

Inclusive EDUCATION

Quarterly Bulletin

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Inclusive Education in Bihar Perspectives, Issues and Challenges

(Deshkal Society and PACS has undertaken an Initiative to facilitate the process of inclusive education in Bihar through policy advocacy and teacher training in October, 2013)

The need for the Initiative

Gross Enrolment Ratio in the rural primary schools in Bihar is an impressive 143.6% but the retention rate is an alarming 58.7% and the dropout ratio in grade V is a depressing 18.9% (DISE, 2011-12, Elementary Education Report Card, Bihar). Most importantly, these developments weigh heavily against children from socially excluded communities. In other words, a disproportionate number of children from marginalised communities either develop a habit of absenteeism or attain the status of dropouts. In essence, the prevailing primary education is not inclusive enough to infuse a sense of belongingness and fairness that could promote satisfactory learning attainment and school retention among marginalised children.

Recent studies and observations on government primary schools and classrooms indicate that the school curriculum and teaching-learning practices and processes are not sensitive towards addressing the learning needs and concerns of children from socially excluded communities, and prejudiced and discriminatory practices against these children still operate in classroom practices and processes. Children are often perceived as having ascribed

learning potential and abilities, or lack of it, based on their socio-cultural and economic backgrounds. On the other hand, the school community also claims in public discourse to treat all children as 'equal', and views them in terms of a universal category. While the first is based on the ideology of caste hierarchy, the second denies children their individual identity and strength as well as their identities and consciousness formed as part of growing up as members of collectives.

As a result, children from socially excluded communities' find themselves excluded from the

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School curriculum and teaching-learning practices and processes are not sensitive towards addressing the learning needs and concerns of children from socially excluded communities, and prejudiced and discriminatory practices against these children still operate in classroom practices and processes.

teaching-learning processes, and lose interest in the existing education system. Their gradual alienation with the system has profound impact on their overall learning status, which is generally developed in two stages: first, their learning attainment is adversely affected, and second, they develop high rate of absenteeism, and eventual dropout.

We have become aware of this process during our field-work. To be precise, a case in point is our pilot study conducted in two schools in block Wazirganj of district Gaya, which resulted in (1) a report on teaching learning effectiveness that aims to realise the goal of inclusive classroom, and (2) a development of teaching toolkit for primary school teachers. In this regard there is a need for such contextual and geographical outreach to our selected four blocks districts and further at the state level where our successful pilot project can also provide a source and guidebook.

Purpose of the Initiative: To build and broaden the perspectives, policies and practices on inclusive primary education through teacher-training, advocacy and consultative processes with the Civil Society Organisations, PACS partners and the Department of Education, Government of Bihar for making the schools and classroom practices inclusive and friendly to children, especially from socially excluded communities.

Critical issues the Initiative seek to address

■ **Problematic teaching-learning practices:** The prevalent teaching-learning practices are exclusionary, to say the least, towards the various learning needs and deprivations of children from socially excluded communities. In addition to basing their teaching technique on rote learning, teachers also disregard any specific learning requirement that a child from marginalised community may have. Learners' home and community experiences are not included in the learning process, and they

are denied opportunities to construct their own knowledge on the basis of the cognitive awareness and abilities that they have developed as a member of the community.

- **Hidden curriculum and pedagogic violence:** The apparatus of hidden curriculum works to justify the social privileges and knowledge of the dominant section of the society, and it operates in instilling the conservative norms and value systems through pedagogic violence. More often than not, the prevailing social violence manifests itself through pedagogic violence in the form of various coercive methods including punishments, arbitrary rewards, and sometimes reinforcement of the belief of hereditary based educability.
- **Subjective interpretation of universal and parochial principles:** The universal principle of equality that merits all children to be treated uniformly deprives children from marginalised communities of special attention and support that they require in order to compete and participate with other children on equal terms. On the contrary, these children's particular social and intellectual characteristics are singled out and positioned, bracketing and debasing them and their community of origin. In both instances they find themselves in disadvantageous situations due to their caste, gender and/or religious background.

Nature of community's needs vis-à-vis the Initiative

Children learn in different ways owing to their community experiences, environmental conditions, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. For primary education to be fully inclusive, it needs to be ensured that the curriculum is accessible to and relevant for all children in terms of what is taught (content), how it is taught (method), how children learn best (process), and how it relates to the life experiences of the children and the environment in which they live and learn. The teaching materials need to be made inclusive by making them responsive to the diverse cultures and socio-economic backgrounds of all the children and relevant to their learning needs and interests.

On the contrary, what is prevailing in the primary schools is a lack of sensitivity and awareness towards the needs of children from socially excluded

communities. And, moreover, this sensitivity and awareness deficit is vertically pervasive among not only in primary schools but also in institutions and organisations, both at district and state level, that maintain oversight over these schools and provide direction to the overall primary education system. Against this background, there is a need for a perspective building through consultative process in the state that constructs or better the understanding of inclusive education among relevant stakeholders, including DIET, SCERT, BEP, SCPCR, Government B.Ed. training colleges officials and, consequently, the agenda of inclusive education is brought into the centre of the primary education discourse.

Salient Features of the Initiative

- Broadening the perspective, teaching-learning skills and capacity of teachers, CRC coordinators, BRC coordinators and Block Education Officer CSOs, and those who are actively involved in primary education in four blocks of sample districts through training and consultative processes.
- Building a perspective and practice through collaboration, critical engagements, knowledge and information dissemination with key officials of BEP, Department of education, Bihar, SCERT, District Education Officials and DIETs/PTECs/BITEs for making inclusive primary education a reality in Bihar.
- Training, advocacy and policy engagement with the Department of Education, Bihar Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and PACS partners at state, district and Block level through a sustained network.
- Creating a dialogue and partnership between schools and socially excluded communities through advocacy and consultative processes at the block level for strengthening the cause of inclusive education.
- Creating information and knowledge base in Hindi through perspective papers and resource materials on inclusive education for all relevant stakeholders.

Strategies

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Expected Outcomes

- Introduction of 'inclusive teaching practices in the class' as part of teacher training modules in four BRCs in four districts reaching out to almost 200 teachers and 50 primary schools.
- Increase in policy measures on inclusive education in terms of introduction of new government policies and government orders towards inclusive practice in teacher training.
- Enhanced understanding of approximately 20 CSOs on inclusive education and practices through intensive networking and alliance building.
- Sustainable and committed network of key stakeholders for advocating inclusive education at state and in four districts.
- Increase in dialogue and partnership between socially excluded communities and school management committees for strengthening the cause of inclusive primary education in 50 villages.

Panel discussion on Inclusive Education

A panel discussion on Inclusive Education, Pedagogic Issues and Problematic Teaching-Learning: The Case of Gender, Tribal, Dalit, Economically Weak and Differently-abled was organised by Deshkal Society at IIC, New Delhi on 9 November 2013. Issues, like gender, tribal, dalit, economically weaker and differently-abled sections of the society, and how they impact teaching-learning were deliberated upon.

Eminent educationists and experts on the theme were invited for the discussion. It was attended, amongst others, by Dr. Peggy Mohan, teacher, linguist, author and producer children's TV programmes; Dr. Srinivas Rao, specialist in teaching and research methodologies, diversity, equity, access, and excellence in education; Mr. Vikas Gupta, educationist and one of the initiators of alternative People's Charter on Education; Dr. Saumen Chattopadhyaya, specialist on human capital, education, and specific features of the education market; Dr. Arvind Mishra, expert on early education, literacy and collective violence, teaching social psychology at Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, JNU; Dr. Dhir Jhingran, Educationist, Policy maker and former IAS officer; Mr. Ravi Prakash, Programme Manager in PACS education and development practitioner; Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Secretary of Deshkal Society; and Mr. Narendra, field researcher on adivasi and learning processes.

Initiating the session Dr. Sudhirendra Sharma, moderator, elucidated the theme and scope of discussion. Based on experience, studies and observations on government primary schools and classrooms there is

ample evidence to suggest that the school curriculum, teaching-learning practices and processes are not sensitive towards addressing the learning needs and concerns of children from socially excluded communities. Prejudices and discriminatory practices against these children still operate in school practices and processes. Immediate remedial steps are needed. Beginning the Presentations Mr. Sanjay Kumar shared Deshkal Society's consistent engagement with Social Diversity, Inclusive Classroom and Primary Education in India for a decade. This pilot initiative is an outcome of this engagement. The insights into three critical issues on inclusive education developed through over the period are: Problematic teaching-learning practices; Hidden curriculum and pedagogic violence, and Subjective interpretation of universal and parochial principles.

The current initiative aims at collaborating and developing creative engagement with State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and Bihar Education Project (BEP) through state level stakeholder's workshop, and dissemination of a perspective paper and the resource materials on inclusive primary education. Similarly, it also proposes to collaborate with DIETs/PTECs and BRCs for the consultative workshop and dissemination of the perspective paper and the resource materials.

Dr. Peggy Mohan observed that the schools are a monolithic structure, un-integrated into society or community. She cautioned against the hidden violence for children from economically weaker sections whose classroom needs are not addressed by teachers. Children are thrown into an unhelpful environment and expected to function on own. Neither are inputs provided nor concepts clarified in ways and contexts the child can identify with. Such children remain academically poor though socially they may fare better. Also, when a child is admitted at 3 years of age, he/she is expected to begin learning

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English without realising at that age the child doesn't understand his/her own mother tongue. A child is ready to learn a language not before 10 years of age. Learning a language involves sophisticated thought processes. It is a traumatic phase for the 3 year old. Learning in one's own language develops confidence and abilities. Bright children are turned dull and leaden. It is a long period of muteness and non-reaction for the child. It is a violation of the child's rights. Not only are the modes of teaching but also the language used in text books is unfriendly to the child.

Dr. Srinivas Rao began with the need to explore the word 'inclusiveness'. He began by asking what 'inclusive education policies and programs' mean. They probably mean that someone is trying to bring in something new. But In spite of these children keep dropping out. Disengagement continues unabated; such high proportion of children do not desire to be part of learning process. They stop feeling the need for education and remain unequal members of society. Some social groups have remained outside the education systems. Historically, social structures discouraged education for them.

Given their trainings, teachers are only redressal mechanisms; educationally, they are supposed to be child-centric. Teachers are trained, at most, to empathise with marginalised children and not engage them that tantamount to, not inclusion, but exclusion of the child. Text books are standardised which makes them exclusive. They have lost touch with social realities of class, caste and gender. They remain only transactions in terms of examinations. A standard III text book recounts how an 'untouchable' child studied with Gandhi ji in schools. At that age the child is unable to grasp he/she is untouchable. Inclusive education processes ought to help a child identify his/her social location and begin ways of negotiating it.

Mr. Vikas Gupta clarified that universal principle of equality, which seem to pose restrictions on specific measures providing individualized attention for excluded groups, is essential for inclusive education. Principle of equality fully recognises difference. For various reasons, inclusion is an important corrective, however, the idea of inclusion has become more attractive these days because unlike ideologies that lay emphasis equality it does not pose the same degree of challenge for equitable redistributive justice. It is far less marked by the tension of redistribution

on equal basis between excluded and included; between privileged and unprivileged; and between 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Inclusion of marginalized or excluded groups

may be allowed without equitable and democratic redistribution of means and opportunities: without substantially redrawing the balance of existing class formation and power relations in favour of actual majority. He therefore suggested that there is a need to bring issues of equitable quality, structural parity and state's direct responsibility to the centre of inclusive education thus, going beyond mere inclusions and access within a 'minimalist' framework and increasingly stratified educational apparatus. He was also of the opinion that education is never a value neutral enterprise. Therefore, there is no reason to be afraid of if one proposes to make education commensurate with the needs and values of the larger society by allowing their lived experiences, their valid place in the learning process. However, it does not happen because the larger society -comprised of many excluded groups/communities forming actual majority—as a pedagogic resource is left outside the formal educational sphere. T major hindrances to inclusiveness are educational curriculum, processes and practises not allowing for the child's lived experiences to be part of his/her pedagogic exercise. This hinders the child in raising questions about his/her social exploitation. It is imperative to bring values and skills of socially exploited/excluded groups at the heart of educational practice and discourse in order to make education truly inclusive. Isolating education from the real life situation would continue to perpetuate marginalisation of the child and his/her social background. It is also imperative to keep in focus factors that cause social and cultural marginalisation. Regrettably, the focus of policy framework and practices has been on numbers and expansion, and not education as such. Therefore, children from marginalised communities' find themselves on the margins of teaching-learning processes, and lose interest in processes and practises apparently provided for them. The irrelevance of, and gradual alienation from, the system adversely impacts them. Despite the recommendations of expert educa-

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For ensuring that all students can learn to read well in early grades, it is possible to promote teaching-learning strategies that provide opportunities for scaffolding, regular practice and revision and extra attention for struggling readers.

On the one hand this kind of structure of schooling discourages children from marginalised sections, on the other it does not facilitate teachers to attain objectives of inclusive education by providing individualized attention to each children as envisaged for instance by NCERT Focussed Group Discussion Paper on Teacher Education (2005) and ignored by SSA and RTE Act and other official policies. One of the historical reasons of this situation is that the development of education in India is different from countries that provide this model. We have never tried to build a system of education which ensures the attainment of 'equality, quality and quantity' objectives all together realizing their essential complementarity. In this scenario, it is not a surprise that there are no reasonable efforts to build a system of inclusive education that can meet the individualized requirements of children with physical and mental disabilities or any particular excluded group. Hence, whilst envisioning inclusive education and seeking its materialization, three principles should be kept at the core. These are equality of participation, equitable quality of education and pedagogic engagement with the lived experiences of learners within formal education.

Dr. Arvind Mishra pointed out that the roots of divisiveness in society lie as much in the discipline of Psychology. Education borrows heavily from Psychology. It creates a rift between the child and his/her environment from the very beginning. Psychology is heavily divorced from everyday living realities. E.g. the reality of child's everyday life is that he/she acts in collectivity and sharing. Psychology insists he/she is an autonomous individual, and not part of the given socio-cultural milieu. This creates dilemmas and confuses the child; eventually excluding him/her from everyday life activity. Psychology is based on the 'Model of Deficit'. It is assumed children

are deficit and when they are unable to solve a problem, the standardised onslaught on him/her begins and prevents integration into school system. Dr Mishra asked what the primary purpose is when a child joins school. Does he/she know what he/she is supposed to do? He may or may not identify with the performance goal. Children are different but are expected to adhere to same standard of achievement. The situation is compounded by the teacher's roles of educationists having been reduced to that of a clerk. Not only are children marginalised, teachers are marginalised as much. The buzzword is not Dr. Dhir Jhingran observed that equitable learning is a good starting point for a discussion with teachers and teacher educators rather than beliefs and attitudes about discrimination in the classroom. Pre-service training is an ideal time to work with young teachers around issues of diversity and inclusion in the classroom. It is important to ensure that teachers develop an understanding of practices that can involve and engage children as active learners. For ensuring that all students can learn to read well in early grades, it is possible to promote teaching-learning strategies that provide opportunities for scaffolding, regular practice and revision and extra attention for struggling readers. Learning skills and 'deep comprehension' need to be stressed instead of mere repetition and memorization. The entry point for such discussion with teachers is 'good teaching-learning' strategies and not issues of bias or discrimination. This is more likely to succeed. It is important for teachers to recognize that children have different learning needs and some differentiated instruction is needed in every classroom.

Dr. Soumen Chattopadhyay pointed out that village hierarchies are reflected in schools. It is the teachers' role to mitigate them. They need be imparted special counselling and training.

Retention or dropout in schools pertains mostly to children from economically weaker sections. Push and pull factors of economy impact these sections the most. It is they that influence retention or dropout rates in schools. The quantity of schooling is closely related to economic growth or its failures. Wide differences exist between growth rates and the levels of household poverty. In this context it is pertinent to assess the efficacy of development schemes for school education, retention and drop out.

Teacher Training

Strategies, Issues and Challenges

One day Teacher Training Programmes were being organised by Deshkal Society as part of the activities of *Pilot Initiative to Promote Inclusive Education in Bihar through Influencing the Teaching-Learning Module*.

The training was organised at the Block Resource Centres (BRC) of Bihiya block in Bhojpur, Tedagachh block in Kishanganj, Wazirganj block in Gaya, and Bahadurpur block in Darbhanga during January-March, 2014. There were more than 100 participants in each training session in these blocks. Out of the total, 30% of the participants were women. These included Head Masters, BRC Coordinators, CRC Coordinators and senior teachers.

Aptly recognising critical issues of teaching-learning processes, hidden curriculum, pedagogic violence, and subjective interpretation of universal

and parochial principles responsible for exclusion of children from education, the training programme aimed at developing an understanding on these issues among the teachers and to gauge the attitude and treatment of stakeholders responsible for implementing the Right to Education Act, 2009 focusing the excluded communities. One major point that emerged during the training is the perceived failure and myth of public education system in India.

The training began with a discussion on six myths that generally dominate the teaching-learning process in the classrooms leading to educational failure of many children and thus halting their educational journey. The persistence of discriminatory practices by teachers, educators, school authorities towards underachieving learners' socio-cultural identities, capabilities and potentialities are based on several problematic assumptions. Some of these pertain to



pervading beliefs and common perceptions about the children's individual and collective identities and their capabilities and potentialities. These are often deeply rooted and shaped by varied socio-cultural contexts which have remained largely un-spoken but understood by those who believe in diverse societal norms. The six key myths that foregrounded the training programme are:

MYTH I:

*Children are Children After All ...
They are the same!*

MYTH II:

*Learning Achievements of Children are
determined by Heredity.*

MYTH III:

"School Kids" Are Different from "Street Kids"!

MYTH IV:

Boys are for Schools, Girls are for Marriage.

MYTH V:

*Children Learn Only from Textbook Transactions
by Teachers in the Classroom!*

MYTH VI:

*Inclusive Education Means Enrolment
of All Children in School.*

Confirming Myth 1, majority of the participants acknowledged that they believe that all children are equal and there they find no such difference among them. A Headmaster in a school in Bihiya says that in the eyes of a teacher there is no difference between children. Teachers do not differentiate among them. However, contradicting the Headmaster, a teacher opined that children from unequal socio-economic and cultural backgrounds cannot be treated as equal. A teacher from a school at Tedagachh, Kishanganj finds all children to be equal up to the age of 6 years. This understanding of equality of all children, which upholds the democratic ideals, silently lead to exclusion as diversity at individual level is lost in collective identity. Socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the children have a major impact on their learning abilities. This needs to be treated as reality by the teachers in order to address the individual needs of the children for an enabling environment added a teacher. He also raises the question if this

can be possible and can it be expected to happen in a school where 8 teachers are to look after 1400 students?

Lack of access to resources as a major cause for underachievement has always been misinterpreted as hereditary. However, some participants denied that heredity determines learning achievement of the children. But a teacher, Tedagachh, Kishanganj relates the learning level of children with their family background. Another teacher is also of the opinion that heredity, to some extent, and individual talent affects learning achievement. Participant's teachers seemed confused about the factors affecting learning level of children. A young teacher-in-charge in a school of Tedagachh block of Kishanganj held parents responsible for the underachievement of children belonging to marginalised groups, thereby, supporting the notion of hereditary educability.

"School kids" are different from "street kids"-considered almost all participating teachers. The participants are unaware of the pain and sufferings street children undergo in making a daily sustenance, which make them much more experienced, more matured than their age, and thus, many a times, deviant. A teacher said that street children should be treated differently in the alternative education system, as they can hamper in maintaining school discipline when allowed to interact with other children in the classroom. Street children grow with a different identity, and often find themselves neglected and situations of untouchability both by peers and teachers. Thus, they tend to develop aversion towards formal schooling. Most of these street children are from the nomadic families who are on the move from one place to another in search of living and hence it is really difficult for them to continue with the formal education process, added a teacher.

Boys are for schools, Girls are for marriage-this notion is now a past, finds all teachers as the statistics establish gender parity in enrolment in government schools in Bihar. The female participant teachers were totally against this notion and discarded gender discrimination in the society as a thing of the past. A teacher in a school in Bihiya block, added that Muslim girls are actively participating in school education. The barriers to school education have been broken and society has started recognising the importance of girl education. The girls are now

enjoying the long awaited freedom to learn, thanks to RTE, she added.

Children learn only from textbook transaction by teachers in the classroom. It is a myth. Children learn in many places-in the lap of the mother, home, society, within the four walls of school, from the environment and the surrounding too, says Sri Deoshankar Tiwari, a BRC co coordinator in Bihiya. He also highlighted that ability to learn is a gift to child from his/her family which is rarely recognized and respected in the schools by the teachers. The conventional teaching process and schools do not help the children in actualising their ability to do something extraordinary in life—the denial of a spontaneous growth.

Children learn only from textbook transaction by teachers in the classroom.

Inclusive Education means enrolment of all children in school-this myth received a mixed response from the participants. Sri Awad-

hesh Sharma defined inclusive education is brings children with special needs or physically challenged group into school. Whereas Sri Deo Shankar Tiwari and Sri Sarvesh Ram further extended the concept of inclusive education to include children that are not currently part of the school system. Sri Rameshwar Jee, headmaster of an upper primary school blames the system for non-implementation of the RTE, which has sabotaged the public education system in a planned manner. Further, the teachers added that teachers are everything- BLOs, Census

Workers, enumerators, Mid Day Meal arrangers-but, certainly not teachers. And for

these teachers, too, are responsible to a great extent as they have utterly failed to deliver. All educational incentives such as midday meal, scholarships, cycles, dress etc.have ensured participation of children in school temporarily, but where is real learning-it seems that “objective is lost in pursuit of means” laments Sri Rameshwar jee. How to ensure inclusivity and quality in education when 8 teachers are to take care of the diverse educational needs of 1400 children? A teacher cited the example of Navodaya Vidyalay where PTR is 1:40, 2 toilets for 40 children and Rs. 30/child/day towards meal is available against Rs. 3.37/child/day under MDM in Govt. Schools. The approach of the government towards public education system is itself discriminatory, they added

A Headmaster in a primary School in Tedagachh Block of Kishanganj asked how and why it is expected from the teachers to implement inclusive quality education, when they themselves are discriminated in terms of wage disparity among teachers. They themselves are struggling for parity and survival, and frustration never yields good results. He also questioned the selection process of newly appointed teachers as most of them are not fit for the jobs and are soldiers without weapon. Once placed high in the society, the teachers today have become the most ridiculous creature in the society, he frowned.

Inclusive Education means enrolment of all children in school

E-group on Inclusive Education for strengthening the process of network building

An e-group on inclusive education has been created as part of the initiative to facilitate communication with network partners.

- It will help in sharing the experiences and understanding of the members of the network partners on inclusive primary education.
- It will be instrumental in dissemination of relevant materials on inclusive primary education among the network partners.

Loreto Day School

A school that believes passionately in inclusion

Loreto Day School at Sealdah in Kolkata, West Bengal is an example of an innovative experiment whereby a privately managed school has gone beyond the norm to successfully integrate the schooling of middle class and poor children through a creative and flexible use of pedagogy, curriculum and resources. The school has 1,400 regular students, of which 700 pay fees to provide stability to teachers' salaries, and 700 come from impoverished slums. Children are admitted through a lottery system at the age of four. They learn together, wear the same uniform, and play, work, study and eat together as equals.

Besides the regular school, three other programmes for street children, domestic child labourers and rural children are also run by the school. The Rainbows is a programme for street children. They are allowed to drop into school whenever they are free, from early morning till late afternoon. When they come, they always find a regular student free and prepared to teach them. This is made possible by a creative structure of the curriculum. Regular children have Work Education for two periods a week which ensures that throughout the day there is a reservoir of 50 potential "teachers" free and prepared to teach whoever comes. The street children are brought to a level for a class appropriate to their age and then slotted into school according to her age level.

Loreto children are also encouraged to make contact with domestic child labourers, to play and talk to them, listen to their stories and even interact with their employers to persuade them to get the children to school. Loreto has admitted 239 such children in this way. The regular Loreto children also interact with and teach 3,500 primary school children in rural areas every Thursday (school holiday) in an ongoing child-to-child programme.

The school uses a variety of teaching and learning methods to ensure that all children can learn intelligently in the classroom. Activity-based learning methods and use of local resources are emphasized. The

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school ensures that all activities are creative rather than money-based so that poor children do not feel

excluded because they cannot afford to take part in them. It also provides head start/remedial / alternative programmes to meet the needs of academi-

cally weaker children. There is no academic ranking or competition, no pitting children against each other for marks. Children are trained to compete with their own best performances and all prizes are effort-based; talent per se is not rewarded, as it is considered a gift.

Child-to-child tutoring and peer learning in Rainbow, domestic child labour and rural schools programme encourage reflection and enrichment of teaching methods. Children are challenged to reflect on what they do and why they do it, to analyse what they have experienced and become aware of some of the burning socio-economic issues facing Indian society today.

The school is sensitive to the various cultures of the children coming from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and promotes appreciation of and pride in each one. It recognizes the injustices poor children are subjected to and is flexible enough to give them first priority. The school is deeply concerned for the dignity of every child and monitors carefully all existing structures. It removes or re-orientates those which might make a child feel inferior. The curriculum encourages children to mix and have relationships with the poor, and exposes them to a variety of life experiences that children from diverse backgrounds bring from their homes or the streets. Even middle class parents understand the educational value of mixing children of several different backgrounds, and parent-teacher meetings are geared towards reflection on various aspects of education rather than reporting on individual children's shortcomings. The school thus exposes teachers, children and parents alike to a variety of socio-economic experiences and issues, and practically makes it possible for everyone to make their contribution in the successful implementation of its vision and purpose.

The school uses a variety of teaching and learning methods to ensure that all children can learn intelligently in the classroom.

(Based on a conversation with Sister Cyrril, former Principal, Loreto Day School, Sealdah on December, 3, 2013.)

School Education

Committee Formation Campaign- BSHA

The Right to Education Act, 2009 prescribes constitution of School Management Committees (SMC) in every government or government aided school consisting of three-fourth of parents and the rest of teachers, and elected representative of local authority. The Act also prescribes that fifty percent of the members of SMC should be women and there should be a proportionate representation of parents of children belonging to disadvantaged and weaker sections of the society. The functions of the Committee are to monitor the working of the school, prepare and recommend School Development Plan (SDP) and monitor the utilization of the grants received from government or any other sources. Based on the SDP developed by the Committee, the grants would be released by the state government or local authority. However, the ground realities depict a different story.

In 2010 Department of Education, Govt. of Bihar passed a gazette for formation of SMCs through election process and later SMCs were formed on ad-hoc basis. Due to the ad-hoc nature, these SMCs were working as per the functions and roles prescribed by RTE guidelines. On 16th September 2013, Department of Education, Bihar government notified reformation of School Education Committees (SECs) replacing the ad-hoc committees. This was a welcoming step taken by education department. This notification provided PACS with an opportunity to engage with the process.



To facilitate the formation process and to extend its coverage in terms of number of schools, PACS had launched its campaign BSHA in Bihar in November 2013.

The campaign started with formation of School Education Committees (SECs) with special emphasis on ensuring transparent, equitable and democratic selection of SECs members and ensuring representation from socially excluded groups in these committees. PACS partners facilitated this process in 12 districts and covered more than 1000 SECs under this campaign. The districts covered are Gaya, Jehanabad, Nalanda, Bhojpur, West Champaran, Kishanganj, Muzaffarpur, Samastipur, Banka, Madhubani, Siwan and Darbhanga. The effort was very helpful & successful in engaging with socially excluded groups during re-formation of SMCs.

Behtar Shiksha Haque Abhiyan (BSHA)

PACS in collaboration with their partner organizations initiated the campaign- BSHA in January 2014 in Bihar to accelerate its ongoing efforts towards providing free, equal & quality educational opportunity to every child without any discrimination based on gender, religion, caste, physical or mental abilities, language and geography.

BSHA is a network of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Alliances, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and parents who are actively working to address issues of exclusion in the education system. It aims to ensure that duty bearers deliver the rights of every child to a free, quality and discrimination free education. BSHA facilitates different campaigns based on the need and relevance of the issue in State at that point of time. Its prime objective is to ensure democratic participation of SEGs in statutory bodies in education system, e.g., SEC/SMC, State/National advisory council

Key activities of the campaign

- Orientation and capacity building of CSOs and CBOs on the role of SECs and RTE Act.
- Organizing rallies, wall writings, nukkad natak, mike announcements, children rallies for mass awareness generation.
- Liaisoning with BRC, CRC members to facilitate the formation of SECs in Schools.
- Media sensitization and involving the media in the campaigns.
- Development of IEC (Poster, pamphlets, leaflet etc.) for sensitizing the CBOs.

Highlights of the campaign

- Through awareness drives during the campaign around 40,000 people have been reached out and awareness has been generated about the SEC's formation process.
- Around 2000 volunteers (2 volunteers per school) have been trained to facilitate the formation

process of SECs in schools and oriented CBO members to participate in formation process.

- During election process, women (mothers) participated enthusiastically and around 1000 women from CBOs were selected in the committees.
- CBOs demanded re-formation of SECs in around 100 out of 1000 schools where the procedures as per the notifications were not followed by the schools administration or CRCs.
- Campaign created a momentum to bring together parents from socially excluded groups to discuss and participate in school related issues.



Forthcoming publications on Inclusive education

Deshkal society is going to publish a set of resource materials on inclusive education. These resource materials will be published in Hindi soon.

1. Positive Discipline in the Inclusive Learning-friendly classrooms

- ◆ Classroom management in an Inclusive Learning-Friendly Classrooms
- ◆ Making the learning environment comfortable
- ◆ Developing classroom routines
- ◆ Developing classroom rules with students and parents
- ◆ Standards for behaviour and good management
- ◆ Providing positive reinforcement.

(Source: Embracing Diversity: toolkit for creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments Specialized Booklet-1, UNESCO, 2006)

2. Inclusive Classroom and social Diversity: Myths and Challenges, Sanjay Kumar

- ◆ **Myth I:** Children are Children After All ... They are the same!
- ◆ **Myth II:** Learning Achievements of Children are determined by Heredity.
- ◆ **Myth III:** “School Kids” Are Different from “Street Kids”!
- ◆ **Myth IV:** Boys are for Schools, Girls are for Marriage.
- ◆ **Myth V:** Children Learn Only from Textbook Transactions by Teachers in the Classroom!
- ◆ **Myth VI:** Inclusive Education Means Enrolment of All Children in School.

(Source: Report on Inclusive Classrooms, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Diversity: Perspectives, Policies and Practices, Deshkal Publication, 2010)

3. Sanskara

P.D. Singh and Sanjay Kumar

It can be said that a process of inclusion of Dalit and other lower caste children, at least in terms of access to school, has been taking place in government schools during the last one decade. But, does this mean that this changing reality has also had a significant impact on the working of caste based prejudices and discrimination

in the schools? In order to address this critical question of the role of caste based prejudices in shaping the relationship between teachers and children from marginalized communities, a pilot study was conducted in two government primary schools in Bihar, which reveals that parallel to the inclusive processes mentioned above, caste based exclusionary processes are still working in the schools, though more in subtle than direct forms.

(Source: Seminar, October, 2012)

4. Need for excellence, not literacy

Nita Kumar

This essay is about a single school started twenty two years ago, that seeks to provide an excellent education inclusively for every child, regardless of background. It was based on research that revealed two crucial problems in Indian education: one, the lack of political will to bridge the divides between classes and communities; and two, a weak technological base, resulting in spaces, curricula, school rituals, and pedagogical strategies that are inadequate for the task of excellent education. Vidyashram, the school described here, has the ambitious agenda of applying solutions to these two problems. A much abbreviated description of its practices, successes and failures, will permit us to understand better the vast challenges of inclusivity.

(Source: Seminar, October, 2012)

5. The Desire for Education

Gyandev Mani Tripathi

The Musahar community needs an educational programme that allows it to develop an insight for understanding its own self. They should know and analyse in historical perspective the knowledge they have received through the oral traditions across generation that ‘the Musahar would not live if he does not work’.

(Source: Asserting New Voices: Changing Culture, Identity and Livelihood of the Musahars in the Gangetic Plains, Eds. Hemant Joshi and Sanjay Kumar, Deshkal Publication, 2002)

Note: These resource materials will be available at our Head office as well as Branch offices.

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.
- Translation, Publication and Dissemination of resource materials on inclusive primary education among key stakeholders of primary education.

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.