

# Learning Curve

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## From Azim Premji Foundation

Azim Premji Foundation, in collaboration with Ministry of Human Resource Development (Government of India), has been organising the National Learning Conference for the past two years.

The first National Learning Conference, held in July 2004 at Bangalore, had the theme – Enhancing Learning in Elementary Schools. The Conference helped bring the issue of Quality Elementary Education on the radar of policy and opinion makers. It also brought forth the significance of the teacher as the most important actor in the progress towards quality elementary education.

Therefore, the second National Learning Conference, held in October 2005 in Bangalore, had the theme – Autonomous and Accountable Teacher for Quality Education. Two strands of thought emerged here – one, that by default or design, a typical teacher has substantial autonomy and therefore she should be able to deliver quality learning to the child. And two, that it is meaningless to talk about teacher accountability when the education system itself does not feel accountable to support the teacher in doing her work of delivering quality learning to every child.

We organised two regional workshops in April 2006 - in Bangalore and Jaipur - to explore the views of the education functionaries on the issue of accountability, including enabling the education

system to support the development of an accountable teacher.

The third National Learning Conference is scheduled to be held in Bangalore in May 2007, the theme being-Equitable Education for Equitable Society. It will focus on the issues connected with creating an equitable society through education, bring to the forefront the barriers faced by several sections of society in entering the mainstream and will also emphasise their needs. The conference will look at such issues from several perspectives, including from those of other marginalised sections themselves, such as women and rural people.

As has been the practise, this conference will also involve a variety of stakeholders, as well as our partners in change, including those from the Government, NGO sector and academics. The discussions will focus on developing a greater understanding of the social and institutional processes involved in the formation of inequities, as well as the systemic bottlenecks that have prevented the meaningful entry of certain sections into the mainstream.

The conference will also discuss practical approaches which could be developed and implemented within the larger society, with a particular focus on leveraging education systems and processes.

**Vijay Gupta**  
*Head, Advocacy and Communication*

## MUSINGS

### A Tale of Two Government Schools

**H N Ananda**

The contrast between the two government schools could not have been more telling. Both the schools faced similar problems of infrastructure. But one school proved that lack of infrastructure could not deter learning, while the other school refused to create a conducive atmosphere for learning.

Needless to say, both the schools that I visited to study the assessment being undertaken by the Karnataka State Quality Assurance Organisation (KSQAQO) provided me insights about learning and assessment.

#### The first government school

Situated amid slums, the school hardly has the ambience of even a typical government school. Once inside, when the bell rings, you would not know whether it is the school bell or the temple bell! This is because a temple is attached to the school and there is no wall

to separate the two. The School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) President doubles up as the Temple Secretary also.

The school has no quadrangle for the kids to assemble or play. So the children line up for prayer in the foyer, which also houses a staircase, and in the narrow verandah attached to their class rooms. After school, children literally step on the road as the school is situated on the busy road where, till recently, lorries were being parked. All that this 66 year old school has to offer is a depressing sight.

#### The second government school

This school is more than 100 years old and is housed in a dilapidated structure – perhaps an indication of the education system in ruins. There is stink all around; a bore well meets the water needs but there is a puddle

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# MUSINGS

round the tap where the kids wash the vessels and plates after the mid-day meal. The area around the school is a dumping yard for chillies where loads of chillies are weighed and packed in bags. Helplessness is writ large on the faces of staff and students, who seem to have resigned themselves to this scenario.

Both the schools have similar infrastructure problems. What, then, is the difference between the two schools?

## Teachers make all the difference.

In the first school, teachers have risen to the occasion and contributed towards learning in their classrooms. But in the second school, the teachers offer you a string of excuses as to why there has been no learning in their classrooms.

## The proof was the assessment of the KSQAO.

Children of the first government school were cheerful and earnest. When the KSQAO exam was conducted, they looked forward to the question paper and were eager to write. They were prepared. As soon as the question paper was distributed, they put pen to the paper, and were engaged in answering. There were no attempts at copying. Students who finished early revised their answers. In fact, it was a picture of near perfection.



On the other hand, in the second government school the entire 7th standard students did not know what to do and how to answer the question paper. Forget about the answers, not many could write their names on the answer sheet. They looked left, right, up and down but not at the question paper. And those few who ventured to look at it seemed to find nothing that they knew in it.

The class was full of craning necks and blank looks that presented a picture of utter helplessness. Some yawned, some whispered, some fought with others but few wrote the answers. Even if they were given access to books, their performance would not have been any better as learning had not taken place in the classroom. When the time to answer the paper had ended, none seemed to have answered all the

questions; in fact, it was more appropriate to find out if anybody had attempted at least one question!

A chat with the teachers of both the schools highlighted the contradiction in their attitudes and perceptions which could be linked to the performance of their students in the KSQAO assessment.

While teachers of the first government school were eager and willing to put in extra efforts to coach their students, teachers of the second government school gave excuses like pressure of non-academic work, lack of parental support and excess load of syllabus for the poor performance of their wards. They vehemently opposed the idea of mass promotion because of which even the chaff got promoted to the next class. Hence the falling standards, they argued. But it was obvious that there was no conviction in their arguments.



Back to the first government school. This school had participated in the Learning Guarantee Programme of Azim Premji Foundation. This exposure was of great help, admitted the teachers. They took on the task of training students to face the KSQAO assessment. Extra classes were held even on Sundays and the model questions in the KSQAO booklet were practiced. Even though similar questions were framed, the students were told not to expect the same and were prepared for other questions. It meant they never encouraged rote learning. Examples from daily life were drawn while structuring the model questions.

**Tailpiece:** At the first government school, a girl entered the class crying when the evaluation was about to begin. She had met with an accident on the way and was shaken by the incident. The evaluator, a teacher from another government school, took the girl in her arms, consoled and cheered her up. Sensing that it would not be enough, the teacher asked the entire class to join her in a small dance and she herself led way by singing and dancing. The whole class was on its feet swinging. The shaken girl was all smiles now. The right mood had been created in the class room ■

*H N Ananda is Consultant, Documentation, Azim Premji Foundation*

# MUSINGS

## The Significance of Education

**Azim Premji**

In 1950, India resolved to secure Justice, Liberty and Equality for all its citizens, and enshrined these ideals in the Constitution. 56 years later, equality of opportunity and socio-economic justice still seem a distant dream. What will it take for our nation to realise these noble goals? In the answer to this question lies the significance of education.

Schools facilitate social continuity by enriching our children with our history, our collective knowledge and cultures. But classrooms are also society's laboratories, where we pilot the kind of society we aspire to create. Seen from this lens, schools become an important tool for humanity in its quest for higher truths; it is where society continuously rediscovers itself and transforms itself.

Schools can create a truly visionary atmosphere – with equity, participation, social action and self-initiative – exposing children to a beautiful world. Through schools, every child can become empowered and self-reliant to engage... with society, economy, culture, realities, possibilities. Schools can truly seed our children with the spirit of inquiry and reform, and in turn they will lead India to a just, humane and equitable society.

But the reality is disturbing. Autocratic classrooms, mechanical teaching, negligible intrinsic motivation, and learning that is estranged from reality – these characterise most Indian schools, urban or rural, private or government, elite or impoverished. If schools today mirror tomorrow's society, we need to be alarmed.

At the same time, there are some promising signs. Voices and actions once limited to personal backyards seem to be coming together. The number of organisations involved in efforts to improve schools, often in partnership with state governments, is increasing. Social activism in education is gathering momentum around critical issues such as Common Schooling and the Right to Education Bill. Parents, irrespective of their socio-economic condition, are seeing the importance of education. They are exercising franchise and demanding change by removing their children from dysfunctional schools. And a few schools continue to show us the right path, despite all odds.

India is on a historic threshold of significant growth, and our rise as a global economic powerhouse seems inevitable. But the choices we make in education will determine if this opportunity will be steered for the greater good of all. The final measure of a nation's development rests in the condition of its subaltern; in India, this represents a large population with minimal social, economic and political choices. And education offers the possibility of lifting our entire country from its mire of poverty and inequity, and enabling a society rich in diversity, harmony and opportunity. As a nation, let us rise above all boundaries, and invest in our ideals and in our future ■

*Azim Premji is Chairman, Wipro Limited and Azim Premji Foundation*

## A New Perspective: Reality Beckons

**Neha Jhingon**

The induction programme at the Azim Premji Foundation, which lasted an entire month, was an enriching experience, not only because it was an insight into the kind of work that the Foundation does, but also because it gave a glimpse of a broader perspective on education.

We, the enthusiastic batch of 20 new recruits, fresh from our respective universities, brought with us not only various cultures, but also a variety of perspectives on education. The one month long induction saw us going through presentations on the Foundation - the vision, approach to realise the vision and the various initiatives - with room for detailed discussions and debates.

After we had understood what the Foundation aimed to achieve and the programmes developed to achieve the larger goal, we were sent off to four different locations, namely - Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, Nizamabad in Andhra Pradesh, Shorapur in Karnataka, Sabarkantha and Banaskantha in Gujarat, to closely observe the field realities. And, to educate us on how the programmes running in these areas were trying to cope with the individual cultural and social characteristics, specific to these places.

My Shorapur team visited a number of schools and met a number of functionaries who helped us to understand both the administrative and academic aspect of elementary education in Karnataka. We saw almost every kind of school - schools with multi - grade classes, schools with single teachers, schools with no building, Urdu medium schools, schools that are functioning well and schools which are not functioning well.

All of us at some level today truly appreciate the children who make it to school everyday in the face of many odds, the parents who send their children in spite of the widespread poverty and the teachers who are teaching in schools where infrastructure is appalling. Initially the dilapidated hotel room, where lizards and insects were our constant companions, the dusty long routes that we had to travel to reach the schools, the excruciating weather, the walk in the dark to eat our dinner...all got us down. But soon we got used to the ways of life in Shorapur and even displayed our linguistic prowess with some smart talking in Kannada. Even a thousand words cannot truly communicate the Shorapur experience, except that in some ways it has changed all of us... dare I say, for the good!

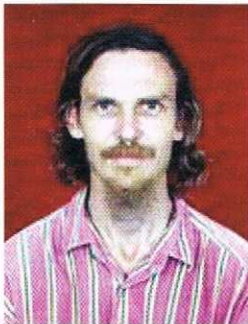
The four teams on coming back from the field visit immediately began work on presentations, the topics of which had been already provided along with the relevant reading material. The four broad topics were - Educational Change, Educational Policies, Educational Philosophies and Learning Theories. Along with these presentations, was a sharing of the field experiences of each team and a discussion amongst the senior Members of the Foundation and the new joiners like us. Subsequently, we proceeded to our new locations of work with the firm resolve to contribute to universalisation of primary education as a first step to a just, humane and equitable society ■

*Neha Jhingon is Member, Research and Documentation, Azim Premji Foundation*

# GUEST COLUMN

## Mid-day Meal and the Joy of Learning

Jean Drèze



**Nutritious mid-day meal needs to be recognised as an integral part of a healthy school environment**

Feeding is widely perceived as an expression of love. Giving and sharing food can do more to foster friendship and affection than the most eloquent religious sermon. This is effectively conveyed in the film *Babette's Feast*, where members of a village community, who despise one another in spite of going to Church every Sunday, become friends as they eat and drink together at a wild banquet.

Provision of cooked mid-day meal in primary schools makes the school environment less hostile for the child. The school environment is often stifling and unfriendly. Verbal humiliation and physical brutality are common, and children rarely enjoy gestures of appreciation or encouragement from the teachers. In such a scenario, mid-day meal can play an important role in lifting up the spirit of the children at school.

Mid-day meal also serves many other useful purposes, such as improving school attendance, reducing the gender gap in education, protecting children from classroom hunger, and fostering a sense of social equality. Mid-day meal can also be seen as an opportunity to generate employment for poor women, and to impart nutrition education. However, all these can be achieved only if the mid-day meal schemes are effectively implemented. Half-hearted attempts can do more harm than good.

There have been many interesting studies on the mid-day meal scheme during the last few years in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, among other states. Many of these studies are available on the website of the Right to Food Campaign ([www.righttofoodindia.org](http://www.righttofoodindia.org)). A number of useful insights emerge from these studies.

First, mid-day meal is in place in most of the primary schools. Some states took several years to implement the Supreme Court order of 2001, which directed them to provide cooked mid-day meal in all primary schools within six months. But ultimately all states fell in line, and as the field studies indicate, the provision of mid-day meal is now fairly regular in most states.

Two, the mid-day meal scheme is quite popular. Parents and teachers generally want it to continue. But some upper-caste parents resent their children sharing food with the Dalit children, or eating food prepared by a Dalit cook. And teachers often complain that the mid-day meal disrupts classroom activities. This opposition usually wears out if the scheme is well implemented and gets smoothly integrated in the school routine. Upper-caste parents resign themselves to the fact that "times have changed". In some states, however, haphazard implementation has strengthened the opposition lobby and a backlash against mid-day meal cannot be ruled out. Children, too, are generally happy to get

something to eat at school. This is not so much because they are hungry, or because the food is better than what they get at home, but because they enjoy sharing a meal with their friends. Many states have started enhancing the nutritious content of mid-day meal and also serve a varied fare, and this tends to make it even more popular among children. For instance, a recent study of mid-day meal in Delhi says: "Many [children] were observed enjoying every last grain on their plates, licking their fingers in delight. Rare was the child who did not take the food, and rarer still the school where the meal was not the highlight of the day."

Fourth, mid-day meal seems to be quite effective in promoting regular school attendance. This is one of the most common findings of recent studies on mid-day meal. Sometimes the reported effects are astonishingly large. For instance, a recent study coordinated by Samaj Pragati Sahyog in Madhya Pradesh found that school enrolment in Class 1 had shot up by 36 per cent within a year after cooked mid-day meal was introduced. A similar jump in school enrolment among Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe children was reported for Jharkhand by Gram Swaraj Abhiyan. These particular figures may be on the higher side, due to small samples or reporting biases, but what is not in doubt is that the mid-day meal has a major effect on school attendance, especially among girls and children from disadvantaged families. In this respect, quantitative data corroborate wide-ranging testimonies from teachers, parents and other observers.



Fifth, mid-day meal helps break caste barriers and foster a sense of social equality among school children. This is very important, because the early years of primary school correspond to a vital period of children's lives, when their perceptions of social identity take shape. It is around that

age, for instance, that children develop a consciousness of their caste and its place in the social hierarchy. The experience of sitting together and sharing a meal, irrespective of caste and class, can help impart a sense of social equality at this crucial stage. The fact that upper-caste parents often resist this experiment confirms that it does challenge the prevailing social norms in an important way.

Sixth, the socialisation value of mid-day meal is defeated when mid-day meal itself becomes a site of social discrimination. A recent incident in Bhokludih village of Mahasamund district (Chhattisgarh) illustrates the problem, as well as how it can be turned into an opportunity to challenge caste discrimination. In Bhokludih, some Dalit children complained that they were given less food than other children at school, made to sit separately, and prevented from entering the kitchen on the grounds that they were "Chamars". When a local teacher (Kamala Chauhan) took up their cause, she was transferred. But this incident received wide publicity and helped to raise public awareness on the need to deal sternly with any incident of caste discrimination at school.

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Seventh, there is some interesting evidence on the value of mid-day meals as a means of nutrition supplementation. While mid-day meals certainly help to protect children from classroom hunger, they may or may not lead to a sustained improvement in their

nutritional status. In fact, a poor mid-day meal (say rice and salt) can even be counter-productive, if it "kills" children's appetite and reduces their intake of richer home food. In this connection, it is interesting to note that according to a recent study by Farzana Afridi, the improved mid-day meal scheme in Madhya Pradesh "reduces the daily calorie deficiency of the average primary school - going child in the survey region by almost 35 per cent, the daily iron deficiency by 25 per cent and meets almost their entire daily protein deficiency". Having said this, there is a long way to go in making full use of mid-day meals as an opportunity to improve child nutrition. Some states have started enhancing the nutritional value of mid-day meals (e.g. by providing eggs and fruit), or combining them with micronutrient supplementation (e.g. iron and vitamin A), but the typical school meal is still quite frugal in most cases.

Last, but not the least, almost all recent studies point to serious quality problems in the provision of mid-day meal. Basic facilities such as cooking - sheds and drinking water are often lacking, with the result that mid-day meal often interferes with classroom activities. Poor hygiene makes children vulnerable to stomach aches, if not food poisoning. Monotonous menus undermine its nutritional value. And social discrimination remains quite common. These problems need to be urgently addressed if mid-day meal scheme is to realise its full potential.

The Supreme Court orders on mid-day meal can be seen as an instructive example of constructive judicial intervention to protect children's right to food. However, Court orders are little more than a temporary solution. Ultimately, provision of nutritious mid-day meal needs to be recognised as an integral part of a healthy school environment, just like a blackboard or textbook. And this recognition needs to be reflected in permanent legal entitlements as well as in political priorities and financial allocations. ■



Jean Drèze is Visiting Professor at the G.B. Pant Social Science Institute, Allahabad

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# GUEST COLUMN

## Inclusive Education

Contributed by Spastics Society of Karnataka

### *Making special students learn like others*

Schools have a responsibility to educate children with disabilities. Commitment to educate children with special educational needs in mainstream schools is Inclusive Education. All students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. It is the meaningful participation of students with disabilities and other specific needs in general education classrooms and programmes.

Inclusive education implies that all learners, with or without disabilities, are able to learn together; they all have access to common pre-school provisions, with an appropriate network of support services. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs. It aims at all stakeholders in the system (learners, parents, community, teachers, administrators and policy makers) to be comfortable with diversity and see it as a challenge rather than a problem.

### **Students with special needs**

Special students are a heterogeneous group. They may learn quickly and easily, or with great difficulty. Their school behaviour may be beyond reproach or frequently inappropriate. Some have sensory or physical disabilities. Others stand out because of their speech, language or culture. Many people think of physical problems when they hear the term disability. However,

physical, visual and hearing impairments are less frequent than learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, behavioural disorders and mental retardation. It is possible for a student to have more than one special need. Even then such

students can learn and do learn. But they require good teaching to succeed in general education class rooms.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (1992) stress on expanding access to students who have no easy opportunity to be part of the mainstream system. The NPE envisaged measures for integrating the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence.

Education being a fundamental right for children in the 6-14 years age group, it is mandatory for all children to be brought under the fold of education. This includes children with disability.

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994), to which India is a signatory,



### **Accommodations and modifications**

**Accommodations** are changes in how a student accesses information and demonstrates learning. Accommodations do not substantially change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria. The changes are made to provide equal access to learning and equal opportunity to show what the student knows and can do. Accommodations can include changes in the following:

- presentation and/or response format and procedures
- instructional strategies
- time/scheduling
- environment
- equipment
- architecture

**Modifications** are changes made to provide opportunities to participate meaningfully and productively along with other students in classroom and school learning experiences. Modifications include changes in the following:

- instructional level
- content
- performance criteria

The following are some examples of accommodations and modifications that can be provided in the general education classroom. The inclusive education team determines accommodations and modifications needed to meet the unique and individual needs of the students.

### **Accommodations:**

- test taken orally
- large print textbooks
- additional time to take test
- a locker with an adapted lock
- weekly home-school communication tool, such as a notebook or daily log book
- peer support for note taking
- lab sheets with highlighted instructions
- graph paper to assist in organising and lining up math problems
- tape recorded lectures
- use of a computer for writing

### **Modifications:**

- an outline in place of essay for major project
- Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) choices on tests
- alternative books or materials on the same theme or topic
- spelling support from a computerised spell check programme
- word bank of choices for answers to test questions
- use of a calculator on a math test
- film or video supplements in place of text
- rewording questions using simpler language
- projects substituted for written reports
- highlighting important words and phrases

Deciding which accommodations and/or modifications to use is an individualised process that depends on the assignment and the needs of the individual student. When the appropriate adaptations are made, the student can have true access to the general education curriculum.

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emphasises access to quality education for all. It endorses the need for fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach to Inclusive Education, namely enabling schools to serve all children, particularly those with special educational needs, by

implementing certain accommodations and modifications. (Refer box for some examples)

India has adopted the Persons with Disabilities (equal opportunities and full participation) Act, 1995 (PWD Act) to achieve the goal of providing access to free education in an appropriate environment to all learners with disabilities till she attains the age of 18. The Act endeavours to promote the integration of learners with disabilities in mainstream schools.

The National Curriculum Framework has recommended setting up of inclusive schools by suitably modifying the content, presentation and transaction strategies and by preparing

teachers and developing learning-friendly evaluation procedures.

Research has shown that Inclusive Education results in:

- Improved social development and academic outcomes for all learners.
- Improved socialisation skills, decreased sense of isolation and more self-esteem through acceptance from peers and teachers.
- Development of social skills and better social interactions because learners are exposed to real environment in which they have to interact with other learners each one having unique characteristics, interests and abilities.
- Non-disabled peers adopting positive attitudes and actions towards learners with disabilities as a result of studying together in an inclusive classroom.
- Laying the foundation for an inclusive society accepting, respecting and celebrating diversity ■

*This article has been jointly written by Ms. Kairali, Special Educator, Mrs. Rukmini Krishnaswamy, Director, Spastics Society of Karnataka (SSK) and Dr. Hema Krishnamurti, Head, Research and Human Resources and Training Department, SSK*

## Reforming the Education System

Krishna Kumar



People who say that government schools don't function are perhaps aware that they are making a sweeping judgement on a vast and varied system. One should compare schools with state run institutions like dispensaries and hospitals, police stations, income tax offices, and bus stands. Inefficiency, of accountability and professionalism, and an ethos of relentless cynicism are common to all government services. Those who

argue that we should encourage privatisation—and withdrawal of the state from its educational responsibility—should perhaps plead for abolishing the government itself.

Any discussion on quality these days turns into a private vs. government school verbal match. Ignoring the good effort made in the government system and a spirited search for faults are considered politically correct. My personal experience as head of National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) shows that no matter what an institution might accomplish, its critics will find a ready and wide audience, especially in the media which hate good news. In such a biased atmosphere we cannot expect people to notice the hard work countless government school teachers put it in. Yes, countless others are inefficient and sullen. And professional training of teachers is poor, to begin with. Bureaucratic culture and politics are two rampant features of the system which wreck the provincial schools. The directorate which governs them has neither the expertise

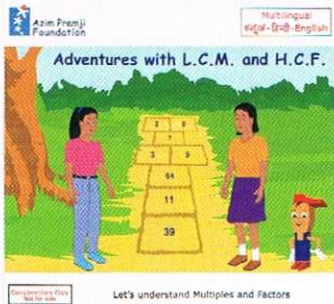
nor the means to initiate systemic reforms. State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERTs) are too weak in status to attract serious attention to their own plight, let alone for making a lasting difference in schools.

These are the levels at which the government system needs to be reformed, in the direction of giving greater autonomy to SCERTs, school principals, and ultimately to the teacher. Excessive control and scarcity of resources have created a culture of cluelessness and corruption. This culture can be changed. Greater resources need to flow, both from the public treasury and industry. Private-public partnership should mean joining hands to improve the system, not for nurturing a parallel sub-system. We should allow private capital to flow into government schools. They need help from industries in numerous respects. Health, medicine and sports, science kits and toys, libraries and laboratories, electricity and telephones are among the obvious needs which the government finds difficult to meet in its schools. Yes, it is no small challenge to convince potential investors that their money will not get eaten up if it becomes available for improvement of government school. It will expand the market in the long run as all attempts to help the state ultimately do. In the immediate run, private capital will enhance the government capacity to fulfill a responsibility which only the government can fulfill and should. Let me close by recalling the critical priority areas: infrastructure and facilities in schools and teacher training institutions, and examinations reforms ■

*Prof. Krishna Kumar is Director, National Council of Education Research and Training*

# FOUNDATION UPDATE

## Technology Initiatives



• Foundation has added 13 more titles of education software, bringing the total to 109. These titles are being used in more than 15,000 schools across India.

• The Local Content Development programme was launched in 48 schools of Karnataka in 2005. Teachers from these schools underwent a two-

day orientation programme to facilitate and guide children in creating content. Earlier this year, the parents and the community sat in rapt attention, as the children presented the content they had created in power point presentations. In this programme, children have complete freedom to select topics, leading to such diverse themes as temples and their legends, farming, medicinal plants in their village, local vegetation, agri-fairs, public properties, environment, poetry recitation etc. Through this programme, children were introduced to the world of technology. Presentations used digital cameras, power point and voice files. A significant aspect was that community members and teachers guided the children in creating the content.

• This year saw the massive participation of 1,24,500 students of Class I-VII in the Computer Based Assessment (CBA) conducted across 412 Blocks and 30 Districts of Tamil Nadu. The Chennai final was a culmination of a contest that began at the block level. In this assessment, each child answers multiple choice questions, randomly selected by the computer, in Tamil, Mathematics and Environment Science subjects. In Pondicherry, this assessment was conducted in early 2006 and here 10, 474 children took the test. The event concluded with the distribution of certificates and awards.



## Child Friendly School Initiative



### Child Friendly School - Chittoor

• Our approach to achieve the goal of child friendly school is to enable the system to transform itself. We believe that for this to happen every actor in the system will have to be enabled - directly or indirectly.

• Specific actions were initiated during mid 2005, by engaging with Mandal Resource Persons (MRPs) and Mandal Education Officers (MEOs) in a dialogue. This dialogue has over a period of time spawned several actions. All these actions build capacity of a specific actor within the system, and some of them address the process related issues. In addition, this initiative has also supplied equipment and material to all or some of the schools to facilitate the teaching-learning process.

• Towards the end of 2006 the government decided to do away with the system of MRPs.

• In the light of these changes, the project team is reworking its approach.

### Child Friendly School - Shorapur

• The team of 30 people involved in the child friendly programme came out with the idea of "Shramdhaan" in 2005 (and have been covering one school in a month), with the objective of accelerating the process of achieving the school improvement plan indicators and to rope in the support of school staff, School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) members and community.

• The team of 30 members is divided in six smaller groups to take up different activities like updating and indexing the school records along with rearranging the head teacher's room, developing bio-intensive kitchen garden to provide required vegetables to the school on a daily basis, cleaning up the whole school premises etc.





# FOUNDATION UPDATE

## Learning Guarantee Programme

### Karnataka

• Karnataka constituted the Karnataka School Quality Assessment Organisation (KSQAO) to assess school quality with a view to initiate systemic reform and improvement in school processes. They adopted the concept of the Learning Guarantee Programme (LGP) and many of its operational aspects for assessment of schools. Over 40,000 schools were assessed by the KSQAO in January 2006 and the results have been shared with the schools and the communities.

• LGP is taking shape in 4 other states, namely Madhya Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Gujarat and Rajasthan. In each of these states, 2 districts have been taken up for the pilot.

### Madhya Pradesh & Uttaranchal

• Uttaranchal conducted its first Learning Guarantee Programme evaluation of 420 schools in Uttarkashi and Udham Singh Nagar districts in March 2006. Madhya Pradesh evaluated 501 schools in Datia district in March 2006. The Vidisha district of Madhya Pradesh, evaluated 1061 schools in August – September 2006. Detailed feedback on performance has been provided to every school, cluster, block and district in these states during August – October 2006.

• Both Madhya Pradesh and Uttaranchal have initiated district level action groups to utilise the information and detailed analysis from the Learning Guarantee Programme evaluation. A significant development is that the District Collector's office is taking active interest in the programme and there is a noticeable focus on the learning levels of children in the schools. In Datia, the district has constituted an academic group that is engaged with a root cause analysis for low learning levels and developing a strategy that engages every level of the academic and administrative system.

### Rajasthan & Gujarat

• In Rajasthan where Azim Premji Foundation partners with Vidya Bhawan Society, the resource group conducted a one



day orientation for all the lower primary school teachers of Tonk and Sirohi district on the use of good assessment practices to help improve children's learning. The state SSA allotted one day in their teachers' training program for this orientation.

Gujarat has attempted a self assessment by the schools so that they can experience for themselves the benefits of competency based tests in lieu of their traditional tests which largely test text book recall.

## Education Management

• Karnataka Schools Towards Quality Education (KSQE) is a three year programme of the Government of Karnataka under the umbrella of Policy Planning Unit (which is a collaboration between Government of Karnataka and Azim Premji Foundation) to bring a significant change in the quality of education in the state. The Education Department has set a goal that every school have at least 60 per cent of children achieving 80 per cent competency by 2008. The Policy Planning Unit is coordinating this programme.

• As part of the coordination and facilitation of KSQE programme, divisional level workshops for all Deputy Directorate Public Instruction (DDPI's) of Mysore, Bangalore, Belgaum and Gulbarga Divisions were held to share the KSQAO results and to orient them with the objectives and the methodology to hold district workshops.

• The KSQE Charter was signed earlier this year by the Chief Minister of Karnataka, Education Minister and also by the senior official of the Education Department. A state-wide teleconference was organised to disseminate and discuss information about KSQE programme and its components to the department officers at the district, block and cluster levels. Consequently, a "bottom five competencies" analysis of KSQAO results (by class, subject and district) was prepared by PPU and discussed in the divisional review meetings to provide a focus for academic intervention and support by the District Institute for Education Training (DIETs) and Block Resource Centers (BRCs).

• As part of enhancing organisational effectiveness, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) was commissioned to do an organisational study of Karnataka education department. PwC submitted the final draft report, which comprised of AS-IS (current status) and TO-BE (Recommendations) reports. In order to seek feedback from the stakeholders, district level workshops were held for all divisions which included teachers, head teachers, School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC) members, Education Coordinator (EC), subject inspectors, DIET lecturers, Block Resource Person (BRP), Cluster Resource Person (CRP), Block Education Officer (BEO) and DDPI.



# RESEARCH UPDATE

The objective of research is to generate and disseminate knowledge on various aspects of education that enables the Foundation to influence systemic changes in quality education to facilitate a just, equitable and humane society. Research is carried out to evaluate programmes as well as non programme research.

## Learning Guarantee Programme

The programme was initiated to recognise and reward schools that demonstrated three criteria:

1. Enrolment - 100 per cent enrolment of children in the 6 - 11 year age group in the habitation
2. Attendance – At least 90 per cent children in classes 1 to 4 attending school regularly i.e. present in the school for at least 70 per cent of the school working days
3. Learning achievement - At least 60 per cent children in classes 1 to 4 having competency - based learning achievement of at least 90 per cent.

The programme completed the planned three years in Karnataka while it is in its first year in Uttaranchal and Madhya Pradesh.

**Karnataka:** 1887 schools from eight districts of North East Karnataka participated in the last assessment carried out in July-September 2005. The children were assessed for learning achievement in Kannada and Maths, as in the previous two years.

Districts	Participating schools	% of schools meeting three criteria		
		Enrolment	Enrolment + Attendance	Enrolment + Attendance + Achievement
Bagalkot	199	91.5	70.9	13.1
Bellary	424	98.8	75.2	9.4
Bidar	157	96.2	44.6	8.3
Bijapur	308	95.8	62.7	5.8
Gulbarga	210	82.9	26.7	5.2
Koppal	217	91.7	55.8	6.9
Raichur	261	96.2	44.6	8.3
Yadgir	111	98.2	27.0	6.3

While most schools met the enrolment criterion, the proportion meeting both enrolment and attendance criteria was about 56 per cent (ranging from a high of 75.2 per cent in Bellary to a low of 26.7 per cent in Gulbarga) and all three criteria were met by 7.6 per cent schools. Ten schools recorded 100 per cent achievement on all three parameters – enrolment, attendance and learning achievement. During the three years of the programme from 2003-04 to 2005-06, participation increased sharply from 896 (9.7 per cent of the primary schools in the region) in the first year to 1887 (20.5 per cent) in the third year. At the same time, the number of qualifying schools increased from 40 (4.5 per cent) to 144 (7.8 per cent) in the

third year. A total of 15 schools qualified in all three years of the programme. There was also an overall improvement in achievement levels. About 61 per cent of the schools that participated in 2004 assessment showed an increase in the percentage of children demonstrating learning achievement (competency over 90 per cent) in 2005. More importantly, improvement was also seen in the 'last quartile' performance.

**Uttaranchal:** The assessment was carried out during March-April 2006 in two districts of the state – Udham Singh Nagar and Uttarkashi. A total of 420 schools participated in the program in its first year. The children were assessed for learning achievement in Hindi, Maths as well as Environment Science (EVS). Here, in addition to competency measurement, marks were also assigned to the responses. This aspect is a significant departure from the design in Karnataka.

Districts/Blocks	Participating schools	% of schools meeting three criteria			Average marks achieved in all three subjects			
		Enrolment	Enrolment + Attendance	Enrolment + Attendance + Achievement	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
<b>UDHAMSINGH NAGAR</b>								
Bajpur	2	100.0	0.0	0	46.6	40.5	39.7	26.3
Gadarpur	21	95.2	61.9	0	55.2	45.6	34.8	30.1
Jaspur	32	96.9	43.8	0	57.9	48.9	47.3	42.2
Kashipur	65	93.9	23.1	0	48.2	40.3	36.2	27.7
Khatima	33	93.9	66.7	0	55.1	50.6	43.4	38.9
Rudrapur	17	76.5	17.7	0	57.3	53.5	41.7	35.8
Sitarganj	30	70.0	33.3	0	50.3	43.4	35.6	31.5
<b>Dist Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>89.5</b>	<b>38.5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>56.6</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>39.4</b>	<b>33.4</b>
<b>UTTARKASHI</b>								
Bhatwari	50	98.0	78.0	0	51.2	51.5	46.0	40.5
Chinyalisaur	25	100.0	84.0	0	53.7	54.6	45.7	43.1
Dunda	24	100.0	87.5	0	51.4	46.9	46.9	37.2
Mori	46	95.7	84.8	0	50.3	45.5	45.7	37.7
Naungaon	27	92.6	81.5	0	57.2	60.5	60.6	53.4
Purola	48	97.9	81.3	0	53.7	52.4	47.2	40.5
<b>Dist Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>97.3</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52.6</b>	<b>51.4</b>	<b>48.0</b>	<b>41.4</b>

Most schools in both districts of Uttaranchal were able to meet the enrolment criterion. The proportion of schools meeting attendance criterion however varied widely in the two districts. While in Uttarkashi it was a high 82 per cent, in Udham Singh Nagar it was below 40 per cent. However, there were no schools meeting all three LGP criteria. The average marks received shows an interesting pattern. There is a sharp reduction in higher classes, from over 50 per cent in class 1 to about 40 per cent or less in class 4.

**Madhya Pradesh:** In MP, the assessment was carried out in Datia district during March-April 2006. As in Uttaranchal, three subjects were covered – Hindi, Maths and EVS. A total of 503 schools participated from the three blocks of the district. Here too, in addition to competencies, marks were provided for answers in the tests.

# RESEARCH UPDATE

The data presented below shows findings similar to Uttaranchal in many ways.

Districts/ Blocks	Participating schools	% of schools meeting three criteria			Average marks achieved in all three subjects			
		Enrolment	Enrolment + Attendance	Enrolment + Attendance + Achievement	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
<b>DATIA</b>								
Bhander	86	96.5	29.1	0	34.6	32.2	30.1	30.0
Sevda	187	97.9	31.6	0	28.9	24.8	19.6	20.2
Datia	230	97.4	26.5	0	33.0	28.6	25.1	24.4
<b>Dist Total</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>97.4</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32.2</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>24.9</b>	<b>24.9</b>

Most schools demonstrate meeting the enrolment criterion. However, less than 30 per cent schools meet the attendance criterion and no school meets all three criteria. Here too, the average marks received by the children are low and as in Uttaranchal show a reducing trend in higher classes.

## Other Studies

The first year evaluation for the Andhra Pradesh Randomised Evaluation Study was completed in April 2006. The study was designed to assess the impact of providing inputs to the schools and incentives to teachers on the learning achievements of the children. Five districts in the state were identified at random and a sample of 510 primary schools was selected where a baseline learning achievement test was carried out among all the children in classes 2-5 during July – August 2005 in Telugu and Maths. The schools were randomly assigned after the baseline test to the five treatment cells as follows to set up an experimental design:

INPUTS (Unconditional)	INCENTIVES (Conditional on Improvement in Learning)			
		NONE	GROUP MONETARY	INDIVIDUAL MONETARY
	NONE	CONTROL (102 Schools)	(102 Schools)	(102 Schools)
	EXTRA PARA TEACHER	(102 Schools)		
EXTRA BLOCK GRANT	(102 Schools)			

The input provided comprised Block Grant to the school for purchase of material for children or an extra Para Teacher for the school. The teachers in the 'Incentive' cells were told that they would receive incentive amounts based on the extent of improvement in learning achievement in the endline test. Feedback on the findings from the baseline study was provided to all schools in September 2005.

## Baseline Assessment Mean Score by Treatment and Subject

Treatment	Maths	Telugu	Total
Control group	18.36	34.96%	26.69%
Extra Para Teacher	17.20	34.20	25.73
Block Grant	16.56	33.67	25.13
Group Incentive	17.76	34.75	26.29
Individual Incentive	17.42	33.35	25.38
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.47</b>	<b>34.18</b>	<b>25.84</b>

The input schools and the incentive schools were monitored regularly over the next 6 months. Subsequently, in April 2006, an end line learning achievement test was carried out in all the schools.

## Endline Assessment Mean Score by Treatment and Subject

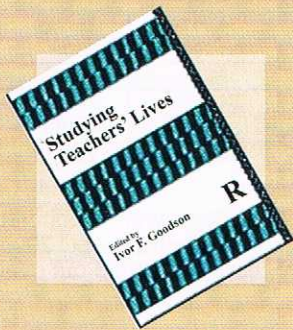
Treatment	Maths	Telugu	Total
Control group	13.11	14.22	13.53
Extra Para Teacher	16.41	15.90	16.03
Block Grant	14.74	15.80	15.14
Group Incentive	16.35	16.97	16.49
Individual Incentive	16.61	17.22	16.81
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.73</b>	<b>49.95</b>	<b>41.24</b>

## Improvement from Baseline Scores

Treatment	Maths	Telugu	Total
Control group	31.47	49.18	40.22
Extra Para Teacher	33.61	50.10	41.76
Block Grant	31.30	49.47	40.27
Group Incentive	34.11	51.72	42.78
Individual Incentive	34.03	50.57	42.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>32.73</b>	<b>49.95</b>	<b>41.24</b>

As can be seen, there is a general improvement in the average learning levels across the school segments and in both subjects. The improvement in the schools which were provided incentives (both individual incentives and group incentives) as well as the schools which were provided inputs by way of Block Grant or an extra Para Teacher is significantly higher than in the control group schools. In addition, it can be seen that the improvement is higher in the 'Incentive schools' than the 'Input schools'. This seems to suggest that the impact on learning achievement of providing monetary incentives to teachers is marginally higher than the impact of providing either an extra para teacher or block grant for purchasing material for the children ■

# BOOK CASE



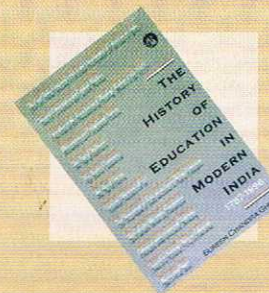
**Studying Teachers' Lives.** Edited by Ivor F. Goodson, Routledge & Falmer 2002. This book examines the background and personal experiences of teachers and the direct and indirect influences their individual situations have on their life and work. Drawing from diverse experiences, the book tries to find a common thread that runs through the lives of the teachers and seeks to understand how their lives are embedded in the social structure.



**Instructional Models: Strategies for Teaching in a Diverse Society.** Thomas Lasely, Thomas Matczynski and James Rowley, Wadsworth Thomas Learning 2002. This book is designed for pre-service and in-service teachers of any subject area who are interested in exploring more fully instructional options that students need in order to achieve learning goals.



**Teaching and Learning in the Primary School.** Edited by Andrew Pollard and Jill Bourne, Routledge & Falmer 2003. This book provides a contemporary view of developments in primary and secondary education across a range of specialist subjects areas.



**The History of Education in Modern India (1757-1998).** Suresh Chandra Ghosh, Orient Longman 2002. This book is concerned not merely with the institutions such as schools, colleges and universities, but with the social forces which have affected the quality of life and with ideas which have been put forward by theorists and practitioners of education in the past.



**Azim Premji  
Foundation**

#134, Doddakannelli, Next to Wipro Corporate Office, Sarjapur Road, Bangalore - 560035, India  
Tel: 91-80-66144900/01/02 Fax: 91-80-66144903  
E-mail: reeshma@azimpremji.org Website: www.azimpremji.org