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INNOVATIVE GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION

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"Learning Curve is a publication on education from Azim Premji University. It aims to reach out to teachers, teacher educators, school heads, education functionaries, parents and NGOs, on contextual and thematic issues that have an enduring relevance and value to help practitioners. It provides a platform for the expression of varied opinions, perspectives, encourages new and informed positions, thought-provoking points of view and stories of innovation. The approach is a balance between being an 'academic' and 'practitioner' oriented magazine."

FROM THE EDITOR

Education initiatives are part of governments all across the globe, guided by a much-deliberated system of principles influencing decisions that are aimed at achieving pre-determined outcomes, which, in turn, are perceived to be beneficial to a particular country's goals.

Much thought goes on behind creating initiatives: they are statements of intent and, equally, the task of implementation is a very complex one. Not just that, innovative education initiatives have the huge additional responsibility of creating and shaping future generations, who, in turn, are any country's future.

The initiatives have to keep in mind the cultural and social norms of the country, while creating the atmosphere for salutary change. The gaps in educational and social levels by, for example, affirmative action, or outmoded methodologies such as detention or corporal punishment, methods of testing and evaluation which give a lop-sided picture of learning and the learner are - or should be - addressed and changed. Many of these areas have undergone changes in order to allow the child to develop and grow according to their own potential, rather than live up to standards dictated by a body of previous and outdated systems.

Another aspect that has to be taken into account while designing innovative government initiatives in education is the changes in society and its demands, both locally and globally, and rethink their strategies in order to benefit a new and contemporary scenario which will equip children to face and handle challenges of current times.

Our own government initiatives are no different. Some of the main concerns have been making education universally available, and creating child-friendly spaces which allow children to thrive and grow into well-adjusted adults who achieve a sense of self-–confidence. Teaching and evaluation methods which serve to help learners to gauge their own progress, looking on teachers as facilitators, creating collaborative atmospheres are some of the things that have changed in the last fifty years.

Has all that was envisaged and anticipated been achieved? In some cases, probably not. Articles in this issue have endeavored to give an all-round view of the attempts, the successes and failures. There are analyses of present as well as past government initiatives from across the country. Some of the articles examine programmes that impact children with special needs. Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan have been evaluated, as have Lok Jumbish (Rajasathan) and Guru Chethana (Karnataka).

These are just a few of the very interesting offerings in this issue and we hope the reader enjoys them. We welcome feedback and opinion, both of which can be addressed to the email id given below.

Prema Raghunath
Editor, Learning Curve
prema.raghunath@azimpremjifoundation.org

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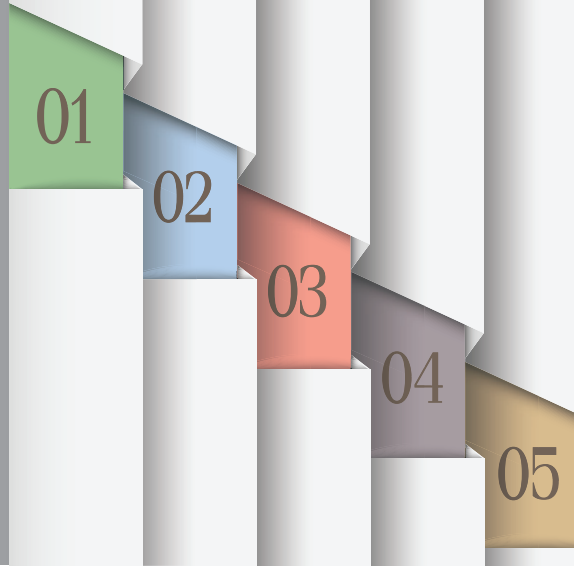

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Persisting Gap between Policies and Practice

Vimala Ramachandran

If we are to study government policies and important education commission reports since 1950 – what strikes us is the list of policy recommendations that been repeated over and over again. Here are a few that has been reiterated in almost every policy statement:

- Provide child care facilities/crèche within school premises (Kothari Commission 1968, NPE 1986);
- Introduce flexible school timings and region-specific school calendar — especially in tribal areas. Create a pool of teachers from the tribal communities and encourage more people to become teachers… (Kothari Commission 1968, NPE 1986, Bhuria[1] and Debar Commissions[2] on Tribal areas); in particular tribal commissions specifically recommended that the government "pay special attention to pedagogical and linguistic aspects of tribal education, focused programme to develop and train teachers in the tribal areas, provide mid-day meals, clothing and books and most importantly calibrate the school calendar to suit the social rhythm of tribal communities… (Tribal Commission 1961)"
- Make teacher education more flexible and local specific and strike a balance between theory and practice (University Education Commission 1948, Secondary Education Commission 1953, Chattopadhyay Committee 1985 and Ramamurty Committee 1990)
- Decentralise educational planning and administration, bring it closer to the people so that it reflects the special needs and aspirations of the community; strengthen decentralised and convergent strategies and evolve context-specific strategies to respond to educational needs — especially of girls and other special focus groups (Kothari Commission of 1968, stressed in NPE 1986, both DPEP and SSA Programmes and the RtE Bill of 2009);
- Common School System – "A neighbourhood school will provide good education to children because sharing life with common people is an essential ingredient of good education. Secondly, the establishment of such schools will

Bhuria Commission 2002-04 Recommendations

The education sector should be regarded as a key sector for the overall progress of tribal people. Though the literacy percentage has increased from 8.53% in 1961 to 29.60% in 1991, this does not necessarily mean that the STs have become educated in the real sense of the term. They have also not been able to catch up with the rest of the society; in fact, the gap in literacy percentage as between the STs and non-STs continues to widen.

The tribal policy will aim at:

(i) Making pedagogy suitable to tribal life and milieu

(ii) Attuning curricula and syllabi to tribal life and culture

(iii) Imparting teaching in the tribal child's mother tongue, at least up to primary level

(iv) Focusing national programmes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan on the tribal population, since it constitutes the most illiterate section of the society

(v) Providing scholarships, hostel maintenance costs, free school uniforms etc. up to the matriculation stage

[1] *Bhuria Committee 1991 and Bhuria Commission 2002-04*
[2] *The Tribal Commission of 1960-61, Chaired by Mr. U N Dhebar*

(vi) In the first instance, setting up educational institutions in the Scheduled Areas and tribal areas, as per the prescribed norms. Further, considering, lowering of the norms in view of the scattered tribal populations

(vii) Repair and renovation of school and hostel buildings lying in a state of disrepair. Provision of toilet facilities in all schools and hostels, particularly those meant for girl students.

(viii) Establishment of at least one residential school for boys and one residential school for girls in each development block.

(ix) Establishment of one Navodaya Vidyalaya in each tribal block

(x) Establishment of one model residential school of the pattern evolved by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in ITDP/ITDA.

(xi) Provision of supplementary nutrition and mid-day meals to children in tribal areas up to middle stage.

(xii) Emphasis on vocational and professional education, setting up polytechnics for studies in subjects like farming, forestry, horticulture, dairying, veterinary sciences etc. Orientation of these studies towards self-employment.

(xiii) Devising measures for meeting the problem of absenteeism of teachers, particularly in far-flung areas, like constituting village education committees, contractual employment,' appointment of ST teachers.

> compel rich, privileged and powerful classes to take interest in the system of public education and thereby bring about its early improvement" (para 10.18, Kothari Commission Report 1968)

Noting the inability of the political system to take policy recommendations seriously, the 1985 document titled *Challenge of Education: A Policy Perspective* said "The 1968 Policy was not translated into a detailed strategy of implementation, accompanied by the assignment of specific responsibilities and financial and organisational support. As a result, problems of access, quality, quantity, utility and financial outlay, accumulated over the years, have now assumed such massive proportions that they must be tackled with the utmost urgency…" This disconnect between policy and practice has progressively led to the education crisis that we face today.

One the other hand the last three decades (especially since 1990) several practices were adopted by the government without any policy level approval. Take the case of contract teachers and para teachers. No policy document recommended the appointment of teachers without the requisite academic qualification nor did any policy suggest hiring teachers on low honorarium. The notion of a para-teacher or a *shiksha karmi* / *vidhya* volunteer / *guruji* (call it by any name) was not part of the educational landscape. However, in 1987, the then Education Secretary Anil Bordia designed a project for Rajasthan. The project – known as *Shiksha Karmi* Project – sought to alleviate teacher shortages in rural / remote areas by appointing local youth as teachers.

Given the educational status in such areas, young men who had passed class 10 were appointed. This project was meant to be a one-off to address the specific situation in schools in remote areas that did not have teachers, or the teachers appointed in such schools refused to attend. Very soon, the idea of appointing local youth (albeit with low educational qualifications) on meagre salaries (often almost one-tenth of the salary of a regular teacher) caught the imagination of the bureaucracy, a number of international donor agencies and, of course, a vocal section of the education community in India. Very soon Odisha, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (to name a few) adopted this model on a wide scale. By the early 1990s such teachers came to be known as 'para-teachers'. Many state governments saw this as means to overcome teacher shortages without being tied down to recurring financial liabilities. The implementation of the 5th Pay Commission's recommendations in the late 1990s placed a huge monetary burden on the government by way of substantially increased salaries. What started as a strategy to specifically address problems in remote areas quickly snowballed into an accepted practice in *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and *Rashtriya*

Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan. The percentage of 'para' or 'contract' teachers, which was around 7.1 per cent in 2003-04, reached its peak of 12.2 per cent in 2011-12, before sliding back to about 7.3 per cent in 2014. In absolute numbers, these percentages translate into 0.5 million para / contract teachers in 2012-13, compared with 6.8 million regular teachers. Jharkhand employs the highest percentage of para / contract teachers at 49 percent in 2012-13, Mizoram (26 percent) and UP (19 percent). (Ramachandran et al, 2018[3])

Another significant strategy adopted by the Government of India was the creation of parallel administrative structures. In 1987, the Government of India (GoI) and the Government of Rajasthan (GoR) agreed to set up the *Shiksha Karmi* Board as a registered society to implement the *Shiksha Karmi* Project. Like most other NGOs in India, this was registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, but with one significant difference. The formal head of the society was the Education Secretary of the state. It was hoped that this structure would provide the flexibility and openness of an NGO alongside the outreach, legitimacy and authority of the government. This signalled a radical departure in development administration – where the mainstream educational administration was bypassed and a parallel structure created to run a "externally aided project". Soon this 'innovation' became mainstream when donor-assisted projects in the education sector adopted this model. Apart from the GOI women's education project *Mahila Samakhya*, the World Bank assisted District Primary Education Project (DPEP) adopted this model in 1994 and later *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) was also implemented through a similar mechanism. Again, here was a mechanism that has no policy level sanction and it was adopted in special projects and gradually expanded. This also went against the federal principle on which resource sharing was agreed to in 1950. One must hasten to add that in 2014 the GOI Finance Ministry was cajoled by state governments to discontinue the practice of direct fund transfers to registered societies bypassing the state government treasury. This had been a bone of contention between GoI and a number of state governments for many years with the issue also being brought up in meetings of the National Development Council of India. This was further reiterated in the BK Chaturvedi (2014[4]) report on centrally sponsored schemes.

Why is it that there is invariably a huge gap between policies and practices in India? Is this specific to the social sectors?

Globally, policies are seen as an agreed framework for action – it spells out the intention of the government. As a result, a lot of energy goes into formulating, influencing and changing policies. Equally, it is also believed that once a policy is enacted by the parliament, adequate resources (administrative and financial) would be allocated. Interestingly in India this is not the case. Policies are enacted and there is nothing that compels the government to implement it in totality. India has witnessed the formulation of wonderful policies in education, health, child development, gender equality, housing, food security etc. However, policies do not come with resource allocation and a time-line for implementation. As a result, the concerned ministries pick and choose parts of the policy for implementation. Since the 1990s, especially after the 1986 education policy and 1992 Programme of Action the MHRD has formulated projects for the implementation of specific recommendations.

For example, Chapter 4 of the 1986 policy on Education for Women's Equality resulted in the *Mahila Samakhya* Project. However, the main recommendation of using education as a tool to neutralise the accumulated 'distortions of the past' in gender relations was not woven into the education strategy. Similarly, specific programmes for teacher training or the District Primary Education Programme focused on setting up institutions like DIET and later BRC and CRC without weaving in gender issues into the content and process of teacher education. The focus on subsequent national programmes of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* was on inputs like opening new schools to increase enrolment, construction of buildings and a teacher training regime.

One of the devastating impacts of the project approach was that the main frame of education

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[3]*Ramachandran, Vimala; Béteille, Tara; Linden, Toby; Dey, Sangeeta; Goyal, Sangeeta; Goel Chatterjee, Prerna. 2018. Getting the Right Teachers into the Right Schools: Managing India's Teacher Workforce. World Bank Studies;. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank. https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28618*

[4]*MHRD, GOI. 2014. Restructuring of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Draft Executive Summary*

administration was weakened and parallel structures were created to implement the schemes or projects launched by Government of India. Across all the states the new 'autonomous society' emerged as competing structures that had more resources (financial and human) and greater flexibility. Funds received from GOI were channelled directly to these societies and resources were targeted to specific activities. Let us take the example of teacher management. Regular teachers continued to be appointed by the main education administration and they were managed as a cadre of the state government. Contract teachers were paid from project funds. This led to a range of problems: (i) teachers paid from projects received different salaries and were governed by different rules, (ii) academic support and training of regular teachers was done through the projects, while they continued to report to the main frame of education administration (and not the project directorate) – leading to confusion both in the minds of the teachers as to who is the controlling authority and in the project leadership, who did not have any jurisdiction when it came to teacher management (transfers and posting, salaries etc.), (iii) Travel allowances for training or official meetings and workshops paid through the projects - and (iv) conflict arising in schools over teachers being paid differently for performing the same duty.

Irregular payment of contract teacher salaries emerged as a big issue in several states. For example, in Jharkhand and Punjab salaries of teachers hired as a part of some project (usually either SSA or RMSA) or are locally hired by Zilla Parishads dependent on the availability of project funds (Ramachandran et al. 2018)

As a result, we have seen the gradual weakening of educational administration across the country. The main administrative mechanism is constrained by lack of financial resources, lack of appropriately trained staff and most importantly, with almost no powers to effect changes when required. Cadres of school inspectors and other field level staff faded out. Even the traditional school level data gathering mechanisms gave way to DISE. The main education bureaucracy is continuously in a fire fighting mode – trying to maintain what it can. On the other hand, the autonomous societies created for education projects not only get more resources (at least till 2014-15) but also had greater autonomy. This mechanism is being reviewed now, but the damage has been done. It will take a lot of time and political / administrative will to get the system back on track.

Insights gained from over 10 qualitative research studies done by me over the last 15 years reveal that administrators and political leaders do not take policies seriously. It is seen as a broad statement of intent, a political statement for the international community – without any 'compulsion' to implement them. For several decades now GOI policies have set goals of universal access to quality education – but these goal posts continuously shifted. We have, on paper, achieved universal primary school enrolment, but are still a long way off to achieve universal participation up to class 8 (elementary). However, the dream of quality education for all children remains elusive. The bottom line is that when the government does not view policies as a legislative mandate – one that they need to implement completely and in the stipulated time – there is bound to be selective implementation.

Another important insight that I gained over the last two to three decades is that our administrators and political leaders are not committed to equity goals in education policies. As a result, there has been a steady growth of private schools and the children of anyone with the economic means to pay shift their children from government to private schools. Equally, the government has also been adept at creating multiple layers within the government schooling system – privileging those with greater voice in the system. Today the financial and human resource allocations for Kendriya Vidhyalaya, Navodaya Vidhyalaya and other newer forms of residential schools get more resources. Some states like Delhi have gone a step further – the government schools are categorised as catering to bright students (pritibha vidhyala) and these schools get far more resources than the ordinary government school. Even within the school different sections are created to cater to children with "promise". As a result, over the decades the ordinary government school has been relegated to the bottom of the ladder – receiving less resources and very little management time.

Why have we reached this state in India? Why is it that policies that are committed to equality, social justice and non-discrimination are overlooked?

Rashmi Sharma (Sharma and Ramachandran 2009[5]) argues: 'The fact is that any policy or plan that is oblivious to the existing reality is no more than a wish list (…) A redefinition of "policy" is clearly required in the Indian context. First of all, policy needs to address some core issues that confront government today…'. We have seen that policy announcements enjoy little leverage when the institutions responsible for policy implementation are themselves not in control, are dominated by narrow turf or profit motives, or run by bureaucrats with little understanding of educational processes. The absence of an integrated vision for educational development can be seen concretely in the absence of linkages, both horizontal and vertical, between policy and practice, between different institutions and different layers.

Ultimately the issue boils down to lack of commitment to the constitutionally enshrined goals of equity and non-discrimination. There seems to be no other explanation.

[5]*Sharma, Rashmi and Vimala Ramachandran. 2009. The Elementary Education System in India: Exploring Institutional Structures, Processes and Dynamics. Routledge. New Delhi*

Vimala, of Educational Resource Unit, New Delhi was involved in the conceptualisation of Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality) and served as the first National Project Director from 1988-93 in MHRD, GoI. She established Educational Resource Unit (now known as ERU Consultants Private Limited) in 1998 as a network of researchers and practitioners working on education. She was a National Fellow and Professor of Teacher Management and Development in NUEPA. She has been engaged in research on elementary and secondary education focusing on gender and equity issues, teacher status and motivation, systemic barriers to realising the equity goals of national policies and programmes for elementary education, adult literacy and continuing education, and most recently has been engaged in researching educational needs of out-of-school youth – especially girls. She may be contacted at vimalar.ramachandran@gmail.com

Evolution of Education Policy in India and its Impact on Government Initiatives

Hridaykant Dewan

Introduction

Formal education has acquired an important place in the consciousness of current societies. There is now clear recognition that education beyond what is available as a part of the community is needed and structures have been set up for creating opportunities for this purpose. The drive and commitment to educate all has been a part of the political commitment of the Independence movement as well as a major agenda of social reformers and activists. The nature and manner of making this available has seen many formats and areas of focus. The policy discourse before Independence and the structures to decide the priorities and work with them are interesting in themselves, but here we look at two major policy statements, the 1968 policy and the 1986 policy, the spirit they display and the programmes of actions they have generated. We then also briefly look at the recent attempts to formulate a new policy statement. This exploration and analysis of the policy holds rich possibilities, but the basic purpose of this article is to provide a background to the public (read Government) efforts, programmes of action and schemes since the 90s. The intense governmental interventions subsequent to the first comprehensive programme of action brought out in 1992 and the semi-government interventions before that have acquired prominence in the minds of people and established frameworks to structure and transform education.

We however, begin with the Kothari commission report of 1966, from which emerged the National policy statement in 1968. This Report is considered to be the first comprehensive overview of education in India and the document to which all subsequent policies and programmes have alluded. We will trace some key aspects indicated in this document through their subsequent formulations and frameworks of action based on that, beginning with the National Policy on Education 1986, which was modified in 1992 and going up to the current process of formulation of a new education policy. The latter has been almost three years in the making, sporadically seeking inputs and releasing documents and choice of foci in the public domain, but still remaining a policy in the making.

Some Key Elements of the National Policy on Education 1986, modified 1992

Considering that the effort towards constructing an educated citizenry requires a multi-dimensional complex approach, we will focus on some aspects that were considered key to fulfilling the Constitutional commitment of a just, equitable and democratic society. The first comprehensive policy statement of 1968/1992 was based on the report of the Kothari Commission on education and reflected the spirit of that time. It was focussed on educating children as well as adults and helping them evolve as citizens of a democratic country. We pick up four strands that in our view provide the basic framework of the intent of fulfilling this commitment and see how they have been treated and the manner in which they are reflected in the subsequent initiatives undertaken by the government. The areas that we consider are:

1. Purpose of education and notion of a human being and a citizen
1. Teachers - their role, autonomy, respect and identity
2. Science and technology as a means of human development and the improvement in their quality of life, versus only as an end in themselves for industrial and market use
2. Common school and equity along with public responsibility and, within these ideas, the need for a policy of school compensating for inequities at home

This review will also bring up the evolving definitions of some basic elements as reflected in policy discourse: the notion of school, of teacher and of responsibilities. Embedded in this discussion are the nature of governance, management and administration of education, including accountability principles and even the question of who is to take comprehensive and

specific curricular decisions, and guide teachers. How are action plans decided and implemented? The discussion will serve as an overview to the missions, schemes and other pronouncements initiated by the Government since.

The Purpose of Education

The 1968 policy, modified in 1992, considered education as an instrument of change that can reach everyone and help usher in the socialistic pattern imbued with a concern for others without violence. It specifically mentions as goals education for economic and social development as essential in a democratic society for personal growth, but through a social perspective. The person is seen as a citizen, a constituent element of the nation. We quote:

'In a democracy, the individual is an end in himself and the primary purpose of education is to provide him with the widest opportunity to develop his potentialities to the full. But the path to this goal lies through social reorganisation and emphasis on social perspectives.'

This is amplified by the argument that individual fulfilment is reachable through a collective spirit and not through a narrow pursuit of personal or group interests. It also warns that this is a long term effort requiring hard work and patience. The intent is clearly to recognise the primacy of the individual citizen and also underline the need for the recognition of the benefits of collective spirit.

While the 1986 Policy, as modified in 1992, restated most of the basic statements of the 1966 Report, nuances in the articulation and emphasis betrayed significant shifts. And while it recognised the importance of quality education for all, it was only up to a certain limit and with somewhat narrower purposes. Citizens had become resources for the development of the abstract nation, thus becoming less important in themselves. The tone leaned towards preparation for vocations; from the development of an enriched autonomous person, the focus was on preparing individuals to follow routines and become a part of an efficient production machinery. The movement was away from conceptual development and a more enriched way of life to getting skilled at small jobs and discipline, and contentment being a cog in a large wheel. The notion of talent-based education and expenditure in proportion to the talent became acceptable.. A shift was thus made away from the purpose of uniform equitable access, and away from the focus on education for a democratic people. As the effort to include everyone in educational enterprise was intensified, simultaneously the urge to stratify it became more and more pronounced. The focus clearly became to develop an 'efficient and capable' workforce and a consumer whom market advertisements could reach and attract – a resource for development and a consumer for the market.

With this as an underlying approach, subsequent efforts have leaned more and more towards skilling rather than educating. While, the curricular frameworks continued to emphasise the educative process and equitability, the budgets and schemes did not show the same focus. In 1988, vocational education became a recognised part of the secondary curriculum with differentiated education in schools considered an the appropriate goal. The conversation about preparing children for the economy started moving from the margins to the centre of the statements. The efforts did not become purposeful as vocational education could only work with a transformed economy and a social order that believed in recognising capability and skill. It needed a society that paid reasonably for labour and with fair opportunity for all to aspire to being what they wanted to. The structures, processes and effort needed to make vocational education meaningful and effective were never operationalised as the intent to spend on the education of the poor and the disadvantaged was absent. So while we did talk about skilling and vocations, all that it implied was to legitimise stratified streams.

The recent effort to develop a new education policy only re-emphasises the trend. Discourse around the policy in the public domain does not mention education beyond measurable learning outcomes and has strengthening of vocational education as an important component. **Unless educational process is more ambitious learning is not likely. In the questions for response to yield ideas for developing the NPE 2016, some questions asked focus on measuring of the learning and seeking ways to replace teachers. In these questions clearly but somewhat obliquly the idea of the teacher is put to test.**

The Notion of the Teacher

The 1968 document articulated some important principles when it talked about the teacher. It said that teachers are the most important part of the

educational enterprise and need an honoured place in society. They must have academic freedom to learn,and to grow and to publish. They need to have educational qualifications and be competent. This and the long section on compensation and parity suggests that the understanding was that the teacher would grow as an autonomous educator and a pedagogue and evolve her own processes and strategies. The system would encourage and empower her to do all this. The capacity-building envisaged and indeed the notion of the teacher that emerges from the spirit of the discussion on teacher are far from the formulations that followed.

The 1986 policy mentioned the teacher as being crucial and had this quote embedded in the section on teachers: '…it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers'. However, in the same paragraph it also stated the bitter truth: 'The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society.'

And it is this socio-cultural ethos that has seen a rapid decline. Therefore, in spite of the statements to the contrary, the notion of the teacher has been under severe stress, and particularly in the last three decades since neo-liberalisation and the education policy of 1986.

The policy proudly stated that 'the Government and the community should endeavour to create conditions, which will help motivate and inspire teaches on constructive and creative lines.' It spoke about merit-based and objective selection and a mechanism to determine appropriate wages and remunerations along with an open participative evaluation system. It promised pay and service conditions which would be, we quote, 'commensurate with their social and professional responsibilities and with the need to attract talent to the profession. Efforts will be made to reach the desirable objectives of uniform emoluments, service conditions and grievance-removal mechanisms for teachers throughout the country.' The policy also talked about reasonable opportunities for promotion and along with that suggested norms for behaviour to reward and punish. So the teacher was on the path of becoming an employee of the state, but with a caveat. We quote 'Teachers will continue to play a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of educational programmes.'

There is a remarkable shift here: many promises are made but are not kept. Along with that the idea of the teacher as only an employee takes shape; terms like 'better deal' and 'accountability' - without clearly specifying accountability to whom - are introduced. And then come the projects to make education possible to the wider community. Taking note of the reluctance of teachers from outside to stay in the village because of the material conditions and unwilling to make the effort to make the conditions reasonable, the alternative choice of putting in someone from the same village to teach was promoted. It also sounded good as it was cheaper, the person knew the language and the culture of children and could be closer to them.

But, as we have been observing, the State has a remarkable affinity to make choices that suit those in control. The ideas and their manifestations get shorn of the essentiality and become something else as they are converted into steps of convenience. The idea of the teacher suffered terribly in this period of neo-liberal infusion of funds into primary and elementary education to improve quality. The effort was primed at quality, as the belief was that for access much has been done, and, unless quality is made better, participation would not improve as it is now more a question of retention. The state system was defined as non-functional, rigid and systemically non-reformable and so parallel structures were set up. In the beginning these attempted to accelerate the improvement in the public system, but eventually became a part of the clamour to close it and hand everything over to the parallel private system. They are in fact said to be the genesis as well since they allow those running the system to argue that we have done everything, tried everything and nothing works. What is forgotten is that the programs chosen and the manner of their implementation never involves those who are supposed to run them and make them work on ground in making decisions about what and how of the steps proposed. The idea of decentralisation and participation has been reduced to closer monitoring and stronger centralisation as the functionaries on the ground are not expected to bring in ideas and represent the situation on ground in order to help analyse the scenario to find better solutions. They are instead meant to promote the central diktats and ensure compliance and to collect 'meaningless' data for central consolidation.

We have digressed but only to emphasise that the teacher recognised as a participant in the educational reform was merely a cog. Her status and stake in the enterprise gradually eroded as

the stratification in the category called teacher increased. In an apparent effort to expand access in a mission mode and for pecuniary reasons the teacher became less paid, more insecure, stratified and vulnerable. The stratification brought into dispute the legitimacy of the regular teacher and the expense incurred on her. That has led to an undue pressure, often unwarranted criticism and the clubbing of all teachers as shirkers, based on the image of the few who were used by the authorities to manage the rest and also enable their rent seeking from other teachers. Whoever be the politicians, and whatever level they may be in the political hierarchy, the teacher was and is at their mercy. In spite of the promise of fair appointments and of capacity building, governments appointed or allowed teachers to be appointed haphazardly for political or rent pay offs, and some governments closed down facilities of teacher preparation or undermined them, claiming that teachers did not need training.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) started in-service capacity building but very soon the DPEP became a mission (abhiyan) - the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). It is not that all DPEP efforts were much better, but the efforts under SSA promoted a deep cynicism and boredom. It demotivated the teaching community as it happened along with the stratification of teachers, treating teachers as lower rung paid employee, the tag of shirkers and 'imbeciles' who could be trained (or not trained as they were not ready to change and learn) by anyone to the stage where the State itself hesitates to talk about training. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) was created with much pomp and show to improve teacher education. In about two decades, it has made teacher education a certification drama. The essentiality of the training degree and the uninhibited licensing of the colleges of teacher education has led to a deep disrespect for the entire teacher education system.

The Justice Verma Commission as well as numerous other committees, new curricula and the increase in the duration of the B Ed and M Ed programmes notwithstanding, the task of recovering teacher education seems impossible. There have been a lot of discussions on the DIET, the SCERTs, the CTEs, the IASEs and the NCTE (or the NCERT etc) as well. In all these, one important point has come up. And that point is that these need to be free of bureaucratic control and have as leaders good academicians and administrators who have some independence in function. They also must have adequate person power and budget that can enable them to fulfil their roles. The irony is that while we talk about educational reforms and vitalising the educational process using these very institutions, they are starved of person-power, reasonable funds and autonomy.

The recent effort towards the new education policy clearly pitch education as not something that the public funds can do and so the private sector and corporates come in. This is not inconsistent with the attempt to get the corporates to make policy suggestions on education. Like bureaucrats, business magnates are the new experts who know all about how to fix the problem of education. As for the teachers the biased view that the teachers need to be watched, evaluated and monitored and governed through rewards and punishment – the idea of teacher accountability without teacher capacity and autonomy – finds currency. There is heavy leaning towards control and better ways of monitoring and no questions concerning motivational factors asked. Nor are alternative causes for de-motivation considered. So, models based on a different analysis to address this question are yet to evolve. The claim is that competence of teachers and their motivation is crucial for improving the quality of education. Further claims are made that initiatives are being taken to address teacher shortages, improving pre-service and in-service teachers' professional development and to enhance the status of teaching as a profession, improving teachers' motivation. The only disruptive factor that is recognised is transfer and even the remedy for that is sought to be made devoid of any choice or human interaction. Apparently the management must be totally mechanical and objective! There is no other suggestion or issue considered worth considering or being administered better.

Science and technology

The 1968 policy emphasised science and technology with the perspective of building an alternative world view and understanding to move ahead of some of the archaic beliefs that were embedded in society. It also spoke about these for the purpose of economic development. The focus in this was, however, clearly towards building an India on principles of rational and scientific thinking. The emphasis was more on science and understanding.

This gradually shifted in the 1986 policy in which the social element of science was reduced. The focus now was to develop abilities and values such as the spirit of inquiry, creativity, objectivity, the courage to question, and an aesthetic sensibility and to relate science to the health, agriculture and daily life. So while this may seem to be a wide arena, the significant part is the dropping of the social and rational view emphasised earlier.

The 1992 Action Plan showed this even more clearly by emphasising the technology part even more – it had a whole section on this aspect. The shift is clear, it is from science and the method linked to science, although equally present in other subjects, to technology and its use for economic development. Rather than a view informing education and sensibility, the focus is now on it being a tool for swifter dissemination of other ideas.

The new policy formulation does not even mention science, or any other subject, as an area of relevance for discussion and inputs. It is only the pedagogies that are of importance besides the technological devices and communication systems. The shift in the 2015 formulation is clear - it assumes that vocational education is what we must move towards and the only matter of discussion is to what extent. The only question allowed is should it be separate or part of the main subjects and how do we make it more interesting. It clearly says that education must prepare people for vocations. The shift from being the constitutional citizen to being the economic resource for the nation and also for the employer is plainly stated. The stress in this is clear - let everyone reach a minimum level of learning so that the benefits of development and progress can be best harnessed. And people are no longer constituent citizens of the democratic nation but are a resource for the engine of development much like the raw materials used in the factories and furnaces. The notion of a citizen and the framework of education and everything else associated with it changed ever so clearly over time, not just in policy and its manifestation, but also in the rhetoric so as to make today the abstract nation and indeed also now the employer superior to the constituent citizen. They must fit in to the slots on offer and be adequately skilled such as to modify themselves as the slots change.

4. The Common school system

The common school system was emphasised in the 1968 document as essential to democratic citizenship. It pointed out that the education system in which private schools also functioned was bound to be iniquitous. It said that the rich are able to buy the best education for their children while the poor have to go to the substandard schools. The position is thus undemocratic and inconsistent with the ideal of an egalitarian society. This also brings to question the idea of what is recognised as merit based selections. The 1968 policy brings this out poignantly: 'sometimes even the ablest among them (the poor) are unable to find access to such good schools as exist, while the economically privileged parents are able to 'buy' good education for their children. This is bad not only for the children of the poor but also for the children from rich and privileged groups.' It thus emphasised that schools should be such that they should allow access to all children irrespective of their social and cultural backgrounds and their economic means.

The 1986 policy and the action plan of the 1992 had no mention of the common school and concern for equitability. Instead it had a plan to make available to the majority a minimum structure and facilities. For those poor who could beat the system and be selected in so called 'talent hunts' there were Navodayas. To be fair to the policy, while it gave up the attempt for the common school as impractical, it did make some concrete plans to provide something and pledged public commitment to the education of a certain quality available to all children. The effort towards this action plan worked in fits and starts and without conviction. Those responsible for making it happen had no faith in its working and did not think of it as important or worth doing. They had no stakes and interest as the effort carried out in mission mode did not involve them and did not expect them to closely communicate with the people their efforts were to address. Coupled with the pressure of considering the education of all children as a personal rather than a public good, the pressure to equate the private system with the public school and with a lens that appeared to always show the public school in an inferior light, had a big toll on the public school system. The process for evolving the new education policy therefore understandably sought responses on school management. The significant point is that the reference to the education of the deprived sections is in terms of including them in education. The principle of equity has been forgotten and the lack of conviction in educating all with equity becomes obvious.

Current Trends and the CCE

The action steps are moving on. The Central minister decided at one go that the NCERT syllabus is too much and must be cut down by 50%. He needed to ask no one why the syllabus was the way it was and what battles had been fought to reduce it to the current levels. He did not ask why the content in the State government books and the private school books and syllabi was so much more in comparison with the NCERT books, and should it not be the former that should be addressed first.

The Delhi government decided that the best way of ensuring success is to separate the children into those who would learn more and those who would learn less. The rationale for doing this was not shared and the possible implications of doing this were not considered fully. The academic issues of the age, stage, its relationship with the National curricular frameworks, the Constitution and even pedagogies did not even occur in the document that the Government brought out. The rationale given was very wishy-washy and disturbing. It is important to think about these questions and then take decisions. It is not good for the system to implement things and remove them even before they have been implemented properly, understood and adapted. Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) is an example of this.

The debates concerning assessment and CCE are focussed on filtering, comparing and ranking. It is not about helping children learn by understanding what they or what an individual is doing- whether what she is doing is right or where is her error, but about why CCE did not work. The questions on CCE pre-suppose that the initiative has totally failed and has shown no gains. Thus the critique does not include answers on questions to do with how they think CCE can help and what in their view have been the benefits of CCE. There is no effort to ask views of people on the ground on how assessment systems can become more nuanced and reward children for thinking and innovation. This exclusion has long-term implications not only for current learners but the very fabric of our society.

Summary

As is clear, the trend in Government initiatives has been of constantly diluting and sometimes even discarding some key ideas of equity and inclusion. The initiatives seem to show a progressive lack of a broad and consistent vision of education aligned with Constitutional values. There seems to be no faith in the importance and possibility of equitable education that includes all, as even the policy documents show a gradual moving away from these ideas. The issues included in policy have remained unaddressed in the implementation on the ground and the budgetary allocations are, at best, only a small portion of what was committed. The sporadic peaks of interventions have a haphazard and poorly visualised design and lack a clear and consistent vision of education that is understood by those in the school system.

The peaks of activity were part of the increasing desire for quick-fix solutions and directed at small components of the system for brief periods. These activities, some based on contradictory principles, could run on parallel lines in the same school and focus on the same element and urge the same teacher to move in opposite directions. In this fragmented approach, the system was not even aware of all the interventions being made and the teachers and the schools who were to implement them were not sure why they were to do what they were being told to do. A lot of these initiatives were from independent private players not talking to each other and were being handled by independent departments within the state.

As the clamour for measuring and monitoring increases, the responsibility of the failure is yet of the teacher. This taking away of the pedagogic and curricular agency and autonomy of the school and the teacher has also been accompanied by increasing instrumental and narrow articulation of education. The system administrators and the protagonists of new methods and techniques for piecemeal goals have decided that the teachers do not work and they cannot think, so they must follow directions. There is no concern and effort put into understanding the work of the teacher and the challenges she has as the system moves from one set of failed ideas and experts to another set without recognising that the only way of quality universal education can be through an empowered and 'autonomously' (not arbitrarily) functioning teacher supported by an enabling eco-system of governance and administration.

Resources:

1 Kothari Commission report 1966 and the National Policy Of Education 1968

2 National Policy Of Education 1986 and the Programme of action 1992

3 National framework for Elementary and Secondary education 1988 - National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

4 Dewan Hriday Kant, New education policy fails to address issues of equity https://www.villagesquare.in/2016/12/05/new-education-policy-fails-address-issues-equity/

5 Some terms used

DPEP- District Primary School Program

NCTE- National council of Teacher Education

NCERT- National Council of Educational Research and Training

SCERT -National Council of Educational Research and Training

DIET – District Institute of Education and Training

CTE – College of Teacher Education

IASE- Institute of advanced studies in education

SSA – Sarva Shiksha abhiyan

NPE – National Policy of Education

NCF – National Curricular Framework

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Hridaykant currently works in the translation initiative of the Azim Premji University. He has been member of the Founding Group of Eklavya and Educational Advisor of Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur. He has been working in the field of education for over 40 years in different ways and aspects. In particular, he has been associated with efforts on educational innovation and modification of state educational structures. He may be contacted at hardy.dewan@gmail.com

What should be the future of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation and No Detention Policy in India?

Aanchal Chomal

Reforms in assessments have been extensively deliberated in India. National policies and commissions before Independence, such as the Hartog Committee (1929) and Sargent Plan (1944) as well as those post-independence such as the Mudaliar Commission (1953), Kothari Commission (1964), National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 and '86, Learning Without Burden (1993) and National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2000 and 2005 have recommended changes in the examination system. Few of the key ideas have been to make examinations *comprehensive* by assessing a range of areas, *shift from rote based questions* to those testing for understanding, application and higher cognitive skills, *use of multiple methods of assessments*, maintaining records of student's work, *use of grades instead of marks* and more recently the use of formative assessments to facilitate learning.

Echoing these changes, the National Focus Group Position Paper on Examination Reforms (NCERT 2006) discusses the need for *structural and procedural changes* in the current examination system. Right from the purpose of exams, to its quality, procedure, use and impact; it recommends changes in multiple dimensions. It endorses an alternative, or more aptly a *complementary system* of assessments in the name of Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). It defines *CCE as a system of school based evaluation which is continual or periodic (before the instruction and during it) and comprehensive (including scholastics and co-scholastics areas) using multiple modes of assessment*.

While policies and commissions have nudged the system to change its approach to assessments often with sparing results, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 mandated schools to make the shift from traditional examinations to a system of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. The no-detention policy has been in effect since the coming into force of the RTE Act in 2010. Section 30 (1) of the RTE Act provides that *"no child shall be required to pass any Board examination till completion of elementary education."* Under this policy, no child can be held back or expelled from school until the end of Class 8, when he attains the age of 14 and passes out of the purview of the RTE Act.

Ever since its inception, CCE and No Detention Policy (NDP) has been subject to intense scrutiny. Educationists, policy makers, practitioners, parents and students have all had mixed reactions about this move. Some views have been in favour of the policy while many others have vehemently argued against it. Concerns have been raised about the inappropriate and often incorrect implementation of CCE and NDP on the ground. Various new assessment practices such as allotment of weightages to formative and summative assessments, series of short tests, formats for grading students, use of projects and portfolios, etc. have emerged with the introduction of CCE. Some of these practices have led to recurring tests causing stress and anxiety to teachers, parents and students, piles of data work, sometimes leading to incorrect data entries while filling up formats, flourishing of the 'ready-made project' industry, promotion of students to subsequent grades even if they haven't acquired age appropriate competencies, ad-hoc assessments of co-scholastic areas, etc.

Much of this has led people to realise that instead of reducing the stress of exams, CCE has increased it. Equally criticised is the NDP which according to many has led to a major decline in students' and teachers' motivation to learn and teach. All of this has led many people to conclude that as a country we are still not ready for this kind of evaluation.

Amidst all these concerns and perceptions, there has been inadequate discourse on what really Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation is. Why is it necessary? How is it aligned to the goals and ideals of education of our country? In the enthusiasm of implementation, we have completely missed out on understanding what CCE really means?

CCE rests on some assumptions about children's learning, teaching-learning process, purpose of assessments and the role of the teacher.

1. One of the foremost assumptions of CCE is that learning happens continuously- inside the classroom, outside the classroom, while conducting a science lab experiment, while solving a math problem, while expressing one's thoughts on a paper in the form of a poetry, a song or a drawing; all through the day in a school, children continuously demonstrate their learning in various forms and modes.

2. Since learning happens in a continuous manner, in order to facilitate the learning process, the pedagogic practices in a school also need to be dynamic. Opportunities provided to learners to develop various abilities, engage in multiple learning experiences, gain conceptual knowledge and work in collaboration with peers need to be ensured.

3. When teaching learning processes are dynamic, the nature of assessments also need to be dynamic. The purpose of such assessments, also termed formative assessments, are meant to aid the teacher's understanding of student learning and evaluate the efficacy of the learning experience. So far most of the assessments have been 'evaluative' in nature i.e. provided marks or grades without specifying the criteria. Neither have these kind of evaluations provided appropriate and credible feedback to students on which areas to focus upon to improve further.

a. Formative assessments are fundamentally different from any current form of assessments being used across most of our schools. It implies systematically tracking every child's learning trajectory through a series of well thought through assessment methodologies; many of which could be informal, closely integrated in the lesson plan of the teacher. Data emerging from these assessments have to be scrutinised and analysed by a teacher to help her devise appropriate strategies to scaffold each child's learning. What should be assessed emerges from a deep clarity about the learning objectives of the topic/concept, and how it should be assessed depends on what the teacher believes is the most appropriate tool for assessing the knowledge/skill/disposition in question and the level of the learner.

4. The last and yet the most important assumption is about the role of a teacher. Teachers play the most important role in facilitating student learning in formal school environments. In playing that role their beliefs about children and how they learn becomes extremely crucial. Any form of bias against children's ability to learn can thwart the learning process. Equally important is the teacher's belief about her own role in the classroom. Teachers who value children's experiences, provide space for learner narratives, are collaborative, understand the needs and concerns, both academic and non-academic of children-can go a long way in facilitating learning of their students.

The above stated beliefs and assumptions form the underlying premise of CCE.

Now let us turn our attention to the practices in schools and the directives provided in policy guidelines on CCE-

1. Most states elaborated CCE guidelines in manuals or handbooks. These manuals detailed out the new assessment pattern, for example, the number of times tests have to be taken, weightage to formative and summative, how many kinds of assessment can be done, etc.

2. Most states changed their report cards to allow for multiple reporting about a child through the entire academic year; in most cases marks were replaced by grades.

3. New areas were added to the report cards- for example, personal and social qualities. In some cases grades were given on these dimensions, sometimes qualitative comments.

4. New formats were introduced and the teacher was expected to fill in the details at periodic intervals. Training was provided to them in the process of filling formats.

Amidst all this there are several things that remained unchanged-

1. The nature of classroom pedagogy continues to be characterised by teacher-directed pedagogy limited to transacting the textbook rather than aiming for conceptual clarity and attainment of curricular goals.

2. Teacher professional development programmes only inadequately address the concepts of pedagogy and assessment both at the pre-service and in-service level.

3. The perspective on assessment is still to label children as slow, average or fast learners. The onus of learning still lies with the child rather than the school environment and the preparation of the teacher.
4. Administrators and teacher-support systems entrusted with mentoring teachers in classrooms continue to inspect their records and formats.

In the absence of any perspective building workshops on assessments it seemed a little unfair to expect teachers to understand it on their own. Also fixed schedules of formats and assessment time tables defeated the entire purpose of continuous formative assessments as they are need-based, changing with the need of every class. In the absence of all the ground work, could CCE have ever been successful?

The obvious answer is NO, or to a very limited extent: perhaps only in the classrooms of teachers who are already aware of good pedagogy. Given this scenario, it was obvious that the much-needed reform in assessment had to fail.

In order to improve the learning level of our students in schools, it is important to stay invested in assessment practices that are formative in nature. This can be only ensured through a system of CCE. There could be a set of things that can be prioritised to achieve this:

1. Acknowledge that doing this is difficult and it would require some time. It is not easy to change our mindsets about evaluation. But it is necessary and therefore we need to give it time.
2. Teachers need to be provided with perspective-building workshops on assessment. CCE is not to be looked at as a technique or a policy that can be addressed through a timetable and few formats.
3. A strong system of teacher mentoring is needed- to provide teacher's with support in designing assessments, synthesising documents, writing qualitative reports. These can be provided by teacher educators, civil society organizations and university students who may be familiar with best practices across the world.
4. Education functionaries supervising schools need to observe classroom teaching and not just the formats and report cards of students. If a teacher is doing CCE, reliable evidences of it would be visible in her classroom and not in the staffroom.
5. CCE should be practised in teacher preparation programmes to enable teacher educators to be better informed about the 'implementation' of such assessments. Also, student teachers would be able to watch closely and learn how to do it in their classrooms.
6. Parents should demand from schools qualitative reports that would enable them to understand what is it that the child is really learning in the school in various dimensions.

Coupled with CCE, it is also important that the twin policy of No-Detention stays. While there are multiple pros and cons of the No-Detention Policy it will be regressive to detain students due to inadequate conceptualization and implementation of CCE. While the future of CCE and NDP still remain uncertain we know that, as a country, we have not done enough to effectively implement either initiative. What we saw as a country was the implementation of the latter without adequate efforts to put into effect the former. It is also well recognised that assessments that are integrated with the teaching-learning process have far reaching impact on student learning.

Now it is up to us as a country to decide whether we would like to continue critiquing the faulty implementation and baseless failure of the initiative or make efforts to learn from our mistakes and make it a reality in our schools.

Aanchal has been with Azim Premji Foundation for 12 years. She heads the Institute for Assessment and Accreditation at Azim Premji School of Continuing Education and University Resource Centre. Her work involves developing frameworks, tools, processes and approaches for assessments of students, teachers, teacher educators and educational institutions. She provides capacity building programs on assessment and evaluation across various states in India. She is a post graduate in Geography from Centre for Studies in Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and has graduated in Geography from Presidency College, Calcutta. She may be contacted at aanchal@azimpremjifoundation.org

ICT in Education: Indicators for Meaningful Integration in Government Schools

Amina Charania

The journey of Information and Communication Technology in Indian school education started through National Policy on Education in India in the year 1984-1986, modified in 1992, stressing the need to include technology in school education to improve the quality of education. This policy led to two central schemes for ICT and Education in 2004, revised in 2010, focusing mostly on computer literacy and Computer Aided Learning. In 2012, the ICT policy in School Education came into existence with the mission of developing accelerating, supporting and sustaining ICT and ICT-enabled activities and processes to improve access, quality and efficiency in the school system.

Over time, the emphasis of ICT in education schemes and policy progressed from computer literacy to making ICT connected to school subjects to improve learning. However, the ground reality is that the use, role and relationship of ICT with quality learning remains elusive. This opaque relationship is a global phenomenon. OECD report (2015) challenged the value of ICT in influencing learning in classroom. Infodev (2010) reported that, while in India and other South Asia countries the interest to employ ICT tools and devices in schools is high, its actual use is low.

Infrastructure challenge is huge especially in government schools in India: the erratic availability of power supply and connectivity further exacerbates use in rural areas. Further infrastructure and connectivity alone do not ensure use. Mobile phones have high accessibility in the interior rural areas, but their use in schools is unacceptable.

On the other hand, schools which have ample infrastructure do not necessarily use ICT to improve learning of school subjects. In my extensive field visits in about eight states in 2011-2013, I found that government and aided schools used ICT in computer labs primarily for digital literacy, computer science classes, or for an NGO-driven intervention using CDs, DVDs, server-box based computer aided learning. A few states also used radio and satellite connections to conduct audio- and video- based lessons from external experts. In this sense, at many semi-urban and connected rural areas, ICT use had moved beyond digital literacy to Computer Aided Learning (CAL) and audio-visual learning delivered through a device. CAL was mostly run by an NGO facilitator or a computer instructor and even today is mostly seen reinforcing basic learning skills in mathematics and languages at primary school level, and remedial learning through DVD- and CD- based content at secondary school level.

From 2014 onwards, I have been witnessing more classroom use of ICT in the form of Smart Classrooms, where packaged multimedia and lesson plans are delivered, mostly by vendors, for teacher use in the classroom. These are mapped to textbook chapters and aimed at aiding teachers to deliver their lessons with media-rich resources. This type of teacher centric content delivery packaged for classroom use is also sometimes called 'Smart classrooms'. Here, I sense a clear dichotomy of platforms of ICT use in schools: computer labs is where ICT tools are in the hands of the students, but the activities in the labs are not connected to mainstream subjects; on the other hand, classroom is where the ICT tools are in the hands of teachers not students, and here is where the tools deliver the content relevant to mainstream subjects. It seems subject teachers and computer teachers have fixed territories and they seldom want to cross these boundaries of space, role and expertise.

Although the Karnataka Open Education Resources (KOER), started much earlier (in 2013), where subject teachers mainly Mathematics and Sciences teachers make and upload teaching resources, OER has only recently become the the new buzz word in government schools across states Free, but not necessarily Open (anyone can legally and freely copy, use, adapt and re-share them, UNESCO), many video-based tutorials have mushroomed and claim to contribute in improving conceptual understanding through the power of digital media, potentially replacing tuition classes.

National platforms like e-pathshala and the National Teacher Platform and subsequent workshops for teachers on OER have very rapidly become popular. Different forms of OER run on a wider spectrum and can vary from offering tutorial kind of videos for better remembering and understanding with some quiz like questions (lower order learning goals). They sometimes also offer higher order thinking skills and only sometimes are designed to fostering student agency. A good example is Pratham's Story Weaver, where children can read digital stories in their local language and context and Creative Common License allows students, teachers and educators to contextualise or remake the stories in their local language/dialect and milieu. The digital platform makes engagement with high quality language material in local context and language accessible and flexible.

Another good example of OER is the Connected Learning Initiative (CLIx) with which I am closely associated. It is designed for higher order thinking skills in Science, Mathematics and English for high school students and is designed within the academics context. The Open Educational Resources created here are based on three pedagogic pillars of enhancing collaboration within students, allowing students to learning from mistakess and fostering authentic learning. An example from the CLIx student OER, is a game called Police Quad offering hands-on knowledge construction on geometric reasoning. In this, students take on the role of the police and try to find the 'thief' which is a shape. The police are supposed to eliminate 'suspects' and identify the 'thief' by using geometric properties. Scaffolding is provided to understand the properties of each shape before a choice is made. Students learn by trial and error and gradually start constructing their understanding around the concepts and properties of shapes.

English resources focus on story-based learning for communicative English. Contextualised to suit local culture, these stories allow students to attempt listening comprehension, speak and record their own voices till they are satisfied with their audio creations. Also, the Open Story tool within the module allows them to select pictures from the gallery, record their voices and create a story.

In all the student modules of CLIx, the technology is in the hands of the students and they engage directly with it, manipulate it and recreate learning experiences. The role of the teacher is to facilitate these experiences and make decisions on when and how to integrate the CLIx resources or parts of it in their lessons. The purpose here is not to create OER for each and every chapter of the textbook, but a few modular exemplars and capacitate teachers to use other available OER from the open space.

CLIx works with four states in about 478 government schools reaching out to about 33,000 students and 2500 teachers. The modules are designed by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) faculty and staff with design inputs from MIT (USA), state curriculum experts and teachers. The programme is implemented by either state government departments or local organisations or state universities with the support of TISS teams.

Capacity building of teachers is an important component of implementation and sustainability of the intervention and is now offered as a 17 credit certificate program in Reflective Teaching with ICT. The offering is in a blended mode, where online interaction, practice-based assignments and F2F meet-ups and workshops are all part of the pedagogy. The state funds the logistics costs of the training, including the TA-DA for teachers attending the training. Some of the key challenges faced at CLIx are getting the labs ready and being kept functional for CLIx content, continuously adapting technology platforms, contextualising modules and certification for all different states. The dissemination is restricted to three languages, sustaining teachers' interest beyond workshops in distance mode to complete the courses.

Another approach which I got an opportunity to pioneer in 2012 at Tata Trusts is the Integrated approach to Technology in Education (ITE). What sets ITE apart from OER and CAL is that it focuses on students' creating a learning artefact and teachers themselves designing the learning activities integrating ICT. Thus here, teachers get to decide the ICT applications and how students will creatively develop a learning artifact, and when and how to integrate OER applications and other ICT tools in their teaching. Thus the central pedagogy of this intervention is that, based on the concepts from the textbooks, the teacher designs and students create the learning artefacts. This approach was designed for upper primary, mainly targeting the most marginalised sections including interior rural tribal areas, Muslim minority communities in slum and rural areas. The

platforms used are community learning centres, government schools and madrasas. Students use ICT tools and applications for seeking information as well as to construct and organise their learning and represent it through computer applications. This project based learning allows them to use and adapt the learning within the local context. A few examples of students' creation are: weather charts as a spreadsheet for deeper and connected learning for the chapter on weather and climate, a video on sound pollution in environmental science by collecting sound pollution clips from their own environment, charts using the *Audacity* application to measure sound waves they have collected from the environment, a diet chart to compare and relate calorie intake and BMI of their classmates, using *Scratch* application to create a road-crossing game and many other relevant topics. This approach has become popular over the years, as it is fun and interesting for students to engage deeply with the subject concepts in the textbook, allows expression of creativity, local context and language. Students in tribal area also use local dialect and integrate with the State language. Since no readymade content is provided, the teachers get ample opportunity to design the lessons, use other web resources and decide on what and how students will create projects or learning artefacts.

Although started in learning centres and private madrasas in the initial years, these places have now become islands of excellence for the neighbouring government schools where the intervention has been scaled up. The expansion is result of multi-stakeholder partnership between local NGOs, State and district education administrations, Tata Trusts and TISS programme and resource team. ITE reaches eight states and about 29000 students, about 600 government schools and 1500 government teachers.

The teacher professional development at ITE is key as the intervention is dependent on teachers' competence to design an ICT activity and facilitate students to create artefacts. Situated in the Centre for Education Innovation and Action Research, the ITE teacher capacity building also offers a four credit certificate course in ICT and Education. Since it is a standalone course, the completion rates are as high as 90 percent. Here teachers learn through practice and implementation of ITE lesson plans, online quizzes on contemporary literature in ICT and Education and engagement in Community of Practice groups using online platforms, and more importantly orienting fifteen more teachers in ITE approach at block level. The major challenges at ITE are infrastructural access and use in schools, working with the districts and state organising block level trainings, gearing states to organise follow-up trainings after the certificate course, streamlining growing database of students' learning artefacts.

Apart from being part of CLIx and starting and spearheading ITE, exposure to academic programmes and various knowledge groups in ICT has shaped my understanding in the sector. Education 2030 goals at the Incheon Declaration clearly states that Information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be harnessed to strengthen education systems, knowledge dissemination, information access, quality and effective learning, and more effective service provision. Various national and international frameworks in education and ICT like comparing 21st century skill frameworks (Dede, 2010), ISTE (2016), TPACK (Kohler & Mishra, 2008), NCF (2005), and ICT Policy (2012) have reiterated that ICT use should be leveraged effectively to make teaching and learning deep, authentic and contextual.

Although there is no standard framework to measure improvement in learning through ICT in India, a relevant question is: what kind of learning can ICT offer? In the TISS Masters' course on ICT and Education, students are expected to engage with different readings and observation of ground practice and develop a framework to assess an ICT practice. The central factors in the framework emphasise on learning, others deal with adoption design, digital equity, and infrastructure accountability. Although a lot is expected from ICT, it is reasonable to justify that in India we would like to concentrate on improving learning of students. However, this outcome is often, a variable influenced by many layers of factors including teachers, school environment and leadership, curriculum, home environment, schooling system and policies.

In my understanding, here are some criteria in the form of questions and discussions that can be used as indicators or framework to view understand or assess ICT interventions in government schools in India. These are classified under Learning Design and Systemic Adoption.

Learning Design

Type of learning: Is the learning with ICT targeted or limited towards remembering the content, remedial practice or is it aiming for deep subject learning,

higher computational thinking, authentic learning (making learning personal or relevant to real life or connected learning needed to make global connect and higher potential for communication?

Role of the teacher: Is the role of the teacher focused on delivering the content which is packaged by an outside agency or has the teacher been involved in the design of the content, media, and pedagogy? Is the teacher central to making decisions on ICT use and subject connection and pedagogy or is it the digital intervention that dictates its delivery?

Role of the student: Are students mere recipients of the digital content? Is technology in their hands and are they actively engaging with it? Are they merely responding to the digital media and content or creating their own learning material?

Open: Are the ICT tools and resources accessible, free and open to be adapted and reused? Although most of the video-based OER are freely accessible they may not be truly open if they do not allow users to adapt, change and recirculate. This condition becomes important especially when the resources need to be adapted in local languages and context. Also, if the intervention requires hi-speed Internet and other devices without providing any alternative for low access users, then the digital resources further divides the gaps of learning and opportunities.

Contextual: Whether the ICT intervention is situated and adapted to the local context: use local language, reflects local culture and its resources, allows students to express local culture and further facilitate them to connect with the concepts constructing their own meaning and knowledge.

I believe that there is no scarcity of ICT innovations in the country, what really counts as innovation is what works for the targeted audience, shows impact at scale, and has potential for systemic and sustainable transformation. Some of these innovations are situated in its design, others, in implementation strategies like accessing infrastructure, nature of collaboration, teacher professional development and situating intervention within the systemic fabric. Otherwise from blackboard to smart board, from print to digital content, if the ICT tool or intervention cannot transform the teaching and learning practices or where the teacher or ICT is still a sage on the stage, then it is a waste of resources and efforts at all ends.

Systemic Adoption

Infrastructural access: Not idealising the 1:1 computer to student ratio, but one that allows meaningful engagement with ICT infrastructure fostering collaboration. Access to adequate infrastructure in terms of devices, electricity and some Internet connectivity are essential to make an ICT intervention work to keep its users motivated and focused towards learning. Thus, the system needs to consolidate models that have worked to make informed decisions to bridge this infrastructure divide. Outsourcing to external vendors has created problems in the past, where the vendors had created their separate space within the school making unilateral decisions on access and use. These schemes and distribution of services need to be carefully examined.

Nature of collaboration: Public private partnerships are crucial to make meaningful ICT integration in education for the government schools. However, private partnerships interests and offerings in government schools need to be assessed in terms of indicators discussed above under Learning Design. Civil societies play an important role in bringing all stakeholders together and implement an ICT intervention collectively on the ground. But care should be taken that interventions do not stay as projects which come and go with financial support. One of the ways out would be to seek academic collaboration for interventions within In-service and pre-service teacher professional development for systemic and sustainable engagements.

Teacher Professional Development: ICT trainings are part of in-service teacher professional development. These are either focused around digital literacy or to a very specific of a particular device, intervention or a platform layered in schools. Here tie-ups with academic institutions would be ideal as ICT in Education has to go beyond a particular intervention or tool. Both ITE and CLIx have taken the route of certification for In-service Teacher Professional Development. The certificate courses aim to developing critical understanding and competence in teachers to choose, use and assess any ICT applications and resources which potentially augment learning experiences and substantiate curriculum goals. Certification also offers the opportunity to engage in continuous professional development through blended learning modes (F2F, practice and online platforms) and develop large and sustainable community of practice groups of teachers.

Finally, any intervention which fails to integrate itself in the existing system is just a splash in the ocean. Systemic integration would indicate for example, negotiating space of ICT intervention within the subject classes, maintaining existing infrastructure and capacitating school staff for lab maintenance, orienting school heads and sharing with them the monitoring responsibility and tools and negotiating assessment allocation and curriculum adjustment to integrate the intervention within the system. The last one is the most difficult. For example, negotiating 20 marks for practical exams in 9th and 10th grade for ITE project is a difficult as ITE is not used by all the schools in the state it serves. Curriculum textbooks using CLIx, OER or ITE projects as optional activities will demonstrate a very big jump but a useful one to sustain pedagogic transformation in the system.

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Amina is Associate Professor at Centre for Education Innovations and Action Research at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. She has been associated with Connected Learning Initiative at TISS and founded Integrated approach to Technology in Education at Tata Trusts. She may be contacted at amina.charania@tiss.edu

From Policy to Practice: A Story from Uttarakhand

Anant Gangola and Kailash Chandra Khandpal

The discourse around the dwindling state of our Public Education System is endless and is heard everywhere irrespective of the depth of the analysis. The state of education affects everyone, consequently, everyone seems to have an opinion about it. Our judgements are often superficial and we miss taking into account the complexity of our Public Education System – right from the classroom to the educational policies.

At one end of the spectrum is the classroom, which is an astoundingly heterogenous space with each student bringing to it hers or his own diversity in the form of social and economic background, emotional and intellectual temperament, response to learning, and a variety of interests, abilities and limitations. If we consider the education system of the country, the complexity in terms of creating and administering a huge system of Secretariats, Directorates, Board of Examinations at the state and central levels, the constitution of the basic functional structures at the district and sub-district levels; and the ground-level engagement with local self-governments, parents, teacher communities and school management – is colossal. From the Parliament to the parent, everyone has a stake in the Public Education System at some level. The challenges of this vast system, with such complexity and scale, are often overlooked when we talk of educational reforms.

As a result of the overall negative narrative around our Public Education System, at a time when we have embraced Education for All (EFA), an international initiative to bring the benefits of education to 'every citizen in every society' and have invited millions of kids from communities which are entering the school premises for the first time in history, the adverse atmosphere is demotivating for teachers and other education functionaries. In our preoccupation with what is lacking, we fail to notice the extraordinary efforts and achievements of our educational system which has made all honest efforts to sustain policies like making education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. At the time this was adopted, the educational system was not completely prepared, but all efforts were made to sustain this initiative. This article attempts to counter the negative discussion on the state of education in our country by showcasing a significant effort that was undertaken in Uttarakhand during the years 2008-2010. It is worth remembering that this is just one such effort. There are many more in almost all parts of the country that have gone unnoticed and unrecognised.

The need for revamping teacher training

This is an account of the efforts made by the state of Uttarakhand towards long-term improvement of school education through the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). To understand this, we need to understand the constitution of the Public Education System at the state level.

There is the SCERT at the helm, which carries out the R&D and provides academic resource support to the State Education Department in its efforts to improve the quality of school education. Then there are the Secretariat and the Directorate for policies and processes, respectively. In addition, there are some units and departments for projects that catalyse the efforts. It is imperative for all these entities to collaborate closely, but, more often than not, they seem to be working in isolation. Therefore, there is a fundamental need for commitment at the level of the polity and the bureaucracy to bring these together towards a synergised effort.

This kind of a desired scenario was achieved to a great extent in Uttarakhand in the years 2008-2010. Dr. Rakesh Kumar, the then Secretary of School Education, came up with strategies to revamp the system. He realised that the teacher plays the role of the harbinger of quality education in the formal school setup. In the Indian context, fingers have always been pointed at the inadequate and poor teacher education. The provisions for teacher education and in-service programs for continuing professional development of teachers lack effective execution that can come only from the bureaucracy,

because that is how our systems run. Dr Rakesh Kumar was able to identify this and realised that, if he fixes the issue of 'teacher preparation', he will move one step ahead to quality education in schools.

The state of Uttarakhand, which was formed in the year 2000, inherited the 'Pre-Service Teacher of Elementary Education' of Uttar Pradesh, which it had been a part of until then. There was a basic course of teacher preparation specifically for elementary school teachers in the country, which is now uniformly named as the Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.). The introduction of the National Curriculum Framework, (NCF) 2005 and the subsequent discourses to revamp teacher education to align with it, which later culminated in the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) 2009, was bound to make an impact on the Pre-Service Teacher Education of the state. At this juncture, Dr. Rakesh Kumar's efforts that attempted to revamp the Basic Training Certificate (BTC) course were initiated. The SCERT took on the leadership in this because it too could sense the importance of revamping the teacher-training curriculum. The Azim Premji Foundation (hereinafter, the Foundation) was given the mandate of facilitating this effort.

Since the NCFTE 2009 had not been enforced by then, the premise for change in the curriculum was based on the following:

A good teacher has:

- Knowledge and understanding of the subject
- Pedagogic (teaching) skills specific to the subject
- Ability to access/develop teaching-learning resources
- Sensitivity to and respect for learners
- Vision and understanding of the society, education and children

Changes that were deemed crucial were that

- New teachers enter the profession with vision, competence and motivation that is conducive to achieving the aims of education
- Practicing teachers find meaning in professional development programmes
- There is a paradigm shift in teacher preparation, development and support

A different approach to teacher training

How these were brought into practice is a great story.

A core team of about 30 resource persons was selected from the state for this task. The team consisted of resource persons with varied experience, from teachers to senior education functionaries. This group brainstormed on how to revamp and revitalise the teacher education course. There was openness to look for ideas around and the Foundation facilitated the orientation of the group by resource persons from premier organisations such as Eklavya, Digantar and Vidya Bhawan. The group also kept a close eye on the efforts being undertaken by the newly created state of Chhattisgarh in terms of revamping its D.El. Ed. curriculum.

The core group reviewed the earlier curriculum, suggested and made changes to align it with the NCF 2005. There were intense debates and discussions as some of the members found value in the erstwhile BTC curriculum of Uttar Pradesh and suggested amendment to it while there was one section of people who were for a complete revamping of the entire curriculum in alignment with the NCF 2005. The debates and discussions finally turned up in favour of the latter group. The reason for this could be the then leadership of the SCERT which was headed by the Additional Director, NNP Pandey, who was a person of academic rigour and had the vision required for a curriculum focused towards the desired objectives. All aspects of the teacher training curriculum were taken into account. A close coordination was also forged with the Uttarakhand Examination Board so that it too could align with the refurbished curriculum.

It took about a year for the curriculum to be developed. Different groups took on the tasks in different areas – from the perspective of education, to the nature of the subjects. There was a decision to not include lectures. A conscious decision was also made in favour of not having textbooks. Therefore, this was a different approach towards classroom practice.

From curriculum to practice

Once the curriculum was ready, there was need to create enabling conditions in the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) in terms of infrastructure and human resources so that the curriculum could be delivered in a suitable manner. A survey of the DIETs to evaluate the available infrastructure and human resources was carried out. There were ten DIETs and three District Resource Centres (DRCs, also called, 'mini DIETs') in the state at that time and it was found that each was short of infrastructure and human resources. An analysis

was done to find out if there were any unutilised funds available with the DIETs that could be used to resolve the infrastructure issues. The Foundation played a crucial role in this analysis. The Directorate was entrusted with the task of making available the desired human resource in the institutions. Within a short span of time, all the institutions acquired reasonably better infrastructure as well as human resources. The infrastructure included the latest technologies, such as broadband connection and LCD projectors. A list of books was suggested for the libraries and the Foundation came forward to make some of these books available at all the DIETs and the DRCs to facilitate a smooth transition to the changed curriculum.

Since there was a paradigm shift in the curriculum as well as the pedagogy, there was need to orient the heads and faculty of the institutions. The heads of institutions were given orientation regarding the administrative and academic tasks required to fulfil these needs. This was broadly based on the following categories:

- Management and planning
- Coordination with faculty
- Supervision of curriculum transaction
- Weekly in-house meetings
- Feedback to the SCERT – administrative and academic
- Resource support
- Liaison work
- Evaluation of training

In addition, there was the newly recruited faculty which had earlier mainly worked in secondary education and did not have the experience of teaching in the Pre-Service Teacher Education. So the training had to be rigorous and with constant follow-up of the curriculum transaction.

Interestingly, the leadership in the SCERT had changed at the time but the new Additional Director, N C Kabadwal, shared the vision of his predecessor, NNP Pandey, and led the efforts that were already in progress, towards the desired direction. He was instrumental in the smooth conduct of the orientation programs and was physically present to facilitate most of these sessions. From every DIET in a region, a core group from the faculty was rigorously oriented for a week and then they were entrusted with the task of passing on this orientation to the rest of the DIET faculty at their institution.

Since the entire process was revolutionary to some extent, attempts were made to keep the excitement alive for this change. A festive environment was created at the DIETs in such a way that the aspirants for the BTC course could feel the excitement of joining the new course. There were banners welcoming aspirants and overall the students were excited to attend the course.

There was also meticulous planning to review the transaction of this revamped curriculum across DIETs and DRCs. A team, consisting of one member from the SCERT and one from the Foundation, visited the DIETs and the DRCs. This team observed classrooms and held meetings with the faculty and the student-trainees. In later courses all these teams sat together at the state level and shared their experiences regarding different aspects ranging from the transaction of the curriculum to the availability of resources in these institutions. This also helped in highlighting and sharing the good practices on the curriculum transaction in various locations.

There were all kind of reactions from different stakeholders. The teachers initially found it difficult to adapt to the change in curriculum and pedagogy. Constant support and reading material was made available to them by connecting all the institutions and the key people by email. The website of SCERT, Chhattisgarh was also handy as it had material relevant to the revamped D.El.Ed. curriculum. Some innovative practices also emerged during this transition, noteworthy among these being the use of external resource persons, resource mobilisation within institutions and using the expertise of student-trainees.

It also became obvious that the faculty required constant support and hence the idea of Regional Resource Groups (RRGs) emerged. Subject-wise RRGs comprising subject-matter experts from the DIETs, the SCERT and the Foundation were formed. The RRGs from both regions of Uttarakhand – Kumaon and Garhwal- met at their respective locations at the end of each semester to review the semester and to plan for the next. This idea worked well in terms of the sharing of good practices in different locations. Since the Uttarakhand Examination Board had been engaged during the curriculum development, reforms in assessment were also done on a similar pattern -- less emphasis on information and rote learning and more on the understanding and application of the curriculum.

An assessment of the curriculum

The change in the curriculum had also created some worries and uncertainties in the minds of

the students regarding the examinations, but after they appeared in the first semester exams and were exposed to the revamped assessment practices, they found it interesting too. A study on this was conducted by the Foundation in 2011-12. The objective was to understand the status of the changed curriculum and to analyse the experiences of the concerned educational stakeholders. The report found the revamped curriculum in alignment with the NCF 2005 and the NCFTE 2009. The key inferences by the stakeholders were:

- The student-trainees, especially the Shiksha-Mitras (Para-Teachers), specifically highlighted their learning in understanding child psychology. But they pointed out that there were no discussions on the teaching-learning processes for Children With Special Needs (CWSN), Multi-Grade, Multi-Level (MGML) and also subjects like, Moral Education and Sanskrit. In Mathematics, the level of content given in the curriculum was much higher than was required for primary classes.
- All the principals, the in-charges of DIETs and DRCs were quite satisfied with the curriculum. Some of them found the curriculum very effective as it was practical rather than theoretical, as opposed to the previous (the six-month special BTC) curriculum. They liked that the focus of the new curriculum was on the qualities of a good teacher, how a teacher should teach in school, how to make teaching interesting and how to interact with children. The DIET faculty also liked the semester-wise structure of the curriculum.
- The curriculum - development team had aimed at ensuring that the curriculum focused more on interactive processes rather than on the content. Introducing 'Nature of Subject' concept (a shift from dealing primarily with content) in the curriculum was very advantageous. It helped student-trainees understand their subjects better.
- The curriculum development team also realised that the course was good from the philosophical point of view, but it was not practical, mainly because it did not take into account the actual situation. Another problem was that the course and activities could not be carried out in totality because of the large number of students.
- The DIET faculty felt that the main quality of the curriculum was the freedom of the student-trainees to express their thoughts, take part in group discussions and presentations and also to listen to others.

However, at the institutional level, the report is not very encouraging. There were still challenges in terms of infrastructure and human resources. Secondly, frequent change in leadership of these teacher education institutions affects a steady pace of transformation. The libraries of the teacher education institutions were inadequate to meet the demand. The disinclination of the DIET faculty members was also a challenge because of their limited exposure to the changed curriculum in the initial phase. Some aspects of the curriculum like internship could not be implemented in totality. The allocation of the number of student-trainees per DIET was exceedingly high, which was one of the basic reason for scarcity of resources.

As per the report, the public-private partnership played a crucial role in the implementation of the course. This facilitated on-site support, meetings of the RRGs to understand the challenges of the faculty and suitably address the issues. Making special provisions for the 'visioning' of all DIETs faculty members , providing content to each institution were some of the key points where the Foundation were able to ensure timely support to the DIETs.

Overall, it was a great effort on the part of the government to ensure that synergy among all departments and stakeholders was established and the revamped curriculum is established in the state now. The story of Uttarakhand clearly reflects that sincere involvement and commitment from the bureaucracy can lead to significant change in the system and, when the underlying causes are suitably dealt with, the change is sustainable.

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Anant currently works with Azim Premji University, Bangalore. He was leading Azim Premji Foundation's field initiatives in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. He has also worked with the Madhya Pradesh government in implementation of TLC, DPEP and SSA for over 10 years. He may be contacted at anant@azimpremjifoundation.org

Kailash is currently the State Head of the Azim Premji Foundation in Uttarakhand. He has worked in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar as well and prior to joining the Azim Premji Foundation, he was working with the Education Department, Uttarakhand. He may be contacted at kandpal@azimpremjifoundation.org

National Programme of Mid-Day Meals in Schools

Anshu Vaish

The National Food Security Act, 2013 lays down the legal entitlement of every school child up to the age of fourteen years to a free, cooked, hot midday meal in all schools either run or aided by the government or local bodies and prescribes nutritional standards required to be met. Before this, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 had mandated the provision of a kitchen in every school, where the midday meal would be cooked. But the seed of midday meals in school had been sown nearly a century ago and evolved through successive avatars before it was given legislative status as a crucial tool for children's food security.

History

In 1925, Madras Municipal Corporation began to provide the disadvantaged children in its schools a midday meal (MDM). This was later extended across Tamil Nadu. Gujarat and Kerala soon followed suit. By the middle of the 1980s, these three states as well as the Union Territory (UT) of Pondicherry had universalised, with their own resources, a midday meal programme for children studying in primary schools. By 1990, the number of states using their own funds to run significant MDM programmes had risen to twelve.

The Government of India recognised the potential of MDM to enhance enrolment, retention and attendance in schools by addressing classroom hunger and in 1995 stepped in with the launch of the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NSPE). This was conceptualised not as an end in itself, but with the objective of educating and improving the health of children, helping their cognitive development and promoting social integration. Initially implemented in 2408 Blocks, NSPE was soon extended to all Blocks in the country. The spread increased in 2002 to children studying in alternative schools such as those set up under the Education Guarantee Scheme. Launched as a centrally sponsored scheme, the Central and State Governments shared the provisioning under NSPE. The principle of fund sharing still continues although the sharing pattern has undergone changes.

The year 2007 saw a major expansion in coverage when the school meal reached upper primary schools in nearly 3500 educationally backward Blocks and was renamed the National Programme of Mid-Day Meals in Schools. The rest of the upper primary schools did not have to wait long as MDM was extended to the entire country in 2008. At the same time, it also began to be implemented in all madrasas and maqtabs supported under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. In 2009, children studying in National Child Labour Project schools were also covered under MDM.

The past nine years have not seen any revision in MDM's coverage. Some states and Union Territories have, however, used their own resources to extend it to secondary school students and/or to add a healthy snack (examples are egg, banana, milk, peanuts and chana) on all or some days in the week at another time in the school day.

Evolution of MDM and present dimensions

In a landmark order delivered in November, 2001 on the Right to Food Case[1], the Supreme Court directed all State Governments and Union Territories to provide a cooked midday meal to every child in every government and government-aided primary school within six months. The meal was to consist of a minimum content of 300 calories and 8-12 grams of protein to be served on at least 200 school days. The Government of India was to be responsible for supply of quality food grains for MDM. This was followed by another order in the same case in April, 2004 primarily requiring full compliance of the 2001 order by September, 2004. A direction was also given that the cooked meals shall be provided to children free of any cost. The Court also ordered that the Central Government

[1] *People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India and Others, CWP 196/2001, popularly known as the 'Right to Food Case'*

shall provide for cooking costs and construction of kitchen sheds in schools, preference must be given to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the appointment of cooks and helpers and MDM shall be supplied even during summer vacations in drought- affected areas.

The order of the Supreme Court led to the MDM Programme being significantly revised in September 2004 to provide a cooked midday meal in keeping with the Court's direction. In addition to free supply of food grain and transport subsidy, the Government of India undertook the responsibility of cooking cost (one rupee per child per school day). The revised scheme also provided for management, monitoring and evaluation costs as well as provision of MDM during summer vacations in drought- affected areas.

The MDM Programme underwent another comprehensive revision in 2009 following extensive consultations with States/UTs, nutrition experts and other stakeholders. Food norms were improved and cooking costs were increased to ensure a balanced and filling school meal. Further, cooking costs were to be revised every year to keep pace with rise in prices. Other modifications were also made to bring in greater flexibility and responsiveness to the diverse needs of States and UTs. For example, a common unit cost of construction of kitchen sheds for the whole country was impractical. Cost sanction was therefore linked to prevalent construction costs in different states, based on a plinth area norm tied to enrolment. Difficult geographies were also given the benefit of transportation costs at par with the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Differential nutritional standards and cooking costs have been in place for children in primary and upper primary classes since extension of MDM to the latter. Cooking costs have risen to over Rs 4 and 6 per child / per school day for primary and upper primary stages respectively. The nutritional entitlements of schoolchildren under MDM are shown in the following tables:

Nutrition norm[2]

Item	Nutrition norm per day/child	
	Primary	Upper Primary
Energy (Kcal)	450	700
Protein (grams)	12	20

Food norm[3]

Item	Quantity per day/child (in grams)	
	Primary	Upper Primary
Food grains	100	150
Pulses	20	30
Vegetables (leafy also)	50	75
Oil & fat	5	7.5
Salt & condiments	As per need	As per need

[2]*Prescribed in Schedule II of the National Food Security Act, 2013*

[3]*Source: MDM website – mdm.nic.in*

In reality, though, the above norm translates typically into a meal that consists of sambhar or dal, cooked with or without vegetables, accompanied by either rice or roti (or one of its variants) depending on local preferences. On some days, *khichdi* or *daliya* or a soyabean product may be served, again with or without vegetables. However, despite the well-intentioned food norm, the inclusion of fresh vegetables, especially green and leafy vegetables, remains a challenge.

The MDM Rules framed in 2015[4] essentially place the revised scheme of 2009 on a legal footing and they have gone a few steps further to strengthen its monitoring and ensure that implementation is uninterrupted. The MDM Rules mandate the School Management Committee (SMC) to closely oversee the operation of MDM in the school. They empower the Head Teacher of the school to temporarily utilise any funds available in the school in order to prevent discontinuation of MDM for lack of funds. In the event of the meal not being provided on any school day for any reason, the children are entitled to a food security allowance comprising food grain and money. So the child's right to food has undergone a significant extension with the National Food Security Act and the consequent MDM Rules.

According to a notification[5] issued by the Government of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in February 2017, possession of an Aadhaar number is required for anyone who wants to avail the benefits of the MDM programme. This applies to schoolchildren as well as cooks and helpers, and the deadline for applying for Aadhaar enrolment was set at 31 December, 2017.

What has MDM achieved?

Nearly 10 crore children studying in over 11 lakh schools benefit from MDM, over 25 lakh cooks and helpers (more than 80% women belonging mostly to SC/ST/OBC) are engaged to cook and serve the meals, and over 8 lakh kitchens-cum-stores have been constructed so far to ensure that the food grain storage and cooking happens in clean and hygienic spaces.[6] Occasional attempts by vested interests to replace cooked meals with ready-to-eat food such as biscuits have been effectively resisted by the government as well as civil society. It is clear that the cooked meal at school is here to stay and MDM is today the largest programme of its kind in the world. In terms of regularity and scale, MDM is acknowledged as one of the more successful food security programmes of the Government of India.[7]

Sample evaluation studies and performance audits conducted by independent agencies have shown that cooked MDM in schools has had a positive impact on enrolment, retention and attendance, especially in the case of girls and students from disadvantaged groups. Their findings show that it has been successful in addressing classroom hunger and helps children learn better. Studies have also shown positive nutrition effects and reduced protein and iron deficiency. MDM has promoted social equity **(equality?)**: children from diverse social and economic backgrounds sit together to eat. There is evidence to suggest that children of 'upper castes' eat the school meal (in all probability cooked by someone belonging to SC/ST/OBC) even though they had been instructed by their parents to refrain from doing so. MDM has promoted women's empowerment by creating new employment opportunities for underprivileged (often destitute) women, involving women's self help groups (SHG) in preparing the meal and sharing the responsibility of school-level supervision with mothers of schoolchildren. It has encouraged good hygiene practices such as washing of hands before and after meals. Further, it has presented an opportunity to impart nutrition education, although this still remains under -utilised. The School Health Programme (SHP), which aims to screen children for basic health parameters within school, is also strategically linked to MDM. It works well in some States but this conceptual link generally needs to be strengthened at planning and implementation levels. Periodic health check-ups of cooks and helpers also require much greater attention.[8]

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[4]*Under Section 39 of the National Food Security Act, 2013*

[5]*Under Section 7 of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016*

[6]*Source: MDM website: mdm.nic.in*

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[8]*This paragraph draws on: (i) Section on Mid Day Meal in MHRD's Working Group Report for preparing the 12th Plan.*
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Some states have innovated to improve the appeal and implementation of MDM. Tripura, for example, has constructed well-designed yet low-cost dining halls, with stone tables and benches. Gujarat involves the community through an initiative called *Tithi Bhojan*, which encourages members of local village communities to add to the nutritional value of MDM, either by supplementing the regular school meal or providing a full meal on days/ dates significant to the donor. Some other states have also adopted this model. Maharashtra has erected fire-proof, prefabricated modular kitchen sheds in several districts in order to save both cost and construction time. Sikkim uses fresh and local organic vegetables in the preparation of MDM. Fund flows, which used to be a major constraint in earlier years, are much smoother now in States/ UTs that have adopted the practice of advance fund transfer to districts. It is heartening that some States/UTs willingly contribute more than their required fund share.[9]

Challenges and the road ahead

Although MDM is generally considered to be a success, some areas of concern remain. Sporadic media reports appear on children falling ill and even dying after eating the meal in school. While such instances appear to have decreased over time, they still occur on account of entirely preventable causes. Grievances regarding MDM implementation generally centre on unsafe food, poor meal quality, irregularity, misappropriation of funds, and caste issues. Detailed guidelines covering every aspect of MDM have been issued by MHRD and are available in the public domain.[10] But without building the capacities of the implementation machinery at all levels and ensuring adequate monitoring and supervision at school level, the problems of MDM will continue to recur. The media also needs to use its power to spread awareness about the positive results of MDM instead of reporting only when things have gone wrong.

The nutritive quality of the meal remains a major concern. In one project in Faizabad district, Uttar Pradesh, implemented by Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute (SSMI), it was found that MDM provided the following nutrition before SSMI's intervention:[11]

For better meal quality, SSMI took some simple steps such as outlining standard practices of preparation, quantifying and standardising portion sizes and training as well as supervising cooks. These resulted in a considerably improved meal in terms of nutrition (averaging 455 Kcal and 11.7 grams of protein). Measures such as these and others listed in the MDM guidelines, can go a long way in not only merely raising the nutritional value of MDM but also add to its variety, taste and appeal to children.

There is still a significant gap (over 3 lakh) between the schools covered under MDM and the kitchens-cum-stores provided.[12] A number of these schools would, of course, be served by centralised kitchens. But the worrying fact is that out of a cumulative sanction of over 10 lakh kitchens-cum-stores up to 2016, construction of 11% had not even started.[13] The importance of proper infrastructure for MDM cannot be stressed enough as it directly impacts clean and hygienic storage and cooking. It also protects children from fire, smoke, hot cooking vessels and hot food spills.

Stage	Energy (Kcal)		Protein (grams)	
	Norm	Faizabad	Norm	Faizabad
Primary	450	353	12	6.6
Upper Primary	700	507	20	9.6

[9]This paragraph is based on 'Mid Day Meal Scheme - Best Practices followed by States/UTs (2015-16)', Department of School Education and Literacy, MHRD, Government of India

[10]MDM website: mdm.nic.in[6]Source: MDM website: mdm.nic.in

[11]Swami Sivananda Memorial Institute (2014): 'Mid-Day Meal Scheme: Comprehensive Review and Interventions', Report on the SSMI-MHRD Faizabad Pilot Project

[12]Source: MDM website: mdm.nic.in

[13]MHRD presentation to the Empowered Committee on MDM Scheme, September, 2016

Fuel cost and efficiency are yet to be adequately addressed. At present, most of the cooking under MDM is done on firewood, which causes internal pollution and is not eco-friendly. Its use is particularly inadvisable in such a massive government programme. In principle, use of LPG (the least costly and most user friendly option available today) has been encouraged by the government but specific resources have not been provided to change over from firewood to LPG. Nonetheless, some States and UTs have made the switch in all or most of their schools. The remaining States must also move in this direction in a phased manner. An earmarked provision in the MDM budget may need to be considered for this purpose.

A persisting challenge is the involvement of teachers in MDM. According to MDM guidelines, "The tasting of the food by a teacher just before serving is mandatory. The teacher is to maintain a record of tasting in a register. SMC member should also taste the food on a rotation basis along with the teachers before it is distributed to the children." This is the only responsibility assigned to a teacher under MDM. Yet it is widely believed that teachers are saddled with a host of MDM related-duties, which interferes with teaching and learning, though this perception may not be baseless. Many primary schools have no staff other than two teachers; it is unrealistic to expect that MDM will only marginally engage them in such schools. The Model Education Code[14] offers a more practical approach to the duties a teacher may reasonably be expected to perform in order to use the opportunity for teaching and learning presented by the serving and eating of the meal in school. They can effectively foster social cohesion if they try to ensure that a spirit of togetherness and equality prevails at meal times.

Some States have suggested that teachers can be unburdened by providing for more schools to be served by centralised kitchens. While cooking at one location and transporting cooked food to schools has its advantages in urban and semi-urban areas, the extension of this system to rural areas demands caution. The obvious problem is the quality of road connectivity, which the MDM Rules have taken into account.[15] The not so obvious reason is that in addition to providing a school meal, MDM also seeks to encourage involvement and participation of local communities, especially parents of children studying in the school. SMCs are expected to monitor and supervise MDM at school level, which would not work with centralised kitchens. The capacities of SMCs and local communities need to be built for exercise of supervision on MDM, which is a valuable stepping stone for SMCs to engage in other aspects of school management. Trained SMCs with a sense of agency can be a game changer in improving the quality of school education.

MDM guidelines have for many years allowed the services of SHGs, non-governmental and civil society organisations, to be used for cooking the school meal. Revised guidelines have been issued in 2017, which require a contract to be signed with the government. Criteria for selection of the organisation as well as roles and responsibilities of the contracting parties have been spelt out in detail. Despite this framework, there is a need to be vigilant about the way in which these arrangements take shape on the ground. Nutrition programmes in the past have suffered because *Mahila Mandals*/ SHGs were captured by influential people with vested interests resulting in multiple instances of unhygienic, contaminated and non-nutritious food being given to children. The requirement of cooked meals has, to an extent, addressed the possibility of such hijacks. But SMCs, local bodies and the media must constantly play the role of watchdog to protect schoolchildren from unscrupulous elements.

Conclusion

The interventions of the Right to Food Campaign and the Supreme Court have played a critical role in ensuring the present salience and magnitude of MDM. The vigilance and constant monitoring by various agencies, notably the Supreme Court Commissioners in the 'Right to Food Case', have spurred constant improvements in MDM and its implementation. Its visibility has led to strong media focus. The potential of a cooked meal to

[14]T National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi (2015), 'Model Education Code: Practices and Processes of School Management'

[15]MDM (Amendment) Rules, 2017

enhance children's nutrition and universalise elementary education with equity and a better quality of learning has academics tracking the impact of MDM, and it is commonly held to be a success story. In the last ten years, the Government of India's budget for MDM has gone up from over Rs 6500 crore to Rs 10000 crore. In addition, the States and UTs have contributed their share.

Going forward, we need to ensure that we can look back and feel we made a good investment in our schoolchildren. We have to build on our successes if the full promise of MDM is to reach every child at the elementary stage of education.

Anshu is a retired officer of the 1975 batch of Indian Administrative Service. She retired in 2012 as Secretary, School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. She is currently serving on the governing bodies of a few NGOs including PRADAN, Katha, Rainbow Foundation of India, Centre for Equity Studies, and the Aga Khan Foundation India, the Institute body of AIIMS, Bhopal, and the Board of Directors of SAIL. She may be contacted at anshuvaish52@gmail.com

Inclusive Education: Issues and Challenges

Anuradha Naidu

Abstract

Inclusive Education is a relatively new concept, having gained international attention in 2000, following the Education for All campaign. In India, the 86th Constitutional Amendment guarantees education as a fundamental right to all and this includes the child with a disability. The subsequent enactment of two progressive legislative initiatives - the Right to Education Act and The Rights of Persons with Disability Act - reflects a policy shift from a welfare-based approach to one that emphasises human rights. However, Disability Rights activists draw attention to the sobering reality that, despite enrolment, children with a disability are invisible in the classroom. The three cases studies presented in the essay demonstrate that children fall through the cracks of a fragmented system, despite laws recognising disability as an element of human diversity. Some of the critical aspects of the objective of attaining quality of learning are differentiated curriculum, pedagogical innovation, examination reform and, most of all, teacher preparation. A culture of collaboration and dialogue among all stakeholders - teachers, special educators, administrators, families and persons with disability is urgently needed to eliminate social barriers and enable a Whole School Development approach to support Inclusion for all children.

"To strive to give something back to society in a spirit of gratitude is the proper way for human beings to live."

- Japanese Buddhist philosopher Daisaku Ikeda

Introduction

Inclusive Education is a relatively new concept in the Indian subcontinent, which has been grappling with the enrolment of children into the school system. The last decade saw a shift in perspective in respect of the education of children with disability - from an approach that emphasises welfare to one that emphasises human rights, following the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD) by the Indian Government. Both the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act), 2009 and the Rights of Persons With Disabilities Act (RPWD Act), 2016, make provisions for Inclusive Education. But with retention and school dropout becoming serious issues, will this progressive vision translate into good practices in schools?

In encouraging and supporting human diversity in the classroom, schools build on humanistic aspects of life, which lay the foundation for the acceptance of differences. Martin Seligman, the father of contemporary Positive Psychology, says, 'Positive inclusive schooling is based on the values of freedom, trust and respect for human diversity.' Tony Booth, author of Index for Inclusion, also emphasises the role of values in the democratic and participatory practice of Inclusion, which recognises teachers and learners equally. Are teachers today prepared in the basic practices of curriculum adaptation, collaborative skills and Universal Design to build a new inclusive school culture?

As a Special Educator trained in the 1990s during the run-up to the World Education Forum, Dakar, 2000, I was thrilled to discover the global interest in Inclusive Education. The idea of the child with disability going to mainstream schools, along with other children marginalised by poverty, gender and cultural factors, was gaining momentum. My first encounter with Inclusive Education was through a four-nation field project on the Index for Inclusion involving India, Brazil, South Africa and the UK. Since then, my idea of Inclusive Education has become aligned with the philosophy of the Index, which is: all students and staff have to be valued, and all efforts made to increase their participation and collaboration in school communities. It is about the teacher, the student and the community coming together to lower barriers and increase access to learning. Inclusive Education is about Whole School Development.

Inclusive Education and legislation: Then and Now

The inclusion of the education of children with disability in the 'Education for All' goals was followed by the 86th Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 2002. Article 21-A of the Constitution guarantees education as a fundamental right and specifies that the state shall provide free and compulsory education for all children in the 6-14 years age group, although it was not until 2009 that the RTE Act was passed by Parliament. For the first time, the Act made it mandatory to include children with disability in the mainstream educational system.

During the same decade, the Indian Government also ratified UNCRPD-2007. Subsequently, the RPWD Act, 2016 came into force, replacing the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (PWD Act), 1995.

In this article, we will review the sections relating to Inclusive Education in these legislative initiatives, as well as reflect on the implications for the quality of learning.

- First, let us look at the RTE Act from the perspective of Inclusive Education, disability and access to quality education.
- Next, we will look at the RPWD Act, its alignment with the UNCRPD and new definitions of disability that incorporate environmental barriers.
- Finally, reading the Acts together, we will consider the UNCRPD concept of Universal Design to make schools inclusive.

The RTE Act

The 'right to education' implies diversity in education. The RTE Act is built of the premise that all children should be in school. Alongside school enrolment supported by a 'Zero Rejection Policy', the Act provides for improvement in school quality through appropriate teacher training, barrier-free infrastructure and improved pedagogical and curricular adaptations. Finally, the RTE Act makes it obligatory for the state to monitor school bodies, and improve their governance and school development plans.

The story of Fatima, from Chennai, as narrated by her mother, a housewife from a coastal town in southern Tamil Nadu, illustrates the challenges in the implementation of the RTE Act. Fatima, 8, was excited at the prospect of being admitted, after a long wait, to a 'good' school. Following the enactment of the RTE, Fatima was eligible to join any school in her neighbourhood. However, on admission she was placed in a special unit and was to remain there till she had gained mastery over the English and Tamil alphabets. Fatima had been misdiagnosed with mental retardation when she was 5. As she grew older, it became clearer that she had developmental coordination disorder, which made writing a huge challenge. She had an impressive fund of general knowledge, but with her dysgraphia, writing was near-impossible. The barriers she encountered were attitudinal: the school authorities just could not understand how a child would get through school without being able to write.

Under the RTE, a child like Fatima, between the ages of 6 and 14 years, has a right to be admitted into a neighbourhood school to access free and compulsory education. The Act defines a 'child' to include children from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, children facing disadvantages from social, economic, gender and religious factors, and, lastly, children with disability. Under the new law, Fatima has been enrolled at a school about a kilometre away from her home.

Another positive feature of the RTE Act is its emphasis on 'Access to Quality Education'. It reflects a shift in focus from a welfare approach to a rights-based approach and makes it a legal obligation for the State to ensure that a child is in a state-recognised school. The guiding principles of the Act also go beyond enrolment to provision of quality of learning.

- Under Section 19, a child is entitled to 'full-time education of equitable quality in a formal school satisfying essential Norms and Standards.'
- The Norms and Standards of the RTE make barrier-free access to class material, classrooms and buildings mandatory.

'Access to Quality Education' implies the creation of environments that enable a child to evolve and grow to full potential. Fatima had encountered traditional social barriers right at the doorstep. Overcoming this requires educational reform and progressive leadership that encourages learning and participation for all.

RTE and the challenges ahead

Under Section 12(1) (c) of the RTE Act, 25 percent of seats in private schools are reserved for children from disadvantaged sections of society. Fatima secured admission in her neighbourhood

school, but could she progress from the special unit to the regular classroom? Section 21 of the RTE Act invests the mandatory School Management Committee with the responsibility to create a school development plan. If the curriculum is truly child-centred and child-friendly, as the Act claims it will be and if the environment is free of fear, anxiety and trauma, Fatima can learn along with her peers, irrespective of her inability to write.

The website of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has links to documents on 'learning outcomes' for elementary schools, a guidebook on index to inclusion, and suggestions for 'accommodation and modifications' in assessment. Does this mean the Quality of Education issue is closer to being addressed? A KPMG evaluation report in 2016, on the achievements of the RTE six years following the enactment, highlights the challenges in the debate over quality of learning. The Head of KPMG's Education Sector points out that the government has so far focussed on universal enrolment and infrastructure development, but now the focus should be on quality of learning. According to the Annual Status of Education report for 2014, 50 per cent of Class 5 students and 25 per cent of Class 8 students are unable to read a Grade 2 reader. Similar statistics on learning outcomes in numeracy point out that pedagogy and teacher-student interactions that encourage learning through understanding and application are needed.

The RPWD Act, 2016

The passage of the RPWD Act, 2016 to replace the PWD Act was a special moment in the history of the disability rights movement. Activists with disability played an important role as stakeholders invested in facilitating social change and claimed their movement was entering a new phase. The fact that the new law is UNCRPD-compliant is transformative in its philosophical underpinnings and shifts the focus from social welfare to human rights. Unlike the PWD Act, the preamble of the RPWD Act lays down the 'principles of empowerment of persons with disability'. These are:

- respect for inherent dignity
- respect for difference and acceptance of PWD as part of human diversity and humanity
- access and equal opportunity, and
- disability as an evolving and dynamic concept. (That concept is based on the assumptions of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children, where adults take into account the children's capacity to exercise their rights.)

Basic provisions and implementation measures

Unlike the PWD Act, 1995, the RPWD Act, 2009 provides for Inclusive Education, which it defines as 'a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disability.' It also elaborates the basic requirements and the means of implementation.

An important development under the purview of the RPWD Act, which has tremendous significance for formal schools, is the inclusion of 21 different types of disability, fourteen more than the original seven in the PWD Act. For the first time, children with autism, specific learning disability and speech and language disability qualify for Inclusive Education.

Sajan, 6, was diagnosed with a pervasive developmental disorder (a disorder associated with social, language and communication skills) when he was 3 years old. Sajan is a reluctant learner who struggles to transition to school every day. His mother's conversation with his teacher showed that he is unable to sit for more than five minutes in class and is a social isolate, making him vulnerable to bullying. The teacher gives him daily homework to improve his writing and numeracy skills to enable him to meet the achievements standards of his class. This has increased stress levels at home. Sajan loves to draw, play with building blocks, creating amazing building designs and play on the climbing frame and slide. However, such opportunities to learn by doing will shrink if the school authorities continue to follow a one-size-fits-all curriculum.

From an Inclusive Education perspective, Sajan and children like him add another dimension to classroom diversity, one which teachers are ill-prepared for. Early detection is also a recognised part of the school system, a progressive step considering that childhood disabilities go undetected in the early years. Sajan and others like him will benefit from early intervention and plenty of encouragement. Sadly, they end up as school dropouts, given the problems they encounter. In the new Act, the basic requirements of attenders, transportation, physical and communication barriers will all be considered as a form of reasonable accommodation. With curricular adaptation, Sajan could learn to develop his attention span using the activities he loves,

working on the same learning outcomes as the rest of the class. He might require a teaching assistant's supervision to help him, for example, make friends or complete a puzzle in time. All these are now listed as interventions in the Act in Sections 17 and 18 under the 'duties of educational institutions' and 'specific measures to promote inclusive education'.

The RPWD Act additionally introduces the notion of 'barriers' in its definition of disability. As the UNCRPD emphasises, the problem of disability lies not in the person but in the 'barriers' imposed by the environment. In Sajan's case, the expectation to sit for a longer duration needs to be modified as he is not neurologically ready. His teacher needs to give him activities that include play in learning, shorter-duration tasks and tangible appreciation for achievement. To improve his participation in class, she has to eliminate the environmental, attitudinal and communicational factors that isolate and exclude and enhance those that give rise to hope and optimism.

Therefore, administrators and teachers can spell out the 'Reasonable Accommodations', that is, the adjustments or modifications in the curriculum or school environment in their Inclusive School Development Plan. This will set the precedent for inclusion of children like Sajan. Some of the examples that will within the framework of the Act as 'Reasonable Accommodations for inclusive school development are:

- transportation for child with high support needs and attendants
- Accessible buildings, campuses, toilets and other facilities
- Pedagogical support for children with learning disability
- Individualised support to maximise academic and social development
- Modified textbooks: for example, the Barkha Series, a supplementary graded reader services published by NCERT
- Alternative and Augmentative Communication systems for children with speech and language impairments
- Modifications in the examination system: extra time, use of computers, scribes

The most progressive feature of the RPWD Act is the 'Universal Design' concept promoted by the UNCRPD. 'Universal design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design' (Mace, 1988). In schools, this translates to creating flexible learning environments that are inclusive of all learners with diverse learning profiles and needs. Sajan can grow up in a joyful learning environment if the same teaching-learning methods are accessible to him and all the other students in the class. Hence the onus lies on each educator to understand the nature of diversity in her classroom. Teacher self-reflection goes a long way to create a nurturing classroom.

Some examples of Universal Design Classroom interventions that can benefit all learners

- Access: ramps, seating, transport, electronic books
- Participation: visual schedules, illustrated vocabulary, working with partners, project work, work experience, outdoor sports, visual and performing arts
- Modes of expression: written, verbal responses, art, drama, multimedia presentations

How do the RTE Act and the RPWD Act work together?

This section explores the links between the RTE Act and the RPWD Act from two different points of view. First, through the macro viewpoint of disability rights advocates, who are concerned about the older welfare attitude influencing national programs such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhayan (SSA). Second, through the case study of Kanika (below), listing the practical aspects of inclusion.

Education of Children with Disability: Historical Entrenchment in Welfare

Even in 2001, when the Constitution was amended to guarantee the fundamental right to education for all, the education of children with disabilities was perceived as a subject of state welfare. This systemic entrenchment in welfare has resulted in the preservation of segregated services even within the flagship programme for the Education For All Campaign, the SSA. Disability rights activists are concerned that children with high support needs are enrolled in school, but end up in home-based programs under the SSA. This goes against the spirit of the RTE Act.

The concept of 'evolving capacities' faces a similar fate for children with benchmark disability with high support needs (with 40 per cent disability) who require intensive support to carry out daily

activities. Disability rights activists ask if social barriers are being overlooked. 'We slot people at a particular level based on our understanding of the person's impairment. This will not lead to respecting the evolving capacity of the individual, because we don't focus on the factors that restrict the development of the person in the given environment,' says disability rights activist Meenakshi Balasubramanian, Coordinator Projects, Equals: Centre for Promotion of Social Justice.

Disability certificates, which are issued by medical professionals, are irrelevant for admission in schools: the emphasis should be on educational assessments. According to Dipti Bhatia, Deputy Director of Vidya Sagar, a disability resource centre, 'assessments should be done at the time of admission to get the environment ready for the child rather than getting the child ready for the environment.' She notes that the examination system must also evolve. The RTE mentions quality of learning based on child-centred and activity-based curriculum, and assessment methods must also reflect the change.

Whole School Approach

Kanika's story illustrates the role a school can play in the inclusion of a child with benchmark disability with high support needs. Born premature, Kanika was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at birth. She achieved her development milestones (with a two-year delay) with intensive physical and speech therapies. At age 6, she was admitted to Standard 1 of her neighbourhood school; she is now in Standard 3. Given the school's progressive history, curricular accommodations such as use of teaching assistants, reduced portions, extra time for writing are part of the class routine. Kanika participates along with all her classmates in art, dance and drama activities and is perceived as a student who succeeds in school.

To encourage more students with high support needs like Kanika, schools need to create a collaborative culture supporting diversity. Here are some ideas to encourage inclusive schooling:

- assess schools using tools like the Index for Inclusion
- create opportunities for teachers, administrative staff, the school community to interact with persons with disabilities
- frame guidelines for collaboration between teachers, special educators and teaching assistants
- develop training programs promoting collaborative teamwork
- allocate resources for assistive technology and communication
- collaborate with disability resource centres to support mainstream schools
- conduct access audits of the school environment
- train teachers through pre-service and in-service programs in differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, curricular accommodations
- encourage co-teaching in the inclusive classroom
- encourage teachers to meet regularly to discuss best practices
- adapt curriculums and assessment techniques. Use electronic portfolio
- involve parents of children with disability

Conclusion

Collaboration is the cornerstone of Inclusive Education. It is a process and not an end product of a series of interventions. Dialogue and self-reflection within the school community will lead to a better understanding of the implementation process. Children with disabilities have the same need to belong as all children do. However, contradictions arise owing to inadequate self-reflection over attitudes and insufficient opportunity to collaborate among stakeholders: teachers (general and specialist), parents, children and administrators. Respectful dialogue through a participatory engagement that helps to develop sensitised personnel, differentiated instructional strategies, modes of alternative communication, active involvement of parents and the community and an administration committed to the advancement of inclusive education is critical.

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Anuradha, until recently, worked in Hong Kong as an Early Interventionist with children with special needs in the 0-6 age group, under the auspices of an early education centre sub-vented by the Hong Kong Government program serving the non-Chinese-speaking population. She trained as a special educator at Vidya Sagar, Chennai, 20 years ago and was introduced to the trans-disciplinary approach there. Her practice has evolved to reflect this as she constantly strives to weave together therapy, education, and alternative communication into a fun-filled process of learning for her students. She can be contacted at anuradha.naidu@gmail.com

Schools as Safe Spaces - Where Do We Stand

Archana Mehendale and Swagata Raha

Introduction

Public discourse and policy on universalisation of education has primarily focussed on improving access to schools, and ensuring retention and participation of children in schools. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) and flagship programmes of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) mainly focus on providing right to education by guaranteeing admission in government/neighbourhood schools and right to schools with prescribed infrastructure and teachers. However, the RTE Act and SSA give scant attention to rights within education. However, provisions related to protecting children's rights *within* schools and ensuring that schools become safe spaces can be found in various other legislation, government notifications, programmes, and schemes formulated by central and state governments. In this article, we discuss these provisions and present what we know is happening in practice.

Provisions and Implementation

Legislations pertaining to children address corporal punishment, sexual offences against children and cruelty in schools. In the policy realm, the triggers for formulation of circulars, guidelines, and advisories have been cases of violations or abuse that were reported by the media. For instance, in 2010, a 13-year-old boy in a premier school in Kolkata.[1] committed suicide after being caned by his teacher This led to an inquiry by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and the formulation of Guidelines on Corporal Punishment,[2] which were adopted by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD).[3]

Corporal punishment

Section 17(1), Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, prohibits subjecting a child to physical punishment or harassment, although neither of these terms is defined in the Act. The Delhi High Court held that provisions of the Delhi Education Rules, which permitted corporal punishment, violated Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution and struck them down.[4] It also directed the 'State to ensure that children are not subjected to corporal punishment in schools and they receive education in an environment of freedom and dignity, free from fear.'

An Advisory for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools under Section 35(1) of the RTE Act, 2009 (based on the NCPCR guidelines) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) offers guidance on the prevention of corporal punishment and redressal mechanisms.[5] It unpacks corporal punishment into (a) physical punishment, (b) mental harassment and (c) discrimination, and requires schools to have a clear protocol to guide teachers on tackling troublesome behaviour (eg., disturbing other children in class, lying, stealing, etc.) and offensive behaviour, causing hurt or injury to others (eg., bullying, aggression towards peers, stealing, violating others' rights, vandalising, etc.).[6] The Advisory requires the school management to conduct regular training programmes for teachers so as to facilitate a shift to a rights-based approach to education, abolition of corporal punishment, and positive engagement with children.

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[1] *"NCPCR wants states to follow guidelines on corporal punishment", The Economic Times, 17 July 2010, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/ncpcr-wants-states-to-follow-guidelines-on-corporal-punishment/articleshow/6178764.cms*

[2] *NCPCR, Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools, http://www.ncpcr.gov.in/view_file.php?fid=108*

[3] *MHRD, Advisory for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools under Section 35 (1) of the RTE Act, 2009. available at http://www.education.goa.gov.in/MHRD%20Advisory%20for%20Eliminating%20Corporal%20Punishment%20in%20Schools.pdf*

[4] *Parents Forum for Meaningful Education v. Union of India, AIR 2001 Delhi 212*

[5] *Available at http://www.education.goa.gov.in/MHRD%20Advisory%20for%20Eliminating%20Corporal%20Punishment%20in%20Schools.pdf*

[6] *Advisory for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools under Section 35(1) of the RTE Act, 2009, Paras 7.1.13-14*

However, there is no mechanism instituted by the MHRD or the state governments to monitor the implementation of this Advisory and schools are not mandatorily required to provide this data to the government.

Sexual assault

Under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) the commission of penetrative sexual assault or sexual assault by a person on the management or staff of an educational institution constitutes an aggravated offence which attracts a higher punishment.[7] The POCSO Act also casts an obligation to report to the police if anyone has the apprehension of the likely commission or knowledge about the commission of a sexual offence.[8] Failure to report the commission of a sexual offence is an offence punishable with imprisonment which may extend to six months, or a fine, or both.[9] If a person-in-charge of an institution fails to report the commission of an offence by a subordinate under his control, the person can be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and a fine.[10] In some cases of sexual violence within schools, this provision has been invoked against Principals and trustees of schools for their failure to report to the police. There has been legal controversy about when a case can be registered against a person for failure to report. In one case against a school principal, the Chhattisgarh High Court held that the primary offence should be proved beyond reasonable doubt before a prosecution is launched against a person for failure to report.[11] However, this reasoning was rejected by the Bombay High Court in a case in which the Director of the Trust running the school asked the victim and her relatives to settle the matter with the person who had allegedly raped the victim.[12] The Bombay High Court held that the interpretation adopted by the Chhattisgarh High Court would defeat the objectives of the POCSO Act to protection children from sexual offences.

State Governments are still struggling with the effective implementation of the POCSO Act. Although the Act prescribes exclusive Public Prosecutors, no such appointments have been made. Regular prosecutors and Sessions Courts are dealing with these cases alongside other criminal matters.[13] These courts are not child-friendly in their design or accessible to persons with disabilities. A panel of support persons to assist the child through investigation and trial is not available in all districts.[14] In the absence of a Victim and Witness Protection System, children and their families face pressures and intimidation from the accused which results in they retracting their statements in court. For instance, a study on the working of Special Courts under the POCSO Act, 2012 in Delhi reveals that of the eight cases in which the accused was a teacher, and in six cases, the child turned hostile.[15] A similar study in Assam cites a case in which two students of Class II had alleged that a teacher had touched their private parts. In court, however, the students said that the teacher showed affection to all children and had not sexually abused them.[16] Teachers constituted 3% of accused persons in a study of 1330 judgments of POCSO Special Courts in Maharashtra and in 53% of these cases the child victim turned hostile.[17] Cases such as these in which the accused is in a position of authority over the child demonstrate the need for strong support systems within the school as well outside to enable the child and the families to participate in the trial without fear and coercion.

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[7] *POCSO Act, Sections 5(f), 7, 9(f), and 10.*

[8] *POCSO Act, Section 19(1).*

[9] *POCSO Act, Section 21(1).*

[10] *POCSO Act, Section 21(2).*

[11] *Kamal Prasad Patade v. State of Chhattisgarh, Writ Petition (Cr.) No. 8 of 2016.*

[12] *Balasaheb @ Suryakant Yashwantrao Mane v. State of Maharashtra, Criminal Revision Application No. 69 of 2017 decided on 22 March 2017.*

[13] *Sonia Pereira & Swagata Raha, Structural Compliance of Special Courts with the POCSO Act, 2012, Chapter 1, pp.1-10 in CCL-NLSIU, Implementation of the POCSO Act, 2012 by Special Courts: Challenges and Issues (2018) available at https://www.nls.ac.in/ccl/jjdocuments/posco2012spcourts.pdf*

[14] *Sonia Pereira & Swagata Raha, Procedural Compliance of Special Courts with the POCSO Act, 2012, Chapter 2, pp.11-29 at 26-27 in CCL-NLSIU, Implementation of the POCSO Act, 2012 by Special Courts: Challenges and Issues (2018) available at https://www.nls.ac.in/ccl/jjdocuments/posco2012spcourts.pdf*

[15] *CCL-NLSIU, Report of Study on the Working of Special Courts under the POCSO Act, 2012 in Delhi, 29 January 2016, p.68 available at https://www.nls.ac.in/ccl/jjdocuments/specialcourtPOSCOAct2012.pdf*

[16] *CCL-NLSIU, Study on the Working of Special Courts under the POCSO Act, 2012 in Assam, 13 February 2017, p.51 available at https://www.nls.ac.in/ccl/jjdocuments/studyspecialcourtassamPOSCOAct2012.pdf*

[17] *CCL-NLSIU, Study on the Working of Special Courts under the POCSO Act, 2012 in Maharashtra, 7 September 2017, pp.67, 69 available at https://www.nls.ac.in/ccl/jjdocuments/POSCOMaharashtrasummary.pdf*

Cruelty

Section 75, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (JJ Act) criminalises the assault, abandonment, abuse, exposure or wilful neglect of a child in a manner likely to cause the child unnecessary mental or physical suffering by those having the actual charge of, or control over, a child. A higher punishment is attracted if the offence is committed by a person employed by or managing an organisation vested with the care and protection of the child, such as a school. While corporal punishment under the RTE Act, 2009, does not attract any punishment, this provision under the JJ Act can be applied along with other relevant provisions under the Indian Penal Code in cases of corporal punishment in schools. However, in practice, some of the challenges faced in implementing provisions regarding corporal punishment as well as any offence against children is the long-drawn- out nature of the proceedings, and the absence of support for the child and the child's family to navigate through the criminal justice system.

The most comprehensive guidelines on safety and security of children in schools, including the prevention mechanisms and redress procedures, is the MHRD D.O of 2014[18] which states that 'a safe and secure environment, free of corporal punishment and abuse, with preventive mechanisms to ensure physical and socio-psychological safety of children, should be stipulated as one of the conditions for giving recognition/no-objection certificate (NOC) to a school by the State Government and also as one of the conditions for giving affiliation to a school by the State Board.' The D.O. is fairly specific on aspects such as the boundary wall, banning of the sale of objectionable materials, approach road, colour of buses, building safety audits, reducing structural vulnerabilities of existing buildings, and putting in place a Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan in every school, verification of antecedents of teachers and staff, their continuous education on child rights under the purview of physical safety. Under health and hygiene, the guidelines stipulate the source of drinking water, its storage and purification, separate and functional toilets for boys and girls, regular monitoring of general hygiene in the school premises and of the children, training cooks and helpers on safe and nutritious cooking of mid-day meals, preventive efforts and vigilance by teachers to detect diseases, deficiencies and substance and drug abuse. With respect to sexual abuse, the guidelines mandate that children are taught the difference between 'good' touch and 'bad' touch, are encouraged to speak up and that the School Management Committee makes the school environment conducive for children to report abuse.

Some state governments have adopted specific legislation to protect children's safety in schools. For instance, in May 2014 the Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights issued guidelines for prevention of child abuse in schools.[19] It specifies principles, guidelines for recruitment, training and capacity building, child protection safeguards within schools which include a Child Protection Policy and complaints mechanism. The Guidelines also provide for therapeutic interventions such as counselling services and recommend the designation of counselling centres within the institution. However, these guidelines are not binding. In the backdrop of cases of sexual harassment of children in schools, in 2016, the Karnataka Police (Amendment) Act, 2016[20] was passed to empower the police to effectively monitor and regulate the activities of the school. Section 31(1), which empowers the Commissioner of Police and District Magistrate to pass orders for preservation of order in public places, was amended to include clause (za) which empowered them to pass orders for 'regulating, controlling and monitoring of safety and security of children'. While school safety is not specifically mentioned in any Central legislation, the Karnataka Education Act, 1983, was amended in 2017 to include provisions for safety and security of students, penal sanctions and the District Education Regulatory Authority was empowered to recommend to the competent a withdrawal of recognition or affiliation of institutions found to be contravening the above mentioned provisions. The constitutionality of the above amendments have, however, been challenged by the Associated Managements of Government Recognised English Medium Schools in Karnataka before the Karnataka

[18] *D.O. No. 10-11/2014-EE.4 dated 9 October 2014.*

[19] *Available at http://delhi.gov.in/wps/wcm/connect/983d42804f4cf70fb7e3bf1e0288d2b8/DCPCR+guidelines+14052014 pdf?MOD=AJPERES&lmod=301782569*

[20] *Available at http://dpal.kar.nic.in/ao2016/22%20of%202016%20(E).pdf*

High Court on the grounds that it overrides Central Laws such as the POCSO Act and the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005[21] and brings within its fold unaided private schools in violation of the Supreme Court's verdict.[22] The applicability of these provisions is, therefore, in question as the matter is pending before the High Court. Concerns have also been raised about the authority given to the police to regulate school safety as the multiplicity of authorities and their guidelines can be confusing for schools.

Based on the foregoing discussion on provisions on school safety and implementation, we see that the legislative framework is only punitive, while the overall policy framework focuses on prevention as well as a system to redress violations. There is, however, an absence of a monitoring system to systematically assess and ensure compliance with the policy framework as well as a lack of clarity on the consequences of non-compliance with the mandatory requirements under the various circulars and policies.

Issues

a) Firstly, despite a plethora of newly adopted legislation, policies and guidelines, there is still lack of clarity about : the nature of shared responsibility among teachers, staff, management and who is liable for what, who is liable for the safety of children when they are in transit to/from schools, and most importantly the core requirements that schools need to put in place in terms of preventive and protective measures, background checks of employees, channels of oversight and reporting and the consequences of the failure to do so. Given that these are issued as advisories and guidelines, schools tend to not see these as mandatory and nor do they see any imminent threat if these are not complied with. Since most of the provisions would require not only a change in mindset, approaches and how schools are organised, a number of them also have cost implications. Furthermore, would these specifications change if it was a government school or a private one, a special training centre or a special school, an *ashramshala* or an international school? In other words, not only are these fundamental issues unaddressed, but the fact remains unacknowledged that these need to be specifically tailored to different institutional settings where children study

Secondly, even though schools receive government notifications and guidelines, there is a lack of awareness among parents in general and Parent-Teacher Associations, School Management Committees in particular about the existence of these policy provisions. As a result, these key stakeholders are unable to hold the school accountable and monitor the compliance to these guidelines.

Thirdly, it is important to recognise that schools as institutions that place high premium on respect to hierarchy, obedience and silence require a much more nuanced approach to implementation of the above mentioned provisions. An offence such as sexual assault of a child happening within school is different from when it happens outside. When those in positions of trust and authority vis-a-vis the child are themselves the perpetrators or when abuse or violence takes place when the children are in school, under their charge as in *loco parentis* rule, there is aggravated liability. However, it is this very hierarchical relationship and the culture of silence in schools that makes it difficult to implement the provisions effectively. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India produced a report on child abuse by interviewing 12,447 children in 13 States (Karnataka was not included) belonging to five categories - children in the family environment, children in schools, children in institutions, children at work and street children. According to this report, 52.94% boys and 47.06% boys admitted to having faced some form of sexual abuse and half of the children going to schools were sexually abused and most of them had not filed any complaint (MWCD, Government of India, 2007, p.75).

However, even this report does not tell us much about the prevalence of abuse and violence while children are in schools. The question that then arises is : why do we not know enough about abuse and violence within schools? This leads us to question the transparency, accountability and channels of visibility in abuse and violence in schools. Given the culture of hierarchy, obedience and silence in schools, how do we know if there is any offence

[21] *WP 33161/2017; Schools challenge amendment to Karnataka Education Act, Deccan Herald, 26 July 2017, https://www.deccanherald.com/content/624719/schools-challenge-amendment-karnataka-education.html*

[22] *HC notice to State on amended Karnataka Education Act, The Hindu, 25 July 2017, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/hc-notice-to-state-on-amended-karnataka-education-act/article19360210.ece*

committed against a child during school? When we review cases reported by the media in recent times, we find that the cases have only come to light when the child has reported the matter to the parents or other trusted adults or the parents noticed injuries and/or behavioural changes.

In conclusion, we find that while the legal and policy frameworks on the subject of protection of children within schools is slowly emerging, there needs to be greater clarity about the implications of non-compliance for schools and greater awareness among parents and SMCs. Even though governmental regulation of schools in ensuring compliance of stipulated norms is required, there is need to mobilise grass-root level monitoring by activating SMCs and parents to play a proactive role in ensuring protection of children in schools.

Archana is an independent researcher working in the area of child rights and right to education. She has earlier worked with Tata Institute of Social Sciences and National Law School of India University. She may be contacted at mehendalearchana@gmail.com

Swagata is an independent legal researcher working in the area of child protection. She completed her B.A. LLB (Hons.) from West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences and her Masters in International Human Rights Law from Oxford University. She may be contacted at swagataraha@gmail.com

Development of Teacher Education in Meghalaya

Bashan D.M. Diengdoh

Teacher Education Institutions were established in a gradual manner to cater to the needs of teachers in the state. The first Teacher Education Institution under the Theological College was started by the Welsh Mission at Cherrapunjee for training of teachers at the primary level. In 1861, the Government decided to amalgamate the Training School section of the Cherrapunjee Normal School from Nongsawlia to Shillong and attached to the Welsh Mission High School at Mawkhar Shillong. By 1946, the Training School functioned in the same building. In 1947, after Independence, the then Government of India requested the Welsh Mission to extend the facility in giving training to the Lower Primary School teachers. The training school later came to be known as Cherra Teachers‟ Training Centre under the management of the Presbyterian Church.

Long before the establishments of BTCs, the Government in 1906 started the Guru Training School (GTS) at Tura with an intake capacity of 30 trainees. It catered to the training needs of primary teachers in Garo Hills, however, due to administrative problem, it ceased to function few years back after nine decades of its existence.

St. Edmund‟s B.T. College, Shillong which was established in the year 1934 was closed down in the year 1942 as per verbal information obtained from St. Edmund‟s College, Shillong.

St. Mary‟s B.T. College now St. Mary‟s College of Teacher Education was established in 1937 in response to a request and dire need of women‟s B. T. College. It was affiliated to Calcutta University in 1938, then to Gauhati University in 1948 and subsequently to North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong in 1973. This College till 1998 conducted part-time course with the help of teachers from the Degree College. It was the first B.T. College for women in the North Eastern States and has been rendering yeoman service in the field of Teacher Education at Secondary level for the past 60 years and is considered to be one of the best B.Ed. Colleges. With the implementation of the National Council of Teacher Education Norms (under NCTE Act 1993), the College has been functioning as a full-fledged College of Teacher Education conducting a one year B.Ed. programme with an approved intake capacity of 100 student teachers.

Then, the Basic Training Centre (BTC) was first established at Malki, Shillong in 1940 by Ms Margaret Barr, a social worker and an educationist from England under Basic Scheme of Education propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. Then later BTCs were established at Rongkhon, West Garo Hills in 1955, Thadlaskein, Jaintia Hills in 1967 and at Resubelpara, East Garo Hills in 1974.

The Post Graduate Training College, Shillong, now, College of Teacher Education (PGT), Shillong was established in the year 1964 to provide degree level training to graduate teachers teaching secondary schools. Initially, the College conducted a full time and a part time course of the one year duration to meet the training needs of the teachers. The intake capacity of the college in both the programmes came to approximate 300 per year. With the implementation of the National Council of Teacher Education Norms (under NCTE Act 1993), the college is now functioning as a full-fledged College of Teacher Education and is conducting a full time one year B.Ed. programme with an approved intake capacity of 100 student teachers.

For the middle or Upper Primary stage, the two Normal Training Schools, one at Cherrapunjee, East Khasi Hills and the other at Tura, West Garo Hills, were established by the Government in the year 1968 with the aim to train the in-service teachers at the upper primary level.

Kiang Nangbah B.T. College, Jowai was established in the year 1981 in Jowai with the objective to train the teachers at the Secondary level in the district. With the introduction of the NCTE norms, the College had closed down its operations, due to inability to comply with the norms.

The Government College of Teacher Education, Tura, in West Garo Hills came into existence in

the year 1993 to cater to the needs of teacher at Secondary level in the three districts of Garo Hills of the State. The College, at present, conducts the one-year B.Ed. programme with an approved intake capacity of 100 student teachers.

The Don Bosco College of Teacher Education, Tura, a Don Bosco Institution established in the year 2005 started the one-year B.Ed. programmes with recognition and permission from NCTE with an annual intake capacity of 100 student teachers.

In addition, there were private non-Government Elementary Teacher Education Institutions, namely, St. Mary‟s Mazzarello, Jaintia Hills, which was started in 1962, and Lum Jingshai Training Centre, Marbisu, East Khasi hills, in 1977. These institutions functioned to serve the training needs of the primary school teachers in the State. But with the implementation of NCTE norms, these two institutions ceased to function in the year 1996 and 2000 respectively, due to the denial of recognition by the NCTE.

The District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) conceived in the NPE (1986) were established in the State first in the three districts in the year 2000. These are located at Thadlaskein, Jaintia Hills, Cherrapunjee, East Khasi Hills, and Resubelpara, East Garo Hills Districts. Later, the other four DIETs were also established and started functioning from the academic year 2005-06 and these are located at Saiden, Ri-Bhoi, Baghmara, South Garo Hills, Tura, West Garo Hills and Nongstoin, West Khasi Hills Districts. The main purpose of the DIETs are to cater to the needs of Elementary Education by way of imparting Pre-service and In-service Teacher Education programme for the elementary school teachers and also to train the Adult and Non-formal personnel for the proper functioning of the Adult and Non-formal education programmes.

Dr. Bashan is a senior faculty member of DERT, Shillong with more than 15 years of experience working in the field of teacher education and social science. During this period, he has been involved in the centrally sponsored scheme of teacher education, research activities, in-service training programmes for teachers and teacher educators, educational technology, planning and administration, etc. At present, he is working on case studies of a few schools in the state and looking at how transformation of non-performing schools in the state can be improvised through the concept of School Improvement Planning. He may be contacted at bashandesmond@gmail.com

Partnering with the Government: Achieving sustainable special education goals for children with hearing impairment: A case study from Assam

Brinda Crishna

Only the brave dare to think upon the grey –

Upon the things which cannot be explained easily,

Upon the things which often engender mistakes,

Upon the things whose cause cannot be understood

Upon the things we must accept and live with.

And therefore only the brave dare to look upon difference without flinching

Richard H Hungerford

Introduction

As a professional who has worked in the disability sector in many parts of the world, my greatest challenge has always been in constantly questioning my own levels of understanding and acceptance as in reality, the life a person who is disabled, or a mother of a child who gives birth to a child with a disability and not the perfect child she had hoped for, are truths that one cannot begin to comprehend. As I have grown older and my years of 'experience' of gaining 'knowledge and expertise' have increased, the more aware and convinced I am of how little I really do know, how quickly the professional in me jumps to conclusions and makes value judgements of good and bad practice, how easily one falls prey to feelings of superiority because one feels that we have so many answers.

This philosophy and line of thought has influenced all the work I have done, and influenced the way we approach our work in VAANI. When considering a partnership with a hearing-impaired child, a parent, an NGO, or the government, it is the belief that we need to listen, to build trust, to understand the other's point of view, before one can start any kind of a relationship and that, I can say with pride, has made most of our work successful and sustainable. It is only then truly need based.

What has this got to do with a case study of working in partnership with the government in Assam, you might well ask, and I will reply that it is a conscious attitude to respect and listen, that has made our partnership with the Assam government as successful as it has become. After working together for a number of years, the departments are so convinced about the work we have been doing together, that they are now signing an MoU with us whereby we will only give some required technical inputs, while they continue to develop the programme on their own.

Background

VAANI, Deaf Children's Foundation was established in 2005 and is the first national NGO in India focusing only on issues around childhood deafness. VAANI provides holistic services that address the social, emotional, communication, language development and educational needs of hearing-impaired children. It encourages families to learn to communicate and understand their hearing - impaired children and thus take an active part in supporting all their needs, including advocating for their rights from governments and service providers.

VAANI's genesis lies in the recommendations of the feasibility study carried out in November 2002 on issues surrounding childhood deafness. It was a national level study conducted in a totally participatory manner. The researcher met families of children with hearing impairment, with the children themselves, with professionals from the Government and non-government agencies across the country. The findings of the study and our work in the last 10 years show that the area of greatest need expressed by all who are involved in or connected with the hearing- impaired including parents, young hearing- impaired people and adults themselves, is the need to create an awareness and understanding about the whole issue of being unable to hear – what it means, how it is caused, the need for early intervention, the problems of communication, the low numbers of parents who

are empowered enough to lobby for their children, the lack of support groups, the lack of information, the lack of employment opportunities and how all this affects the lives of the hearing-impaired, leaving them without the power to direct their own lives.

In India, the statistics for childhood deafness are staggering. Congenital deafness affects 5.6-10 of every 1000 live births in the country (National Health Portal of India). This does not take into the number of children who acquire postnatal deafness due to health and hygiene reasons. Children born with hearing impairments are unable to comprehend the meaning of the world around them or to express themselves. They cannot chat with their friends and families, understand people around them or learn from their teachers. They remain totally isolated, living in silence in our noisy world.

VAANI works towards bringing language and communication into the lives of hearing-impaired children and their families, while addressing issues about their social and emotional wellbeing.

At VAANI, children with hearing difficulties are taught to communicate, and their families are trained to understand them and manage their social and emotional needs. No two children are alike. So, an Individual education plan (IEP) is drawn up with annual and quarterly goals based on that specific child's communication, social, emotional and intellectual abilities. One professional teacher of the deaf (ToD) is assigned to each child. The ToD meets with the child AND his/her parent once a week for an hour-long session. The presence of the parent as a part of the teaching process is compulsory, so that the work can be taken forward and practised at home.

On the other days of the week, the child is encouraged to go to regular school so that he/she remains a part of the mainstream and socialises with other children. The teachers at the regular school are given skill training on how to handle the hearing-impaired child in their class and get the best out of him/her.

Working in Partnership

We believe very strongly that real change and impact can only happen if we link our programmes with already existing plans and schemes that exist within the government, be this Central or State government. They have the means and the reach. Hence working in partnership with the government seems to be the logical way forward if we want sustained and far reaching changes.

VAANI has been actively working in Assam since October 2007 and in the past ten years of our work, what came through as a huge gap was the need for the involvement of parents in the lives of their hearing-impaired children and also the need for identifying and early intervention with hearing-impaired infants and young children.

Early identification of children who are born unable to hear or are hard of hearing is critical to ensure that their families have the knowledge, understanding and resources they need to help their children acquire language, spoken and/or visual and achieve age-appropriate communicative, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional development. The hearing-abled child acquires the skills of communication through using speech and language which s/he hears around her/him.

This is not possible for the hearing - impaired child as the loss of hearing does not allow him/her to learn language, and who therefore has no mode of learning. There is a gap between actual communication and educational requirements of the very young hearing-impaired child and the learning opportunities available to her/him either at home or at an early pre-school programme. Hence there has been a desperate need for early intervention programmes to be set up as this will provide appropriate learning and understanding, pre-school skills and emotional bonding from the very birth of the child, ensuring a stable future growth.

We realised that to be able to integrate into already existing programmes the first step would be to create an awareness about the nature of our work amongst relevant government departments in a positive and non-threatening manner and gain their trust in working towards building a positive relationship.

The Assam Strategy

Since VAANI works to educate hearing-impaired children, we started by approaching the SSA (Department of Education) in Assam in 2007

- Slowly, with many and repeated interactions, SSA functionaries began to understand the complexities of childhood deafness. For example, in a seminar conducted by VAANI, the Director of the SSA realised for the very first time that a hearing aid without an ear mold was of no benefit to a child.
- Once officials were convinced, VAANI began training SSA volunteers and teachers and in 2010, it became the State Resource Organisation on all issues related to hearing impairment for SSA. We soon realised that via the SSA, services did not reach the 0 to 6 years age group.
- The next step then was to approach the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service) department – Social Welfare Department. It was easier this time as we had already established a relationship with the Department of Education. In the meantime, we had conducted a State-wide study on what was happening to hearing-impaired children in Assam in particular. The breakthrough was after the seminar entitled Status of Deaf Children in Assam where the results of the study was shared and in which the Social Welfare Department had been encouraged to participate actively and it was then, in 2011, that the decision was taken of taking the work forward with VAANI.
- In 2012 VAANI was considered a member of the State Social Audit Committee of the Department of Social Welfare, Assam.
- Subsequently, with continuous networking and finally convincing the government to approve of the decision, an MOU was signed in 2014.

  'VAANI's work is a boost. In this project, identification of hearing-impaired children is most important and it is important that the AWWs know how to do it. All the AWWs need to be trained on identification and thus help in a more authentic data collection' (Anil Phukan, MIS in-charge, Department of Social Welfare)
- The stigma around hearing - impairment began getting erased and more people wanted to learn to use sign language

We decided to carry out a pilot study across three districts initially. The project aimed at setting up 26 satellite centres in the blocks of the three districts, Kamrup, Nalbari and Nagaon over a three year period and strengthening a State Nodal Resource Centre in Guwahati, which would act as a one- stop-shop for all kinds of services, information, resources and expertise in addressing problems relating to childhood hearing impairment within Assam. As language is a huge issue, all our teaching learning material was made available in the vernacular.

The State nodal resource centre would act as:

- A model best practice demonstration centre extending early intervention services for the development of young (0-6 years) hearing-impaired children in developing communication, language and literacy skills and measuring its impact.
- A research centre that would carry out research into developing innovative teaching techniques and material relevant to rural communities and hard to reach communities.
- A parent -friendly centre that would provide need- based support ranging from counselling and guidance services, to skill training programmes for parents/ caregivers of young hearing-impaired children.
- Provision of educational support to older hearing-impaired children to prepare and

enable them to gain access to appropriate mainstream classes and alternative forms of education such as vocational training.

Year 1 & 2 focussed on identification of hearing-impaired children and initiating centre -based services in the Block Sadhan centres,which were were in reality the *anganwadi* centres that were already in existence. We used their buildings and linked our teaching to activities that were already working. The centres began to get popular as all children coming to the Sadhan Centre benefitted as the *anganwadi* workers got training and developed skills in early identification and providing early stimulation and became efficient as teachers. Twenty six centres were equipped and became functional, with most of the *anganwadi* workers in charge of the centres assisting the VAANI team during the sessions with children's parents. With the rolling out of Year 3, work began on identifying leaders amongst parents and *anganwadi* workers who would be future resource persons in the blocks.

Amongst the *anganwadi* workers, prior to attending the training workshops, two percent of the participants had less than 20 percent level of knowledge. After attending the workshops, 75 percent of the participants had increased their level of knowledge on hearing impairment to above 70 percent.

Amongst the parents, 10 percent of the parents had below 20 percent level of knowledge about deafness and communication skills. After attending the workshops, 85 percent of the parents' level of knowledge on hearing impairment and communication skills increased to above 70 percent

Visits to the AWC revealed that parents had started getting involved and had shown interest in coming to the centres regularly as they believed that the teaching had improved the communication between the parent and the child. The mothers all observed that their child's comprehension power had improved as they noticed a substantial progress in the understanding and writing skills of their child, something they had not seen earlier when these children had been attending regular schools. An indirect impact of VAANI's work with the SSA was that block level Master Trainers were also being trained on sign language by VAANI trainers and were now actively disseminating skills to general school teachers.

Linkages with district and block level functionaries had to constantly be strengthened by involving them in not only the 'good' achievements, but honestly sharing the challenges as well and actively encouraging them to share ideas and thoughts. With their increased cooperation, we were slowly able to achieve the project goals.

Today the SSA and Social Welfare Department are working to identify strategies of sustaining the work in the 26 Sadhan Centres with VAANI's technical support, and taking the project forward to other districts.

Key Learnings

- Government officials needed to be educated on issues just like everybody else – politely, patiently, persistently. Government officials are traditionally wary of the 'NGO types'. There is a need to build relationships as allies and not antagonists and assist them in developing a sense of ownership with the work being done.
- Specialised training of government workers has a better response when the trainees saw it as personal skill development and enhancement and begin to see themselves as professionals who are mastering skills such as making planning schedules, writing concise reports that are not time consuming, maintaining accurate records and gathering accounting knowledge etc.
- There has to be active proof of work. The 28 Sadhan Centres that developed did so in the already existing anganwadi centres. VAANI equipped the centres with necessary teaching and learning material, which benefitted not only hearing - impaired children, but even the other children who came to the centres. The setting up a state resource centre was able to demonstrate good practice and was able to put government officials in touch with the actual beneficiaries.
- Working with the government often involves dealing with multiple departments/ministries who are often not used to working together. Focus has to be made on collaboration and coordination. An example of this is the Steering Committee meetings, where all levels, from the District Commissioner, the Nodal officers and the SSA teachers attended. This ensured that the plans were made together and everyone knew what they were responsible for and knew

what was expected of them.

- There has to be a conscious effort to allocate human resources for liaising with the Government. People who see the officials as their own, chosen from within their communities, who speak their language, see them as non-threatening. The fact that all our training materials and posters are in the vernacular bolstered these beliefs.
- Government workers must be compensated for additional work done or taken on by them. A small allowance to cover their transport, a small stipend or awards in recognition of work done go a long way. For example, anganwadi workers are paid only a very nominal amount of money and often just their travel consumes most of the allowance given to them.
- Possibly the greatest lesson we learnt was that working with the Government is a long term commitment and that the differences in pace and priorities need to be thought through and managed.
- The greatest challenge we faced was when officials left and we had to start afresh to educate the new officers who took over from them. However, we also saw that involving people at all levels at our meetings and awareness raising sessions proved that some degree of learning and continuity remained

Conclusion

It is important to bear in mind that government officials are no different from other people and we are all human beings, with our own personal biases, good days and bad days. Traditionally the relationship between the government and the NGO sector has been filled with suspicious mistrust. We need to break this pattern and I believe strongly that it can be done! The only way for us to ensure sustainable change is by working with the government.

Brinda is the Founder-Trustee of VAANI Deaf Children's Foundation. She is a trained special educator and seasoned development professional. She has a Master's degree in Special Education from the University of Manchester, UK. She has spent her entire working years, or more than 40 years, fiercely working for the rights and development of children with special needs. She has worked with international and bilateral agencies and NGOs, including the ADB (Vietnam and Cambodia), the IFC and the World Bank, the British Council, Cheshire International, Handicap International, Save The Children and Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy. Her approach to work is based on a deep commitment to the right to equality for human beings. She may be contacted at bcrishna@vaani.in

Details Matter: An Evaluation of 'Evaluations'

Harini Kannan

Introduction

In August 2009, the Indian parliament enacted the Right to Education (RTE) Act which enshrined education from 6 to 14 years as a 'right'. The Act additionally mandated a variety of 'requirements' relating to infrastructure, Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), curriculum, teacher training, inclusionary education, and the focus of this article – a continuous and comprehensive student evaluation system (CCE). The objective of these mandates was ensuring a 'quality' education for children.

Amongst the mandates, the introduction of CCE signaled a paradigm shift in India's public education. Historically, student evaluations have focused on measuring academic knowledge gained by children over the course of a term or year through terminal examinations. These were high-stakes exams, as scores carried a lot of weight in determining whether students were promoted or detained in the same standard. Traditional systems of evaluation were also very narrow in their scope – the focus was primarily on evaluating students on 'subject' knowledge and very rarely, if at all on other aspects. CCE on the other hand, was meant to be both continuous and comprehensive: by 'continuous' it meant that evaluation of students would be done 'continually' over the course of the academic term, and by 'comprehensive' it meant that evaluations would not just focus on learning in academic subjects, but also on co-curricular activities and behaviour. The underlying sentiment impelling these changes was that schooling should foster learning, be enjoyable and less stress inducing and focus on the holistic development of a child.

As the CCE programme was being rolled out, researchers affiliated with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) conducted a rigorous evaluation of the implementation of the CCE programme in Haryana.[1] The results were sobering. In spite of the promise of CCE to catalyse improvement in primary schools, the programme does not appear to be meeting the basic objective of increasing learning outcomes.

'Theory' of CCE

The 'continuous' aspect of CCE is well grounded in student evaluation theory. Continuous evaluation typically consists of 'formative' and 'summative' evaluations which are carried out throughout the term and at the end of the term respectively. Formative evaluations are diagnostic in nature and the information gathered from them is used to strengthen the teaching-learning process. Summative assessments, conducted at the end of the term, enable quantification of students' gains in knowledge. While summative assessments are typically pen and paper tests, formative assessments can range from informal ones such as oral questions asked during class to pop quizzes and projects. These types of evaluations are therefore designed to be complementary to one another and more inclusive to students who may face challenges with respect to traditional assessments.

The 'comprehensive' aspect of CCE focuses on holistic development of children. This has been emphasised by educators over time as essential to ensure that students gain key life-skills and be productive members of society. However, despite this lofty sentiment, there has been no formal integration of measures to cultivate these life-skills in the standard school curriculum; rather this has been left to schools and teachers. Comprehensive evaluations have been seen as a tool to align the focus of the goal with the processes to achieve the same.

Implementation and Evaluation of CCE

While the RTE Act mandated the introduction of CCE, it stipulated that states design their own programmes as suitable for their local needs. The

[1]*This paper is a non-technical summary of Berry et. al. (2018). Please review the paper for more details on the evaluations and results. The working paper can be accessed at https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/Failure-of-Frequent-Assesment_Berry-et-al._feb_2018.pdf*

Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) was the pioneer in introducing CCE in affiliated schools, and its programme has served as the blueprint for various states developing their own programmes. As of April 2018, almost all states have implemented CCE, though there are variations in the coverage across schools and standards.

In spite of CCE's widespread adoption as well as support from educationalists (CBSE 2009), little is known about the program's effects on outcomes it is supposed to help achieve. Quantification of a programme's impact is ultimately an empirical question and one cannot conclude on the 'impact' of a program without subjecting it to a rigorous impact evaluation. Impact evaluations of social programmes and policies are common in the development economics literature and increasingly adopted by governments and civil society organisations to understand whether new programmes 'work.'

Shortly after CCE's adoption by the Central Government, the Government of Haryana Department of Education reached out to J-PAL to conduct an evaluation of the CCE programme in the State of Haryana during the 2012-2013 school year. While the evaluation was limited to Haryana's CCE implementation, broader lessons can be distilled. Before the article outlines the programme, findings and conclusions; a short refresher on impact evaluations is warranted.

Impact Evaluation using Random Assignment

While 'impact' has many colloquial meanings, in the context of empirical research it has a very precise definition. Impact is defined *as the difference in outcomes (can be learning, health, economic etc.) of a group when they have been exposed to a programme compared to outcomes had they not been exposed to the program (counterfactual).* As one immediately recognises, it is impossible to observe the counterfactual and we need to use other means to create a group to compare outcomes. In academic parlance, this group is called the comparison or control group. While there are many different methodologies that can be used to quantify impact, the credibility of the method rests primarily on how the comparison group is created. These groups can be created in a random, quasi-random or non-random manner. The J-PAL affiliated researchers chose to evaluate the impact of the CCE programme using a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) design. RCTs are considered the most rigorous and credible way to evaluate programmes, as they involve randomly assigning individuals or groups to receive a program, while others are randomly assigned not to participate in the programme. The strength of the RCT design rests on random assignment of individuals or groups so that prior to the implementation of the programme, these groups are similar in nature and they only differ in their exposure to the program. Given this, if there are differences in outcomes at the end of the program, they can solely be attributed to the programme and not to other factors.

Haryana's CCE programme design and roll-out

In 2011, Haryana was one of the first states to develop and pilot their CCE program. The programme was designed by the State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT) and was influenced heavily by CBSE's program. Continuous evaluation was operationalised by evaluating students in standards 1 to 5 on a monthly basis and standards 6 to 8 on a quarterly basis. To facilitate diagnostic evaluation, languages were evaluated on the basis of listening, reading and writing skills, while mathematics and environmental sciences (EVS) were evaluated on the basis of learning of fundamental concepts. Key sub-skills/ concepts were identified for many of these, and assessment of children was required across all. The program required significant documentation in form of monthly evaluation sheets which the teacher used to record evaluation for each sub-skill including broader descriptive comments, and term-wise report cards which were used to provide a consolidated status of learning for each child enrolled in the class. Marks were eschewed and grades were provided at the end of the term to standards 6, 7 and 8, while a summary of descriptive remarks were provided for students in standards 1 to 5. The programme necessitated the use of a variety of evaluation tools such as oral recitation/Q&A, class participation, quizzes, unit tests and projects. To facilitate objectivity and standardisation in evaluation, detailed grading rubrics were provided. In addition to scholastic aspects, co-scholastic aspects such as participation, creativity and skill in cultural activities, and personal qualities such as respect, cleanliness, leadership quality, were also assessed.

Though the programme was conceptualised by the SCERT, the training for the programme was outsourced to private agencies. A 'cascade' training

model was adopted where the SCERT faculty oriented resource persons from agencies, who then trained master trainers who in turn trained the trainers. Teacher training was conducted for seven days at block headquarters by the trainers. Teachers were primarily trained on how to conduct student evaluations and complete the required documentation with some focus on how to change teaching practices or otherwise aid low performers.

During the course of designing the programme and planning for the evaluation; J-PAL researchers emphasised the need for a strong mentoring and monitoring mechanism in the field. Programme take-up and implementation often falters when there is no on-going support for implementer or participants. To ensure the CCE program was not consigned to that fate, the Education Department requested that the J-PAL research team help them set-up systems for monitoring and mentoring. Interestingly, while there was a pre-existing cadre of government officials called ABRC (Assistant Block Resource Coordinators) whose main role on paper was to support school functioning; their role as academic advisors was de-emphasised. They were instead used as 'couriers' to communicate with teachers, gather data and organise events. In consultation with the department, the J-PAL research team worked to operationalise and systematise the role of ABRC as mentors and monitors. This was done through clearly defining responsibilities, training them on the CCE programme and how to mentor and monitor it and finally setting up an internal implementation review and feedback mechanism within the district.

Evaluation Design, Sample and Data[2]

The Education department requested us to situate the evaluation across four blocks in two districts – Kurukshetra and Mahendragarh. Five hundred schools were sampled from a universe of all schools in the four blocks (Ateli and Narnaul in Mahendragarh and Thanesar and Pehowa in Kurukshetra). Four hundred of these schools were primary schools with standards 1 to 5, while the remaining hundred were upper primary schools consisting of standards 6 to 8 i.e. middle, high or senior secondary schools. To operationalise the RCT, the schools were randomly assigned to either receive the CCE intervention or to a control group.

Impact on what'?

While carrying on an impact evaluation, it is necessary to identify the outcomes that the program is designed to affect. Once these broad outcomes are conceptually defined, it is necessary to break them down in measurable indicators. There are a variety of outcomes that can be affected by the introduction of CCE – students may experience less stress, they may find school more enjoyable, or they may have improved self-esteem and learning outcomes. The focus of our evaluation was limited to quantifying CCE's impact on learning outcomes for one major reason. In a country like India, which has made significant strides in student enrolment, learning outcomes have not kept pace. Year after year, the National Assessment Surveys and Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) report little, if any increases in learning outcomes. Therefore, a far reaching program such as CCE should first and foremost lead to improvements in learning outcomes. This focus was supported by senior bureaucrats who believed that, given the investment in the design and implementation of CCE; they would like to understand if the programme addressed the key issue of learning outcomes. We therefore decided to focus on learning outcomes in Hindi and Math.

Findings and rationale

What were the results of the evaluation? After one year of CCE implementation, we found that Hindi and Math test scores of students in schools exposed to the CCE program were statistically identical to those of students who were in the comparison schools—students in the CCE schools did no better than those in the comparison schools in either subject. Hence, we can conclude that CCE program did not improve learning outcomes.

So why didn't a programme designed ostensibly to improve learning outcomes have a positive impact? There are two main reasons why programmes fail – they are either not designed to address the key problem and/or they are not implemented in the field properly. In this section, we use a combination of anecdotes and hard data to unpack what may have gone wrong.

To ensure strong implementation, the program 'suppliers' (here, the teachers) have to be well

[2] *A pedagogy intervention which involved remedial teaching at the level of student's ability by grouping was also evaluated at the same time (TaRL). Please refer to (Banerjee 2017) which describes the findings from this and related interventions.*

trained, monitored and given support when required. We found that while over 90 percent of teachers were trained on CCE, only 41 percent of teachers in primary and 21 percent of teachers in upper primary classes maintained evaluation sheets and report cards, which are critical for recording and use of evaluation information. While this is egregious, what was more concerning was that even when records were maintained, the information from evaluations was not typically used to identify low performers, to change teaching practices or to provide feedback to students. Therefore a key underlying tenet of CCE was unmet. Interestingly, while the official CCE concept note issued by the SCERT did mention identification of low performers and recommended remediation, remediation was not covered extensively during teacher training. Given the poor learning outcomes in the state, concrete remedial measures for various causes of low performance were also not recommended as the faculty at SCERT indicated that the onus of developing remedial measures rests on the teachers. The design of CCE which involved evaluating students across 20 skills and 41 sub-skills proved to be extremely onerous. The most common concern expressed by head-teachers was that CCE was extremely time consuming. While more than two-thirds of teachers surveyed indicated that they faced problems implementing CCE, less than 10 percent indicated it positively affected teaching.

Travelling in the field and speaking to teachers, we acquired a more nuanced understanding of what CCE meant to them. A significant number of teachers viewed CCE as just an increase in the number of times a student was to be evaluated, or a need to do more projects and ensuring children were encouraged in co-curricular activities. Since the 'no detention' policy was also introduced at the same time, a few teachers took it to mean 'no exams/ evaluations' more broadly and questioned the need for CCE. Examining completed evaluation sheets, we found that teachers either provided comments such as 'good/fair' or did not provide any, while a few teachers indicated that they needed a lot more training on evaluating co-curricular activities and behaviour. Even teachers who had completed evaluation sheets weren't able to indicate which of the children were low performers and why, so readiness for remediation seemed a long way off. These conversations and observations indicate that teachers hadn't internalized the philosophy of CCE which may have affected their interest and ability to implement.

Lessons learned

Though our evaluation specifically examined Haryana's CCE programme, there are more generalisable lessons that can be distilled. Haryana's CCE wasn't designed keeping in mind ground realities of student performance or teacher's motivations – it failed as it did not focus on building basic skills or entrench a mechanism of feedback.

An ideal CCE programme would not just involve going through the motions of incorporating different evaluation tools and conducting more evaluations; it would chart out a clear process by which the evaluation data can be analysed and fed-back into the teaching learning loop. It would set clear guidelines for identifying low performer students and provide insights on types of remedial measures that can be adopted. While the administration believes that teachers are best equipped to devise their own remedial programs, insights from the field indicate that teachers do not possess this skill, and therefore a state policy with such a focus is warranted. Too many parameters for evaluation lead to significant investment of time in evaluation, time which could be put to more productive use. CCE programs in other states that have similar documentation requirements would entail similar burden as Haryana's CCE program. Interestingly, a 2014 National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT) report indicated that many states do have such requirements as part of their CCE programme.

CCE, while having a clear underlying theory, has not been found to have a significant impact on learning outcomes and is therefore unlikely to be the programme India requires. Given the situation India faces- where a significant percent of students do not possess basic learning competencies- there is a dire need for programmes that directly focus on building basic skills. Interestingly, the pioneer of CCE in India, the CBSE, seems to have recognised the pitfalls of CCE and reinstated a system of evaluation in secondary schools close to one that existed prior to the advent of CCE. Perhaps it is time for state governments to take stock and reconsider.

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Harini is a Senior Research Manager and Post-Doctoral Fellow at J-PAL South Asia at IFMR. Her interest in evidence-based policy formulation influenced her decision to work with J-PAL South Asia. She is currently working in New Delhi as a Principal Investigator on a variety of evaluations in education and health. She also works with the J-PAL South Asia training team to provide customised advisory services for various partners such as Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID, and the Governments of Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Punjab. She may be contacted at harini.kannan@ifmr.ac.in

Transforming Rural Primary Schools: Case for Community Centred Approach

Javed Siddiqui

State of Rural Schools

India has the exceptional achievement of having a primary school (class I-V) within one kilometer in 98 percent of its habitations. Access to physical infrastructure is matched in official records with enrolment in excess of 96 percent. But the good progress on getting rural children to schools is, however, substantially lost with low retention and insufficient learning levels, restricting opportunities for their future lives as citizens, parents and contributing members of the economy. ASER[1] 2016 shows that 27 percent of all children in Std. VIII were unable to read a Std II level text, almost 57 percent were unable to solve a 3-digit by 1-digit division sum. The proportion of children in Class III who are able to read at least Class I level is barely 42.5 percent.

Transforming Rural India (TRI) baselines focused on rural primary schools across 17 districts in east-central India showed even poorer results. Further, it found rural schools are rarely open for full school hours, on an average we have 25 percent regular teachers and 25 percent untrained 'guest' teachers and almost 50 percent vacancy. It is not a surprise that parents are pulling their children out of government schools: these are truly worrying statistics. Our schools are failing to equip children with basic skills and setting stagnation in inter-generational mobility. In rural schools, the majority of children are first time learners and, with over half of the parents never having been to school, their aspirations from schooling includes support in furthering family advancement. Thus, the social cost of this systematic neglect of rural schools includes the family and the community.

Beyond concerns on learning outcomes, our engagement with schools will need also to include as primary responsibility, shaping the child's future life in a democratic society. Well-functioning 'schools' in a deeply stratified society with pervasive embedded caste, class, gender discrimination and hierarchies are primary spaces to forge new social contracts founded on our Constitutional values of freedom, equality, justice and liberty. The child has an opportunity in school to develop new fellowships beyond her family and kinship which create the necessary conditions for unfettered expression of her innate potential.

Transforming Rural India's Efforts

Education outcomes have intersectional and mutually reinforcing ratchets with other quality life dimensions. 'Early learning crisis' in primary schools are linked to the absence or the poor quality of preschools, particularly for rural children who are first generation learners and come from print-deficit homes. Much research has confirmed that a child's psycho-social and cognitive development is determined by her first 1000-day nutrition, which is linked to habitation, disease burden, sanitation, food availability at home, intra-household gender equality and such determinants. In addition to well-functioning schools we will need well-functioning village life for achieving foundational outcomes in schools.

The education effort at TRI is situated in its broader action engagement around multi-dimensional change in the village with leadership in the community. In our understanding one of the prime drivers of the poor state of our schools is a three-way trust deficit: the community-school, school-teacher, and child-community disconnect. TRI engagement attempts to create conditions to address this by taking a multi-pronged approach. In addition to working towards increasing school and teacher accountability and bringing pedagogical innovations for better classroom experience, efforts are also on to harness positively the aspirations of parents and a shared responsibility and accountability of community in shaping goals and engagement. TRI's Education Sector Council has detailed the following pathways to bring desired changes:

[1]*Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), India's largest NGO-run annual survey, has been conducted by Pratham since 2005.*

	Pathways	Description	What success looks like ?
	Enhance Parent-Child Interactions	This focuses on parental support to child, includes - building understanding of education and purpose among parents - sensitise Parent to alternative notions of childhood and for back-home support to child - learning material in homes, print-rich environment - joint work and presentations by Parent-Child	Parent is invested, interested and supports child in her learning.
	Strengthen Parent-School Engagement	This focuses on the Parent's engagement with school and teacher, includes - support parents to dialogue with teacher about her ward, wherever possible through PTA and similar structures - equipping her to assess learning attainment of her ward and of other peers of her child - Parent groups to support teachers and children interactions and school activities	Parent has legitimacy and consensus about knowing how her ward is doing, she is also forthcoming in supporting legitimate affairs of the school.
	(a) Strengthen local communities' engagement with School (b) Building and sustaining local ecosystem for supporting education	This focuses on "Community" which goes beyond parent to other villagers, women collectives, traditional collectives, Panchayat leaders etc. and could include engagements that - foster sense of ownership, engagement, support and pride in the local school - citizen understanding of school including infrastructure as mandated under RTE, teacher and support from government - Strengthening of SMC – members' understanding of their role - Functioning of Villages Education Committee, Janpad Shiksha Upsamiti etc. - Social peer pressure on sending children to schools - Community engagement with drop-out children - Normative issues are children studying for couple of hours in evening etc. - Community volunteers - Shikshan-Mitra/Para-Teacher supporting children off-classroon - Shikshan Protsahan Kendras, Library, Children Activity Centre etc	Local community owns the school, is interested, engaged and supportive of its well-functioning. Contributes (by way of volunteering, financial resources etc.) to setting mechanisms supportive of education.
	Enhancing Teacher motivation and Capacities	Here focus is on teacher connect with mission of education, includes : - Formal mechanisms for acknowledgment - Conversations and Peer Groups - Teacher Resource Centre- - Better classroom materials and methods – work sheets, Teaching Learning Material	Teacher is motivated and skilled to make classrooms better, meaningful, engaging and imbued with learning and enjoying the act.
	Strengthen Education System	Strengthening the monitoring and support system at Cluster and Block levels; - participation in CRC and BRC meetings to make introduction of new methods a sustainable process. - Work with BEO to expand the program through CRC and BRC participation - Sensitisation of the governance and administrative structures towards this elements and build towards institutionalising them	Education bureaucracy and local mechanisms are supportive of teachers, head-masters

Creating Space for Community Action

While learning from past efforts, we have placed the involvement of the community central to our efforts. Communities, largely seen as being illiterate, are perceived as being incapable of contributing to the learning of the children. Thus, it is alienated from the decision-making process related to schools. We are attempting to broaden engagement beyond mandated spaces like School Management Committee (SMC) and Village/ Panchayat Education Committees, for community to also take responsibility for anchoring off-classroom support to children, mobilising parents and building a supportive print-rich ambience in the village. The key challenge being addressed is establishing community ownership and parent's engagement with schools which can bridge the existing trust deficit and bring a sense of purpose for teachers. The effort thus focuses on work with community collectives, Panchayats and their leaders to take responsibility and strengthen the local school system. Additionally, a cadre of socially motivated local women from within the community are being groomed to encourage and support public system interface platforms like the SMC, PRI-platforms.

Parallel engagement with the school teachers attempts both to support their capacity and connect them with the community and PRI leadership to seek help and support in performing their duties. Thus, the Theory of Change revolves around (a) triggering 'community action' (b) better engagement of parent (c) strengthening delivery capacity of the education systems. Results and community leadership form important elements of our approach, particularly as we would like efforts to sustain beyond our presence in the villages, schools. In order to institutionalize a process that creates an environment which promotes learning, we need affective and effective engagement of the community.

These efforts require a new mode of engagement with the community and the fostering of a new ethos, supported by practical methods like the engagement of Community Volunteers. This starts with building their perspectives on education, appreciation of the role of the school and children in shaping the child's life-mechanism and responsibilities of public education system. Community based structures - such as federations and other collectives are central to this engagement. Events and processes in the community are facilitated by women in order to create an environment which promotes learning and begin engagement of the communities with the school. In order to institutionalize this process of engagement, their capabilities are strengthened to work with the existing functional structures such as the School Managements and the standing committees in the Gram Panchayat. This also gives these structures a broad base to make it more transparent and accountable to the community and thereby engaging them in the process of school development.

This is followed by interventions that develop the capabilities of community-based structures to work on education development initiatives. The activities designed by the children, parents and community volunteers is anchored by local community organisation, this is supported by the routine process of information flow and timely visibility of progress to different nodes.

Progress

TRI's Primary Education Pilots, which commenced in 11 blocks in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal, started in 2017. In each block, engagement is anchored by Education Resource Organisation[2] working closely with community collectives. In Madhya Pradesh, TRIF has entered into formal agreement with state government to work with Teachers and CRCs and create a supportive environment for this effort. All the Resource Organisations are part of TRI's Education Sector Council which integrates broad strategy and periodically assesses the progress being made.

It has evolved as a space for mutual learning, peer support and creating joint-action. Resource organisations have developed roadmap across the five Pathways, in each block a baseline status of schools has been completed, informing context-specific strategies and activities. Today, 731 community volunteers across 566 villages are engaged in strengthening schools and off-school processes in their villages. 192 Village Organisations comprising leaders from Women Self Help Groups have set targets for their village schools. In 56

[2]Eklavya (http://www.eklavya.in/); Vikramshila (http://www.vikramshila.org/); Prajayatna (www.prajayatna.org); Vidya Bhawan (http://www.vidyabhawan.org/) and Samavesh http://www.samavesh.org/)

villages parallel supportive learning spaces such as libraries and learning centres have been started and in 110 villages the Village Organisations organise Balmelas to support teachers. With such active participation of community members, SMC engagements have been regularised in 262 schools and in 176 villages SMCs are connected with the Gramsabha/Panchayat where concerns around educational issues are regularly placed. Teacher training and different capacity building efforts, which include effective use of TLM and alternative classroom processes, have been done with 319 teachers The first annual dipstick study commissioned in May 2018 will show whether an education effort which simultaneously works with all the constituents – child, parent, community, teacher, school and situated within the context of community-led multi-dimensional effort -is able to produce better learning outcomes.

However, in one area where it is clearly making progress is involvement of community members in school affairs. A women leader captured this genuine desire to change: 'We feel bad about our lives, alas if we could have studied…… we would not have been called 'gawaar' (illiterate), we don't want our children to face this!' Ranjita Devi, a leader from Dewla village Rajpur block responding to importance of education for community shared '… if children have knowledge and understanding they live life with cleanliness, they can talk with others and understand what other says. They know and can understand the things even outside of the village boundary…. they know what are the schemes and support available from government and how to take advantage of these schemes.'

A few indications of promise for remote rural schools are visible in improved attendance, teachers spending more time in schools and with children, parent engagement with children, community efforts to recognise teachers, quality of SMC meetings etc. Communities have mobilised resources and volunteered to set up Children Activity Centres, organise summer camps. In Bankura, enthused school teachers have started a local magazine to share their experiences, best practices and also sharpen their writing skills. Laxman Mahato, teacher of Mukundpur Primary School opines that the 'magazine becomes a voice for progressive region….. this magazine brought out regularly has the potential to become a voice of progress and reason in this entire region eventually helping the cause of good education'.

At Transform Rural India, this early experience gives us confidence in the power of convergent action to make the rural schools better.

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Javed, as a Manager, anchors the Transform Rural India (TRI) - Education Sector Council. He is responsible for establishing and nurturing partnerships and is also involved in supporting field engagement for deeper understanding and ground-level strategic actions. He has about twenty years of professional experience in the Elementary Education and Development sector, out of which, for eleven years he worked as a Research Associate for NGOs and State education bodies across India, managing various programs and project components. Prior to joining TRI Foundation, Javed has worked on Science Education with leading organisations like Eklavya, Azim Premji Foundation, etc. He has also worked as a Resource Support for government and non-governmental entities such as S.C.E.R.T., BGVS Maharashtra, Doosra Dasak Rajasthan India, Arch Nachiketa Trust, etc. Javed has done his Masters in Development Management from Asian Institute of Management, Philippines. He further holds a post-graduate degree in International Education & Development from the University of Sussex, UK and Master of Science in Botany. He may be contacted at javed@trif.in

Initiative Towards Quality Education

Manoj Kumar Tripathy

Education is a prime concern of society. Naturally both as individuals and as a society we always think about a better education for all round growth and development of the individual and, ultimately, society. Today the term quality education has gained pace and is a matter of concern and debate among educationists and even common people. In fact education itself is qualitative in nature and outcome. The matter of discussion or concern should be the process, the contents etc. Anyway many interventions and innovative ideas are being implemented and practised at different levels to ensure quality education, particularly in the field of elementary education.

In our state more than twenty-five areas have been identified for continuous professional development of teachers involved in elementary education, to meet their professional requirements and challenges to ensure quality education. Further, the aim is to make the classroom attractive, bring effectiveness and vibrancy in classroom transactions and, importantly, to provide children with a conducive environment where they can construct their knowledge.

Continuous professional development programmes like Art-Integrated learning, School Readiness Programmes related to literacy, early literacy, numeracy, English as fun, etc. are being implemented and have proved to be quite effective and helpful in meeting the quality education requirements.

The Art-Integrated Learning Programme (AIL) is one of the flagship programmes of NCERT. It was introduced in Bihar in 2013 with initiative of SCERT Bihar and support of UNICEF. Batches of master trainers were trained by the NCERT expert resource team. Since then the AIL programme was ramped up and now it is an important part of CPD. Initially it was started in 200 schools in 20 districts, each having 10 schools, with full support and enthusiasm. The teachers, CRCC, BRPs imparted training in pedagogy of AIL. The result is quite positive in a real time situation. In fact integration of art in learning process has not only created a friendly and joyful environment in schools, but has also become established as a dynamic and pedagogical process to bring back vibrancy and attractiveness in classroom transactions. The attendance, involvement and participation of children has increased manifold, the first and foremost change evident in school environment is the vibrant Chetana Satra (morning assembly).

Under the able leadership of *Bal Sansad* and trained teachers, children are making different shapes in different style in a regular rhythmic fashion. Besides the State prayer and National Anthem, in the *chetna satra* they enthusiastically sing devotional and local folk songs, the essence of their culture. News reading, creating and collecting local news, poetry recitation, motivational talks, birthday and auspicious days, social and cultural celebrations have all became regular feature in morning assembly. Interestingly, the activities of *chetna satra* are so designed that they could easily be integrated with different subjects, concepts and classroom activities.

For example, if the children are standing in a particular shape or design on any particular day, it may be a point of discussion and understanding regarding shape, size and dimension for class 1 to 8. For primary classes it may be a matter of observation, identification, assimilation, classification, etc. whereas for higher classes it is a matter of dimension, area, measurement and so on.

AIL provides ample scope and opportunity to integrate local art and cultural component with abundant local resources. Colours and crayons, sand and clay, paper and leaves, cloths and costumes, everything included in this programme provides a natural feeling. The programme helps in creating teaching learning materials for better understanding of different concepts. Importantly,with their active participation in all these processes children get fully involved. The use of visual and performing art forms at different level with proper identification and integration with different subject matters creates a vibrant environment, full of interest and joy. Pedagogically, too, AIL provides opportunities

to children to imagine and express, show their creativity and expression, grasp and understand concepts, develop relevant skills and many more. Now the pedagogy of AIL is being practiced in most schools throughout the state with proper training, academic input and support by SCERT and DIETs to create an environment for quality education.

Another interesting and innovative intervention in quality education is School Readiness Program - *CHAHAK*. Children coming to school for the first time must get space and identity. They should feel school to be as comfortable as their homes. The school environment must be conducive, friendly and joyful, making the children intimately involved. The programme is based on the theme 'Ready Children and Ready School to ensure learning'. *CHAHAK* is breaking the myth that only the teacher can ensure learning. This programme strongly establishes the fact that each and every child has the potential to learn and is ready to learn. This 24-day programme starts at the beginning of the new session, mostly with new entrants. Keeping in mind the context, background and previous experiences of children, the programme has been designed to acquaint them with the school environment without any hesitation.

The activities of *CHAHAK* intends to ensure that the school is a warm, welcoming and fear- free place for the children, specially for those who are coming for the first time. It tries to bridge the gap for those children who had never been a part of pre schooling, are from marginalised backgrounds and may not have the required psychological support necessary at the tender age of five or six.

CHAHAK also eases the process of the school and its teachers to understand and own the children. The programme includes sessions on storytelling, games and sports, chanting and recitation of poems with proper gestures, acting, singing, dance and drama, playing with clay, sand, crayons and colours, sketching, painting, observing and identifying their environment and surroundings through nature walks, etc.

CHAHAK is being implemented in all the schools of state with the support of Bihar Bal Bhawan *Kilkari*, Bihar Education Project, SCERT Bihar and UNICEF. Teachers of classes 1 and 2 have been imparted training. The teachers are not only enjoying the training but are also creating a joyful, playful and friendly environment in their respective schools to bring in the change.

Another quality initiative programme is the Sports Based Learning- *Khele Paddhe Badhe Bihar*. It is very true that every child has lot of potential and is full

of creative energy and vigour. Children are curious and inquisitive by nature, natural leaders with cooperative and helping attitudes. They try to do the things the way they think and want, with their full strength and capacity. One can see and realise it by watching their involvement and activity, particularly while they are playing. With this realisation it is felt that their such potential and qualities may be channelised effectively for the enhancement of learning.

It is sports and games which provide every opportunity to show the full capacity of their zeal, enthusiasm and involvement. With this notion the sports-based learning program has been initiated in state as *Khele Padhe Badhe Bihar*. The beauty of this programme is the inclusion of different child-friendly games properly integrated with the concepts in mathematics, science and language skills. The theme of sports-based learning is 'Sports for Development'. In it, almost all the games and sporting activities of different categories are included. The games are so designed and modified that outdoor games can easily be played indoors in a small place, even inside the classroom. It also includes health and hygiene, cleanliness, physical literacy. There is wide scope and understanding for the selection of local specific games so that children may show their interest, creativity and learn in the playway style.

These are a few initiatives which are in place to meet the demand and challenges of quality education in the state. The cost effective and local resource based nature of these programmes has increased the ownership and involvement of the schools, the teachers, the children and even the parents.

Most importantly all these programmes are inclusive in nature, providing ample scope for involvement and participation of all, irrespective of any barrier. Of course, these programmes are

easy, interesting and effortless as they provide opportunity to involve all. Their impact is more situational and real time that cannot be compared even with empirical data.

Each and every day opens a new horizon, full of new hope, expectation and experiences. The children are playing a pivotal role in furthering the effectiveness of these programmes with input of their experiences and resources of their context. All these programmes provide opportunities to bring the community closer and are happening at many places.

Manoj is currently the Head Master at Government School, Bheldumra, Ara, Bhojpur, Bihar. He is also a guest faculty at DIET Pirauta, Bhojpur and is associated with development of science books for elementary classes, curriculum, syllabus and self -learning materials for D.El.Ed., and training modules for pre-service and in-service teachers training. He is a trainer, subject specialist and State resource group member of SCERT Bihar, Bihar Education Project Council. He may be contacted at manojtripathy365@gmail.com

Government Initiatives Towards the 'Training' of Teachers: Principles and Implementation

Nimrat Khandpur

Context

The teacher is central to all educational reform – this is the underlying principle of change in educational processes. Hence, an initiative to capacitate teachers is generally an adjunct to most government initiatives in education. The word adjunct is chosen with care – while the intent is to capacitate teachers to create change, somehow the teacher becomes a supplementary rather than a key player. A case in point is the implementation of continuous and comprehensive evaluation across States. A reinforcement of good pedagogy became a 'programme' with fixed templates and close monitoring in most states. From trust in the teacher and autonomy for her to help her students learn, we moved to what was resented as additional paperwork.

While the reasons for a lack of trust in the teacher are many, ranging from systematic downgrading of the status of the teacher through top-down percolation of curricula, materials and processes, to the lack of facilitation within the ecosystem in which the teacher works, one manifestation is the perpetuation of outdated practices in our classrooms with ever worsening learning outcomes.

The situation becomes even more ironical when one considers the multiple initiatives the government has created for the professional development of teachers, including the setting up of decentralised structures devoted entirely to this purpose. While these structures are meant to facilitate both pre- and in-service professional development of teachers, this article will restrict itself to initiatives related to in-service professional development or 'training', the term commonly used for formal activities involving learning in teachers.

The question that first needs to be addressed – what kind of support do teachers need to be able to change their classrooms? Once this question is answered, actual on-the-ground implementation of initiatives towards teacher professional development will be reviewed using this lens.

A framework for capacity building

Principles

A review of literature and a distillation of learnings across the years reveals certain principles related to how teachers learn while in service. These principles, in turn, provide the basis for designing a framework for the capacity building in teachers.

The **first** principle is that teacher participation in professional development activities is a precondition to effecting any changes in classroom teaching and student learning. This is but natural, since teachers have very few opportunities to examine their own practices in the light of current policy and discourse around education.

However, the operationalisation of this principle needs care. Any change in practice requires a change in the teachers' personal theories about learners, curriculum, teaching-learning, assessment and also about their own capabilities. For this, an in-depth engagement is necessary in order to help teachers engage with the additional or different perspectives and/or information and to integrate these within their existing theories. Besides the fact that teaching is a complex activity, with wide diversity and uniqueness of teaching-learning situations which no training can prepare teachers to deal with, teachers also need time to apply these learnings into their practice, and to review the impact of this application. It follows that they need to share these experiences with a more experienced peer and seek solutions for any challenges they may have faced. In short, they may need time and support before they develop the confidence to effect change in their engagement with the various aspects of their practice.

In this scenario, short-term face-to-face trainings are perceived by teachers as opportunities to acquire relatively discrete pieces of knowledge and new skills that can be easily translated into practice – the result is viewing any attempt at reform as a new 'programme' which is to be implemented by doing these three or four things. No deep change is affected in understanding; change in practice is

therefore either not sustainable or stops short of any real change which can lead to improvement. Therefore, for any real change to occur, teachers require a long-term engagement with professional development activities.

The **second** principle flows from the first. Change takes time, especially since the demands of the everyday tasks of teachers compete with their new learning. In this scenario, they need more than theoretical conviction that the change is necessary and meaningful – they need demonstration, exemplars and dialogue. Most significantly, teachers need specific individualised feedback related to the application of their learnings. Therefore, frequent dialogue and intervention are important for implementation of learnings from professional development activities.

The **third** and final principle is that, to order for the above two principles to be actualised, teachers need to be able to influence school policy and processes while having a supportive ecosystem that is enabling rather than focused on monitoring tangibles like records and learners' scores on tests. They need a platform to articulate their successes, concerns and challenges in an accepting environment, thus contributing to the planning and rollout of programmes. At the same time, they need customised help tailored to their own experiences.

Most important of all, they need trust.

Components

Based on these three principles, the framework for building capacity of teachers that emerges contains some key components which are universal across programmes.

The **first** is the need for an enabling ecosystem which allows teachers to be take charge of their learning. In the current scenario of teacher professional development, this needs a comprehensive review and reform of practices around teachers. While appropriate pre-service teacher education is important for this to happen, the critical components are working conditions and culture, and mechanisms and support, designed specifically for continuing professional development of in-service teachers. Along with this individual effort, a culture of self and peer learning is also needed.

The approach to professional development activities must include multiple modes of learning, for example workshops, reading, discussions, exposure visits, learning communities, in-class support and so on, while ensuring integration of and coherence across activities. A review of relevant literature reveals that activities which promote teacher learning include: listening to discussions around classroom practice, observing peers, being observed and receiving feedback, access to supplemental materials and exemplars of student activities, engaging with professional readings, discussing practice with someone more expert, authentic experience of learning the subject, discussing personal theories of practice and their implications, examining student understandings and outcomes, analysis of current practice and planning for change, and discussing issues which have been identified mutually or individually with peers. Therefore, restricting these activities to face-to-face trainings can be counterproductive.

Another component is of the teacher's choice – her choice of which activity to participate in, to recommend content, to seek help and from whom to seek help, thereby retaining autonomy over her own development. The focus should not be fulfilling objectives through 'feeding' the teacher content and perspectives, but to help the teacher establish habits of reflection and self-learning. Professional development activities should also help shape the teachers' belief systems while improving practice – space must be provided for questioning beliefs about customs, traditions and practices through engaging in a meaningful process of critical enquiry.

The next sections examine some of the larger National initiatives towards teacher professional development through this lens.

Government initiatives to support teacher professional development

Among the many initiatives around teacher professional development at the National and State levels, two stand out. The first is the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Restructuring and Reorganisation of Teacher Education, initiated in 1987, pursuant to the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986, modified 1992), which was further strengthened in 2012. The second are the initiatives associated with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA), launched in 2001, and the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan (RMSA), launched in 2009.

These initiatives have resulted in structures for academic support to teachers at multiple levels. At the national level are the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National University of Educational Planning and

Administration (NUEPA) while at the state level are the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). In some states, the nomenclature may be different, for example, in Meghalaya the functions of SCERT are performed by the Directorate of Educational Research and Training, while in Karnataka the same is done by the Department of State Educational Research and Training. At the District level are the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs).

In addition, Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs) and Colleges of Teacher Education have been identified among existing institutes of teacher education as state level resource institutions for teacher professional development. Further, Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) at the block and cluster levels, respectively, are additional layers closer to the teacher. At its most simplistic, at various levels, these institutions are meant to determine what would be meaningful towards building teacher capacity, including building the capacity of teacher educators and planning programmes and activities around these needs. While most of the institutions within this structure were initially set up for elementary education, their mandate is now expanding to include secondary education.

This article will confine itself to a brief summary of the role of each of the state level institutions, beginning with the SCERT, which has been notified as the 'academic authority' for elementary education by most states post the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Broadly, the SCERT is required to be involved in policy formulation, perspective planning, curriculum and material development and the review of teacher as well as school education, facilitating school improvement through multiple approaches and supporting in-service teacher professional development. The SCERT is also required to undertake the necessary research as well as documentation and dissemination, including maintenance of databases, required to fulfil these expectations. Specific to professional development of in-service teachers, the SCERT is required to undertake studies for needs identification through engaging with classroom processes and stakeholders, plan and implement/ support implementation of in-service professional development activities in various modes through identification of resource persons and development of related materials, and provide follow up and continuing support. It follows that the SCERT is required to maintain strong institutional linkages (e.g. with RMSA, SSA, DIET, CTE, IASE, NGOs working in the space of teacher education, etc) to ensure convergence of all similar efforts in the state.

The IASE is expected to support and implement preparation and continuing professional development of teacher educators for elementary and secondary school, develop materials and support curriculum implementation, conduct and mentor research to improve the quality of education across all levels of school and teacher education. The CTE has a similar function, with particular focus on secondary education.

DIETs were proposed with the intent to add a district-level tier. It was envisaged that this would ensure wider coverage as well as qualitatively better support on account of their being geographically closer to schools, and therefore more attuned to the needs and problems of the particular district. At its core, the idea was decentralised academic and resource support to the education system. The DIETs are expected to anchor district specific planning, provide pre- and in-service teacher education, conduct and mentor relevant research and engage in direct field intervention and school improvement.

At the block level, the BRCs function as a repository of academic resources, including preschool material and material for children with special needs. They are required to maintain and update databases, including related to activities intended for professional development of teachers, and of Resource Persons for different subject areas and themes. They are required to visit schools to provide on-site academic support to address pedagogic issues and other issues related to school development, and for follow up of programmes. They are also required to support other resource institutions in addition to organising in-service teacher training based on teacher needs as observed during school visits and interactions with stakeholders. It is but obvious that, to do so, they must undertake regular school visits – they are thus required to be closely associated with the work of teachers and school processes. In addition, they must participate in monthly teacher meetings organised at the CRCs to discuss academic issues and to design strategies for better school performance, including involvement in the design, implementation and review of the school

development plan. Finally, they must design a comprehensive quality improvement plan for the block/cluster and implement it in a time bound manner in consultation with relevant bodies, including the School Management Committee (SMC).

The CRCs, which are closest to the teacher, are central to implementation of policy and programmes. Typically, a cluster would have 8-10 schools – this offers opportunities for focused, customised and sustained support for teachers. Like the BRCs, the CRCs function as academic resource centres with adequate resource/ reference materials for teachers, but in a much more proximate manner. Coordinators are required to undertake regular school visits and provide onsite academic support to teachers. Another important aspect is the organisation of monthly meetings to discuss academic issues and design strategies for better school performance. An important outcome of these meetings is expected to be the formation of formal and informal learning communities. In addition, they are required to coordinate with the SMC and other local bodies for school improvement, including development and monitoring of the school development plan. Thanks to their engagement with various schools in the cluster, CRC coordinators can play an important role in forging linkages across schools. Another interesting aspect is that in most states, BRC and CRC coordinators have been teachers themselves – who would understand the needs and requirements of teachers better than their peers?

If one looks at the structure within states as a comprehensive whole, the scope for professional development of teachers is tremendous. It ranges from state level programmes for capacity building of teachers to block or even cluster specific programmes. Opportunities like cluster level meetings can become opportunities for sharing of challenges and good practices across school and teachers, providing for contextualised support in a unique manner.

School visits can become opportunities for onsite support related to challenges specific to teachers in individual schools, review of effectiveness of programme implementation, identification of needs of teachers, and so on. From broad programmes at the state level, which will help build coherence and cohesiveness among educational processes in the state, to very specific programmes tailored to the needs and context of teachers at the district, block and cluster, or even school, level are possible. Teachers have a voice through interaction with the BRC and CRC coordinators, through cluster level meetings and even the DIETs through both geographical proximity and the very nature of the role of the latter. This voice can translate into contribution to policy formulation and the design of programmes and activities. Teachers can also seek support from a variety of Resource Persons and have access to a variety of teaching-learning resources – eventually, they are expected to function as Resource Persons themselves and, given their understanding of the context and their proximity to classrooms, contribute to the development of teaching-learning resources,

Thus, the principles discussed above are met by these initiatives: institutional structures are in place for teachers to participate in professional development activities beyond trainings, both mandated by the state and its arms and driven by personal need. Teachers have time to engage with learnings and seek support whenever they feel a challenge in implementation. And, as mentioned earlier, they have a voice and wherever they are unable to articulate their needs, processes for systematic needs identification are expected to be in place. However, the reality is different.

The reality of implementation

A review of reports concerning the status of the resource institutions for teacher education within the state reveals certain common observations. The first is that all institutions, from the SCERT to the CRC are plagued by vacancies. Very often, where posts are filled, the appointment may be contractual and for a short period – even three months at a time – which creates a sense of insecurity and hampers long term planning. Professional development activities for members of these institutions are far and few between.

Infrastructure is poor, learning resources are left wanting – libraries and laboratories are either absent or of a poor quality. Linkages within institutions are poor and in most states, a coherent plan for teacher professional development is not in place.

The focus of institutions like the IASE, CTE and DIET has remained pre-service teacher education in most states, with in-service professional development activities being conducted as mandated as opposed to contextual need, generally in cascade mode,

across states. Research remains a highly neglected area, with resultant perpetuation of existing practices and lack of development of contextual theories. Curriculum development takes place as mandated, but material development is largely limited to textbook development for schools. Some States have institutionalised cluster meeting where teachers can interact with each other and with functionaries, but these are few and far between.

More alarmingly, the percentage of teachers who have received in-service training appears to be decreasing. The Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE) data reveals that in 2010-11, 40.21% of teachers received in-service training; this percentage was reduced to 14.9% in 2015-16. A comparison of UDISE data for 2014-15 and 2015-16 reveals that the overall percentage of teachers who received in-service training went down from 18.34% to 14.90%. The percentage of government school teachers who received in-service training was 27.90% and 23.17% in 2014-15 and 2015-16, respectively. The percentage of teachers from aided schools who received in-service training was 15.55% and 13.21%, respectively. And the percentage of teachers from unaided schools who received in-service training was reported to be 1.82% and 1.11%, respectively.

A review of the content and processes of in-service training reveals that the focus of training is highly subject-oriented and pedagogical in focus: areas such as inclusive education, life skills and leadership, etc. do not find a place. Needs assessment to inform training development remains a concern in most states, and teachers generally play only a limited role in terms of contribution to design. Teachers reported that they were satisfied with the training programmes, despite widespread use of conventional instructional methods such as lecture, whole group discussion, etc, and appreciated the efforts of Resource Persons while acknowledging the limitations posed by large number of participants, nature of venue, etc. They reported acquisition of skills and attitudes, ideas, and new knowledge along with consolidation of prior knowledge However, transfer of learnings to teacher practice was reported to be limited due to factors such as quality of training, lack of motivation, pre-existing attitudes, limitations posed by large class size, lack of facilities and learning resources in schools and limited follow up and support. A positive outcome reported by teachers was the development of networks of colleagues with similar interests, involvement of headmasters, and the use of innovative strategies and resources. Interestingly, BRC were seen primarily as the 'venue' of trainings.

One observation that comes through is the need for a paradigm shift from one-shot trainings to continuous professional development not only of teachers but also teacher educators. Ironically, the structures to facilitate this paradigm shift are in place. Thus, in India, meaningful and sustainable professional development of teachers remains a lost opportunity.

Conclusion

While the overall picture may appear dismal, pockets of innovation driven by a few States, individuals and some NGOs exist. Voluntary teacher forums, teacher learning centres, innovative programmes run by some DIETs and individual efforts by teachers – these offer models for in-service professional development which can be integrated into the existing structures. The need is for a paradigm shift – for resource institutions to view professional development activities of teachers as more than trainings, and for governments to genuinely view teachers as critical to the achievement of the goals of education policy and programmes, as opposed to ciphers in the completion of schedules of implementation and bearers of accountability.

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Nimrat has been with the Azim Premji Foundation for the past seven years, and is currently a part of the School of Continuing Education and University Resource Center, Azim Premji University where she contributes to professional development programmes. She has been working in the space of education policy, teacher education and assessment, and has also contributed to teacher education curriculum development. She may be contacted at nimrat.kaur@azimpremjifoundation.org

Fault Lines in Government and the Trajectory of Education Programmes: Lessons from DPEP and SSA

Rashmi Sharma

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) that followed it, have been critical programmes for elementary education in India. DPEP aimed at making primary education universal, while the goal of SSA was to make elementary education universal. Both sought to reduce gender and social inequities in education and improve learning levels. As these programmes progressed, they were pivotal not only in implementing policy, but also in creating it and changing institutional structure. In DPEP and SSA, new schools and supporting institutions were set up, new policies regarding teachers evolved, and pedagogic practices, i.e. textbooks, teaching methodology, student evaluation etc. were impacted.

As an Indian Administrative Service officer, I was happy to work in the DPEP and SSA, because I was keenly interested in elementary education. But surprisingly, this experience led me back to a renewed interest in my core work: the working of government. As I collaborated with colleagues within and outside the government on pedagogic issues such as textbook writing, teacher training, student evaluation etc., various non-pedagogic 'events' took place, which eclipsed concerns about teaching and learning, and swept along our efforts in unexpected directions. It became clear to me that the quality of elementary education was at least as dependent on how the government worked, as it was on the curriculum, the quality of textbooks and teacher training and that government reforms were a necessary condition for the reform of education.

DPEP was launched in 1994, after the economic reforms of 1991. The economic reforms were taken up in the context of a foreign exchange crisis, for which the government sought an emergency loan from the Indian Monetary Fund (IMF). IMF conditions required not only that the economy be liberalised, i.e., licenses and quotas for industries be disbanded and tariff barriers be lowered, but also that government expenditure be controlled. This meant a financial squeeze on the social sector, including elementary education. There were fears among policy makers that such budgetary cut-backs would hurt the poorest sections of society and, in education, stall the universalisation of elementary education, which was mandated in the directive principles of the Indian Constitution. Moreover, at this time, India had become signatory to several international agreements to make primary education universal. Consequently, the government decided to seek financial assistance from external funding agencies such as the European Union, the World Bank etc for primary education, which came in the form of an externally assisted programme for making primary education universal in backward districts, i.e. DPEP.

DPEP differed from the government programmes of that time in several ways. To begin with, it was implemented through a project structure, rather than the departmental machinery. Project offices to manage the programme were set up at state and district level, separate from the offices of the government departments. This decision was driven by two factors. The practical reason was that, as DPEP was funded by various external agencies, a separate project structure enabled better tracking of expenditures and monitoring of the project by the funding agencies. But in a more long-term sense, the more important reason was a belief that the regular government offices and institutions were simply not capable of the type of developmental work envisaged in DPEP. Proponents of the project approach argued that the administrative structures of education were totally caught up in routine activities such as disbursing salaries, organising examinations, lackadaisical school inspections etc., and academic institutions lacked real expertise and willingness to innovate. In contrast, making good quality primary education universal required community mobilisation to get out -of -school children into school, with a special focus on girls, scheduled caste and scheduled tribe children and the disabled and an interesting and attractive classroom.

My own first exposure to DPEP as Director, State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in Madhya Pradesh showed, all too clearly, that these were very real problems of our existing institutions. SCERT was given the task of making new textbooks that promote activity-based learning and teacher training. In actual fact, SCERT had no one who could guide this process. SCERT routinely produced slipshod textbooks, which were dull, not based on any thought-out pedagogic strategy, and even full of printing errors! To make good quality, activity-based textbooks, intensive collaboration with NGOs and experts from outside government became necessary. And the SCERT faculty, rather than leading the reform, had to be coaxed to participate and not obstruct the new pedagogic practices. While some of the faculty joined in and worked hard, others continued to drag their feet.

This experience showed clearly that the state government had paid no attention to developing the SCERT as an institute of excellence. The people posted to SCERT were usually college teachers and were there not because they were interested in school education or had some special expertise, but because they wanted to stay in Bhopal and were in a position to manipulate their posting. Some were disinterested in work of any kind, some were happy to work as they always had, producing indifferent textbooks and teacher training modules and a few who were work oriented, lacked exposure and encouragement. Now, when the government attempted to improve the quality of primary education, its institute was of little help. This problem of human resources was visible not just in SCERT, but all through the system. The administrative offices lacked trained educational administrators, and experts in gender, community mobilisation, education of differently abled children etc. Making primary education universal required a radically different institutional support structure.

Given this situation, two approaches were possible. One, the government could have improved the existing institutions. Two, setting up a separate project structure, with better expertise and modes of working. The first possibility was never even seriously considered. The political need, as well as pressure from funding agencies was to act quickly, building new schools, changing text books, training teachers, etc. Transforming the system would have taken time. Moreover, it was difficult to do: it meant getting the right people in the right places. In the regular structure, favourites were posted in good positions, with little attention to merit, and changing this practice meant upsetting existing power equations. It also meant working in a more thinking and democratic manner, rather than the command -and -control style, which also affected those in power. Given these difficulties, DPEP was implemented through a project structure.

The project strategy appeared to work to a degree. Several activities, ie new schools, vastly improved textbooks, large-scale teacher training, community mobilisation, various types of strategies to enrol out of school children etc. were taken up.

Why did this happen? Why was the new project structure more vibrant than the old government structures? Notably, the DPEP staff included experts on gender, children from deprived groups, differently -abled children, community mobilisation etc., unlike the regular government offices and institutions, which were staffed with teachers who had been promoted, but never retrained to address their new tasks. In DPEP, efforts were made to recruit the best possible people in contrast to the patronage-based transfer and posting practices that characterised the regular system. In other words, human resource management in DPEP took into account the merit and the expertise needed, rather than patronage, as the criteria for positioning people. This was supported further by constant engagement with NGOs and resource persons, so that expertise from outside the government was also harnessed.

However, even as DPEP adopted new ways of working, no attempts were made to bring about similar changes in the regular departmental structure. In fact, the departmental structure was weakened further, as it was reduced to routine work, such as disbursing salaries and conducting examinations. People working in the regular departmental offices were not trained or exposed to new ideas and were de-motivated as they felt (and were) excluded from new initiatives. This exclusion was visible from the ground to the national level. Many of them became critical of DPEP initiatives and created difficulties for the project. More important, an opportunity to bring about long-term changes in the existing system was lost. What may have happened if the expertise hired in the project structure had been made part of the regular departmental structure, merit-based transfers and postings made mandatory and the whole departmental structure retrained in new ways, remains a hypothetical question.

When SSA replaced DPEP in 2000, there were some important shifts. First, as SSA was launched in 2000, the Indian economy had begun to grow rapidly and government revenues increased substantially. This meant that the government could spend substantially more funds on the social sector. Consequently, SSA was not externally funded, but was funded by the Central Government, with state governments providing a small share. Over the years, the funds available for SSA and, through it, investment in elementary education, increased exponentially. Yet today, though several new schools have been set up, the school infrastructure has improved vastly, and enrolment in elementary education is near universal, children's learning levels remain abysmal, and there is a continuous migration of wealthier children to private schools. In spite of huge investments, a well-functioning elementary education system remains out of reach. The reasons for this lie in the persisting fault lines government functioning that DPEP took short-term measures to counter but failed to address for the longer term. In SSA, the defences that DPEP had tried to create against the institutional malaise were undone.

SSA, as a national programme, could have done away with the project structure. However, though the proponents of the programme criticised the project structure of DPEP, it was retained in SSA. The reason for this was simply that the pros and cons and possibilities were not discussed in-depth. In fact, scant attention was paid to the lessons, positive and negative, from DPEP. This happened because in government, policies and programmes are formulated in a highly individualistic manner. The extent and depth to which past experiences are analysed and lessons learned are highly variable. As SSA was formulated, there was little exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of the DPEP project structures. In the end, they simply became the SSA structures and, as SSA moved beyond the DPEP districts, similar structures were set up in new districts. Again, there was no attempt to address long term institutional problems.

At the same time, many of the positive practices that had made DPEP structures effective were abandoned. As SSA was a domestically funded programme and not an externally funded one, manpower recruitment and placement processes were more aligned to the existing practices within government. Consequently, over time, the merit-based recruitment and posting that had characterised DPEP were replaced by patronage-based postings. Also, compared to DPEP, officials in SSA engaged far less with experts from outside the system, so that the flow of new ideas and practices declined too. As in the case of other government programmes, the focus shifted to creation of infrastructure. Consequently, much of the vibrancy that had characterised DPEP was lost.

In fact, DPEP and SSA contributed significantly to reducing the quality of teachers. An important development that took place with DPEP was that 'para' teachers, contractual employees, who were poorly paid, began to be appointed. This happened because many states needed large numbers of additional teachers to make primary education universal, but the finances of most state governments were in poor shape. As the pressure to make primary education universal grew, states attempted to bring down the cost of teachers so that they could hire more of them and began to appoint para- teachers. In Madhya Pradesh, regular teachers were declared a 'dying cadre' and were replaced by para -teachers as they retired. The 'Education Guarantee Scheme' of Madhya Pradesh promoted the concept of poorly paid, contractual community teachers as desirable and not just a response to strained finances and was admired by many. Not all states embraced the para- teachers as enthusiastically as Madhya Pradesh, but nearly all hired some para- teachers.

The appointment of para- teachers was a highly contested issue. Those who favoured the idea argued that the regular teachers became smug because they were permanent, were often absent, did not teach with any commitment and there was no need to pay them good salaries. A contractual, low paid teacher from the community was far more likely to be committed to the school. Those who were against para -teachers argued that teachers needed to be made more, and not less, professional. Hiring poorly paid, ill qualified para -teachers was a disservice to the poor children who attended government schools. Again, this question was rarely debated rationally. For instance, little attention was given to the fact that politicisation of teachers, patronage in postings, and lack of recognition of good work, rather than salary and permanence, may be the important issues. Again, policies were often simply changed overnight, with little analysis and reflection.

As SSA was launched, it tacitly supported para-teachers by providing payment for their salaries, and the number of para- teachers grew rapidly, in spite of the fact that the financial constraints that had propelled the appointment of para-teachers no longer existed. But, over time, para teachers formed unions and agitated for secure employment and better wages. Subsequently, state governments had to make several concessions, raising the salaries of para -teachers and making tenures more secure. This meant adopting the worst of both worlds: poorly qualified people were hired as teachers when low-paid, contractual jobs were advertised. But their salaries had to be increased, not on the basis of performance, but on the success of their agitations. Many para-teachers also became semi-permanent, with the consequence that the whole idea of removing a teacher because of poor performance became meaningless. In addition, the policies regarding teachers changed continuously and school system now functioned with a large number of dissatisfied, and often agitating, teachers.

Because the institutions remained fundamentally unreformed, there were setbacks in other areas too. For example, DPEP had promoted context-specific, decentralised planning and each year, district level plans were prepared with the goal of making primary education universal. The DPEP programme guidelines were very sparse, with only some 'do's and don'ts', as each district was expected to formulate its own strategies in the context of its own problems. For example, to enrol out -of -school children, the strategy could be to mobilise and sensitise the community, or start an alternative education centre, or initiate a bridge course so that children could join formal schools, etc. This was unlike the usual government schemes, where strategies were pre-decided. For example, the pre-DPEP scheme for Non-Formal Education (NFE) stipulated a single strategy to enrol out- of -school children, i.e. starting non- formal education centres with fixed costs. It did take into account that, in some cases, mobilising the community to send children to schools, or providing childcare to free older siblings to attend schools might be better strategies.

As district plans were prepared every year in DPEP, they were discussed and analysed in some depth at all levels. Several new strategies to enrol out -of -school children emerged. However, from the very beginning, the tendency was to take decisions at the state level, so that all the district plans of a particular state looked alike. This happened for two reasons. One there was the lack of capacity at the district level. The manpower at the district offices was limited. Moreover, district officials were not used to planning and often did not make very good plans. In such cases, state officials tended to step in. Second, this was how government departments usually functioned: state officials directing district officials. Consequently, state as well as district level officials were comfortable in these roles. However, there was constant pressure in the project to make decentralised plans, and this led to at least some context-based planning and strategising.

SSA retained decentralised district level planning and in fact sought to promote village level planning. But in practice, with SSA, planning became even more top-driven. To begin with, SSA guidelines were very different from DPEP guidelines. As stated above, DPEP guidelines did not indicate specific activities or prescribe fixed unit costs, which allowed for significant flexibility. However, SSA guidelines contained both these, as this was the usual government practice, and finance departments insisted on it. SSA was more flexible than the usual government programmes, in the sense that it allowed a wider range of activities, and also allowed districts to choose from among these activities. However, as the activities and unit costs were pre-defined, district plans simply repeated these activities and provided numbers. With greater control of the regular government system on SSA, the top-down practices were strengthened further.

Similarly, serious pedagogic reforms attempted in DPEP suffered too. In several states, in DPEP, new, activity-based textbooks were prepared. But this was an uphill struggle. Sometimes, the new textbooks attracted a great deal of criticism, as they introduced new and unfamiliar ways of learning. When teachers were trained for activity-based learning, they too had difficulty in grasping concepts. Since the capacities of SCERT faculty and education departments had not been built adequately, many officials and teacher educators remained hostile to these changes. Often, when governments or bureaucrats in-charge changed, the new textbooks were abandoned. With SSA, the focus on quality of education and pedagogy diminished further as posts were filled increasingly with the regular administrators and teacher educators, and consultation with experts

outside government declined. Teacher training programmes, once taken up with a great deal of care and commitment, often became routine, and even the source of corruption. In the end, establishing new schools, creating infrastructure, hiring new teachers and providing free textbooks, uniforms etc. to students became the focus of SSA. These were important, but as the classroom processes did not improve, a high-quality school system remained out of grasp.

The most important lesson from DPEP and SSA, to my mind, is about the working of government. There are deep problems related to human resources and working styles in government. The structure of manpower itself is problematic. Expertise that is needed in many areas is lacking. Further, the management of existing human resources is not based on merit. An official may be recruited on merit, but during the course of her career, for postings and even promotions, is more likely to do well by nurturing powerful godfathers than doing her job well. This promotes a lack of commitment to work, as the existing incentive structure simply does not promote good work. The processes of working, based on hierarchy and centralisation, block strategies suited to the needs from the ground from emerging. Thinking through and deliberation are optional, even at the top-most levels of government. As a result, poorly thought -out programmes and policies go unchecked, especially if they provide political benefits. Even the better formulated programmes are laid low as they are implemented through institutional structures that lack technical capacity and function in a rigid and hierarchical manner.

These characteristics impact every government initiative. All programmes are transformed and moulded in this pattern. DPEP attempted to bypass these problems by creating project structures, but failed to address existing institutional fault lines, and possibly deepened them. SSA carried them along, undoing the project gains of DPEP.

The lesson is clear. The increasing government revenues today have made good quality elementary education a very real possibility. But the manner in which government works is a major constraint. Unless there is deep and real institutional reform, success in creating a really high-quality school system will remain elusive.

Rashmi is a former Indian Administrative Service officer. She has worked and published extensively in the areas of elementary education and local self-government in India including two books, 'Local Government in India: Policy and Practice' and 'The Elementary Education System in India'. At present, she is engaged in researching and writing about the structure and working of government at the grassroots. She may be contacted at rashmishuklasharma@gmail.com

Guru Chethana - Teacher Professional Development
A Government of Karnataka Initiative

Rudresh S

'The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers' - such exhortations are indeed expressions of the important role played by the teachers as transmitters, inspirers and promoters of the eternal quest for knowledge in human beings. All of us aspire for a good society that is humane, equitable and sustainable. It is assumed that school education provides the foundation for it. Education could bring such society through non-violent and sustained manner. India attempts education for every individual amending fundamental rights where it ensured Right of Free and Compulsory Education. As result of this, it is being attempted to ensure access for each child in terms of schooling as well in quality. The reservation of seats for vulnerable family children in private schools is part of the same. Through this, the education of every child became a mandate of the Government. Both the Central and State governments have been putting in their best efforts to ensure easy access of school for all children and promoting regular attendance through various government programmes. India has achieved a lot in terms of enrolment, and significantly accomplished attendance of students in primary schools. The issue that remains unaddressed is quality of education. Many reports such as ASER, NAS identified gaps in learning levels of students across the subjects. It has become serious issue in the school education these days and has been identified as a key concern in school education. The quality of education is considerably determined by teachers and their engagements in the classroom. Teacher professional abilities eventually contribute for quality delivery of education in the schools along with other requirement such as infrastructure, PTR (Pupil Teacher Ratio), school leadership, etc.

There are issues in teacher education programmers in India both in pre-service and in in-service. Both programmes broadly unable to prepare teachers for kind of students and context of the schools by having short team duration and focusing pedagogy of the subjects. It is evident that teachers need to be prepared in relation to the needs and demands arising in the school context, to engage with questions of school knowledge, the learner and the learning process. Expectations of the school system and teachers change from time to time, in response to the broader social, economic and political changes taking place in the society. This pushes for revamping teacher education for enhancing professional abilities in the teacher community.

Following are the primary reasons in favour of re-designing teacher education:

1. Short duration pre-service programmes would only build basic perspectives with little connection to in-service teacher education, causing school teachers' critical professional needs to remain unaddressed.
2. Aligning pre- and in–service teacher education has not been addressed adequately till date.
3. The interlinkage between theory and practice in both pre-service and in-service programme is weak.
4. The existing teachers need to be acquainted with paradigm shifts in the ever -changing education system. This requires enriching one's knowledge and understanding of the basic concepts and aims of education, something which does not get adequately covered in the pre-service training and the gap remains unclosed due to insufficient time spent on in-service training.
5. Current in-service professional development programmes are often inadequate to provide an individual with much-needed pedagogic understanding or abilities and dispositions to become an effective teacher.
6. Processes in teacher education fail to make teacher become a reflective practitioner.
7. In-service programmes focus mostly on addressing issues of text books, hard spots in the subject rather than building conceptual and deeper understanding combining with constructive pedagogy among the teachers

8. In many cases, especially in in-service programmes, there is disconnect between programmes/training of the present year with previous and upcoming years. Programmes are being delivered in a piecemeal fashion.
9. The non-availability of adequately trained resource persons in the district and block levels to reach teachers at the expected quality is another disadvantage.
10. There is huge transmission loss by having multiple levels of cascading strategy
11. Programmes/modules are centrally designed and have to be delivered irrespective of teachers' needs and interests.

In this situation, continuing professional development of the teacher becomes paramount importance for effective transaction of the curriculum and to bridge these gaps. While there are thousands of children coming out through the existing process, there are lacks in resources which require rigour and focus to address this gap. This necessitates long-term vision and a framework that attempts to address the above-mentioned issues in the in-service programme by considering every possible influencing factor and deliver a meaningful experience to teachers.

The Department of Public Instruction, Government of Karnataka (GoK) has taken up the challenging task of overhauling the in-service teacher education program in the State under the name of Guru Chethana. The aim of the initiative is to address the concerns in the in-service teacher education programmes and to make teacher development efforts meaningful and relevant. The massive exercise of re-designing the approach, content as well as the delivery of the programme, along with the establishment of a teacher tracking and management system, is being implemented in collaboration with the Azim Premji Foundation.

Based on the insights from last decade, keeping the national documents such as National Curriculum Framework 2005 and National Curriculum Framework for Teachers Education 2009 in mind, such a teacher becomes a reflective practitioner, capable of questioning the curriculum, syllabus and text books, enhance the school curriculum by incorporating community knowledge and establish interlinkage between theory and practice, the state has envisioned a professional development plan for in-service teachers.

The key principles adopted in the programme are discussed below.

1. The plan should be long-term and lead a journey of teachers in professional development. In-service teacher education is a continuous process which should be coherent - not sporadic one-off sessions which do not hold together; a long term plan of teacher development allows individual teachers to develop holistically
2. It must offer a combination of learning modes - expert-driven, peer-learning and self-learning and create decentralised self-sustained leaning spaces to foster self-leaning and peer learning, which are crucial.
3. It must respond to issues teachers face in their schools, relevant to all classes and subjects. This comprehensiveness in curriculum will have long-term engagement of teachers which will build continued and connected learning opportunities.
4. It must offer options for teachers to choose so that they can access what is relevant to them through multiple platforms, for example, workshops, seminars, study groups, etc.
5. Materials used for teacher development should be comprehensive in scope by including education perspective, subject perspective, subject content and pedagogy
6. All the engagement should be guided by a consistent set of educational ideas for example, role of a school in Indian society, how children learn, nature and pedagogy of each subject, why physical, psychological, social, ethical development of the child is important and reflect in all forms of teacher education programmes.

The senior functionaries of education department were committed to addressing the gaps in the teacher education. The beauty of the programme was the involvement of officers from the Additional Chief Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education Department to the teachers of each school. This effort was sustained for two years to implement the first year programme. In order to have a long term plan and allow teachers to choose the modules as per their need and interest for their professional development, the path was laid out for five years.

The programme was designed in four phases from conceiving to execution - a. curriculum

development, b. modules development, c. resource person development, d. programme launch.

a. Curriculum Development

The curriculum has been developed collaboratively by identified teachers, teacher educators and subject experts from across Karnataka and some members from the Azim Premji Foundation. This group went through a careful process of preparation by considering the needs of teachers as well as the expectations from teachers which had been articulated in national documents. The curriculum framework for teachers' development was evolved as a first step to plan the long-term approach in this regard – enabling a strong and continuous professional development program for the teachers. The curriculum describes the context of teachers' development, principles, approaches, themes, practicality, classroom applications, teacher engagement modes and assessments. Considerable effort has gone into visualising the multiple and diverse needs of teachers to develop the courses and modules. This is a comprehensive curriculum which includes issues around child development (for example, how children learn language, the social context of learning), understanding key concepts in school subjects and methods of teaching. It suggests around 250 themes for teachers' development, and proposes different modes of teacher engagement, modular orientation on each theme. A modules/concept/theme can be taken up from 1-5 days as per interest and requirement.

b. Module Development

The modules were developed by adopting the principles of curriculum. A group of identified state resource persons from the education department and Azim Premji Foundation under the guidance of mentors developed the modules through a rigorous process lasting for about five months. These modules are graded so that they respond to different levels of teachers' understanding. In the long-term, the plan is to have 200-250 modules available for teachers to choose from. These modules, comprising education perspective, subject perspective, key concepts, pedagogy and assessment, are integrated with one another and not looked at in isolation. There were 28 modules spread across Science, Mathematics, Social Science, Education Perspective in both Kannada, Hindi offered to teachers in the year 2017-18. The rest will be spread across subsequent years. Each of the modules was piloted, reviewed and fine-tuned with the involvement of the review committee.

c. Resource Person Development

In order to execute the programme on a mass scale and to address the issue of non-availability of trained resource persons in the districts, four master resource persons for each module from each district were selected through process of written and oral tests. A total of 112 master resource persons were identified in each district. Each MRP undergoes a 10 day training programme in perspective, content and pedagogy with five days on module content and five days of additional input so that MRPs are capable of engaging five days with teachers. The programme involved developing education perspective (understanding society, education, children and teaching), deeper understanding beyond the module content and proposing illustrative pedagogy of the sessions where there were spaces for demonstration by each MRP. In the process, around 3500 MRPs were trained in a month by having multiple batches.

d. Programme Launch

The programme was launched by Chief Minister of Karnataka on the eve of teacher day, September 5, 2017. Teachers gave their choices on the 28 modules available for the years 2017-18 by logging in Teacher Training Management System (TTMS). The system was available in desktop and mobile where mostly teachers used the mobile app to manage their choices and tracking of workshop schedule. The whole process of teachers' choices, batch formation, inviting teachers, scheduling trainings and feedback from teachers done through TTMS. The processes of the state level was managed by DSERT and implementation was done by respective DIET (District Institute of Education and Training). Around 2000 batches of a 28-module training conducted in a three to four month period spread across 34 districts. In the process, 75000 teachers were trained.

It reduced the cascade mode as trained MRPs directly facilitate trainings for teachers in the district. It was also important to ensure the quality of logistics such as basic facilities – functional toilets, safe drinking water, quality food, venues with sufficient light and air, uninterrupted power supply etc. This was assured by the DIETs in the respective districts, contributing significantly to enhancing the quality of the modules.

It was first time in India that teachers were allowed to choose the modules as per their interests and needs on a scale like this. It was only possible through a sustained effort and interest of Government to maintain the rigour across the year, an exclusive monthly meeting was conducted by Additional Chief Secretary of the Primary and Secondary Education Department which played a leading role from inception to execution. Ownership of DSERT maintained the tempo across the year and across the activities. The core team formed at state level was helpful in planning, monitoring and reviewing the processes and bringing rigour by following the time line and enhancing quality at all levels. The teachers appreciated the concept of choice-based teacher development and preparation of MRP, something that came out in a dipstick study conducted post-execution. At the same time, they valued role of TTMS in smooth implementation of programme and tracking of teacher development for long term. Guru Chethana was spoken about by the Chief Minister and the Education minister as a programme in the state government budget and on many other forums. This gave it greater validity.

The communication strategy of programme contributed lot in reaching people. As part of communication strategy, a microsite was developed where teachers could access all the information about the programme and the modules. The teachers could also download modules well in advance and come prepared to the training sessions. A huge launch programme at the state level, followed by multiple seminars at state and district levels on teachers' professional development, created interest among the teachers about Guru Chethana as a programme. Through all this process, 1.4 lakh teachers enrolled and expressed their choices in four priorities through TTMS. Looking at the numbers, it was evident that teachers expected quality literature and quality processes which convinced the stakeholders and enhanced the interest in professional development.

However, because there were challenges, it was cautiously attempted to ensure the quality from curriculum development to execution of the programme. Though clear communication on the quality of the arrangements such as venue, food etc., there was feedback from teachers which drew attention to further improvement. Sustaining interest and patience among the State Resource Persons for two years in the module development and MRPs development processes was difficult and led to fluctuations within the group. Another challenge was to develop a shared understanding of the concept of programme across the levels of stakeholders and maintain same momentum across the levels of government system. As the scale was huge, it was tough to deliver the respective printed modules to the respective districts which resulted in delays.

It was also challenging in the beginning to convince people involved on the paradigm shift in the nature of materials and processes as they naturally carried the baggage of many decades. Initially, it was tough to make them open up, but interesting to note that 90 SRPs and state officials are now ambassadors of new pattern in the teacher education.

Guru Chethana was a unique experience in the teacher education domain for Karnataka and other states are keen to understand the Karnataka experience. The concept of long-term, continuous and connected engagement with choice-based teacher development along with quality and meaningful delivery in teachers' professional development needs to be spread across the country. What is most desirable is that all teachers should be reflective practitioners and contribute towards creating the society articulated in the Indian Constitution.

Rudresh currently heads the Kalaburgi and Yadgir district institutes of Azim Premji Foundation. He has been with the Foundation since 2003. His interest is in Teacher Professional Development. He has been contributing for joint initiative of Azim Premji Foundation and Govt. of Karnataka on Teacher Professional Development. He may be contacted at rudresh@azimpremjifoundation.org

Education Through Practice: An Overview of the Diploma in Elementary Education Course

Shalini Jha

The Diploma in Elementary Education course is a two-year course devised by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) to provide an opportunity of skill enhancement and honing the level of expertise to the students enrolled. The course was designed in such a way so as to keep it at par with the level of training imparted through the regular course.

Even with a different course structure, the diploma students were provided a training which rendered their skills equivalent to those enrolled in a regular course. The trainees were required to attend classes once a week, either on a Saturday or a Sunday, where they were involved in teaching in a school as part of the course. The trainees were therefore not only coached and their skills upgraded, but were also provided with an opportunity to get practical experience. A balanced synthesis of instructions, trainings and much-needed practical participation enabled the trainees to hone their talents and become well-qualified instructors, both technically and practically.

Syllabus

After several rounds of brainstorming and revisions, the final syllabus was framed to keep it comparable with that in the regular mode. All essential course materials were included in the syllabus and designed specifically to suit the needs of this group. The teaching-learning material was easy-to-understand for the teachers and were designed to be easily inculcated. The emphasis was solely on quality.

Cross-departmental Collaboration

A seamless chain of administrative work was created which linked the trainees with the course instructors, the resource personnel and, further, with the SCERT and the Centre. This helped in building a strong structure which enabled the trainees to receive all course material, workshops and classes well in time. The course structure and the course material were updated to all the links and there was no delay in the trainees being provided with the course material as a result of departmental inter-linking and communication.

Digitisation and Ease of Access

All the course material, besides being provided in a hard format to the trainees, was also made available online, along with all details of the course schedule and structure. ICT material was used to supplement the teaching-learning material. An optimum use of technology was made during the course where the trainees were also instructed on the proper use of laptops and smartphones for teaching purposes. Videos,etc. were shown to the trainees on CDs intermittently during training workshops. The entire procedure and schedule was regularly updated online.

Registration

A small group of students were registered. The Resource Personnel (RP) organised training workshops for capacity building. These RPs were connected to the core mentor.

Evaluation

The assignments which were given to the trainees comprised of classroom-based practical questions. These answers were to be critically analysed and examined. Assignments were given based on practical experience of the trainees and were designed to be crucial part of the learning process. They were formulated keeping in mind the experience of the trainees in the teaching experience and therefore it required the trainees to make full use of their mental faculties while attempting the assignments. The analysis of the assignment questions was a test of the students' understanding of the learning process and their subjective critical evaluation of the practical experiences, thereby negating any chances of students writing assignments through improper means.

Besides this, spot-checks were often conducted on the campus premises to ensure that the module was properly being imparted as planned.

Learning Plans

The pedagogy or the depth of the knowledge had to be completely child-centred. The aim was to make it flexible enough to reach to the child's level. Special attention was also provided to the learning plans which encompassed a lot of school-based activities. A separate portfolio and register were maintained for the same. Apart from that, the trainees were instructed to maintain a diary of the activities that took place, thereby recording their own performance. These were all part of the school-based action research plan for classroom-based problems. Keen observation and evaluation were the core tasks involved in the entire procedure.

The SCS screening team comprised of 40-50 members. Their task was to support and monitor trainees and provide a detailed report on the same. The trainees were required to attend workshops on a regular basis under them.

Concluding Remarks

A cumulation of all these different and complementary exercises resulted in a major success of the diploma course training programme which was created with the intention of training the new teachers under the D.El.Ed. programme, while keeping it at par with the regular course module. It was clear, at the end of the programme that the hard work of all involved paid well and the trainees were visibly upscaled with their techniques, skills and their knowledge base enhanced. In retrospect, it may be said that the diploma course turned out to be a successful experiment and ought to be continued.

Shalini is currently a government middle school teacher at Purnia, Bihar. She has a Bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's degree in English. She is a resource person and master trainer in ODEAL and disaster management coordinator for Purnia district, Bihar. She may be contacted at shalinijha443@gmail.com

Insights from a SSA Training Programme

Shehnaz Zakir

All the teachers of government schools are given a 6-day training by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) so that the teachers can be made aware of certain issues related to education such as CCE, improvement in the results of examinations and effective classroom teaching. After getting a job in government service from an aided education institution, I too got the opportunity to participate in a training programme conducted by SSA. I was attending this for the first time although I had been a part of many training programmes in Vidya Bhawan during my 14 -year tenure. With the same perception of training in mind, I came to SSA training programme with a lot of enthusiasm.

The training lasted for six days, in which the participants were supposed to work on two subjects – Mathematics and English. Three days were allotted for each subject. On the first day, half of the time was spent in reaching the venue and getting the registration and other formalities done. Then the discussion started on Mathematics and the Master Trainer (MT) asked us to share our problems. The teachers came up with their problems, which ranged from fractions, statement sums and writing the numbers. But no one had the solutions to these problems. Every year such problems are put forth in the training but they do not get resolved. Teachers are unable to understand how to teach these concepts. All the teachers wished that the Trainer should take the discussions forward so that some solution may emerge. But he could not do it since he had no experience of these classes and also he had not seen the textbooks of classes 1 to 5. So he was unable to discuss the issues related to this topic. He then asked the teachers to share their teaching experience and the methodologies they adopted which enabled children to do sums correctly. The ball was in teachers' court again. Most of their experiences pointed towards making the children mug up things somehow, remember it for some time and teach it again the following year. On the whole, the entire discussion was of no use and the MT was not able to facilitate the whole process properly.

No solid work was done in the next two days on mathematics. As a part of group activity, two to three teachers got together and prepared a chart and wrote down their ideas, while others were busy in completing their own chores. The charts were simply placed without any presentation, question-answer session or discussion.

When it came to filling up the CCE diary, the time was spent in the similar manner. It appeared that the MT was not very familiar with the CCE diary. All the details were taken from the teachers who had been filling this diary since previous year. Even they could not answer all the questions. For example, how will you write the lesson plans for the groups that you have made in your class, how will you evaluate the children of the different groups, will you prepare different question papers or whether the same paper will have the questions of all the levels etc. The teachers looked quite confused with the diary activity. They were also unhappy because they did not understand anything in the training. There were no takeaways for the math teachers as they did not get any new ideas either to bring a change in their class or to teach the children.

The next three days were meant for English. This subject was new to me also. I had several questions in my mind and wanted to find their answers. After the introductory session, the MT started talking and I realised that the problem of English was more alarming. Most of the teachers felt that it was very difficult to teach English to children because they did not know how to read and write English. The MT asked teachers to provide solution to this problem. All of them emphasised the need to learn the spellings of the words. My question was whether learning the spellings would help the children to read and write faster. There was silence. Some teachers shook their heads, some said that children do not learn the spelling and that is the problem.

The questions were bouncing in my mind again. I told the MT that there are certain activities that help in teaching a language which can be done before teaching reading and writing. On hearing this, one teacher said that in learning language it is very important to do speaking and listening activities with the children. The MT agreed and discussed how the teachers should also try to speak simple English sentences with the children in the class which would help in learning to read. Here again the teachers did not show any interest in the group work. They simply copied a few things from the textbook and made charts. There was no serious presentation or discussion on them.

The plight of CCE diary was no different because the teachers could not understand the plans of different groups in English subject. So they took a completed diary of one of the teachers and just got it photocopied.

In this way the teachers continued to find ways by which they could go back to school and do their job easily.

In the end when they were asked to give suggestions, they said that there is no point in giving suggestions because nobody pays any attention to them and there is no improvement in the way a training program is conducted. They said that they have been attending these training programmes for the past few years where they only waste six days. They are not benefited in terms of improving their teaching. So the training ended with mutual accusations.

I went back to school and asked the science teacher (II grade) about her training experience. She said it was fine and that they learnt about how to intensify the involvement of children while teaching in the classroom which was a very good thing. I asked about the venue of the training and was told that it was held in Vidya Bhavan. Some master trainers were from government school while the others were from Vidya Bhavan. So there was a partnership of government and private institutions. The science teacher also said that the Master Trainer of Vidya Bhavan even taught a lesson from the textbook to give the teachers a demonstration.

Now I want to highlight a few important things that are done in the training sessions conducted by non-government educational institutions. The trainers of these institutions make a complete plan before the training starts with details of how many sessions would be there and what points would be discussed in them. Throughout the training, there are open discussions in all the sessions in which the teachers also voice their problems, experiences and opinions. The group work is also done sincerely, presented before the participants and all the groups share their ideas. Further, articles related to education written by good authors are given which help in understanding various dimensions of pedagogy. Though the teachers felt bad to attending the training programme during summer holidays, after the training they felt that they were benefited and it was not a waste of time. They realised that the training was worthwhile.

According to my understanding, the difference between training given by a private institution and a Government (SSA) institution is that the trainers of private institutions were more serious, would listen to teachers and came fully prepared.

So why not the Government MT also do their jobs more seriously and with more preparedness?

Translated from Hindi to English by Nalini Ravel

shehnazakir@gmail.com

Learning from Innovative Programmes in Education: Lok Jumbish – Peoples Movement for Education for All[1]

Shobhita Rajagopal

Introduction

There have been a number of innovations in the education sector in the State of Rajasthan that have aimed at addressing exclusionary practices and gaps within the education system. These have demonstrated the possibility of evolving meaningful strategies to address educational needs of disadvantaged children as well as improve educational planning and delivery.

Lok Jumbish, or Peoples Movement for Education for All, was launched in June 1992 by Government of India and Government of Rajasthan with support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). It began with the basic aim of universalising primary education in Rajasthan. Its main objective — as stated in the 1990 project document was 'to develop, demonstrate, catalyse and transform the mainstream education system with the objective of ensuring that every child has access to basic education (Grades I to VIII).'

Lok is a Hindi word meaning 'people' and *jumbish* an Urdu word meaning 'movement'. Together, they convey the idea of a people's movement as well as a movement for the people. Lok Jumbish attempted to make education a people's movement ensuring active and sustained participation of people at every level (Chaudhary, 2003).

Lok Jumbish (LJ) began with a mission to mobilise, motivate and energise the community and education service providers. It was based on the conviction that rejuvenation of the current education system was a key factor to universalisation of education in the State, which was struggling to meet the universal goals of elementary education. It therefore focused on re-examining issues related to access, retention and achievement of children. The first phase of the project was for a period of two years from 1992-1994. In this phase LJ covered 25 blocks. In the second phase of the project (1995-1998[2]), the focus was on strengthening and consolidating gains made during the first phase. Post 1999, LJ faced a period of uncertainty and there was a gradual decline with the final closure of the programme in 2003.

This article discusses the approach and key strategies adopted by LJ in its effort to bring education within the reach of children across different districts of Rajasthan. It also highlights the key learning's from the intervention.

The Approach

The approach adopted by Lok Jumbish was based on principles of decentralisation, consensus building and partnerships, participatory planning and evaluation and commitment to quality through an intensive mission mode (Lok Jumbish Parishad. 1995).

Since LJ was a process driven project there was a clear understanding that the results would directly depend on the processes initiated and delivered in the field. Therefore, the management structure was built on the recognition that the real problem was not one of supply alone, but also of unutilised capacities, as was evident in the low school participation rates.

The project was implemented through the Lok Jumbish Parishad (LJP), an independent autonomous body that was set up at the State level. The LJ personnel and team was carefully selected, and drawn from individuals from within the education department, many among them had experience of working in other innovative programmes implemented in Rajasthan such as the Women's Development Project and the *Shikshakarmi* Project. It also drew within its ambit persons with proven experience of working across the development sector.

Focus Areas

Being a process-oriented programme, the operational strategies focussed on maximising

[1]*I am grateful to Shobha Lokanathan Kavoori for her comments on the draft.*

[2]*In 1998 SIDA withdrew its support to the project in the wake of India's nuclear testing.*

participation of community. The key focus areas included:

- Management of education
- Community participation
- Quality of education
- Ensuring Gender Equity

Management of education

The Lok Jumbish management philosophy was radical, marking a shift towards a decentralised system. Many lower level management structures were established for managing education. The unit of decentralised planning in LJ was the village and the unit of decentralised management, the block. 25-30 villages were clubbed together to form a cluster. Each block was divided into five to seven compact clusters. Personnel at the cluster level were responsible for translating the goals of LJ into action at the village level.

Initially five blocks were identified wherein an effort was made to create bottom-up planning mechanisms that could respond to diverse educational needs of the community. The processes resulted in the introduction of the *Prerak Dal* (core team, with women members constituting one-third to half the membership), formation of the *Bhawan Nirman Samiti* (building committee) and then the Village Education Committees (VECs) and cluster level groups for mobilisation and educational support. At the block level the *Khand StariyaShiksha Prabhandhan Samiti* (Block level management committee) provided support and monitored the project. At the State level the empowered executive committee reviewed the progress on a quarterly basis (Ramachandran, 2016).

Govinda (1997) notes that the management system of LJ, was 'antithetical to a centralised, hierarchical way of functioning'. Educational planning was not only decentralised, it was also a bottom-up process. Experiences at grassroots level helped to shape the implementation and/or modification of the LJ programmes.

Community Mobilisation

A key aspect of LJ was mobilising the community for education and creating an environment where parents feel motivated to send their children to school. The project document also acknowledged the need to make special arrangements for children engaged in work, girls who could not attend formal schools, children of migrant/nomadic families, tribal children and children with disability. The emphasis was on enabling children who were left out to join the mainstream.

Some key strategies were evolved in the effort to mobilise communities. These included:

School -Mapping and Micro- Planning

Lok Jumbish chose to adopt school mapping as an effective means of overcoming some of the infirmities of centralised planning in providing primary schools, which had failed to ensure universal access and participation in Rajasthan (Govinda,1998).

School mapping (Shala Manchitran) was a critical tool used for social mobilisation and involving community in analysing the educational situation in their villages and planning for children's access to primary schooling. This process enabled a comprehensive assessment of educational facilities available for children in the area. During this exercise every household in the village was depicted visually on a map. Details of children in the school-going age and their enrolment status was collected and mapped. The location of existing schools and facilities were also represented on the map.

Involvement in school-mapping activities such as surveys, preparation of a school map and school improvement programmes helped to reinforce participation of community members. The collective analysis helped the community to understand the existing educational situation in the village. A major focus in the school-mapping exercise was to understand the situation of girls. Initially, a disproportionately small number of girls was reported; it was then decided that a conscious effort would be made to look for 'unseen' and 'hidden' girls.

Given LJ's commitment to ensuring that primary education is accessible to children across habitations, micro-planning provided mechanisms for planning and ensuring children's regular participation in schools and non-formal centres. Micro-planning usually started after the required educational infrastructure was made available in the village. Micro-planning in LJ was family-wise, while child-wise planning and monitoring undertaken basically by the members of Village Education Committees (VEC) and cluster personnel of LJ with the help of the village community. The VECs identified non-enrolled children, contacted the concerned families and undertook activities to

ensure regularity of attendance and retention of children in schools

The two instruments of micro planning which gradually became the means for effective universalisation of primary education were:

(i)Village Education Register (ii) Retention Register maintained by every school and non-formal learning centre.

The emphasis on micro-planning led to diverse initiatives being taken up in different blocks i.e. planning low cost hostels for children from migrant families, setting up of *balikashivirs* for girls and residential camps in Lunkaransar in Bikaner and providing facilities for Muslim minority children in Kaman in Bharatpur (Rajagopal,2003)

Quality of Education

The focus on quality of education involved the training of teachers and teacher-educators to help initiate and promote a curriculum and pedagogic package of reforms based on the Minimum Learning Levels (MLL) that were introduced during that period.

Minimal Levels of Learning

Lok Jumbish also emphasised the need to achieve minimum levels of learning (MLL) for each stage as laid down by the National Policy on Education, 1986. Thirteen textbooks-cum-workbooks were developed and used in classes 1 to 5. Supplementary teaching learning materials were also developed and teachers were trained. MLL-based textbooks and teaching methodologies were initially introduced in 1992 only in 45 schools.

Teacher Training

In LJ, teacher training was a key strategy in addressing issues in quality education. The emphasis was on building a positive social image of the teacher and facilitating continuous training. A dialogue was initiated with the teachers prior to their training. The trainings focussed on motivating and sensitising teachers as well as sharpening their pedagogical[3] skills. Competency based trainings on MLL were also organised. The role of Sandhan training and research agency was central to these trainings.

Sahaj Shiksha Kendra(Non-formal learning centres)

To address the needs of children who were left out of mainstream education, *Sahaj Shiksha Kendras* (SSK) were established. The SSK initiative was based on the premise that conflicting priorities between education and work could be resolved only when some realistic options were available. The SSKs were initially designed on the lines of government-run NFE centres. Later, the focus of these centres was on providing education that is relevant and easily adaptable and promote holistic and creative learning.

Education was related to the day-to-day lives of the children. Efforts were directed towards greater investment in training of instructors and ensuring infrastructure facilities at the SSKs. The training of instructors focussed on enhancing subject knowledge and pedagogic skills in the context of multi-grade teaching. The child centred approach, the flexibility in timings, adapting the curriculum to children's needs and linking their experience to new knowledge together with the extensive participation of the community helped in providing contextually relevant education to a large number of children, especially girls (Rajagopal,2003).

Ensuring Equity

Ensuring gender equity in educational access and outcomes was a priority in LJ. There was a clear recognition that it was not possible to move towards equal education unless issues of gender equity, women's dignity and status are addressed. The key strategies included:

Promoting Women's Collectives

The *Mahila Samoohs* (women's collectives) formed at the village level helped women to analyse critically the condition and position of women in society and link it to issues of educational opportunities and deprivation. There were several instances where members of the women's groups kept a strict watch on functioning of schools and teacher attendance.

Adhyapika Manch (Women Teachers' Forum)

The low participation of women teachers in MLL trainings led to the creation of a forum called *Adhyapika Manch*, where women teachers discussed their needs and problems. Women teachers found these forums an effective medium for coming out of isolation and to feel empowered. These forums became an important vehicle for

[3]*Sandhan a Research and Training agency was intrinsically involved in teacher training in Lok Jumbish.*

building the self-image of women teachers and consequently that of women's groups in villages.

Samvadika

Another forum set up for discussing issues related to women's development was *Samvadika*. One of the agendas of this forum was reviewing all the field level activities from a gender perspective.

Balika Shikshan Shivirs

Balika Shikshan Shivirs (adolescent girls' camps) were also started for out of school girls, who had missed the opportunity of schooling. This served as a bridge programme for facilitating the re-entry of girls into mainstream schooling. Convincing parents to send girls to these residential camps and retaining them in these camps was a bold step, given the socio-cultural milieu in the state.

Learnings from LJ

The LJ project was implemented in Rajasthan with a clear intent of universalising elementary education. As against a single point entry, the project aimed at addressing issues at multiple levels. All formal and non-formal learning centres in a block came under its scope of intervention.

Decentralised local level planning and flexibility in decision-making enabled a large number of children to access the educational stream. In addition, the centrality of gender led to putting in place appropriate institutional mechanisms at various levels.

The project also tried to bridge the gap between community and the educational delivery system by putting in place local level management of educational processes. The focus on both the supply and demand aspects of education also helped in establishing that any educational endeavour has to be a continuum rather than a piecemeal effort.

The project brought together government agencies, teachers, NGOs, elected representatives and the community to function as an interactive group, working towards the goal of universalisation of primary education.

Conclusion

Though LJ could not sustain itself after 2003, it did create a momentum and reached out to children who were excluded from mainstream education. It was an initiative which evolved gradually and addressed chronic issues in education delivery through community- led processes.

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Shobhita is Associate Professor at the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur. She has extensive experience in research, policy advocacy and training on issues related to gender mainstreaming, women's rights and empowerment and gender and education and reproductive health. She has several national and international publications on these issues. She has been actively involved in the women's movement, NGOs and civil society movements in Rajasthan and India. She may be contacted at shobhita@idsj.org

Quality Education: Delhi Government Initiatives

Mohammed Suhail & Waseem Ahmad Khan

Education is the foundation stone of a successful life: it empowers learners with knowledge and skills for overall development. Quality education must emphasise better acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that help an individual deal with human, societal, national and universal goals.

Cognitive and non-cognitive skills developed in schools contribute to economic as well as social development. It helps learners become socially more acceptable individuals and plays a pivotal role in creating peaceful, blissful and justifiable societies. Imparting quality education in schools is important for the development of skilful human beings as a resource for the country. Presently, children in different parts of the country are receiving unequal education with respect to quality parameters, though their success is completely associated with the level of quality education they are receiving. It is a fact that a person with quality education is able to innovate efficiently leading to enhanced economic development.

Current Scenario in Delhi Government Schools

Delhi is both the capital of India and a metro city where provision of quality education system is expected. Delhi has different types of schools to provide education such as private, government – aided, schools run by Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and schools run by Directorate of Education. However, there are many unrecognised schools as well which are run by individuals or a group of individuals.

Delhi has over four million students in schools and most of them are studying in schools run by MCD and Delhi government. Recent studies and surveys have found that there are unfortunately very low standards of learning in children: it was found that youngsters in Delhi aged between 14 to 18 cannot read their mother language or mother tongue fluently and more than 50 percent, or half, of the students cannot solve simple division and read English. A similar status of learning has been found in upper primary level students. A survey conducted by Delhi government reported that in class six only 25 percent students can read Hindi textbooks and can read English textbooks of the second class.

This scenario of learning levels compels us to think about other places in remote areas where educational facilities are difficult to provide. It is important to disseminate quality education to students for their future benefits. UNESCO (2014) recommended that improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Need for Innovative Practices

The Right to Education Act (RTE) was implemented in 2009 with a noble objective to provide education and make education accessible to each and every child from 6 to 14 years age group, keeping under its purview the classes from 1st to 8th. This right is not just a right to access education, but it gives every child the right to attain quality education.

The current status of the level of learning in students lays great emphasis on the adaptation of some new and innovative teaching learning processes to overcome barriers of learning. Innovation in the quality of education is required to shape a generation which can communicate effectively, think critically and rationally, work collaboratively and take decisions on merit. So, a review of the curriculum, with emphasis on innovative methodologies is the need of the hour to overcome the hurdles present in providing quality education.

Initiatives by Delhi Government

Look Beyond Basics, an annual status of education report (ASER, 2017) reported that 86 percent of youth in the age group 14-18, whether in school or in college, are still within the formal education system and claimed that about 25 percent of this age group still cannot read basic texts fluently in their own language. Only 43 percent of them are able to solve division (three digits by one digit) problems correctly.

More or less the same situation prevails in Delhi as well, but the Delhi government decided to break the odds and try to find ways to ensure quality education. The government started flagship programmes to enhance the quality of teachers, students as well as teaching- learning process.

A programme named Chunauti was launched in June 2016 with the aim of bridging the learning gaps of grades 6 to 8 and to ensure no dropout in class 9. Students of class 6 to 8 were divided into two groups (Pratibha and Nishtha) and students of class 9 were in three groups (Pratibha, Nishtha and Vishwas) according to their learning levels. Teachers were asked to adopt suitable methodologies rather than follow the textbook and lecture method. Special training sessions were organised for teachers and specialised content was designed and developed for the same to strengthen foundation learning skills, ie reading, writing and basic mathematical competence.

Another initiative of Delhi government is the appointment of Mentor Teachers. About 200 teachers have been selected from Directorate of Education (DoE) schools to provide onsite pedagogical and academic support to teachers in schools. A mentor teacher is assigned five or six schools to visit every week and observe teaching and learning and provide assistance to teachers wherever required.

Further, the government introduced another scheme of Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC) to support teachers within the school. Each school was ask basis with teachers and help enhance their skills, provide feedback to the teachers and the school administration and also keep in touch with mentor teacher to improve his/her own skills using brainstorming sessions to come up with solutions to help students and teachers of their schools.

A recent initiative introduced by the Delhi government is 'Mission *Buniyaad*', a scheme started on 11th May 2018 to end on 30th June 2018. It is basically an extension of previously launched scheme known as 'Reading Campaign', which was introduced to gauge and address issues related to reading skill of students from classes 6 to 8. Teaching -learning material (TLM) for this campaign, which focussed on basic concepts was developed and administered. It was claimed by the government that the reading campaign initiative produced good results and around 75,000 students learnt to read fluently and 90,000 students learnt to solve basic mathematical operations. However, it is reported that around 2.5 lac students are still below the desired level. So, Mission *Buniyaad* was launched to address issues associated with writing and basic numeric ability.

Other initiatives started by the Delhi government, such as the Pragati series should be mentioned. This is based on the principle of 'learning without burden'. A set of foundational learning material for English,Hindi, Maths,Science and Social science was developed for classes 6 to 8. This material was printed and distributed free of cost to every student of the government schools to enhance their learning experiences. Organising summer camps in government schools for class 6 is another remarkable initiative of the Delhi government. The idea behind this campaign is to familiarise students with the school environment with utmost emphasis on the activity -based learning experiences as prescribed by NCF 2005. Different activities are conducted in the summer camp such as art and craft, reading and writing, games, dance, music etc. to engage the students and make them learn and acquire skills.

Another initiative of the Delhi government is *Kala Utsav*. It was initiated with the aim to showcase and make students aware about the aesthetics, heritage, customs, culture and traditions of other states. This initiative promotes art in education and artistic talent of students through music, theatre, visual arts and craft at different levels.

Another significant step of the Delhi government is the establishment of Mega Parent Teacher Meetings (MPTMs). This gave teachers and parents the opportunity to meet every month to order to bridge communication gaps and provide proper feedback to the parents regarding learning and development of the students. This also brings in a harmonious and cordial relationship between teacher and parents.

SWOC Analysis of Schemes

Strength

- Schemes started by the government shows clear intensions and willingness of the government to enhance learning environment for the students of government schools.
- Delhi government has spent 25 percent of its total budget to enhance and improve educational environment for students as well as for teachers.

- Supplementary and remedial teaching learning materials are provided.
- Educational inputs are given to the teachers by organising teacher trainings on regular basis.
- There are academic interventions and feedback by the teacher development coordinators (TDCs).
- Community participation to enhance students' learning.
- The teachers proactively support such moves though they demand a lot of effort.

Weaknesses

- Students' participation is not as per expectations: only 25 percent students appear to be attending classes in the summer vacations because they prefer to go to their hometowns in summer vacations and do not want to attend such classes.
- Government schools are already facing a crisis in terms of numbers of teachers. Further, about 200 teachers are deputed as mentor teachers and 1029 teachers are working in the capacity of TDCs from already appointed teachers, which adds to the crises of teachers.
- Mostly guest teachers are involved in Mission Buniyaad.
- No extra appreciation or incentives are given to teachers to motivate them to put in extra effort to improve the situation.
- The government asks for data such as attendance of the students, teacher's diary, distribution of refreshment etc instead of emphasising on actual learning.

Opportunities

- Government, school administrations as well as students have the opportunity to make learning the environment better so that students can learn in a better way, with special focus on reading, writing and solving basic arithmetic problems.
- Further, these initiatives open the door for implementing follow-up programmes to improve academic settings in government schools.
- Teachers get a chance to improve their existing knowledge and skills by attending in-service training as per the requirements of present times.
- Similarly, students also get a chance to overcome their weaknesses in relation to academics, specifically in reading, writing and basic arithmetic problems.

Challenges

- Ensuring good attendance of students is the most challenging task for the administration as well as for teachers.
- It is difficult to carry out different programmes back to back and also maintain regular curriculum as per given guidelines
- Another difficult task is keeping both the teachers and students motivated to come and perform in the scorching heat of summer.
- Real assessment of such schemes and initiative is a great challenge.

Conclusion

It has been observed in the past that governments blindly allocated money to different heads with the focus to improve infrastructure alone which resulted in increased per child expenditure but the performance of the schools did not improve at all. This led to inconsistency between expenditure and performance. This time the Delhi government has made the education system a priority and is spending a lot of its budget to enhance and improve educational settings and educational environment for the students as well as for teachers. The government took sensible steps and introduced different schemes to ensure quality education in addition to improve infrastructure. It provided opportunities to students to learn without being too burdened and overcome their learning barriers with the help of the 'joyful teaching- learning' approach. However, it is challenging for the teachers as well as for administration to carry out different programmes back to back and also maintain regular curriculum as per given guidelines.

Despite all this, it is encouraging to see teachers working so sincerely and supporting such changes which demand a lot of effort.

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Mohammed Suhail is a teacher. He holds a doctoral degree in education from Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He has shown varied and multi-dimensional interest in Outdoor Education, Experiential Learning, Teacher Education and ICT. He has developed a training model based on outdoor learning for the continuous professional development of working teachers. He may be contacted at msuhail.edu@gmail.com

Waseem Ahmad Khan is a Professor in the Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education (IASE), Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He has working experience of more than 30 years and has expertise in Social Sciences Education, Teacher Education, Guidance and Counseling, Environmental Education, Educational Administration and Supervision, Minority Education, Socio-Economic Issues, and Higher Education. He may be contacted at wak.jmi@gmail.com

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Azim Premji University
Pixel Park, PES Campus, Electronic City, Hosur Road
Bangalore - 560100

080-6614 5136
www.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in

Facebook: /azimpremjiuniversity

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Twitter: @azimpremjiuniv

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