

PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

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*Assessing and offering suggestions for improvement
of primary schools in the informal settlements of
Bangkok, Thailand, Varanasi, India, & Nairobi, Kenya*

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INTRODUCTION

Everywhere around the world, education is desired. Similarly, in most places of the world, quality education is just out of reach. From rural villages to sprawling cities and slums, schools are being erected to meet the needs of the poorest of the poor. Many of these schools are raised up by locals without much experience or education regarding teaching and management. But when it is a question of access or quality to education, access becomes all that matters.

Now that numerous schools exist in communities around the world, the quality of these schools can be addressed. School administrations and teachers must examine themselves to determine how they can best educate and serve the students in their communities. Using the assessment scale below, a handful of schools in the slums of some of the world's largest cities have been assessed and encouraged to take steps towards not just providing education, but providing quality education that will transform lives.

ASSESSMENT SCALE

Each of the schools studied were done so as a case study. The criteria for analysis used for these case studies was based on field practice and academic research. Data collection and interviews were facilitated under an internship with a minimum of forty hours of work alongside a supervisor from the schools. Various observations made under this supervision, along with interviews, provided the needed data. The questions for these interviews were drawn from Teri N. Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom's *Program Administration Scale: Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management*. Ten areas were chosen for evaluation:

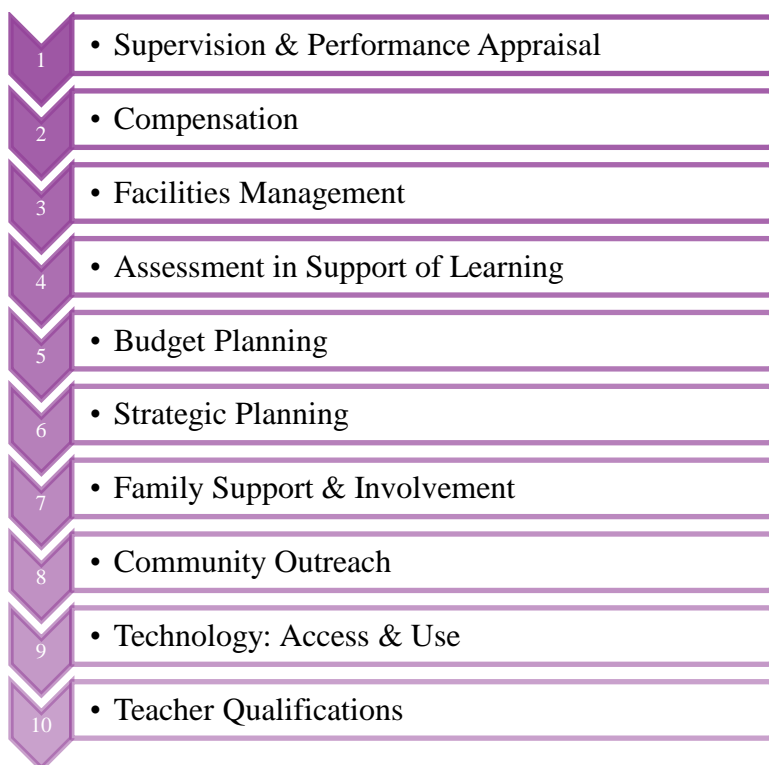


Figure 1: School Assessment Scale

BANGKOK SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND, THAILAND



In 1947, The Foundation for the Blind in Thailand established Bangkok School for the Blind. It was the first blind school ever established in Thailand. The school is located in the Dusit District of Bangkok and sits in the middle of a long stretch of research hospitals, medical universities and colleges, and government institutions.

Bangkok School for the Blind is has a boarding primary school and integrated studies secondary school with a total of 200 visually disabled students: fully blind, visually impaired, or low vision. Of these students, 30% are from Bangkok while 70% are from

other provinces. The Foundation for the Blind fully supports the Bangkok School for the Blind financially through their fundraising efforts and donors. All students' tuition and boarding are free of charge to parents and the students. The school functions on a large property, which includes a large grassy courtyard, benches, covered walkways, a swimming pool, ample office space for teachers and staff, a large recreation area, cafeteria, and a 3 story dormitory. Conveniently, the school shares its facilities with the foundation.

Collectively, there are 30 teachers, a large supporting staff, and daily volunteers working at the school every day. All of the teachers at the Bangkok School for the Blind must have their teaching licenses and bachelor's degree, requiring at least 4 years of undergraduate studies and passing the government test. Most teachers graduated in special education or single subject categories and some have their master's degree. All teachers are required to read and write in Thai and English braille, use a braille typewriter, and be able to teach students how to use a slate and stylus. Each year, teachers are given the specific training, practice, tests, and assessments for developing their skills. New teachers must attain the government's braille certification by the end of their first year of teaching. Some teachers have studied abroad internationally and bring global perspectives and practices for teaching students with visual impairments. There are also many teachers that were once students at the school returning to contribute to the development and knowledge of the community. Even among the teachers there is a balanced mixture of fully blind, visually impaired, low vision abilities.

At Bangkok School for the Blind, teachers are compassionate and are demanded to perform well. Their students range in age within each grade level as the school is not strict to age requirements due to their sensitivity towards the students' goal for quality education. Being that 70% of the students are from other provinces parents often have difficulties finding ways to help their blind child access education. Some students have multiple disabilities, hearing difficulties, behavioral issues, or learning disabilities alongside their visual disability. Due to this, teaching methods are highly based on auditory methods, oral strategies, and touch training.

Teachers meet on a weekly basis with the principal in staff meetings for updates and announcements. These announcements include assessment dates for teachers, evaluations for the semester, special seminars available on campus or through other conferences, opportunities for

training, and foundation projects with the school. Each teacher is expected to help the school's system to become more adaptable for students and to help build a stronger teaching curriculum that is paralleled to public education. Teachers also work in teams on projects developing innovate lessons, better practices, course electives, improved methods for student life and well-being, and spiritual balance. Last but not least, the active engagement of learning through the field is encouraged by the foundation. Annually, there are at least 2-3 large all-school field trips coordinated by the foundation with the goal to enrich students in environments off campus to places such as farms, cultural centers, art development centers, factories, and museums.

While much at Bangkok School for the Blind is both innovative and effective, there are three areas that could be improved. First, although the school has a highly functional computer lab, both teachers and students are using out-of-date technology. The primary system used is slate and stylus for the students. Access and finances to assistive technology has yet to be reached. There is one braille typewriter per teacher and students must ask permission to use it for assignments. There has yet to be a course elective that orients students to different types of assistive technology available in the world. Second, the teachers do not have assistants to help inside the classroom. The teaching ratio is currently 1:7, but there still seems to be a need for one-on-one teaching, learning by touch, and behavioral help. For special education primary school students (students with multiple disabilities), there is a specific need for a teacher's assistant. Third, from this year's annual student assessment, the students voiced a need for cleanliness in the dorms and the bathrooms. The student may not be able to see, but they are still voicing the need for cleaner facilities based on touch and smell.

Over the past 68 years, Bangkok School for the Blind has been working diligently towards developing better practices and curriculum for the blind population of Thailand. The school has high hopes and wide perspectives in sharing knowledge with other organizations and associations advocating for the blind and visually disabled community. Their goal is to establish education, community, independence, and spiritual balance through their school that will expand to transform society as a whole. The teachers seem to be highly influential and consistent in their students' lives. Most students return expressing gratitude with readiness to contribute. Some return as teachers, while others become financial contributors to the foundation providing for needs such as desks, furniture, paper, braille paper, supplies, recreation, special events, play, and conversation. Much has been accomplished through this school, and the future is bright for further developments.

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DESERT STREAMS SCHOOL, NAIROBI, KENYA

Desert Streams School (DSS) is located in the heart of Kibera in an area called Laini Saba. From its first days as a daycare started by director, Judy Oloo, the school has grown to host 150 students from baby class (nursery) to class 8 (eighth grade) and the hope is to reach up to secondary school. Although the families are charged fees for each term, support for the school also comes through monetary donations and other gifts (e.g. nine computers were just donated). The school is located on the same property as a church started by Judy and her husband Tobias; however, there is currently very little connection between the two entities other than a few staff from the church. Judy's love for the students and her passion for education are evident in the way that she has persevered to make this school a reality. Years ago, she began with a few children under her care. As she watched them, she felt a desire to see them educated, and from this the school grew to what it is today.



This passion and dedication continue to be evident, and the school has grown because of Judy's vision for DSS. It was not simply her desire to be one more school in Kibera (where there are hundreds), but she wanted to see her school filled with quality teachers who care as much about the students and their education as she does. Through her criteria for hiring and observations of teachers in the classroom, Judy ensures this quality in her staff. Families are encouraged to be involved in observing teachers, discussing their children's work with teachers and administration, and monitoring student workbooks. Furthermore, parents are invited to be involved in the Parent Teacher Administration and to attend occasional meetings at the school.

Judy's heart for the community shows in her plans to eventually create a vocational program for parents to receive training in computers and tailoring among other trades. DSS does, and will continue to, impact individual students, families and the larger community. However, the school does face a financial struggle which is one of the biggest hindrances to further growth. Networking in the local communities of Kibera and Nairobi will greatly benefit the school. Although Judy has identified a number of potential partners, she still needs to make initial contact and pursue partnerships. Such partnerships can be of financial help, but might also assist in providing food, classroom supplies, uniforms, and other necessities. Fortunately, Judy has been very good with her accounting and maintaining a budget; this will prove useful when seeking outside financial help and when more funds begin to come to the school.

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Already, there are many strong qualities evident in the administration of the school, but there are other areas where improvement would be beneficial. DSS is in need of more capital.

While Judy has ideas for networking opportunities, it seems she has not pursued those connections yet. It will be beneficial for the school if she creates those partnerships now, and continues to pursue any that come across her path. These partnerships can lead to monetary assistance, but could also help in training for teachers, additional educational material for students, extracurricular opportunities for students, and more. In addition, there are a number of ways that Judy could work to help the school bring in some of its own income outside of school fees.

There also seems to be a need for increased training and accountability for teachers. Training teachers (possibly through partner organizations) can lead to creativity in the classroom and more academically challenging lessons for students. Teachers should be aware of consequences for leaving classrooms unattended or failing to show up to work. The students are dependent on teachers placing a high priority on their work and in helping these students succeed. Additionally, there seems to be more office space which could be better utilized. Teachers would benefit from more room to work and a quiet place to relax. Judy could utilize the lower office space to have more room for herself and any meetings, and the teachers could utilize the upper level office space or vice versa.

With more effort put into networking and partnerships, income generating activities, and teacher training, Desert Streams School will continue to grow not only in size, but also in quality. The potential is there, and Judy has the passion and dedication to work towards the best for her teachers and students.

THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION CENTER, BANGKOK, THAILAND



The Community Education Center is a primary school for asylum seekers in Bangkok. In Thailand, asylum seekers face difficulties that make it difficult for their children to obtain proper education. In an attempt to remedy this, asylum seeker communities have opened up their own schools. The Community Education Center is one of the largest asylum seeker schools, hosting about 50 students. The parents are very grateful that this school is in their community because it gives them and their children hope for a better future.

While the founder and principal of the Community Education Center is an asylum seeker himself, he is not a part of that particular community. Being an outsider gives him respect and influence that he might not otherwise have. One of the main tasks that the founder is responsible for is fundraising. The school functions 100% off of donations from organizations, churches, and individuals. The money from these donations pays rent for the classrooms, teachers' & board members' stipends, and school supplies. Founded almost two years ago, the Community Education Center has been steadily growing ever since. The continuous growth of the school has much to do with the efforts of the founder to organize it in a way that functions well.

Every teacher and board member at the Community Education Center is there as a personal volunteer or because they were voted in by the community. The teachers volunteer their time because they sincerely care to see the future of these children changed for the better. There is a head teacher who supervises the rest of the teachers as well as creates the curriculum. Some of the teachers may not have had previous experience teaching, but they were added to the faculty because they could manage a classroom well. The community additionally selects the school's board members. The board members' roles are as liaisons between the community and the school. The teachers and board members get reimbursed just enough to cover their transportation costs to and from the school each day. With such volunteers and community selection of staff, a harmonious relationship is created between the two, as the school attempts to meet the exact needs of its community.

The Community Education Center rents five small rooms which have been converted to classrooms, one for each grade level. Every classroom is complete with a whiteboard, markers, and desks. One classroom also serves as a computer room where the children can practice typing as well as play educational computer games.

The teachers volunteer their time because they sincerely care to see the future of these children changed for the better

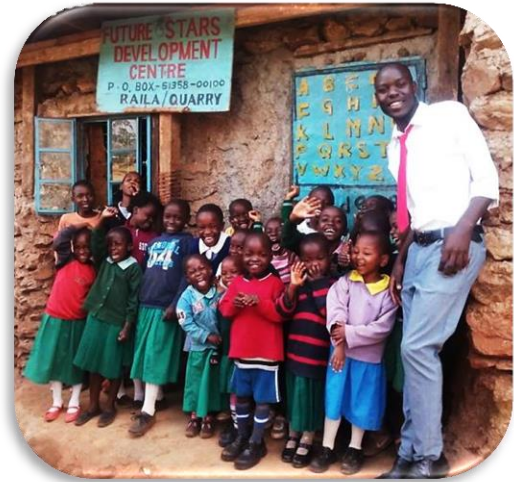
Along with their basic education, the children at this school have been taught to look and act very respectfully. Each child is given a school uniform which they must wear every day. If they need to leave the classroom for some reason, they must ask for permission. The teacher has the authority in the classroom and the students respect them.

Additionally, the children are given tests every week and their scores are uploaded onto a website where their parents can monitor their report cards. At the end of a school year, it is ultimately up to the teacher's discretion whether a child is capable enough to move onto the subsequent grade. One area where the school could improve is in standardized testing, creating placement tests that children have to pass in order to advance.

Ultimately, the community is grateful to have a place to send their children. The community is consistently in communication with the board members who have the ability to create changes in the school based on what their children need most. For example, the community expressed a desire for their children to learn the Thai language. Talking it over with the other faculty, the school went ahead and found volunteers to come a few times a week to teach Thai to the children. Through good communication and a commitment towards success, the Community Education Center is continuing to develop into a much needed educational resource for asylum seeking children.

FUTURE STARS DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, NAIROBI, KENYA

Down a red mud road, across a rickety wood bridge, and over large, gray boulders in a small creek is a small school with a bright blue sign reading “Future STARS Development Centre”. Started in 2009 by a local mother who struggled to obtain education for her children, Future Stars offers free education to orphaned and street children and affordable education to local children living in the heart of the Kibera slum. Serving their community for five years now, Future Stars has developed some useful strategies for their school, but still has room to improve.



There are a number of aspects of Future Stars’ school that are commendable. First, the management is very personal and dedicated to the school. Teachers have a close relationship with the school manager and have great respect for her, making their team close and knowledgeable of all areas of the school. Second, the management of the facilities is a group responsibility and thus an issue of group pride. Everyone in the school is responsible for some aspect of the school’s upkeep, from management to students, ensuring that each person feels a degree of ownership and pride in the school.

Additionally, the teachers have all volunteered at the school and decided to stay on full-time, displaying a level of commitment and passion for teaching the children in Kibera which colors the classrooms of Future Stars. Teachers make sure to shape their teaching strategies to their students’ needs and try to evaluate on a regular basis. Another admirable quality is the honesty with which Future Stars communicates with its donors by clearly communicating their needs and promptly relaying how the monetary gifts have been spent. Outside of the students attending the school, Future Stars encourages parents to become involved by having triannual meetings where parents are able to express their opinions and advice for the school and the students. Events for the children are also made available to the public to attend and participate, such as singing events, school competitions, and teacher trainings. Within its short history, Future Stars Development Centre has accomplished much.

While Future Stars has been able to survive in the challenging slum community, there are a few areas that they could improve in to provide better quality education to their students. It would be in the school’s and the teachers’ best interests if there were regular staff evaluations every term. This would keep the teachers accountable and encourage quality teaching methods. One such method would be to incorporate papers and projects into classroom curriculum to provide another means of learning assessment for the students outside of standard government exams. Encouraging teachers to go for trainings would also be beneficial for the school as all of the teachers do not have more than basic secondary education. Providing incentives to do this through financial support and monthly evaluations will greatly help this become a reality. Part of improving the school’s education quality is to also ensure the vision, mission, and strategy for

teaching of the school. Since its establishment, none of these have been altered. Now that five years have passed, it would be beneficial to revisit these to breathe new life into the school.

In addition, while Future Stars encourages parents to be involved in the school, it might be helpful to also find ways to aid and assist the parents which would eventually impact their children. Perhaps through providing basic classes for adults in the community, children would be further inspired to study and would receive more assistance in their own studies. Even providing basic teacher-parent meetings to discuss their child's education could go a long way. Finally, finding means to make Future Stars financially sustainable would be the greatest improvement. Whether this is through growing their donor base or upscaling their current entrepreneurship activities such as rabbit raising and renting, it will provide the needed funds to improve the school's functionality. With financial stability, they could hire someone to cook and clean, pay for teachers' salaries which are currently not forthcoming, purchase a laptop for office functionality, and create a budget for more than just food costs.

Future Stars has the potential to make significant change in its location among the poorest of the poor.

Currently, Future Stars Development Centre is a conglomeration of challenges and hopes. Over the past five years, the school has overcome much and has inspired local children to study and dream big for their futures. Yet, there is still much that poses difficulties for the school, the staff, and the students. However, with a few small alterations, Future Stars has the potential to make significant change in its location among the poorest of the poor.

ASHA DEEP VIDYASHRAM, VARANASI, INDIA



Asha Deep Vidyashram is a school in Varanasi, India designed to give high equality education to children with illiterate parents. These children have a much lower probability of becoming educated and breaking the cycle of poverty because their parents cannot help them learn. Most of the children at Asha Deep come from a nearby urban slum. Asha Deep is led by the principal, Connie and most of the funding to run the school is raised abroad.

The teachers and teaching quality at Asha Deep is an area of pride for the school. Although most of the teachers do not have a degree in education, most of them have completed college. More importantly, the teachers are dedicated to the children and their

education. There is a structure in place to daily supervise teachers and how they are teaching. Although there is no scheduled performance review, when there is a concern with a teacher, Connie will usually talk to the teacher, encouraging and helping them to change. Unfortunately, Asha Deep teachers are paid very minimally but continue to stay at Asha Deep, as the work environment is positive and they are not qualified for a government job.

It is a common sight at Asha Deep to see broken benches, torn books, and 4 pairs of scissors in a container that should have 10. There is a lack of care for school property, even among the teachers. Daily argument over which mats go in which classroom can often be heard in the hallways after assembly and even arguments over 'stolen' dusters and chalk from one classroom to another. The teachers use the small, one room library as their staff room to work during their free periods. A technology room equipped with 7 computers gives children a chance to learn how to use a computer but power cuts, computer break downs, and internet failures often hinder this practical learning.

At the start of each academic year, every child, except those entering kindergarten, are initially assessed so they can be put in the correct grade. Teachers are expected to assess their students as they teach and give tests. End of semester results also indicate a child's ability to perform in school. During weekly staff meetings, concerns with specific children are brought up and solutions are discussed. The school has a written mission statement and plan to give quality education to students with illiterate parents. Although there are no yearly, planning meetings, recently Connie and others have been reviewing the mission and vision statement to gauge how they are doing. The fiscal management is also part of Connie's job. As it is one of the many things she juggles, her main goal is to keep raising as many funds as possible and make sure there is enough for the next few months. There is no strategic planning for the budget.

Asha Deep strives to have the community involved in the school

Asha Deep strives to have the community involved in the school. Different members of the community work for the school as cooks, cleaners, drivers and even a teacher. Parents are encouraged to come to parent-teacher meetings. Teachers visit the homes of each child at least once a term. At the moment, there is little human capacity to work more intentionally with families, but further ideas for involvement are being explored. Since the school has been around for over 10 years, it is well connected with other NGOs and has a good reputation in the community.

SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES



Five schools were analyzed in this global study of private primary schools for the poor. One was located in India, two in Bangkok, Thailand, and two in Nairobi, Kenya. Three of the schools were located in urban poor communities, one is adjacent to an informal settlement, and one is located among universities, medical facilities and government institutions. The school environments varied – some schools operated out of rented rooms, others had their own space; however, only the Bangkok School for the Blind boasted of adequate space for students.

All of the schools targeted marginalized populations, which include: children with illiterate parents, visually disabled, children of asylum seekers, orphans, street children and children from informal settlements. Perhaps due to the philanthropic nature of these schools or their environments, all of the schools operate almost entirely by donations and mainly from international sources. Bangkok School for the Blind is the only exception, as it is entirely funded by the Foundation for the Blind in Thailand. In spite of economic hardships, all but one school, Future Stars Development Centre in Nairobi, have a computer lab available to students and faculty.

In terms of teacher qualifications and assessment, the schools vary though there are several common denominators. Only two of the five schools require their teachers to have a teaching license. Two of the schools operate on a purely volunteer basis, where some teachers have no prior teaching experience. Most of the teachers from the Kenyan schools do not have a bachelor's degree. At Asha Deep Vidyashram in Varanasi, India, most teachers have a college degree but not in education. When it comes to teacher qualifications, the majority of schools do not have a high standard.

Assessing the teachers is a challenge for all but one of these schools. Currently, there is no formal assessment measure in place in every school except Bangkok School for the Blind. In terms of evaluating students, Community Education Center in Bangkok and Asha Deep Vidyashram use exams to gauge their students' performances, though these are not standardized and evaluation is left mostly to the teachers' discretion. Both schools in Kenya use the same standardized tests as the Kenyan government, which it also uses to assess teacher performance.

While each school has a unique situation and target population, they all share many of the same challenges and strengths. There is inadequate space for three out of the five schools, and

Community Education Center is expanding at a rate that will soon call for additional space. Four of the schools lack sufficient school supplies, whether it be broken desks or not enough dusters. All of the schools are in need of more finances, whether it is to simply exist or to operate more efficiently by adding more staff or better equipment. Additionally, four out of the five schools need to establish a standardized assessment system for teachers and students.

Despite the list of challenges, these schools also share the qualities of persistence and resilience. Three of the schools have been operating for a decade or more and Future Stars Development Centre is in its sixth year of operation. Only Community Education Center has been in existence for less than five years. In these schools we find overwhelming community support and respect, which is not surprising as these institutions have undertaken the difficult task of educating marginalized and at-risk populations.

At the helm of each educational institution is a visionary with an indomitable will

Big hearts and steady hands can be used to describe these schools. At the helm of each educational institution is a visionary with an indomitable will. Ordinary men and women with unspeakable compassion for the less fortunate have persevered through financial hardships, inadequate learning facilities and underqualified staff to provide education for the poor, and they are slowly and steadily improving their work.

Figure 2: School Comparison Chart

School	Asha Deep Vidyashram	Bangkok School for the Blind	Community Education Center	Future Stars Development Centre	Desert Streams School
Location	Varanasi, India	Bangkok, Thailand	Bangkok, Thailand	Nairobi, Kenya	Nairobi, Kenya
Environment /Urban poor community?	No; slum adjacent	No; big space, dorms, recreation amenities	Yes; 5 small rented rooms	Yes; several rented rooms	Yes; located on church property, small iron-roof structure
Years in existence	10+	68	2	6	10
Target population	Children w/ illiterate parents	Visually disabled	Children of asylum seekers	Orphaned & street children; children from slums	Children from slums
Funding source(s)	Overseas donations	Foundation for the Blind in Thailand	Donations	Donations & local businesses	Tuition & donations
Access to Technology	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Teacher qualifications	1. College education (mostly) 2. No teaching degree (mostly)	1. Teaching license 2. Bachelor's degree 3. Govt. Braille certificate	1. Volunteers 2. Voted by community 3. No teaching experience (some)	1. Volunteers 2. Secondary education	1. Teaching license 2. Secondary education 3. Bachelor's degree (some)
Formal Assessment Standards	Teachers: none Pupils: end-term tests	1. Annual pupil assessment of school 2. Annual teacher assess. & training	None	Teachers: none Pupils: Govt. sponsored exams	Teachers: none Pupils: Govt. sponsored exams
Challenges	Worn equipment; lack of school supplies; poor facilities care; consistent electricity; inadequate space	Out of date technology; lack of teacher assistants; facility cleanliness	Student assessment	Staff evaluation & training; student assessment; finances; inadequate space	Finances; lack of school supplies; inadequate space; staff training & accountability

SUGGESTED STEPS FORWARD

Throughout this paper, five schools operating among marginalized communities have been analyzed. Based on suggestions from the school administrators and observations during a four-month internship, five areas have been identified for potential growth in schools operating among these and other marginalized groups. These are suggestions to consider both when starting such a school and improving existing schools.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of education is not only to assist the individual, but to also impact families, communities and whole societies. Engagement in the community is already quite strong in all of the schools studied. These schools may serve as examples to others as they invite parents to visit and meet with the teachers and involve community members as volunteers or in decision-making, as is the case with Bangkok Community Education Center.

Many schools are already community based, in part because of the cultures they are operating in; however, deep engagement with the local community and families of students can be strengthened for greater impact. Some questions to consider while developing schools among the marginalized are: How can parents and members of the community be invited to participate in the life of the school? What ways can parents facilitate learning at home? A couple suggestions for moving forward in this may be:

The purpose of education is not only to assist the individual, but to also impact families, communities and whole societies

- Invite family and community members to participate in day-to-day school operations as a way to create deeper relationships, and bring the community together in alleviating some of the financial burden of the school.
- Create partnerships with other local schools to create networks among students and educators for even broader impact and learning within the community.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a rapidly advancing field which affects all areas of society and is critical to learning. One way to further tap into this area of learning can be to find ways to make up-to-date technology available and incorporate it into school processes, though the financial challenges inherent are recognized. Bringing technology to the school and the classroom will likely open doors for teachers to advance in their fields, for schools to be more competitive and impactful,

and for students to gain wider, higher education and career access. In order to pursue these educational advances, here are a few suggestions, based on what is working in similar contexts:

- Start small. If the school does not already have technological access, consider the purchase of at least one computer in order to begin helping teachers learn basic skills. Once more computers can be purchased or accessed, these teachers can begin training students as well.
- If the school already has some access to technology, consider updating that technology and/or invest in more updated training for teachers and/or students. There are many programs available in a variety of languages for learning basic and advanced computer skills.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

It is clear that one of the greatest struggles for schools for the poor is finding adequate funding. Before opening a school, solid financial and creative fundraising plans and structures may be beneficial. Because education is so important and in such high demand, it is easy to move forward in opening a school hoping that the finances will come later. However, most of the schools studied have struggled from the beginning to obtain adequate funding. In most cases, the



school administration is left to handle the running of the school in addition to bookkeeping and fundraising. While it may not be possible to consult or hire a financial expert, delegating these tasks or working with a team is suggested in order to consider a financial plan, create and maintain a budget and to pursue various funding opportunities. This may also alleviate some of the burden for the school administrator and may help provide financial accountability. Here are two suggestions:

- When starting a school, look for an individual or a team to come alongside with financial training and/or obtain some training regarding fundraising and accounting. It is also encouraged to work with at least one other person on financial decisions for the sake of accountability.
- When the school becomes more financially stable, consider bringing on part-time or full-time staff who can handle fundraising and accounting in order to assist the director with those responsibilities.

TEACHER EXPECTATION

Despite low pay and difficult teaching environments, many teachers working with these marginalized populations continue to come to work each day. Their dedication to the schools and students is admirable. In order to maintain this dedication and to facilitate the highest quality in the education of already established or new schools, accountability structures for teacher attendance, teaching methods and curriculum are encouraged to be in place. The life of a school rests largely with the teachers who are interacting with and impacting students all day long—hiring quality teachers is important so that students are challenged to grow in character and academics.

The life of a school rests largely with the teachers who are interacting with and impacting students all day long

Some areas for growth in strengthening teacher performance and quality of education were found as follows:

- The administration can observe and periodically evaluate teachers to help strengthen their teaching ability and classroom management.
- The administration can encourage and/or provide relevant training for teachers to increase their skills in teaching (e.g. learning new methods, gaining factual knowledge in their field, etc.).
- Teachers can also be encouraged to find creative methods to engage students and maximize learning.

STUDENT PLACEMENT

Within the informal settlement and other marginalized communities, accessing quality education can be a challenge and is often disrupted. Thus, it is admirable that the schools studied here prioritize placing students in classes according to their appropriate grade level. This is crucial. It may be more beneficial to place students according to academic level rather than age so that they do not miss out on academic learning from classes or grades skipped.

It is also encouraged that schools utilize multiple means of assessing student progress. These case studies seem to suggest that students are largely assessed based upon testing performance. However, studies and local conversations suggest that multiple forms of evaluation may provide a clearer picture of a student's capability. The following idea may assist in implementing or improving student evaluation methods:

- Student progress can be evaluated based on attendance, behavior, classwork, homework, and test scores combined. This may not be possible for national evaluation standards, but can still assist the school administration in their own evaluation of students and teachers.

CONCLUSION

The suggestions examined can be used when starting schools in marginalized communities. Additionally, existing schools may find these suggestions helpful in increasing effectiveness in education. Schools are growing exponentially among the poor to address gaps in access to quality education. Now the focus is on helping these indispensable schools provide the best education possible. According to Plato, “The direction in which education starts a man will determine his future in life.” For most children, education is the only hope for breaking the cycle of poverty in their families. When these children are educated well, they can develop as individuals and positively impact their families and communities.

When these children are educated and educated well, they will develop as individuals who can positively impact their families and communities
