

Inclusive EDUCATION

Quarterly Bulletin

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Report on State Level Network Building on Inclusive Education

Siddharta Hall of Hotel Patliputra Ashok, Patna, Bihar

The state-level network building on Inclusive Education witnessed the participation of civil society organisations, academicians, research fellows, activists and policy makers. 40 participants attended the meeting. Sri A K Pandeya, Director, SCERT chaired the session. Smt. Abha Rani, Principal, Teacher Training College, Bikram; Mr. Jayendra of CARE; Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Deshkal Society; Father Anto of Dalit Vikas Samiti; Sri Kapileshwar Ram of Dalit Adhikar Manch; Mr. Ashok Kumar, DPO, SSA, Patna; Sri Satyanarayan Madan; Pawan Pankaj; Mr. Pankaj Kumar and Ms Arti Verma of PACS

were among the important speakers on this occasion.

Mr. Jay Prakash welcomed the participants and placed the endeavours being carried out to promote inclusive education by Deshkal Society. Sensitisation based on behavioural change communication in the form of 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 material on inclusive education are some of important activities Deshkal Society has undertaken and this meet-



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ing is a part of this series 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. Pandeya in his address said that education is a fundamental right of human being and is possible for all. Categorically placing the initiatives being taken by the department to promote inclusive education, Mr. Pandeya mentioned the experiment he is engaged in CRC, Gorkhari in Bikram block of Patna where no instruction is given to the teachers. Interactive classrooms are based on TALK and LISTEN. A news bulletin Chal Padh, Kucha Ban is also published by the joint efforts of students and teachers.

The Department of Education is holding regular interactive meetings with different stakeholders. Stress is on to ensure quality education in government schools. Proportion of out-of-school children has come down; the demand for education has increased. Mr. Pandeya did not hesitate to mention the pathetic state of HR deficit owing to the collapse of teachers training institutes after 1992.

Mr. Sanjay Kumar of Deshkal Society while mentioning the challenges of learning in government schools held prevalent teaching-learning process responsible for the same. He also asserted that the most who suffers because of this process are the first-generation school children.

Mr. Jayendra of CARE finds the word inclusive education academically debatable that has nothing to do with education; it is either the conflict of ideas or the conflict of system. RTE in India seems to be only a scheme. Education is a state subject and it is the fundamental duty of the government to provide quality education to all. Demand for education in the community needs to be investigated. Discriminatory approaches, poor implementation of the programme, casual treatment are required to be dealt firmly.

Smt. Abha said that teachers should not be held fully responsible for poor level of learning in government schools. In recent years the department of education has utterly failed to produce the cadre of teachers. Private teacher-training institutions have caused an irreparable damage to education.

Mr. Pankaj of PACS stressed the need for building a perspective on inclusive education whereas Ms Arti of PACS said that issue of inclusive education is always seen as a conflict between community and teachers. All discussions are based on perceptions only. The problems of teachers are not heeded and they find themselves the most excluded group in the education system. Proper coordination among the different stakeholders, documentation of the process, experience sharing are some of the activities that should be undertaken immediately, Arti added.

Resolution of the meeting:

- Formation of a small core group
- Case-study based research
- Involvement of education department and SCERT.

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

Report on District Level Workshop

30th March, 2015 Gaya, Bihar

A one day district-level consultative workshop was held at Upahar Hotel in Gaya district, Bihar on 30 March, 2015. Ms. Geeta Devi, ex-Principal of DIET, and Prof. Manjhu Sharma from GBM College were the resource persons of the workshop. Chief functionaries and staffs of different NGOs working in Gaya district participated in the workshop. In total, there were 44 participants. The workshop reviewed teaching-learning process in classrooms, materials used by teachers along with problems and nature of discrimination faced by children of socially-excluded communities in primary schools. Challenges faced in the implementation of inclusive classrooms were also discussed in the workshop. Overall, it focused on activities undertaken through this project and its continuation and effectiveness. Perspective paper on inclusive education published by Deshkal Society and other resource materials were utilized to initiate the workshop and create a platform for dialogue among the participants and the key stakeholders.

The basic idea was to build a network of academicians, researchers, parents of children (primarily belonging to socially-excluded communities), district officials, related NGOs and



other key stakeholders working at the grass-root level not just to discuss but to ensure continuity of the process of sharing, spreading awareness and raising issues regarding primary education and initiatives undertaken to implement it. At the end of the workshop, the link between civil societies and the government was strengthened. Most importantly, it succeeded in establishing a connection between the parents/guardians of children and thereby, bringing one of the most influential stakeholder under the fold of the initiatives of the government and CSOs.

Report on BRC level Teacher Training Programme

A one-day BRC level Teacher Training Programme was organised in Wazirganj, Bahadurpur, Bihiya and Tedagachha blocks of Gaya, Darbhanga, Bhojpur and Kishanganj districts from 23 February 2015 to 12 March 2015. Altogether 400 teachers of different primary schools falling under these blocks participated in this training programme. The desired expectation of this programme is to build a perspective on inclusive education among the teachers as well as to sensitize them on discriminatory attitudes and practices taking place in schools and in the classrooms discouraging the educational journey of marginalised society.

The Teachers, the central character of primary education system especially the niyojit sikshak consider inclusiveness only about catering to the special needs of children with disabilities. Special needs arising out of socio-economic and cultural conditions and exclusion caused due to problematic teaching and learning processes and discriminatory practices do not exist in their mind. Interaction with them also suggests that they do not consider themselves as part of



the educational organisation. Their involvement in teaching- learning process seems to be missing. Extremely low level of motivation, fatigue look, indifferent attitude, uninspiring and always overburdened with petty grievances they have nothing to offer what may be called education. The academic background of most teachers and also the training they receive do not arm them to counter the challenges of inclusive education.



The biggest challenge in primary schools is poor learning level of students despite all welcome initiatives taken by the educational administration. And the attitude of the teachers also adds more to it. So the objectives of inclusive education cannot be achieved unless change in attitude of teachers is not ensured.

This training programme focussing on three critical issues-problematic teaching –learning process, pedagogic violence and universal concept of equality- and based on the concept of behaviour change communication- conducted on a regular interval seems to have cast an impact on their thought towards inclusive education. But it needs to be continued for a longer period of time.



In Dire Need of Reform

Rohit Dhankar

The Zakir Hussain Committee Report (1939) on basic education rightly saw examination system as “a curse to education”.

The Commission on Secondary Education (1952) spelled the curse out by pointing out that it dominates education in every aspect from content to teaching and that it becomes the sole motivation for learning.

Today, there is near unanimity that the examination system is in dire need of reform. Therefore, the Right to Education Act (RTE) is justified in emphasising continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE). However, all efforts to change the examination system almost always fail. One wonders why this exam system bounces back every time one tries to reform it. Obviously, there are many reasons. This article briefly hints at one, perhaps the most important, of them.

Examinations and the factory model of schooling: The structure of modern school, brought to India by colonial masters in curriculum, teaching and examination, assumes that knowledge can be organised into discrete packages, each to be mastered independently. Therefore, learning can be organised into grades, and the content of learning in each grade can be separated into subjects like language, mathematics and environmental studies without emphasising interconnections.

The curriculum, therefore, loses its aim of holistic growth and becomes a bag of more or less unrelated units. Once the curriculum is fragmented, the teaching and testing follow suit. Therefore, periodic checks on how much of each of these independent units is memorised becomes the most efficient way of evaluation. This is the birth of an examination system most suitable for a factory model of school.

The models of the school and examination support and give life to each other, and are highly management friendly and authoritarian.

The CCE as a possible alternative. What is demanded in CCE is ‘continuity’ and ‘comprehen-

siveness’ in assessment of learning. Discrete periodic events—however frequent—do not constitute continuity, unless one creates a sham misleading definition. One does not require much analysis to realise that the continuity in evaluation can be achieved only if the teaching itself becomes a process of evaluation for the child as well as for the teacher, and includes an ongoing sensitive response to the child’s learning difficulties and achievements.

It is possible; but requires individual attention to each child. Therefore, the teacher needs to know each child, be in a position to make mental note of their learning behaviour in the classroom, needs to know their difficulties and successes individually, and to keep a reliable record of her classroom teaching every day. This, in turn, demands a high teacher pupil ratio, and institutional time for the teacher to plan, prepare and maintain notes. The system recognises none of these demands of CCE or not to the extent it should.

The second aspect in CCE is comprehensive-ness, which demands attention not only to the particular concepts being taught, but to situate them in curriculum of the subject, and connect with what is being learnt in all other subjects as well as to the child’s general problem solving behaviour. The teaching, therefore, becomes a highly reflective activity. In addition to scholastic learning, comprehensiveness also demands attention to the child’s attitudes and dispositions. That further increases the demand for time and hard work.

The purpose: The central purpose of CCE is to facilitate better learning for the child. Three-fold variations in any class room can be easily understood: One, the children are likely to learn with different paces. Two, are likely to have different conceptualisations of what is being taught during the process of learning; for example, in their ways of understanding multiplication or how seasons change.

Their paths to achieve a common understanding are likely to differ substantially. Three children come to class with different levels of preparedness to learn and interest in different subjects. Therefore, the same child may learn faster in one subject while may be slow in another. A suitable pedagogy for CCE has to facilitate learning in all these situations.

Little choice

On the other hand, the system demands that all children in a class complete the curriculum by the end of the session. This leaves very little choice for the teacher but to teach the whole class in a uniform manner. In order to complete, say, the upper primary curriculum in three years the teachers and children need an enormous amount of freedom to plan their work and execute it. The authoritarian system does not allow that.

To take an example, the understanding of child's knowledge in CCE has to be progressive making which becomes increasingly consistent internally as well as with accepted human knowledge at a given historical juncture. In this understanding, if the child is becoming progressively aware of her own ideas and tries to create coherence in them, it should be considered very good progress. But the year-wise packaged curric-

ulum emphasises conformity, memorisation and reproduction on demand. These two attitudes to knowledge and learning contradict each other. As a result the teaching becomes geared to examination and the intellectually organic progress has to be abandoned.

It is clear, therefore, that the CCE can succeed only if we make the system flexible, change the notion of child's knowledge, formulate the curriculum as a learning continuum and restructure the school.

Surprising we continuously miss the point that the prevailing examination system is a creature of the structure of school and curriculum; and cannot be reformed without dismantling the authoritarian school. If we still lack the courage to question this structure, CCE will fail; or it will metamorphose into something very akin to the existing examination system; which will serve no good purpose than to kill one more excellent idea in education.

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(This article was published on January 05, 2015 in the Deccan Herald. It can be accessed at <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/451598/in-dire-need-reform.html>)

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 some 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.

These comments were part of a discussion on lack of functional toilets in schools of India.

Dear friends,

I am in agreement with the opinion of the Centre for Ecological Audit. During the course of my visit in schools for more than 25 years I have encountered so many non-functional toilets in schools. Toilets are constructed in schools through so many agencies since more than 20 to 25 years. They are constructed at one hand and became non-functional at other hand. If the toilets constructed in schools since 20 years are added together they will be more than sufficient for requirement. Lack of proper planning for construction of toilets in schools and lack of proper upkeep of toilets are the basic reasons due to which schools are without toilets till date. So schools must plan properly for the construction of toilets and also have proper arrangement for its maintenance and upkeep. It is only possible through the involvement of school management in a proper way.

The other side of the coin is the unavailability of toilets in households. Until or unless each and every house holds has the toilets it is difficult to maintain the toilets in schools.

The congregation of children from schools of Delhi may opine the need of toilets in schools and it is one of the reasons for drop out in schools. In rural areas unavailability of toilets in households plays an important role for drop out of children in schools specially girls from deprived sections. It is the one of the causes for child marriage in deprived girls to save the prestige of family. I am expressing the facts in hidden forms. If you collect the reports of newspapers on daily basis you may come across that majority of raps are due to unavailability of toilets in households which compels the parents for early marriage of their girls which deprived them from schools. So we must launch a campaign to ensure toilets in every household if we have to ensure the girls education with full potential.

With thanks,

A.K. Pandeya

Well, toilets are important for schools but it seems now the whole school education will get limited to toilets. We know toilet training is part of “anal stage” of socialization. And during my field work in Orissa, Jharkhand, M.P. and Gujarat I found in many of the Ashram schools toilets were not being used. Reason was that children are uncomfortable with toilets as they are not in habit of using these. If the children do not have toilets in their homes they may take lot of time to get accustomed to toilets. I do not understand why educationists cannot understand it while for politicians it is okay. Why can't they understand that cultural capital of the children coming to schools has to be the fundamental thing in the process of any education?

Sorry I feel bad when major issues in school education of our children from Dalit, tribal, minority, rural and poor people, and of girls are being continuously overlooked.

Regards

*Dr. Dinesh Kumar Sharma
Formerly Professor of Sociology,
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This comment was in response to a discussion initiated by Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma: “With several government schools in some states (Rajasthan, Punjab etc) having been closed down, the Right to Education has become a sick joke. And the sickest part of it is that, on top of the other taxes levied on the taxpayer, there is an ‘educational cess’ of 3%. Can the government justify ‘edu-cess’ under such conditions?”

My comment is not on Educess.

The issue is not specific to Rajasthan and Punjab. The problem is much wide spread, more prominent in educationally advanced states.

This is about a study that may interest participants of this discourse.

We did a study in Punjab in January, 2010. It indicated certain important demographic changes.

One important change was population stabilization by around 2016-17. Punjab has very high GER and NER. The study predicted the possibility of such a problem. I was told (not part of the study), that last academic year, more than 12000 seats in schools did not get filled up in Chandigarh UT alone. In fact, we recommended developing comprehensive schools — from grades 1 to 12; we also recommended pre-primary education for all children.

When schools get smaller and smaller, because of TPR as one of the planning parameters, more and more schools will be multigrade teaching. We did a door to door survey in 2006 of child birth in village Udang that houses 1107 families. In one year, only 75 children were born. The village has five primary schools. On an average, each school got just 15 students in 2011-12. Similarly, because of 0.5 km as planning parameter despite improvement in road condition and transportation, governments continue to maintain non-viable schools. Issue is not whether schools are getting closed or opened; issue is whether every child is getting opportunity of quality school education. Instead of focusing only on access (availability of schools), focus should include equity and quality. Issue is whether governments have created appropriate alternative opportunity for all children to attend school (indicated by NER and GER)

All state governments need to recast their original planning parameters. It cannot be same for all states, e.g. Kerala and Bihar at the two ends of the continuum. But, unfortunately, central funding still goes on in ‘one-size fit-all’ modality.

*Prof. Marmar Mukhopadhyay
Chairman, ETMA Council.*

This comment was in response to a discussion on out-of-school children.

Distinguished members of this august forum,

Indeed, we need to get active for protecting government schools seeking all CSR and government support. We need a kind of movement called Sarkari School Bachao Abhiyan.

I am rather apprehensive of this new definition. Is there a plot to destroy all the government schools neglecting them? I saw the Prime Minister reaching the government schools seeking attention of all teachers and ensuring that their children also studies in the government schools. I really loved this focus on the government schools. I hope all teacher and people in the neighbourhood of government schools cooperate. It is clear; we would not have all fossil fuel energy support for transporting children in the post carbon age after the end of what I call PETRO MODERN AGE! Thus, we need to secure inclusive schools for all with food and nutrition security. MDM is good in breaking caste based barriers and breaking the yoke of untouchability in the minds of children. We must defend government schools and secure this as a place for building socially inclusive and ecologically safe future for our children.

At the same time, we need to get support for malnutrition and hunger prone Dalit ,Adivasi and minorities households so that children are not forced to migrate. This makes the case of getting land rights for Dalits and Adivasis across the religions and regions in order to secure means for survival and sustenance for all asset-less and landless households prone to migrate.

After the conclusion of National Convention on Dalit and Adivasi Rights on December 4,2014 at Ramlila Maidan, National Confederation of Dalit Organisations , a national network of 2100 Dalit, Adivasi and Minority Organisations, a huge rally from Ramlila Ground to Jantar Mantar was organised by Adivasi Adhikar Andolan, Rashtriya Dalit Mahabha and Bundelkhand Nirman Manch with the slogan of Jai Bheem Paanch Acre.

More than 30000 Dalit ,Adivasis from across the religions and regions and from across India specially from the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar ,Jharkhand, Punjab and Delhi participated in the rally on 5th December,2014. In this the contingent from Madhya Pradesh was the largest where 36 per cent Dalits and Adivasis have only 3 per cent land. Converging at Jantar Mantar, the demands were made with much power and force by all leaders representing the cries of landless, asset less and marginalised Dalits and Adivasi from across the states.

The slogans and its intensity showed the urgency of the demand against the deprivations that have been part of the lives of Dalits and Adivasis at a time when the government is focussed more on giving land for the corporate rather than attending to the needs of Dalits, Adivasis who have been victim of usurpation and dispossession due to their illiteracy and exploitation. The rally was organised for demonstrating the urgency of the demands of Dalits and Adivasis for land rights that was the most important condition for child protection, women's empowerment , health, education , nutrition and dignity along with asserting the rights to education, housing , livelihoods, prevention of violence against Dalits and nutrition.

Thanks to Dr. Sudhirendar Sharma for bringing up this news here.

With best wishes and warmest regards,

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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.