

Diversity, Social Inclusion/Exclusion and Inclusive Classrooms: An Innovative Programme for Improving Learning Achievement of Diverse Learners in Rural Govt. Primary Schools in Gaya District of Bihar

Context

Elementary education in India has witnessed a steady growth over the years in enrolment of children from all sections of society, particularly from weaker and disadvantaged sections. Owing to the increased inflow of children from weaker and disadvantaged sections, classrooms and schools are becoming increasingly diverse. However, the current teaching-learning practices are characterized by prevalence of various myths and stereotyped beliefs among teachers and school administrators that adversely affect the learning experience of children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. For instance, it is widely believed that Children are Children After All ... They are the Same. This belief ignores the fact that children come to school not only with their own individual identities and experiences, but also with a consciousness and identity formed while growing up as members of collectives. Another belief that leads to stereotyping children from different backgrounds is that children's ability to learn is determined by heredity rather than by what happens in the classroom.



Key Questions

In view of the above, the proposed project seeks to address the following key questions:

- How do we expose teachers to the diverse socio-economic characteristics of children, and sensitise them towards their different learning needs and constraints?



- How do we democratise teacher-child and child-to-child relationships in socially diverse classrooms, and enhance effective classroom participation of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds?
- How do we build the capacity of teachers to facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes that could enhance learning achievement of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds?

Specific Objectives

- To explore and analyse the socio-economic characteristics of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds, and identify their different learning needs and constraints.
- To enhance professional skills and motivation of teachers to plan and implement context specific inclusive classroom practices and processes that could enhance learning achievement of children from diverse and deprived socio-economic backgrounds.



Project Area & Coverage

The project is located in Wazirganj block of Gaya district in Bihar. It covers for intervention all the govt. primary and primary-cum-upper primary schools (157) and approximately 40,000 children enrolled in Classes I to V in these schools.

Project Duration

Two Years (October 2011- September 2013)

Funding Partner:

Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, new Delhi.

Major Activities

- i. Household survey of children in a sample of selected schools
 - To explore and analyse the socio-economic characteristics of children from different socio-economic backgrounds.
 - To understand, analyse and identify different learning needs, interests and constraints of children from diverse and deprived backgrounds.
- ii. Baseline and endline assessments of learning achievement of children in a sample of selected schools
 - To establish the baseline status of their learning level before the project intervention.
 - To measure the impact of the project intervention on the learning achievement of children.
- iii. Classroom observations, and focus group discussions with teachers, children and parents
 - To identify, discuss and analyse various aspects and elements of classroom practices and processes that adversely affect the learning experience and outcome of children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
 - To discuss and analyse the information and feedbacks from these processes in the fortnightly sessions with teachers at CRCs in order to identify issues and problems as well as areas for teacher support and improvisation of teaching-learning practices and processes.
- iv. Capacity building of teachers through interactive and participatory fortnightly training sessions at CRCs.
 - To discuss and identify teaching-learning practices and processes which adversely affect learning experience and outcome of children from diverse backgrounds.



- To identify and assess professional development needs of teachers.
 - To develop context specific inclusive classroom practices and processes for introduction in the schools.
 - To enhance professional skill and motivation of teachers to experiment with and adopt context specific inclusive teaching-learning and classroom practices and processes responsive to the learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds.
- v. Classroom demonstrations and on-site teacher support for inclusive practices and processes.
- To conduct classroom demonstrations on teaching-learning practices and processes relevant to children from diverse backgrounds.
 - To provide on-site teacher support on use of examples from the socio-economic context and life experiences of children from different socio-economic backgrounds for explaining lessons, use of local objects and materials for engaging children in activity-based learning.
 - To ensure that teachers not only understand factors and behaviours which facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes, but are also professionally equipped to implement this understanding in actual classroom situations.



Key Outcomes

- Increase in regular school attendance of children.
- Reduction in drop-out rate and increase in retention.
- Enhanced learning achievement of children.
- A perceptible positive change in the behavior of the teachers towards children, especially from the marginalized communities.
- Enhancement of teachers' motivation and skill to facilitate inclusive classroom practices and processes.