

Eklavya Foundation

Annual Report of Activities



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EKLAVYA FOUNDATION
Annual Report of Activities
2007-08

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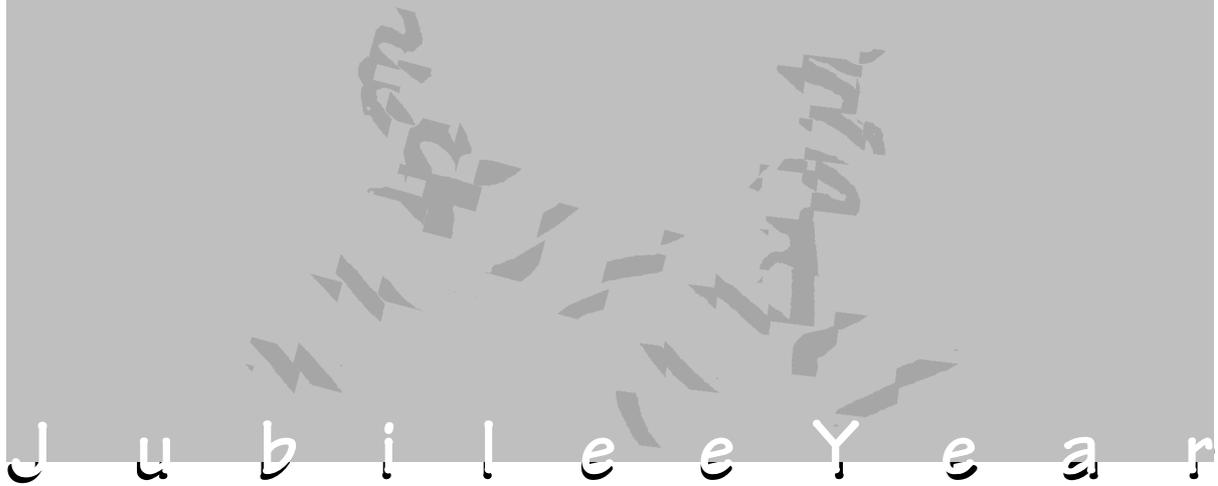
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J u b i l e e Y e a r



2007-08 marks the twenty-fifth year of Eklavya. These twenty-five years have seen major shifts in the field of education, and in the role of the state and of the civil society voluntary groups like Eklavya. The pursuit of values like democracy, equity, reason and meaningful education has opened up newer vistas, posed newer challenges and has led to the erection of new milestones but the end remains as distant and elusive as ever. The task appears far more complex today than ever before, but it is heartening to know that Eklavya is today a part of a much larger group of organisations and individuals who are pursuing similar goals. Eklavya has reflected a great deal on these issues during this and the preceding years with the objective of redefining its goals and strategies.

This year was a year of change for the organisation: new structures and norms were put in place and they began to function with all the creakings of an old machine changing gears. Old programmes were recast and new programmes undertaken amidst fierce debates and dissensions.

If one were to cite highlights, the setting up of Chhattisgarh Educational Resource Centre (CERC) in Raipur as a collaborative venture with Vidya Bhawan Society and Digantar would top the list. Likewise, the initiation of a curricular reform exercise in Bihar and the signing of an MoU with the Rajya Shiksha Kendra of MP would indicate the growing opportunities of working with the government school system.

Internally, the Resource Centre Programme has given us a live field base in the community and among children through seeding of Shiksha Protsahan Kendras (SPKs) in five new districts covering all major field centres of Eklavya. The Curricular Research and Material Development Programme revived Eklavya's long commitment to carrying forward the Science Curriculum Programme and an elementary school Math Curriculum Programme. In our Publication Programme, the major developments have been the recasting of *Chakmak*, our children's magazine, and the opening of Pitaras in three new states, besides a significant expansion in the range of the published titles.

All this has been made possible by the contributions of a large number of volunteers, school teachers, resource persons and funding partners, and of course, the regular members of the Eklavya group. It is my especial pleasure to thank every member of this group and congratulate them for rising up to the new challenges.

Vijaya S. Varma
President



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A. Curricular Research and Material Development



A.1 Researches in Elementary Education

A.1.1 Whole School Transformation

Initiated in 2004, this programme seeks to explore ways in which a comprehensive transformation of all academic aspects of a school system can be facilitated. After initial explorations with a number of medium-sized private schools, we had decided to focus on a group of schools managed by an NGO, Mahila Chetna Manch (MCM) in Bhopal. This is a group of six schools catering to lower middle class students. Eklavya has sought to orient the teachers into new pedagogies, as well as to deepen their understanding of the subjects, and to help them develop a more meaningful academic programme, select textbooks, evaluate student performance, and above all interact with parents and convince them of the need for innovation. The salient features of the work done this year are given below.

- ❖ Though we could not develop a proposal for structural reforms for the next phase, as we had planned, we were able to constructively intervene in most aspects of school development – teacher training, work with principals and management, weekly planning, review and observations, assessment, setting up and working of learning centres, working on the reading process etc.
- ❖ A review of the textbooks available in the market was undertaken with the MCM management. Finally, the NCERT books for the primary classes and relatively reasonable books and notebooks



for the pre-primary classes were prescribed. Two books of English verses for early readers, and *Padho Likho Maza Karo*, all published by Eklavya, were prescribed for the pre-primary classes and class 1.

- ❖ Together with the principals and teachers of the schools, we were able to institute an annual calendar which included parents and teachers' workshops, holidays, weekly tests, exam dates and a regular plan and schedule of weekly reviews with the teachers etc. These were broadly followed during the year but some changes were made by the management in a somewhat ad hoc manner. In two of the schools, the school timings were not rationalised and we couldn't get adequate time for review. Nevertheless, we were able to regularly carry out weekly planning and review throughout the year by adjusting some time in each school.
- ❖ In spite of considerable teacher turnover, typical of small private schools, many new teachers have taken to the new methods quite well – thus the assumption that changing a school's culture will in turn help new teachers to change has been borne out.
- ❖ Student strength has been steadily increasing indicating parental support to the changes.
- ❖ Regular parents' workshops were conducted in all the three schools – about two with each set of parents. This has had a very good response which is shown by the parents' acceptance of non-exam based assessment of children in the pre-primary classes and the inclusion of continuous as well as oral assessments in a larger way for classes 1 to 4.
- ❖ A significant headway has been made in assessment processes. All test and exam papers have moved away from rote-based mechanical processes. Pre-primary classes are now moving to non-exam-based continuous evaluation, after taking the parents into confidence. This was made possible because we were able to convince the management. Eklavya began by giving them a proposal as to what needs to be done. We showed them samples of assessment rubrics from other schools and Rajya Shiksha Kendra's directions. We then developed checklists to show teachers and parents how it could be done. We trained teachers in making worksheets and evaluating them. We had a workshop with parents in all the schools, and teachers shared the new assessment scheme and processes with them. Parents agreed with the new scheme of evaluation.
- ❖ All this was possible due to our regular interaction with the teachers. Almost all the assessment work was done by the teachers after discussions in weekly planning and review meetings, and after necessary demonstrations and classroom observations. We also had a two-day workshop on assessment in January 2008.
- ❖ Internally, we developed a rigorous reporting system with the help of Smita Shendye of the Green Earth group which has helped us review the work fairly regularly. However, consolidating them into periodic documents is yet to be done. This is what we are struggling with at the moment.
- ❖ Shashi Mendiratta has been commissioned this year to do a status study of the schools in order to chart out the path for the next phase.
- ❖ Members participated in the WATIS Partners Meet and in a review of the School Transformation Programme.



Project Coordinator: Anjali Noronha

Other Team Members: Dinesh Rastogi, Ruth Rastogi, Veena Bhatia, C.P. Kada, Arvind Jain, Alethea D'Rozario, Jayasree Subramanian (part time)

Resource Persons: Jacob Tharu, Ravi Subramaniam, Sabyasachi Mukherjee, Smita Shendye

Funding Partner: WIPRO (Wipro Applying Thought In Schools)

A.1.2 Development of Curriculum for Pre-primary to Class 2

This programme is largely located in the Mahila Chetna Manch (MCM) schools and seeks to develop the academic package for the early classes starting from nursery to class 2. The programme aims at producing a comprehensive document, and materials relating to this stage. However, it was not possible to undertake this exercise as we were unable to recruit enough persons for the purpose. So the team focused on day-to-day work in the schools and providing academic guidance to the teachers. The details of these activities are listed below.

- ❖ A workshop on making and using teaching aids was held in May 2007 for teachers of pre-primary to class 2. Apart from the MCM teachers, teachers from six or seven other schools also attended the programme.
- ❖ Learning centres were set up in all three schools for the second year and systems were developed for their continued use. Children from Nursery to KG II are now used to a fixed time for the learning centres and are much better at sharing things and arranging them after use. Replenishment, repair, storage and development of activities through the year need to be further streamlined (Appendix 2). A short film on this has been shot and edited.
- ❖ A module on activities in children's library has been prepared jointly by the Indicorps scholar Tanya Sehgal and Veena Bhatia (Appendix 3). Tanya Sehgal has also documented the setting-up of the libraries and their use by children and teachers under the WATIS programme (Appendix 4).
- ❖ The process for bilingual language-learning (Hindi and English) was further developed – with stories, poems, discussions, brainstorming, blackboard writing etc – forming an integral part of both oral and written language development. Two books of English poems for language-learning were published — *The Flying Man* and *Three Little Monkeys*.



¹This and the other appendices referred to in this report are available as a CD.



- ❖ Maths materials were also supplied and used. Calendar and weather-chart was regularly used in all the classes.
- ❖ Library books for both Hindi and English formed a part of the language-learning process in all the classes from Nursery to class 2. These were a part of both, the whole class activities and the reading corner of the learning centres.
- ❖ Integrated teaching of mathematics in pre-primary classes and concretisation and contextualisation of mathematics in classes 1 and 2 was followed. NCERT books were used for all subjects in classes 1 and 2. Materials to support teaching were developed for these books.

Project Coordinator: Anjali Noronha

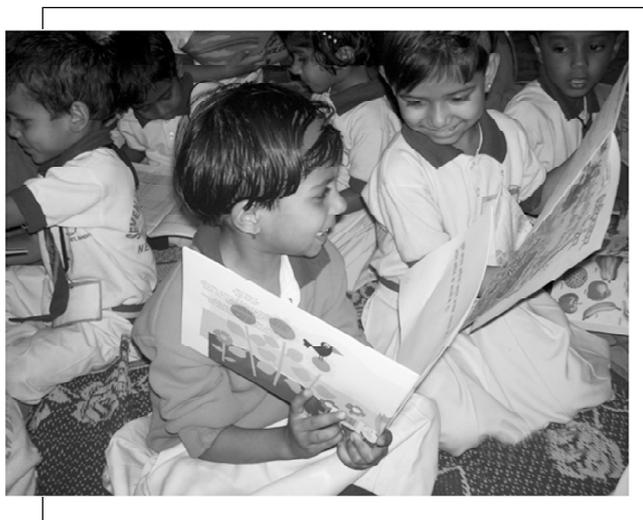
Other Team Members: Dinesh Rastogi, Ruth Rastogi, Veena Bhatia, C.P. Kada, Jayasree Subramanian

Consultant: Smita Shendye

Funding Partner: WIPRO (Wipro Applying Thought In Schools)

A.1.3. Bilingual Language Curriculum Development

It is widely acknowledged that most children grow up in a multilingual context, and the language resources that they bring to the classroom are grossly underutilized in language-teaching programmes. There has also been a growing demand for the teaching of English at all levels in the schools. It has thus become imperative to develop language-teaching strategies that take into account the linguistic richness of children's background and the need for children to learn both Hindi and English, neither of which may be their mother tongue. Eklavya's Primary Education Programme (Prashika), had made a significant breakthrough in developing a programme for comprehensive teaching of Hindi. During this year



we have been trying to build upon these foundations to develop a language-teaching programme that addresses these concerns. Building on the now fairly well-established premise that strengthening the home language, as well as one or two more languages, actually enhances critical thinking and gives a cognitive advantage to the learners, this programme seeks to work on developing their comprehension and expression in both Hindi and English. A large part of this work is now being done in collaboration with the MCM schools in Bhopal. The bilingual programme is incorporated in the integrated pre-primary and early primary programme and has to be extended to classes 3 to 8. The work in the latter classes progressed slower than planned as we could not recruit enough people for it. Hence we concentrated on providing support to the language teachers of classes 3 to 8 in these schools, in selecting materials (NCERT books



were selected), conducting classes and making assessments. For this purpose:

- a. A workshop was held for teachers on language-teaching in classes 3 and 4 in June 2007.
- b. Weekly planning, review, classroom observation and demonstration were done regularly in the MCM schools.
- c. Quarterly syllabus, worksheets and assessment schedules were developed.
- d. Teachers were helped to make weekly tests and worksheets.
- e. Alethea D'Rozario has prepared a perspective paper based on her experiences of teaching English in Bhopal schools. This was presented in a small workshop on teaching English to Hindi-speaking students held in August 2007 in Hoshangabad (Appendix 5).
- f. Jana Hrabovska, a student of School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, spent a month in Hoshangabad, courtesy Development and Human Rights Institute (DHRI), teaching English to the children who use the Eklavya library and also at a small private school. She tried out some ideas on the use of comparative grammar in teaching English to Hindi-speaking children (for detailed report, see Appendix 6).

Coordinator: *Anjali Noronha*

Other Team Members: *Alethea D'Rozario, Arvind Jain*

Resource Persons: *Jacob Tharu, Mukul Priyadarshini*

Funding Support: *SIG / ICICI Bank*

A.2 Math Education in Classes 3 to 8

This programme seeks to build upon the work already done in math education for primary classes under Prashika and focuses on class 3 onwards. Initially the work was being done as a part of the WATIS intervention in MCM schools of Bhopal, but it was later shifted to Hoshangabad so as to enable us to work with the government schools around there as well as with some private schools. The first step in this direction was to set up a team to work on math education. However, this could not be done as we were not able to make timely recruitment. An outline of issues to be addressed in the programme has been prepared (Appendix 7).

Owing to personnel constraints only a part of the work planned could be accomplished. It included a review of the available textbooks, and initiating intensive work on the teaching of fractions. The latter was done in collaboration with Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE) and Muskaan, an NGO working with street children in Bhopal. The team coordinator visited HBCSE and participated in a workshop for teaching fractions. Workshops on math teaching, especially the teaching of fractions, were held in Bhopal and Hoshangabad (see reports in Appendix 8). Resource persons from HBCSE, Delhi and Patna also participated in the week-long workshop on fractions for teachers held at Hoshangabad in May 2007.

We sought to try out a combination of the sharing-model and the measure-model to introduce fractions to



children. The trials were carried out at Muskaan, Bhopal, from August to December 2007 and at Abhimanyu School, Hoshangabad, from October 2007 to January 2008. We found that children learn better and often come up with their own arguments to compare two fractions using this model. A report of the trial is in preparation. A video document and a short film to demonstrate how children use the model to compare and add fractions have been prepared. This may be used in the teacher training programmes. We wrote an abstract for a joint paper, combining the experience of the HBCSE team with our efforts, to be presented at the International Conference on Teaching Mathematics to be held in Mexico in July 2008. The abstract has been accepted and we will be presenting a paper at the conference (Appendix 9).

Jayasree Subramanian, who had earlier worked on gender issues in Indian science, presented a paper titled “Women’s Experience vs. Dominant Notions: Gender Politics in the Science Institutions in India” at the Indian Women Scientists Association held in January 2008 at Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu. This provided an opportunity for us to review the literature on gender and math education (Appendix 10).

Project Coordinator: *Jayasree Subramanian*

Funding Partner: *SIG / ICICI Bank*

A.3 Science Curriculum for Classes 6 to 10

This programme seeks to build on the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme (HSTP, developed for classes 6 to 8) by reviewing the science curriculum for classes 6 to 10 in a comprehensive manner, and developing materials that can be used for teaching and learning science besides engaging with teachers and classroom practices. It also seeks to involve scientists, educationists and others in critiquing the existing curriculum and materials and in articulating an alternative framework for science teaching.

The Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme evolved in an era in which “scientific temper” and “learning by doing” were considered the objectives to be achieved. Today the concept of scientific temper has been subjected to rigorous critique. Besides, the understanding of pedagogy of science too has undergone considerable change. Never the less while these theoretical debates are moving ahead, the actual classroom practice remains in a time warp of rote learning. It has thus become imperative to engage with both the theory and the practice of science education on a new basis.

The Science Curriculum Development Programme commenced by inviting the large resource group involved with the HSTP and with the writing of the new NCERT textbooks to join a platform for a long term engagement with the issues of science teaching. Intense discussions were conducted through emails and in the four consultation workshops held during the first six months (For a summary report of one of the first consultations held in Indore in April and Delhi in May 2007 see, Appendix 15). After considerable debate it was decided that we will concurrently work on three lines – firstly, develop a curricular vision of science teaching in schools, at the elementary stage and in high school; secondly, develop some modules for use in teacher training and classroom teaching on certain key concept areas; and thirdly, work with some schools in trying out ideas and involving teachers in the process of curriculum and material development.



A.3.1 Curriculum Framework

The two main foci for this work are working out the curricular outline and figuring out the minimum knowledge of science that the children leaving school at the end of class 10 should have. The second involved intense discussions on what the curriculum would offer as an incentive to students so that some of them are motivated to take up pure science in higher classes, while at the same time keeping the curriculum relevant to the broader section of students as well.

Five workshops were held in order to develop a critique of the existing curriculum, syllabus and textbooks, evolve an alternative framework and discuss and give shape to new materials that individuals/ teams may begin to work on. These were held on October 12-13, November 8-9, December 2-3, 2007, and February 2-3 and February 16-17, 2008.

We have had two rounds of discussions on curricular framework. We were able to resolve the question of pursuing a framework that we thought appropriate rather than be bound by any particular syllabi. However, the details of the framework need to be fleshed out and opened to debate.

A draft paper has been prepared reviewing the literature on science education and suggesting the contours for high school science work (Appendix 11A). Copies of relevant literature on science education have been and are still being circulated among the resource group for reading and discussion.

A number of persons have reviewed the new NCERT textbooks either in part or in whole. These reviews are useful internal documents that are shared among the teams. Some of these reviews are likely to be published in *Sandarbh*.

A collection of materials on science education is being built at the Indore centre where a small lab has also been set up to design and conduct experiments.

A.3.2. Work on Modules

While work on the curriculum framework seems to call for a larger debate, we managed to make a list of topics deemed essential to making a well-rounded human being. It is obvious that a mere listing of topics does not indicate the depth or breadth of the intended coverage. So it was decided that before starting the work on turning any of these topics into modules, the team would present a concept paper to the group outlining not only what the module intended to cover, but also the methodology to be followed.

The list includes the following topics:

1. Force, Motion and Gravity
2. Current and Conduction
3. Magnets
4. Heat and Temperature
5. Water (physical and chemical properties, hydrogen bond)
6. Evolution
7. Inheritance up to the Structure of DNA
8. Natural Resources, Environment and Conservation



9. Light
10. Work, Energy and Power
11. Observational Astronomy
12. Probability (chaos)
13. Modern Ideas in Science
14. Science, Technology and Society (STS) Issues
15. Telecommunications
16. Origin of Life
17. Homeostasis
18. Structure of Matter
19. Cell
20. Taxonomy
21. Chemical Reactions
22. Classification of Elements
23. Sound
24. Environmental Problems of Today
25. Fluid Dynamics
26. Electronics

After listing the topics (which are far from being exhaustive) teams were formed to work on some of them (see Appendix 12 for a note on the concept of modules and some of the teams).

It was felt that STS issues would have to be appropriately dealt with in all the modules instead of doing it in a separate module. It was also decided that the team working on a module would decide whether it would be pitched as resource material for teachers or as self-learning material for children.

Work on different modules is at various stages. Development of three modules (Light, Cell, and Structure of Matter) had already been in progress before the work on classes 9-10 curriculum was envisaged. These three modules are nearing completion and will be tried out with teachers (Cell, and Structure of Matter) or students (Light) within a couple of months. A two-day workshop on the concept of cell and how to teach it was conducted in Indore with the help of the life sciences resource group in September, 2007 (Appendix 13).

Two modules (Force & Motion and Heat and Temperature) went through rounds of discussions within the group and also with some teachers before drafts were prepared. The sequence developed was tried out during the summer training in Indore in June 2008.

A.3.3. Work with Teachers/Schools

Continuous efforts have been made to include teachers in the discussions on curriculum and modules. The level of involvement is not as much as expected because of the heavy work load that the teachers already have. But the role of the schools in Indore, which have been sending their teachers to us for training, as



testing grounds for the modules, and in trying out various activities in the classroom, has been very significant. Over the years, we have been able to build a network of schools that accept our presence and allow us to work with both their teachers and their students in the classrooms.

Efforts are on to involve the Kendriya Vidyalayas of Malwa in this process. A workshop focusing on high school science teaching was conducted in June 2007 for teachers of these and other schools. Regular follow-up and meetings with teachers, and trying out of ideas have continued.

Team Coordinator: *Arvind Sardana*

Other Team Members: *Uma Sudhir, Himanshu Shrivastava, Javed Siddiqui*

Advisor: *Sushil Joshi and several others*

Funding Partner: *SIG / ICICI Bank*

A.4 Master's Programme in Elementary Education

A.4.1 M.A. in Education (Elementary) Programme

This is a unique master's programme housed in Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, conducted jointly by the faculty of TISS, Eklavya, Digantar, Vidya Bhawan and other guest faculty. Eklavya was involved in the conceptualisation of the programme and is presently a member of the Collaborative Academic Committee (CAC) which coordinates the programme and is also responsible for teaching two courses on Curriculum and Pedagogy of Social Sciences. The two courses were conducted in the second semester.

Eklavya members participated in the CAC meetings that reviewed various aspects of the programme as well as in the interviews for admission to the third batch. The CAC reviewed admission policy, evaluation systems, policy on submission of assignments, issues connected with the utilisation of Moodle, the Learning Management System (LMS) and the problem of coping with readings, particularly in English. This year English support was organised for students.

Members participated in the first programme review at a full faculty meeting at Udaipur in March 2008. Certain decisions regarding submission of assignments and feedback were taken during this review. The development of the programme in Hindi was also discussed.

A.4.2 M.A. in Education (Elementary), Hindi

Right from its inception, the idea of developing the programme in Hindi has been part of the visualisation. A subcommittee comprising of members from Digantar, Eklavya and Vidya Bhavan was constituted to concretise the contours of the programme and develop the course in Hindi. This committee met three times this year and worked out various dimensions of the programme. This is being developed further and the programme should be ready by April 2010.

Team: *Anjali Noronha and Yemuna Sunny*



A.5 Ongoing Research Projects

A.5.1 Geography Survey

A book is under preparation based on a survey of children's understanding of concepts relating to the rotation and revolution of the earth and its implications for geography curriculum and teaching. The book is likely to be published in 2008-09. A paper based on the issues emerging from this study has been prepared and is likely to be published in the *Economic & Political Weekly* ("Experience and science in geography education").

Project Coordinator: Yemuna Sunny

Advisor: Arvind Sardana

Funding Support: SIG / ICICI Bank

A.5.2 Children's Atlas

Work on this project remained suspended due to the focus on A.5.1.

Project Coordinator: Yemuna Sunny

A.5.3 Adolescent Education and Human Body Modules

The first module in the series, *Our Skin*, was completed after incorporating the feedback received from a number of persons, including doctors, health workers and teachers. It is likely to be out of the press by July 2008. This and the other modules in the series deal not merely with the common questions that arise in the minds of adolescent children but also the social dimensions of health issues. For example, in the module on skin, we take up the issue of fair skin, social preference for it, how it affects women's lives and how the fairness products work on the skin and their long term effects.

In addition to this, drafts of the texts of three more modules are nearing completion (a picture-book of human body, and modules on skeletal system and muscular system). Meera Bhatt, a student internee from TISS, Thuljapur Rural Campus, spent ten weeks to help with these and also prepare a draft of a module on reproductive system.

Besides this work of developing modules, we have been participating in current debates on issues relating to adolescent education. A review of materials used for this in MP was presented in a seminar (Appendix 14) and a report on Sexuality Education has also been prepared jointly with several other individuals and organisations (Appendix 15).

Project Coordinator: Anu Gupta

Illustration and Design: Karen Haydock

Academic Review: Arvind Gupte, Sushil Joshi, Karen Haydock, Mira Sadgopal, A.V. Ramani and others

Funding Support: SIG / ICICI Bank



A.5.4 Conversation with Children: A Research

The objective of the research has been to understand how classroom conversation affects the teaching-learning processes in the classroom and how such dialogue gets linked to the nature of classroom relationships. Speaking, listening and being part of a discussion brings out students' reflections on many aspects of living. Classroom observations and interventions were conducted at government primary schools in Malakhedi and Raipur villages of Hoshangabad district in 2006-07, and the findings and observations are now being studied in the context of available literature on the subject. A preliminary report of the observations emerging from the fieldwork (Appendix 16) and a note on the meaning of writings by children (Appendix 17) were completed this year. This report includes observations on the participation of students in classroom activities, their interest in books, and their behaviour in situations made less formal through the researcher's intervention. It is proposed to prepare three articles based on this work to be published in refereed journals. As a background to this research a brief profile of the school and village was prepared during the year.

Principal Investigator: Jitender Kumar

Guidance: Ramakant Agnihotri

Funding Support: SIG / ICICI Bank

Programme Coordinator: Anjali Noronha

Appendices

- Appendix 1. A Detailed Note on WATIS Programme Intervention in Elementary Education
- Appendix 2. Learning Centres
- Appendix 3. Library Handbook: A Guide to Books and Activities for Primary-aged Children
- Appendix 4. Green Paper: Community-based Libraries
- Appendix 5. Language Teaching
- Appendix 6. Teaching English in Hoshangabad Schools
- Appendix 7. Developing Middle School Mathematics Curriculum
- Appendix 8. Report of Fractions Workshops
- Appendix 9. Combining Share and Measure Meaning of Fractions to Facilitate Students' Reasoning (Abstract)
- Appendix 10. Women's Experience vs. Dominant Notions: Gender Politics in the Science Institutions in India
- Appendix 11. Report of Indore meeting on Science Teaching in Classes 9-10
- Appendix 11A. Report on Issues in Science Teaching and Learning
- Appendix 12. Science Modules
- Appendix 13. बायोलॉजी विषय के स्रोत समूह की दो दिवसीय बैठक, 8 व 9 सितंबर 2007
- Appendix 14. A Review of Materials used in Madhya Pradesh for Adolescent and Life-skill Education
- Appendix 15. Sexuality Education for Young People
- Appendix 16. बच्चों से बातचीत – प्राथमिक शाला मालाखेड़ी, कक्षा-3 – कक्षा के अनुभव (2006-07)
- Appendix 17. लिखना सीखना माने क्या?





B. Resource Centres Programme



The aim of this programme is to develop field-based educational resource centres catering to and working with schools, communities and youth. The vision mission exercise undertaken last year led to the decision to consolidate various field-based programmes into a comprehensive programme which would be implemented across the entire field area of Eklavya covering four districts, namely, Betul, Hoshangabad, Harda and Dewas. We began this year by consolidating our programmes in one block in each of the districts.

In order to facilitate working with the government school system in these blocks, we signed an MoU with the Rajya Shiksha Kendra (Government of MP) in December 2007. The MoU also enabled us to re-establish formal relations with the education department after a gap of nearly four years.

B.1 Shiksha Protsahan Kendras (SPKs)

These are community-based teaching centres which are intended to provide academic support to first generation learners who have little in their environment to support school learning, and to involve the whole community in educational issues on a concrete and sustained basis.

The SPKs neither seek to replace the formal schools nor have they been conceived as “tuition centers” to which parents could send their children and absolve themselves of their educational obligations. On the contrary, they seek to improve the functioning of the formal schools through fruitful interactions with the entire community. Indeed, the community plays a crucial role in running them.



A typical SPK is managed by a committee (*samiti*) set up by the community which actively participates in its deliberations and decision making. The community selects a young educated boy or girl to whom they entrust the centre. Eklavya provides academic and logistical support by training the volunteer teachers, supplying teaching and learning materials, academic follow-up etc, besides a modest stipend. The community in turn undertakes to provide space for holding the classes, ensure student attendance, monitor the functioning of the centre and collect contributions for providing stationery to the children. The classes are held two hours every day at a time which is convenient to all children.

The academic programme of the SPKs focuses on learning to read and write and do basic math operations through wholesome and interesting activities. It encourages teachers and parents to use materials that are available and are prepared locally.

The children are assessed at the beginning. The assessments and thereafter the monthly reports of their achievements are placed before their parents and the committee by the volunteer. At these meetings the goals and strategies of education in the early years are discussed in concrete terms. Eklavya engages parents in in-depth discussions about the education of their children, their potentials and strengths. The parents often compare the performance of the school and the teacher and bring it into their discourse and deliberation. During the last few years we have also developed a more distanced system of interaction with the centres, with the help of cluster coordinators who visit the centres to assist them and report upon their progress in monthly review meetings.

A review of our experience of the last decade shows that the SPKs are effective in scaffolding the learning endeavour of school-going children from deprived social backgrounds, especially the first generation learners.

Our experience indicates that it is possible to:

- ❖ mobilize people of most modest means and without any formal education to invest their time and resources for the education of their children;
- ❖ teach all children to read and write etc. through simple activities and materials, provided the teacher establishes empathy with the learners;
- ❖ enable children through such exposure to grow up as vocal and assertive individuals;
- ❖ build a network of such centres with follow-up personnel and nodal centres;
- ❖ help these centres to act as levers to bring about positive changes in the schools of the block.



These potentialities induced Eklavya to set up such centres in sufficient numbers in five additional blocks in Hoshangbad, Harda, Dewas and Ujjain districts. UTI Bank Foundation (now Axis Bank Foundation) agreed to provide funding support for this programme. During the last year nearly 80 new centres were started. This galvanised the team and led to intense field-based activity which



included Eklavya team's preparation for the work, initial contact with the communities during the summer months, selection of villages, setting up of parents' *samitis*, selection of teachers, their orientation and year-long intensive follow-up through visits, fortnightly meetings etc.

The most heartening part of the experience has been the spirited work put in by the volunteer teachers who, though equipped only with limited formal education, have creatively applied their native wisdom to the new pedagogic strategies and materials provided by Eklavya.

B.1.1 Setting-up of New Shiksha Protsahan Kendras

a. Summer Camp and Team Preparation

Every year we have been organising one or two summer camps for children in Shahpur block. This year it was decided to hold such camps in eight places in the block and use this as an opportunity to orient and prepare the Eklavya team. The workshop to train the teachers for the camp held at Kuppa in May 2007 was also used to familiarise the Eklavya team from the new districts. Team members spent some time in the camps to get a first-hand idea of the processes of the SPKs. Detailed field notes and reports of all these camps are available. In addition a group of B El Ed students from Lady Shri Ram College participated in the summer workshop and documented their experiences and observations (see Appendix 18 for a summary in English and the detailed report in Hindi).



b. Survey and Initial Processes

This was the main focus of work of the teams in the different districts. Despite the extreme heat of the summer, our team members repeatedly visited the remote villages, held meetings with parents, *panchayat* officials and school teachers regarding the idea of the SPK. The fact that this was neither a new coaching school nor a charity-work, and that the community had to play an active role in its affairs, had to be communicated to them with considerable skill, sensitivity and patience. Once the community was ready, suitable teachers with at least minimum requisite qualification and due sensitivity towards children had to be selected by the community itself. Often Eklavya was called upon to help in this process. However we confined ourselves to giving them broad suggestions and insisted that the community decide upon the candidate themselves. In the end each committee selected two candidates who would be trained. In case one of them dropped out due to some reason, the other person could take over. As regards the location of the SPKs, different teams are trying out different ideas. Some are trying to hold them in the premises of government schools while some are trying out spaces in the larger houses in the community.

c. Teacher Orientation

The teachers identified by the *samitis* participated in a series of orientation workshops. The first workshop took place in July, the second in October and the third in December 2007.



July Workshop: A workshop was held between 9 and 12 July, 2007 in Hoshangbad for nearly 43 candidates. The workshop was also attended by 18 persons from Eklavya and five other participants.

We began with sessions which helped the candidates realise the potential of children and how they learn. All participants were asked to list all that a six-year-old child has learnt in language and maths before coming to the school. As the list grew more and more impressive they realised the tremendous ability of children to learn without being actually taught. This was followed by sessions to explore how children learn, what makes it more conducive for them to learn and what hampers it, how games and play help in learning; in short, how children construct knowledge.

This discussion was followed by a scrutiny of the paradox as to why children with such creative learning ability fail to learn the three 'R's in the formal schools.

After this we encouraged the participants to think of their own experiences of how and when they learnt to read and write. This was an exciting session which helped them to understand how children may be helped to learn.

These sessions prepared the participants to look at learning more openly and creatively. This was followed by initiating them into various kinds of activities that would enable children to learn reading and writing and basic maths better. These activities were taught by experienced teachers from Shahpur. There were also sessions on how to use a library for teaching, how to prepare wall newspapers, etc. The orientation concluded with sessions on planning the setting-up of the SPKs and the schedule for the first month.

Within a fortnight day-long meetings were held in Pipariya, Hoshangabad, Harda and Dewas to recapitulate and to plan the next round of work.

October Workshop: This was held from 4 to 7 October, 2007 and was attended by the first lot of new *guruji*s who were trained in the basic approach of the SPKs and in the nitty-gritty of running the centres. They went into the question of how children learn by exploring and assessing with the participants the linguistic and mathematical knowledge and skills that children aged four or five bring to the schools. Given the fact that most children are linguistically mature and have developed quantitative and numerical sense by age four, it is obvious that they learn all this through informal association with adults and by creatively interacting with the environment. How to ensure that children have a similarly conducive learning atmosphere in the classroom, too, was discussed at length. How challenging activities and games encourage children to learn, despite the effort involved, was brought home to the participants.

Keeping all these aspects in mind, a set of activities were designed and tried out with the help of specially designed materials. Several sessions were devoted to figuring out how to organise the class, how to maintain records of children's attendance and performance and how to report on all this to the parents.

December Workshop: This workshop, held from 26 to 30 December 2007, was intended primarily to orient the new teachers and to give additional inputs to the old ones. Thus this workshop had two separate sections for the new and old teachers. The training for the old teachers focused on math teaching, especially teaching concepts like fractions. They were also introduced to theories regarding child psychology and learning, such as the ideas of Piaget and Vygotsky. This was an experiment at introducing these advanced and complex theories to teachers who themselves had barely passed high school. Simple readings in Hindi were distributed to them. The teachers found these discussions very stimulating and enriching even though they may have gathered only the rudimentary information from them.



d. Inauguration and Material Supply

Subsequently, new SPKs were inaugurated. In most instances the inauguration was a formal affair involving the entire community, the school teachers and the *panchayat* officials. Eklavya has prepared a kit-bag of materials that are needed to initiate a centre – posters, library books, cards, workbooks, dice, crayons, card-sheets etc. These have been given to each of the centres.

Following the inaugural ceremony, there have been periodic review meetings with parents in most villages. Parents have by and large appreciated the work being done at the SPKs and there is now a great demand for setting up more centres in the same village to cover more *bastis* and *mohallas*.

Malwa Region: Ten centres were initiated both in Bagli block of Dewas district and in Narwar block of Ujjain district. Most of the centres are located in *dalit* hamlets or quarters and most of the teachers are *dalit* youth too. These hamlets are situated mostly three to five kilometers off the main roads. Nearly three-fourths of these teachers, eight of whom are girls, come from SC /ST / OBC background.

Hoshangabad District: Forty centres have been initiated in the Pipariya and Babai blocks of this district. While most of them are located in multi-caste villages in plains, a few have been started in forested *adivasi* villages especially in the Pipariya block. In most villages two centres have been started in view of the demands made by the parents. On an average 30 to 35 children have been registered at each centre.

Harda District: Twenty centres were set up in the Harda block of this district bearing the same name. The new centres are about 10 km from Harda. Some of these are in settlements not served by any primary school. At least five of them are in *dalit* settlements. Of the twenty teachers, three are women, 15 *dalits* and the remaining OBCs. On an average, 35 students are registered at each centre and about 80% of the children have been attending classes regularly.

Shahpur Block: In the Shahpur block of Betul district 35-40 centres have already been functioning for the past few years. The teachers of these centres have been instrumental in guiding the new teachers by sharing their experiences with them.

e. Baseline Study and Categorisation of Students

After an initial period of familiarisation in the new centres, a small test was conducted to ascertain the proficiency of the children in reading, writing and maths. On the basis of this assessment they have been categorised as beginners, middle-level or advanced learners. Most of the children fall into the first category, and almost none of them has reached the third level. Each class has been divided into three broad groups based on this information. Each of the groups has specific study tasks using materials that have been specially designed for them.

The teachers keep regular record of the activities performed by their students and the individual competence demonstrated by them.

f. Supply of Materials

The materials supplied to each of the centres mostly consist of card-sets, poster-poems, puzzles, dice, activity cards, *tambola*-books, workbooks, card-sheets, black board and a special metal box.



g. Meetings with Parents

Regular meetings with parents have been taking place at all the centres. Prior to setting up a centre we have at least two or three meetings with the community, and the inauguration itself is a community event. Subsequently a meeting is held once every month at each centre to review the progress of the children, their attendance, the supply of materials, the collection of community contributions to the SPKs and any other relevant issues.

A typical meeting is attended by about 20 to 30 parents. The number of women among them varies – it is high in Harda district where more women than men participate, and low in other places. In initial meetings the parents introduce themselves and their respective communities, and the group members from Eklavya acquaint them with the work of Eklavya. In the subsequent meetings topics of current interests are discussed – children with irregular attendance, base-line tests and grouping of children in two or three categories, use of the materials and demonstrations of how activities like these help children to learn. The theme of parents' contributions is often taken up with varying success. In Harda, for example, about Rs. 200 has been collected from each of the nine centres that had been established in the previous quarter. The SPK *Palak Samitis* have used this money to purchase notebooks, pencils and colour boxes for the children. In Babai block, a total amount of about Rs. 1200 has been collected and spent likewise. It appears that in other areas, like Pipariya and Malwa region, mobilising contributions may be difficult. However, a heartening development is that the milk cooperative of Limboda, a village in Bagli block, has resolved to contribute to the SPKs by supplying necessary articles like mats for children to sit upon and other such things. Similarly in some villages people have committed to making contributions at *panchayat* meetings.

Parents usually show keen interest in seeing how the new teaching-learning materials (TLM) help children in learning. They are often skeptical about how children can learn by engaging in playful activities.

h. Follow-up, Meetings and Workshops with Teachers

Follow-up Visits: Eklavya personnel have been regularly visiting the new SPKs to provide on-site support to the teachers, helping them to take classes, arrange materials, fill monitoring charts and meeting with parents. We try to visit each centre at least once in ten days. A typical visit usually begins around 6.30 a.m. in the morning, to enable us to reach the site of the SPK before its activities start. We sit in the classes and observe the teachers at their job, give them feedback, inspect their diaries and the displays of children's works, stocking and storing of materials etc. After the SPK session ends, we visit the teachers' homes, and the homes of at least a few parents to discuss with them the progress of the centre. We also try to visit the government schools and exchange news with the school teachers. A unique follow-up of the new centres was conducted in October 2007. Two teams of old SPK teachers from Shahpur (nearly half of whom were women) visited the new SPKs in the other blocks to share their experiences and motivate the new teachers. This not only had a positive effect on the new SPKs but also fortified the confidence and motivation of the Shahpur teachers. They also saw new possibilities of interacting with government schools. It is proposed to organise a reverse follow-up during the next few months when the teachers from the new areas will visit the Shahpur centres.

Anuvartankartas or follow-up persons from amongst the teachers have been functioning in Shahpur. This system is now being extended to the new regions too. Senior and experienced persons were selected in



December 2007 for this purpose and they were entrusted with the work in January 2008.

Fortnightly Meetings: As mentioned in the earlier report, two meetings are held every month. The first meeting is held locally within the block while the second meeting is held at the respective regional centres (Shahpur, Hoshangabad and Dewas). The regional meeting lasts for three days while the local meeting is a one-day affair.



Five fortnightly meetings took place each in Dewas, Hoshangabad, Pipariya, Harda and Bhayawadi and Handipani (Shahpur). These meetings were devoted to discussing the problems being faced by the teachers, the daily diaries written by them, baseline study and categorisation of children and new methods of teaching.

In the monthly meetings, in which all the teachers of a region gather, the focus is on academic preparation and explaining to the teachers how to record the progress of children. Some of them also focus on certain conceptual topics that teachers find difficult to teach. Thus one of the Malwa meetings was centered on the number sense and the teaching of place values. Aamod Karkhanis of Nav Nirmiti, Mumbai, was invited to conduct this meeting.

The SPKs have provided a space for a number of student internees to visit and gain first-hand experience of teaching children in rural areas. Ranjit Hangargekar, a student of TISS, Thuljapur Campus, observed the working of the SPKs and also conducted a comparative study of children in government schools and in the SPKs in the vicinity of Harda. As this study was conducted at the very beginning of the SPKs in Harda block, there is a need to conduct more such studies in the future to assess the impact of the SPKs.

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B.2 Gatividhi Kendras (Centres for Continuing Learning for Adolescent Children)

Based on our experience of facilitating *Chakmak Clubs*, *Bal Samuhs*, *Vichar Vimarsh Manch*s etc. in the past, we have been exploring the possibility of providing learning opportunities to children outside the formal spaces offered by schools. It was decided to consolidate the lessons learnt from the above mentioned programmes and apply them in the entire field area of Eklavya, as many of these programmes had been confined to small specific locations. This gave us an opportunity to discuss the nature and direction of various programmes and how they could be fruitfully integrated.

Synthesizing Past Experiences and Forging a New Direction: As a part of the vision mission exercise we realised the need to put together diverse experiences of working outside the schools with youth, children and the wider community. This exercise is in progress and a number of documents summing up such experiences have been written to facilitate this process. These relate primarily to the *Vichar Vimarsh Manch (Bal Samuh)* programme in Hoshangabad (Appendix 19).

Conceptualising Future Directions: A number of issues needed to be examined in the process of giving concrete shape to the plan. The initial plan was to set up *Gatividhi Kendras* in the six blocks where the SPKs had been set up. It was visualised that, while explorations might be made to set up these resource centres in collaboration with the education department's cluster resource centres, we might also rent new premises for establishing the *Kendras* if required. A full-time person was to be appointed to conduct the library and the activities to be held at the centre, in nearby villages and in nearby schools. On reexamination, it was felt that the salary proposed for the coordinators of the centres could not be justified in Eklavya's framework, and would be unsustainable if it was raised. The long-term viability of single-person establishments was also reexamined in the light of the experience of many Eklavya centres of similar nature. It was felt that it might be better to strengthen the core teams in the existing centres and provide support to field-based activities through such augmented teams, instead of proliferating unviable establishments in relatively isolated locations.

The other issue that had to be explored afresh was the management of the work envisaged. How autonomous should its management be from the SPK project? There was a perception that a fourth programme group may be needed in Eklavya, focusing on "out of school" community and youth-based initiatives. A new proposal was also mooted that envisaged the expansion of *Vichar Vimarsh Manch* through networking with NGOs both in and outside MP. This was to be implemented through four annual workshops on issues of expression, creativity and social understanding. It also proposed the publication of the magazine, *Udaan*, in an expanded form with a new focus on the nature of adult-child relationship in the process of learning.

The different proposals, strategies and management frameworks were debated in several rounds of presentations and meetings in the group and in the Academic Council. The Academic Council issued relevant guidelines in December 2007 and then again in February 2008. It made a plea for integrating field-level programmes in the six blocks, adding value to the structures set up by the government, and supporting community initiatives through training, resource inputs and honorarium-based financial support for regular services such as running a nodal library.

Even as these discussions went on, several field-based activities were still continuing.



Ujjain: A 10 day children's activity workshop was organised independently by the youth volunteers of Ujjain who had been attending the library and activity camps of Eklavya for the past many years. They had formed a group named Yuva Samvad and undertook the challenge of being not just the resource persons but also the chief organisers of the summer camp. Eklavya was able to provide support and guidance and welcomed the initiative of the group to make a success of the camp on their own strength.

A competition was organised for school children to paint and create artwork with waste materials. The awards were given away at a special function held in the memory of Shri Vishnu Chinchalkar on his death anniversary on the 30th of July.

Dewas: The public library of the centre continued to function as a library cum children's activity centre and also as a centre for cultural discussions.

Hoshangabad: A seven-day workshop was organised for teachers and school-based field personnel of the organisation Sahmat on the teaching of fractions in mathematics at the primary and middle school level in May 2007.

A week-long workshop was held with the children from Malakhedi who were coming to the library at the Hoshangabad centre in the first week of June 2007.

A six-day long puppet-making and theatre workshop was held in Hoshangabad in the last week of June 2007. People learnt to make puppets with various materials like cardboard, socks, balloons and plaster of Paris. They then developed scripts on different topics and enacted the scripts with the help of the puppets that they had made. They gave performances of their amateur puppet-theatre in four villages as well as in Hoshangabad city. Plays were prepared on social issues — health services in villages, the problem of addiction to liquor, exploitation of women, greed and corruption. Members of other NGOs took part in this workshop along with the youth from villages where *Vichar Vimarsh Manch*s had been active for many years. The NGOs who participated were: Sahmat from Kesla, Jeevodaya from Itarsi, Muskaan and Samavesh from Bhopal.

In August 2007, a symposium on the issue of teaching English was organised in Hoshangabad. Students and teachers from schools in Hoshangabad, and those running English coaching courses in the city were invited along with the youth of *Vichar Vimarsh Manch* and the teachers who had been active in Eklavya's programmes.

In September 2007, youth volunteers came together to plan and conduct a *bal-mela* (children's fair) in Patlai village in which they gave children the opportunity to work with Rangometry and make shapes, to solve puzzles and riddles, and recount riddles they knew. They also did experiments with light and air. A street-play prepared by the youth was also presented in Patlai village.

In October 2007, the youth volunteers conducted another *bal-mela* in Raisalpur village where they played many games with children and taught them to make things with paper-folding work. Here also they collected many riddles locally known to people and solved them collectively. The volunteers also presented a street-play in Raisalpur village.

Pipariya: The library functioned actively throughout the year.

A youth convention was held on the occasion of Deepawali. Erstwhile members of Pipariya library who



had made a successful career for themselves were invited to address and advise the youth of the town and share their experiences with them.

Parasia: Library and activity centre continued to function. A workshop on chemistry teaching in collaboration with the local college and high schools was held.

Harda: The children's library functioned actively, particularly in the summer holidays. Instructive and enjoyable daily activities, such as mask-making, origami and painting, were organised for children.

In village Uda, Women's Day was celebrated on 8th of March 2008 with the girls of the village.

Active support was provided to the education department in organising the *balika-mela* in village Kukravad by conducting a quiz programme and organising games and rangoli.

The 25th anniversary of Eklavya was celebrated by holding a get-together of all old-time associates and teachers.

World Book Fair, Delhi: The World Book Fair was held in Delhi in February 2008. Prior to it, an attempt was made to review the readers' responses to Eklavya libraries, and to plan the purchasing of new books for all the six centres, as well as the proposed rural *Gatividhi Kendras*, from the Book Fair. Books for children and adults were purchased by a joint team from Pipariya, Dewas and Hoshangabad and then supplied to all the six centres.

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Funding Support: *SIG / ICICI Bank*

B.3 Working with the Government Education System

Ever since the closure of the formal school programmes like HSTP or the Social Science Programmes in 2002, our official interaction with the department of education in MP had been minimal. Our work with government teachers and schools remained informal and within a loose framework of voluntary participation. While the involvement of these teachers rooted our work in the field, it created logistical problems. Further, the impact of the work was limited to the few teachers and schools that we could informally work with, but the larger system remained untouched. It was therefore decided to formalise our interventions and interact with the larger education system by entering into an understanding with the *Rajya Shiksha Kendra* (RSK). After brief discussions a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with the RSK. The objectives of this collaboration are:

- ❖ Enhancing the capability of government school teachers in the subjects, pedagogy, planning classroom processes and evaluation of students.
- ❖ Inducing and enabling the community to support the educational efforts of the schools.



The method to be adopted will involve providing on-site resource support to BRCs, CRCs and schools and holding workshop on specific concept areas during summer holidays and on non-teaching days. This will be done in three blocks where Eklavya has already set up community-based SPKs (Shahpur, Babai and Bagli). (See Appendix 20 for the MoU).

The MoU was signed in December 2007 but the related formalities were completed only in February-March 2008. In the intervening period, Eklavya initiated school-level observation of classroom processes to gauge the kind of intervention needed.

Funding Support: SIG / ICICI Bank

Programme Coordinator: Ghanshyam Tiwari

Appendices:

Appendix 18 Report of SPK Camps

Appendix 19 *Vichar Vimarsh Manch* Reflections

Appendix 20 Memorandum of Understanding with *Rajya Shiksha Kendra*.

