

### The Concept of an Improved School

Under the EGS & AIE scheme the schools being conceived are largely going to be single teacher schools. In these schools there would be 25 to 30 children. There are other characteristics of the schools that make them different from the formal schools. These schools will have:

- Children in the age group of 6-14 years all together in a class.
- The teacher of the school will be from the same village or from the same Panchayat.
- The space for the school will be provided by the community.
- In most cases the school will be located in the habitation or adjoining the habitation.
- The timings of the school will be decided by the community to suit the learners.

Ensuring quality education and sustaining it in schools as envisaged in this scheme is a challenge which needs to be addressed. What is understood as quality education should be stated and clarified.

When we want to discuss quality of a school we will need to talk about the learners at the school, the teacher, the space of the school, the school environment, the material and equipment of the school and the teaching learning material.

When we discuss the school from the point of view of the **learners**, it should be a place

- Where children are free to explore and experiment.
- There are opportunities for children to do things themselves and learn, to play, work and talk with children of their own age as well as those older to them.
- There is a variety in the learning situations for the children.
- There is an adult who is concerned about the physical, cognitive and social development needs of all the children.
- This adult is interested in the children and is available whenever the children need.

If a school is able to provide children with an environment which is facilitative and allows them to explore and learn independently, there is no reason that children will not be at school each day.

The **teacher** is the cornerstone to ensure quality in a school. While selecting a teacher it will be critical to select someone who will

- be sensitive to the needs of the children
- be capable of planning activities according to the needs of the children
- have a clear understanding about the learning areas of the different subjects
- be able to prepare plans for each child to do individually as well as in a group

- enable the children to develop as self motivated learners
- work along with the children instead of getting things done from them

The **space** for the school should allow for children to be able to work either in one large group or in small groups and also individually. There should be space for both indoor and outdoor play. The materials and equipment of the school and the teaching learning material can be organised adequately and also stored properly. The room should get sufficient natural light and air. The school should have basic amenities of drinking water and toilets.

Children should be allowed to handle and use most of the **material** available in the school. Children should have access to and are encouraged to use books and other learning material other than the prescribed textbooks. There is sufficient amount of play material and equipment available for the children to use. The material available for the learners should be such that the children can independently use it with minimal help of the teacher.

The **community** should have a sense of belonging towards the school. The community members should be willing to extend support in the activities of the school. The community members could be involved in ensuring that the teacher is regular to the school and all learners are also regularly attending school.

It has been attempted to broadly discuss the parameters, which impact the quality of a school and its practices. This is not an exhaustive list and therefore it can be further broadened. The challenge lies in not only developing a good quality school but also maintaining it. Some of the areas in which it would be critical to focus are as follows

- appropriate and adequate space for a school
- a creative, sensitive and skilled teacher
- an initial training and regular academic support for the teacher
- appropriate and sufficient teaching learning material for the centre to be made available prior to the opening of the centre and a system by which it is replenished regularly
- a variety of learning material and resource material both for the learners and the teacher.
- Proper utilisation of all available resources.
- Capable and efficient system which is sensitive towards children and the society.

## **Training of Teachers**

The kind of school that has been discussed in the earlier note on an ideal school and the qualities of a teacher that were outlined, it is not possible that any person who has studied upto class 8 or class 10 to go to a school and start teaching the children and work with them. The teacher will have to undergo some preparation.

Any individual before he begins working with children needs to learn new things, get new ideas a fresh orientation. The individual should also reflect on the kind of school that he / she attended, the assumption that the individual has related to education of children, especially children from deprived communities. This self reflection and analysis is important so that unconsciously this person does bring in those very things in the school which he / she disliked in the school.

This teacher will need to be appraised of the recent research and developments in the area of education. The changing trends in the relationship between the school and the society. Similarly there are issues related to why children have been out of school, the child rights issue, issues of child labour so on and so forth. Only an intensive and long duration training programme, which is organised before the school / centre / camp between operational, can fulfil these requirements for developing a teacher for the school. An intensive training programme is only possible when it is a residential programme.

### List of Resource agencies conducting long duration residential training for teacher

S.No.		Duration	Topic	Methodology
1	<p><b>Shikshaghar/ Prehar Pathshala Teacher Training Module (Nalanda, Lucknow)</b> Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ A brief plan for both phases and a detailed plan for each day.</li> <li>◆ During the first phase the focus of the sessions is on discussions on issues related to education. The participants are also help in developing activities and teaching-learning material.</li> <li>◆ Residential training programme.</li> </ul>	Two phases of 15 days each	<p>Orientation, introduction to DPEP, social structures and their inter-relationships, objectives of education, Why alternative schooling? what is an alternative school? Role of a teacher in an alternative school, how children learn and understand? Class-room organisation-fear, punishment, competition in the class-room et c., course content for a primary school, teaching methodologies and development of teaching-learning material and its use.</p> <p>Topic- why education , objectives, the nature of areas of learning (language mathematics and EVS).</p>	Discussion in large and small groups, games and activities, role play, group work, practice sessions on activities and developing TLM.

2	<p><b>Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) Teacher Training Module (Rajiv Gandhi Prathamik Shiksha Mission, Bhopal).</b></p> <p>Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The training programme develops capacities of teachers to deal with ideological issues and day to day situations</li> <li>• Academic and Administrative issues related to school have been discussed in detail</li> </ul>	21 days	<p>Training-why, role of teacher, expectations from the training programme.</p> <p>Education-why, objectives, the process of understanding concepts, skills; areas of learning.</p> <p>Learning process- Preparations for setting-up a school, class-room organisation, grouping of learners based on their abilities, planning, evaluation of learners</p> <p>Topic- Need of learning language, mathematics, EVS, art &amp; craft, activities.</p> <p>Evaluation: Concept, continuous evaluation, assessment of problems faced by children, trainees evaluation, Philosophy and values, equivalence, social set-up, religion, gender: teacher- child relation ship in the above context.</p> <p>Discipline, fear, punishment, companion and competition</p> <p>Review – Academic and Administrative issues community support</p> <p>Review- different methods</p> <p>Gender- community participation.</p>	<p>Discussions in small and large groups, games, role play, classroom organisation, planning of activities and development of teaching-learning material.</p>
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3	<p><b>Teachers Training (Digantar,Jaipur)</b> Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education, areas of learning, focus on principles of learning areas.</li> <li>• Grouping of learners, classroom organisation and multi-level situation.</li> <li>• Developing an understanding on why training to enable the trainers to develop their individual plan for training of teachers.</li> <li>• Developing a training package for teachers of alternative schools.</li> </ul>	21 days 1/ 40 days1/ 4 months	<p>Training- what, why, how methodology and activities, role of trainer.</p> <p>Introduction of participants and activities to develop team spirit..</p> <p>The concept of an alternative school, an understanding of why education, role of education, objectives, sensitivity, skills, process of learning in children, activities for developing an understanding in children multi-level teaching.</p> <p>Topic: Language, mathematics, EVS and art and craft) objectives, form, activity use of teaching learning material..</p> <p>Philosophy and values, inter personal relationships</p> <p>School environment – group/classroom organisation, discipline, competition, comparison, fear, punishment</p> <p>Organising-classroom, time-table, basic amenities like drinking water and electricity.</p>	<p>Discussion with participants in small and large groups to understand and analyse their assumptions on education, observation of classrooms, games, songs, story telling sessions, creative activities, science experiments, exposure visits, book review and analysis, film and other audio-visual material and diary writing.</p>
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4	<p><b>Shikshakarmi Teachers Training (Sandhan, Jaipur)</b> Features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a training syllabus for every subject area (language, mathematics, science, social sciences).</li> <li>• There is a detailed plan for each learning area in the different subjects.</li> <li>• Residential training.</li> </ul>	37 days	<p>State formal school curriculum. The focus of the training programme is on transaction of the curriculum activities, use of TLM adopting different methodologies, use of games story telling sessions, art and craft. The teachers are encouraged to group children based on their abilities.</p>	<p>Demonstration of transaction of course content in the classroom using activities. Opportunities are given to the trainees to plan and conduct activities.</p>
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## **Teaching Learning Material**

In a schools where there are children of different age group and of different abilities, the school has a single teacher, the children in the school are allowed to learn at their own pace, there is all likelihood that the school would have 3-4 group of learners. These groups would be on the basis of the different abilities of the learners. In such situations if the learners are provided with material which is directed by the teacher, it is found to be inadequate and inappropriate. Such materials ignore the different levels of the children and also engages all of them in one activity. There is also no scope to repeat any activity especially for these children who have not been able to develop the concept.

The textbooks and teaching material used with children in such classrooms will have to be such that after the teacher has explained the activity to the children, they should be able to do the work themselves, independently. The teacher will need to ensure that the activity is not a mere mechanical exercise and repetitive like copy of alphabets or writing the numbers. The activity should be enjoyable based on the abilities of the learner and allow the child to use his understanding to discover new knowledge and further develop his skills.

The teacher should also ensure that the children while working in smaller group share the material and also support each other in the learning process. Such teaching-learning material is especially useful in organising the school where there is a single teacher, all children have different competency levels and they are of different age groups. It is upto the teacher to creatively use the teaching learning material in a planned manner.

Given below is a list of organisations which have prepared different kinds of teaching learning material.

## **Review and Planning Meetings Fortnightly / Monthly**

To maintain the quality of an education programmes and to for developing its quality further, the induction training of teachers is not sufficient. The initial training is the starting point of a continuous process of developing an understanding of issues related to education and learning of skills, to work with children. The teacher sharpens / clarifies his / her understanding of issues and development of skills over a period of time. If the teacher, mechanically, conducts the class it that this understanding developed during the initial training does not grow and in all likelihood starts to diminish Therefore it is important that the teacher keeps reflecting on his / her work and experiences and shares them with his / her colleagues. The programme should provide space for such reflection and staring. This can be provided during the Review and Planning Meetings of teachers. This meeting can be organised with the objective to bring about qualitative improvements in the programme.

If this meeting is held every month then the two days of the meeting can be broadly divided into four sessions. The first three sessions should be devoted to discussions on academic issues and the fourth session should address the administrative issues of the programme. In case these are one day meetings held only fortnight then too one full day should be and half a day from the second day for discussions on academic issues. The purpose is to allow the teachers to share their experiences, raise problems related to curriculum transaction, use of teaching learning material, addressing the different levels of learners etc. and to be able to get new inputs to enable the teachers to plan new activities.

In these meetings the teachers along with the CRP should be able to discuss and deliberate an issues relevant to education of children, problems encountered during organisation of school and identify solution collectively. The CRP has to play a key role in regularly organising these meetings. The CRP has to be able a facilitation and a motivation enabling the teachers of the Alternative schools to search solutions to their problems themselves. The CRP has to ensure availability of resource persons, materials and other help that may be required by the teachers and the CRP during the process of planning for the learners and the classroom.

The CRP should ensure that all teachers get an opportunity to share their experiences. Discussions can be organised in small groups of 4-5 persons which are then shared in the larger group of all the teachers in the cluster. It is suggested that not more than 20 teachers are there at one time during this meeting. This is to ensure an intensive discussion, reflection and participation of all those present.

Discussion in smaller sub group ensure participation of all members and also enable the CRP to interact with each of the teachers.

During the discussion on academic issues the teacher could include the following areas for discussion. The teacher should share the following information about their school.

- ★ Average attendance of children in the last fortnight / month.
- ★ Feedback on meeting with parents of children who are irregular at school. Reasons for long duration absence of teachers if any, efforts made to bring these children to school.

- \* Issues for which contact was made with the community.
- \* To discuss and analyse the above issues in the context of issues discussed in last two / three meetings.
- \* A brief presentation on the nature of academic work done with children in the last fortnight / month.
- \* Problems faced in curriculum transaction, achievements of the learners.
- \* Share the progress made by learners. Prepare a chart on the monthly / quarterly progress of each child.
- \* The teachers could collectively along with resource persons look for possible solutions to problems faced by them in the classroom.
- \* Sharing of new activities and preparing teaching-learning material for the activity.
- \* Read reference material, journals, articles and make relevant use of it.
- \* Develop teaching learning material.
- \* Resource persons to introduce new activities, teaching-learning material.

Some of the above activities can be discussed in sub-groups and then shared in the larger group. Discussions with resource persons to develop new activities or discussions on issues related to education of children should preferably be within the larger group.