

Workshop on School Education held in Indian Institute of Education, Pune

QUALITY

- Qualitative improvement should be measured, according to an established baseline. Criterion to judge quality of the school have to be fixed according to relevant and meaningful yardsticks, that include infrastructural requirements, as well as quality of classroom transactions, numbers of teachers available in each classroom, adherence to the Teacher Student Ratio, the number of children of the suitable age being abreast in their class, and other criterion.
- School Curriculum must be designed with a holistic approach, with the aim of being immediately relevant. Various aspects of life in the local community, such as awareness about health and hygiene issues, agriculture, water supply, features of local climate and geographical conditions etc. must be integrated within the curriculum.
- School curricula must be oriented around the world of work, and become directly relevant in procuring employment. Guidance Counseling must also be available to all students. Other measures, such as professionals for the community interacting with school children for a day each year, should also be encouraged.
- Courses for vocational education that are up-dated and relevant to the local economy should be made available in secondary schools. These schemes must also be conducted by skilled expertise, and offer useful qualifications that can help in securing employment.
- School curricula must also nurture creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. School children must also be taught how to access knowledge and resources, rather than simply imparted information that is learnt by rote. An integrative examination, along the lines of the Olympiad, that tests skill-based abilities, as well as ‘talent’ should be taken by all school going children.
- The use of ICT and web technology in school education must be creatively envisioned, and with a much larger role, for both students and teachers. This should enable connectivity between students and teachers across a very large spectrum.
- Computer centers should be provided by the government in all schools, along with expertise that enables all school going children to utilize this effectively. Computer teachers should also be employed, and appointed by each school.
- Standards of infrastructure provided from various government schemes must be regulated. Calculations for their costs must also be reliably estimated, according to current market prices, and not outdated ones, so that quality infrastructure is not compromised on.

- Teacher recruitment from within the locality should be encouraged, particularly in case of far flung districts. If possible, potential candidates for school teachers should be locally selected, and sent for training, with the object of them returning to teach in their own community.
- The process of early- childhood learning has to be given greater consideration in teacher education, including curriculum design, in service training, circulation of teaching learning materials, etc. The syllabi of DIETs need to be changed as well in this light.
- The functioning of DIETs has deteriorated from their original purpose of providing training and support to teachers, to merely examination bodies. The mandate for DIETs has to be revised. These should function as a resource center for capacity building of local teachers, rather than only as a training- cum- examination center.
- DIETs must be given greater autonomy from the SCERT, and allowed to act as a learning space for teachers. For instance, the DIET may also house mobile language labs that circulate reading material in the locality in different languages.
- Training programmes from the DIET are often outdated, and regarded as a formality. DIET lecturers must be recruited from a professionalized cadre, and their courses have to be modernized and made relevant to the school teacher. Teacher training departments, therefore, should also be linked to university departments.
- Training programs have to be made directly relevant to teachers: they should include, for example, up to date pedagogy for Maths and Science teaching, as well as incorporating local development programs in school education.
- Teachers must also be given incentives to attend training programs, which may also be held during the holidays. For instance, attendance of such training programs may be made mandatory for promotion, salary raises, etc.
- The follow up and monitoring programs of DIETs have to be made more frequent, so that they remain relevant to teachers.
- Teachers must be treated as specialized professionals, providing a particular service, and not as a substitute task force to perform additional duties. All non teaching duties, like election duty, for teachers must be limited, and if possible, ended. In addition, non academic aspects in school functioning, such as preparation of the mid may meal, should be handled by a separate category of employees in the school.
- For purposes of inspection, schools should be divided into three or four categories, according to the frequency with which they have to be inspected. Schools that do not meet mandatory requirements for infrastructure, or quality, should be inspected more frequently.

- Furthermore, there also has to be a change in the way in which school inspectorial visits are regarded. In Rajasthan, the Shiksha Karmi Shiksha are seen more as support staff, rather with a hostile, suspicious, and outsider perspective.
- More incentives have to be given out to local level authorities for adhering to set norms and standards in school education. For instance, in Chattisgarh, if a village has 100% literacy, the gram panchayat is given an award from the state government.
- Token cash prizes may be given to schools by their district authorities, for complying with basic norms, having greater rates of retention, etc. An independent third party may recommend their suitability to be given these awards.
- The rise of unregulated private teacher training colleges has to be checked. It should be compulsory for all teacher training colleges to declare how many persons holding M Ed and B Ed degrees they have on the management boards.
- Parallel coaching classes should be restricted. One measure to do so could be entrance exams for all children who complete the XIIth.

## QUANTITY

- Resources allocated to each school must be effectively managed. Access to school facilities, such as adequate school buildings, libraries, Ashram Shalas, as well as accommodation for teachers, must be made available on a demand basis. Evaluation of these facilities must be carried out on a collaborative mechanism.
- Measures to increase quantity must be accompanied by a collaborative and accountability model, between the state govt., Zila Parishad, relevant NGOs and private stake-holders, so that the measures can be reliably evaluated. A social monitoring mechanism that operates through the Gram Shiksha Samiti may also be considered.
- Quantity should only be increased if concerns about quality are adequately addressed. The number of schools should only be increased if they would possess adequate facilities, numbers of teachers, fulfill infrastructural requirements, etc.
- The infrastructural potential of schools also has to be tapped more extensively. For instance, these facilities may also be tapped in the evening by the neighborhood, which can also fund further infrastructural development of the school.
- There should be greater awareness of tax, and other benefits available to corporate bodies who wish to set up schools, as well as for infrastructural maintenance of schools.
- Problems of scalability of initially small scale projects must also be considered in greater depth. For instance, when the Lok Jumbish project was up scaled, some of the

general factors that operate in the system at large, such as corruption, also began to creep in. This problem was compounded because of the lack of coordination between different government departments on school education.

## ACCESS

- There is a strong case to be made for encouraging the running of evening school with fewer hours for children who have to work in fields or take care of their younger siblings during the day time. It is found that their attendance in these centers have been higher, as is their absorptive capacity while they attend.
- Early child education centers should not be left only to angadwadis, but should be linked with regular primary schools, and qualified elementary teachers.
- SSA programs have to have more facilities to incorporate the physically handicapped into the mainstream education system. The Rehabilitation Council of India and the UGC must work together for this purpose. Along with additional languages like French or German, sign language should also be made available to trainee teachers.
- Schemes along the lines of KGBV should also be made available for physically handicapped children. In addition, bridge courses and refresher courses must also be carried out, specifically aimed to physically handicapped school going children.
- There should be a list of children in each village, the drop outs, and girls, so that they can be monitored, by the gram panchayat, school teachers, as well as SMCs and VECs.
- Incentives offered from a complete school education may change according to the socio-economic- geographical conditions that prevail in the locality.

## MANAGEMENT

- Management of school education affairs must be put, as much as possible, in the hands of local level bodies like the Village Education Committee and the School Management Committee, as a matter of policy. Currently, this is often hindered due to a lack of a specific, coherent, and fixed, policy on school education at the state level.
- There must be a specific school education policy for all states. Many states have not had legislation for this purpose, with the effect that the priority placed on school education may get displaced with changes in government.
- The procedures relating to school education and school management must be more thoroughly coordinated within government departments. There must be a single window system, for matters relating to school management, such as land allotment, dealings with the revenue department, etc.

- There have to be greater allowances made for the differences in requirement of urban and rural schools. In many cases, funding for from municipal authorities for the purposes of urban school education is entirely inadequate.
- There has to be greater coordination at district, and state level government departments, on matters relating to school education. For instance, the provisions of the Zila Parishad and the office of the Collector may well conflict with each other, due to oversights in both offices.
- The control over allocation of funds at the District level should be transferred from the District Collector to the District Education Officer.
- The plan ceiling for expenditure on school education has to be stipulated certainly, and not subject to arbitrary change so that planning for disbursement of funds at the state\ district level becomes meaningful.
- The scheme of employing a “gram mitra” in each village for three or four areas, such as school education, basic health and hygiene, matters relating to the panchayat etc should be encouraged. The gram mitra can be, at minimum, XIIth pass. He can assist primary and secondary teachers in the village, as well as reduce the social gap between the parents, children, and their school teachers.
- The school year and timings may be planned according to what is suitable in the local climatic conditions. For instance, in many areas, the rainy season prevents children from attending school. This flexibility could also be extended to the running of extra curricular activities in school.
- The possibilities of Public Private Partnerships need to be examined in greater detail. For example, an entire Block may be handed over to a suitable private organization for a period of five years, with the resources of the government at their disposal. The results of this can be monitored, and measures may be taken accordingly for other Blocks in the locality.
- School Management Committees and Village Education Committees should include retired or well respected teachers from the community.
- Managerial and capacity building training courses should be undertaken by all principals\ heads of schools, to aid in their personnel and resource management duties. Their performances may also be subject to evaluations by the local community.