perspective (Uphoff 1993: 613,618). NGOs are also said to promote economic and social change, but in order to achieve this it is important to have a well-functioning state, so that markets and civil society can work properly. However, he also suggests that if there is less state control, there is a chance to expand the civil society. Another common notion is that civil society is strong in places, where the state and the market cannot provide services that people want or that the services being provided are not good enough. Hence, NGOs are also seen as gap fillers. However, Uphoff mentions that NGOs are not only operating on self-interest reasons but also because of common interests (Uphoff 1993:618-619).
3.2 The Relationship between the State and NGOs

Atack discusses in his article the relationship between the state and NGOs and how one can improve the legitimacy of NGOs. He divides the question of legitimacy in two strands: firstly, the formal-procedural criteria, which means the principals the state is following, for example that the state has the right to say that everyone should obey the laws made by the Government and secondly, the substantive-purposive criteria, which pays attention to the common interests and goods, such as welfare (Flathman 1995 cited in Atack 1999:857-858). Another important aspect is that governments are able to reach out to everyone in a country, while NGOs usually just reach out to a small part of the population, mainly those who the NGOs are interested in reaching out to. Despite this fact, NGOs are said to be more effective in programme delivery and reaching out to the poor than the governments (Atack 1999:859-861). However, it should be kept in mind that NGOs cannot become a substitute to the government, instead NGOs and governments should work together in order to achieve social change. NGOs should support the government and they should come up with well-working policies which would result in more effective development work. However, this is easier if a country has a functioning state and is democratic (Korten 1987 cited in Atack 1999:863).

3.3 Justification of the chosen Theoretical Framework

I have chosen to base my research on these two theoretical frameworks, because Uphoff mentions strengths and weaknesses with NGOs, thus, I have been able to use these points when analysing the interviews and particularly when it comes to how NGOs look at what they and the Government of India are doing when it comes to primary education. It is also important to bear in mind the fact that one should not only look at civil society as a separate sector but as a sector that is interlinked with the state and the private sectors. Since I have conducted an interview with a Government Official, this interview will represent the state, which gives further depth to the study. Even though, Atack has a similar approach as Uphoff, I have decided to use his ideas as well, because Atack mentions a few things that Uphoff does not. Also the fact that Atack is discussing the government-NGO relationship more precisely, gives my study more in depth focus.
4. METHODS AND SELECTION

4.1 Research Method and its Limits

Since the aim of this study is to get an understanding of whether or not NGOs have the potential to improve primary education in India, I have decided to base my research on qualitative methods, since qualitative research tries to give an understanding of how people or organisations interpret the social world (Bryman 2008:26). When it comes to research methods I have decided to base my study on semi-structured interviews. There are advantages and disadvantages with choosing semi-structured interviews as a mode of primary data collection. The advantages with the chosen method is that before the interview, the interviewer has some clearly specified questions, that should be answered during the interview, but the interviewer also have the possibility to ask follow up questions, if the interviewee reveals something that the interviewer wants to know more about and thus, receive more in depth information (Bryman 2008:438).

There are limits with the chosen methods. First, it may be difficult to carry out a number of semi-structured interviews and try to get the same results as one wants, because all of the interviews are different and one never knows what kind of follow-up questions one can ask. Results from such interviews might be difficult to compare due to the nature of flexibility. I am also aware that the analysis will be affected by my way of thinking; hence, I have used sources (previous research) with differing views as means to create a well rounded understanding of the situation. It also has to be kept in mind, that my sample size is small and that it is difficult to make larger generalisations from the results, but the aim of this study is not to make generalisations on the issue but to get an understanding of the issue. A reason why this study is not aiming at making generalisations is because India is a vast country, were each state has its own context and has achieved different results when it comes to providing primary education, making it difficult to make overall generalisations.

Other factors that might have affected the reliability and validity of the data are the fact that the subject is sensitive, and that the interviewees may not want to criticise themselves or the government, because that would give a bad picture of the organisation or the country. An example of this is that one of the NGOs has a very close relationship with the Government; hence, the NGO has not been criticizing the Government. Despite these factors, I believe that the method chosen is in favour of my study, because I will have a NGO perspective on the issue, which is the aim of this study.
4.2 Sampling and Limitations of the Study

To be able to answer my research questions I decided to conduct an exemplifying case study (Bryman 2008:56), where I interviewed six NGOs (see part 4.5) in the southern part of New Delhi. The NGOs were found on the internet and what these six NGOs have in common is that they are running different educational programmes and that they are rather small NGOs. I decided to conduct the interviews with smaller NGOs because they are more easily accessible and they usually provide more time for the interviews than larger NGOs, because networking with other organisations and persons is important for them. I am not taking into consideration private schools that play a vast role in India. This is due to that, children who NGOs try to help are usually poor and belong to marginalised groups, hence; they cannot afford to pay for private education. Even though, the main focus of this study is to look at NGOs, it was a good opportunity to conduct an interview with the Government Official, because the Government is basically working with the same issue, and by conducting an additional interview it will give my study a better perspective and opportunity to see whether the answers differ or not. All the interviewees were interested in the research and they were willing to participate in the study without any kind of problems.

The interviews took place in the offices, in a school of the NGOs and at the Department of School Education and Literacy, since the interviews were taking place in the offices and school, I was able to see some of the activities they are organising and meet some of the students that are enrolled in the programmes. This benefited the research process due to that it made it easier to understand what the organisations are doing and what the educational situation actually is like.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to the interviews an interview guide (see Appendix) was made and during this phase the examples of Bryman were followed (Bryman 2008:442-443). The data collection was spread out during a period of 10 weeks, from the 2nd week of December 2011 through the end of January 2012. The duration of the interviews were approximately 30 minutes, as most of the NGOs did not have more time. An exception for this is the Government Official, who only gave me 10 minutes to conduct the interview. During the interviews I took a position, where I was asking the questions that I had formulated and then I let the interviewees talk without interrupting them. I wanted to be the listener and I only asked follow-up questions on issues that I regarded as important for my study.
Due to the sensitivity of the subject and the fact that five of the NGOs have collaboration with the Government, i.e. they are dependent on the Government to some extent; only one of the interviewees gave permission to record the interview on tape. This interview was transcribed entirely after the interview. The remaining six interviews were written down during the interview and the interviewees were talking in slow speed, in order for me to take notes. Immediately after the interviews, I once again wrote down the interview, in order to remember most of the things being said. After the interviews, I also noted down my feelings during the interviews, the environment where the interviews took place, etc. The main problem faced during the interviews was to try to have control over the interview and get answers to the asked questions without interrupting the interviewees too much. Another problem faced was the difficulty to get proper answers to the sensitive questions about the Government, especially from the NGO that is working closely with the Government of India. Some of the interviewees wanted to talk for a long time, while the interview with the Government Official was rather hectic and busy; this affected how much information I was able to get from the interview.

The transcription was followed by analysis of the interviews; the analysis was done through thematic analysis, where the data has been coded and then organised in themes (Bryman 2008:554). I did not decide the themes in advance, instead each interview was treated as a separate case and based on the content of the interviews themes were created. After that, the themes from the different interviews were compared with each other.

4.4 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are important to take into account when conducting research (Bryman 2008:113). Prior to the interviews, all the interviewees were informed about the aim of the study and that they had been chosen for the interviews only on the basis that they are working with educational issues either in a NGO or as a Government Official at the Department of School Education and Literacy. When these aspects had been presented, the interviewees were informed that the interview is taking place on voluntary basis, and that the interviewees are allowed to withdraw from interview whenever they want and that they are allowed to answer only those questions they want to answer. I also informed them that the interviews are based on anonymity, i.e. the name of the NGOs will not be published anywhere in the thesis.
4.5 Presentation of the Interviewees

This subsection will give a short introduction of the interviewees. In order to retain the anonymity, I have decided to only provide short information about them.

- NGO A: was founded a decade ago. In the beginning the NGO was mainly concerned with environment issues, but has now expanded its work to the education sector as well. The NGO is mainly active when it comes to awareness rising about topics related to education.

- NGO B: was founded around a decade ago. The NGO has a multidimensional approach and is working in the education, health and environment sector. When it comes to education the NGO is mainly working with children that have parents that have migrated to New Delhi.

- NGO C: was established over two decades ago and the organisation is working with children living on the streets. The NGO highlights that it is important that children participate in decision making, when it comes to topics that concern children. The NGO is working with education issues, such as vocational training but also health care issues.

- NGO D: was founded over 30 years ago and the NGO is providing formal education through the schools that the NGO is running in slum areas. The NGO is concerned with education, health and gender issues. The NGO also arranges non-formal schooling for children.

- NGO E: was established around 25 years ago. The NGO is concerned with social injustice, particularly when it comes to education. An important issue for the NGO is quality education. In addition to this the children should be taught in an innovative and playful way.

- NGO F: was founded a decade ago and the NGO is only working with education issues among marginalised children. Some of the services the NGO provides include vocational training and help for children that have dropped out from school.
5. ANALYSIS

5.1 NGOs and Improvement of Primary Education

5.1.1 Awareness Rising and Advocacy

The three different types of NGOs that were distinguished in part 1.2.2 can also be acknowledged from the studied NGOs. A common pattern among all six NGOs when it comes to improving primary education is that they all in some ways work with awareness rising. All the NGOs in question agree on the fact that awareness rising among parents is highly important, because many parents do not know why a child should be educated. NGO E as well as the Government Official highlight that it is important to change the mindset of the people, because if the parents do not consider education important, they will not send their children to school. This is a long process and it will take time before one is able to see changes in society. NGO A has a slightly different approach when it comes to awareness rising, instead of just counselling parents, they locate, through their community visits the children that are not enrolled in schools. Another approach the same organisation has is to raise awareness of the RTE Act through street plays, since a great number of people, including teachers, do not have any idea what the Act is about. In order for people to be able to claim their rights, they have to be aware of what rights they have. It can be asked how effective street plays are in improving the educational situation, but at least it is a positive start to try to educate people about their rights, in order for them to later put pressure on the Government for positive change. This is a potential area, where NGOs can play a role in improving the situation.

Advocacy is important when it comes to improving the educational situation. Two of the studied NGOs are active when it comes to advocacy, but they have different views on how to do it. NGO A is engaged in being out on grassroots level and observes the situation and then report to concerned authorities what should be improved in e.g. schools. NGO C organises sessions where children can give their opinion on a certain policy that is supposed to be released and through that children are able to influence Government decisions.
5.1.2 Formal or Non-formal Education?

Only one of the studied NGOs (NGO D) is engaged in providing formal education for children in slum areas of New Delhi. As the previous research part points out it is problematic with NGOs that provide formal schooling, because of the uncertainty of the quality of education (Blum 2009:245). But NGO D also mentions that non-formal education centres understand the local context better, e.g. when it comes to why children in a certain community are not enrolled in school. So, NGOs do not only provide formal education but also vocational training and schooling where there is an attempt to bring children to a certain academic level before enrolling them in schools (NGO D). The provision of vocational training is an area that can be problematised. Having vocational training in addition to formal education is a supplement, but only providing vocational training if a child is between six and fourteen and not enrolled in formal schooling can be problematic, because there is a risk of child labour. Before judging the way NGOs are working, it has to be kept in mind that the studied NGOs are working with what the Government suggests in the SSA programme, i.e. awareness rising, providing resources and mapping of problems at local level (SSA 2011:84-87). This makes it difficult to criticise what the studied NGOs are working with, because, at least to some extent, they have followed the suggestions made by the Government. However, it has to be kept in mind that not all NGOs are following the suggestions made by the Government, because of the large number of unreliable NGOs.

5.2 NGOs and Their Own Work

Based on how long it takes to enrol a child in school it can be asked if NGOs have the potential to improve primary education. From the NGOs studied, one is able to see that the duration of enrolment varies from 1 day to 13 months (NGO A, NGO B, NGO C, NGO D, NGO E and NGO F). How effective are the NGOs in their work when the duration varies this much? It has to be kept in mind that those NGOs with a short enrolment time are just concerned with helping children to seek admission in schools, while those NGOs with a longer enrolment process are concerned with preparing the child for studies, in order for the child to later cope with the studies. When it comes to the former group, it is beneficial that NGOs help in the admission process, because many parents do not know how to seek admission. This is beneficial if the child is supposed to start first grade or has the required knowledge to get enrolled in another grade. A problem might arise if a child has never been enrolled in school and is supposed to be enrolled on the age-appropriate admission basis, i.e. a child who is 10 years can get admission to the 5th grade. In this case it is an advantage that NGOs prepare the children before seeking admission, as this increases the chance that the child will stay in
school. This is an area where NGOs can step in and help those children that have fallen behind in their studies and NGOs are hence, able to assist the Government in providing education for these children. A problem associated with NGOs helping children to seek admission is that someone should ensure that the children stay in school after admission; otherwise there is no point with preparing them for school.

5.2.1 Importance of Government and Civil Society Involvement

Both Uphoff and Atack highlight the importance of civil society involvement in achieving social change. Atack mentions that NGOs can only reach out to some parts of society, while the Government can reach out to the whole country (Atack 1999:859). The overall conclusions from the interviews with the studied NGOs on their own contribution to improve primary education, is that NGOs should be engaged in the process, but it is the Government who should be the main provider. NGO A clearly states that it is better that the Government is doing the work, because they can reach out all over India and hence, help a larger number of people. Contradictory, NGO E and NGO F have the opinion that it is a weakness that Government policies are on the national level; it would give a better result if the work could be done on regional level, due to that organisations operating on regional level have a better understanding of the local context. This statement raises the question, whether it is good or not that the policies would be on the regional level, because that means that there would be a wide range of different policies in the country and one could ask if that is efficient? As stated earlier, India is a federal system where State Governments plays a major role in providing education and this has resulted in that different states have achieved different outcomes when it comes to education (Mkandawire 2004:287 and Mooij 2007:326). An example is the southern state of Kerala, which has performed well when it comes to education and thus have a high literacy rate (Venkatraman 2009:43) and the northern state of Bihar, which despite progress is not doing as good as Kerala (Banerji 2011:34). As seen, there is already a wide range of different policies in the country (Prabhu 2009:22-24), but still problems with primary education remain. This indicates that it could be more effective if the Central Government would have more responsibility, since then there would be a comprehensive school system in the whole country.

Uphoff states that NGOs can fill in the gaps that the market and the state for some reasons have left open (Uphoff 1993:619). NGO A says that NGOs can be observers at local level and then report to the Government what should be done, but NGOs should not and cannot fill in the gaps that the Government has created; instead the Government has to improve the situation. This
view is also being shared by the other NGOs; hence, NGOs and the Government should be partners who can provide help for each other. This can be associated with the theoretical approach that state, markets and civil society should work together but the Government still has the leading role (Atack 1999:861 and Uphoff 1993:610). The importance of working together with the Government can also be seen from the statement by NGO A, that if they do not work together with the Government, the school (which the NGO wants to help) will not listen to them, because they are a NGO. This gives an understanding that, firstly, the studied NGO is afraid of not being taken seriously in their work and secondly, it provides evidence that they know that they at least to some extent have to work with the Government in order to carry out their work.

5.2.2 Criticism by NGOs towards Their Own Work

As the theoretical part suggests, interventions made by NGOs should be viewed through positive eyes (Uphoff 1993:619). At this particular point, NGO D mentioned that NGOs can only be a tool to improve the educational situation, if they are honest and do not seek profit. This comment further strengthens the theoretical assumption that there are a wide range of problems associated with NGOs and their work. NGO E and NGO F state that in order to improve the situation it is important that all NGOs have a common approach, because as the situation looks like right now, NGOs have different programmes and they tend to come up with alternative approaches, such as vocational training instead of addressing the importance of formal schooling. Once again, the importance of working closely with the Government’s approach to improve primary education is being highlighted (Uphoff 1993:610). An interesting finding from the interviews is that three of the studied NGOs are critical towards themselves in the way that they are questioning why NGOs should be providers of education, because if NGOs play a big role in providing education, the Government will not take the education issue seriously (NGO A, NGO B and NGO E). This gives an understanding that NGOs do not believe in their work and it can be asked why the situation look like that? Can a reason for this be that there are a large number of NGOs in the country, but still there are modest changes and improvements in primary education? It is also important to refer back to the statement by Uphoff that interventions made by NGOs should be seen positively, since the Government will always be there (Uphoff 1993:619). However, from the statement by the same NGOs it can clearly be seen, that if NGOs play too large a role, the Government will not take the issue seriously, because the Government is not forced to do that. Here it can be asked if the reason for the bad situation in primary education is that the Government has given too much responsibility to NGOs and hence, the Governments do not take education issues as seriously as they should.
Another interesting issue related to NGOs criticism towards their own work, is the fact that NGO E is questioning its own work. This is being done when the NGO in question states that activities they do in order to raise awareness of the importance of education are good, but they are not the most effective ones. Instead the NGO thinks that one-on-one consultation is the most effective way. NGO A on the other hand, thinks that awareness rising among the public is more effective than one-on-one consultation. These two statements are interesting; firstly, because of the fact that one can ask why the NGO in question do not base its work on the methods it think is most effective and beneficial? This gives an understanding that the work done by NGOs might not always be the best. Secondly, it is intriguing to see that these two NGOs have different view on what the most effective way of working actually is. This shows that NGOs lack a common understanding of the most effective way of working and due to this NGOs are coming up with different approaches.

5.3 NGOs and Government Contribution

5.3.1 Bad Implementation

The interviewed NGOs have similar views on the contribution made by the Government of India and only a few differences can be found. Five out of six NGOs states that the Government has done a lot when it comes to improving the educational situation in the country, but there is still a lot to be done when it comes to primary education. The major concern among these NGOs is that the Government has come up with a wide range of policies and schemes, but despite this, the situation is not good, because of bad implementation (NGO A, NGO B, NGO C, NGO D and NGO E). An example of this is when NGO A was supposed to seek admission for a child in school, but the headmaster in the school refused admission. When the persons from the NGO started talking about the RTE Act and what is says, they noticed that the headmaster and other teachers did not have any idea of the RTE Act. This is a major concern, as if the teachers, who are supposed to provide quality education, do not know anything about the rights children have, the implementation of the laws and policies are not good. Here, NGOs can be a part in educating the concerned authorities, teachers and parents etc. in order for them to gain knowledge about these things. Other evidence of that the Government does not do enough, is that NGO B states that if the Government would do enough there would be no need of NGOs. This can be linked with the theory that civil society is strong where the state and the market do not provide sufficient services (Uphoff 1993:618).
5.3.2 What Should be Improved?

It is impossible to talk about the effort made by the Government without discussing what they could do in order to improve the educational situation in the country. As the theoretical framework part suggests, NGOs should support the Government and help them to come up with policies that work (Korten 1987 cited in Atack 1999:863). An interesting finding from the interviews is that two of the NGOs come up with the suggestion that the Government should launch new schemes and policies in order to solve the existing problems. The suggestions are that the RTE Act should include everyone up to the 12th standard (NGO A) and that there is a need of new schemes for children that are poor (NGO C). It can be viewed as a beneficial thought to launch new schemes, but the question that has to be asked is whether it is enough to improve the situation. There is already a wide range of different targeted social welfare schemes in India (Prabhu 2009:22-24) and despite these schemes the problems remain. One can also discuss why the RTE Act should be expanded to the 12th standard, when there are still problems that have to be taken care of, in order to improve the situation in schools up to the 8th standard. It is important to take care of the current situation before expanding the system. NGO B is concerned with schemes directed towards Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised groups. Their opinion is that the quota system is discriminating other groups that cannot take advantage of the reservations when seeking admission in schools. This indicates that if NGOs have to play a big role in policy formation, it will be difficult to come up with a suggestion that all the NGOs in question agree upon, as there are a large number of NGOs and it is impossible to assume that all NGOs will agree on the same thing, due to their different interests. This statement can be strengthened by the theory that NGOs are to large extent being motivated by self-interests (Uphoff 1993:619). Hence, it can be stated that it can be more beneficial if the Governments would make most of the policy suggestions.

Other problem areas that the NGOs mention are that the school infrastructure such as classrooms and toilet facilities should be improved (NGO B). Governments should provide more funding and the funding being provided for schools should be more efficiently distributed, because now schools have to wait for funding for a long time (NGO D). In addition to this the quality of education and teacher training should be improved (NGO A and NGO B). From the analysis made so far, one is able to see that NGO A and NGO C try to influence the policy process through advocacy. Otherwise, one can see that the studied NGOs are not concerned with directly improving the school infrastructure. However, it is clear that NGOs are providing more resources to the education sector (Colclough 2010:505-506). It can be asked what the situation would be like if there
would be no NGOs operating in the education sector. On one hand, the situation could be worse due to a lack of resources directed towards the education sector, but on the other hand the situation could be better, if the Governments realise that they have to invest more money into education, in order to improve the situation. Attack states that NGO and state cooperation is most effective if the concerned country is democratic (Attack 1999:863). India is a democratic country, but despite that there are vast problems with the Government. NGO A mentions that schools do not receive the money they need, due to a widespread level of corruption in the country. This bears witness to that there is a need to also improve what the Government is doing, in order for the money to go where it is supposed to go.

5.4 The Government Official

The views of the Government Official regarding NGO participation does not differ much from the other interviews. She makes the point that there are both large and small NGOs in the country and their impacts have been very different, depending on what they have focused upon. Uphoff mentions the importance of state, market and civil society collaboration (Uphoff 1993:609). The Government Official seems to be well-aware of this fact because the Government of India has collaboration with NGOs, so they can go out to schools and tell the teachers how to become more RTE friendly (Government Official). This comment goes clearly against the statements that many of the NGOs mention that the implementation of Government policies are bad and that people do not know anything about e.g. the RTE Act. The reason for this may be that the Government only works closely with a few NGOs. However from the NGO Partnership System-website it can be seen that all NGOs, except NGO A are registered on the page (Government of India NGO Partnership System 2009). This raises the question if the Government should try to reach out to even a larger number of NGOs in order to achieve change in the society.

When it comes to Government responsibilities in improving primary education, the Government Official provides a good picture of the Government itself, giving examples of that there is an increase in the number of schools. The interviewee also mentions that India has good legislation, but it takes a while before one is able to see results. Even though the interviewee brings up the importance of state and civil society partnership, the conclusion is that the responsibility of providing primary education lies with the Government alone (Government Official). This can be linked to the fact that NGOs will never be able to replace the Government in providing education (Attack 1999:861). This fact raises the question; why does the Government, to such large extent, encourage civil society and NGOs to be active participants in educational issues, if the main
responsibility in the ends lies with the Government? It is acceptable that civil society and NGOs play a small role, but in the SSA programme, the Government highlights that NGOs play quite a big role in the education sector.

5.5 Connecting to Jagannathan’s Study

In order to add a perspective to my study, this section will compare my study with Jagannathan’s study. To a large extent the findings from both studies are similar, e.g. both of the studies are addressing the importance of parents being engaged in their children’s education and preparing a child for school. In addition to this Jagannathan’s study points out that NGOs play an important role in assisting and supporting the Government when it comes to primary education (Jagannathan 2001:28-29,31-32). What is interesting with both of the studies is that Jagannathan has been studying bigger NGOs that have played an important role both on macro and micro level (Jagannathan 2001:10), while my study has been based on smaller NGOs. Despite the differences in the selection and size of the NGOs it is interesting to see that there is at least some kind of common notion what should be done in order to improve the situation and a common goal for the NGOs to work towards. Since the studies are similar, they provide, at best, evidence of that some of the NGOs are being serious in their work and that NGOs are able to have a common approach on how to work. Since NGOs play a large role in the education sector, this gives hopes that at least some NGOs are able to do something in order to change the situation. This gives further strength to this study, because NGO E and NGO F highlight the importance of having a common approach in order to improve the situation.

6. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Now this paper will move over to a conclusion of the study. The aim of this study has been to examine whether or not NGOs have the potential to improve primary education through looking at their own contribution and their opinion about the effort made by the Government.

From the interviews it can be seen that NGOs exist, because the Government of India does not do enough when it comes to providing primary education, hence, NGOs have come up with different approaches. Over time, the Government of India has however taken a more active role in education issues and this has meant that a great number of NGOs have changed their focus from providing education to awareness rising, advocacy and preparing children for school. Hence, one is able to see that the studied NGOs have found their niche in awareness rising and this is an
area where NGOs have potential to change the situation because as two of the interviewees mentioned it is important that the mentality of people change and people have to know their own rights in order to make use of them. In addition to this some of the studied NGOs are providing non-formal schooling and one of them is providing formal schooling. However, as the previous research part points out, it is problematic with those NGOs that are providing formal education, because of the uncertainty of the quality of education being provided by them.

From the theoretical framework and the analysis it can be observed that there are problems with the work NGOs perform. A common theme among the NGOs studied is that they regard their work as important even though some of the NGOs are self-critical, yet it is an advantage that they are aware of the fact that there might be problems with their work. Another interesting point is that the studied NGOs have different approaches how to improve the situation and hence, the studied NGOs do not fully agree on what the most effective way of working is.

When it comes to the effort made by the Government, the studied NGOs agree on the fact that the Government has done a lot when it comes to education, but not enough, because of bad implementation of policies. Two interesting findings that go against the theoretical framework are, firstly, that two of the studied NGOs have the opinion that the Government policies would work better if they are on the regional instead of the national level. This particular point can be discussed, because as seen from the analysis part, the State Governments plays a big role in providing education and hence, there are vast differences between the states. Thus, it can be asked if the Central Government should take more responsibility. Secondly, one of the studied NGOs states that NGOs cannot fill in the gaps that the Government has created. Hence, it can be asked why NGOs play such a large role in educational issues. The interviewed Government Official provides a positive view of what the Government is doing and the Government Official highlights the importance of state, market and civil society collaboration when it comes to improving primary education, but the conclusion of the interview is that the main responsibility lies with the Government alone.

In the case of India, one has to keep in mind that the Government has a large responsibility when it comes to education, but as the background part of the paper points out, one should also remember the private sector, especially those unrecognised schools where the Government does not influence the education. It is important to remember the private sector, because the sector is large and it is impossible to improve the overall situation if one only takes Government schools into consideration. One also has to bear in mind that NGOs in India play an
important role in the education sector, because the role of NGOs are being highlighted in different education policies. From this study one is able to see that the NGOs studied are fulfilling some of the responsibilities that are being stated in the SSA programme. Thus, in this case the studied NGOs cannot be criticised for their work, because they are listening to the suggestions made by the Government. The overall conclusions from the study are that NGOs have the potential to improve the educational situation through rising awareness of education issues, advocacy and through preparing children for their studies. But according to the studied NGOs the main responsibility lies with the Government, which right now does not do enough when it comes to primary education.

6.1 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on this, a suggestion for further research is to look more closely at how effective the programmes and education that is being provided by NGOs actually are, because this would give a better understanding of whether or not it is an advantage that NGOs are playing such a big role in the education sector in India. Another suggestion is to examine the topic more in depth by studying what the Government, private schools and the civil society are doing in order to improve the situation, this would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the whole situation.
7. REFERENCES


8. APPENDIX

8.1 Interview Guide:

8.1.1 Questions for the NGOs:

- Can you tell me a bit about the organisation?

- In which ways does the organisation raise awareness of the Right to Education Act that was launched in 2010?

- Which way do you think that is the most effective way of raising awareness of the importance of education? Why?

- Do you think the Indian Government does enough to try to enrol all children in school? Why/why not?

- What could be improved when it comes to what the Government of India is doing?

- Do you think NGOs can be a tool to get all children into school? Why/ why not?

- Does the organisation is some ways identify the problems/challenges there are in the communities to why children are not enrolled in school? How?

- What does the organisation do in order to solve those problems?

- How long does it usually take to enrol a child in school after that the organisation has got to know that a child is not enrolled in school?

- The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is one of the most important programs when it comes to achieving universal primary education. With the SSA special attention is paid to children from marginalised groups. What do you think about these special programmes?

8.1.2 Questions for the Government Official:

- What do you think about the current educational situation in India?

- The RTE Act was launched in 2009, how has the act changed the educational situation?
• In SSA it has been highlighted that NGOs play an important role in implementing and monitoring the SSA. What do you think about the fact that NGOs play such a big part in the education sector?

• Do you think that NGOs can be a tool to achieve universal primary education?

• Have you faced any kind of problems when working with the RTE Act?