

LEARNING CLASSROOM SERIES DOCUMENTATION

1. *QUALITY EDUCATION*

What is Quality Education?

Educational quality is a challenging concept as perceptions vary widely; ranging from good infrastructure in schools to effective teaching-learning processes, student assessment, community participation and education management. The undeniable fact about quality education is *quality of Learning*. In the absence of good quality of learning, the system may produce educated illiterates or unemployable degree-holders.

'Equality, Equity & Excellence' would constitute quality. The core of the Quality is the right of all children to education-this concern for social justice needs to inform the fabric of all policies and reform efforts. It is also a matter of popular demand and is viewed by people as the bases for an individual's and finally society's well being. The role of universal education-that of having an educated electorate-in a democracy is undisputable.

Quality of education is not only about more resources, but also more reform within a holistic framework for example access, retention, learning outcomes and transition or social equity and gender are part of the same continuum and PTR, teacher deployment, training, performance appraisal and cadre management are inextricably linked. Age appropriate curriculum and text books, learning materials, committed teachers with knowledge of the subject, context of the children and pedagogy. All dimensions of education together influence probability of achieving good quality education

Why Quality Education

Education is a basic human right and is necessary for sustainable social and economic development. Investment in basic education is indispensable for human development and pro – poor growth. At the individual level, education opens possibilities that otherwise would be closed: a better chance to lead healthy and productive life, to participate fully in civic and political affairs, and to defend and protect rights to survival.

Education, in all countries, is crucial for coping with integration in a global world and the transformation of the nature of work – requiring more flexibility, mobility, teamwork and use of technologies. Experience and research has shown that the best preparation for future goals – family- life, citizenship, the world of work as well as further education and training – is founded on good general comprehensive education, including universal values and basic learning skills. A life-long learning system is required to develop the necessary competences that are changing at an unprecedented rate.

Today, education is considered not only a means for national development through its human capital, but also an end in itself. The Indian economist, Amartya Sen, significantly influenced the debate on education through his involvement in the *United Nation's Human Development Report*:

"If we focus on the expansion of human freedom instead of focusing on economic progress as an end of education endeavors, then economic growth can be integrated into a foundational understanding of the process of development as the expansion of human capability to lead more worthwhile and more free lives."

Education is a crucial factor in achieving other human development goals as well. Out of the eight Millennium Development Goals mentioned below, six are promoted through education.

The Millennium Development Goals

Endorsed by 189 countries at the UN General Assembly on September 2000:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

Thus in the twenty first century education, skills and the acquisition of knowledge have become the decisive determinant of a person's and a nation's productivity. If the final goal is to improve the quality of life for all, then it makes sense to invest in improving the quality of education to make a fundamental difference.

Current Situation of education in Government schools

In exploring the concept of quality education it is important to examine current situation of majority of the government schools in the country which do not provide quality education!

"Our constitution fathers did not intend that we just set up hovels, put students there, give untrained teachers, give them bad textbooks, no playgrounds and say, we have complied with Article 45 and primary education is expanding... They meant that real education should be given to our children between the ages of 6 and 14."

M.C. Chagla, Education Minister, 1964.

More than forty years later we in India have not taken these words seriously. Even today going to school is neither attractive nor stimulating for the child. The PROBE report enumerated following description ten years ago, there in not any substantive change in the situation as of 2007.

- ✓ There is teacher shortage and overcrowded classes. Children play or fight among themselves; puzzled and bored.
- ✓ Teaching activity is of short duration, teachers arrive late and leave early, when present they may not teach. This spoils chances of success especially for first-generation learners; child's self-esteem hurt -- "I am not important and neither is learning."
- ✓ No teaching aids used, alien curriculum, child may not even have a textbook. Child repeatedly experiences the burden of non-comprehension and with it a sense of shame.
- ✓ Copying and cramming are the most common teaching methods. No stimulation for a thinking mind to develop or for self-confidence to grow.
- ✓ No craftwork or colour or music; physical activity is rare. Boredom; schooling is not invigorating for the child.
- ✓ Gender, class and caste bias; quiet discrimination against children of disadvantaged background causing further marginalization of underprivileged children
- ✓ School buildings are usually bare, often dilapidated, and even filthy.

What is required to achieve the goal of Quality Education?

This is probably the most important question today in the elementary education system in the country. The need for advocacy for universal quality education by the general public and lobbying is needed as the government faces little pressure to change. There is the need to dispel myths such as poor parents do not care about educating their children.

There is a need for improved school environments, to view teachers as key to the success of schools, to overhaul the teaching curriculum, to question education management and finally a huge need for policy change.

Crucial points to act upon urgently:

- ✓ Time on task: Qualitative studies point to very low actual teaching time. The schools work for less than 140 days in a year and not for more than four hours a day. However, in a single teacher schools time devoted to each class is 25 minutes per class / per day. Very often even this little opportunity is not utilised as the teachers may be present but are not teaching! This is a very serious issue having direct effect on learning outcomes.
- ✓ Hunger in the classroom is a common phenomena and alarming rate of malnutrition prevails especially among very poor; landless, ST and SC, specific occupation groups and migrants.
- ✓ Work burden before & after school hours in which the girls are worst affected, especially first born are working at home and farms. Situation of boys is worrisome as they are in short-term bondage or cattle grazing.
- ✓ Caste based segregation persist as schools having poorer facilities and TPR catering to some social groups
- ✓ Teacher-pupil ratio is unfavorable in a significant percentage of schools it is as high as 1:100.
- ✓ Percentage of single teacher schools too is very large in the country

Burden of failure moves with the child from one stage to the next; childhood malnutrition and ill health, poor learning at primary, poor self-esteem including discrimination in schools. There is an urgent need to invest in health, nutrition and quality education. Poor quality leads to less community interest and involvement leading to more apathy and vice-versa as better quality education leads to greater partnership and interest from the community.

2. REACH INDIA PROJECT

The government of India had launched a programme for Primary education called DPEP in 1993 and its goals were to increasing access and learning achievements of the children in the most backward districts of the country, with special focus on STs, SCs and the girls among them. This programme was followed by countrywide programme of Sarve Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in year 2000, which also focused on all the cities besides districts and rural areas.

The REACH India project aimed to impact the elementary education in selected parts of the six states of India through NGO intervention. The goals of the project included increasing access to education for the hardest to reach disadvantaged children, especially girls and increase quality of education provided to them.

Learning Classroom Series

The REACH India project developed a niche of its own by complementing the existing large-scale government programmes from outside and developed and demonstrated diverse approaches through variety of models and practices used by different NGO partners in the field to achieve the goal of universal primary education of equitable quality. However, the implementation of the project and its strategies have had its own challenges such as avoiding duplication of efforts, identifying gaps and needs in the existing programmes so that it can supplement and complement these larger efforts while developing unique models to reach children in most difficult circumstances in this pluralistic and complex society.

Just to Assess educational quality and to conduct needs assessment as part of the first in the series of M&E technical assistance workshops were conducted in Delhi (January 2005), Jharkhand (February, 2005) and Kolkata (February 2005). A special session was held on educational quality with special focus on assessment of quality of educational services in the formal schools as a result of NGO interventions. The input from participants' at the workshops greatly helped in the formation and refining of the checklists developed to assess educational quality.

Two checklists have been developed for this purpose. One checklist assesses quality of education in formal schools and the other is for assessing technical capacity of NGOs in educational service delivery (reflecting the two types of NGO programmes in REACH). These checklists are self administered by the NGOs, which is in itself a capacity building exercise and also builds and reinforces perspectives on quality of education. The checklists also served the purpose of needs assessment for REACH to develop its quality of education interventions. Results showed that most NGOs needed assistance in:

- Curriculum development
- Teaching learning methodologies, and
- Assessment

The most NGOs rated their programs as average to above average, and there is considerable room for improvement in almost all cases.

REACH's technical assistance approach includes exposure visits to other successful education initiatives, training workshops, One-on-one interactions as follow up to the visits and the workshops.

Learning Classroom Series

REACH India selected its NGO grantees based on an assessment of the ability of the NGO to deliver educational services to vulnerable populations, many of whom reside in marginalized areas. While all NGO grantees had previous experience in education, not all the NGOs had in-depth experience with the proposed types of educational

Learning Classroom Series

delivery modes and/or target areas. But REACH considered that these grantees showed great promise to reach these populations, and hypothesized that with inputs of funds and technical assistance that they could deliver education services of good quality and become important players in the educational arena beyond the project completion. To date, we have found that, with very few exceptions, our NGO partners need and appreciate REACH inputs in the quality of education arena. For many of the NGO staff, REACH training sessions and technical interactions represent the first training and assistance they have received in quality of education.

Learning Classroom Series (LCS) is the centre piece of REACH's quality of education improvement strategy, this is a series of workshops called the Learning Classroom Series. The focus remains on improving the quality of education in the classroom and is related to individual NGO efforts to accommodate greater use of multi-grade teaching and learning strategies that accommodate the specific needs of at risk children. Three broad areas were identified as areas for assistance based on a combination of proposal reviews, site visits, needs assessment workshops and informal talks with partner NGOs in Delhi, Jharkhand and Kolkata. The three areas for support identified are curriculum enrichment, improvement in teaching-learning strategies and assessment. The importance of these areas was confirmed by the results of the quality of education checklists.

The REACH India staff contracted with a senior educational consultant, Jayshree Oza, to develop and conduct a training series that would address the three need areas. The set of three workshops were conducted over 14 days each in Delhi and Jharkhand between September 2005 and January 2006, in Kolkata between March and October 2006 and in Mumbai between February and July 06. The gap of about a month between each workshop enabled participants to practice in the field what they had learned in the workshop, and return to the next workshop with feedback on their experiences. Thus, the entire period of three workshops was visualized as a 'learning laboratory' where learning and practice were envisaged to go hand in hand. Workshop participants included heads of NGO educational programs and teaching staff working on educational quality strategies.

Apart from supporting NGOs in enhancing educational quality on the ground, the LCS series is presenting this training sourcebook that can be used by the participants and other wider audience of practitioners.

3. Context of the Bridge & Remedial courses

All of the grantee NGOs of REACH India project are well established with unique history and status of their own. Some of them have experience in education sector as well. There are two types of grantee NGOs; grantees that directly make the intervention with the target audience of the project and the others called Capacity Building

agencies, deliver their project outcomes through the sub-grantees by building their capacity to conduct education intervention while strengthening these sub-grantees as NGO organisations.

Some have started non-formal centres i.e. **Bridge courses** to provide primary education and mainstream children in to government schools between the ages of six to fourteen. Others have started **Remedial Courses** for students going to regular, mainly government schools. The Study Centres aim to provide the much needed ongoing support to students which may not be available in their own homes. This support aims to prevent drop out and makes good the learning gaps which enable students to continue to cope with classroom learning tasks. Besides this the support aims to provide a safe space for self study by students, revision & home work completion. These centres in some instances are in the community and others run the centres in the school premises in partnership with the school authorities.

At the start of the LCS project a visit to the most of the grantee NGO was under taken by the consultant for the LCS project along with the REACH project staff to gain understanding of the real context; to ascertain the challenges and opportunities the project presents. The other important reason for the visit was to develop the LCS in partnership with the grantee NGOs and to respond to their felt needs. The observations and the interactions high lighted some of the challenges and the complexities which are inherent in the task of providing education to at risk children emanating from lack of public facilities& civic amenities, poverty and lack of education of their families. Due to scarcity of resources and lack of civic amenities in the proximity of the urban slum locations and remote rural locations where at risk children reside, NGOs face a number of difficulties as described below which in turn have impact on student learning.

Students: *Bridge course Centre* students would often be never enrolled children or dropouts of varying age groups and do not have any other formal educational inputs in their life. The goal of the Bridge Courses is to main stream the children after adequately preparing them for the grade level in which the child is to be admitted.

Remedial Centre students are essentially those children who attend regular government or in some instances poor private schools from slums and very poor localities. The task of providing adequate support becomes challenging due to In-class complexity of the student body. The students in any one of the Study Centres would be:

- Multi-grade and multi-level in the learning comprehension
- Varied age, background, cultural mix
- Varied language and learning interest
- Irregularity of students & teachers

- Very limited time (Lack of certain minimum time on task for the students)
- Economic vulnerability resulting in instability at home and often has minimal parental support.

Classrooms: Many of the centres have severe time and space constraint, often in the space of about 10' x 10' approximately 30 students of different ages and varying grades or ability levels sit together. This situation has limitations for children to move around, experience or experiment with new learning in the classrooms. Often these are multi-purpose spaces, which is not conducive to display of learning materials or safety of simple learning tools.

The most challenging situation for the study centres is students from different grades i.e. I to VII come to study together. The children come from different mother tongue to the centres. In the community run Study Centres there is additional challenge that the children in the same classes may not come from the same schools and therefore it can not be taken for granted that they are on the same "page" in various subject.

S.N.	Potential diversity of the students in a centre	CHALLENGES
1.	Multi-grades & levels (Grade – I TO VII)	It is very difficult for a teacher to teach a number of subject for different grade levels, especially in remediation centres with differing learning difficulty of different students
2.	Multi-age groups (AGE 5 TO 15 YEARS)	At different age levels children have different emotional and socio-psychological needs. For one teacher to address all these to a number of differing age groups in a limited time period is challenging
3.	Multi-lingual (minimum of two to four language)	It is quite challenging to address children's needs when they have different mother tongues. The same is true when in the same centre children from different medium of instruction are present to provide them with content knowledge in different languages of instruction. .
4.	Multi-religion	While children coming from different religious back ground could provide a great opportunity to develop harmony and mutual respect for each religion and develop respect for diversity. It also presents challenges of school calendar and holiday schedules. It is crucial that the teacher is extremely sensitive and aware.
5.	Gender- boys & girls together	The boys and girls have different needs as they are growing up. In regular schools the numbers of both the boys as well as girls are large in any co-

		educational institutions and to provide different opportunities and facilities for both is possible. However, in a small centre of between 25 to 40 students the economy of scale does not work in the centre's favour and often no special effort is made to address the needs of either gender.
6.	Different neighbourhood	In the school based centres children come from different localities which makes it difficult for teachers to keep in contact with the community, spread messages quickly and effectively, hold meetings and check student absence or truancy
7.	Different schools (in community centres)	When children from different schools attend the same centre the teacher has a challenging task on hand. Different schools have different school calendars, timing of the school and the use of different text books. Even if all afore said is the same the schools could be teaching at varied speed and emphasis in the same class and in the same subject. This makes it difficult in addressing the children's needs even if they are at the same grade levels in community based centres.

Teacher Quality: Most of the teachers are not well educated or trained and come with limited capacity; most teachers are class VIII or X passed. Few agencies have given rudimentary training to their teachers, often the content of these are more logistics and donor requirement driven rather than pedagogical. They need intensive training and exposure as well as regular support of guidance and mentoring. They need time and space to develop materials, practice teaching and get feedback on a regular basis. The teachers are often poorly paid which in turn does not attract good teachers to these learning centres and causes frequent turn over of teachers

Learning space: As described earlier most of the centres suffer from extreme paucity of space and children are cramped up in small rooms without much ventilation or light in oppressive hot conditions. For quality education quality learning environment is critical and that is not available to these childre. Creative solutions to this very difficult challenge of paucity of space needs to be found.

Time on task: All the Bridge course centres function for approximately three hours on an average as detailed out in the following chart. The students are expected to achieve learning levels equivalent to class IV students at the end of a year before being main-streamed. In the regular schools students study for four years, for five hours a day where as this contact time is reduced to one forth for the students studying in the Bridge courses who at the most study for two years for three hours a day to achieve the same level of competencies.

Learning Classroom Series

The students in remedial courses too get very limited amount of “time on task” and only for the duration of the project for two years, this does not provide for ongoing regular support required for the students who have no support at home.

**TIME ON TASK TABLE OF THE GRANTEE CENTRES
DURATION AND DAILY, WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

S.N.	NAME OF THE GRANTEE	BRIDGE COURSE CENTRES			REMEDIAL CLASSES CENTRES		
		Total duration of the course	Weekly Number of days	Hours daily	Total Duration Of the course	Weekly Number of days	Hours daily
1.	AADI & CEMD	Not Applicable					
2.	BADLAO FOUNDATION	2 years	6 days	2 hours	-	-	-
3.	BANBASI VIKAS ASHRAM	11 months	6 days	8 hours	-	-	-
4.	CINI ASHA	10 months	6 days	3 hours	Open	6 days	3 hours
5.	CLPOA	2 years	6 days	4 hours	-	-	-
6.	CWD	-	-	-		6 days	2 hours
7.	DEEPALAYA	1 year	6 days	3 hours	-	-	-
8.	DISHA	1 year	6 days	3 hours	-	-	-
9.	DONBOSCO	11 months	6 days	3 hours	-	-	-
10.	DOOR STEPS SCHOOL	-	-	-	9 months	6 days	2.5 hours
11.	IPER	6months	6 days	3 hours	-	-	-
12.	MANO VIKAS KENDRA	-	-	-	Open	6 days	2 hours
13.	N.B.J.K.	2 years	6 days	4 hours	-	-	-
14.	PRAYAS	11 months	6 days	3 hours			
15.	SAHARA	11 months	6 days	2 hours	Open	6 days	2 hours
16.	SARD	11 months	6 days	3 hours			
17.	SAVE THE CHILDREN	-	-	-	1 year	6 days	2.30 hours
18.	VIKRAM SHILA	1 year	6 days	2 hours			

Besides this the students as well as teachers attendance rates are very poor which reduces effective time on learning tasks. "Time on task" of learning need to increase for improving the quality of education and learning outcomes especially in the situation where in all the students belong to very disadvantaged backgrounds.

Thus the centres are running in limiting infrastructure and low levels of teacher capacity to impart education to children from disadvantaged backgrounds having complex diversity. Above has influence on the quality of education in the project. This will also impact the transfer of learning of the LCS to the centres. The quality of support cum monitoring of the project would have influence on the success of the intervention. The ability to transfer the existing knowledge and new learning needs to be developed among the grantees. The LCS aims to enhance knowledge and competencies of the participants to provide and manage elementary education, which needs to be transferred first to the relevant staff hired for the project within the NGOs including teachers and others within the sector in due course.

Insights and impact on planning: The situation described above is extremely complex and demanding for even the expert teachers. To add to this the expectations of the project is pretty stringent and is untenable without any significant strategic changes in the intervention. It was time to think more suitable strategies to address the situation. The goals of the interventions are very loosely defined such as increasing retention and learning of the students in the main stream schools for the remedial centres and preparing students to be enrolled in the primary schools for the bridge courses. To start with goals need to be more concretely defined in terms of what is expected to be accomplished and to what extent.

It is obvious that the complexity of the student body described earlier and arrangement of time and space to provide mediation, teacher quality and time on task issues all combined are not conducive to easy achievement of the goals.

A targeted approach with new set of strategies would need to focus on class room processes to include:

- Curriculum and classroom management for a multi grade and multi-level context
- Effective pedagogic practices and the use of teaching learning techniques
- Actual use of TLM towards gaining specific learning competencies
- Assessment of student learning against established learning outcomes
- Use of those principles and factors which contribute to effective and speedy learning

- Monitoring of the study centres for their effective functioning and student learning

4. Learning Classroom Series (LCS):

4.1. Goals, Objectives and Learning Outcomes of the serialised workshop

Goals:

To be a reflective practitioner while developing and using effective learning material, classroom instructions and active assessment for improved student learning

To develop a resource pool of mentors who are able to transfer and demonstrate effective classroom practices for student learning

To enhance partner NGO capacity for planning, monitoring and managing change to meet the goals of enrolment, retention and meaningful mainstreaming

Workshop Title	Learning outcomes
<p>1. Enriching the relevance of core curriculum</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>To provide inputs and processes which enhance participants' competence to adapt concepts, attitudes and practices developed in the workshop to make the core curriculum more relevant to the needs of at-risk children in their programs.</p>	<p>The participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand principles and assumptions for developing curriculum. • Understand new concept knowledge and develop attitudes and skills for curriculum revision • Review existing curriculum for relevance to the students context • Be able to adapt, contextualize the learning material as per the needs of the student • To develop curriculum and related outcomes for the supportive life skills for at risk children • Learn and use the practice of reflection with support • Develop an action plan that outlines how they will make use of what they have learnt about curriculum improvement strategies to their own organization

<p>2. Practicing Active Learning Strategies for At-Risk Children</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>To provide such opportunities that the participants are able to adapt concepts, attitudes and practices for learner-centered and active teaching methods and techniques that support quality education strategies.</p>	<p>The participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand various child development and learning theories and principles and implications for teaching practices ● Understand and actively use lesson designs and frameworks in achieving specific learning outcomes ● Develop, understand and use a range of teaching methods using a variety of learning aids ● Understand the concept of change and how to deal with it ● Develop action plan that outline how they will make use of the teaching methods and approaches they have practiced in the workshop in the teacher development strategy for their own organization
<p>3. Promoting Active Assessment in the Classroom</p> <p>Objective:</p> <p>To ensure participants are able to adapt concepts, attitudes and practices developed in the workshop to better align the methods and procedures used to assess learning and teaching outcomes.</p>	<p>The participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use assessment as an integral process of learning cycle of Plan-do-check-act (PDCA) ● Understand the concept of continuous and comprehensive assessment; its methods, tools and processes ● Simple tools of action research with regard to student learning or lack of it, and incumbent adjustments to teaching practices ● Use scientific methods and tools for academic planning ● to design & practice active assessment procedures and methods that promote increased participation by learners and their parents in the assessment process ● develop an action plan that outlines how they will make use of the more active assessment procedures and approaches they have been exposed to in the works in the teacher and student assessment strategy

4.2. Facilitator's Guide

Following section provides principles and assumptions of the facilitator which guided the design, goals & objectives, agenda, content and processes of the Learning Classroom Series.

Children and how they learn

There are well-researched principles to understand the children and how they learn:

- ✓ Self esteem is critical to successful learning. Children, who feel good about themselves as learners, learn more and apply it more productively than children who do not.
- ✓ Children learn from each other as much, if not more, than they learn from us. The synergy of group work provides demonstrably better learning.
- ✓ Teacher expectations play a large part in student learning outcomes. If teachers expect students to perform well, they generally do. Unfortunately, the converse is also true.
- ✓ Emphasis needs to be placed on discovery learning. Use teaching methods that actively involve students and present challenges. Experiential learning lasts longer; an old Chinese saying is "I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand". An experience which makes use of all five senses in a holistic way deepens the understanding and potential for recall.
- ✓ Learning is easier when made contextual i.e. "Known to unknown" The younger the child, the greater the need for concrete references. Abstract concepts can be used but always in association with concrete references.
- ✓ Cognitive development is facilitated by providing activities or situations that engage learners and require adaptation (i.e., assimilation and accommodation).
- ✓ Learning materials and activities should involve the appropriate level of motor or mental operations for a child of given age; avoid asking students to perform tasks that are beyond their current cognitive capabilities.
- ✓ Use of principles of learning such as motivation, retention, reinforcement and transfer are used by the teacher in accordance with learning tasks and needs of the students.

- ✓ There is not a single unitary intelligence but multiple intelligences that a person possesses to varying degrees. The theory suggests that each learner constructs knowledge in a unique way. Teachers must use multiple strategies to accommodate learners and assist learning.
- ✓ There are different Learning Styles which suggest that all children do not learn in the same way.

Beliefs of a Facilitator

- ✓ People have the ability, the intelligence to resolve conflicts and find solutions with support
- ✓ The beliefs are respect, honour, trust, the value of sharing and strength in community.
- ✓ Trust and belief that anything can be accomplished. We can do it with an optimistic attitude to foster best possible results
- ✓ Valuing knowledge and wisdom
- ✓ People really want to make things better, but we're all starting from a different place and tell a unique part of a story.
- ✓ A belief that we are unique individuals and all are valuable assets in achieving solutions
- ✓ All people need to be listened to respectfully and listening to for understanding, this creates shared knowledge base to solve problems
- ✓ Conflict is an opportunity, from discomfort comes the space and energy for positive change
- ✓ Democracy is inclusion of minority and diverse points of views
- ✓ People have ownership in the decisions they make
- ✓ People learn best through experience

Characteristics of an effective facilitator:

An effective facilitator -

- ✓ values others, their abilities and potential for learning and is unbiased
- ✓ is non-judgmental, open minded and transparent
- ✓ is a guide on the side and not a sage on the stage
- ✓ gives every one an opportunity to be heard and present varied perspectives without imposing own views
- ✓ is open to risk taking, open to mistakes and open to corrections
- ✓ Uses processes, methods, designs and frameworks to bring varied perspectives and solutions
- ✓ Creates healthy relationships, listens respectfully and resolves conflicts
- ✓ Brings groups together and creates synergistic, enabling environment
- ✓ Is passionate about the people and the cause leading to shared joy
- ✓ Has the knowledge of the task at hand and is willing to learn more

Workshop Design protocol

1. Building on NGO partner experience: A major interest is to build on the rich experience that the NGO partners bring to their work with communities and with at risk children. Each workshop provides ample opportunity for its NGO partners to share their experiences with each other and develop, through workshop interventions, strategies for introducing change into their own organizations.
2. Introduce new concepts that are feasible in the local context: Select training activities and training content that is relevant to the participating NGOs.
3. Be practical and action oriented: Workshop activities be practical in orientation rather than theoretical and allow for as much 'hands on' activity and experimentation with new concepts as possible. Participants are challenged to think about ways in which their current practices might be reviewed and adapted to accommodate new concepts and approaches.
4. Opportunity for self reflection as well as group reflection on new concepts and changes in practices: Ensure that adequate time is provided for modelling of self-reflection and group reflection processes.

5. Universal ethics as guiding principle: Developing creative solutions for emerging demands and challenges to provide quality education for all based on universal ethics remain central to the development of the LCS
6. Planning for follow-up: At the each workshop participants are to develop an action plan that indicates how they plan to apply what they have been exposed to and learnt in each workshop to their own institutional practices. Workshop planning accommodates an action planning activity.

Model of intervention

The Learning Classroom Series (LCS) is a programme which uses open-learning methods for NGO personnel to enrich their educational services. It comprises of a series of three workshops on curriculum enrichment, improved teaching-learning strategies and promoting active assessment in the classroom with an interim practicum to practice learning in the field. Thus, the entire course is envisaged as a learning laboratory for educators where learning and practice will go hand in hand.

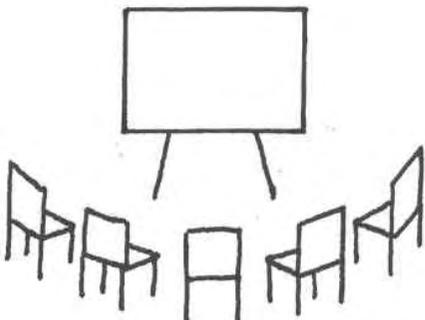
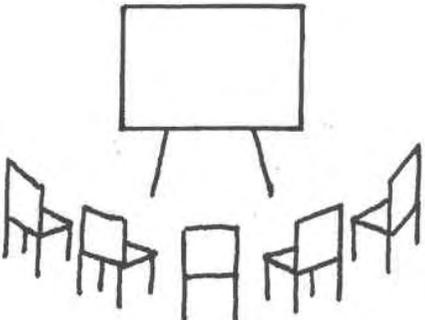
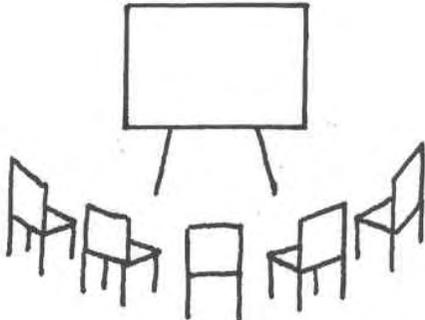
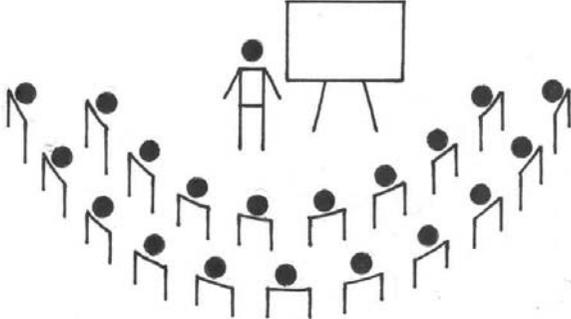
Participation

The people responsible for making decisions about the REACH India project within the NGOs, the coordinators, field supervisors, few select teachers and trainers of respective NGOs participated in the LCS. The same cohort of participants continued for all the three phases of the LCS with a very few exceptions which helped in comprehensive learning with reference and possibility of taking back the learning to their own NGOs. It is important to mention here that many of the NGO supervisory staff does not come from teaching background or in many instances do not have background in education sector.

Methodology

The LCS programme focused on developing educational capacities through interactive, participative and experiential learning processes. Emphasis was placed on self-learning and collaborative learning that predominantly influenced the conduct of this series. The workshop series offer opportunities for critical thinking, practice of concepts learnt, collegial sharing and reflection. Varied methods such as role plays, collaborative inquiry, case studies, experiential analysis, games, simulations and finally creating collective statements were made use of to bring about change in beliefs, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour.

DIFFERENT LEARNING ARRANGEMENT BASED ON THE NEED OF THE TASK AND THE GROUP



4.3. LCS Serialised Workshop Design and process

Universal design of the serialised workshop with contextual variations:

The LCS in its three part series with the duration of five-five and four days and broad themes described through the documentation remained the same. The overall Learning Outcomes developed at the start of the series too proved to be relevance in each site and remained the same. However content and processes of the workshops changed to incorporate contextual needs and respond to specific challenges some of which have been mentioned earlier. Some of these changes included understanding of larger government initiatives and understanding NGO role in this context, content and methods to suit different needs of the Bridge and Remediation centres. Greater emphasis was provided on team building, basic content of teaching and innovations in pedagogic and assessment practices, concepts of child development and learning especially for the children from disadvantaged backgrounds. An added impetus was provided to plan and prepare participants to transfer the learning and its practices within the NGOs, their learning centres and other areas of project implementation. In one site a special workshop of two days was organised for the heads of the NGOs on concepts of leadership, change management, TQM and planning.

Workshop 1: Enriching the Relevance of the Core Curriculum

A major component of most quality of education strategies is the review and enhancement of existing core curricula, and the development of additional or different curriculum modules that promote greater relevance of the curriculum to the every day needs and realities of at-risk children. Greater relevance in the core curriculum promotes enhanced learning outcomes and has been shown to impact on community support for education.

Day-1: The collaborative learning process started with exercise of Grounding resulting in participants getting to know each other and the expectations they had from the workshop. This was followed by overview of the course. Having increased comfort levels with each other the participants described the current situation of education in the Centers in small groups under five different heads of Community participation, Curriculum, Teaching Learning, Assessment and Management of the Study Centers.

This was followed by presentation on Rights Based Approach. This was with a view to locate NGO's contribution and work in the micro reality to the macro picture of Right to education including access, learning and participation

which was presented through the Rights based framework. This was followed by a short talk on the importance of this work in which the NGOs are engaged.

The participants worked in six small groups to examine the necessary and sufficient conditions for the Right to Education to be a reality on “the ground”. Two groups each worked on three different themes namely; Study Centers, Systems Support and Accountability. The description in a manner became the desired best outcomes for the future with positive impact on students, projects & community. The day-1 ended with a certain restlessness and yet eagerness to do something, a readiness to learn new approaches and paradigms to work towards the desired outcomes described on the flip charts by them!

Day-2: The day started with a talk on history of education in the country. Relevance of the NFC developed by the NCERT in 2005 and perspectives on the MLL as well as MLL based text books. It is important that the perspective on this is changed and the participants should not rely so completely on the given text books. This was to develop a context for the task of developing learning ladders.

The concept of multi-graded teaching was explained with the example of the Rishi Valley RIVER project and importance of learning ladder to help children plot for themselves their existing milestones in competency levels in language, Maths and EVS. This methodology is useful in grouping children of differing abilities and competency levels.

Day-3: The day started with a session on Basic concepts on Developmental Psychology that included phases of child development, whole brain theory in learning with implications for educators including importance of child centered pedagogy, use of TLM to provide concrete experiences and activity oriented teaching to children. This was well received by the participants and many got the theoretical understanding and background for the activities and methods that they are already using. Participants offered some relevant examples and ideas to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts learnt.

In small groups using flip charts participants listed concepts that the students find difficult to learn and teachers find difficult to teach resulting in learning gaps for students in language, EVS & math. Existing empirical research was shared with them for further clarity of why the gaps in learning remain and how these gaps need to be addressed. One of the important eye opener was to discover their individual learning styles as all the participants responded to a learning style inventory and self scored the results.

Day-4: The day started with the presentation of basic concept of taxonomy of cognitive domain. This was very well received and served as the basis to start understanding the process of thinking and learning. With this background the participants commenced review of existing curriculum to promote greater relevance to the every day needs and realities of at-risk children. The participants engaged in developing a framework of standard, Specific Learning Outcome, indicators for the topics that were identified to be difficult, in each discipline of language, math and EVS. The process of developing the framework of Learning Outcomes for difficult concepts continued for all three subjects and at three levels to develop learning ladders so that in a multi-grade, multi-level centres the teachers can use the ladder for targeting the teaching at appropriate stages.

Concept of team development was explained with a diagram to illustrate that while working together in team conflict is necessary and healthy teams learn and resolve these.

Presentation on profiling the Study Centres was backed by data from the visits to the centres managed by some of the NGOs to understand the reality. NGO partners work needs to relate to a larger canvas of elementary education, particularly in the context of Right to Education; Right to Access, Right to Learning and Right to Participation of Parents and communities.

Day-5: The organizational teams were exposed to a variety of TLMs and their use. Use of song, dance, poetry, story telling, plays in the T-L process. The practical approach to development of TLMs was deliberated upon with messages like; developed need be cost effective, easy to replicate, stored and be effective in their use for children to grasp learning.

In the forenoon session the participants developing plans for continuing and consolidating learning and materials developed during the workshop for regular use in their respective Study Centres. These plans were developed on a frame work of Management Cycle to ensure implementation and monitoring of the objectives set by each of the NGO.

The workshop ended with an opportunity for each of the participants to share about their learning and any comment they wanted to make to provide closure and feedback to the workshop and its processes. There was an overwhelming feeling of time well spent that provided relevant learning. Some of them felt strongly that this workshop should have been conducted at the beginning of the project to bring maximum advantage to the children in their care.

It is important to note that the complete agenda of the workshop was not completed in the given time. The development of learning rubrics and concept of assessment could not be addressed in this workshop for paucity of time.

Reflections & feedback:

Given the context of the bridge and remediation centres under the REACH India project the process of examining existing curricula was extremely important. The efforts in the first instance were directed at identifying the concepts which are most difficult for the children to learn especially those that are building blocks to further learning. The second and most significant task accomplished by the participants was to develop learning ladders detailing learning outcomes frameworks in the subjects of mathematics, language and Environment science. The entire exercise increased greater relevance of the curriculum to the every day needs and realities of the classrooms with a view to assist the teachers who teach children at-risk.

NGOs expressed their comfort with the level of the technical content that was presented as well as with the duration of the workshop. All NGOs produced action plans that would provide the basis for follow up.

For most of the participants the concepts and learning provided during the workshops were completely new, participants had very little previous knowledge of the construct of learning outcomes or the concept of child psychology. Participants understood the new content about curriculum framework and were able to carry out workshop exercises that demonstrated some level of mastery of the concepts learnt. A rough draft of the curriculum for three subjects i.e. Language, Math and EVS was developed through small group exercises during the workshop. Subsequently eleven NGOs developed frameworks of Learning Outcomes in three subjects up to grade level-V independently to suit the needs of their context after the workshop. A list of these NGOs as well as a compiled version of Learning Outcomes frameworks; one in Hindi and the other in English are provided in section-III of this document.

Workshop 2: Active Learning Strategies for At-Risk Children

Experience and research clearly demonstrate the key role that active teaching methods make in increasing the quality of what transpires in the classroom. Providing teachers with a full repertoire of learner-centered teaching

methods empowers teachers and provide critical motivation for children to master not only the knowledge part of learning, but also the skills and the attitudes that are needed to take action on that knowledge.

After the first workshop on Curriculum development NGOs attempted to use the broad framework of the curriculum developed during the workshop. Some used it just as it was and others tried to customise it further to suit their specific needs, all the NGOs plan to intensively work on it. The new approach to curriculum with predetermined standards and learning outcomes also demanded new strategies for teaching and learning. The second workshop on active learning strategies was designed to meet these challenges.

Day-1: The collaborative learning process started with exercise of Grounding resulting in participants getting to know each other and renewing previously established camaraderie. Besides this the participants also learnt about each others experiences of all the new ideas and learning tried out by the participants in their respective work places, consequent to the first workshop. Finally they also shared their expectations from the current five day workshop. This was followed by overview of the entire five day course.

Role of a facilitator, recorder and a team member

The participants were divided into 7 groups. Two groups deliberated on the characteristics of a facilitator, two on the characteristics of a recorder and the other three groups deliberated on the characteristics of a team member. Each of the group shared their deliberations with the larger group.

The next session was on developing the Vision of the child in 2020. The question raised to the participants was what Knowledge, Skills and Attitude would you like to see in the students at the end of five years in your centres.

The participants group continued to work in the same groups and discussed the knowledge, skills and attitude that a child would have after five years. The participants made group wise presentations of their deliberations.

Subsequently the Lesson design frame work was presented to the participants. This is a well researched model framework that can be used to present any subject and at any level of classes for teaching in a classroom style setting. For all of the participants this was new and also it was a new approach to address day to day issues of how to teach well and how to monitor teaching; both could be addressed by using this framework of lesson design. On the same design the facilitator presented a lesson which was much enjoyed by the participants. They were asked to prepare any one lesson, a mini lesson on the same framework to be presented in a small group of participants by each one, the next day.

Finally the participants reviewed the day's work in project teams and wrote their own individual reflection and completed the learning log given to them.

Day-2: The day two started with presentation on Principles of learning i.e. the use of motivation, reinforcement, retention & transfer by teachers for creating an effective climate for student learning. The participants appreciated the nuanced understanding of these principles and the practical techniques of their use in the classroom teaching. The next session on Child centred practice of math learning commenced with viewing a film on teacher training for math teachers followed by a presentation of variety of tools and methods to teach difficult concepts, identified during the first workshop. The participants truly appreciated the practical approach to teaching maths especially in the multi-grade situation for the remediation faced in the Study Centres.

For the topic on Classroom management handouts were provided to the participants on topics such as developing classroom norms, tips for discipline, developing rapport, clean and attractive classrooms etc. The participants discussed these in small groups and shared their learning with other groups.

This was followed by participants presenting one mini-lesson each in the small groups as a practice session and the follow up work from the previous day. This was a very important exercise and many of them had not taken the task seriously and were not prepared and as a result could not fully follow the newly learnt lesson design while presenting their lessons. However this gave them an opportunity to reflect on importance of teacher preparation and planning for teaching. Those who had prepared enjoyed the experience and reflected on the short comings in their own lessons.

The day concluded with participants reviewing the day in the small group of the project teams and writing individual reflections.

Day-3: This was followed by a session on Learning Styles and the participants identified their own predominant learning style. The concept was a big success and they realized that people learn differently and therefore lessons must be presented to suit all three kinds of learners such as visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. The students should also be given opportunity to practice new learning in variety of ways and through actual experimentation. This also brought home the urgent need of activity based classrooms especially where mediation is the central need for all the children coming to the Centers.

Learning Classroom Series

The day started with Child centered practices of language learning; this presentation included LCD slides as well as certain games for language learning. Participants played these with each other in small groups and besides enjoying these understood the use of games and fun activities for teaching languages.

The Cooperative learning Concept and method of teaching were shared with the participants and they actually learnt some of the activities for language teaching using this method which gave them a practical experience in the process of using Cooperative Learning method.

The participants reflected in small groups and wrote down their individual learning logs and feedback.

Day-4: The Multiple Intelligences was another new concept that helped in creating an understanding of the children and how they learn. The students having eight different types of intelligences as all people have and teacher need not rely entirely on the linguistic and logical mathematical intelligence alone for teaching and learning was a big lesson for all. The unexpected outcome was also an observation by one of the participants that it is not than justified for the teachers to classify children in categories like "Slow Learners" based on the scores on tests.

The development of learning maps & materials based on learning outcomes was organized in six groups two each for Math, Hindi & EVS. This entailed developing learning maps for the multi-grade classrooms where in participants developed four stages of lessons i.e. preparatory, conceptual, practice and self assessment. This planning led to the groups developing some ideas on TLMs and activities for teaching these lessons. Groups shared these with each other and found these useful and practical for the study centres.

The day ended with the participants writing the individual learning log and sharing in organisational teams.

Day-5: Child centred practices of Science learning based on the activities and practices developed for science and math teaching. The session was full of activities; practice of the concepts learnt and engrossed the participants completely.

In some instances participating organisations made presentations of "good practices" from their own experiences and practices used in their respective organisations. This was a great learning opportunity for the presenters as well as participants.

In the final session of the workshop the participants developed plan for transfer of learning in organizational teams. The participants developed plans for continuing and consolidating learning and use of materials developed

during the workshop for their respective Centres. These plans were developed on a frame work of Management Cycle to ensure implementation and monitoring of the objectives set by each of the NGO.

The workshop ended with an opportunity for each of the participants to share about their learning and any comment they wanted to make to provide closure to the workshop and its processes. There was an overwhelming feeling of time well spent that provided relevant learning. Some of them felt strongly that this workshop should have been conducted at the beginning of the project to bring maximum advantage to the children in their care; however they valued the learning as they would continue to use these learning beyond the project period in their respective NGOs.

Reflections & feedback

This course focused on the critical need of improving the pedagogy in the classroom. The participants understood and experienced relevance of the contextual examples and models from the lives of the children-at-risk and learnt variety of methods for classroom teaching. The child-cantered pedagogy was at the heart of the workshop design. The workshop focused on teaching of math, language and Environment science and a lot of topics were identified from the previously developed curriculum by the participants in the first workshop. The difficult topics were identified and addressed to develop teaching learning materials to help students understand the concepts clearly. Teaching methods like cooperative learning, multi-grade teaching and learning were focused upon. The participants had opportunities to practice the concepts taught and simulate by teaching each other in small groups and such practice sessions helped in clearing their own doubts about content as well as methodology of teaching. For all the participants the workshop proved to be of immense relevance as they could relate the learning to their day-to-day needs and saw opportunities to use the learning at their own levels, collectively and individually.

The sessions were conducted in a mix of English and Hindi languages with materials provided in English and some in Hindi. Work groups functioned in two languages including English and Hindi.

Participants were motivated; task oriented, and completed workshop exercises with products they deemed of future use in their organization's work. Participants managed the cross-organizational work group exercises well and noted that they had learned a considerable amount from each other by way of lateral learning. Participants were appreciative of opportunities to work with staff from other NGOs during the workshop, as well as with their own colleagues as they began to think of how to apply workshop content and principles to their own work.

Workshop 3: Promoting Active Assessment Procedures in the Classroom & Community Participation

The use of more active and appropriate assessment procedures in the classroom is a critical aspect of improving the quality of education especially for at-risk children. Assessment methods must reflect both the objectives of the teaching/learning process and the teaching/learning methods used. Assessment procedures must tell students, teachers and parents what is being learnt in the classroom and provide valuable information for reviewing and revising the curriculum and teaching methods.

In the Indian education system student assessment and its consequence i.e. student achievement scores, are the key component that drive the whole system of education; the syllabus, teaching, scheduling including school community relationship. However, this system is least prone to change and has not developed in keeping with other aspects such as pedagogical changes in the classroom, even in the relatively developed schools in the country.

In the context of Remediation Centres the concept of assessment acquires added significance because the very existence of these Centres and rationale of mediation in student learning is the product of assessment system. The children who are not "doing well" in the traditional system of school examinations are often the target of the remediation Centres. These centres by definition need to conduct diagnostic test to ascertain the learning gaps among students in order to mediate the same. This very important first step will determine the success of efforts in the Centres and this in it self makes it very important that the NGOs ensure effective pre & post student assessments in their Centres directly in relation to the learning outcomes framework developed during the first workshop. This workshop helped to develop critical link that was established between the curriculum and the assessment activities i.e. the link between the Specific Learning Outcomes and expectation of student performance. This would help the participants to choose the type, kind and method of assessment for specific learning outcomes.

DAY-1: The workshop began with understanding participants' feelings and concerns through the process of Grounding, Greeting Circle and the overview of the course was provided. In order to create common grounds an understanding of the current situation was required. In participation the Assessment system used in the Centers was described in terms of type, frequency, methods and reporting system etc.

The focus of the subsequent session was on non-scholastic activities for the students and life-skills orientation. Besides enumerating various activities participants shared its importance, methods of including these in the

schedule based on their experiences. The assessment process for these activities through observation, practice, group demonstrations etc. helped the participants in experiencing not only method but purpose of assessment.

DAY-2: In order to bring in new perspective and an understanding of assessment as a critical part of teaching-learning cycle and not an end activity new inputs on the concept of Assessment i.e. Importance of assessment, difference between examination & assessment, various types, kinds and methods of assessments were shared and practiced.

In further detailing of the practices of various tools of assessment such as observation schedule, written & oral tests, mental math, quiz, projects were made relevant to the study centre needs. Creating blueprints, Practice of developing Tests for language/EVS/ Math and the system of scheduling of assessment in Centres were deliberated and planned. All the participants were required to reflect on the days processed and content and finally write out their own learning log.

DAY-3: The day focused on the Reporting System of the assessment and explored the concept of marks, grades and descriptive/narrative comments and their relative advantages and disadvantages. A new concept of Rubric was introduced with some examples which included understanding the concept of criteria & assigning value to each of the criteria on the learning ladder developed during the first workshop. Introduction of concept and use of RUBRICS would help three aspects; 1) students are provided qualitative comments on their progress and not just numerical scores that does not tell them what they need to improve for further learning. 2) The RUBRICS also provide next steps in the process of self learning for students 3) the record keeping of student performance and planning mediation activities for teachers become easy.

The Management Information System especially in context of record keeping and using student performance and group performance data for decision making was discussed. Formats for these data as well as providing feedback on student performance were developed. Use of the performance feedback by: Student, teacher, Parent & Administration were discussed.

Effective monitoring system and the type of records that need to be maintained were discussed in small groups:

- Attendance
 - Regularity of students
 - Regularity of teachers
 - Regularity of a certain minimum time on task

- Classroom processes
 - How effective are pedagogic practices?
 - What are the teaching learning techniques that are being used in the Study Centres.
 - Actual use of TLM towards gaining specific learning competencies
- Assessment of student learning
 - Against established learning outcomes
 - For a multi grade, multi-level context
 - Keeping government mainstreaming in view
 - Keeping in view how to assess what contributes to good and speedy learning

Day-4: The most important aspect of success of any Study Centre depends on its relationship with the community it serves. In order to gain insights and help strengthen this process the participants in small groups described the current situation of schools and community relations. Through a participative enquiry the challenges of the situation were recognized and direct accountability of the centres to the community, especially under the Rights Frame work, was accepted. The importance, need, schedules and aims of PTA Meetings were established and methods of organizing awareness and orientation campaigns were discussed.

Towards the close of the workshop the participants were psychologically prepared for Re-entry in the workplace. This is because the participants would have under gone some changes due to participation in the workshop such as new information and interpretations, and some amount of practice. However, the people in the workplace would not have gone through such experience so the re-entry helps the participants fit in back within the organization without letting go of the learning and resultant changes.

This process included planning by the project teams of each of the NGOs to take the learning back to the field and each team made presentation of the project TEAM Plans. The final activity was sharing of participants feelings and learning in a non-threatening comfortable environment in the "Closing".

Reflections & feedback

Participants were motivated; task oriented, and completed workshop exercises with products they deemed of future use in their organizations' work. Participants noted that for many of them this was the first time that they were exposed to various dimensions and aspects of the student assessment.

The content of the workshop was practice oriented, it focused on methods, tools and periodicity of student assessment appropriate to the Learning Centres. The content also included the system of providing feedback to students and making it relevant and useful for all the stake-holders such as teachers, administrators and parents. A few progressive and strategic changes in the student assessment system can enhance student learning and self worth rather than diminish it.

For want of effective methods they did not assess non-scholastic learning of the students. The paradigm of providing feedback in qualitative terms and yet remaining consistent with the use of RUBRIC appealed to all of them. They felt that as it has been in the past these strategies, methods and tools would be very welcome by their teachers and help in enhancing quality of learning in their centres.

IV. Leadership & Change Management workshop for the NGO Heads & teams

A two-day workshop on Leadership and Change Management was organised for the Kolkata grantees. All the participants of the LCS workshop series from the grantee NGOs as well as the coordinators of the REACH India programme and the heads of the NGOs attended this workshop. The objective of the workshop was to ensure transfer of the LCS to their and the sub-grantee Bridge and Remedial centers.

The themes of leadership and its roles, transition management, team building and its processes as well as Total Quality Management were addressed in the workshop. The participants had opportunities to examine some very real issues and in the organizational teams they actually resolved some of the issues and obstacles to achieve the REACH project goals. The NGO teams developed detailed plans for implementation.

The NGOs were supported to overcome specific difficulties faced by them in taking the action plans forward and all the curriculum enrichment activities in their respective NGOs. In retrospect this workshop should have been organised for Delhi and Bombay grantees as well, given the success and impact of the same in Kolkata and presence of similar needs at these two sites as well.

In the spirit of laboratory approach to creating the learning classrooms, the facilitator provided feedback to the NGO action plans as well as curriculum plans.

1. Conclusion

An experiment of Learning Classroom Series for capacity building of NGOs is a unique experience in the sector especially as the process unfolded to be one of empowerment. The learning in partnership through intensive participation by the participants, through engaging with the day to day challenges and seeking solutions and developing their own ability in the process to find solutions suited to their own challenges and needs. The technical inputs, techniques and games were much appreciated but the life enhancing experiences were the sense of self, respect for ones own self, the sense of purpose and satisfaction of value of ones own effort; all these came from intense and selfless experience of involvement in the processes of solving the problems and responding to challenges.

Dr. Kanchan Mathur in An Assessment of REACH India's Learning Classroom Series project states, "That the LCS workshops were found to be extremely useful by the participants' needs no emphasis. The participants' have been able to incorporate the leanings into their existing curriculum design or create a new curricula based on the learning from LCS, the TLMs have been used by all and the assessment methods undergone a change.

The workshops dealt with important educational issues and the valuable information and technical inputs that came along with the workshops have added to the participants' pedagogical knowledge, enhanced teaching skills and raised motivation levels.

They also contributed to the capacity building of NGOs. They stated that the lessons and benefits of LCS workshops would go beyond Reach India project and would be continuously used and incorporated in all the future teachers' training programme conducted by them and the benefits will, in turn, continue to percolate down to the teaching community and students. By way of unintended outcomes most of the partners reported that the LCS workshops provided a forum for meeting and interacting with a range of individuals working in other NGOs and gave an opportunity to learn about their work. The workshops also acted as a meeting ground with resource persons with different skills which were an enriching experience."

This document is prepared to support and help all those who put in a lot of hard work to ensure that the children coming to their centres get the best possible quality education and it is their right. Many other teachers, supervisors in similar situations across the country need a lot of support to continue to perform heroic tasks on a daily basis, it is hoped that they find this useful for their work.

Participant Led and Developed

Learning Standards Framework Bridge & Remedial Courses

Learning Standards Framework

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Clearly defined and articulated Learning Expectations are critical to improving quality of learning. Apart from the other factors that determine the quality of learning such as teacher competence and time on task, the most important aspect remains “what do children learn? And what is worth learning?”

In Indian education there have been some efforts in this direction such as work done under Minimum Levels of Learning (MLL) through the country in the later decades of the last century. The centrally designed MLLs tend to be more mechanistic as they mentioned in great specificity competencies that must be learnt, while often not at all mentioning the underlying understanding desired. Basically, the MLLs are specified as expected learning outcomes depicted in terms of observable terminal behaviors (referred to as ‘competencies’). The list of competencies for class I in Mathematics mentions learning expectations such as ‘Count 1-20 using objects and pictures’, ‘Identify zero as the number representing nothing or the absence of objects in a collection’, ‘Arrange numbers 1-100 in ascending and descending order’, etc. (MLL, p. 20-21). On the other hand The ‘national standards’ defined in America for numeracy (kindergarten to grade 4) states their learning expectations as: ‘Construct number meanings through real-world experiences and the use of physical materials’, ‘Interpret the multiple uses of numbers encountered in the real world’. Such statements are followed by an explanation of what abilities and understanding can be developed, and what kinds of learning experiences need to be provided. Such a statement of standards reflects a perspective in which mathematical knowledge is not fragmented into logical bits, but seen as growing out of the child’s efforts, her experiences and using what she knows, interpreting and learning. Learning is not seen as the outcome of specific pedagogic acts, but as emerging over a period of time.

The MLL based teaching activities continue to be narrowly teacher led and these are geared to student evaluation. Education needs both developing standards and defining objectives. However, defining these standards and objectives based on a model of the child as essentially receiving knowledge and learning as exhibiting 'observable behaviour' according to a narrowly defined timetable is entirely "behaviouristic" in nature and does not see the child constructing his or her knowledge and making meaning of the world and life for ones own self.

What are Learning Standards?

'Learning Standards (LS) are a set of clear statements broken up often in level or class and subject wise specifying the key educational objectives that must be achieved by students at that stage in that subject. Many other countries have documented Learning Standards (LS) for their systems of education. Although, the terms they use to address the same objective may be different.

This framework of learning Standards brings rigor, depth, and clarity to the whole process of student learning. They are a compilation of the essential knowledge, skills, concepts that students should know / understand / demonstrate / retain / perform. Their content guide the design of curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Why do we need Learning Standards?

As mentioned in the introduction, there is a need for a set of better defined, realistic, research-based set of learning expectation to improve quality of learning. In the absence of such a document, we cannot achieve the age-grade relevant guideline of learning potential, quality and equity that we wish to incorporate in what children learn today. These become even more significant in the context of Bridge courses and Remedial centres as by

definition their aim is to mainstream the students based on the level and degree of student learning in various subjects taught at schools. This main streaming in case of Bridge courses is by way of actual enrolment in schools or in case of Remedial centres by removing the learning gaps for students to be a part of academic processes of the classrooms.

Above mentioned overall goal of the Centres will be well served by Learning Standards as they aim to achieve quality by clearly specifying expectations. Students learn best when expectations are clear and commonly understood by all concerned (*policy makers, curriculum developers, textbook writers, educators, teachers, students and parents*). Student achievement improves in an environment where curriculum, instruction and assessment are in sync. The LS are important to raise the achievement levels of all students and to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is of the highest standards. The Learning Standards can prove to be the impetus for that. Teachers need help to make informed decisions about what they have to teach in order to help their pupils attain the learning outcomes.

The standards also increase public understanding of, and confidence in, the work of NGOs in this instance and in the learning and achievements resulting from this system. It provides a common basis for discussion of educational issues among lay and professional groups, including pupils, parents, teachers, schools and NGO managements, education departments and funders alike. Learning Standards will bring about a degree of consistency, focus, and clarity in defining what children at different levels and in different subject should learn.

Bridge & Remedial courses: Learning Standards Framework

The bridge and remedial courses are conducted in a variety of formats and by variety of agencies using variety of content, methods, and assessment and learning standards. The only aspect that is common among all is the vulnerability and marginalisation of the children they all serve. The cause of providing good quality education for all children is compelling enough to ensure that there is a “Learning Standards” framework so that it becomes a frame of reference for all those who are working for this cause.

Development of the standards framework is anticipated to be of great value to any single or two teacher schools. The framework presents the Learning Standards in a stage wise progression rather than grade levels for example the sample provided here is in three stages of school education i.e. Pre-School or ECE, Primary and Middle school and these stages have developmental validity. This kind of presentation overcomes the problems created by “mono-grade” classroom being the norm, with rigid application of age based grouping of the children, class wise teaching with a rigid expectation that all children of the same age will learn at the same pace. The stage wise arrangement as illustrated below allows children of different abilities and learning needs to form a learning group. Formative assessment of the children in this situation could be extremely flexible as per the pace of learning of each child. The summative assessment for moving from one stage to the other i.e. from primary to the middle school takes place over longer duration cycle rather than an annual requirement for each class in a hierarchical manner. “Describing the characteristics and concerns of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in stages allow syllabi, textbooks and learning resources, and for teacher to plan for children’s development and the gradual deepening of abilities, competencies and concepts” according to the National Curriculum Framework 2005. The reference to grade levels in the framework is purely indicative to suggest a frame of reference and not with view

to segregate children accordingly or to conduct one standard examination at the same time for all the student sat that level.

The Standards Framework will help teachers in planning classroom and assessment activities, students and parents can refer it to be aware of the path and progress in learning and supervisors can use the same for monitoring and guiding the teachers.

A brief overview of what has been incorporated in the LS is mentioned below:

- The Learning Standards framework provided in Hindi is stated for each class from Kindergarten (K) to class V and is suited for the Bridge as well as the remedial course.
- Practicing teachers, supervisors, NGO coordinators of the educational programmes and subject experts from the field from a range of institutions from four regions participated actively and in small groups created for different subjects and levels developed the Standards before presenting these for the scrutiny by the peers and the experts. The processes of preparation, inputs and actual development of Learning Standards has been described under the discussion of workshop designs and process (page-23 to 25)
- At the primary stage, the child should be joyfully exploring world around and harmonising with it. The objective at this stage is to provide hands on activities for students to acquire the basic cognitive and psychomotor skills through observation, classification, and inferences etc. The other objective is to develop basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The basic numeracy skills to be learnt at this stage at this stage are whole numbers and its operations, fractions and decimal, estimation, measurement besides simple geometry. Therefore the subjects selected for the LS are: Mathematics, Environment Studies and Languages (English & Hindi)

Learning Classroom Series

- The Learning Standards framework is presented in a subject wise learning ladder having five columns i.e. Theme & Standard which are overall statements of learning expectations followed by Specific Learning Outcomes, indicators of student effort and learning, topics/content and finally learning experiences.