

Efforts Towards Comprehensive Quality Improvement under SSA

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is at a crucial stage, when the goals related to universal access and enrolment are nearly achieved. However universal quality education remains a challenge in the majority of States. The ongoing annual appraisal of State Plans has revealed that a lot of efforts are being made in SSA, but there is sometimes a lack of convergence of the initiatives around a common vision and a clear set of desired outcomes. It was realized that many of the State Quality Plans and interventions are not integrated and focused in the light of the recommendations of the NCF 2005. Hence the outcomes for children, teachers and system are not commensurate to the input, and the efforts do not result in the extent of changes desired in classroom processes for effective pedagogy. Without a sound understanding across the system of how children learn different subjects and the role of teachers in facilitating the desired pedagogical processes, the quality-related interventions fail to do justice to children's learning.

To overcome these limitations and optimise the resources and time ahead, MHRD has undertaken several initiatives in 2009-10 to strengthen State's planning and efforts for comprehensive Quality Improvement. Some of these are described below.

a. Regional Workshops on Education of Equitable Quality

MHRD organized four consultative Regional Workshops in June – August 2009 to discuss and agree upon a broad quality framework that would guide future SSA efforts for quality improvement in a cohesive manner. The 3-day workshops provided an opportunity for top level education authorities to reflect and discuss through participatory mode about children's learning and classroom processes, to arrive at a shared vision of the shifts desired in core and enabling components of education quality, and to design a plan of action for taking this vision forward in the coming year(s). The Workshop was attended by Secretary (EE-II), Joint Secretary (EE-II) and other members of EE Bureau, as well as the Education Secretaries, State Project Directors, State Pedagogy Coordinators, SCERT Directors and Directors of Primary Education from all the different states. The discussion covered both core components (Curriculum, pedagogy, materials, classroom organisation, lesson planning, learning assessment) and enabling components (teacher development and support, performance assessment, administration, programme evaluation, research, institutional development). During the third day of each workshop, each state designed and presented a broad Plan of Action for integrating all core and enabling components in their state around this shared vision for pedagogical renewal, and for disseminating this vision and deepening pedagogical understanding among all stakeholders at different levels in the State. The minutes of the Workshops are included hereafter.

b. State level Visioning Workshops

Subsequent to the Regional Workshops, approximately 17 States have conducted similar State-level workshops with different stakeholders in the State, in order to share the discussions from the Regional Workshops and to draft a broad vision and comprehensive plan for quality improvement in the State. These include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Daman & Diu, Himachal Pradesh,

Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Punjab, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand. About 4 States so far have been able to develop a Quality Vision Document for their State, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, and Uttarakhand; while 5 others are in the process of finalizing theirs, including Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh. A detailed table describing the commitments that each State made in their Quality Plans which they designed and presented during the 4 Regional Workshops, as well as the steps that each State has taken as a follow-up in the ensuing months, have been included hereafter.

c. National Resource Group for Quality Education

The 6th Meeting of the National Resource Group (NRG) for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was held on 29th September, 2009, in order to discuss the present context of quality improvement in SSA in light of the recommendations of the 10th Joint Review Mission, the passing of the Right to Education Act in August 2009, and the four Regional Workshops on Education of Equitable Quality. Strategic discussions were held on what kind of resource support could be provided to States as a follow up to the above, to further strengthen State's efforts towards overall pedagogical renewal. (Minutes of this meeting have been circulated separately).

d. National Sub-Missions on Learning Outcomes and Teachers Training

Under SSA, six Sub-Missions have been constituted at the National level to provide guidance and resource support in guiding SSA interventions, two of which relate specifically to quality interventions. One is the Sub-mission on 'Defining Learning Outcomes and Assessment/Monitoring of Students' Achievement Levels', and the second is the Sub-mission on "Teachers Training, Strengthening of academic support to institutions and other aspects of quality improvement under SSA". Both of these held their third meeting in October 2009, which led to useful deliberations and recommendations for strengthening these two areas under SSA (Minutes of these meetings have been circulated separately).

e. Workshop on Strengthening Effectiveness of BRC/CRCs

A National Level workshop was organized in Delhi on November 16 & 17, 2009 to discuss the findings of the recent studies on effectiveness of BRC/CRCs, and to suggest concrete measures for improving the effectiveness of BRC/CRCs. Participants included representative from BRCs, CRCs, DIETs, functionaries from some State Project Offices, eminent educationists, representatives from Monitoring Institutions, MHRD and consultants from TSG-Ed.CIL. (The report and recommendations emerging from this Workshop have been included later in this document).

f. National Workshop on 'Progress and Planning for Comprehensive Quality Improvement under SSA'

MHRD organized a National Workshop on 'Progress and Planning for Quality Improvement under SSA' on 19-20th November 2009 in Bangalore. The purpose of

the workshop was to collectively take stock of efforts and achievements in improving the quality of elementary education under the SSA program, and to help States by sharing a Planning Framework, tools and guidelines for designing a comprehensive Quality Improvement Plan for the next three years, which will effectively integrate all core and enabling components towards achieving a clearly outlined vision of quality. This 3-Year Perspective Quality Plan is to form part of the Annual Work Plan and Budgets for 2010-11, and to become the basis for guiding States' SSA quality interventions over the next few years. The Workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss with States the important implications emerging from the recently enacted Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, and its implications for quality efforts under SSA.

g. Preparations for Annual Work Plan & Budget 2010-11

Four regional Planning Workshops were coordinated by TSG in November to December 2009, where intensive discussions were held with the State Pedagogy Coordinators from each region, to help them in designing 3-Year Quality Plans that will strengthen each of the major quality parameters under SSA in an integrated manner, in order to lead to visible enhancement in children's learning. The thrust that was emphasized is to gear all interventions to bring changes in classroom processes and to ensure that every child learns, and to ensure the State is geared up to meet the specifications of the Right to Education Act.

During these discussions, it was stressed that the Quality Plans must be designed keeping in mind the implications of the Right to Education Act, the recommendations of the 10th Joint Review Mission of SSA, the discussions held in the 4 Regional Workshops on 'Education of Equitable Quality', and the letter sent out from the Joint Secretary (EE-II) with guidelines for formulation of the AWP&B 2010-11, which emphasized the following key thrust areas:

- i. All quality interventions must be in consonance with NCF 05 and the RTE Act, with clear steps to ensure that curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, TLMs, teacher training and assessment systems are all harmonized in tune with NCF 05
- ii. Teaching Learning Materials for LEP and remedial teaching should be integrated with the regular textbooks, without becoming an add-on or extra load on children
- iii. States must review their systems of testing and school grading, to ensure they do not demotivate or cause stress to children, which may contribute to dropout
- iv. Plans must include a Saturation Plan for upgrading all untrained teachers over next 2 yrs, with appropriate 2-yr equivalent course, in convergence with Teacher Education Scheme
- v. Need for major shift in in-service training programs to address the social, cultural & economic context of learners, and the training *process* itself should be conducted through experiential, participatory and inclusive methods
- vi. Must include approaches for rejuvenating BRC/CRCs, by reviewing the recruitment/ placement systems, selection criteria, roles & functions, and capacity building for RPs
- vii. Need for re-orientation & training of educational administrators at all levels, to the 'child rights' perspective as per RTE

h. Communicating with States through Videoconferences, Teleconferences and Correspondence

MHRD with support of Pedagogy Unit TSG has continued to follow-up with states' efforts for holistic quality improvement, and to share resources, ideas and tools to help them in this regard. A National Teleconference was organized by MHRD on 3-4th November 2009 to take stock of states' progress in this regard. Thereafter, a National Videoconference was organized on 16th December 2009 on the theme of 'Comprehensive Quality Planning under SSA'. In addition, Joint Secretary (EE-II) wrote a letter to each State highlighting the specific quality-related issues in each state, and stressing the need for harmonization between various core and enabling components towards a shared vision of quality.