

NIPUN Shikshak: A Demonstration based Capacity Building Programme

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The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 cites concern about the ‘learning crisis’ due to the fact that large numbers of students are unable to attain Foundational Literacy and Numeracy goals. It states that ‘The rest of this Policy will become relevant for our students only if this most basic learning requirement (i.e., reading, writing, and arithmetic at the foundational level) is first achieved’. To this end, national- and state-level efforts are ongoing. This article highlights one such initiative that remains underway at the time of writing.

Teacher capacity is central to improving student learning. Professional development must be delivered in multiple formats and sustained across the year, with design and implementation anchored close to the school. This allows training to respond to local classroom realities rather than follow a one-size-fits-all model. It also creates space for peer learning and builds teacher communities that provide ongoing informal support.

One example is the NIPUN Shikshak programme, conceptualised over four years and implemented since 2024–25 across seven districts of Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal, Damoh, Dhar, Khargone, Sagar, Sehore and Vidisha) covering 36 blocks and 315 clusters.

Need for a decentralised model of professional development

In a large State like Madhya Pradesh, with nearly 1.29 lakh primary school teachers, professional development is typically designed at the State level and implemented at the district and block levels through trained resource persons. Programme design is informed by teacher needs assessments conducted through online surveys, feedback from training institutions, student performance in Classes 5 and 8, and learning gaps identified in national assessments conducted by PARAKH. Trainers such as State Resource Groups (SRGs), District Resource Groups (DRGs), and Master Trainers (MTs) are selected through written tests and structured discussions.



Demonstration classes

Demonstration sessions are organised separately for teachers of classes 1–2 and classes 3–5 in Hindi and Mathematics.

Each session begins with mapping the selected topic to the State’s foundational literacy and numeracy goals. The syllabus coverage is reviewed with the identified teacher(s), and a quick assessment is conducted to understand students’ current learning levels.

Although the quality of design and modules has improved over time, many teachers report that training activities are difficult to translate into classroom practice. The main concerns relate to a one-size-fits-all approach and limited follow-up support. NIPUN Shikshak seeks to address this gap by shifting both design and implementation closer to the cluster level. The programme focuses on addressing context-specific classroom challenges and creates structured opportunities for peer learning and demonstration among teachers working in nearby schools.

Approach of the NIPUN Shikshak programme

The NIPUN Shikshak programme uses two models of teacher professional development

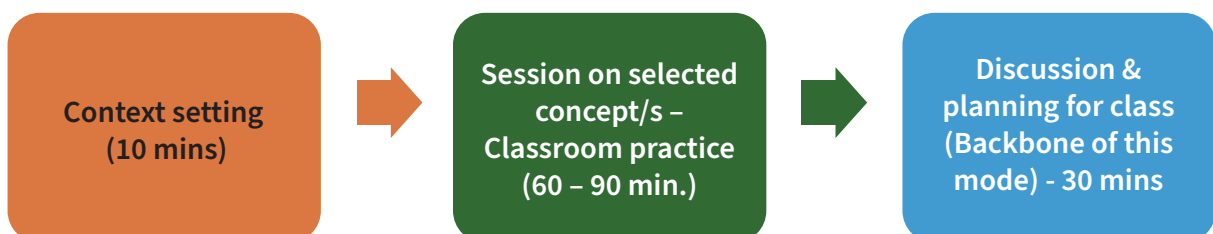
- Demonstration classes conducted in real classrooms
- Cluster-level meetings, which is also known as Shaikshik Samvaad



Teachers then collaboratively select the learning outcomes, prepare a lesson plan and teaching materials, and conduct the class while other teachers observe the session.

The teachers who are observing the class are provided with a reference sheet to

Process of demonstration class



record their observations. This sheet captures details about the teacher, students, learning outcomes, and instructional strategies. It also guides the post-demonstration discussion and helps teachers reflect on classroom practice.

Structured discussions before and after the demonstration create opportunities for reflection and peer learning.

Shaikshik Samvaad

Shaikshik Samvaad is a structured academic discussion that is held during monthly cluster-level meetings attended by teachers of Classes 1 to 5. Given their academic focus, separate sessions are organised for Language and Mathematics teachers.

These meetings typically centre on specific learning outcomes and the sharing of classroom practices. An expert or a participating teacher may lead a session on the selected concept. Teachers reflect on both the conceptual aspects and their classroom experiences, creating space for peer learning. Each meeting concludes with a concrete plan for classroom transaction,

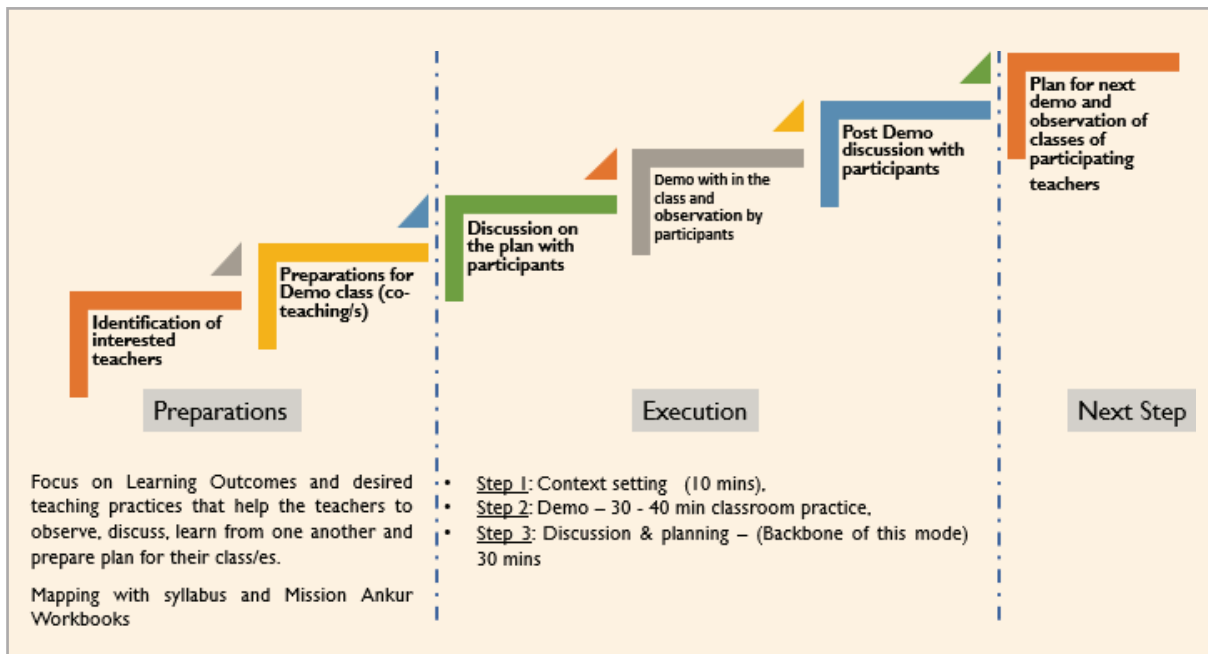
including strategies and materials to be developed or sourced.

Process of Shaikshik Samvaad

To ensure effective programme management, the Rajya Shiksha Kendra is supported by a dedicated team from identified NGOs. This team tracks activities, coverage, and overall impact, while providing critical implementation support across both modes. Their role includes maintaining standardised documentation and ensuring the seamless flow of reports from the cluster up to the State level. Additionally, they work with the teachers directly and facilitate the Shaikshik Samvaad agenda.

Operational Design of NIPUN Shikshak programme

In Year 1 (2024–25) of the NIPUN Shikshak programme, clusters within each block were divided into two equal cohorts. Teachers in Cohort 1 attended demonstration classes, while those in Cohort 2 participated in monthly cluster-level meetings (Shaikshik Samvaad). In Year 2 (2025–26), the modes were swapped: Cohort 1 joined



Shaikshik Samvaad, and Cohort 2 attended demonstration classes.

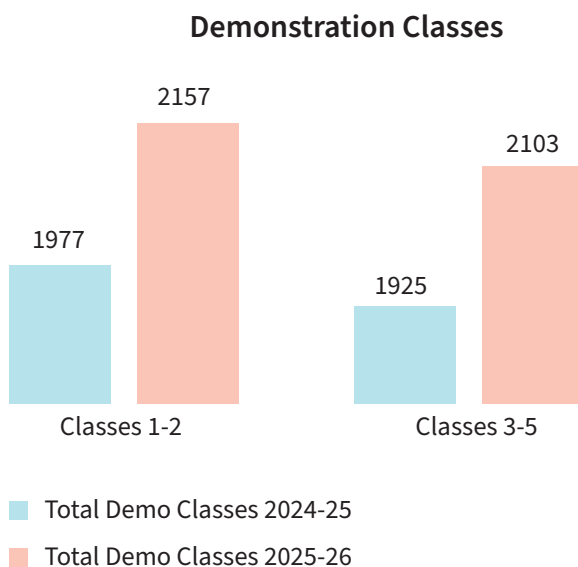
Each cluster selected for demonstration classes was further divided into 3–4 sub-clusters, each comprising 5–6 nearby primary schools. Demonstration classes rotated among these schools so that all teachers could observe and participate, ensuring no group was too large to limit engagement.

For Shaikshik Samvaad, monthly cluster-level meetings were held for both cohorts. Teachers were organised into two groups: those teaching Classes 1–2 and those teaching Classes 3–5.

In Years 3 (2026–27) and 4 (2027–28), demonstration classes are planned for all clusters.

Influence of the programme

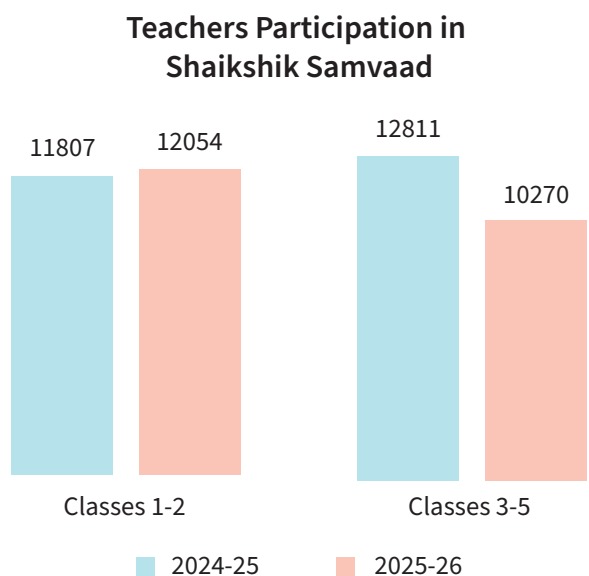
Participation



Demonstration classes organised in Madhya Pradesh so far since July 2024 to Dec 2025

In 2024–25, 72 percent of teachers in the district participated in either demonstration classes or Shaikshik Samvaad, this increased to 76 percent in 2025–26.

Shaikshik Samvaad (monthly cluster level meetings) were held for the teachers of classes 1–2 and classes 3–5 separately almost all the months from July to February. In 2024–25, total participants were 11807 and 12811 for classes 1–2 and 3–5, respectively. In 2025–26, total participants were 12054 and 10270 for classes 1–2 and 3–5, respectively.



Implications for learning

Two separate assessments measured student outcomes for teachers participating in the programme. The results showed improvements in mean achievement of students in both Language and Mathematics.

Overall, both assessments indicate that student achievement improved across classes and subjects, demonstrating a positive impact of the programme.

Subject	Class	Improvement in the mean achievement of students in study 1 (%)	Improvement in the mean achievement of students in study 2 (%)
Language	3	20.91	17.55
	4	10.00	15.29
	5	20.67	16.30
Mathematics	3	36.97	18.25
	4	19.00	12.77
	5	14.50	10.47

Effects on processes – systemic and school-level

Many teachers who participated in the programme have since been selected as Master Trainers (MTs) or Key Resource Persons (KRPs) for other in-service teacher training initiatives.

Observation of demonstration classes has boosted teachers' confidence and improved their classroom practice, with a greater emphasis on identifying learning outcomes and planning lessons effectively.

The programme has also enriched the learning environment, with around 2,500 classrooms now featuring print-rich materials, including reading and subject corners developed specifically for the initiative.

Challenges

While most teachers were able to conduct demonstration classes effectively on basic concepts such as reading stories or numbers and operations, they faced difficulties with slightly more complex topics, including comprehension, division, and fractions.



Demonstration lesson in progress

Conducting demonstration classes in multigrade classrooms also proved challenging. Teachers from single-teacher schools often could not participate in Shaikshik Samvaad or observe other demonstration classes, as no one else could be left in charge of their school. In such cases, co-teaching or discussion sessions were planned within their own schools.

Additionally, since many teachers were not accustomed to formally recording observations, facilitating rich post-demonstration discussions was difficult. While the reference sheet format provided structure, facilitators were sometimes needed to guide the discussion effectively.

Way forward

In 2026–27, the third year of the programme, demonstration classes will be organised in at least 70 percent of clusters. Content areas, learning outcomes, and teaching practices from the past two years have been mapped by subject and grade level, providing teachers and functionaries with a clear framework to address field-level needs.



Teachers who participated in demonstration classes and Shaikshik Samvaad sessions over the past two years will serve as mentors for their peers. Building on this experience, it is expected that teachers will increasingly document their work, processes, and changes in classroom practice.

Given that most teachers have found this model of professional development highly effective, efforts will focus on strengthening it further and expanding its reach to additional districts.

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