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(Hg.)

## **Capacity Development und Schulqualität**

Konzepte und Befunde zur  
Lehrerprofessionalisierung  
in der Entwicklungs-  
zusammenarbeit

Venkat Reddy

## Teachers as guarantors of quality education for every child

### 1 Basic education in India

India has a child population of 250 million in the 6–14 years age group. It has the largest network of public schools with 1,042,251 schools and 3,749,946 school teachers covering 183.36 million children. Significantly, noon meals covering over 131.69 million children are provided – this is the largest hot cooked meal program in the world. Many poor children are given scholarships, free text books, and even residential accommodation to help them continue in schools. Most children who are covered under the special programs come from some of the poorest of families. They have been categorised as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes by the Constitution of India for mandatory affirmative action. Being a federal government, schools are located in the provinces, called the States of India, which are diverse in culture, economic advancement and also the texture of political regimes. In the state of Kerala, which is in the south along the coast, every child attends school. On the other hand in Uttar Pradesh, in North India which is landlocked and has a terrain of dry and wet land farming, or in the State of Rajasthan which is largely a desert area, there is a huge challenge of retaining children in school.

In some states, primary school is up to 4th grade and in some up to 5th grade. Elementary school education is invariably up to class 7 or 8. There are common board examinations at the end of primary and elementary school level, but there is no uniform pattern in this. In all the states however the school completion board examinations are conducted for the children in the 10th grade which is when children are 15 to 16 years old. It is estimated that 39% drop out after class 5, 54.6% children (56.9% girls) drop out before they complete class 8, and 66% (68.6% girls) drop out before they reach class 10 (GOI, MHRD Website, provisional data for academic year 2001–02).<sup>1</sup> These percentages are appallingly lower in tribal areas, backward districts and among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes even after five years of continuous presence of children in schools. On the whole, an estimated 87 million (Census of India 2001) children between the ages of 5–15 years are not in schools (including school dropouts). They constitute almost 50% of our country's child population. There has to be a definitive action to correct this situation of poor retention of children after primary school.

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<sup>1</sup> Dropout rates: Primary (classes 1 to 5) Boys: 38.4%, Girls: 39.9% and Total: 39%. Dropout rate at Upper Primary (Classes 1 to 8): Boys: 52.9%, Girls 56.9% and Total 54.6%. Dropout rate from classes 1 to 10: Boys 64.2%, Girls 68.6% and Total 66% (Source: DOEEL, MHRD, GOI Website, provisional data for academic year 2001–02).

In the past decade India has witnessed an explosive demand for education. The majority of schools in India are run directly by the government, whilst there is now an emerging trend of private schools coming up all over the country. The percentage increase in the number of teachers has not kept pace with increase in enrolment or the percentage increase in the number of children attending schools. Thus, there are several instances where a school teacher at the primary school level is saddled with over 80 children and in the secondary school level it is not uncommon to find over crowded classrooms. The implications of this trend are worrisome as the major brunt of teacher shortages is being faced in rural, remote and tribal areas.

While majority of schools in the country are run by the State governments directly there are some Central Schools as well to cater to children of civil servants whose parents are on transferable jobs. In addition there are schools under private management which are government recognized, some of which receive government grants (aided schools) and some of which do not (unaided schools). Since government schools are perceived as weak and unable to deliver quality education they are being supplanted by private schools, with many of them claiming to be 'English medium schools'. Though private schools constitute only a small percentage, their number is rapidly increasing and their spread constitutes a major challenge to the government school system.

The range of public and private provisioning of schools in the country accounts for an unfair and iniquitous education system. Equally worrisome is the existence of a large number of unrecognised private schools and tuition centres that cater to children who can pay – loading the dice against children in poverty situations.<sup>2</sup>

While there is variety in the types of schools there is even greater variety in the basic facilities and amenities available in the schools of the government system. In small villages there are schools that have no buildings of their own and run in public, community or rented premises. On the other extreme, in larger villages there are schools that have pucca structures of stone and brick, with playgrounds and even some trees. The Municipal Corporation schools in the metropolitan areas are often housed in buildings that were once fine structures but which have deteriorated because of neglect.

## 2 Challenges for a first-generation learner and school dropouts

Out-of-school-children are in the labour force working either for an employer or in their own homes. Many of them are trafficked from their communities and villages to far away unknown places to work as domestic child labourers or in sweat shops as casual forced labourers making products, in embroidery, handicrafts and

2 Pratichi (India) Trust (2002): The Pratichi Education Report, New Delhi, PROBE Report, Public Report on Basic Education in India, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1999 and Ramachandran, Vimala (2004) (Ed.): Gender and Social Equity in Primary Education – Hierarchy of Access. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

other kinds of work. Wherever out-of-school-children are, being out of school means they are subject to exploitation and drudgery of work with little hope of realising their potential and denied the opportunity to dream of a better tomorrow. Engaged in unpaid domestic work and in the unorganised sector, children are rendered invisible and their work unrecognised. Being out of school girls succumb to pressures of early child marriage that causes untold harm to their overall growth and development. Children who are physically and mentally challenged are grossly neglected and not reckoned for and they face enormous difficulties in getting any kind of schooling. Most children do not continue in schools due to the system's inability to address their specific needs. Thus, it is only such children who have been able to overcome the barriers survive. Some of the barriers are as follows:

(1) *Inability of the school to understand and respond to the first-generation learner:* Often the lack of quality education or the circumstances of the child are given as reasons for why a child drops out of school. More important there is a lack of appreciation of the difficulties faced by the first-generation learners in coping with the school system. Families that have been denied literacy for centuries would only know how to transact the world of work, labour and employer-employee relation. On the other hand, the act of going to school necessitates an inculcation of culture and habit of packing the school bag and lunch box, doing the homework, preparing for the endless numbers of unit tests and examinations, being punctual and regular to school and so on. It requires knowing the procedures of admission, getting a birth certificate, attendance in schools, obtaining a transfer certificate to move from one level i.e. primary school to the next level i.e. the elementary or high school. They are at a loss to deal with the school system, the myriad of procedures, rules and hidden practices that we as middle class have acquired and transact almost unthinkingly. The system is unmindful of these intricate difficulties of the first-generation learner and assumes that the every day life of a student is well chartered. The school governance which is designed for those who already know how to send a child to school and lacks the patience to encourage first-generation learners needs to ensure that poor children are not pushed out of schools.

(2) *The burden of examinations, curriculum and exclusion:* Education requires a support system such as tuitions, coaching classes, learning environment at home and in schools etc. to cope with the complicated curriculum especially at the elementary and secondary school levels to enable children pass the board examinations. First-generation learners need support to overcome the inherent deficiencies of their environment and thereby prevent failure of roughly 50% of them who take the Board examination. Failure also results in a loss of self-worth and their eventual exclusion from the school system. Poor children need a support system to help them overcome these barriers and continue in school till they complete class 10.

(3) *Cultural diversity – the need for an inclusive policy:* The school system also needs to be sensitive to children who come from different cultural milieus. Where the children's home language differs from the language of the school, comprehension is indeed a big issue. The school system has to gear itself to reach out to such

children within a culturally and socially sensitive environment thereby preventing their exclusion. It is necessary to start with the comfort levels of the child when she/he enters the school. At the same time there is a need to take the child along the education path that would empower her to negotiate with the existing and dominant systems of knowledge and culture.

(3) *Physically and mentally challenged children – the need for sensitivity*: Differently abled children require special attention in terms of understanding, teaching methods and material, daily activity learning, development of motor skills, behaviour, social activities etc. The school system is usually overwhelmed by the presence of children who need special attention. Children with disabilities are discouraged and even go unnoticed both at the school as well as the societal level. There needs to be an adequate provisioning of support services and accessibility both in terms of material infrastructure and pedagogical strategies for such children. Specially trained teachers are required to cope with such children.

(4) *Older “out-of-school-children” – issues of mainstreaming*: With the activities at the field level initiated by the government and civil societies, many school dropouts who are now in labour force chose to join schools. They are being prepared through bridge courses, accelerated learning and special classes for admission to schools. Since schools have been designed for regular school-going children there are issues of procedures of admission and rules that do not fit well with these children and their context. Even with regard to getting qualified for examinations there are requirements that a child should have studied for some number of years to qualify to take the examination. The system needs to be flexible enough and evolve systemic capacities to prepare such children for an age appropriate class and help them continue without any disruption.

### 3 Teachers for children’s right to education

In the context of the multiplicity of challenges faced by children, over 2,500 government school teachers in Ranga Reddy District, Andhra Pradesh established the “Teachers’ Forum for Liberation of Child Labour” (BKVV) in 1996 to protect the rights of children in the school-going age. This was facilitated by the MV Foundation. The forum has since become a national level organisation and rechristened as ‘All India Teachers’ Forum for Child Rights’-AITFCR.<sup>3</sup>

3 The AITFCR claims a membership of over 2,000 committed government teachers, each of whom pays an annual membership fee of Rs 20.

Work is spread over all the three regions of the state – Telengana, Andhra and Rayalseema. The MVF actively supports the AITFCR both technically and, to a limited extent, financially in 14 of the 23 districts. Recent expansions have been into Nellore, Medak, and Prakasam districts which are being covered without MVF’s support. The nominal expenses on meetings, workshops and travelling for the purposes of mobilization are being met in these districts out of local retail donations.

Districts into which the AITFCR is still to make an entry are Krishna, Khammam, Karimnagar, Nizamabad, West Godavari, and Guntur.

The teachers' forum defined that the responsibility of school teachers is for all children in the neighbourhood and not only for those who attend schools. In other words, they are to reach out to all "out-of-school-children" which includes child labourers. Most important to their philosophy is the definition of child labour as all children out of school.

They believe that schools are to be transformed from institutions that discourage children to study to institutions that are inclusive and go out of the way to welcome and encourage first-generation learners. Therefore, they reached out to every household in the neighbourhood, talked to the parents and persuaded them to send their children to schools. They assured them that they would impart quality education and ensure supporting every child build his self esteem. They also modified policies of admissions, promotions, retention and attendance to make them simpler and more sensitive to the first-generation learner. They recognised that older children require special attention to prepare for studentship to bring them on par with other children of similar age group in school. In doing so they radically changed the role of schools.

The school teachers participated in campaigns, marches, rallies and public meetings instilling confidence among the poor to withdraw their children from work and send them to schools, persuading employers to give support to parents in sending their children to schools, interacting with the local government – especially the departments of welfare, education and labour – to sensitise them on child rights, taking up specific cases of violation of child rights especially in schools and social welfare hostels and enthusing the villagers to contribute generously to build school infrastructure.

In recognition of the parental aspiration for the education of their children, they assured that every child in school is given a 'Learning Guarantee'. It expresses that children deserve the learning that is accorded for them in that specified class. In doing so the teachers established that government schools are not second rate education programmes and guaranteed that every child is learning and learning well. This

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During the new millennium, the AITFCR will focus on:

- Instilling and motivating other teachers, peer groups and teachers' unions by spreading the message amongst government school teachers. Organizing seminars and workshops for teachers to improve the quality of education in schools. Imparting training to education volunteers.
- Releasing and motivating child labour to enrol in mainstream schools. Running workshops for district level officials from the education department on how to combat the menace of child labour.
- Assisting running of intensive bridge courses (for newly enrolled older children), of school strengthening programs.
- Setting up a database for all children in the 5–14 age group in every village.
- Building pressure to modify and simplify the policies and practices relating to admissions, promotions, retention, and attendance – and make these more contextual to the social and cultural background of the rural children.
- Stronger focus on the quality of education, on the girl child, and on recruiting more female teachers to redress the current balance of the membership, which is tilted in favour of males.

is while acknowledging the fact that children do not have the learning environment in their homes and are therefore given additional attention to make up for their disadvantages. They offer to be sensitive to the specific circumstances from which such children are admitted and respect the children while guaranteeing them their right to education.

The teachers' forum has a set of guiding principles called the 'Non Negotiables for Schools and Schoolteachers':

- All children must join schools in classes according to their age.
- School teachers must recognize that it is the responsibility of the school to give children a guarantee that they would learn.
- School teachers must provide a guarantee to build competencies of children in order to reach the class in accordance with their age.
- School teachers must guarantee that corporal punishment will not be used in the classroom to discipline children.
- School teachers must ensure that all children feel wanted and are comfortable in the school.
- The school must ensure that there is no violation of children's rights in the school as well as in the community.

The teachers' forum demonstrated that teachers derived their strength as professionals by addressing the multiplicity of challenges and deciding the specific nature of education that has to be imparted to every child and in protecting the right to education. They were empowered to decide what they are to teach and how they are to assess the children in order to guarantee that children in their schools actually learn. They experienced first hand the journey of children to become 'children', and weave through all the social, cultural and linguistic barriers. The school teachers adhered to the principle of universality in reaching out to every child, rich and poor. Children's right to education and school participation bestows the teacher with the energy to keep the child in school and not get pushed out. Indeed there is such an intertwining of children's right to education and teacher empowerment.

If we are to effect any quality reform in the system, all support systems from the cluster to the state level will have to base their support on a trust of and respect for the teacher, according him/her respect, space and at least a measure of autonomy. Teachers also need to be encouraged and assisted in forming their own support groups. A mature team should also be there to offer support and guidance to teachers when required.

### The 'Learning Guarantee' programme

When the government of Andhra Pradesh made an assessment of the learning levels of children in select schools in Chittoor district in April 2001 the results showed that more than 60% of children in class 5 did not reach even up to the standard of class 1. This

survey was shared by MV Foundation with the teachers' forum and volunteers of Shankarpally mandal in the beginning of the academic session. This started a debate on the quality of teaching and learning in the schools at Shankarpally mandal. While it was accepted by every one that no child must work in the area in this mandal, there was no clue as to what was being taught in the schools. There were complaints from some parents that their children did not learn much in schools in spite of them making enormous sacrifices to send their children to schools. The pressure therefore was built up to assess the learning levels of children in the primary schools of Shankarpally mandal as well. It was decided that after such an assessment the parents are given a guarantee from the school that their children do also learn. The questionnaire which was used in Chittoor district was administered in the Shankarpally mandal to assess the learning levels of children in the primary schools. The results of the study showed that children of Shankarpally mandal were not any better than those in Chittoor, if not worse. This was alarming and the school teachers decided to concentrate more seriously on the issue of giving children the guarantee that they would learn if they came to school. This was the beginning of the learning guarantee programme of Shankarpally mandal.<sup>4</sup>

The 'Learning Guarantee' programme in Shankarpally began in eight villages. There was a detailed analysis on the achievement levels of each of the children in the schools. This assessment was done entirely by the school teachers who had maintained base line records of every child from the beginning of this experiment. Subsequently, these children were grouped according to their levels of learning and the teachers evolved Teaching Learning Material (TLM) to build the competence of the children in the respective schools. The teachers also drew up daily and weekly plans for these children focusing on teaching English, Mathematics and Environmental Studies. All the activities were in consonance with curriculum objectives for each class as fixed by the State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT) of the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Part of the strategy used for ensuring learning was to regroup children in the school based on their learning levels. This was essential to impart the right level of education to the children so that she/he could pick up from that point.<sup>5</sup>

4 The findings of the study on the learning levels of children in Chittoor District were made available to the gathering in the meeting held in Shankarpally mandal in May 2001 to introduce the Learning Guarantee programme to the School Education Committees (SEC), parents, and Gram Panchayat officials. Nearly 600 people were present. The objectives of the programme were spelt out and children from Classes 3–5 were assessed then and there. The results of assessment were presented to them the next day. The 'Learning Guarantee' programme was then initiated in the Upper Primary Schools of Mokila and Chandippa villages.

5 Initially there was not much support from the teachers in Shankarpally mandal though support from the community was quite strong. These indifferent teachers were invited to view the process being adopted whenever they had the time. They visited the schools in Mokila and Chandippa and were convinced of the utility of the project. This invitation was extended to the Mandal Education Officer as well. During his visit to Budlapur he asked the children a few questions in Mathematics and Telugu. He was satisfied with their response and having commended the efforts of the volunteers, noted some positive remarks in the Visitors' Register. Traditional folk forms Burrakatha and Harikatha, were used as a means of developing the children's vocabulary

Initially there was resistance from the parents of the children for breaking up of the classes in the school and re-arranging children into groups in which some of the children in the higher classes were made to sit with children who were still in classes 1 and 2. They felt that shifting them to a group along with younger children was a waste of time. A series of meetings were held by the school with the parents to tell them about the objectives of the programme. They were also promised that in such a system each child would be taken care of in her/his group by the school teacher and ensured that they actually learn and soon reach a level in accordance with their age as well as class they are in. In some schools the headmaster had rendered a public guarantee to the parents and community in the process of convincing them regarding the efficacy of the programme. The community also participated in the programme by ensuring children to regularly attend school and by extending all co-operation possible to the schools. As a result, the schools got energized and innovative methods of teaching and learning emerged. The inputs provided for the children were a result of collective efforts and continuous reviews conducted by the community through group meetings. Such an involvement resulted in the teachers feeling empowered. In the process and in a matter of four to five months there was remarkable change in the learning levels of all the children. Their ability to listen, speak, read and write vastly improved. Even in Mathematics they gained confidence. The change that came about in children truly enthused the teachers to do more.

#### 4 Suggested conclusion

With more than 87 million children out of school in India, it is imperative that government school teachers be encouraged to recognize the special need for support of the first-generation learner from poor and deprived families. The example of the AITFCR – the All India Teachers' Forum for Child Rights – in South India is remarkable because it empowers teachers to be accommodating to those families and children who are not familiar with a bureaucratic system and who, as a result, frequently see themselves pushed out of school. The teachers' forum was facilitated and continues to be nurtured by the MV Foundation, an important partner in India of the Welthungerhilfe and the Alliance2015.

A first step is for teachers to accept that they are responsible for all children of school-going age in their given community, not only the ones already attending school and to create child friendly school environments. The "Learning Guarantee Contracts" devised by the teachers' forum and signed between schools and parents improve the quality, accountability and commitment of schools and teachers on the one hand and the learning outcomes of pupils on the other.

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as part of Sunday Sandadi which is a government programme to encourage children to take part in extra curricular activities on Sundays. The teaching methodology employed was quite effective and the children learnt to write and read well within a span of ten days.

By making schools child-friendly and learning results measurable, schools embark on the challenging but essential path of school development to ensure every child's right to formal, full-time quality education. It is a process that calls for a collective effort of all stakeholders in a community and highly rewarding because of the motivation and energy it sets free. As such it is a model to be expanded and well worth exploring in other contexts and regions.

**D**as Ziel, eine ausreichende Qualität der Schulbildung sicherzustellen, ist in Entwicklungsländern sehr eng verwoben mit der Frage nach Möglichkeiten einer effizienten Professionalisierung der Lehrkräfte. In diesem Band werden zum einen verschiedene, von zentralen Organisationen der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit durchgeführte Maßnahmen im Bereich Lehreraus- und -fortbildung vorgestellt und aus der Perspektive der jeweiligen Verantwortlichen im Hinblick auf ihre Effekte reflektiert. Die Praxisberichte werden zum anderen von verschiedenen Autorinnen und Autoren aus der Schul- und Unterrichtsforschung aus deren jeweiliger theoretischer oder empirischer Perspektive betrachtet. So wird ein Einblick in die unterschiedlichen Wissensbestände und Erfahrungsbereiche von Praxis und Forschung gegeben und es werden diese Wissensbestände miteinander in Beziehung gesetzt. Damit wird die oftmals angemahnte Diskrepanz zwischen Forschung einerseits und Nutzung wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse in der Praxis andererseits zu überbrücken versucht.



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ISBN 978-3-8309-2794-5



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