

Synopsis Seminar

Seminar Title	: Parental Engagement and Accountability: Educating Children from Slums in a ‘Smart City’
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Venue	: Seminar Room, HS Dept. (Room No. 436)
Date and Time	: 10 Apr 2024 (5.00PM)
Abstract	: Education as a social subsystem includes teachers, parents, students, and administrators, evolving with societal shifts to provide vital knowledge to children. The Covid-19 pandemic has transformed education, emphasising accessibility, digitisation, and heightened stakeholder responsibilities. Schools adopted flexible and innovative teaching methods but excluding parents has complicated their role in children’s education. Interactive platforms have transformed urban education, yet the lack of focus on parents has hampered the effective use of educational resources and forced children from impoverished backgrounds to drop out of school. Parental Engagement (PE) is vital for student success, especially among low-income families to bridge the parent-school gap. The semi-systematic review (SSR) approach was used to address the topic’s broad scope, revealing research gaps such as studies neglecting dynamic nature of PE influenced by evolving patterns and non-Western countries relying on strategies from developed nations and omitting broader sociological perspectives. Educational surveys also overlooked parents, disrupting the accountability balance between schools and stakeholders. In response to observed issues in ‘Smart City’ Rourkela in Sundargarh district, this research aimed to investigate patterns of parental engagement, analyse associated accountability practices, explore technological mediations, and identify enablers. The study used multi-stage sampling and concurrent triangulation. It employed descriptive statistics, Location Quotient Method (LQM), surveys, case studies, content analysis, and Focused Group Discussions (FGD). The study applied Anthony Giddens’ Structuration Theory (1984) based on crucial components as chosen for their relevance within the current context. Results of the first objective revealed that PE is procedural but shaped by structural factors and school policies, often resulting in parents surrendering their agency to teachers. Patterns of PE were influenced by factors such as school type, infrastructure, and neighbourhoods. Private schools are perceived to excel in engagement. The second objective on accountability practices highlighted accountable events, networks, metrics, and resources as vital. Schools can promote inclusivity and cultivate a culture of agency through community liaising, personalised support, and resource sharing. The results from the third and fourth objectives examined technological mediation and enablers influencing PE in schools that uncovered a shortage of technological resources, as only a few schools had functional websites, limiting parental representation. Schools with websites reflected a hierarchical orientation, disregarding broader audiences. While technology emerged as an enabler, concerns remain regarding substitution and inadequate representation of parental roles. Recommendations include voice call reminders, digital attendance monitoring systems, e-feedback surveys, and user-friendly PE applications. The novelty of this research lies in its potential to support schools in underprivileged areas and aid policymakers in aligning engagement programs with SDG 2030 goals. Lastly, the study advocates for sustained investment in PE to foster a supportive environment where parents can actively participate in their children’s education.

Keywords: *Parental Engagement Accountability Education Slum Smart City*