EVALUATION OF MANIGAL PROGRAMME IN CHENNAI DISTRICT

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Abstract

Background: The Manigal programme was launched by the Asha trust in the district of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu. This programme was launched for the Narikuravar community. This community was officially declared as the denotified tribes of Tamil nadu in 2016 by the Government of India. The community practises nomadism. This and several other factors impact the education of children of the Narikuravar community. Education is a tool for empowerment of the marginalised community. With empowerment as a major vision the Asha trust first launched the Manigal programme for the Narikuravar (interchangeably used with gypsy) community in 2004 and was later upgraded to another gypsy colony in 2015. The programme aims to improve the enrolment, retention and learning levels of the gypsy children.

Methods: The research design adopted is case study, eliciting the qualitative data from the primary data sources. The population has been taken up for the study, which includes 2 schools (Kottur and Indiranagar) in the city of chennai. The used instruments are Interview schedule, Focus group discussion, Checklist, Observation schedule, School schedule and Document analysis.

Results: The findings indicated that many components of the programme were implemented as intended. Data collected suggests that the programme is successfully implemented by the programme functionaries. The vision of the programme such as support of the teachers, materials and better classroom strategies are implemented as intended. There is a significant improvement in the learning levels of students in all the subjects observed and also the attitude of the parents and the students towards education and schooling has changed positively. The Manigal support systems (teacher and material support) is to a large extent effective in maintaining and improving retention and enrolment. Cultural practices, poverty and exposure to money at a very young age act as a barrier for the programme to completely attain its objective. At the same time, the consistent effort of teachers has yielded desirable results. There is also a significant improvement in learning levels and the interest of the students has improved. This is attributable to the intervention of the Manigal programme teachers and strategic planning. There are positive unintended outcomes such as improved hygienic practices, reduced prejudice, improved interaction with peers, acceptance rate and self-confidence. The unintended negative outcome from the point of view of the parents indicates that gypsy are losing their characteristic of moving from one place to another due to education and undue mental stress for Asha teachers.

Keywords: Narikoravar, Nomads, Denotified tribes, gypsy, programme evaluation, upscaling.

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Introduction and background

Programme evaluation involves the evaluators to study and review the intervention and enhance the effectiveness in conceptualization, implementation and completion of the visualised programme. This further helps in the diagnosis of the existing issues and its effect. Programme evaluation plays a vital role not only in understanding and finding solutions and alternatives of the weakness but also in adopting and expanding the strengths of the programme. (NCERT Programme evaluation report ABL, December 2011) Evaluating educational programmes is lucrative to all the stakeholders. Educational programmes are unique and contextual. Every educational programme is constructed on the basis of the social and target group needs. Planning and implementing an educational programme requires monitoring and evaluation.

The Manigal programme was started in 2005 in one of the colonies of Chennai by the Asha trust. Asha started in the city of Chennai in the year 2002. The trust actively executes about 10 projects which together support more than 80 schools, and provide scholarships for over 100 students. The programme focuses on the Narikuravar community (also known as the nomadic tribe and the term gypsy is used interchangeably).

The Narikuravar 'Nari' meaning jackal and 'Kuravar' men, comes from their former skill in trapping jackals, the cunning animal. The Narikuravar community consists of 30,000 members (Dragomir, Zafiu; 2019) in Tamil Nadu. The community is said to have migrated from north India to south India. Under the British Raj, they were enlisted in the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911, labelling 150 communities across India as 'born criminals'. However they were denotified after independence after the report of the Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee in 1949. In India there are around 500 different nomadic tribal communities. Government of India (2016) in the list of "Denotified tribes, Nomadic and Semi Nomadic tribes of India" the Narikuravar community is classified as a nomadic tribe community of Tamil Nadu. This implies that the community is under physical movement for livelihood. The community is still under movement even after gaining permanent or temporary addresses for the welfare schemes of the government. Schooling and formal education is an unknown practice to the community in the early 21st century. Keeping this in view The following are the programme goals developed by the Asha Trust for Manigal programme[7]:

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[7] Retrieved from https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=1160 and https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=1234 on 22/12/2022

- To help in the enrolment and retention of gypsy children in schools.
- To give personalised attention to the gypsy children in school and create a congenial environment where they feel secure, accepted and settled.
- To help gypsy children attain necessary learning levels and complete the school cycle,
- To maintain close relations with the parents and community and get their cooperation for the education of gypsy children.
- To prevent children from pursuing rag picking at an early age.

In 2015 the Manigal programme was further upscaled from the Indiranagar colony to another colony of the gipsies. The following study has been taken up to evaluate the impact or the output of the programme. In this chapter, a brief background of the programme and the gipsies is provided.

Methodology

Design of the study

Case study design was adopted for the programme evaluation. This design was adopted as the programme evaluation fulfils the four criterias by Yin (2012):

1) answering "how"
2) the study focuses on evaluating the programme in real world context,
3) there is no clear distinction between the context and phenomena
4) the behaviour can not be manipulated.

Epistemological position

The epistemological position of the present evaluation of the Manigal programme is pragmatism (Yin, 2003). This is best suited for the study as the evaluation tries to find the extent of implementation of the programme in the Narikuravar community and account the opportunities and challenges. The extent to which the implemented strategies are yielding the desired results of improvement in enrolment, retention and transition of the Narikuravar students is evaluated in this study. The study also uses several data collection instruments and uses a qualitative approach.

Population

The entire population of the Narikuravar students and the relative stakeholders are taken up for the evaluation. The Manigal programme by the Asha trust is functioning actively in two government schools of Chennai:

I.   Chennai primary school, Kottur
II. Chennai high school, Kottur
III. Chennai primary school, Indiranagar

Since, Chennai primary and high school exists in the same campus, it is considered as a single school. 28 Narikuravar students are studying in the Kottur school. While, 14 students are studying in the Indiranagar school.

Data collection

The following table indicates the evaluation questions framed by the evaluator to evaluate the programme, the necessary indicators to evaluate the questions, data sources for each evaluation question and followed by the instruments used for data collection.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="4">Table 1: Evaluation Framework for Manigal programme</th></tr>
<tr><th>Evaluation question</th><th>Indicators</th><th>Data Sources</th><th>Instruments used for data collection</th></tr>
<tr><td>1. Is Manigal being implemented as intended? If not, Why not?</td><td>Relevance of materials distributed by the Manigal programme.
Students' participation and Classroom environment.
Students mark records.</td><td>Teacher
Children
Parents
Asha Manager</td><td>Interview schedule for teachers
Interview schedule for children
Interview schedule for Asha manager
Focus group discussion with parents</td></tr>
</table>

2. To what extent are Manigal support systems (teachers and material support) effective in maintaining and improving retention and enrolment?	Parental/community awareness Number of students completing their education cycle till 10th and 12th. Asha and Regular teachers	Teacher Children Regular School teachers School Records Asha Manager Display of wall painting and cultural materials Students classroom interaction	Interview schedule for teachers Interview schedule for children Interview schedule for Asha manager
3. What has been the impact of Manigal in improving the learning levels of school students?	Previous test scores of the students Perception of Asha teachers	Parents/Community members and school records Asha teachers Regular school teachers	Focus group discussion with the parents and pass out students School records schedule. Interview with regular teachers Interview with coordinator Interview with Manigal teachers.
4. Are there any unintended outcomes attributed to the Manigal programme? If yes, what are the positive and negative outcomes?	All the outcomes which have impacted other than those specified in the programme objectives	Students Teachers Asha Teachers Community Members	Focus group discussion with parents and pass out students. School records schedule. Interview with regular teachers

Further, a programme logic model was developed in order by collecting the necessary information regarding the programme from the document analysis and initial interaction with the administration.

Table 2: Programme Logic Model						
Identified needs	Inputs/ Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes		
				Immediate	Intermediate	Ultimate
Small children take up garbage and rag picking The gypsy community is marginalised economically, socially and educationally. Inability of the students to adapt to the regular school due to difference in the language and lack of mother tongue in school teaching and learning practices Lack of adult guidance for education Nomadic lifestyle of the community leads to absenteeism and drop out	Human resource: Two teachers posted in the school (2 primary and 1 secondary teacher) Tuition in the colony. Financial resources: Budget of 2022: 12,68,900 Material resources: Teaching Learning materials ICT resources Sports materials Health care and hygiene kit Other resources: Uniform Clothes Slippers Lunch box Towels Mats Cupboard Gifts and prizes Blackboard painting Notice board	Personalised attention to each gypsy student Multilevel classes are taken up by the Asha teachers Sub groups are made of gypsy students and the Asha teachers make sure to help them t settle down with the school. Providing ICT support to the students Canvass the community, establish links with parents and community Tuition classes for the gypsy students	Feeling of acceptance Studying in a congenial environment Learning Mathematics and English with special focus Enhancement in learning in all subjects Enhanced participation in curricular activities Students interest to attend school and learn is improved	Smoothly adjusting to school. Better participation in classroom Reduction in absenteeism Feeling secured Termination of garbage picking and rag picking Improvement in achievement	Reduction in drop out Students don't opt for rag picking and garbage cleaning even as part time. Reduction in learning gap Enhanced participation in co curricular activities Community mobilisation is enhanced on the front of education Improvement in literacy Improvement in numeracy	All the gypsy children are enrolled and retained in schools Children continuing higher education after schooling No children in the age of 0 to 18 are in the profession of garbage cleaning and rag picking. The gypsy community coming out of the marginalised status Enhanced participation in extracurricular activities Community as a whole is educated

Data analysis

The data is analysed with respect to the framed evaluation questions and by linking it to the evaluation questions and programme logic model framed by the evaluator. The qualitative data was collected by recording the interview and subsequently analysing the data within the week of data collection. The data was coded and a code book was developed by the evaluator manually. Common themes were identified across the interview conducted for different stakeholders of the Manigal programme.

Results

During the assessment of the implementation of the programme as intended with reference to the indicators (Table:1), interview and focus group discussion with all the stakeholders was taken up. Following are the common themes identified:

> Support during regular school: Successful support is extended by the Asha teachers in everyday school. Parents during the focus group discussion responded that Asha teachers have interacted with the community and their children on a regular basis, and provided support in all school activities particularly in studies and assignment.

> Students enjoy their time with Asha teachers more than the regular classroom. The general practice is that Asha teachers engage these students in a group in between periods, or during periods that the students are not very comfortable with. Usually during the Tamil period, Asha teachers collect all the children and take them to the classroom which was assigned to them by the school and teach the students. Regular teachers of the Chennai Primary School account their observation saying that the children have improved a lot in their subjects because of the individual attention that they receive from Asha teachers. The support is further ensured by developing, procuring and using relevant support materials.

> Support after the school: Parents and students said that Asha teachers after the school hours welcome students to their home for further tutoring. These students majorly belong to 9th or 10th standard.

Further to assess the implementation of "Manigal strategies" in classroom students were interviewed along with an observation schedule carried out by the evaluator. The following are the results:

Student teacher ratio: It is observed in the Asha classroom that the ratio is 20 students: 2 teachers. This student teacher ratio in the primary classes helps teachers to give personalised and individualised attention to each child. This is one of the objectives of the programme which is achieved.

Teaching learning resources: The resources used in the class vary from puzzles, blocks, worksheets and application Kanini. Teachers use appropriate teaching learning materials which are age specific and children friendly.

Teaching methodology: Various teaching methodologies such as activity based learning, multi grade grouping, subject wise grouping and ability grouping are used by the teacher.

Student participation: The classroom is more learner centric than regular classroom. This could be due to the less number of students and individual attention that learners receive from the Asha teachers.

Assessment: Asha teachers undertake continuous formative assessment. After teaching or completing each activity they ask the learner to say what they learnt in their own terms. They also ask the older student to test the younger ones.

Assignments: Asha teachers give regular assignments to the students. These assignments are in resonance with that day's lessons that they have learnt. Generally assignments are light and easily accomplished by the students.

Classroom environment: It was observed that classroom environment is congenial and conducive for learning. The environment is very secure for the learners as the teachers are attentive to every individual student's needs. Thus, Manigal teachers play an active role as facilitators.

The intervention provided by the Manigal programme has been able to reach out to all the gypsy children in Kottur. All the students and parents are aware about the school and the Manigal programme. The teacher and material support given to the students by the Asha team has worked positively. The following graph shows the number of students from the

community in the year 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023 in primary classes of the Kottur school.

Figure 1: Students enrolment in 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023 in primary school, Kottur
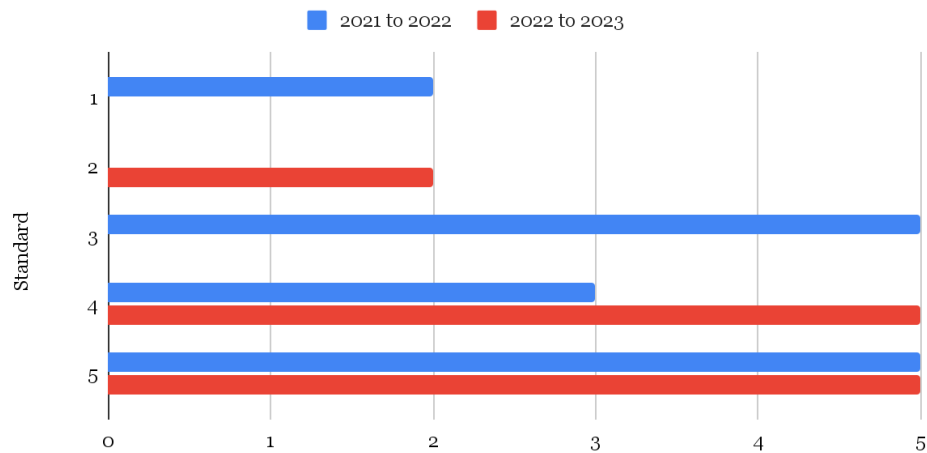
The following graph shows the number of students from the community in the year 2021 and 2022 in the secondary classes of the Kottur school.

Figure 2: Students enrolment in 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023 in secondary school , Kottur
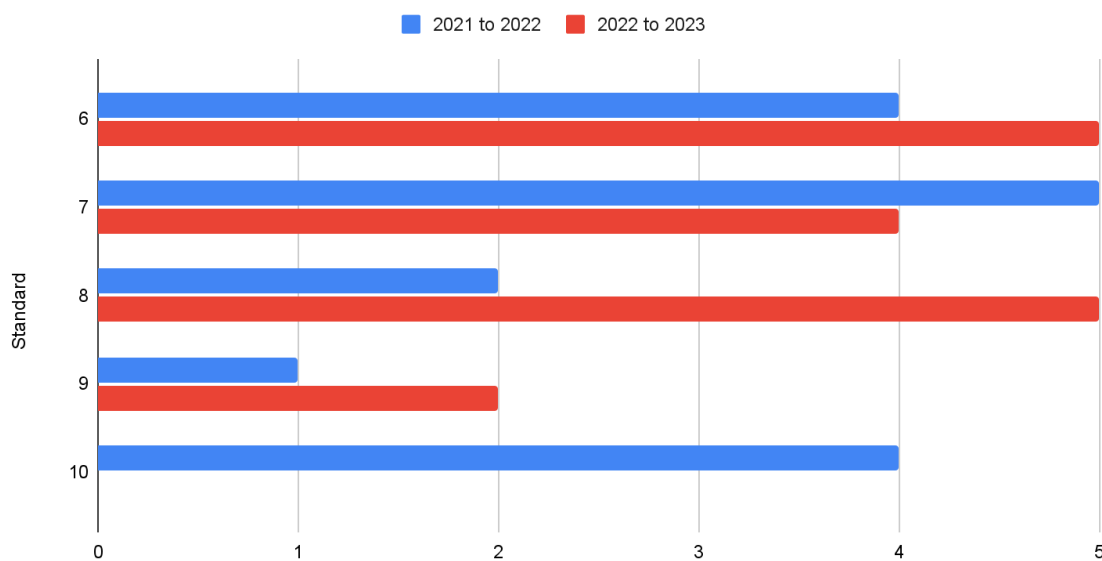
The above graph suggests that there is a drop out rate this year. The boy in the ninth standard in 2021 to 2022 dropped out. In the focus group discussion he revealed that he is more

interested to earn and take care of his family. Other than that the transition rate is constant. Some of the barriers for the programme are:

Cultural practices: The Narikuravar community don't send their girl children outside for schooling after attaining puberty. Further, their nomadic lifestyle encourages their children to adopt the same.

Poverty: The community earns money on a daily basis. They pick rags everyday, segregate the trash and sell them in the market and earn money. Since, more they pick rag, more money, they encourage their children also to rag pick and they take their ward with them.

Exposure to money: From the data collected from the interview from teachers and focus group discussion it is found that the children get exposed to easy money making practices at a very early age. They know what garbage will fetch them money and begging can get food and money. So they resort to these practices by even dropping out of the school.

The intervention in Indiranagar has yielded better results. This question is answered with the help of focus group discussion with parents and interview with the Asha teachers. The following is the table of the number of students enrolled in the year 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023:

Figure 3: Students enrolment in 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023 in Indiranagar primary school
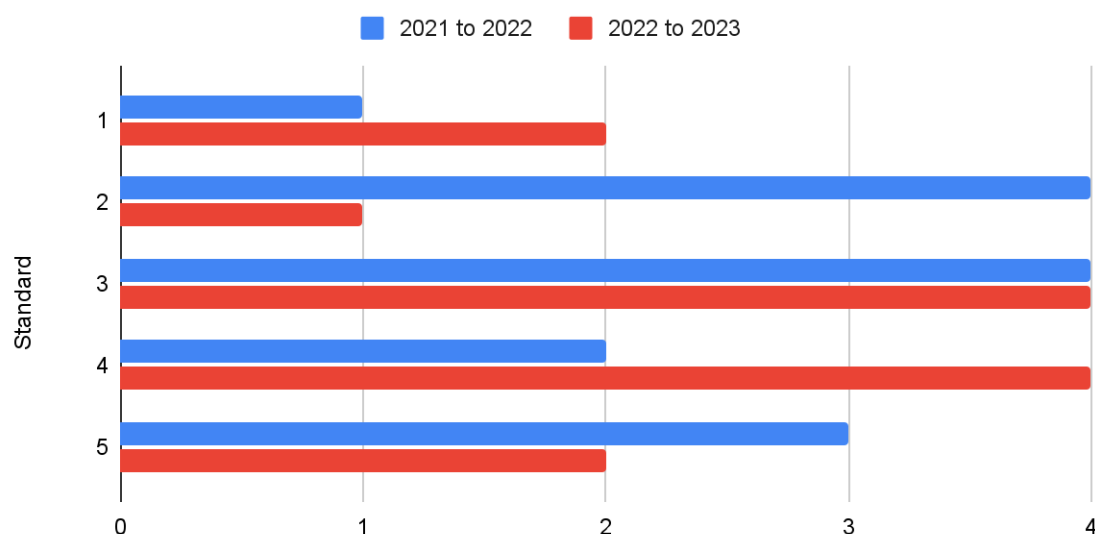
The above graph suggests that there is a consistent transition rate in the Indiranagar school. Four students 10th and six students have completed their 12th standard examinations.

The collected data indicates that the gypsy parents in the beginning were extremely reluctant to send their children to school. In Indiranagar in 2005 the enrolment in school was nil. But now in Indiranagar parents are sending their children to study further by enrolling them into hostels.

Further, there is a significant improvement in the learning levels of students. This is attributed to the strategic intervention of the programme, individualised attention, enhanced teacher pupil relationship, activity based teaching learning approach and reasonable teacher pupil ratio. Also, the manigal programme has developed intrinsic motivation and interest among the gypsy students to learn.

An unintended outcome is defined as the outcome that is not foreseen while planning the programme. From the data collected from parents, Asha teachers, Regular teachers, parents, pass out students and students, improved hygienic practices, reduction in prejudice, enhanced interaction with the peers and increased acceptance rate of the community in everyday life emerged as positive unintended outcomes that are attributable to the Manigal programme.

The unintended negative outcome from the point of view of the parents indicates that gypsy are losing their prime characteristic of moving from one place to another due to education and there is an undue mental stress for Asha teachers.

Recommendations

The Manigal programme is a beneficial programme that is implemented as intended with more positive intended and unintended outcomes rather than negative. The following are the recommendations for the Manigal programme:

- The programme can be upgraded to be implemented across the state in all the gypsy colonies.
- The programme can bring successful people from the same community and organise seminars and discussions with them.
- The programme can organise small fairs for the community to sell their handmade goods.
- The programme can organise fairs in school where all the children can exhibit their skill and handmade goods.

Conclusion

Enrolment: The enrolment of the gypsy students into school was a very tedious process. It consists of regular connection with parents. As the parents do not have personal motivation to send their wards to school, the children also lose many school days or eventually drop out. The Asha teachers serve as a link and ensure enrolment.

Retention: Retention of the gypsy students is a very challenging and sometimes impossible task. Each student in his/her school tenure is a drop out at least one time in their school cycle. This is a commonly observed trend across the community. Asha teachers try using several strategies and innovative techniques to try and retain the students in the school system.

Further, the transition as observed by the evaluator is constant. Over the years the parents' attitude has changed towards the programme leading to the sustainability and the success of the programme. Teachers employed by Asha expect the rate of transition to improve in the upcoming years.

The personalised individualised attention by the Asha teachers are certainly effective in improving learning levels and creating a congenial environment. The programme has also ensured that the gypsy children are completing the school cycle. The programme has ensured close relations with the parents and community. The community is aware of the programme and its objectives. This promotes cooperation for the programme. Therefore, the Manigal programme by Asha trust is a flagship programme that offers lessons for our everyday classroom practices and inclusive classroom settings.

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