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About the publication

The launch of the journal 'Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators' is an initiative of the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) to highlight the vital role of teacher education in India, as the country is poised to provide quality education to all its children, irrespective of gender, caste, creed, religion and geographies under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RtE), 2009. The large influx of teachers necessitated under RtE represents the biggest opportunity to bring fresh life into schools for decades to come. The challenge is to enhance the role of teachers in shaping the social transformation India is witnessing, as well as have a long lasting impact on the quality of education, also making it significantly more equitable. Teachers and all those in the system need to recognize that their ownership and voices are important and that they can and do learn not only from their own experiences but also from each other through collective reflection and analysis. The publication attempts to lend voice to teachers, their educators, researchers, administrators and policy makers in the varied institutions: Schools, CRCs, BRCs, DIETs, IASEs, CTEs, SCERTs etc., and make visible their engagement in accomplishing extraordinarily complex and diverse tasks that they are expected to perform. Contributions are welcome both in English and Hindi and there are plans to produce the journal in a multilingual format in the near future.

Call for contributions

This publication is for all of us: teachers, teacher educators, administrators, researchers and policy makers. It is to provide a platform and also to build a network for our voices, ideas and reflections. Since the idea is to make this journal reflect all our voices it would only fulfill its purpose, if we contribute to it in as many ways as we can. We look forward to all of you contributing with your experiences, questions, suggestions, perspectives as well as critical comments on different aspects of teacher education and schooling. This could also be through comments and reflections on the current issue. Your contribution could be in the form of articles, reports documents, pictures, cartoons or any other forms of presentation that can be printed. We look forward to your inputs to make this journal truly reflective of our voices. It is proposed that this be a quarterly publication. We would like to receive contributions for the next issue by 15th January, 2014. We also look forward to comments and suggestions for improvements of the publication to make this a participative endeavor and improve its quality. These can be sent to the following:

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'Voices' (VTTE) is meant to bring to teachers and teacher educators local and global issues relating to conceptual aspects in education and touch on current updates as well. The current issue of Voices focuses on one such important idea brought into focus by the E-9 technical meeting held in Delhi on 27th and 28th June, 2013.

As we know, E-9 is a group that has some common concerns and a shared determination to overcome similar challenges. This involves exchanging ideas and know-how to help each other fulfill the common goals. Set up in 1993, E-9 consists of 9 highly populated countries in the world – Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan. They launched a joint effort toward universal quality education and called it the E-9 initiative. The E9 group was an offshoot of the EFA movement launched in 1990 at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. The nations participating in EFA had sought to and made a commitment to provide education to every citizen (children, youth and adults) in every society as early as they could. They had given themselves 25 years to meet this goal. The 9 countries mentioned above had more than 70 per cent of the world's adult illiterates and more than 50 per cent of its out-of-school children in 1993. Thus, in order to achieve the EFA goals, it became imperative to separately define the targets and strategies for this group.

With the 2015 deadline set for EFA looming near, work on meeting the goals and setting new targets post-2015 has assumed a sense of urgency. The Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting was held in New Delhi, India on 9-10 November 2012. India now holds the Chair after the 2012 E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting and along with UNESCO Secretariat, takes leadership of coordination between the countries. The Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting selected 'Delivering Inclusive, Relevant Quality Education for All' as the theme for E-9 cooperation during the 2013-2014 biennium. The New Delhi Commitment identified the following areas for E-9 cooperation during the biennium:

- curriculum reform and development of teaching and learning materials;
- strategies for making schools inclusive;
- professional development of teachers to impact learning for all;
- use of ICTs for enhanced access and learning; and
- develop institutional capacities for assessing learning outcomes

E-9 technical meeting was held in June, 2013 to discuss the progress under each of these areas in the nine countries and devise strategies for future - both immediate and post 2015. Voices presents a summary of the presentations and discussions on each theme. Besides this the current issue of Voices has two articles that analyze and bring out some aspects of the uploads on E-9 put up on the teacher education website (teinida.nic.in) which is hosted by MHRD. The article by Rima Kaur gives an annotated bibliography of four articles and the article by Richa Shrivastava presents where the E9 countries stand in terms of various development indicators and provokes the reader to come up with interesting queries to best understand the available data.

The article by Saurav on teacher's practice of projects can be related to both teacher professional development as well as assessment and serves as a timely reminder that we should not treat the five themes taken under E-9, as independent, mutually exclusive entities; rather develop strategies that are synergistic. The issue of preparation of teachers and teacher educators, in context of the Justice Verma commission, is examined by Disha Nawani in her article.

Inclusion, for long associated with physical disability, is now more widely interpreted. Yet, mental health issues of children are still regarded as taboo in India and have not even been acknowledged far less addressed. Priyanka Padhy talks about this 'elephant in the classroom' in her article.

In addition, as part of our regular features we have a book review by Richa Goswami where she looks at the book 'Concerns, conflicts and cohesion: Universalization of elementary education in India.'

We hope this issue would bring before you the challenges that India and other countries face and the lessons that are being learnt in seeking a way forward. We also would like to have your observations, views and opinions on ideas shared in this and earlier issues. We would also like to request you to send in your experiences and ideas on issues that would be of interest to others. 'Voices' needs your voice too.
The E-9 Initiative was launched in 1993 at the Education for All (EFA) summit in New Delhi. The E-9 countries had more than 70 per cent of the world’s adult illiterates and more than 50 per cent of its out-of-school children. Thus, it was rational to prioritize this group as progress in these countries would have a positive impact on EFA. Since its launch, the initiative has become a forum for the nine countries to discuss their experiences related to education, exchange best practices and monitor EFA-related progress.

EFA has six internationally agreed education goals that aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. 1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. 2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to, and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality. 3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes. 4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults. 5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. 6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The twenty years since the launch of the E-9 initiative have seen progress in the advancement of these goals, especially in achieving net enrollment rates in primary education and in youth and adult literacy rates. These years have also seen changes in the socioeconomic conditions of the countries: China is now the second largest economy in the world and India and Brazil also figure in the top ten. Some countries have emerged as aid-donors and exercise leadership in all aspects of EFA.

Yet, a number of obstacles remain and there is a need to accelerate if the E-9 countries are to achieve all goals by 2015. They still represent two-thirds of the world’s illiterate adults and 42 per cent of the out-of-school children. In recognition of this need, the Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting in November 2012 selected ‘Delivering Inclusive, Relevant Quality Education for All’ as the theme for E-9 cooperation during the 2013-2014 biennium. The New Delhi Commitment identified five areas for E-9 cooperation during the biennium which were focused on during the two day technical meeting.

In line with the New Delhi Commitment, the Government of India as the E-9 Chair, together with UNESCO as the E-9 Secretariat, organized a technical meeting in order to finalize concrete action plans for E-9 cooperation during this biennium. The meeting aimed at discussing how E-9 can, and should, position itself in the wider EFA context, in particular the National EFA 2015 Review process and the process to define the post-2015 education and development agendas. Its national and international participants included state level representatives, policy makers, prominent teacher educators as well as international experts.

Countries were expected to propose the areas in which they would like to take leadership in coordinating the work during the biennium and to identify institutions and responsible persons to participate in the meeting. In preparation to the meeting, leaders in each area had to develop a work plan proposal. Consultations on the work plans will continue by email and teleconferences. The work plans were presented by the technical experts in the meeting and discussed further.
E-9 Technical Meeting : Opening Address

by

Hon’ble Minister of State for human resource development, Dr. Shashi Tharoor

27th June 2013

It is indeed a privilege to present my second opening address at the E-9 platform within a short span of eight months of my assumption of the office in the Ministry. It therefore, gives me immense pleasure to be before a gathering of distinguished delegates from the E-9 countries, eminent experts from across the continents, senior officials from our valued partner organization UNESCO and the Ministry.

The Ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting held at New Delhi last November had, as you are all aware, chosen ‘Delivering Inclusive, Relevant Quality Education for All’ as the theme for E-9 cooperation during the 2012-2014 biennium. The New Delhi Commitment adopted at the end of the meeting had specifically identified five inter-related thematic areas for E-9 cooperation during the biennium. These are: Curriculum reform and development of teaching-learning materials; strategies for making schools inclusive; professional development of teachers to impact learning for all; use of information and communication technologies for enhanced access and learning; and development of institutional capacities for assessing learning outcomes.

The present technical meeting seeks to evolve a coherent action plan and to establish thematic networks that will help implement different activities required to implement the action plan. Needless to say that the deliberations relating to each of the identified thematic areas and formulation of the action plan for E-9 co-operation would be of immense significance for not only taking forward the E-9 agenda for the biennium but also contribute to the last ‘Big Push’ to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals.

It is widely recognized that the key factors that are required for ‘delivering inclusive, relevant quality education for all’ include the curriculum and teaching-learning materials that would enable each pupil to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values conducive to the actualization of his/her potentialities to the fullest. The dynamics of education and its role in national development and social transformation make it essential that the curriculum and teaching-learning materials continuously renew themselves in order to maintain their relevance to the changing societal needs, learning needs of learners and to the emerging national development priorities. Renewal of curriculum and qualitative improvement of teaching-learning materials for enhancing their effectiveness and relevance emerges as a significant challenge in this context. In India, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) was formulated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), after extensive consultations in 2005. The NCF aims to bring about a significant shift towards schools and systems that are child-friendly and inclusive, and teaching-learning processes that are more based on a constructivist approach. The NCF 2005 envisages the development of textbooks and other teaching-learning materials that facilitate construction of knowledge by learners through the understanding of concepts, by active exploration, reflective thinking, and by providing interactive opportunities for children to carry out activities in groups, with continuous and self and peer assessment of learning. The syllabi, and the teaching-learning materials, developed by NCERT reflect this philosophy. The NCF 2005 brings into focus the need to arrive at a relevant, balanced set of educational aims describing what the learners should learn.

Inclusive, relevant quality education necessitates approaches that would help meet the learning needs of diverse groups of pupils and prove
opportunities for all learners to become successful in their learning experiences. It calls for interventions designed to ensure that all children have the right to not only equal access to education but also access to conditions of learning and learning experiences that provide equal chances of success to all. While we all recognize that each child has a right to learn and access information, we also need to realize that children will only learn in an atmosphere where they feel safe, secure, valued, respected and are not unduly stressed by the fear of examinations or ridicule. Schools, teachers, administrators, and community need to include and retain all children in education through educational programmes and practices that value diversity and enable all children to experience dignity and confidence to learn.

Inclusive, relevant quality education calls for teaching-learning processes that are characterized by learner-centred and active learning approaches as well as cooperative learning which would stimulate curiosity and independent thinking, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, promote planning and execution of projects and self-learning. Since quality teaching is vital for improving student learning outcomes, quality teachers are central to all efforts aimed at qualitative improvement of education. In the context of the rapid changes in knowledge, technology and management, teachers need substantial reorientation and training in order to enable them to cope with the new profile and changing roles and tasks demanded from them. The task of enhancing teacher performance through better initial professional preparation, continued professional development opportunities for keeping teachers abreast of new developments in particular subject areas as well as in pedagogy, and through the provision of adequate supervisory and technical support in order to enable them to cope with the changing curricular thrusts continues to be a major challenge. We need to ensure that bright young talent enters the primary school teaching profession; that teachers are professionally prepared, academically supported and sustained in the profession via appropriate career development and occupational mobility options.

The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) is getting increasingly integrated into educational settings. The information and communication technologies have the potential for communicating across geographical distances with ease, for accessing new pools of information and resources and for participating in new learning networks. Realizing the potential of technology to support education, India has made huge investments in deploying ICT, in a phased manner, at all levels of education. India’s trajectory through the technology landscape has been through the early experiments with satellite technologies, moving on quickly to national level broadcast, video conferencing and establishing training networks. It has also made great strides in systematic mapping of schools employing GIS and online information systems. Online admissions and announcement of examination results are becoming commonplace. The thrust, in recent years, has been to wean the mindset of the narrow strand of computer literacy or computer-assisted learning and engage with a more promising usage of ICT for planning and
management, enabling informed decision making, connecting students and teachers with the world, breaking professional isolation, unleashing creative potentials and bridging divides.

Another challenge in the context of our efforts to promote inclusive, relevant quality education for all relates to the designing of learning assessment methodologies and procedures that would allow students from diverse backgrounds to demonstrate their learning gains and capabilities, including higher-order thinking, breadth and depth of understanding of prescribed subject matter, and the ability to apply their knowledge and skills in a wide range of contexts. Developing institutional capacities for institutionalizing a reliable system of learner assessment that assess all aspects of student learning emerges to be significant in this context.

The thrust, in recent years, has been to wean the mindset of the narrow strand of computer literacy or computer-assisted learning and engage with a more promising usage of ICT for planning and management, enabling informed decision making, connecting students and teachers with the world, breaking professional isolation, unleashing creative potentials and bridging divides.

The commitment of all E-9 countries to ensure that all children not only attend school, but also learn well puts forth pertinent questions like: Can we think of setting specific and operational learning goals for children, which may not be grade wise but for three sub stages i.e. (a) preschool stage, (b) grade 2 stage and (c) grade 5, in acknowledgement of the fact that each child learns at his/her own pace and needs flexibility in the learning and in the learning context? This would allow for ensuring academic/school readiness for all at the preschool stage, learning of basic skills of 3 R’s at the early primary stage and appropriate learning levels for grades 3 to 5 in a cumulative mode. The learning goals should be realistic, achievable and be articulated in a way that parents and teachers understand them. As capabilities for measurement and analysis improve, the assessments can become more sophisticated. It is important that available documentation on assessment of learning outcomes is used effectively to inform reflective classroom practices and to develop classroom learning environments that strive to make success achievable for each child.

I am happy to note that the Final Statement of Global Education Meet (GEM) 2012 in its section on Accelerating Progress towards EFA goals by 2015 specifically mentions about initiatives in some of the E-9 countries, such as school feeding, cash transfer programmes to poor families and legislation on the right to education, that have demonstrated how rapid progress can be achieved. To conclude, I would like to reiterate the provisions in para 28-33 of the New Delhi Commitment and reaffirm our collective resolve to accelerate progress towards EFA goals through effective E-9 co-operation and wish all of you two days of fruitful deliberations.”
I. Quality and Equity in Brazilian Basic Education: Facts and possibilities


While policy measures like free and compulsory schooling have helped Brazil attain almost 100% access to basic education, it continues to struggle with issues of quality and equity. Its highly segmented population is catered by a differential system of public and private schools. These are shared problems faced by several countries. Using mathematics data of class VIII students from Brazil’s National System for Evaluation for Basic Education (SAEB) 2001, Soares outlines the influence of gender, race, social position and school on the cognitive proficiency of students. While there is no difference in the quality of boys’ and girls’ schools, the former outperforms the latter. Whites have an edge even in the most equitable conditions. Higher socio-economic status strongly enhances performance. Interest and involvement of the family in schooling their child has the most significant impact. The private school with good teachers becomes a location for high performers. The key concern is how informed policy making and resource inputs, both within the school and the society outside, are necessary for slowly yet assuredly addressing quality and equity simultaneously in Brazilian schools. Soares’ work is preliminary understanding of these core issues and broadly sets the stage for further work and analysis.

II. Teacher Absence in India: A snapshot


Retrieved from http://www.teindia.nic.in/Files/Articles/Articles_23feb12/jeea_teacher_absence_in_india.pdf

The authors attempt to understand high teacher absenteeism through the results of a nationally
representative survey on government-run primary schools and some rural private schools in India. One in four teachers were absent from school and a significant number of teachers present were not engaged in teaching activities. Authors argue that absenteeism of a higher paid, qualified and experienced teacher is similar to a lower paid contractual teacher. Efforts to motivate them through their training and recognition do not ensure regularity. Local monitoring by the community and formation of PTAs works only under certain conditions. Private schools perform marginally better, though this is also dependent on certain factors. However, good working conditions and infrastructure along with frequent inspections of schools significantly reduce teacher absence. The authors seek correct policies and reforms that not only lower teacher absence but also check its vastly damaging impact on students.

III. Voice and Agency of Teachers: Missing link in National Curriculum Framework 2005


Retrieved from [http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/pdf/Poonam%20Batra%20Voice%20and%20Agency%20of%20Teachers%20EPW_October%201-7.pdf](http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/pdf/Poonam%20Batra%20Voice%20and%20Agency%20of%20Teachers%20EPW_October%201-7.pdf)

Poonam Batra highlights the decline in the agency of the teacher by engaging in a critical review of the National Curriculum Framework 2005 and its intended influence or lack thereof, on the prevalent practices in teacher education. It is argued in this essay that the status of teachers has continued to decline because of a systematic silencing of their voice through policy and bureaucratic assumptions. While the NCF 2005 recognizes the need for quality education as an essential prerequisite for social transformation, it fails to draw significant attention to the pivotal role of the teacher in this process. Policy measures such as recruitment of para-teachers and other such short-sighted solutions to long term goals betray the formally trained teacher. Batra asserts in this essay that teachers are reduced to being “passive agents of the state”, devoid of the ability to engage in critical thinking and analysis. In order to avoid the resultant academic stagnation of the teachers, it is also suggested that there is need for inclusive, updated and intensive teacher education that enables the teacher to grow intellectually and professionally through in-depth engagement with a discipline.

IV. Education in Contemporary India: Perspective and opportunities


Retrieved from [http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/pdf/Poonam%20Batra%20Education%20in%20Contemporary%20India_June%202011.pdf](http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/pdf/Poonam%20Batra%20Education%20in%20Contemporary%20India_June%202011.pdf)

In this essay Poonam Batra traces the evolution of educational policy, development and practice in post-independence India through various socio-economic and political contexts. Batra suggests that the reluctance of the polity and bureaucracy in the 1950s to focus on strengthening school education alongside the institutions of higher education, the political and economic instability of the 1960s and the socio-politically volatile decade of the 1970s not only hindered the realization of the goal of universal elementary education but also led to the waste of otherwise crucial time for educational policy development and implementation. The era of awakening came only in the 1980s with increased political interest in education and more importantly with the National Policy on Education in 1986. The recent past however, has seen a proactive involvement of the state through NCF 2000 and 2005 as well as the Right to Education Bill in 2005. The performance pressures of the state arising from increased international and corporate funding are also examined and it is concluded that in order to meet targets, the government’s reliance on “economically viable but sub-optimal options” are compromising on quality including that of teachers.
Notes from the E-9 Technical Meeting

Curriculum reform and development of teaching and learning materials

Curricular reform is like changing the architecture of a building already in place – inconvenient, time-taking and encountering enormous resistance from people

Introduction

Often the term ‘curriculum reform’ is perceived to be synonymous with ‘updating knowledge’; thus, ‘revision’, updating or improvement in the syllabi and textbooks is the visible face of curriculum reforms. But this process has a far more complex invisible face - the hidden processes of pedagogic issues that make the curriculum more relevant to successive generations of young people. It is seldom recognized and expected that curricular reforms may require a deeper re-designing of pedagogic relations and may, therefore, require a longer gestation period before their impact is felt.

Curricular reforms in India – A backdrop

The Indian case of recent curricular reforms has both these faces. In India, the starting point of the most recent curriculum reforms were the questions of why education is burdensome and examination centric; how is it different from what children learn at home? It was felt that India had missed the cognitive revolution. While over the decades, child psychology had evolved and grown, children’s learning was perceived in psychology and frozen in the behavioural approach to how children learn.

The outcome of this exercise was the National Curricular Framework (NCF–2005) document, supported by 21 focus groups position papers by NCERT. The formulation of NCF-2005 initiated a vast debate across the country on priorities and problems regarding how knowledge is selected and represented across the school curriculum and on how it is handled by teachers in the classroom. The new syllabi and textbooks brought out by NCERT since 2006 have deepened this debate, and many other initiatives have enabled the debate to be absorbed and pursued at different levels of administration in the states. It is to be emphasized that unlike previous attempts the new textbooks were not simply revised but freshly conceptualized. In NCF05, for the first time curriculum was formulated on the basis of the infused model - what the child knows and brings to the school rather than what is needed in the universities.

NCF-2005 has been translated into several regional languages. Many states have decided to adopt the new textbooks; several others have created their own, negotiating the NCF perspective with the help of NCERT’s exemplar material. This process is still going on and the recent review of five states carried out by NCERT shows that although substantial progress has been made, the picture remains mixed.

NCERT has broadened the scope of curricular reforms in order to create an ethos conducive to change. Its programmes for teacher trainers have concentrated on improving theoretical understanding of the NCF perspective. Interactive sessions with subject experts through satellite communication have enabled a vast body of functionaries to comprehend the basis of the changes made in the design of syllabi in different subjects.

NCF-2005 directly addresses the teachers and not just curriculum and textbook developers. Recognition of indigenous innovations — both by individual teachers and institutions — is another dimension of NCERT’s plan. It has given supportive grants and academic advice to schools representing the heritage of innovation.
Teacher education is currently a major priority of curricular reforms in India. NCF-2005 has been followed up by a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE-2009). There is a sense of urgency in NCFTE but not a sense of panic; this is based on the realization that quick fix response cannot be long term solutions.

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), the organization statutorily responsible for teacher education, has started reviewing the curriculum of teacher training followed in different states. This exercise is being guided by the pedagogic perspective articulated in NCF-2005 and the legal framework of the Right to Education (RTE) act. Together, these documents place the teacher in the role of a social architect whose professional awareness and acumen are expected to address the deeper anxieties and priorities NCF-2005 resonates. These relate to the endemic problems of discrimination in the classroom. Curriculum and pedagogy are at the heart of RTE’s goals of achieving universality of elementary education while ensuring gender parity and equality among all social groups in an inclusive classroom environment. These goals cannot be achieved by changes in the syllabus and textbooks alone. Teachers’ belief and commitment to these changes are going to play a crucial role in taking the NCF initiative forward.

**Challenges to curricular and material reforms**

India has a centre-state system for education thus leading to the problem of how some degree of commonality can be achieved in a federal system. To an extent this issue has been resolved as the States take their own decisions but also follow NCERT example and guidelines. The states are reworking their curricula as per NCF-2005 but with over 2000 languages, implementation of the first language learning model advocated by NCF-2005 is becoming an issue. Curriculum reform is being reduced to textbook revision.

Terms such as child-centred learning, continuous comprehensive evaluation and especially Inclusion is not correctly understood. New systems of assessment are needed if the new syllabus and attempts are to be successful. These require more sophisticated way of measuring children’s achievements—some have been developed by NCERT as also by other E9 countries like China and Brazil.

Some of the problems arise out of institutional structures directly in charge of curricular reforms, their academic status and capacities, and their access to the intellectual and creative resources available in other institutions. However, many persistent problems have their roots in the bureaucratic functioning of the directorates of education and the boards entrusted with examination and certification. School curriculum reform is not immediately accompanied by other reforms such as teacher education reform but everyone needs to be brought on board at the same time for efforts to be successful.

The profile of student-teachers is changing and models of teacher education need to respond to this change. Models of in-service education are minimally understood - CRC and BRC are poorly integrated into higher education system. A long-term investment is needed in this area but there are no large scale examples in India about how this can be done.

It is too early to assess the impact of the new textbooks, the first of which appeared in 2006. Generational changes will need to be studied and the new generation of learners will complete their schooling in 2017 and that will be an ideal period to assess the impact.

**Other reforms**

NCERT in India has also focused on early reading and early mathematics which have been identified as two critical curricular spheres on which the nature and quality of learning depends. By focusing on the early primary grades, NCERT’s research and training in these two key areas will enable the larger system to overcome a long-term academic deficit. The preparation of a 40-part graded reading series, *Barkha*, marks an important beginning in a neglected area of the primary-level curriculum. Finally, a great deal of attention is being paid to improving assessment and evaluation. The focus is on enabling teachers to make assessment and record-keeping an aspect of teaching.
Key learnings from the E-9 technical meeting

- While reform in school curriculum results in changes in syllabi and textbooks, the reform process also necessitates a deeper redesigning of pedagogical reforms which may require a longer gestation periods before this impact is felt;

- The curriculum reform process requires debates on priorities and problems regarding how knowledge is selected and represented across the school curriculum and how it is handled by teachers in the classroom;

- The curriculum reform process needs to be accompanied by reforms aimed at improving assessment and evaluation with special focus on enabling teachers to make assessment and record keeping an aspect of teaching.

Activity 1.2 - Document and share best practices to support national-level consultations for reviewing the effectiveness and relevance of the existing school education curriculum in E-9 countries. This would be done between September 2012 -February 2014.

Activity 1.3 - Prepare National reports based on the findings of the assessment of the effectiveness and relevance of the existing school education, and on the inputs received during the sub-national and national consultations. This would be done in May 2014.

Activity 1.4 - Prepare synthesis report based on E-9 country reports. This would involve:

- Prepare National Reports March-April 2014
- Synthesis Report June to August 2014
- Review synthesis and follow-up action September 2014

Activity 1.5 - Prepare a draft national curriculum framework to guide the process of curriculum reform for delivering inclusive, relevant quality education for all. This would be between May to October 2014.

To facilitate all of the above the group decided to:

- Create a website for exchange of information relating to E9 activities;
- Promote the use of social media;
- Create a page E 9 Education Best Practices on Facebook;

The E 9 chair was expected to administer the above three and the implementing agencies were also decided. The proposed activities at the national level will be coordinated by a national level agency involved in curriculum planning and development with support from the Ministry of Education. The E-9 level activities and technical meetings will be coordinated by country chairing the E-9 in collaboration with the E-9 Secretariat at UNESCO.
Understanding inclusion

For a very long time (and in some cases, still), inclusion was equated with children with disabilities. In fact, several E9 countries identify inclusion with disability – but it is important to do away with all labels and follow the example set by Brazil. It is now understood that inclusion is not confined to schools and that it is applicable to the wider society or community in which we live. Migrant children, street and working children, different caste groups, and disadvantaged children, youth and adults, all belong to this category. Changing situations and contexts leads to new forms of social exclusion emerging all the time. Inclusion in schools and training centers is one major step towards erasing social exclusion. An implication is that even ordinary schools should include a greater diversity of students and all students, even those with different needs, are the responsibility of all teachers rather than a special needs teacher.

Inclusion and the E9 countries

While all E9 countries are committed to inclusion, either as a separate policy framework or as part of laws enforcing EFA, they are at different levels of progress. EFA and Right to Education advocate an overarching policy of inclusion but countries do not know what they need to do to go beyond these broad statements to something more concrete, something that can be implemented. At implementation level, all countries have adopted a twin track system – special needs programmes run on one track and inclusive education runs on the other. The two tracks are either in parallel or converge, depending on the country. For teacher preparation towards handling inclusion, training programmes of different durations have been introduced with the modalities varying from country to country.

Countries have separate provisions – resource centres, special schools, special classes within regular schools – to support schools and teachers in dealing with inclusion. But these measures often focus on remedial teaching and not learner centred pedagogy. ‘Casual’ inclusion which refers to ‘dumping’ children or youth in inadequately prepared schools has affected the quality of education. Regular schools continue to follow rigid curriculums and are unable to devise means of assessments. Lack of support structures, infrastructure and trained teachers either leads to denial of admissions or high dropout rates.

What is inclusion?

_Inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination._

(Conclusions and recommendations of the 48th session of the International Conference on Education (ICE) - UNESCO, 2008)

Challenges to inclusive education

The presentation on inclusion and subsequent group discussions identified the following major challenges in achieving inclusion:

- Ambiguities in defining what inclusion actually means. Is it learners with special needs, or from disadvantaged backgrounds or a diverse group of learners?
- In the absence of an inclusion models, special schools continue to exist. Special Education exists as an important component of Inclusive Education for preserving the
comfort and stability of the mainstream education system. They are harnessed to enable the school to go on with its routine and “main” activity but the status quo is maintained and mainstream schools continue exclusion.

- Resistance to inclusion is still prevalent as inclusion is considered to be dictate from the top and not acceptable to teachers.
- Conflict between inclusion agenda and (standard) agenda: Content heavy curriculum and evaluating progress based on marks and grades leads to tension between curriculum load and inclusive teaching.
- Schools across countries still do not have the capacities to provide for students with a wide range of diversities (without comprising).
- Structures in schools are not adapted to encourage team work and specific interventions. Inclusion demands a cultural transformation of schools.
- Training of teachers and pooling of resources still inadequate.
- Application of Universal Design to school buildings is not a reality.
- Linkages between community, teacher - teacher, peers, teacher - parents etc. are weak.

Suggestions for attaining inclusion

The presentations also came up with some implementable suggestions to make inclusion a reality, with the understanding that these are long-term commitments and inclusion cannot be achieved overnight.

- Research on all E 9 countries on the status of inclusive education – policy and practice, collation of any data that is available. This could be done in a comparative manner, so that countries can learn from each other.
- Review E-9 country policies and strengthen them in order to bring in a more holistic understanding of inclusive education. This includes developing a policy for inclusive education for all and not limited to one kind / category of exclusion.
- The policy so developed should also have an action plan. This is because there is a gap between policy and implementation. The aim is to reduce this gap. To this end, there is a need for systematic dissemination across the country so that people at all levels take this policy seriously.
- Also each country identifies the most disadvantaged/excluded; those who are excluded within the school. This basic information is required and would help the debate on inclusion.
- The communities or constituencies that are marginalised should have a voice in the policy making process.
- Understanding the reasons for exclusion within the school and the classroom.
- There are systemic implications of inclusive education – the pupil teacher ratios have to be around 1:20 if the teacher has to teach a groups of children who are at different levels, with some of them needing focused attention/support.

Action Plan

The sub-group working on inclusion came up with the following action plan to achieve their goals.

Activity 2.1 - E-9 countries to map communities of learners that are excluded from and within school; create a data base and analyse the reasons for their exclusion;

Activity 2.2 - Sharing of policies and comparative review from the inclusion perspective and good practices;

Activity 2.3 - Each of the E9 countries to develop concept papers on inclusion for sharing;

Activity 2.4 - Create a platform for dialogue, sharing experiences, resources such as teacher training materials and effective programmes;

Activity 2.5 - Each of the E9 countries to develop an advocacy plan for adequate fund allocation for developing inclusive schools to be undertaken;
Activity 2.6 - Evolve a set of preconditions for effective inclusion (including inclusive classroom indicators):

- norms for pupil -teacher ratio
- non-discrimination
- grievance redressal mechanism
- inclusive school development plans.

Invitation from Brazil

The Government of Brazil conveyed that it was willing to lead the work under this theme and invited E-9 countries to participate in a workshop on inclusive education to be held in April 2014, to debate the following:

- Literacy
- Indigenous education through multi and inter-linguistic perspective and multi and inter-cultural perspective
- National languages and official languages
- Subsidies to expand schooling in connection with revenue transfer policies (to share Brazil’s Bolsa Familia Programme for the poorest)
- Evaluation
- School and integrated community and inter-sectorality.
Introduction

Teachers are at the centre of all educational endeavours. Yet, the EFA Goals from Jomtien in 1990 to the Dakar Framework in 2000 and many other such international declarations, including the MDGs have not yet addressed the critical issues of the competences and skills that teachers need to address the much desired concerns of quality, equality, relevance and inclusion at the heart of the philosophy of Education for all.

We judge teacher competence not by quality per se but by student outcomes in public examinations. This has resulted in teachers neglecting quality interactions and learning outcomes in favour of prescriptive teaching and teaching to the test. Teacher education and training too focuses on providing these skills. Education is reduced to delivering a plan made by someone else and somewhere else.

There has been a shift in meaning of quality pedagogy, curriculum and aim of education in recent years. Teacher education too now needs to undergo a transformation and build skills whereby both the teacher and students become partners in co-construction of knowledge with each being accountable for the teaching learning process. The problems to be surmounted include an undersupply of teachers, inadequate institutional capacity, gap in teacher educators, out dated curricula and sub-standard educational materials.

Professional development and what it requires

Professional teachers in today’s context are those who are flexible, reflective, imaginative, creative, innovative and with an enquiring mind. They work in diverse classroom that requires them to examine their own values and beliefs. They also have to engage with the social context of learning, with subject knowledge and understand multiple childhoods. To create such a teacher demands a totally new approach not just a simple change of programme.

The new teacher should have the necessary values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure the sustainable learning and full participation of every learners in class. For this they need to - value learner diversity, support all learners, give learner a sense of belonging and create a network of professional development. The teacher education programmes should inculcate these competences and skills. The presentation by Prof. S. Tchombe clearly articulated how Africa has used both initial training and in-service education to achieve these goals. They have also developed some indicators for Quality teacher education that help in developing an institutional plan. These include having a well-equipped library, fostering ICT skills, teacher educators’ commitment and capacity building opportunities etc.

All of the above require change in policies and implementation plans that take the teacher on board. For example, in terms of recruitment of teachers, there should be a sustained cadre of professionally qualified teachers and do away with the two streams of teachers – regular and part-timer. In-service training framework also needs to be redesigned and linked to teacher career paths. This must be accompanied by other concerns such as teacher’s morale, prestige/status, career/professional mobility, salary/technical allowances and other social amenities to reduce attrition from the profession and increase commitment.

The following steps were suggested in the meeting as key requirements to achieve teacher professional development:

1. Reform pre-service education. This would entail the following:
   - Review curriculum and pedagogic approaches to address diversity amongst learners; teacher beliefs and assumptions.
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• Engage prospective teachers with the theory and practice of the social context of learning; childhood and the development of children and epistemological basis of knowledge domains.
• Widen and deepen state presence in the sector of teacher education.

2. Recruitment Policy
• Address shortfall of professionally qualified teachers while preparing for a sustained cadre of professionally qualified teachers.
• Reshape policy to liberate the school system from the dual system of teacher recruitment: contractual and regular.
• Redesign teacher education to professionally equip teachers to teach in diverse classrooms.

3. Provide for Continuous Professional development
• Develop a more informed discourse and a honing of skills amongst teachers to enable child-centered education, subject-specific constructivist pedagogies and Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) approaches.
• Provide on-site teacher support based on teacher needs and classroom concerns.
• Establish mechanisms for faculty exchange and research-based learning frameworks.
• Bring private schools into the ambit of state mechanisms of academic support to teachers and monitoring of schools.

Experiences from E9 countries

Indonesia: It started teacher reform in 2007 when a law was passed by parliament for recruitment and existing teachers. The recruitment and deployment system has been revised and the teachers are a district cadre now. Central government does not hire or fire, but it is done in the 500 districts. Teachers cannot be affiliated with any political party; if they are then they have to resign. Also there is a process whereby the government will not re-certify every single teacher through one certification mechanism. The new law also provides continuous professional support to 2.7 million teachers and has introduced a teacher performance appraisal system. This appraisal is closely tied to student learning outcomes.

In Egypt, as part of pre-service training, teachers work as assistant teachers for 2 years and then get a report from the inspector of schools. In China, most of the training is provided by local government, especially finance.

Cameroon has distinct models for primary and secondary school teachers. Basic education suffers from high attrition rates of teachers, as the school environment, high PTR, is not conducive to teachers. The second challenge is that there are no opportunities for continued professional growth and development. Inspectors from ministry do not understand the context in which the schools functions and the reality of school life and what the teacher goes through. Training itself does not equip them for these challenges. In certain situations the distinction between pre-service and in-service teacher training, what the two require and what the aims of the two involve is blurred. Who supervises the teachers and what are they supposed to supervise is unclear.

Action Plan

The experts in the sub-group working on this theme outlined the following activities, to be carried out by 2015.

Activity 4.1 - Preparation of Country Profiles
• Recruitment policies and working conditions of all categories of teachers - including teacher profiles
• Perspectives on teacher and teacher education
• Teacher education curriculum and models
• Teacher Educator Profile
• Teacher Accountability systems

Activity 4.2 - Create web-based platforms for sharing information and materials relating to teacher Education, pedagogy, best practices and opportunities for professional enhancement for teachers and teacher educators.

To facilitate the above, the E9 countries need to agree on:
• Lead country to coordinate preparation of country profiles and prepare a synthesis.
Notes from the E-9 Technical Meeting

Developing institutional capacities for assessing learning outcomes

Assessment in India

There have been several initiatives in India for large-scale assessment. NCERT conducts national achievement surveys, Pratham, an NGO, conducts ASER and work has also been done by organizations such as Educational initiatives as well as SCERTs and SIEs in Rajasthan. The results of these surveys have shown that assessment cannot be discussed in isolation from learning outcomes.

Questions of how we define learning outcomes and the basic assumptions in defining these outcomes are being raised. For example, the learning outcomes assume that all children of same age are at same level; a homogeneity in age-grade progression; ignoring socio-linguistic issues etc. But surveys show that over 100 million children are below expected grade-level!

There is the belief that children are not learning because there are no “inputs” – teachers / textbooks/infrastructure - that the lack of materials leads to lack of learning. Deeper educational issues such as sterile / hostile classrooms that are not inclusive and lack of engagement with the content are ignored. Time on task studies show that maximum time is spent on copying (not active learning).

Thus, assessment efforts need to also examine issues of emergent literacy, think about science of learning and identify the purpose of assessments. High stakes are associated with assessment especially when it is linked to teacher promotions. Competitive assessment can lead to data manipulation. Ultimately assessment needs to be linked with system reform.

The purpose of national and international level assessments needs to deal with issues of confidentiality of the information being generated and avoid potential misuse. They also need to cautious of the implications these assessments on the health of schools especially poor schools.

Learning outcomes – a new perspective

The term ‘learning outcomes’ of students has many connotations. One common assessment model involves identifying learning outcomes and testing students for the same. This model holds accountable teachers and head-teachers for the results. It is an externally imposed model supposed to drive up standards but it tends to result in children being better in tests and examinations. What is neglected is the learning of the children and the focus is on exam performance – which should ideally be the last step - leading to an assessment driven curriculum, which is the end part. By relying on summative assessments, knowledge becomes a product of assessment and this distorts the notion of learning.

An alternative reform model now being suggested focuses on creating an effective and learning environment based on teachers and teachers’ capacities. Here curriculum standards form the learning outcomes. Curriculum standards are created based on values (example; temporal ordering of items – progression) and are different

Assessment standard

An assessment standard specifies those knowledge-sets, skills or dispositions (at different levels of difficulty), which a student is required to have, and which are expressed in such a way that they can be tested in a controlled environment, such as an examination.
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from pedagogic (teaching) standards or assessment standards. They focus on what a child should know, should be able to do and which disposition (attitudes / inclination) she should acquire. But they do not specify how these knowledge, skills and dispositions should be taught. Most vitally, curriculum standards are not subject to the notion of whether they can be tested or not.

**Curriculum standards**

- Curriculum standards are not the same as teaching standards or assessment standards.
- It is therefore important that the standard is not compromised in any way by whether it can or cannot be used as a testable construct.
- Furthermore, these standards do not specify how the knowledge, skills, and dispositions should be taught.

This shift from an assessment driven development of learning outcomes to curriculum standards is needed to avoid a wash-back effect on the curriculum, on teaching and learning and on institutions. This shift requires capacity development to equip teachers with skills and disposition that impact classroom processes. The shift also cannot be at the level of individual teachers but has to be institutionalized.

**Strategies for assessment**

The presentations during the meeting presented two alternatives views of assessment and learning outcomes – the large-scale assessment model and curriculum standards model. Both, however, agreed on some areas of work:

1. There is a need to have realistic stage-wise (not age-wise) learning goals for pre-school, grade 2 and grade 5. Focus should be on early grade learning which can be a combination of CCE and sample based assessment.

2. Have a time bound plan to review and develop a system of annual assessments that gives reliable data for reforms. Results of surveys have to be communicated to parents and the teachers in a language that makes sense.

3. Review and pre-school and school teacher education curriculum in the light of the new learning outcomes and integrate CCE into teacher training.

4. Classroom learning environment is a critical factor in assessment. Developing indicators for assessing a facilitative classroom environment is required as also the identification indicators common across countries and contexts.

5. Develop systemic capacity, institutional capacity and people’s capacity for assessment. The capacity to assess as well as analyse the results of the assessment has to be developed. A science / theory of learning needs to be developed and tested in the field acting as a lab area.

For example, knowledge of how early reading takes place in different contexts like a multilingual scenario is absent. While many other disciplines work in this area, for example, language and linguistics, they contribute little in knowledge of reading as they have a different focus. Further, the knowledge acquired also needs to be extended to assessment. Assessment of non-academic areas such as sports is also required.

**Action Plan**

The sub-group working on assessment realized that one factor that plagues any meaningful dialogue on assessment is the lack of data. In its absence, discussions are reduced to expressing views and impressions rather than informed opinion.

**Activity 3.1** - Detailed Status Survey of National / Large Scale Assessments systems and processes in E-9 countries and learning from the same. This will cover the following:

- Objectives, age/grades and subject areas
- Coverage and Sampling
- Agencies involved including extent of teacher involvement
- Periodicity and Survey Management
- Dissemination and usage of results

Activity 3.2 - Capacity Building on National / Large Scale Assessments

Areas of Capacity Building – India can offer support from institutions like NCERT, ASER and EI. Agencies and institutions from other countries need to be identified. This will involve:

- Designing and Conducting Large Scale Assessments
- Developing Assessment Tools
- Helping teachers to develop assessment tools
- Test Development/Test Administration
- Data Analysis/ Test Interpretation
- Communication of Results
- Understand implications for curriculum, textbooks, classroom transactions

Operationalization Plan for Activity 3.2

1. Visits across E-9 countries
2. Network of Resource Persons

Activity 3.3 - Collaborative multi-country E-9 Study on understanding how diverse groups of children learn (Science of Learning)

- Lab district approach: To understand ground realities and systemic challenges and improve early learning and assessment in a small region with a focus on capacity building and seeing how this can be used to impact classroom practices.
- Multi country multi disciplinary research to develop indigenous understanding on how children learn including in a collaborative mode so as to develop a community of researchers.
- These projects may encourage the development of focused institutional research and engagement of universities and other institutions.
- Arriving at indicators for Learning Environments

Offer made by Ambedkar University, New Delhi, India: The Ambedkar University in collaboration with NCERT has volunteered to be the lead institution to coordinate the above.
Introduction

The question of what constitutes learning has assumed new significance in the age of technology in the classroom ranging from traditional whiteboards to radios, TVs, PCs, tablets etc. Modes of learning too have changed from face to face to now distance education and open distance learning. ICT devices have evolved from pure computing devices to widely connected multimedia, multi-gadget interface and even mobile phones. In the wider world, ICT has become a way of life leading naturally to the issue of what should be the model of ICT in the larger school system.

There are several model of using ICT for education in different countries around the world. Uruguay follows the ‘one on one model’ and several countries have adopted the BYOD – bring your own device – model. However providing the ‘hardware first model’ – a laptop for each child – does not address the issue of integrating ICT in education. They also fail to foresee real situations such as battery chargers burning down and lifetime of a device.

While concentrating on issues of hardware, pedagogy and curricula have often been ignored. This needs close work with the three primary stake holders in ICT in education – the teacher, the school system and the student. The requirements of the three stakeholders are well defined:

- The teacher - an ICT teacher in 2014 should be connected to peer group and resources. She should be trained to use material critically and also be a critical creator of materials. ICT pre-supposes a flexible classroom with a teacher has the agency and flexibility of choices. In the situation where the curricula is fixed and cannot be adapted, the use of ICT is compromised. Unfortunately the teacher has no say in curriculum or the teaching regime.

- School systems: Apart from teaching learning, other aspects such as mid-day meals etc. also need to be covered by ICT. They need to evolve to use ICT and prepare databases, map schools, MISs etc. This exercise can save money used in data seeking and mining and ensure informed decision making.

- Students – While defined as a single stakeholder, all students are different with different needs. Developing a flexible ICT curriculum that enables students to integrate it with other subjects is a must. More critical computer skills and not MS Word / Excel etc are needed.

E9 experiences

Indonesia has 30,000 islands and it is a challenge to educate people. ICT has been a boon and it connects over 300 universities, 21000 schools and 900 offices. The network is utilized to house a learning website where textbooks, admission information etc. is uploaded. Among the proposed activities is an International symposium on ODL in Bali in November, 2014. However, there is a need to connect the teachers at the school level.

In Nigeria, content for ICT from primary to senior secondary levels has been developed and has been operational for five years. While the university is well established, well trained teachers are required. The curriculum of pre-service teacher education has been upgraded to accommodate ICT training so that in a few years teachers to handle ICT would be available.
Infrastructure too is poor and mechanisms to institutionalize in all schools across the country are unclear. Thus capacity building of in-service teachers, providing infrastructure (which is capital intensive) and setting up computer labs are a priority.

Different states in India have different experiences. EduSat facility is used in several states especially in the north-east. Teaching of computer science is compulsory from class 6th but the absence of a curriculum is felt. The learnings from this subject are not applied in others. Governments have introduces laptops to children schemes although experts caution against this. The ICT experiment in India has shown that failure is often due to the fact that teachers have been bypassed while students get computers.

One to one model is not the way to go; 3 or 4 children per device is a better way as it encourages them to reflect together. We emphasize infrastructure but it is not utilized properly where available. In fact, computer labs reduce flexibility, mobility and creativity in using ICT in other subjects. As positives, ICT has been used for child tracking systems in Orissa and Tamil Nadu as well as other states.

The biggest challenge of training teachers to integrate ICT into the curriculum, not in computer labs but in subjects, remains. Bridges between people who develop content and teachers who use it are needed.

Key issues and concerns in use of ICT

Based on the country presentations, the following key concerns were identified:

- We cannot focus on one technology to the exclusion of others - technology alone cannot ensure success
- ICT normally so far had not had any pedagogic principles and thus has not been successful. ICT fails when no clear pedagogy underlies it. Pedagogy implies a purposeful strategy to enable children to learn and teachers need training for deploying ICT.
- ICT models should be lucid, significant and achievable showing how it can be used to give attention to particular learning needs in given circumstances.
- A need analysis of different ICT devices and deployment models is needed.
- If we treat ICT as a gadget to be supplied, then ICT in each classroom cannot be afforded and we would face issues of e-waste. Even if the funds are available, should we look at buying a laptop for each child?
- There have been several small innovations but can the small innovations be scaled up? If yes, how?
- Internationally developed content has to be contextualised. It is not sufficient to translate content to local language.

Action Plan

The sub-group worked around three questions while developing the action plan. They were:

- How to overcome issues of hardware, electricity etc. and in fact understand that these are non-issues if there is an informed rejection of ‘hardware first’ model?
- How to use of ICT in all activities related to running a school?
- How to train teachers who have not used technology before?

The four focus areas were: Teacher Training for new pedagogy; Enabling change in schools with focus on performance of children; creating an observatory – a group of technology savvy people and the capacity building of all stakeholders.

Activity 5.1: Articulation of policy and plan for ICT in Education at the national level in each country. This would involve:

- Sharing of existing policy / framework
- Enable E 9 countries to seek support from each other for policy formulation
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**Activity 5.2:** Develop / revise ICT curriculum for teachers, school administrators and other educational functionaries:

- Develop appropriate curriculum for capacity building
- Develop and use online courses (MOOC)
- Share training / professional development practices / models
- Evaluate of existing practices

**Activity 5.3:** Develop and share open Education Resources for the school system

- Create of a shared agenda for OER among E 9 countries
- Open up India’s National Repository for use by E 9 countries
- Expand the collection available in National Repository to accommodate teacher education

**Activity 5.4:** Study the impact of ICT efforts in the E 9 countries

- Compile existing studies / evaluation / researches in ICT for education
- Share issues / concerns / designs
- Share outcomes / results

**Activity 5.6** International Symposium for Open Distance Learning (Bali, 2014)

- E 9 countries to participate
Notes from the E-9 Technical Meeting

E-9 positioning in the global EFA processes

Background

With less than two years remaining in the 2015 deadline set for meeting the 6 EFA goals, the task force meeting provided the ideal setting for assessing the progress in their achievement and defining strategies for acceleration. Thus in order to achieve the first goal related to expanding ECCE, it was decided that the age for learning has to be defined at birth with every child having the right to comprehensive care and education. The other five goals were also defined more specifically. For example, in achieving adult literacy by 50 per cent, literacy would now include not just reading and writing but also the ability to communicate, express and connect.

Apart from the big push needed to meet the goals by 2015, the other two main tasks on the agenda are preparing for the meeting in 2015 as well as preparing the post-2015 agenda. Several meetings are lined up before the May 2015 conference. 18 members of the EFA steering committee are expected to meet, with India representing the nine E9 countries. The annual global EFA meeting has been scheduled in Latin America in early 2014 and 8 countries from each region will be attending the meeting. Among the E9 countries, Brazil, China, Egypt, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan will be part of the proceedings.

The E9 countries will prepare for the global conference in Seoul in May 2015 by having national as well as regional review meetings. The national reviews are expected to take place in 2013 and wind up by 2014. The process of the review would involve voluntary, participatory, inclusive support by the E9 partners. The objectives include a review of progress on the six goals, the strategies of achieving the goals and determine the relevance of the EFA framework as a holistic global agenda. The expected outcomes are a clear awareness of where the countries stand, especially in terms of equity, as there has been an increase in intra-country disparity, a fact pointed out repeatedly during the conference. The outcomes also include a shared vision for the E9 countries on how to move forward with a renewed commitment to education.

The EFA 2015 reviews – details

The overall aim of the national reviews is to assess progress made toward achieving EFA since Dakar, and the extent to which countries have held their commitments. The review is expected to generate and lead to a broad-based critical debate on the evolution of national education and training sectors since 2000 by the national stakeholders with regard to the effectiveness and efficiency of their past efforts and the relevance of EFA to their national development context. It will also identify the priority areas for furthering the transformation of national education systems in order to better contribute to equitable and sustainable development in diverse contexts.

The goal of universal access to school has been achieved but this has raised questions about what learning is taking place there, which had lead to a bigger question of what is learning. Can it be defined in terms of test scores or is it a holistic process which needs to be defined.

The first objective of the country-wise review is to assess the extent to which the country has made progress towards the six EFA goals. This would include analysis of trends in key relevant indicators since 2000; analysis of disparities in access to effective and relevant learning for children, youth and adults since 2000, particularly for the most disadvantaged social groups; and analysis using research and case studies to illustrate and highlight critical issues and how they have been addressed.
The second objective is to review implementation at the national level of the 12 strategies of the Dakar Framework in achieving EFA. For this objective the tasks include an examination of the way the strategies have been implemented since 2000; identifying the challenges that remain in view of strengthening the effectiveness and efficiency of the education and training sector in its contribution to national development efforts.

The third objective is to determine (through consultations with national education stakeholders) the relevance of the international EFA framework for future national education policy and practice. This will be done through consultations which will serve as a basis for setting the direction and laying out the national education agenda relevant to future development context beyond 2015 and also consultations to identify the benefits and limitations of the international EFA Framework since 2000 and to inform the global debate on the scope and shape of any potential international post-2015 education agenda.

At the end of the review, national reports covering a systematic stock-taking of how and why the country has made progress (or not) on key dimensions of EFA and how the country plans to move forward within the context of the national development agenda are expected. The report is also expected to set national post-2015 education agenda based on EFA 2015 through an inclusive and participatory process anchored on evidence, past experience and various best practices.

Each country is expected to implement the review in a participatory, inclusive, evidence-based, constructive and forward-looking manner and involve all national stakeholders. They are expected to use existing information and have effective and efficient further information gathering, if needed. The review’s findings can be used to rekindle public and political support for education; and also highlight lessons learnt, reflect on future national education agenda and inform follow-up strategies.

The timeline proposed is as follows: Establishment of national EFA review committees/teams (May-June 2013); Launch of the national EFA 2015 review (June-July 2013); National dialogues for the national EFA 2015 review, and drafting of the national EFA 2015 review reports (June/July 2013 to April 2014); National forum on the ‘EFA 2015 review and post-2015 education agenda’ (April-May 2014).

For the regional EFA 2015 Review the proposed timeline of activities/events organised and held by regional EFA partners in their region is June – October 2014.

For the E-9 EFA 2015 Review Process, the timeline is: Establishment of E-9 team for EFA review and preparation of National report (July-August 2013); Submission of national reports of E-9 countries for preparing a synthesis report (May 2014); and E-9 Consultation to review country reports and finalise the format of the E-9 EFA synthesis report (e-consultation and video conference) (May-June 2014)

The new goals demand a focus on building institutional and individual leadership. This demands institutes that can envision and plan action, and carry out educational research. This also demands investment in developing High End Human Resources who can lead and take on new challenges.

**Education Post-2015**

In the past twenty years, the way countries view education and access to it has changed diametrically. The focus has shifted from access to quality, tinged with a human rights perspective. This has affected all aspects of the frameworks of educational planning. In the desire for quick fix solution to meet the EFA goals several education related projects were launched, many to great success. Their success has now enabled countries to move towards a child rights and entitlement perspective as well as decentralization.

However, before they set new goals, the E9 countries still need to work towards achieving the six goals. Quantitatively much has been achieved but this has highlighted other issues related to quality, some arising from intra-country disparities – regions, remote areas, social groups,
minorities, migrants, and the urban deprived. Gender equality has also remained problematic.

The goal of universal access to school has been achieved but this has raised questions about what learning is taking place there, which had lead to a bigger question of what is learning. Can it be defined in terms of test scores or is it a holistic process which needs to be defined. What students learn in schools is also dependent on the school environment and the modified goal now is to not just build schools but foster them as inclusive spaces that accept diversity as natural and desirable; spaces that shun competition and promote learning to learn together.

This has also resulted in a desire to achieve ECCE as the marginalized groups and first generation learners need pre-school education to come to par with their middle class peers.

With access to education becoming a reality, the new goals will have to be set according to changing global needs. This includes ‘learning to live together’ in a world underscored by cohabitation of multiple perspectives of religion, culture, language and ideology. What it requires is education that develops capability and right attitude in its citizens; education that develops skills to adapt to fast changing demands of the work place and finally education that fosters life-long learning.

The new goals demand a focus on building institutional and individual leadership. This demands institutes that can envision and plan action, and carry out educational research. This also demands investment in developing High End Human Resources who can lead and take on new challenges. All E9 countries have tremendous human resource potential that has remained untapped. This will need cooperation within E-9 for creation of regional platforms of learning and sharing, building and strengthening networks of Professional Institutions and Combining the Social and Cultural Capital with Financial Resources.

**Defining post-2015 national and E-9 education and development agenda**

The key points in the post-2015 agenda are as follows:

- Formulation of national and E-9 education agenda beyond 2015 through an inclusive and participatory process anchored on evidence, past experience and various best practices.
- National and E-9 reports on the education agenda beyond 2015 based on the findings of the national and E-9 EFA 2015 review and in the emerging national and global context
- Defining post-2015 national and E-9 education and development agenda.

The proposed timeline is:

- Submission of national reports of E-9 countries for preparing a synthesis report on post-2015 education agenda (May 2014).
- Drafting of E-9 synthesis report based on E-9 country reports on post-2015 education agenda (June - August 2014).
I can see and feel, since entering the room today, that we made a leap forward since I was with you yesterday morning at the opening session. There is a collegial atmosphere today which demonstrates that your joint work and discussions over the last two days, and the common sense of purpose, brought you closer to each other and created professional links which are the real essence of the E-9 Initiative.

I have learnt that your discussions had been very fruitful and that the expected outcomes of this meeting were achieved. We made great efforts to mobilise the finest Indian experts as well as representatives of our States in order to enrich, facilitate and support the discussions and exchange at this meeting, to learn from your countries’ experiences and to share the Indian experience with you.

The work plan you developed in the thematic groups shows us the way to the next E-9 ministerial meeting to be hosted by Pakistan in November 2014. I believe that the work we embark on will lead to tangible outcomes with benefits for each and every one of our countries. The planned exchange and peer review of existing policies, the joint analysis of successful - and unsuccessful! – approaches and practices will be extremely valuable in guiding E-9 national strategies to improve education quality and the decisions which I and my fellow ministers have to take.

I would like to thank all E-9 participants for their contributions made here and our special gratitude goes to Brazil and Indonesia for offering invitations to all E-9 countries for highly pertinent events which they will host: Brazil will organise an E-9 workshop in April 2014 on Strategies for making schools inclusive, and Indonesia hosts a Symposium on Teacher development in November 2013 and a Conference on Open and Distance Learning to enhance access in August 2014. I would also like to acknowledge Nigeria’s excellent proposal to submit to the International Task Force on Teachers for EFA a request to plan a special E-9 forum at their next meeting.

In May 2015, in Seoul, Korea, we will gather with other countries and EFA partners from the UN system, civil society and the private sector, to take stock of progress towards the EFA goals set in 2000 and decide on the way forward. Our leaders will also meet at the UN General Assembly to adopt a future global agenda. We should, as E-9, strongly engage in the process for defining this future agenda and ensure that our leaders speak in the UN with one voice so that the central role of education is reflected and that global education goals for post 2015 represent our people’s aspirations and needs.

India represents the E-9 Initiative in the global EFA Steering Committee and Dr Amarjit Singh, who sits on the Committee will consult with all E-9 Focal points and keep them informed of the work and recommendations with regard to the milestones up to 2015. In our role as E-9 Chair, we are fully committed to “steering” the agreed work plan and do everything in our reach, with the support of the UNESCO E-9 Secretariat, to ensure its successful delivery. We will use the existing communication mechanisms and keep E-9 focal points and the newly established expert networks connected through email and tele-conferencing. We will continuously update the Website and strive to make it a reference library for your work. We will also put in place a monitoring system, with UNESCO’s help, to publish a bi-monthly Newsletter for progress updates on the thematic working groups.

I also intend to solicit UNESCO’s Director-General, Ms. Bokova, to host a ministerial lunch meeting during the upcoming session of
UNESCO’s General Conference in November, for the E-9 ministers to review together with her, mid-way between the Ninth and Tenth E-9 Ministerial Review Meetings, our joint and individual efforts to improve EFA progress and education quality in our countries.

We have no time to lose. Our children, young people and adults need quality education and our nations need educated citizens. Let us take the inspiration of this meeting back to our offices and institutions and start the follow up on Monday, right after a restful weekend.

You can count on us in India to provide the required leadership as well as our contribution to the work, and on the E-9 Secretariat for their support. It is now in our hands to make this new phase of E-9 cooperation a reality with the full cooperation of all of you.
E-9 Countries: A Comparison

Abstract

While the E-9 countries together constitute one group with some common concerns, within the group there are several disparities. These disparities are in terms of what the different countries have achieved towards meeting the E-9 goals and also in terms of their economic development, levels of education etc. This article tries to examine the conditions in the nine countries along various parameters. It also compares the situation in these countries but most importantly it tries to get us to formulate questions that would help us obtain a deeper understanding from given information.

Introduction

The six tables given in the article are a comparative presentation of select data sets from UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) that help understand the prevailing conditions of education in all E-9 countries. The first table gives basic information of economic standing and social well-being of citizens in the nine countries. The subsequent tables specifically chart the status of education with respect to primary and tertiary levels of education. Overall literacy of both males and females, which has been a basic concern, is compared. Allocation of resource inputs for education is also mapped. The final table presents the problem of progression and completion in education despite favourable enrolment figures. Each table is followed by a set of questions that not only help to interpret the given statistics but also to think critically about underlying issues that influence education which cannot always be contained within the boundaries of a table. Readers are encouraged to formulate their own questions through this exercise of comparison.

Education and Population

Table I, given on the next page, gives information about the populations of the E-9 countries, and other factors associated with population such as fertility rates, poverty, life expectancy etc. The last row of the table gives the number of children who are out of school in these countries. Different indicators for the same country or same indicator for different countries may be compared. Table I throws open some interesting areas of discussion—

1. Can successful control of population help in formulation of better strategies to ensure quality education?

2. A majorly rural population is expected to face greater challenges on the path of mass education. How important is curricular and pedagogic reform in ensuring that each child of this vast population feels a part of the classroom?

3. How is education located within poorly performing social indicators such as infant mortality?

4. Compare the GDP per capita of the E-9 countries. Does this help us better understand the expectations from schooling?

5. Is the statistically small number of out of school children in a majority of E-9 countries a major hurdle out of the way? Does this help focus more on other more pressing concerns in education?

These questions may not all be answered by using the data given in table I. Other data which could help us is given in tables II to V.
Table I. General information of E-9 countries

Source: Adapted from UIS Statistics In Brief, http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/background.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>150,494</td>
<td>185,987(2005)</td>
<td>1,347,565</td>
<td>82,537</td>
<td>1,241,492</td>
<td>242,325</td>
<td>114,793</td>
<td>162,471</td>
<td>176,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual population growth rate (%)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population 0-14 years (%)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28 (2005)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural population (%)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total fertility rates (births per woman)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (0/00)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth (years)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita (PPP US$)</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>11,740</td>
<td>8,400</td>
<td>6,281</td>
<td>3,650</td>
<td>4,636</td>
<td>16,588</td>
<td>2,533</td>
<td>2,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP growth rate</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1. All data is from the year 2011 unless otherwise noted
2. UIS is UNESCO Institute of Statistics

How to interpret enrollment rates

Table II & Table III deal with enrolment rates of different countries. Table III gives the tertiary enrolment rates. Table II throws open some interesting areas of discussion -

1. What reasons factor the GER exceeding 100% in almost all E-9 countries? In India, how does compulsory schooling and the no-detention policy as mandated by the RTE Act influence this statistic?
2. How does one address the attribution of identical UIS estimations to countries comprising the Indian subcontinent, namely India, Bangladesh and Pakistan?
3. To what extent have E-9 countries been successful in attaining gender parity at this level of education? Would this trend directly influence enrolment of females at secondary and tertiary levels?
### Table II. Regional average of primary enrolment at schools in E-9 countries in the year 2011

**Source:** Adapted from UIS Statistics In Brief, http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/background.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GER (%)</th>
<th>NER (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MF</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GER = Gross Enrolment Ratio, NER = Net Enrolment Ratio, MF = Both males & females, M = Males, F = Females

**Note:**

1. Statistics in bold are UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) estimations.
2. GER is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education. The GER may be greater than 100% when students younger or older than the official age for a given level of education are enrolled in that level. NER is the number of pupils in the theoretical age group who are enrolled expressed as a percentage of the same population.

### Table III. Regional average of tertiary enrolment at schools in E-9 countries in the year 2011

**Source:** Adapted from UIS Statistics In Brief, http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/background.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tertiary Enrolment rates (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table III throws open some interesting areas of discussion -

1. The table illustrates how higher levels of education in almost all E-9 countries are marred with diminished access by both males and females. Will tertiary education with its research and specialization favourably map the future of E-9 countries?

2. At first glance one notices how this level of education is tilted in favour of females in more than half of the E-9 countries. What has prompted the prevalence of such trends in these countries?

3. The two Latin American countries of E-9, namely Brazil and Mexico, are significantly ahead in tertiary enrolment of both males as well as females. These are also the countries with certain other favourable indicators as depicted in Table I. How do we situate their progress in this regard?

4. Charting the progress of Nigeria using Tables I, II and III, what are some of the broad trends in education that emerge there?

Literacy rates - importance now and in the future

Table IV. Regional average of literacy rates at schools in E-9 countries in the year 2011

Source: Adapted from UIS Statistics In Brief, http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/background.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Adult (15+ years) %</th>
<th>Youth (15-24 years) %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MF</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>94.7</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>92.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = National estimation, ** = UIS estimation, - = Data not available

Note:

1. All data from the year 2011 unless otherwise noted
Table IV throws open some interesting areas of discussion -

1. With the attainment of 100% literacy, there will no longer be any first generation learners. Would you perceive this as a significant milestone?
2. Is female literacy intimately tied to the social well-being of a country? (Also refer to Table I)
3. How does one prevent literacy rate from becoming a mere statistic?
4. Does changing global perception of E-9 countries rest on its attainment of literacy? Would this be a welcome development?
5. Despite several domestic challenges faced by each E-9 country in attainment of these literacy figures, how have they become a reality?
6. Do shared measures and common goals adopted by E-9 countries for the outreach of education talk about their collective concerns?

Resources for education - impact

Table V. Resources for education in E-9 countries

Source: Adapted from UIS Statistics In Brief, http://www.teindia.nic.in/e9/background.html

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Pupil/teacher ratio (primary)</th>
<th>Public expenditure on education</th>
<th>as % of GDP</th>
<th>as % of government expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>36 (2010)</td>
<td>3.1 (1975)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = National estimation, ** = UIS estimation, - = Data not available, ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education

Note:

1. All data from the year 2011 unless otherwise noted
2. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was designed by UNESCO in the early 1970’s to serve ‘as an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting statistics of education both within individual countries and internationally’. For more information visit http://www.unesco.org
Table V throws open some interesting areas of discussion -

1. China has a highly favourable pupil-teacher ratio despite being the most populous country in the world. Indonesia performs exceedingly well too. How can a large and varied population be used to better this ratio in the Indian subcontinent?

2. Education as a long term investment can ensure immense gains to a country, yet we see through Table V that the resources allocated for it are marginal in most E-9 countries. At the same time, the Latin American countries of Brazil and Mexico contribute a significantly larger share of their GDP to education despite having relatively slower GDP growth rate (See Table I). What is the rationale of such differences in allocation?

3. Does higher resource input necessarily ensure better standards and quality of education?

Where E-9 countries stand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School life expectancy ISCED (1-6 years)</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>Brazil</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Indonesia</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Nigeria</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

* = National estimation, ** = UIS estimation, - = Data not available, ISCED = International Standard Classification of Education

Note:
1. All data from the year 2011 unless otherwise noted
2. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) was designed by UNESCO in the early 1970's to serve 'as an instrument suitable for assembling, compiling and presenting statistics of education both within individual countries and internationally'. For more information visit http://www.unesco.org
Table VI throws open some interesting areas of discussion -

1. Are conditions within the school as responsible as those outside it while determining school life expectancy?

2. Brazil contributes significantly higher resources to education (See Table V) yet the percentage of repeaters is highest among all E-9 countries. What does this say about the policy of education in the country and also the social conditions that lead to such a statistic?

3. To what extent is the structure of schooling responsible for high drop-out rate till class five in countries like India and Pakistan?

4. Is a high transition rate from primary to secondary level a good enough indicator of progression in education?

Conclusion

The article has tried to give exemplar questions that can be asked when we see some data. An interesting exercise would be to look at the data given at the UIS website and come up with similar questions. Alternatively, we could first pose some questions and then search for the data needed to answer them.
Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators

Saurav Shome

A teacher’s practice of projects: Scope for improvements

Abstract

The paper reports an analysis of a semi-structured interview conducted with a teacher about her project practice. It was found that she conducted projects on science topics at the middle school level to follow her school guideline. She assigned projects to individual students and did not provide any help while they conducted projects. She only pointed out the mistakes once students submitted their projects and asked them to resubmit it. It was observed that all her projects were designed to collect information and they did not align with the stated learning goals of the project. Similarly, her self-developed assessment criteria did not match with her stated learning goal. The paper points out the scope for improvement in her project practice and ways to integrate such experiences in teacher professional development.

Introduction

National Curriculum Framework 2005 has recommended conducting projects in Indian classrooms (NCERT, 2005). The policy suggestions and subsequent circulars sent by central board (CBSE, n.d.) and several state boards have resulted in frequent assignment of projects in the Indian schools. This has burdened the students, their parents, and teachers alike (Shome & Natarajan, 2013). It is reported in literature that teachers often find it difficult to translate the policy suggestions in their classroom practice (Fullan, 2007). Teachers follow pragmatic approach to fit the policy suggestions in their existing practices in order to reconcile systemic constraints and their own professional incompetency (Bryan, 2003; Guskey, 2002).

For meaningful implementation of policy suggestions it is important to study the teachers’ existing practices within the larger social context (Price & McConney, 2013). However, teachers’ practice of teaching also depends on teachers’ philosophical position on teaching and learning and their personal experiences (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, it is crucial to develop individual teachers’ understanding about teaching-learning and initiate a discourse on existing practices. Teachers would not change their belief as well as practices if they do not see the positive changes due to the suggested practices (Guskey, 2002). Therefore, it would be effective to allow teachers to articulate their practices as well as their goals of following such practices. The teachers and teacher educators, individually or in collaboration among themselves can develop meaningful teaching practices to meet the curriculum requirements and the challenges that they may face during this process.

Objectives of the study

The study aimed to explore teachers’ existing practice of projects and identify the specific components of practices in order to modify existing practice. The study aimed to know:

1. The influence of NCF 2005 on teachers’ conduct of projects,
2. The teachers’ ideas about projects, and roles of projects in students’ learning,
3. The teachers’ planning and implementation of projects in terms of a) assigning students their tasks and their expectations from students, b) nature of guidance provided to students, and c) nature of project assessment, and
4. The challenges teachers face while conducting projects.
Research Design

The work reported here followed a case study approach (Yin, 2003) to know the teacher’s actual project practice with her students. A 30 minute semi-structured interview was conducted with the teacher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The questions were mostly open ended and were used to initiate discussion. Researcher generated subsequent questions on the basis of the conversation.

Participant profile: We invited Shubhra (name changed) to participate in the study. She was teaching in a higher secondary, CBSE affiliated private English medium school. She taught general science in class VII and VIII and physics in class IX and X. There were about forty students in her classroom, most of whom hailed from houses from the middle-income group. Their parents were either employed by the government, had their own business or were involved in farming. According to Shubhra, the students’ home language was not English and the students received most of the academic support from their school teachers and private tutors. The parents spend adequate amount of money for their children’s education. Most of the parents sent their children to private schools assuming that they provided better education than the government vernacular schools.

Data collection and analysis

The interview was conducted in two languages, English and Hindi. The complete interview was audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. This was also complemented with extensive notes taken during the interview. The analysis of the data is reported under the headings of influence of NCF 2005 in her conduct of projects, ideas about projects, perceived advantages of conducting projects, and plan of projects and its implementation.

Influence of NCF 2005 in the conduct of projects: Being a teacher of CBSE affiliated school, Shubhra conducted projects at middle school level as a part of formative assessment. However, how the project was to be conducted was decided by the respective school. Her school conducted six unit tests in an academic year for the middle school students. Every student had to carry out one project in each unit test.

Ideas about projects and its role on learning: She thought that through projects students “develop their thinking” and they become more creative. She mentioned that during the initial stages, she had to tell her students on how to do the projects. But after one or two projects, students came up with their own ideas. She also said that in projects, students work on their own and therefore, they understand better.

“… project has advantages … see, in project we just guide them. Children labors on their own … do activity on their own … do practical on their own. Then they understand better. That seats in their brain better … if we just dictate them or elaborating … it is a little difficult for children to understand … in projects, they developed mentally … develop their thinking power a lot.”

Shubhra equated project work with practical work. She did not assign projects to the high school students, even though the circulars asked teachers to conduct project at this level as well. However, in her school, high school students were engaged in making models with some explanatory write up for exhibition purposes. With reference to one of her projects on Types of soil assigned to students, she elaborated that in the project, students see the soils “practically”. Therefore, they understand better than just explaining the properties and types of soil.

Plan of projects and its implementation: Shubhra’s plan of projects and her implementation of projects are described under the headings of a) assigning students their tasks, and her expectation from the students b) nature of guidance provided to students, and c) nature of project assessment.

(a) Assigning students tasks and expected students’ productions

The projects were based on the chapters that were covered in the particular unit test. After completion of the chapters, she asked her students to collect more information on the same topic and
at times, collect samples wherever applicable. Students were supposed to stick the samples on the project report. The teacher explained her project practice in the following words:

“According to our rule, for every unit there should be a project. Suppose in one unit test first and second chapter is coming. So, there should be project on first and second chapter. Now, suppose, first chapter is something related to soil … So, generally we tell the students … we explain the chapter to them and then we tell them … you just collect as much as information you can regarding this type of soil … plus if you can collect the samples. Stick it on your project report.”

Her other project examples included project on Fiber to fabric, Collecting vegetables, and Acids in different fruits. A brief description of each of the three projects are given below:

Fiber to fabric: After teaching the chapter “Fiber to fabric” she asked her students to collect various samples of fibers, stick them in their note book and write the characteristics of each of the fiber.

“… we just gave them the project for second test … see, these many fibers we have … you just bring the sample of these fibers, as much as, you can find … stick it in your book and … write the characteristics.”

Collecting vegetables: In this project, students of Class VIII were asked to bring real vegetables or photographs of the vegetables and stick them in their report or a chart, and write whether they are Kharif or Rabi crops.

Acids in different fruits: In this project, students were asked to collect the names of the fruits that contain acids. They were supposed to paste the pictures of the fruits and had to write down the corresponding acids found in that particular fruit.

All her projects were assigned to individual students. She found it easy to grade students if projects were done by them individually. Shubhra observed that students generally collected information either from books or from Internet. Students’ parents helped them in collecting samples. Her school did not have Internet connection, but many students had computer and Internet connection in their home.

(b) Nature of guidance provided to students

She stated that students did most of the projects with the help of their parents. She only corrected their projects and sometimes gave inputs for improvements of the final product. She cited an example, where one student had put the sample of sandy soil and described it as clay. She asked the student to touch the soil and feel its texture and that the collected sample was in fact sandy and not clayey. In some projects, she helped her students by collecting information from library. Students noted down the information and later presented it neatly with suitable sample in the project report (she called it “project file”).

“… I just go to library, take the information, and what I can … what knowledge I have, just give it to them … that … these are the some of the characteristics. So, they note it down (neatly) … in a project file.”

(c) Project assessment

She assessed her students based on certain criteria that she developed on her own. These were a) number of characteristics listed, b) appropriateness of sample collected, and c) neatness. She also mentioned that she used her judgment on whether the student had understood the characteristics. The researcher questioned her on how would she get the feeling that students have understood the characteristics, for which she replied that she assessed the students’ understanding on the basis of samples they collect. This criterion was identical to her “appropriateness of sample collected” norm. The following conversation gave a clear picture of her assessment scheme:

Shubhra: See, if they have written all the characteristics and I mean the collection is correct, everything is correct … and if we feel like that … the student has understood the characteristics …

Researcher: How do you know that they have understood?
Shubhra: Because, if they have understood the characteristics then only they can bring the correct soil. Right? If they have not understood the characteristics then how they can bring the correct … When they will understand that sandy soil is like this … it is a little smooth … once they will understand … then only they will collect … so, based on that, we give the marks.

Interestingly, it was not necessary in her projects that all the students would get the same score even when they all brought the correct sample along with the relevant information. Their grades were also based on neatness. Her idea of neatness and rationale for keeping neatness in the assessment scheme was elaborated in her following statements:

“… if there is a project … that means it should be a full fledged project … it should not be a time pass work. Everything should be systematic. Neatness should be there. Maximum points should be there … plus the samples, the collection should also be there … how much attractive you can make with all the correct information … we give the marks … Keeping all these criteria in mind, because, the main idea is … they should understand the value, that what is the value of project, in that way they can be more creative. Like making drawings and underlining the things all these things should … I mean … it should be like that.”

She did not provide any feedback to her students while they do the projects. Once they submit their projects, she pointed out the mistakes they have committed. The students corrected the mistakes and brought the next day. According to Shubhra, students always wrote correct theory but they made mistakes in collecting samples.

“Because, generally what happens, theory part they always write correctly … but when it comes to the collecting … experimental part … when it comes in collecting the samples and all … that time they make the mistake. So, we just tell them that see silk you have sticked here and here cotton characteristics are written. So, you just compare it, is it cotton? If they can then it’s fine. Otherwise, I will explain them that see this means this, this means this, that means it is not fulfilling these things, it is not cotton. Simple.”

Challenges in conducting projects

Shubhra considered that checking projects in addition to the regular class assignments was a burden. Further, projects took longer time than regular lecture based class. However, she felt that students learn better through projects, therefore, the challenges were acceptable for her.

Everyday Shubhra took five periods in four classes. She assessed students projects during the “zero periods”. During “zero periods” students were engaged in activities like preparation for school functions. The teachers not involved in such activities got time to grade the students’ projects. Sometimes, she asked her students to stay for some time after school hours to grade the projects.

“Generally we have zero periods and all. At those time students are involved in activities, like preparations of functions and all. So, at that time generally we check the projects … the teacher, who are free … that time keep on checking the project … whenever there is a free period for us.”

Due to the lack of time, grading students’ projects were delayed. In some cases, students started studying another chapter. However, Shubhra did not find any problem in the grading process being delayed. For her, she had already pointed out the mistakes during the submission of projects and had asked her students to resubmit after suitable corrections. Further, she pointed out that all students were not able to collect information. She attributed students’ “mental level” with the ability to collect information and only “some fine bright” students could do the projects without teacher’s help.
Discussion

Shubhra conducted projects to follow her school guidelines. She did not refer to the teachers’ manual published by CBSE on formative and summative assessment (CBSE, n.d.). She found that projects help students to develop their ability to think creatively. Interestingly, all her project assignments involved collecting samples, pasting them in a note book, and presenting the information neatly. All her stated tasks at the most helped students to gain new information. It was clear from the task description that there was little scope to engage with generating any new knowledge or solving any problem. It was important to note that Shubhra had limited the scope of students’ creative thinking in a narrow context of “neatness”.

She also thought that projects help students to gain practical knowledge as they were doing something on their own. However, she also observed that almost all students could reproduce correctly the “theory” part. It was interesting that she herself ensured that students were informed about the relevant information either through regular classroom teaching or providing more information informally after school hours. However, she had equated this information as theoretical knowledge.

For example, in Fiber to fabric project, she had already informed students about the characteristics of fiber without engaging students in hands-on experience. There was a missed opportunity to bring practical experiences in deriving the knowledge about the characteristics of the fiber. To engage students in order to develop practical knowledge, the students could have been given different fibers in the classroom. They could be asked to list all the similarities and differences they found and suggest experiments that would test their hypothesis. In the next class, the teacher could or would conduct the experiments. Alternatively, teacher herself could bring the fibers in her classroom, design some tests to compare the properties of the fibers and ask students to perform the tests under her guidance.

Unfortunately, in her approach, students received information without a meaningful context.

Another project assigned by her, on Types of soils was similar to the project on Fiber to fabric. Here the crucial issue was, the types of soil described in the textbook were not necessarily corresponding to the soil found in some particular region. In nature, soils are found mostly as mixture. It is noteworthy that the textbook classification of soil is quite simplistic and does not necessarily correspond to the real world. The textbook content is derived from the generalization of the pattern found in nature for better understanding. Here, teacher could allow students to investigate different kinds of soils in the school and discuss about them. It is possible that students would come out with a better understanding about soil and generate their knowledge about soil rather than regurgitating textbook information.

The project on Collecting vegetables and writing them whether they were Kharif and Rabi seemed to engage students in a simple task and underestimating students actual ability. Before conducting the projects, teachers are required to write all the learning goals they are expected to cover through the project. If students’ efforts and investment of time does not justify the breadth and depth of learning taking place from such engagements, teachers need to reflect on their practice. Shubhra’s project on Acids in different fruits also fall in the same category.

Her perception about knowledge and creativity also influenced her in guiding students and assessing the projects. Equating information with knowledge led her to conclude that her students rarely made any mistakes in “theory”. On the other hand, she believed that all her students do not have the “mental ability” to collect information.

It is well accepted that students can construct knowledge from engaging in meaningful group activities with the help of teacher (Shome et al., 2011). Interestingly, Shubhra’s project practice needed to be articulated properly to find possibilities of such knowledge construction for students with varying abilities and contexts.
Conclusion

The study reported a teacher’s project practice and the scope of improvement in her existing practice. The findings of the study cannot be generalised for all the teachers conducting projects in their respective classrooms. However, it throws some light on the current school project practices and ways of developing better teaching practice from the existing practice. The study also failed to explore the teacher’s understanding about knowledge, theory of knowledge construction, goals of education and teaching-learning in detail. The study made no attempt to observe her actual classroom practice, which would have provided a better picture of her project practice. However, the interview attempted to elicit several of the classroom components up to an extent which had enough clarity to infer from the conversation alone.

The study pointed out the need of an urgent investigation of the project practices in schools. It is important to articulate the teachers’ practice of project in teacher professional development. This articulation would help teachers and teacher educators to construct a new meaning for conducting projects. A sustained discourse between the community of teachers and teacher educators would modify their existing practices and help them in finding meaning in their own actions.

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Preparing teachers and teacher educators in India: Justice Verma commission and beyond

Abstract
The focus of this paper is twofold. It wishes to:
(i) Understand factors pertaining to teacher education and their preparation in the context of the problems highlighted and recommendations given by Justice Verma Commission (JVC).
(ii) Share the author’s own experiences of being a Teacher Educator (TE) in one of the most robust programmes on teacher education in India.

Introduction
In a country which has not yet achieved hundred percent literacy and where even a substantial number of children going to school cannot meaningfully read and write, the quality of education imparted in schools continues to be a serious concern. National and international assessments of learning levels of children studying in schools in India have been repeatedly pointing out that children’s learning is not commensurate with the competencies expected to be attained in the grades that they are studying in.

While studies and reports of children’s dysmal performance in schools have been making headlines in both newspapers and journals, teachers have also been simultaneously facing flak for their non-serious lackadaisical attitude and non professionalism towards their job. The relationship between ‘good teaching and learning’ is too obvious to be highlighted here. While there are several factors like, presence of a sound curriculum, good teaching-learning materials, laboratories and libraries etc which are essential for quality education, the centrality and importance of ‘well trained and committed teachers’ can hardly be overstated. This concern was reiterated at the E-9 Ministers Meeting in Delhi in 2012 as well, which was organised around the theme of “Inclusive, Relevant Quality Education”. The educational mandate of these countries is not just to universalise education and get their children to enroll and stay on in schools but also provide quality education to them.

Needless to say, that issues of quality and performance essentially concern children belonging to poor and socially disadvantaged sections of society who largely depend on the low-fee paying government or private schools. Teachers in the state school system are often accused of non-professionalism on their part due to the permanent nature of their jobs and teachers in low-cost private schools are often said to be under-trained, under-paid, and under-employed. While teachers working in both these spaces face peculiar challenges which are invariably linked to issues of ‘quality education’, it is important to understand the ills plaguing the teacher education space in India.

Justice Verma Commission (JVC): Need for Judicial Intervention
JVC was set up with the intervention of SC of India. The need to set it up arose out of the judicial impasse which was reached due to recognition of 291 Colleges in Maharashtra in 2008 to start Diploma in Education (D.Ed.). These institutions were recognised by the Western Regional Committee (WRC), despite the explicit recommendations of Maharashtra Government that the State did not require more D.Ed.
institutions due to limited employment opportunities for the graduates of this programme. The matter reached the High Court which de-recognised these institutions in 2009 following which the Colleges effected filed Special Leave Petitions before SC. The SC then appointed JVC to examine the entire gamut of issues which had a bearing on improving the quality of TE as well as improving the regulatory functions of National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE).

Deliberations of the Commission

While it is natural that there would be instant curiosity to know the fate of those 291 Teacher Education Institutions (TEI), which stirred up the hornet’s nest, the report does more than reviewing them and systematically addresses all the concerns related to preparation of teachers and its relationship with the quality of education received by children in schools. The report focuses on four key areas outlined below.

(a) Quality of Pre Service Teacher Education (PSTE). The need to professionalise TE and enhance the quality of such programmes has been a consistent concern expressed by major Commissions and Committees right through the 1960s. The two main problems identified with existing TEIs are 1) the institutionalised intellectual isolation of the school teacher, which means that TEIs function as closed spaces with the sole mandate of training teachers and 2) a circumscribed engagement with pedagogy as mere technique, bereft of engagement with subject knowledge. The other problems pointed out are:

- View that lower academic qualifications are adequate for teaching at the lower level, a view that is detrimental to the quality of entrants who join this program.
- Poor curricular content and organisation, whereby students receive fragmented knowledge which is neither linked to larger aims of education, disciplinary knowledge nor to the ground realities of classroom practice.
- Adoption of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode as a quick fix method to impart training to those teachers already in schools.

The short duration (leading to a certificate or diploma) programs are usually shoddily conceived and executed. Non availability of standard and good readings and availability of sub standard materials and guide books are also a bane of such programs.

- Insufficient number of sound and comprehensive programs that prepare Teacher Educators (TE) and lack of school teaching experience on their part.
- Assessment of student teacher (ST) which are narrowly focused on assessing of conceptual and pedagogic aspects to the exclusion of qualitative dimensions.

For each of these problems, the JVC makes specific recommendations. For instance with regard to the ODL mode, it says that its value lies in providing a platform for continuing professional development of teachers but as a matter of policy, the first diploma/degree in education should be offered only in the face to face mode. Besides these, it also presents a conceptual and operational profile of the envisioned teacher. The report also expresses concern over the proliferation of private TEIs in the country and the need to increase the State’s active involvement in teacher education. Apart from this, it urges for a radical shift to be made in curriculum and institutional design and locating of TEIs in multi and inter-disciplinary academic environments.

(b) Quality of In-Service Teacher Education (INSTE). At present, teachers’ in-service education is an activity conducted by the State through its specialised institutions for a specified period. While in-service programmes have been conducted under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) etc, JVC notes that a holistic framework for them has not yet been developed. Institutions where the training is conducted- District Institute of Education Training (DIET), Block Resource Centres (BRC) etc are not adequately equipped in several states, in terms of physical infrastructure and resources. Other problems pointed out are- absence of a uniform framework for the selection of resource persons, lack of clarity in terms of selection of teachers for a particular programme, preparation of curriculum
and modules with a top-down approach and the short duration and design of these programmes.

The JVC recognises the need to cover all educational personnel and not just teachers from all stages of school education in both government and private schools. It reiterates that it should be made mandatory for all teachers to participate in in-service education programmes, as per their choice and convenience as against the existing policy of deputing teachers by departments. Some of its specific suggested measures are - need to conceptualise both the content and duration of TE programmes in consonance with their goals, linking promotions, other incentives etc with successful completion of training programmes, contextualised training, adoption of cascade model for skill-specific and information-related areas where there is less likelihood of dilution across vertical levels, training by Cluster Resource Centres (CRC) in response to needs assessment of teachers in their clusters and sustained interaction of the trainers with trainees in smaller groups etc.

(c) Teacher Performance and Teacher Audit. Reports on poor performance of school children have also expressed the need to monitor teachers’ performance and initiate measures to hold them accountable. While it is believed that teacher audit followed by the required corrective measures would lead to improvement in teacher effectiveness which, in turn would enhance the effectiveness of schools, some of these studies single out teachers without understanding the constraints of the overall environment which they work in. In view of the above problems, the JVC recommends the need to develop an overall framework and guiding principles governing teacher performance and teacher audit, which factor in the assessment of school where she teaches, duties and functions she is expected to perform and also the terms and conditions of service, including the environment in which she works. The assessment is intended to be supportive and not punitive, so that not just teachers but schools as institutions recognise their responsibilities towards students.

(d) Strengthening regulatory functions of the NCTE. The NCTE was established as a statutory body in 1993. One of its mandate was to curb commercialization in teacher education. However, JVC noted that of late there has been a proliferation of self-financing institutions in teacher education, with little quality control. Some of the lacunae in NCTE’s own performance of regulatory functions as observed by the JVC are - no institutional mechanism in place to obtain feedback and review its norms on a continuing basis, policy of recognition of courses and not institutions, which leads to growth of stand-alone institutions for a specific course on TE, lack of guidelines for innovative programmes on TE, lack of norms in certain subjects, inability to inspect TEIs periodically, inadequacies in the current proformas being used for inspections and lack of coordination between the Regional Committee and State government on one hand and the affiliating University on the other.

The JVC proposes organizational re-structuring of the NCTE in consonance with its various functions and proposes the formation of special Cells for its multiple academic and non-academic functions.

The significance of the recommendations of JVC can hardly be over emphasised in a country where there are still several children outside school and majority of those inside are also in urgent need of good quality education. JVC systematically unravels the complex interplay between different factors and actors impacting both ‘training of teachers’ and ‘educational spaces which provide opportunities for such training and teachers’ professional growth’. Different Committees are now being formed to ensure that the recommendations made by JVC are taken seriously and implemented.

The second part of this paper addresses some concerns with regard to the professional backgrounds of Teacher Educators and the opportunities provided for professional growth in the spaces which they work in. For this I have drawn upon my own experiences of being a Teacher Educator in one of the most vibrant and robust programmes on teacher education- the Bachelors in Elementary Education (B.El.Ed.), a four year integrated teacher education programme after Class XII, offered by the University of Delhi. As realisation of objectives
of ‘humane and professional’ teachers also requires teacher educators with similar orientations and trainings, nature of programmes preparing teacher educators is also of concern. In this regard one may mention the two-year long dual mode Masters in Education (Elementary) program being offered at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. Unlike traditional M.Ed. programs that are the mainstay for preparing teacher educators, this program among many other objectives is also designed to prepare TEs. With a rich and vibrant curriculum in place and serving the needs of a working population, especially school teachers, it’s curriculum ensures that the TEs are equipped with a sound understanding of all important aspects related to school education.

Understanding Concerns of Teacher Educators

The National Curriculum Framework on Teacher Education (NCFTE), 2009 and JVC both present a model of an ideal school teacher— one who understands children’s development, situated as they are in multiple socio-economic-political contexts, allow children to co-construct knowledge, make learning a meaningful experience, have a critical understanding of curriculum and believe in ethically universal values. By the same logic, one would also assume that the ‘teacher’ who is in-charge of preparing such ‘enlightened and humane’ teachers are also trained within a similar curricular and pedagogic framework. In this context, it would also be presumptuous to assume that a ‘conceptually and pedagogically’ sound teacher education programme which provides opportunities for STs to grow professionally also facilitate the professional growth of TEs teaching in that programme.

(a) Selection of Faculty. Attempt of the B.El.Ed program to develop a comprehensive understanding of the ST is evident in the vibrancy and richness of its curriculum (taken as an exemplar in the NCFTE, 2009). It includes courses like, child development, cognition and learning, contemporary India, nature of language, basic concepts in education, nature of disciplines like social science, natural science, math, social science, pedagogy related papers and a practicum component entailing 17 weeks of school internship. The Teacher Educators selected to teach in the programme either have an M.Ed. background or a post-graduate degree in electives with research in education. While the former are supposed to teach pedagogy-based papers, latter are supposed to teach more generic papers which do not necessarily require a degree in education. This mix of teachers works well for the programme as all the courses offered in the programme have competent faculty to teach them. Having said that, there is a bit of a disconnect so far the ‘individual training’ of these TEs is concerned. Neither an M.Ed. nor ‘research in education’ are adequately positioned to give a comprehensive understanding of all issues related to education, as is expected of a ST through the B.El.Ed. curriculum. Due to the heterogenous clientele and shifting demands of jobs related to education, the M.Ed. Course caters to a wide range of academic and professional needs. Although M.Ed. is generally accepted as the requirement for one to become a teacher educator, the programme as offered in most universities is simply an extension of the B. Ed., seriously lacking in inputs focussed on the preparation of teacher educators, secondary or elementary. (NCFTE, 2009).

(b) Experience of teaching in schools. While it is universally acknowledged that all TEs either at the beginning or midway in their career must have acquire experience of teaching in school, the selection of faculty for the program lays no conditions for TEs nor makes it mandatory for them to acquire such experience. While the nature of the courses in the curriculum and expertise required to teach them is such that the appointed TE need not have this background since all the pedagogy related papers are taught by teachers who have done their M.Ed. However, there should be some mechanism whereby the TE gets an opportunity of gaining experience of teaching in schools. While some of the papers they teach, for example, Contemporary India and Core Social Science may not require them to have a first hand experience of teaching in a school, most of the issues they deal with in these papers may perhaps be better addressed if teachers teaching them also have experience of teaching children. While this may not be a compulsory condition, it will certainly add value to the teacher’s
competence of handling such issues, and will also enable ST to integrate theoretical insights with realities on the field.

(c) Work Culture. The program also willy nilly allows TEs to work in isolation. They position themselves as subject experts with little need to engage with each other’s subject areas and continue to do research in their own narrow areas of interest and specialisation. By training, they are socialized to work within strictly classified disciplinary boundaries and they continue to do so in their professional spaces as well.

(d) Biases and prejudices of TEs. While it has been recognised that working in a highly heterogeneous and differentiated social context like India, the school teachers need to be sensitive to the diverse contexts that children come from and interact with them with understanding and sensitivity, the training of TEs leaves much to be desired. It has been seen that some of them have biases and prejudices which need to be addressed. A generic programme in education or an M.Phil and Ph.D does not train people who are often employed as TEs to address their own biases and reflect on them. There are a few TEs whose own attitudes and beliefs need a complete overhauling as they have little understanding of the ways in which their own stereotypes regarding gender, caste, community and class get reflected in the class impacting the views of STs. It is unrealistic to expect to have reflective, humane and sensitive teachers who themselves have not been trained by such TEs!

(e) Suggestions to address the above mentioned limitations. It is important that the training and further research/capacity enhancement of TEs is in synch with the kind of curricular goals expected from STs. All TEs over a period of their probation perhaps can get a sense of the entire teacher education curricular framework. While the suggestions given below have emerged from a specific context, most of them apply to other teacher education programmes as well and are not limited in their significance.

• Two short term programs (both Foundation and Refresher) can be organised by the Education Department of the University per year for a period of two years. One of these programmes could be linked to the B.El.Ed curriculum with experts coming in from different disciplinary backgrounds and another could be on educational issues of a more general kind (issues of access, drop out, participation, learning levels, gender, regional and socio-cultural disparities in education, multi lingual teaching, contemporary issues or reforms in education etc). These courses could be made mandatory for everyone. TEs themselves can be a part of this resource pool. Alternatively, each College could take a lead in organizing this activity.

• TEs should be supported in conducting joint inter-disciplinary research.

• Inter-disciplinary research projects on part of students - presently fourth year students undertake research projects within specific disciplinary domains for which they seek guidance from individual faculty. If interdisciplinary research projects could be facilitated with guidance from more than one faculty, then besides the ST, this would also give opportunity to TEs to interact with each other and know more about each others’ areas/perspectives.

• Fellowships whereby TEs teach in schools and their salaries are protected by the parent organisation.

• Adoption of a school by each TE College in a way that the College takes responsibility for the academic enrichment of that school, support in setting up Resource Rooms etc. An agreement could be arrived at, whereby the student interns also continue to go to these schools on a regular basis. The other way to do this is also to forge linkages between college education departments, schools and DIETs.

• Resource support for an overall enabling work environment and culture for the TE - support in terms of finance, space, time, recognition etc for conducting researches, organizing workshops, inviting resource people to talk on different themes and in terms of infrastructure as well - space, computers, internet access, facility to Xerox,
subscription to good and relevant books and journals (both hard and soft), good resources like different kinds of curriculum, textbooks, children’s literature and multi media resources etc need to be made available.

- Systematic pooling in of resources and capacities- NGOs working in the field, DIETs, Colleges of Education- whereby TEs also engage with work happening in the field. A field visit to such a site is anyway an important component of the B.El.Ed curriculum, which needs to be strengthened by forging long term sustainable relationships with them.

While these are specific recommendations keeping the experiences of TEs teaching in the B.El.Ed. program, some of them maybe applicable to TE’s who are teaching in similar such programs. The idea behind sharing these experiences is to highlight that while some problems may appear to be generic, the solutions suggested may not always be uniform. In the context of the JVC report, while its recommendations are based on an understanding of the existing teacher education space in India, it is important that these be understood in their individual contexts and interpreted keeping in view the peculiar needs of diverse spaces. For instance different states may have their specific problems and solutions to them also therefore need to be contextualised. Different educational spaces and programmes may have their unique limitations and rather than looking for an ideal programme or ideal solution, one must encourage multiplicity of spaces and programmes keeping in mind the broad principles as enunciated by the JVC for overhauling and rejuvenating the system of teacher education in India.

References


Notes:

1. It inspected 304 TEIs, out of which 3 refused to be inspected. Of the 301 TEIs, only 44 were recognised, 249 de-recognised and 7 applied for closure of the D.Ed. programme fearing imposition of penalty for disregarding SC’s orders and reimbursing the costs of the inspection.

2. This problem was particularly observed in a state like Tripura by the Joint Review Mission (JRM), where a large number of children were already in schools but teachers teaching them were not trained. So under the RTE those teachers were now being trained under distance mode.

3. For instance the JRM Tripura noticed that while NCTE’s newly approved D.El.Ed. curriculum was in place, the books recommended for the same were not available and TE’s were relying on their old hand written notes which were probably made with the help of sub standard books available in the market.

4. This programme was developed in collaboration with Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (Mumbai), Digantar (Jaipur), Eklavya (Bhopal), Vidya Bhawan (Udaipur) besides feedback of several eminent social scientists and educationists. It was developed with the support of SRTT and ICICI Elementary Education.

5. While there are problems at the level of curriculum in some TE programmes (for example, existing M.Ed), in the case of B.El.Ed., the curriculum is conceptually and pedagogically sound.

6. The B.El.Ed. for instance has a component called Self Development, whereby STs are made to systematically go through a series of workshops on examining various aspects of their selves.

7. This applies to TE’s who come through this route and not perhaps those who have got their post graduate degrees in education.

8. The Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi is the nodal organisation for coordinating the programme at a centralised level, while the programme itself is housed in Colleges which offer it.
Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators

Priyanka Padhy

The Elephant in the Classroom: Responding to Mental Health Concerns of Students

Abstract

Teaching in the 21st century requires teachers to address diverse social-emotional, developmental and learning needs arising in a classroom. Mental Health concerns are one such significant need. Are student-teachers prepared to face the Mental Health concerns of children in classrooms? This paper attempts to establish the need for empowering student-teachers with awareness of Mental Health issues that frequently emerge in schools today. The paper also highlights the gaps in teacher education programs that prevent future teachers from developing a sound understanding of, and dealing with the Mental Health concerns of children in classrooms.

Going beyond diagnostic labels and clinical presentations, the paper examines the degree to which newly recruited teachers, as part of the school-teacher–student–parent coalition, find themselves prepared to respond to the needs of children with difficulties. The present scenario necessitates teachers to work in tandem with school counselors by contributing their own expertise in order to address the unique needs of children. An acknowledgement of the need for relevant training paves the way for building in missing elements of Child Psychology into Education and teacher education programs, particularly B.El.Ed. Conclusions and recommendations in this paper have implications for revisiting and strengthening the present B.El.Ed. curriculum.

Introduction

The basic premise of this paper will be established by exploring two separate albeit parallel questions. The first of these requires a close examination of the realities of a 21st century classroom. Among the many differences that the teacher in a classroom has to engage with, there are also issues of Mental Health of children and adolescents that have to be catered to. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Atlas, henceforth ATLAS (WHO, 2005), brings this issue into sharp focus by stating that currently available epidemiological data suggest a worldwide prevalence of child and adolescent mental disorders of approximately 20 per cent.

“Elephant in the room” is an English idiom for an obvious fact that is being ignored. The expression also applies to an obvious problem that no one wants to discuss. It is based on the idea that an elephant in a room would be impossible to overlook. Thus, people in the room who pretend that the elephant is not there have chosen to avoid dealing with the big, looming issue. The idiom implies that there is an existing issue that needs to be acknowledged and that it is not going to go away by itself.

From there emerges the first question: Is addressing the Mental Health of students the Elephant in the Classroom? Are the Mental Health concerns of students in ‘mainstream classrooms’ being adequately addressed? Is Mental Health an acknowledged need in the classroom or is it an exigency that can be ignored by considering it secondary to more important issues in the classroom such as achieving the educational goals of the curriculum?

The second question emerges naturally from the first one. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009 (NCFTE) states, ‘At the heart of teacher education is the question “What value does teacher education add to the prospective teacher’s ability to face challenges of facilitating the development of critical and creative students and subsequently adults?”’
(NCTE, 2009, p. 7). Given that Mental Health issues of children and adolescents is a serious and pertinent need in schools informed by the spirit of inclusion, where do we stand in terms of the preparedness of teachers in the classrooms?

This paper seeks to take a closer look at these two related issues: (a) acknowledging Mental Health as a serious concern in classrooms, and (b) the teacher education it necessitates, and consequently, the gap between the two.

Let us now examine in detail the cup, the lip and the slip in between.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Scenario

1. Defining Mental Health: The term ‘Mental Health’ is broad in terms of what it includes and what its implications are. The definition suggested by ATLAS is useful here for its comprehensiveness as well as its simplicity. It states, ‘Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. Achieving mental health and maintaining it consists of two functions. One is about preventing and treating mental disorders, and the other is about fostering or promoting mental health and wellbeing’ (p. 42).

The term Mental Health therefore, spans an entire spectrum ranging from state of distress and illness to state of well-being and productivity. A plethora of needs arise from the mental aspects of a child’s life and all these needs need to be acknowledged and addressed.

2. Worldwide Scenario: Epidemiological data on Child and Adolescent Mental Health has a stark story to tell. Children and adolescents constitute almost a third of the world’s population. In an article published in Monitor on Psychology, Tori DeAngelis states: ‘One in five children and teens suffers from mental health problems, and the number is growing. The World Health Organization estimates that by 2020, neuropsychiatric disorders in children will swell by 50 per cent compared with other health-related problems, making them one of the five leading causes of childhood illness, disability and death’ (DeAngelis, 2004).

The ATLAS also states that the gap in meeting child Mental Health needs worldwide is staggering, with between 1/2 and 2/3 of all needs going unmet in most countries of the world. Child and Adolescent Mental Health remains a vastly ignored area in developing nations. In addition to lack of resources, there is lack of public knowledge about mental disorders in children and adolescents and there is stigma evident at all levels of society involving children and adolescents, families and treatment providers.

A systematic survey of the literature and use of key informants found only 7 per cent of countries worldwide (14 of 191) had a clearly articulated, specific Child and Adolescent Mental Health policy (Belfer and Shatkin, 2004).

In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years of age often need special care and protection that adults do not. This led to the formulation of the historic United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child — the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights for children. The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child (http://www.unicef.org/crc).
3. Indian Scenario: Guided by these ideals, India began to pay attention to the Mental Health needs of children by formulating from time to time general health and education policies such as the National Policy for Children (1974) and the National Policy on Education (1986). The Integrated Child Development Scheme (NIPCCD, 1989) laid the foundation for proper psychological, physical, and social development of the child (Sharma, 2005). Despite these efforts, it can be said that the policies have not yet percolated down to the level of identifying and addressing the precise Mental Health needs of children, and that Mental Health services throughout the country are still woefully inadequate. According to a recent article published in the *Times of India*, one in five children in developing countries like India has a mental health problem (Sinha, 2011). The article reports recent findings that inform that despite their relevance as a leading cause of health-related disability and their long-lasting effects throughout life, the mental health needs of children and adolescents are neglected.

Mental Health in Schools

New Realities: The modern world with its fast-paced lifestyles and changing mores has also impacted our children drastically by exposing them to a multitude of stressors such as family dysfunctions and breakdowns, peer pressure, economic and housing problems and growing up in a competitive world rife with parental expectations. In his essay ‘Childhood in a globalising world’, Krishna Kumar (2006) locates childhood in the context of globalisation marked by expansion of industries, eroding and changing of occupational identities, migration and the decline of nuclear family as a normative institution. The essay sheds light on the changing roles of institutions like the family and the school.

He says, that while the changing face of work patterns and employment opportunities is visible, less visible are the effects of these changes on family. The essay suggests that with changes in the immediate milieu of the child, we can expect to see changes of a fundamental nature in relations within the family, particularly with regard to child rearing and socialisation.

In a rapidly changing world where the old knowledge, approaches and methods are swiftly changing because of the arrival and recognition of newer concerns, the traditional understanding of schools, both their need and functions are also undergoing evolution.

Krishna Kumar also notes that in the current context, the institutions that are responsible for regulating the child’s encounter with the world are finding it difficult to function in that regulating capacity. To quote Krishna Kumar (2006: 4032), “If we look at the family, the neighbourhood or the community and the school, we can recognise a certain level of exhaustion in these institutions in terms of their ability and their energy to act as mediating agencies between the child and the adult world.” He uses the example of internet technology to present the increasing challenge of adult regulation of what the child receives and what he/is protected from. He states that it is no longer possible to regulate such knowledge and it is becoming increasingly hard to protect children from sexual vulnerability and abuse.
In the face of this flux, the teacher mediates between the child and the world. The teacher may frequently find herself helping a student to deal with structural changes in the family, coping with abuse and domestic violence, adjusting to changing work patterns and migration of parents and adjusting to loss of parental employment. Further, not only does she have to respond to the changing childhood of children, she also has to adapt to the changes in teaching as profession under what Krishna Kumar calls the ‘management culture’.

In the face of newer realities, Mental Health of students is slowly being recognized as a serious concern that requires preparation and participation on the part of all stakeholders—the school, the teachers, the child, and the parents. A number of schools today are guided by the spirit of inclusion and are attempting to build themselves into centers of learning that are open to all children, whatsoever their economic, social, cultural or health status may be. Compared to the past, there is an increased effort to accommodate the diversity of needs students have.

School Mental Health at the Policy Level: At the policy level too, there is greater recognition of Mental Health as a concern in schools. The Comprehensive School Health Policy by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) envisages looking at School Health in a holistic manner that includes both Physical Health and Mental Health and recognizes school as an arena for learning and acquiring health supportive knowledge, values, ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. One of the key components of this policy is a counseling, psychological, and social services program that is designed to ensure services for students’ mental, emotional, and social health provided by well-qualified professionals and counselors, and access to referrals and interventions where necessary.

In a similar vein, National Policy on Education states, ‘Recognising the holistic nature of child development, viz., nutrition, health and social, mental, physical, moral and emotional development, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) will receive high priority and be suitably integrated with the Integrated Child Development Services programme, wherever possible (MHRD, 1992, p. 13)

Various recommendations have been made by national bodies such as CBSE for effective partnership between Health and Education sectors. In July 2002, CBSE advised all the senior secondary schools to appoint a person on full-time basis for performing the duties of a counsellor (Cir. No. 8, 10th July, 2002). Later in March 2008, the need for counseling in schools was reiterated with an instruction to schools to provide at least 20 sessions of psychological counselling, per year, to all students at secondary and senior secondary level. (Cir. No. 8, 10th March, 2008). However, these measures are far from being implemented in all seriousness. Schools as a whole—the management, the teachers, the parents, the counselor, and the children have to work together as a coalition if a truly empathic and receptive space is to be created.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) uses a multi-axial approach to assess and classify mental disorders and enlists the following as ‘disorders usually first diagnosed in infancy, childhood or adolescence’: Mental Retardation, Learning Disorders, Motor Skills Disorder, Communication Disorders, Pervasive Developmental Disorders including Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Eating Disorders, Elimination Disorders and Separation Anxiety Disorders.

In addition to these, there are also Anxiety Disorders, Personality Disorders, Substance-related disorders, Depressive Disorders and other mental disorders that may be diagnosed in adulthood but have their beginnings in childhood.

The last decade has seen steady rise in the incidence of suicide among youngsters and prevalence of these disorders. It is imperative that all institutions working for children, particularly schools, take cognizance of the same and brace themselves to deal with this reality.

Mental Health in Classrooms

While issues of Mental Health need to be addressed at the systemic level by the School, it
is at the level of the classrooms that these problems unfold. Often what may seem like behavioral problems that hamper classroom proceedings may be indicative of latent psychological issues. Inattention, what is often termed ‘hyperactivity’, defiant and aggressive behaviour, poor social interaction, sexual misconduct, and emotional disturbances are some such issues the teacher may find herself facing.

Role of the Teacher: Being the point of contact between the school and the child, the onus of fulfilling the needs of the students falls squarely upon the teacher. Also, the close bond that the students have with their teachers, one that often goes beyond textbooks and frequently opens up shared personal spaces, makes the teacher unparalleled in terms of the impact they have upon the students.

The very nature of the teacher’s role necessitates that she steps into the classroom armed with awareness and preparation not just pertaining to her subject area, but about everything that concerns children, particularly their psychological needs. As the earliest receptor of warning signs, it is critical that the teacher is equipped to identify difficulties and take necessary action by involving relevant parties at the earliest. This is the crucial juncture where the problem of Child Mental Health can either be addressed or brushed under the carpet owing to lack of awareness and preparation.

The fundamental question here is whether newly recruited teachers find themselves enabled to deal with such issues or do they find themselves looking away, leaving unaddressed Mental Health concerns become the ‘elephant’ in the classroom.

Teacher Education: Preparing the Informed and Steadfast Teacher

The modern-day teacher is an engaged agent. In his book ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’, Paulo Freire criticises the vertical characteristic of the ‘banking concept of Education’ in which Education becomes an act of depositing, the students are the depositaries and the teacher is the depositor. He posits a “Problem-posing” education which embodies communication and posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world. In Freire’s words, “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world.”

Further, seen from the constructivist lens, the teacher is a ‘learner among learners’ who has moved from being an imparter of knowledge to being a facilitator of the conditions that will help the learner in the process of knowledge construction (Pandey, 2007). At all times, the teacher is juggling the hats of a nurturer and a facilitator. She has to be tuned into the emotional climate of the class as much as she is tuned into the learning atmosphere.

Mutuality of engagement, therefore, marks the role of the teacher and necessitates preparation towards new realities.

(a) Vision of Teacher Education Frameworks: The National Policy on Education places a great degree of importance on teachers having a sensitive approach towards the needs of learners. It states, ‘…a human being is a positive asset and a precious national resource…to be cherished, nurtured and developed with tenderness, and care, coupled with dynamism. Each individual’s growth presents a different range of problems and requirements…. The catalytic action of Education in this complex and dynamic growth process needs to be planned meticulously and executed with great sensitivity’ (MHRD, 1992, p. 3).

In articulating the vision of the purpose and practice of teacher education, the NCFTE states, ‘Teachers should be prepared to care for children…, love knowledge and be constantly learning, …and work to build a better world, develop sensitivity to the problems of the learners….’ (NCTE, 2009, p. 14). It recommends that teacher education programs should engage teachers with children in real contexts than teach them about children through theories, helping them understand the psychosocial attributes and needs of learners.’ (Endnotes)
The NCFTE also reiterates the issue of exclusion in classrooms arising out of physical or mental disabilities of students: ‘It is necessary that teachers...are sensitized...of the philosophy of inclusive education and oriented to the different kinds of adjustments that schools have to make in terms of infrastructure, curriculum, teaching methods and other school practices to relate teaching to the special needs of all learners’ (Ibid., p. 12).

It is also important to note that NCFTE proposes including, among others, family health, mental health, health information, and use of health services in teacher education curricula. It is proposed that these topics should be included in the foundational paper on Child Studies.

(b) Examining Ground Realities: At present most teacher education programmes fall short of these ideals considerably. Although National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) have collaborated to develop curriculum on inclusive education and make it a part of general teacher education programmes, there is still a strong need to upgrade elementary teacher education. Greater curriculum time needs to be invested in skill learning and practice, and in adopting a professional approach to training strategies in order to respond to the Mental Health needs of children.

(c) Examining the B.El.Ed. Program: Looking closely at the vision, objectives, and structure of the B.El.Ed. program reveal some of the gaps between what exists on paper and what is translated into practice. The B.El.Ed. program is a four-year undergraduate degree program offered by the University of Delhi since 1994. It is considered an improvement over previous teacher education models with its vision of imparting student teachers with a broad vision of education and a perspective to understand children, thereby empowering student-teachers to seek to adjust the system to children’s needs rather than the other way round.

The B.El.Ed. course offers the possibility of close engagement with a multitude of issues concerning children and challenges the student educator to engage in reflective practice. The program amalgamates educational theory with pedagogical experience in a phased manner and offers an array of subject areas that can strengthen the foundations of the teacher to be. As such, the programme is certainly ahead of other teacher education programmes in terms of the rigour as well as the depth of exploration. Even so, a closer look reveals that elements of Child Psychology and Mental Health of Children and Adolescents form a small portion of the four-year-long engagement.

The foundation course on Child Development in the first year has one unit on ‘Children with Special Needs’, which takes a preliminary look at the issue of disability and special education but provides little space to look at Mental Health as a separate issue.

In the third year theory papers on School Planning and Management and Basic Concepts in Education, and practicum on Classroom Management offer some spaces to look at the psychological needs of children, but Mental Health needs that may arise in a classroom are still not directly addressed.

In the fourth year, students are offered an optional course on special education with a focus on disability—its impact, prevention, and changing trends in Education. The ‘optional’ nature of the offered course is quite antithetical to the idea of an inclusive classroom. It is also to be noted that at present, few, if any, of the colleges offering B.El.Ed. are offering this optional course to the fourth-year students. The reasons for this range from lack of students interested in taking this course to lack of faculty to teach these specialized subject areas.

On the whole, it can be said that the fourth-year student, on the verge of entering a school as an intern, and soon as a new recruit, often finds herself lacking the complete skill set what are these skill sets that would be required to respond to children with difficulties. Responding to issues and problems of Mental Health requires a very specific preparation, and a better utilization of existing spaces is absolutely essential.

(d) Possibilities for Change: Teacher training programmes such as B.El.Ed. have to anticipate this emergent need in the classroom and equip
teachers at many levels. Student-teachers need to be given a broad-based understanding of which classroom behaviours and deviations are acceptable and which are a cause of concern and subsequent action. While this may be a fine point of distinction, a teacher who is aware of possible problems is likely to be more discerning than a teacher who isn’t.

As discussed previously, upon entering school, newly recruited teachers can find themselves facing varied issues such as behavioural issues, bullying, child abuse, school refusal, separation anxiety, exam anxiety, problems of family breakdowns, chronic illnesses in children such as diabetes, gender identity issues, issues related to being from a minority community, religion or class, self injurious behaviours, sleep and eating problems etc. All of these issues have a profound impact on the well-being of the child.

Teacher Education could prepare student teachers in four areas that for the purpose of simplicity can be called Understanding, Identifying, Responding and Managing.

First, would be to develop an understanding of children and their development and needs at various stages of development. This is an aspect which is usually covered in the foundation papers on Child Development in teacher education programmes.

The second area could be to identify difficulties. This would involve developing an understanding of what the various problems faced by school-age children are and how they likely to manifest in the behaviour of the children. This would also involve being tuned to the children’s usual behaviour and reading early signs of distress. Developing emotional literacy in classrooms could also be an area of skill building.

The third area would be to equip student teachers to intervene and respond to children’s issues. This part of teacher education must focus on developing empathy, non judgemental attitude and listening skills. This humanistic approach is critical for any teacher who intends to respond to children’s mental health needs. Other areas of skill building could include making accommodations in the classroom in response to particular needs of students such as changing the language of instruction or seating arrangements, dealing with depressed or suicidal students, managing crises related to substance use, advocacy where safety of a student is concerned, addressing issues of discrimination based on race, gender or religion in class and also developing a classroom of zero tolerance with regard to bullying and harassment.

The last area could look at building skills that enable teachers to work in liaison with other professionals working with children. There may be difficulties that teachers may find require greater resources and expertise for which they may need to consult and work in collaboration with the school counsellor and other professionals outside the school.
Teacher education should also include developing inclusive classroom practices that help children with difficulties to work along with other children. A prepared teacher would not only approach her classroom with greater confidence in her abilities and her preparation, she would also become a part of the solution. In addition, teacher education should also seek to develop student teachers into agents of change. Teachers can play a very important role in bringing about awareness and help families understand and cope with Mental Health issues of children. According to the Bioecological model, the Mesosystem—interactions between microsystems such as school and family—have a profound impact on the growing child (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). In this way, teachers can be a great resource in a solution-oriented approach to Mental Health.

**Building Bridges: Concluding Remarks**

In a study conducted by National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore (Kapur, M., cited in WHO, 2005), teachers teaching classes one to nine in a rural school were sensitized to child development and child Mental Health and disabilities through five one-day workshops. They were trained to identify, refer and manage when possible, psychological problems of children. Children were provided psychosocial stimulation through play, art, and other activities, one hour a day, six days a week, for five weeks. In addition, *anganwadi* workers received orientation programs. It was found that the intervention significantly enhanced attention, intelligence, creativity, language, and arithmetic skills.

If short-term interventions such as the above can have such a positive impact on students in a classroom, then it can be safely extrapolated that weaving in these elements into teacher education programs and filling in relevant training needs would have profound and far-reaching outcomes.

Acknowledging Mental Health as a real concern and approaching teacher education with an intention to prepare and empower will go a long way in changing our classrooms for the better and making them into spaces where no ‘Elephant in the Classroom’ goes unnoticed.

**References**


Notes

1. The term ‘Psychosocial’ is used to denote the psychological development of an individual in, and interaction with a social environment. Erik Erikson suggested that social demands influence the ways in which the biologically determined characteristics of an infant develop. He proposed 8 successive stages of the development of personality from infancy to old age. Each successive stage in the sequence sees the individual adding a new mode of competency dealing with characteristic ‘crises’ attending that phase of life. From the age of 0 to 2, the psychosocial crisis is that of basic trust versus mistrust with the child trying to ascertain whether the world can be trusted. From 2 to 4 the crisis is that of autonomy versus shame and doubt during which the child tries to understand if it is alright to be an autonomous being. The crisis during 4 to 5 years is that of initiative versus guilt wherein the child deals with the question of how much initiative can be taken on one’s own and during 5 to 12 years the child struggles with whether or not he can make it in the world of others as he goes through the crisis of industry versus inferiority. Each crisis is favourably resolved when the ratio of positive to negative elements incorporated into the person’s identity leans towards the positive. Each successful resolution leads to the development of a virtue which further bolsters the individual’s identity. By adolescence the central quest is to acquire a stable sense of identity, the answer to the question: Who am I?

It follows from this that children have distinct attributes at different developmental stages and grapple actively with questions that contribute towards the development of identity. Understanding these attributes by engaging with children in real settings would help teachers to understand the landscape of childhood and enable them to respond to needs specific to the stage.

2. The use of the term ‘special needs’ is not limited to a particular population here. It is based on the idea that all children would have different needs and that the school should be a space where all these needs are recognised as unique and met. Whether it is children with particular mental or physical disabilities or children with diverse learning needs or children who are marginalised because of their social positions or even gender, the emphasis is on catering to all.
 Concerns, conflicts and cohesions: Universalization of Elementary Education in India; Edited by Preet Rustagi, 2009

Concerns, conflicts and cohesions: Universalization of Elementary Education in India is a book which will be a useful reading for academicians, people engaging with schools and the education system at the same time, and policy makers. The book has been edited by Preet Rustagi, Joint Director of Institute for Human development(IHD) and contains some very contextual articles by eminent academicians. Prof. Rustagi has been working on labour, development, gender and tribal child related issues for the past seventeen years.

In spite of the Right to Education act, the journey towards universalisation of elementary education(UEE) is fraught with many challenges. This book presents the various dimensions of these challenges. Many of the papers included in this book were presented in a seminar organized by IHD in June 2006.

The book has five sections and the first section is introduction and overview. The other four sections deal with four different ways of looking at the concerns of universalisation. The first section which is on disparities and inequities has four articles which explore how inequity is perpetuated in the system and affects the goal of UEE.

The flaws in many of the implicit assumptions and approaches to UEE have been highlighted in the detailed examination undertaken by Tilak in his paper, "Universalising Elementary Education: A review of progress, policies and problems".

Jhingran and Shankar, in their paper, "Measuring educational development and disparities" highlight that centrally sponsored schemes often give uniform treatment to different regions and ignore the differences in circumstances. In this paper, they have presented a study based on spatial disparity and discuss how careful sub-state analysis can inform policy design and administration. The inequities in elementary education are elaborately discussed by Sunil Batra in the paper, "Inequities in Elementary Education" which highlights how schools are in fact, often also responsible for creating conditions that result in an unrecognised learning potential for millions of young Indian students.

In the last paper in this section, Vimala Ramachandran's, "Systemic barriers to equity in education" raises important questions about how some states show more success in similar programs as compared to others. For the purpose of deeper analysis, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh (AP) were selected. Many commonalities in the two states have been highlighted out such as both are fairly well connected by roads and transport, both have an arid region which is dependent on rain for agriculture, small habitations in both states do not have private schools and others. But a striking difference was that all the schools that were visited in AP were functioning regularly and this was not the case in Rajasthan; the teachers in AP schools were usually aware about the number of irregular children and the reasons for it being so; almost all schools had a library and the school system is not riddled with rent seeking and patronage. In both states though the situation on papers was different from that on field. For example, in the recent past, the mid-day meal program of Rajasthan has been appreciated in other states of India and in this paper also it has been pointed out that the program was found to be working fairly well. But it was also found that this was the only program which was regularly monitored by both cluster and block level officials. Two
important inequity parameters in Rajasthan were single and two teacher schools which were disproportionately distributed in the rural and inaccessible areas and the mainly dysfunctional alternative schools opened to increase access and equity. Despite functionality, the basic problems in AP were of learning levels, corporal punishment and gender inequality. Thus after reading the paper, while it is noticeable why many of the schemes were better in AP and why the school enrollment is higher, one is also left to wonder how to really bridge the gap of inequity without questioning the classroom processes.

The next section in the book is about the challenge of attaining quality in education. The first paper, "The challenge of quality" is by Krishna Kumar where Kumar makes the point that the problems of quality education are not new but seem compounded as market has been the sole reference point for judging the worth of an idea or policy. As a consequence, we are missing the effect that outcome testing has/may have for classroom teaching and curriculum development. He presents, what Stenhouse has argued, that outcomes-approach to the assessment of quality weakens our appreciation of the teacher's role and capacities as a judge of quality; it also forces us to take an instrumental and necessarily trivialising view of knowledge. He takes two examples for detailed study to understand the case of improvement in quality in education: Nai Talim and Hoshangabad science teaching program. From here Kumar raises three lessons for Indian education system: First is the challenge of mainstreaming innovative practices. Second, the issue of quality cannot be seen in isolation from the socio-cultural context of education and third, all this requires a careful and sensitive embedding of the recommended progressive practices associated with the constructivist movement in school's cultural milieu.

The second paper in this section is by Rahul Mukhopadhyay entitled "Changing mindsets about Quality". In this paper Mukhopadhyay discusses how bureaucracy understands quality education, interprets the programatic aspects of quality interventions and how dual hierarchies, with individuals occupying different levels of positions, affect the policy/project implementation.

The next section is on issues concerning curriculum, pedagogy and learning. This section has three papers. The first paper, "The open classroom and its critics" is by Padma Sarangapani, where she discusses what an open classroom would entail using the National Curriculum Framework 2005 and Popper's concept of 'open'. Sarangapani brings NCF 2000 and its criticism as the backdrop in which the process of developing NCF 2005 is discussed. Three key ideas introduced in NCF 2005 have been discussed in this paper; constructivism, local knowledge and critical pedagogy. These three ideas also parallel the critical features of Popper's 'open society'. She then presents how critics of NCF 2005 have responded to these key ideas. She concludes by comparing education that enhances agency with personal responsibility with education as socialisation into an ideology and the classroom implications of both.

The significant issues outlined by Sadhna Saxena in "Women's education or 'Schooling' for women - Contested terrain" are the inabilities of the schools, classroom interaction and curriculum to unpack patriarchal institutions such as school, marriage and family. As Saxena says, "the paper argues that realignment of power, that is, women's empowerment, is not possible unless personal experiences of gender, caste and class oppressions, including violence, are brought into the infinitely complex and richly mediated classroom and teacher education processes, and linked to structural impediments in an upfront manner."

The need for a context specific improvement in schools, elimination of the exclusionary impact and movement towards a scenario of learning equality is suggested by Galab, et al. in the paper, "Enhancing child learning in andhra Pradesh". The paper analyzes the interplay of home and school environments and their impact upon learning quality.

The last section in the book is about inclusive education. It has four articles dealing with different groups which are excluded or face exclusionary practices in education. The first paper, "Children with disabilities" by Sudesh Mukhopadhyay talks about two aspects of inclusion: First about tracking excluded children
and improving their access to schooling and second about the quality of education. The second paper, "Over age children" by Usha Menon, discusses a very different group of children, the children who are for different reasons older than others in their class. The study focuses on overage children in class one. The amount of data presented in this study makes it a little difficult to follow but the important issues raised indicate that when in a multiage classroom we follow a pedagogy which assumes everybody to be at the same level, it harms both overage children and the younger ones.

The next article "Out of school children" by Afke de Groot, analyzes different reasons like gender discrimination, caste biases, absence of female teachers etc., that keep children out of school or pushes them out in the context of Rajasthan. The last paper, "Out-of-school and working children" by Rustagi, et.al. discusses how children working in and out of their domestic arenas remain out of school, because the schools don't attract them sufficiently to leave work and come to school. It also emphasizes the need for the school system to be sensitive to the fact that some aspects of children's lives such as the need to work will not go away in the near future and the schools need to accomodate them. Thus the strategies towards UEE, need to be considerate of these realities.

Most of the papers in the book are relevant and cohesively bring the points across, though some of them pose difficulty in reading. The sections also have been meaningfully created. The reader will benefit as not only does the book enhance understanding of various issues related to education but also provokes us to view these issues through a new lens.
# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>B.Ed.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
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<td>B.El.Ed.</td>
<td>Bachelor of Elementary Education</td>
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<td>BRC</td>
<td>Block Resource Centre</td>
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<td>CBSE</td>
<td>Central Board of Secondary Education</td>
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<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuous Professional Development</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
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<td>College of Teacher Education</td>
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<td>IASE</td>
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<td>ICDS</td>
<td>Integrated Child Development Services</td>
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