

Inclusive EDUCATION

Quarterly Bulletin

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Report on State Level Network Building on Inclusive Education

Seminar Hall, A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies | Patna, Bihar

A state-level network building meeting on inclusive education was held on 30 December 2014 at A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, Bihar. There were 30 participants in the meeting, which included civil society organisations, academicians, research fellows, activists and policy makers. Prof. Sudhir Kumar, HoD, Division of Statistics, A N Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna chaired the meeting. The key speakers of the meeting were Mr. Junaid (SCERT), Dr. Ajay Kr. Singh, Dr. Pallavi, Dr. Sangeeta Kumar and Yasmin Azim.

Mr. Jay Prakash welcomed the participants and shared the details of the PACS education project and other endeavours of Deshkal Society for promotion of inclusive education in Bihar. Sensitisation of policy makers, practitioners, teachers, and other key stakeholders of education on issues of inclusive education has been the main strategy of Deshkal Society. Regular BRC-level training programme, seminars, district-level workshops, publication of quarterly e-bulletin, formation of e-group on inclusive education, publication and distribution of resource materials on inclusive education are some of



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the important activities that Deshkal Society has undertaken to this end. Mr. Prakash also shared that the network building meeting is a part of these activities to establish a creative engagement with different stakeholders working in the field of education. Sharing of ideas, experiences, best practices on inclusive education, challenges and practically-implementable suggestions and also a collective commitment to address the issues of inclusive education are the expectations of this network-building meeting said Mr. Prakash.

Mr. Junaid in his deliberation said that education essentially requires three things- school, pupil and teacher, and all three are required to be bonded with a deeper sense of belongingness with one another. Sadly that umbilical cord is missing. Neither students get the fatherly affection from the teachers nor do the teachers receive unconditional submission from the students. In order to achieve the objectives of inclusive education, we need to make our schools inclusive because it is school that teaches a student what exclusion is. The school must acknowledge and respect the indigenous skills of a student because this acceptance will encourage him to continue his study.

Mr. Upendra Manjhi said that people from marginalised community are not consulted in the process of making any law and act. Drawing-room discussions cannot yield anything in favour of the poor. The first-generation school children find themselves in a different world in school. Processes of teaching, syllabus, environment in schools are designs best suited to students coming from the financially sound and socially influential families. Students of the marginalised community need extra support and care. The teaching method for them should be based on their indigenous skill and an integrated school can meet their requirement.

Dr. Ajay Kr Singh quoted Mr. Smith who first brought this word “Exclusion” in public discourse in 1835. All countries, societies and communities are existing with the sense of exclusion, it is everywhere. With the changing time the words “Exclusion” and “Discrimination” need to be revisited in the context of transforming untouchability. Since India is a complex and heterogeneous society the objectives of inclusive education cannot be achieved unless discrimination owing to social, economic and nutritional factors is not addressed properly. The word inclusion should not be fashionably made synonym for Dalit only, concluded Mr. Singh.

Dr. Pallavi and Dr. Sangeeta Kumar attributed the lack of commitment to the pathetic scenario of elementary education in government schools and emphasised on attitudinal change of those steering the process. Yasmin Azim shared her experiences and challenges faced in handling multi-grade classroom as a teacher.

Prof. Sudhir Kumar, the chairperson of the meeting, while summing up the deliberations said that the entire discourse on inclusive education seems to be based either on assumption or reality. Exclusion is universal. We are born unequal so a certain amount of inequality is inevitable in the society. Simply performance of mechanical responsibility by the implementing agents will not help in achieving the goals of inclusive education. Compulsions have nothing to do with the hard realities and an ad-hoc approach cannot be the solution. Inadequate infrastructure, utterly poor quality of teachers, extreme loaded ends of delivery mechanism is the serious concerns that need to be addressed. Mr. Kumar appreciated the efforts of Deshkal Society for placing the discourse of inclusive education in centre stage and applauded the commitment of participants.

The meeting ended with a formal vote of thanks by J Prakash.

Report on BRC Level Trainings in Four Project Blocks

BRC-level teacher trainings were organised in the four project blocks. The details of training are given below:

Date of Training	Name of Block
15/11/2014	Bihiya
5-7/11/2014	Wazirganj
15/12/2014	Tedagachch
06/12/2014	Bahadurpur

More than 250 participants attended the training programmes that included Headmasters, teachers, BRC Coordinators, and CRC Coordinators. The training programme focused mainly on:

- How to cope with the challenges of inclusive education
- How to make the classroom inclusive and entertaining
- Sensitisation on the issues of discrimination inherently prevailing in the classroom

Mr. Jay Prakash, coordinator, PACS Education project shared the purpose of the training programme and requested the participants to share their problems and challenges faced in classrooms and in schools, which will help in formulating solutions to the discussed problems that has been crippling inclusive education in Bihar.

Shri Madan Sharma, Block Education Officer, Tedagachch addressing the participants in the training programme, shared that a very large number of students discontinue their academic journey at a very early stage. This is the major challenge that Bihar faces today. There are many reasons behind this huge drop-outs and one among these is the “absence of the sense of belongingness that is missing from the characters of our teachers”. He urged the teachers to try and broaden their understanding of social diversity and educational needs of the children, so that schools can be made inclusive in the real sense.



Most of the teachers shared that their schools lack infrastructure and fall far behind the norms prescribed by Right to Education Act, 2009. The lack and low quality of infrastructures discourage the parents and community to send their children to school. Private schools have better infrastructural facility which often works as a factor while deciding on which school to send their children to.

Many of the participants shared that notion of “gifted” learning ability does exist, whereas many held the society responsible for this discouraging situation of education in government schools in Bihar. Very few teachers honestly acknowledged their shortfalls as teachers.

The participating teachers and Headmasters shared their desire to receive training at regular intervals.

The biggest challenge as shared by the teachers is the management of multi-grade classrooms and the age-related admissions. Non-academic engagements like Mid-Day Meal, Censuses, responsibility of booth-level officers in election also affect them besides deputation.

The book entitled Inclusive Education and Social Diversity was distributed among them. A bulletin on inclusive education that is published quarterly under this project was also made available to them.

Our Schools are Just Getting Smarter

Shantanu Prakash

Digital tools are found to enhance teachers' performance and enliven the classroom experience

Education has remained, from time immemorial, the basis of all change, development and progress, whether societal or individual. It is, therefore, interesting to see that education itself is being enveloped by change, as the digital revolution re-engineers almost every aspect of it, from content to delivery to evaluation.

Globally, education is unrecognisable from its earlier avatar except in the fundamental dynamics of the teaching-learning process. That too, some would argue, has undergone a transformation so dramatic that teaching and learning are no longer what they used to be and a new set of variables are dictating the mechanics of this relationship.

The IT-enabled ecosystem with its attendant features such as the digital classroom, content-on-demand, interactivity, dynamic progress mapping and new metrics of evaluation have transformed it into a digitalised, modern concept where outcomes matter most.

Century old notions of education are breaking down in favour of a system that is rebuilt from ground up to include a technology platform that ensures individual learning, creativity and collaboration at every stage of the education ecosystem.

New paradigms

The typical classroom which was once characterised by boring hour-long sessions, has now transformed into an interesting, challenging, multimedia environment. Projector screens are the new blackboards and content is designed to impact, engage and interest, holding attention, easing comprehension.

Learning has become seamless and students have become more attentive to the subject on the plasma screen or the interactive whiteboard. At the same time, teaching has morphed into a strategic management task. Technology has freed teachers from rote-based teaching and allowed them to focus on managing student performance,

and aiding, mentoring and monitoring progress. It has also allowed teachers to provide individualised instruction based on student needs.

Technology-aided education not only provides schools a potential mechanism to improve outcomes, but also radically transforms the teacher-student-parent collaboration model.

Ideas like the Integrated Learning System (ILS) — an IT-based education programme that controls the delivery of the curriculum, provides inclusive feedback to the learner and assists teachers to meet the challenges of delivering high quality instruction — will define this new order. ILS is a means to improve students' academic performance and teachers' productivity in classroom with simple, practical and meaningful use of technology.

ILS includes the use of various apps which help in increasing the student's attentiveness and participation. The primary advantage of ILS remains the potential to respond to the needs of individual learners. Through ILS, the curriculum can be tailored to meet the academic objectives of the students who, being quick adopters of technology, get a better understanding of curriculum, concepts and visual learning strategies.

Easy passage

With over 50 per cent of students today using a smart phone device or connected to the internet, it is no surprise that students are taking to learning through technology like duck to water.

Today, the digital classroom experience is metamorphosing into a new, integrated technology architecture that helps schools in enhancing the quality of learning and increasing learning outcomes by extrapolating the positive experiences of the smart class.

The key drivers of this transformation are modern, pioneering ideas like the SmartSchool concept. SmartSchool looks at the school as an integrated learning ecosystem, where layers of technology interventions at various delivery points create a 360 degree education experience

that encompasses content, delivery, access and assessment.

SmartSchool provides never-seen-before features, allowing schools to integrate, create and enhance a 360 degree relationship with all stakeholders while keeping the student at the centre of the learning experience.

India has had the unusual advantage of being relatively in step with global trends in digital education; at least as far as urban centres go. The internet is freeing up learning like never before.

Time, space, distance, geography, faculty are no longer a limitation and anyone, anywhere can

acquire any quality of education any time. In a shift such as this, it becomes necessary for education policy drivers to provide enabling administrative and regulatory mechanisms so that the millions of our young students can get the best the world has to offer.

The writer is the CMD of Educomp Solutions

(This article was published on October 6, 2014 in The Hindu. It can be access at <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/our-schools-are-just-getting-smarter/article6475772.ece>)

E-group-Deshkal for Inclusive Classroom: Comments from Members

An e-group titled, Deshkal for Inclusive Classrooms has been formed on Google groups as part of the project activities and spearheaded by Deshkal Society. The group has a membership of 1857 stakeholders from across the country and the world working on education as well as other related areas of social sciences. These include policy makers, social activists, eminent educationists, government officials, and Civil Society Organisations. The e-group serves as a common platform for the stakeholders to share their stories, concerns and anxieties on various developments in education sector of not only India but also the World. This is also a platform through which Deshkal Society has been disseminating the project activities and learning to the wider audience.

Membership of the group may be obtained by sending your email at deshkal@gmail.com and/or inclusiveclassrooms@googlegroups.com

Deshkal for Inclusive Classroom is pleased to share two selected comments from a list of active interactions and discussions among our distinguished members. We hope our members will keep supporting the group with their valuable inputs and opinions.

First and foremost let me take this opportunity to congratulate Deshkal for starting this INCLUSIVE group. Second, let me thank Deshkal for inviting eminent people and educationist in their periphery to this group. Last but not the least let me also show respect to DESHKAL for what they have been doing for many years is to be saluted with pride.

Now coming to the discussion let me accept the views of Sri. A.K. Pandeyaji — almost 90% as a national threat of non-availability of teachers and 10% to the ever diminishing higher education pillars which are not producing teachers whom we feel like touching their feet whenever we see or meet them. I disagree with him only on one point that we have this habit of pointing fingers and tend to forget that when doing so three fingers are pointing towards ourselves.

What I want to convey is “stop blaming the Higher Education System alone”. Let us focus on appointing good professional people on the top of each institution, each university, each college and each Department; those who understand the meaning of EDUCATION actually not factually. There are people who formulate plans that are made in Air-Conditioned Rooms and are far away from reality, be it school education or higher education or teacher education.

Bihar has been the focus for me for almost 10 years now first with a few MNCs and then with World Bank TE project where I got to meet real people most of whom are here in this forum but the reality is life exists out of Bihar also as pointed out by Pandeyaji. But yet again why limit it to Delhi University alone?

There are enough examples why not GoB does a G2G activity and share the good practices with good universities across the country and replicate the best practices as it is a Government to Government activity and costs them nothing. There has to be some road map and some timelines for the activity as this is one point which I have seen is missing in reality in almost all departments.

I am involved in consulting for almost a decade for IT and education and helped departments in across 20 states with finding low cost solutions like Re.1/- per child cost for an end-to-end Campus Management Solution, content which can be accessed with a mere wi-fi

connectivity (with or without internet), knowing the working of the IT assets of the schools spread across the length and breadth of the state and so on.

I am sure with the enlightening of things to come for our next generation learners be it teachers, parents, students or the school administration we all will take the benefit for our future the kids and their teacher.

Best Regards

A.K. Banerjee, Ex-Consultant
World Bank-SASED Unit, Patna-Bihar

Dear Friends,

Greetings. I have been reading all the exchanges about teachers and how they work. Here is a HM [Headmaster] who has been working consistently with his community for the past 8 years.

Mr. Karuppaiyan is the HM of a Panchayat union primary school in Neduvasal East in Pudukottai district in TN [Tamil Nadu]. His school is located in a backward district and the community members around the school are largely rural agricultural labourers. When he joined the school, there were barely 25 children in a single building which housed the MDM [Mid-day Meal] kitchen as well. The school had a single chair – this chair used to go around the village whenever an illiterate elder died – the belief being the illiterate person’s spirit would leave with satisfaction if the body is seated in a chair from the school.

Mr. Karuppaiyan, being the product of the system he has joined in his youth, initially was content to complain about parents who would not visit the school. The MDM organizer once urged him to stay back in the village after 6 pm so that he could see the parents. Thus began the school’s transformation.

Since that first revelation to Mr. Karuppaiyan that the parents don’t return home until 6 or 7 in the evening, all his VEC/ PTA/ SMC meetings take place late in the evening. The school remains open and the HM waits for the parents. The school children participate in all the household events including funerals and other life stage rituals in the community. Children make flower arrangements for these events from their school garden.

The community in turn visited the school and was appalled to see the poor condition of the building all those years ago. As per rural custom in many parts of TN, community members often pool their money and resources together when one of the poorer relatives gets married – this is called seeru – usually small household items necessary for a young couple to set up a home. Similarly, the community decided to pool their savings over a period and bought simple things like brooms, buckets, vegetables, cooking utensils and water pots and brought it in a procession. Parents carried these on their heads so that the whole habitation could see what was being offered to school.

Over the years, the school has managed to move to a larger piece of ground, with open classrooms as well as a garden; it has play equipment like see-saw etc. All children have stainless steel plates and glasses for MDM - all contributed by the community. Additional vegetables and other treats are added to MDM periodically by the parents/ community members.

The teachers help the community in accessing various poverty alleviation schemes as well as development schemes. The school has also created an alumni network as children from the village have gone to work across the globe. With the help of alumni the school has smart boards in its classrooms, a computer lab, rain water harvesting structure and a FACEBOOK page.

I have been very lucky to have heard Mr. Karuppaiyan explain how and why he works the way he does. His basic question is: "I get paid by the government to work for children, which means children's families, their community, and their well-being. Without the school contributing to the community of my children, how can I justify earning my salary?"

The pictures you see are samples: government supplied books and notebooks are distributed to children by the SMC members in this school. Usually this is done as a chore by the teachers as they have to get signatures of the parents as proof that such materials have been distributed. Mr. Karuppaiyan makes this into a mela rather than a chore. The SMC of Neduvasal East is probably one of the few SMCs in the country who create a school development plan which they follow up at fixed intervals.

There are a number of things he has done with his teachers and community which have added a rich texture to the lives of children in Neduvasal East.

There are a good group of teachers who go the extra mile because of their deep understanding of the role a school plays in the lives of children. Some of these have been copied by Mr. Karuppaiyan in his mail below. These are the colleagues who energise and guide me. They are the reason why my job is so precious.

Please feel free to contact any of them. If you happen to be in TN near Tiruchy you can perhaps visit Neduvasal East.

With regards,

Aruna Rathnam, Ph.D. Education Specialist,
UNICEF Chennai



Future Activities on Inclusive Education

- Publication and dissemination of perspective paper on inclusive primary education in Bihar
- Formation of a State level network with key stakeholders of inclusive education, mainly, policy makers, representatives of civil society organizations, representatives of NCPCR, SCPCR, SCERT, DIETs/PTECs, PACS partners and educationists.
- District level Consultative Workshop for Perspective and network building among key stakeholders.
- State level Consultative Workshops for Perspective and network building among key stakeholders.

About the Bulletin

The Bulletin aims at presenting and disseminating the perspectives, policies and practices on inclusive primary education among the key stakeholders. It serves as an instrument for consistent dialogue and network building among the key stakeholders of inclusive education.

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Declaration

The views expressed in this publication are those of the project team only and do not necessarily represent those of PACS.