

Submitted by

Indian Team attended training on Child Rights, Classroom and School Management in 2006

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Background

Education has always been considered as key to social transformation. It is a powerful tool for human development and empowerment. The benefits of high quality education particularly at the school level are widely accepted across the globe and almost all countries are continuously striving for developing a well governed education system suitable to their socio cultural and political context. Children in most countries are generally treated as precious asset and education at the primary level considered as their basic need and fundamental right. Access to quality elementary education not only improves quality of children's life by preparing them to face the challenges at the later stage of life, it also yields significant benefits for society as a whole. Basic education, in nutshell, has tremendous impact on living condition since it is a means of upward mobility for the children of socially or economically disadvantaged section of people. Quality education of longer duration contributes a lot to the future of any individual child and it also shapes the future of family, society and nation.

In India with turning of this millennium education has become fundamental right for the children of 6-14 years age group leading to reform initiatives in multiple fronts. One of such initiatives has been promotion of active participation of children in school as well as classroom activities which has also been one of the major recommendations of Child Right Convention in 1989. A good school is identified with the activities that school conducts for promoting a kind of environment, which is conducive for 'joyful learning'. As per Indian ethos, education has been considered as continuous process of enlightenment leading to enjoyment and a feeling of fulfillment. This path of education can not be achieved without creating a situation of joyful learning either within classroom or outside.

Classrooms in India are full of diversities in terms of socio cultural and economic background of teachers and taught. While some children are able to cope with the method and pace of teaching

and learning in classroom, some children lag behind and gradually get isolated from whole class. Subsequently these children may experience failure in class and chances of these children being 'at risk' increase. Many such children lose interest in education and finally drop out from school. In India a large section of children is still dropping out although in last two decades educational facilities have increased considerably along with tremendous increase in demand for education and enrolment of children. In view of this continuous problem of dropout, attention is now increasingly being paid by government and non government agencies to make classroom attractive for children ensuring their active participation in learning process.

It is in this context and in view of urgency in addressing the right of children to education, this project has been undertaken in six schools of two different states namely Madhya Pradesh and Kerala to experiment with different activities that can provide adequate opportunities to children to participate actively in educational process. These two states are completely different in many respects as far as education is concerned ranging from availability of schooling facility to classroom management that affects largely on participation of children in classroom. While in Kerala majority of people are fully aware about the need for education of children and actively participate in day to day activities of school, in Madhya Pradesh demand for education in society is comparatively lower than that of Kerala. Again it is much lower in case of girls and disadvantaged children. Madhya Pradesh has larger proportion of people below poverty level and disadvantaged section of people belonging to tribal groups. Universalisation of Elementary Education is far from reality in Madhya Pradesh whereas Kerala has already achieved 100% access, enrolment and also gender and social equity in children's participation of school irrespective of their social and gender background. However in both states access to quality education is an area of major concern particularly in government school. At present in Kerala Constructivist Pedagogy is being implemented. It is expected that this initiative might have affected the classroom situation to some extent.

During this project an effort has been made to initiate some more activities to improve participation of children and their learning level. The agenda was to ensure learning with fun by experiencing and experimenting with different learning material. Attention was also given to raise the awareness level of people for education that is required for reducing absenteeism of children. During last nine months continuous support was also provided to the teachers and grassroot level workers to encourage them to take initiatives for practicing activity based teaching method involving children at optimum level which in turn led to one to one relationship between teacher and student. Present report aims at documenting the major initiatives taken during this period of time.

It has been decided to conduct an action research in selected schools in Madhya Pradesh and some Alternative Schools in Kerala to examine the extent to which the classroom activities are being organized to promote child participation in school. The International Training Programme in Sweden provided the input on the Activities that can ensure child friendly environment for their effective learning and it has been decided to make model activity based and child friendly class rooms through this project work.

Project in Kerala on Ensuring Child's right to participate in Classroom Activities through improving Classroom Management

Among all states in India, Kerala has achieved highest literacy rate. The literacy rate is 93%. The learning strategy from the conventional system has already been changed. Even then in many of the schools the traditional system is still continuing.

Aim of the Project

Preserve Child right in the classroom through Participation

Assure quality education to all children

Create Awareness of Activity based and child friendly classrooms

Objectives

To identify various strategies for developing classroom as Child friendly

To identify different activities for developing a child friendly classroom

To make an attitudinal change among teachers from the conventional system of teaching and evaluation

To Prepare teachers to adopt the activity based and child friendly teaching learning method

To create an awareness among the parents, community and teachers about the Right of the Child to participate in class room

Implementation of the Project

Task and Target Group

The task is identified to make a role model activity based and child friendly classroom in the existing situation with the help of support mechanisms by the investigators and with the help of some other sources. Keeping this goal in mind the investigator identified two alternate schools in Wayanad district where majority of the children belongs to tribal community. (Alternate school is a single teacher school handled all the 1 to 4 classes by one teacher in a non accessible area. This may be inside a Forest or on the top of a hill where more than 10 children are available as out of school children)

The identified schools are Kurichiat A S Centre and Cheeyambam A S Centre.

In Madhyapradesh the identified Schools are Govt. P.S. Kalmunda, Govt. P.S Gowardha and Govt. P.S. Kirchiri (Girls).

Being the investigator has a good rapport with these Schools the existing conditions are well known to the investigator.

The major problems identified are

The classrooms are not sufficiently spacious for conducting activity based teaching

The Teachers are not getting sufficient training in activity based teaching

Most of the children are first generation learners so they are not getting any support from their home

Sufficient Teaching and Learning Materials are not available in the Alternative centre and school

Many children are coming to the school without proper dress due to poverty

Teachers and Parents are unaware of the rights of the child

Process designed for the Project

Meeting with the community members

Meeting of the Parents

Design the training to the instructors

Supply of learning materials

Organising some fests for awareness

Distribution of clothing food etc..

Continious monitoring

Formation of Child Right Protection Council

Awareness Programme of Child Rights

Identification of the Resource support

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan

Parent Teacher Association

Stake holders

Non Governmental Organisations

Implementation

Outcomes of the Project

Pilot Project

The Pilot project was started with preparation and implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the relevance of SIP to address the Child Right in Madhya Pradesh and In Kerala. Some Schools were selected to start the preliminary work i.e strength and weakness of the schools and how the children are treated in these schools. It was necessary to find out how the children are being encouraged to participate in learning process and whether they were facing any difficulty. During this process of pilot study it was found that the un attractive classroom environment posed serious difficulty for involving maximum number of children From the initiation of the Project work with the suggestion of our Mentor Prof. Per Wickenberg we have pinpointed the Topic as Promoting Activity-based and Child-friendly learning environment in the classroom. The Pilot Project helped us to converge the learning situation to the interest of the Child. The Major interventions of our Pilot Project are as follows.

- P1 - An Orientation programme on child rights for school teachers was conducted at Sulthan Bathery. About 100 teachers participated the programme.
- P2 - Sri. Mathew Zacharias and E.P. Mohandas engaged the sessions.
- P3 - District Panchayath president Smt. Sarasamma is inaugurating the awareness programme for school children.
- P4 - The District Panchayath President declaring has the child friendly School by presenting a flower to a child.

Awareness Rally

Before the Activity Camp a rally was conducted. Students from different schools participated in the Rally. All the children enjoyed the rally and fulfilled their responsibility of bringing their friends in school.

An awareness rally was conducted. Teachers and students of different Alternate Schools were participated.

Activity Camps

Different Activity Camps were conducted with the help of some experts in the field. During the activity camp Children got enough opportunities to experience different activities. Through this activities children will slowly learn many things which is related with the Pedagogy.

AS Fest

With the support of SSA wayanad Two A S Fests were Conducted. The students Parents and Publics Really made this a Festival. All children Participated one or another activiy. All the children were rewarded. Parents and Publics also joined with the children. Publics arranged a very good feast in these two fests.

Formation of Child Right Protection Council

A council for the protection of child right was formed in the name of 'Child Right Protection Council Wayanad'. The District Panchayath President is the chairman of the Council. The District officials like Deputy Director of Education, District Education Officer, District Welfare Officer, etc. are the members of this council. Sri. Mathew Zacharias is the President, Sri. E.P. Mohandas is the Secretary of the council. The main object of the council is to protect Child Right and give awareness to the public and teachers. The area of the council is entire district of Wayanad. It is decided to extent the concept of Child Right Protection Council through out the state.

Project Interventions at Madhya Pradesh

Coverage area – Three primary schools

1 Govt. PS Kalmunda

2 Govt. PS Govardha

3 Govt. PS Khirkhiri [Girls]

Activities Undertaken in Last year (2006-07):

Activities with teachers- Participants are ten govt. teachers from three schools.

- Five days training workshop on motivation and ensuring child rights.
- Three days training workshop on SLM [Self Learning Material] and TLM [Teaching Learning Material] development.
- Activities and uses of self learning workbooks
- Development of activities on child rights
- Development of TLM as pocket board, word strips, sentence strips, cutouts etc
- Training on library activity and management for language development.

 By monthly orientation in RPM [Review & planning meeting]- discussion on quality education & child rights.

Activities with children- Participants are all students from three schools

Environment building

- Child Rights through class room activity by keeping the example of quality education in front of parents and teachers.

- A real objective of education is kept in front of everybody. In concern to this Maje ka Kendra(center of fun) were run for the children, where

- Children can have fun in learning
- Teachers can have fun in teaching
- Parents can have fun in the achievements of their children.

- To promote multi faceted talents of the children, competitions were organized at schools.

In all school such competitions of singing, story writing and telling, dancing, theatre, science quiz, math's race etc were conducted. This year (2006-07) expenses met by the teacher and community.

 Self-learning through workbooks.

 Joyful activity with children

Organization of Bal Mela

It was organized in one selected school Khirkhiri. Children themselves have prepared several items, which were presented on the stalls. During mela nataks, the children also performed in cultural activities including singing and dancing.

Total cost / expenses on mela were borne by the community and teachers.

Educational Visit

 Children were taken for the exposure visit keeping in mind to impart the knowledge of environment. New structure was given to it. They were taken to police station, railway station, post office and bank. Where they had direct communication and interaction with the officers. Officers introduced them to the department and their work

Bal Sabha

In all the three villages Bal Sabha is organized every week. In order to enhance their creative talent and provide them a chance to show their abilities

Creative Work -

To develop hand crafting of child many activities are conducting in "Maje Ke Kendra". Such as:

Clay toy making

TLM of clay

Doll by using cloths

Use of useless things

Paper boat, chakri, ball, kite, flower making

Picture Art -

Children are motivated for picture art by providing the related material according to their which what the color they want they can choose and can try to make what they can. The good pictures are pasted on the wall so that children can fell proud.

Child Corner -

In each Maje ka kendra have a particular place for children where the things like pictures, toys magazines, self learning material etc made by themselves are kept.

Library -

All 3 schools are facilitate by libraries to increase interest and keep curiosity continue inside themselves. In library children not only read the books parallely their language competency is developed also such as completing stories, making stories by watching pictures, completing Kahani chaukhat.

Project Work -

To promote environmental study, to create interest inside children towards it, to develop scientific technique project work activity for children . In this activity some small groups of children called 'Khoji Dal' allot small projects to them. This activity is proving succeed because the children who did not know read and write are doing research work now.

How does it happen?

For Khoji Dal those children are selected belong 3rd and 4th std and have minimum competency of good speaking and good listening. The size of Dal could be 5 to 6.

Bal Patrika (Children's Magazine)

- Hand written children magazine is ready each and every school.
- Wall news paper

Wall newspaper is been started in all 3 schools on practical basis

Bal Panchayat--

*Formation of Bal Panchayat- For the children, by the children.

Purpose:

- Learning by doing self [child]
- Realization of their [child] responsibilities.
- Knowing about election procedure, panchayati raj its structure and their rights
- Developing leadership skills
- Teach them how to carry out given responsibility.

Election for Bal Sarpanch/ Bal Upsarpanch:

Eligibility

- He/She should be form III, IV or V std.
- He/She should be regular to school, intelligent and active.
- He/She should be capable to convey his/her message.

- Should have leadership.

Election procedure:

- Prepared voter list of children by children.
- Prepared ballot papers, election symbols by children in creativity session.
- Announcement of election through rallies.
- Formed panel has four members one is presiding officer and three are polling officers (They can be PTA/Sarpanch/Upsarpanch/Janpad Adhyaksh/Community members)
- Four candidates are nominated for Sarpanch/Upsarpanch.
- Filled up registration form by them.
- Firstly, name of voter is to be matched with voter list then ballots are given to voter for vote to candidate.
- Voter (child) pick up and chooses his/her favorite candidate and put up ballot in ballot box.
- Polling officer marks voter's finger.
- Panel makes counting in front of one and all.
- Declaration of results.
- Taken oath by Bal Sarpanch
- Commitment of his/her (Bal sarpanch/Bal upsarpanch) responsibility.

Work/responsibility of Bal sarpanch/upsarpanch:

- Analysis of work done by Samities.
- Making coordination with members of Samities.

Samities: Formed by Bal Sarpanch and Bal Upsarpanch.

One Adhyaksh

1. Shiksha [Education] Samit

Four members

Work/Responsibility:

- Interaction with parents to send their children to school [especially with them whose kids are irregular]
- Make help in TLM development.
- Conducting classes in absence of teachers/CA
- Entire information regarding school.
- To knowing the learning level of children.

One Adhyaksh

2. Anushasan [Discipline] samiti

Four members

Work/Responsibility:

- To save school property
- To ensure sitting arrangement & drinking water.

- To provide material for Bal Sabha.
- To ensure interesting punishment for those who break the rules.

One Adhyaksh

3. Swasthaya/Swakchhata Samiti

Four members

Work/Responsibility:

- To Ensure cleanness of children otherwise inspire to parents for that.
- Ensure that each should wash hand before taking food and should use potable water.
- Health check-up of children.
- Meet with children suffering through health problem.

One Adhyaksh

4. Sahityik/Sanskrutik/Kreeda Samiti:

Four members

Work/Responsibility:

- Preparing list of participants to take part in various cultural programs, in Bal Sabha etc.
- To appreciate children for taking part in games/sports and extra curricular activities.

Bal Sabha – Its an event organized once in a weak in which various cultural and educational programs are held such as Rangoli making, clay modeling, debate, speech, allocation, essay writing, story telling, science & maths puzzles, dancing, singing, poetry competitions etc.

- Improvement of school environment – Beautification & decoration programs.
- Project work – Some small projects has been done by children such as sheets collection, wings collection, water sample collection and surveys done by children i.e. finding out total no of animals, male/female, houses existing in village, history of village etc.

Activities with community:

- Regular community meetings for discussion on child rights issues.
- Sandesh Vahini performance- demonstration on child rights and importance of education.
- Night meetings and film shows in villages to presenting educational films on child rights & girls child education

Activity with Government:

Monthly meeting with government officials discussion on child rights is conducted regularly.

Major Interventions and Activities

- Awareness Programme
- Awareness Rally

- Activity Camps
- A S Fest
- Formation of Child Right Protection Council
- Convergence Programmes

Awareness Programmes

Conducted at different stages. Parental awareness programme conducted in Two centres. An awareness Programme for the Teachers and Parents also were conducted. The programme is mainly focused on the child Right and duties of the adults to protect the Child Rights.

Conclusion

From above explanation one can find that with consistent efforts and enabling strategies it is possible to involve students in classroom activities. The students belonging to remote areas and backward communities also tend to participate well if they are given chance and an environment conducive to learning and participation. The above project is just example of humble beginning and this effort needs to continue in future in many other such areas where children are at the risk of silent exclusion even though they come to school but are not being able to actively participate in classroom activities and remain passive learners. Collective efforts of Government, NGOs and INGOs all are needed to solve the problem of non participation of these children to large extent. The project is therefore a learning experience and this particular initiative may be scaled up in future in phased manner.